

Éva Gyulai

CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS AND SCENES IN MISKOLC, 1830–1930

Abstract

In the Reform Age, the market town of Miskolc gained a distinguished cultural status in Hungary: it boasted a printing press, a permanent theatre, casinos, an 8-grade school, a famous seminar for young ladies, bookshops, a scholars' private society and a liberal intellectual elite. During Dualism no buildings were erected for cultural purposes as culture was not top priority for the business elite. After WWI Miskolc acquired new social and cultural functions in the region, but some facilities were lacking: a Palace of Music was built, but there was still no public library.

Key Words: Urbanization of Miskolc, cultural institutions, museum, casinos, cultural scenes.

Słowa kluczowe: urbanizacja Miskolca, instytucje kultury, muzea, kasyna, sceny teatralne.

The century between 1830 and 1930 can be regarded as the age of modernisation for both Hungary and Miskolc. The investigation of such long historical periods brings us nearer to a successful comparative analysis of Central European cities and their level of urbanisation. It seems expedient to divide this century-long period into three parts in accordance with the events of both the national history of Hungary and the urban history of Miskolc.

The first part, the period lasting from the 1830s to the 1860s, is called the Reform Age or the post-revolutionary period (following the Revolution of 1848) in Hungarian historiography. This period includes the final decades of the pre-modern social order as well as the first period of capitalism and embourgeoisement. This was the time when the very first civil cultural institutions and scenes appeared in Miskolc. Until this time, along with schools, the institutional culture had primarily been attached to churches, and there were civil and patriotic initiatives to establish cultural institutions only in the Reform Age. The second part, from the 1870s to 1920, was characterised by the development of the bourgeois legal system, society and capitalism, this being the period of *Gründerzeit*

in Central Europe and Hungary. It was in this period that modern bourgeois cultural phenomena became institutionalised and were incorporated into the fabric of local societies. The third part, the decade from 1920 to 1930, represented a completely new period in both world and East Central European history; the age following the First World War brought new state borders, a new political regime and trends, and, naturally, a new view and institutions of culture in Hungary. Following the First World War, the geopolitical status of Miskolc changed as well, as it became located near the state border and thus acquired new functions in every respect.

The Reform Age and the post-revolutionary period, 1830s–1860s

In the Reform Age, culture, access to culture and the cause of the national (Hungarian) language and literature were closely connected to the politics of the reformist opposition, not only with respect to political culture but also concerning culture, access to culture and the dissemination of culture as well. Reformist politicians – the future participants of the 1848 revolution – wanted a culture that was both national and modern bourgeois at the same time. In the crown town of Miskolc, with a population of about 10,000, the creators, supporters and disseminators of culture were also the liberal gentry and the professionals holding offices, the so-called ‘honoratiors’ or ‘Lateiners’ stratum: the educated bourgeois, led by county official Bertalan Szemere (Barthélemy de Szemere, 1802–1869), the representative of the municipality of Miskolc in Parliament and a future Prime Minister.



Fig. 1: Franz Eybl: Bertalan Szemere, 1843. Lithograph.
Herman Ottó Museum, Miskolc, Historical Archives, Inv. № HOM HTD 53.251.35.

Similarly to travelling aristocrats, Szemere, who came from a poor noble family, took a tour of Western Europe in 1836–38 with the help of some well-to-do relatives. He published a highly successful book of this tour, illustrated with engravings and printed in Pest, the cultural and economic centre of the Kingdom of Hungary (now part of Budapest).¹ The travelogue focused on the modern economic, social and cultural institutions of the Western European countries, but Szemere had also studied conditions in western prisons, as he was a lawyer preparing for a political career. In addition to many other things, in Paris he noticed the many bookshops as well as the lending libraries and the reading rooms, where anybody could read the latest newspapers and magazines for a few sous: “the apprentice, the laboratory hand from the pharmacy, the page and the porter all drop in for a minute, and, sitting down next to the elegant dandy on the velvet bench, they run through their favourite papers... the cabman, the brush-maker, the woman selling fruit and the water-carrier all read newspapers.”² Although the travelogue could only be published in a censored version, its author was elected a corresponding member by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

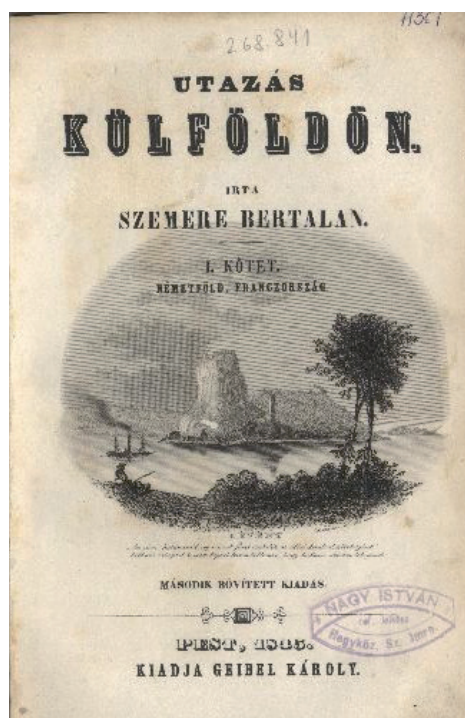


Fig. 2: Travelogue of B. Szemere, Pest, 1845 (2nd edition)

¹ Bertalan Szemere, *Utazás külföldön*, I–II, Pest: Magy. Kir. Egyetem, 1840, 2nd edition: Pest: Geibel Károly, 1845.

² B. Szemere, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 151.

As a Member of Parliament, Bertalan Szemere knew Pressburg (Hungarian: Pozsony; today Bratislava, Slovakia), the venue of the parliamentary sessions in the Reform Age and the political centre of the country, very well but he also felt at home in Pest, in Buda and in the capital of the Hapsburg Empire, Vienna, with its bustling cultural and artistic life. It was in Vienna in 1846 that he got to know Leopoldina Jurkovich (1829–1865), daughter of a rich court agent and professor of law, Mátyás Jurkovich (†1846), whom he later married. His mother-in-law, Therese von Comper, was a celebrated amateur soprano singer in contemporary Viennese second society (*zweite Gesellschaft*). Franz Liszt also played the piano in home concerts organised in the Jurkovich family's flat in Vienna.



Fig. 3: Alexander (Sándor) Kozina: Leopoldina Jurkovich, 1844.
Oil on Canvas. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria [Hungarian National Gallery] Inv. № 61.34-T
(Photo: G. Kulcsár)

In the age of national awakening, culture became a national cause. That was why the issue of dramatics in the Hungarian language was at the same time a political issue for the Hungarian gentry, bourgeoisie and even for peasants. The

theatre was the most democratic cultural institution, as it required no literacy so the illiterate could also enjoy it. At the same time, it often conveyed high culture and demanding literary texts and did so in the national language. Miskolc, lying at the gate to the Highlands of the Hungarian Kingdom, was the largest town with a Hungarian majority in this region, which was why it became the location for the second permanent Hungarian theatre, the foundations for which had been laid by former troupers. In 1823, a theatre was built in the city of Miskolc. This theatre was, however, not maintained by the town but by the county. The only earlier stone-built theatre built in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary was in Klausenburg (Hungarian: Kolozsvár; today Cluj-Napoca, Romania) in 1821. The building of the Miskolc theatre burnt down in 1847, and the new stone theatre, which still is in use, was built by 1857 according to Antonio Cassano's plans, mainly from donations. The front of the theatre faced the Main or Market Street of the town.

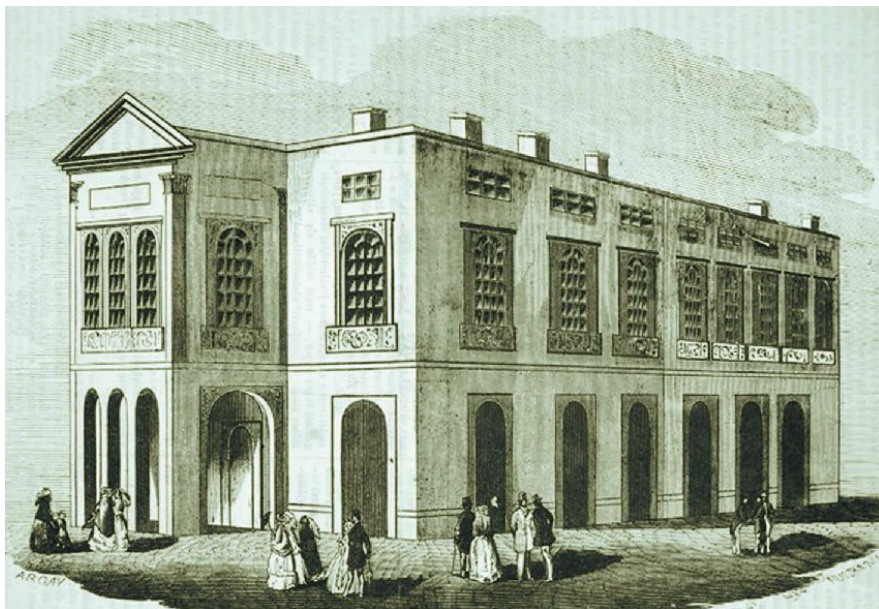


Fig. 4: Lajos Huszka (printmaker) and Argay (illustrator): Building of National Theatre, Miskolc. Print around 1860.

OSZK Színháztörténeti Gyűjtemény [Hungarian National Széchényi Library, Budapest, Theatre History Collection] *Inv. №* 133/1964

In the National Theatre of Miskolc, the town's residents could see the greatest Hungarian actors and actresses of the age, including the famed prima donna Mrs Déry (Déryné, 1793–1872), who first came to Miskolc as a trouper and then after retiring in 1847 settled down there and wrote her memoirs in the town. Her memoirs are one of the gems of that genre in Hungary, and, at the same time, are an important source for research into theatrical life and culture in the Reform Age.



Fig. 5: Eduard Friedrich Leybold: Actress Déryné (Mrs Déry), 1827. Paper, watercolour
Herman Ottó Museum, Miskolc, Art Collection. Inv. № HOM KGY 62.11.

The Reform Era was the period of casinos (social clubs). In Miskolc, two casinos were set up, although they did not have separate buildings. In 1831, the National Casino was opened for the nobility and bourgeois elite in the Okolicsányi House. In 1837, the Miskolc Civil Association (*Miskolczi Polgár Egyesület*) was established for the craftsmen of the town. As institutions of self- and public education, casinos supported culture, primarily by having their own libraries from which members could borrow books, and also by being the scene of social and political communication. In 1842, Bertalan Szemere and several other citizens of Miskolc who loved reading established a separate reading circle in Miskolc as a civil foundation. This association also accepted women as members, while casinos only admitted male members. The reading circle had a double objective: the self-education of citizens and the popularisation of books in Hungarian so that members could get closer to participating in public life. The chairman of the Reading Circle of Borsod County (*Borsodi Olvasókör*), Bertalan Szemere wrote that the more people read, the more works writers would produce, and libraries could then be set up and “public intelligence will increase in the nation”.³

³ Bertalan Szemere, “Borsodi olvasókör: Ismertetés és felszólítás az írókhoz és könyvtárosokhoz,” *Társalkodó* 11 (1842) 6th August, 1842, p. 72.



Fig. 6: Josef Kriehuber–Johann Höfelich: Freiin Katharina von Geymüller. Lithography, Vienna, 1835.
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Porträtsammlung, Inv. № ÖNB PORT 10834–01.

In 1842, at the initiative of the National Casino, the first model nursery school was established in the building that also first housed the casino. This nursery school was supported by Baroness Katharina von Geymüller (1808–1880), daughter of Johann Jacob von Geymüller (†1834), a Viennese banker of Swiss origin. Katharina von Geymüller was the wife of one of the most respectable personalities and politicians in the region, Baron Miklós Vay de Vaja (1802–1894), sub-prefect of Zemplén County, who was lord lieutenant's administrator for Borsod County (and Miskolc) between 1831 and 1845, acting as the substitute for the lord lieutenant appointed by the king. Although the nursery school was not strictly a cultural, but rather an educational institution, the novelty of the initiative and the institution shows the level of civic culture in Miskolc.

Miskolc has had book printing since the 1810s. It was at this time that the first printer and editor settled in the town. A characteristic product of Szigethy Press was the Miskolc Calendar (*Miskolczi Kalendárium*), first published in 1819, which was basic reading for the lower classes as a well-known product of pop literature. However, the first bookshop that became a special and important cultural scene in Miskolc was only opened in 1835 during the Age of Reforms by Joseph Kraudy, the descendant of a bourgeois family of German origin from Neusohl

(Hungarian: Besztercebánya; today Banská Bystrica, Slovakia).⁴ Another bookshop was established by Johann Ferdinand Grossmann in 1835. In 1847, the latter was taken over by a Polish Jew who fled from Poland in 1842, an educated man named Michael Heilprin (born in Piotrków Trybunalski, Poland, 1823, died in Summit, NJ, USA, 1888), whose father, Phinehas (Pinkas) Menahem Heilprin (1801–1863) was a well-known Jewish theologian.⁵

Michael Heilprin's bookshop, located in the main street of Miskolc, which also functioned as the market street, became the cultural centre of both Miskolc and the region. It was frequented by liberal politicians, men of letters and professionals, including Sándor Petőfi. In addition to local publications, new books published in Pest were immediately available there. One of the bestsellers of the Reform Age, the above-mentioned travelogue by Bertalan Szemere, was sold there as were portrait engravings of renowned contemporary personalities. Several of these people worked in Miskolc in the Reform Age, including László Palóczy (1783–1861), member and notary of Parliament and sub-prefect of the county who lived in Miskolc and the celebrated actress of the Reform Age, Mrs Déry, who often made appearances there.



Fig. 7: Faustin Herr: *László Palóczy*, 1840. Lithograph by Carl Gerold, Vienna. *Gemersko-malohontské múzeum*, Rimavská Sobota, Slovakia

⁴ See more on Joseph Kraudy and his family: Éva Gyulai, “Armáles (1693) a osudy bansko-bystrickej rodiny Kraudy”, *Acta Historica Neosoliensia – Vedecký časopis pre historické vedy* 13 (2010)/1–2, pp. 304–329.

⁵ See more on Michael Heilprin: Gustav Pollak, *Michael Heilprin and His Sons*, a *Biography*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1912.

Having a talent for languages, Michael Heilprin quickly learnt Hungarian and he even wrote poems in the language. In 1846, one of his poems, entitled “A Song of a Jewish Circle” was published in Miskolc.⁶ In the poem, the author, as a Jewish patriot, urges his companions, the offspring of the Jewish nation who had suffered greatly, to love this homeland, Hungary, and expresses his hopes for the arrival of the age of civic freedom. The poem was addressed to a Jewish circle of friends consisting of young educated people who drank wine together grouped around the educated poet and bookshop owner. One of the verses of the poem describes the following about this educated liberal Jewish company: Our little circle was linked by friendship... [this friendship] intertwined our grim lives with roses, and crowned them with the crown of taste.” Wolf Bródy (Wolf ben Moshe, 1770–1841), the chairman of the synagogue, and Abraham Hochmuth (1816–1889), a teacher at the Jewish school⁷ in Miskolc, were certainly members of this circle. They were also members of the Pest Association for the Dissemination of the Hungarian Language among Jews Living in Hungary, established in Pest in 1847.

Michael Heilprin, who during the 1848–49 Revolution and War of Independence, accepted a job with Interior Minister Bertalan Szemere wrote heartening poems to the Hungarians fighting for their freedom.⁸ He emigrated in 1849, but returned to the country for a short time in 1850 before finally leaving Hungary for the USA.⁹ In America he translated poems from Hungarian including Sándor Petőfi’s verses.¹⁰ In the early 1850s, he also published books in Miskolc and ran his bookshop, which was also a lending library, until 1856. We still have the library register, which contains German, English and French books in addition to Hungarian volumes. At this time, Heilprin ran the shop and the lending library together with his business partner, who was none other than the Kraków-born Bernat (Baruch) Fraenkel (1829–1888), whose son, the Miskolc-born Sándor Ferenczi (1873–1933) later became the closest colleague of Sigmund Freud.

⁶ Mihály Heilprin, *Zsidó kördal*, Miskolcz: Tóth Lajos, 1846.

⁷ Cf.: Abraham Hochmuth, *Die jüdische Schule in Ungarn: wie sie ist und wie sie sein soll*, Miskolcz: D. Deutsch, 1851.

⁸ Mihály Heilprin, *Köztársasági dalok*, Pest: Lukács és Tsa, 1849.

⁹ Michael Heilprin, *To my Hungarian friends, departing to join Garibaldi*, New York, July, 1860 (S.l., 1860).

¹⁰ M(ichael) Heilprin, “My Care. Translated from the Hungarian of Petoefi”, *Graham’s Illustrated Magazine* (Philadelphia) LI (1857), № 5 (November), p. 432.

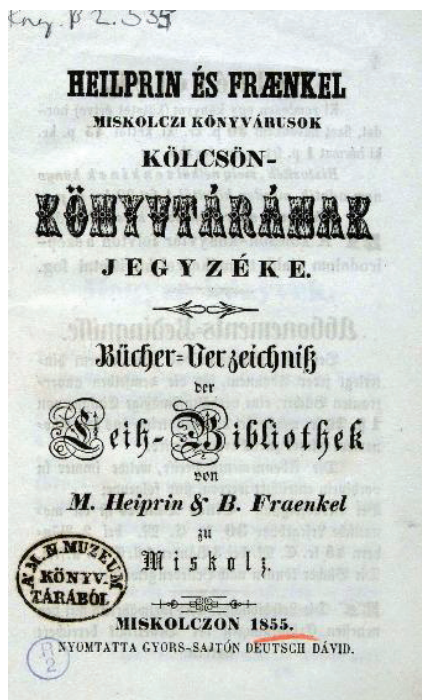


Fig. 8: List of Lending Library of Heilprin and Fraenkel. Miskolc, 1855

The elite of Miskolc, who were mostly Protestants (Reformed), were educated in the nearby Reformed College of Sárospatak or studied law in the Lutheran Colleges of Eperjes (today Prešov, Slovakia) or Kásmark (Hungarian: Késmárk; today Kežmarok, Slovakia). In this period, one did not need a university degree to take the law examination – an academic degree was enough. It was characteristic of these elite noblemen that one of them, Miklós Kun (1812–1875), the mayor of Miskolc, wrote and published a concise history of his town not only for intellectual purposes, but also to collect arguments that the market town of Miskolc should be awarded the status of a free royal borough.

Miklós Kun, the educated mayor who was also involved in historical studies, was a member of the unofficial scholarly association of Miskolc along with several other liberal-minded contemporaries. This association was established through a civil initiative and was rather a circle or club of friends than an institutionalised society of scholars. The Major Street Scholarly Society regularly gathered together in the house of Miklós Kun's younger brother, János Kun (1820–1886), a young jurist and later a lawyer and Member of Parliament for Miskolc (1869–1872), on Major [= Town's Croft] Street to debate literature, science and liberal political ideas. They were also actively involved in politics, as they supported Bertalan Szemere for Parliament. As a matter of fact, Bertalan Szemere also published poems and short stories. What is more, in 1840, he won

an award from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and his legal study on the death penalty was published by the Academy.

The Miskolc circle of these educated young liberals was also called a “scholarly society” because in the first half of the 1840s, it was in the house in which Gusztáv Szontágh (1793–1858) rented a room. He was one of the most excellent representatives of Hungarian philosophy, whose mother tongue was German and who was sent into retirement from the army as a captain. While writing one of his important philosophical works, Szontágh was also involved in an experiment to grow melons in his landlord’s spacious gardens in the town and on the outskirts. The “passionate melon grower”, as he called himself, wrote one of the fundamental works of contemporary agricultural literature on how to grow tasty melons in Hungary on the basis of his experiments made in Miskolc.¹¹ Szontágh was not only driven to gardening by scientific curiosity but also by an intellectual approach, about which he writes the following in the preface to his work on melons:

It is futile to strive only for spiritual culture. As long as theoretical education does not go hand in hand with physical exercise from the nursery school to the university, and intellectual workers do not combine their work with some kind of sport, one cannot speak about physical and spiritual soundness (health), and thus about happiness. What is more, one cannot really consider oneself educated, as how can one be really educated if one does not have enough brains to promote one’s own well-being?¹²



Fig. 9: Leo Tersch: Teréz Karacs, around 1840. Engraving.

Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum MTKCs [Hungarian National Museum Historical Gallery]



Fig. 10: Miklós Barabás: Gusztáv Szontágh, 1844. Lithograph, A. F. Watzel, Pest. Private collection

¹¹ Gusztáv Szontágh, *A szenvedelmes dinnyész. Útmutatás okszerű dinnyetermesztéshez*, Miskolcz: Tóth Lajos, 1843, 2nd edition: Pest: Heckenast, 1860.

¹² G. Szontágh, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

Separate mention must be made of the Young Ladies' Seminary of the Reformed Church, opened in 1846, the first principal of which was the writer Teréz Karacs (1808–1892), one of the best known figures in Hungarian women's education. A liberal-thinking intellectual whose father was the renowned cartographer Ferenc Karancs and whose mother was writer Éva Takács worked in Miskolc until 1859, a play of hers was performed in the local theatre and a collection of her "wild romantic" short stories was published in Miskolc in 1853.¹³ The subjects in the curriculum of the young ladies' seminary, with three grades and four female teachers, were religious studies, natural science, geography, history, Hungarian language, German language, arithmetic, housekeeping and sewing (as well as embroidery, crocheting and knitting). It was characteristic of both the liberal atmosphere of the seminar and the liberal opposition in Miskolc that churchwarden László Palóczy set the examination ceremony for 4 July because of the symbolic meaning of this date, as he himself said:

It is the day of the liberation of America... We are also celebrating our liberation today, giving our daughters a similar education as we provide for our sons. No country or nation can call themselves free if women are not equal to men in education.¹⁴

As a matter of fact, Teréz Karacs did not only provide for the educating and informing of the disciples in her seminar. In a letter to the editor published on 17 December, 1848 – during the 1848 revolution – in the literary and political periodical *Életképek* [Scenes from Life] edited by Mór Jókai and Sándor Petőfi, she wrote that it was she who provided the inhabitants of Diósgyőr, located near Miskolc, with copies of the newspapers *Munkások Újsága* [The Workers' Newspaper] and *Nép Barátja* [The People's Friend], published during the Revolution for common people to inform them about the political events. According to the republican Teréz Karacs, the people of Diósgyőr, including teamsters, often read these papers even at 11 p.m. or midnight. She described a scene of twenty illiterate women sitting around a miserable old spinster who could, however, read very well, and who read *Nép Barátja* aloud in the magnificent meadow under the castle of Diósgyőr. "Common people cannot show their happiness enough in their new situation [e.g. being freed from the bonds of serfdom] as they are now free from toiling for the landlord, and they can taste the nobler fruits of the press, so nurturing for the soul."¹⁵

¹³ Teréz Karacs, *Összes munkái I–II*, Miskolcz: Tóth Lajos, 1853.

¹⁴ János Szendrői, *Miskolcz város története és egyetemes helyirata*, I–V, Miskolcz: Public of Miskolc, 1886–1911, Vol. IV, p. 534.

¹⁵ Teréz Karacs, "[Reader's Letter], Miskolc, 21 Nov. 1848", *Életképek* 4 (1848)/25 (17 Dec. 1848), pp. 770–773.



Fig. 11: Joseph Kraudy: *József Lévy* around 1865. Oil on paper.
 Herman Ottó Múzeum, Miskolc, Art Collection, Inv. № HOM KGY 53.57.
 (Gyulai, *Miskolci portrék 1750–1950*, Cat. № 48, 20.)

The Reform Age was also the period of the birth of modern press and the publication of cultural and scholarly periodicals. In Miskolc, however, only one weekly, the *Miskolczi Értesítő* [Miskolc Bulletin] was published from 1842 and only contained advertisements. It was in this weekly that Teréz Karacs announced in 1844 that she intended to open a seminary for young ladies in Miskolc. The editors of the weekly were the ironmonger Joseph Lichtenstein (1802–1855), the director of the first financial institution in Miskolc, the Miskolc Savings Bank [Miskolczi Takarékpénztár], which was established in 1845; and the general dealer Ferdinand Furman. The people of Miskolc could only read cultural, scholarly or political articles in the periodicals published in Pest, mainly in the so-called fashion magazines (literary and social periodicals). Several members of the Miskolc cultural elite including Teréz Karacs, Bertalan Szemere and the young József Lévy (1825–1918), who became the celebrated poet laureate of the country at the end of the 19th century, wrote poems or short stories for these magazines. It was characteristic of the liberal professionals and political elite that they were also involved in literature. Intellectuals, however, often wrote reports and letters to the editor about Miskolc to national papers and magazines as well. In 1847, the most famous political paper of the era, *Pesti Hírlap* [The Pest News] had as its local correspondent Maximilian/Miksa Vadnay (1816–18 March

1849 in Miskolc), a county official, magistrate and later Member of Parliament in 1848, who was enthusiastic about the French revolution. He and his family, the Vadnays, received Sándor Petőfi, the country's best-known poet in Miskolc in July 1847. Petőfi's friend, Rudolf Vadnay (1819–1889) became a senior official (drafter) in the Ministry of Interior led by Bertalan Szemere in 1848 together with Lajos Horváth (1823–1911), who was also from Miskolc. In the age of Austro-Hungarian Dualism, the latter became a well-known politician, a Member of Parliament and a member of the upper house. After the revolution, Rudolf Vadnay retired to his estate and involved himself in linguistic studies while his nephew, Károly Vadnay (Vadnai) (1832–1902) became a famous novel writer and critic in the capital. His name became one of the trademarks of modern Hungarian journalism. In the 1880s, he represented Miskolc in Parliament. After the collapse of the revolution, József Lévy, having also worked for Interior Minister Szemere, worked as a journalist and poet contributor for several periodicals edited in Pest under the pseudonym Miklós Bátor (Nicholas the Brave). He then returned home and worked as teacher of literature and Latin in the Reformed Lyceum of Miskolc until 1856.

1870s–1920: the age of Austro-Hungarian Dualism and its end

The age of Dualism, the “Gründerzeit”, the period of modernisation was quite controversial as far as the cultural life of the town was concerned. Economically, Miskolc was one of the most rapidly developing towns in Hungary. Additionally, Miskolc was awarded the much longed-for municipal authority in 1909, becoming equal to the free royal boroughs with their rich past and at the same time legally equal to the counties and the capital. The townscape also underwent a significant change as a long row of mansions, blocks of flats and shops were built in its long main street.

Despite the changes, in 1908 an article in *Ellenzék* [Political Opposition], the local opposition newspaper, stated:

Honestly, intellectuals are quite low in number in Miskolc... We have a thriving trade, we are a treasury for agricultural production and our grape exports beat those of Tokaj-Hegyalja... We have geniuses in economics, first-class financiers equalling Kornfeld¹⁶... We have highly qualified local specialists, who are capable of everything except West European taste and the civilised man's craving for art, which are essential needs for the inhabitants of sophisticated thinking of foreign cities. Nobody has a need for arts and literature here.¹⁷

Indeed, in the age of modernisation, Miskolc was not able to establish truly modern and important cultural institutions. Thus the impetus of the Reform Age

¹⁶ Baron Sigmund Kornfeld (1852–1919), a Jewish banker of Moravian origin, a prominent representative of Gründerzeit in East Central Europe.

¹⁷ *Ellenzék* (Miskolc), 24 Sept. 1908.

broke, the new bourgeois elite was not integrated into the town's cultural life, and the political elite considered politics more important than culture.¹⁸

No higher education institution was established in the town but Miskolc made considerable progress in secondary education. By the beginning of the First World War, it had developed into a real town of schools, with even an 8-grade academic grammar school for girls. Three new secondary schools were built in the town. However, these could not fill the cultural gap created by the lack of the lecturers and students of a higher education institution. In addition, despite its bustling cultural life in the Reform Age, though mainly relying on an individual and civic basis, Miskolc possessed no such historical cultural capital as the free royal boroughs of the Middle Ages did. There was a lack of both real cultural traditions and modern civic cultural trends and initiatives in this trading centre, rapidly undergoing capitalist development.

In the age of modernisation, the press, as the repository of social publicity, became the most important social, political and cultural institution. Thus, local dailies and weeklies appeared in Miskolc. Until the First World War, more than 20 newspapers were started but over half of them did not survive their first year of publication. They were all political papers divided in political attitude between the ruling party and the opposition. Although several publications started and ended (among them a paper for women), there were no real cultural periodicals. It is true that the newspaper published articles on culture, but most of them represented the purely political press. No cultural magazine was edited in Miskolc, with the exception of a 4-page publication called *Színház* or *Színházi Lapok* [Theatre or Theatrical Papers], published between 1905 and 1909 and edited by Ödön Fehér (1880–?), and a special publication started by railway officers in Miskolc having 3 volumes that, according to its title, was also a literary weekly, *Haladás: vasúti szak- és szépirodalmi hetilap* (1902–1905) [Progress: A Special Railway and Literary Weekly]. Indeed, the magazine published some of the best Hungarian writers of the age, including Gyula Krúdy and Margit Kaffka. The latter is considered to be the most talented poetess and woman writer at the turn of the century by the literary establishment. In the 1880s, the leading figure of opposition journalism in Miskolc was Mihály Váncza (1859–1918), a teacher and journalist (*Miskolcz, Borsodmegyei Lapok, Borsod*). He also established a meteorological station in the town, providing the national meteorological institute in Budapest with data registered in Miskolc. He edited the only women's magazine of the age in Miskolc, *Hölgyvilág: szépirodalmi hetilap* [Ladies' World: a Literary Weekly], which had 13 issues in 1884. This women's magazine had a supplement dealing with fashion and housekeeping as well (*Divatcsarnok*, [The Hall of Fashion] and *Háztartási Lapok* [Housekeeping]). Although according to its title it was a literary magazine, it also published feuilletons and poems. In fact, Mihály Váncza's

¹⁸ For details about the social elite of Miskolc in the Age of Dualism, see: Judit Tóvári, *Az elit Miskolc város társadalmában 1872–1917*, Budapest: Studium, 1997.

father was Mihály Wándza/Vándza, senior, (1781–1853), a painter, scene-painter and theatre director who settled in Miskolc in 1820 and painted scenery for both the Miskolc and Kaschau (Hungarian: Kassa; today: Košice, Slovakia) theatres in the 1830s.

With the exception of the press, the cultural institutions established in the Reform Age continued their operation until the end of the 19th century, although in a different way. At this time, the National Casino was already called the Gentlemen's Casino and occupied the elegant second floor of the theatre, which had been rebuilt by 1857. It had a billiards room, two sitting rooms, two reading rooms (with English, German and French papers) and, from the 1880s, gas lighting. The civil association also continued its operations but its headquarters were more similar to a restaurant. These two clubs reconstructed the contemporary Miskolc elite according to political affiliation, as the gentlemen's casino was mainly an institution of the ruling party while the civic association was that of the Forty-Eighters' opposition. In the age of Austro-Hungarian Dualism, a third casino was also established mainly for Jewish tradesmen – this was the most populous one. However, these casinos of the Miskolc elite and citizens gradually became political institutions, losing their cultural objective and character as well as the demand for self- and public education.

The nationally recognised Miskolc National Theatre remained the centre of cultural life, with its operations directed by a corporation. In addition, a supporting association was also set up but it did not deal with the professional or artistic issues of the theatre, only with economic questions.

With regards musical life in the town, the lack of cultural institutions and scenes was especially conspicuous. In the 19th century, there was no formal music education in Miskolc. Similarly to other towns, a civil organisation named *Zenekedvelők Egyesülete* [Association of Music Lovers] was formed in 1869, but the amateur orchestra maintained by the association mainly gave concerts in private houses as there was no real concert hall in the town. At the end of the century, Mihály Klima opened a private music school under the name Miskolczi Zeneakadémia or Conservatorium [The Miskolc Music Academy or Conservatory] in one of the blocks on the main street, whose teachers regularly gave chamber music concerts. It was only at the beginning of the 20th century that the first municipal music school was opened in the Fáy House, an 18th century one-storey mansion.¹⁹

Civic and workers' choirs were formed everywhere in contemporary Hungary as a civil initiative; and it was no different in Miskolc. This was how the municipal singing society, Miskolczi Daláregylet [The Miskolc Singers' Society], was established in 1882 with the objective to spread the culture of singing. However,

¹⁹ See more on the musical life of Miskolc: Irén V. Zalán, "Miskolc zenei élete a két világháború között, I–III.", Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve / Annales Musei Miskolciensis de Herman Otto Nominati 19, 21, 22–23 (1980, 1982, 1985) 153–208; 195–220; 149–174.

its elitist character was indicated by the fact that both the Lord Lieutenant of Borsod County and the mayor of the town participated in its leadership. Just like with the casinos, the society of the town was divided in its choir societies as well. In 1888, the petty bourgeoisie and craftsmen set up the *Miskolczi Polgári Dalos Egylet* (Miskolc Civic Singing Society).



Fig. 12: Borsod–Miskolc Museum, around 1910. Photo, private collection

It was only in 1893 that the fundamental cultural institution of the civil sphere was created in Miskolc under the name Borsod–Miskolczi Közművelődési Egyesület [Cultural Association of Borsod County and Miskolc]. It made an effort to support every facet of modern civic culture. It operated in sections and in 1899 both its function and mission were extended, as was reflected in its name, which then incorporated the word ‘Museum’. Under its aegis, the first museum of the region, called the Borsod–Miskolczi Múzeum, was formed. With regard to its coverage and cultural influence, the museum extended beyond Miskolc to Borsod County as well. Its most important organiser was a railway officer, Bertalan Balogh (1870–1922), who had an exceptional career, as he became a cultural politician of national renown. The association considered one of its objectives to support musical life in Miskolc, which had just started to develop, so it organised an orchestra and concerts. Although the town still had no music hall, on 24 April 1904 Mozart’s *Requiem* was performed in the National Theatre. This concert was a landmark in the musical life of Miskolc. All of the representatives of musical life in the town – the municipal music school, the singing society and the cultural association – participated in the organisation of this impressive

event, but even in this way they were only able to perform this grandiose piece of music with the contribution of the local military band! Later, the orchestra of the iron factory in Diósgyőr also joined the Miskolc Orchestra and then before the First World War, it was able to perform symphonic pieces. In 1912, the 54-member orchestra gave a concert in Kaschau (Kassa/Košice), as well. Inspired by such successes, Bertalan Balogh looked for allies to boost the musical life of the region. He approached the Széchenyi Circle in Eperjes (Prešov) and Kazinczy Circle in Kaschau (Kassa/Košice) to set up a joint music society and a fund for organising concerts. That was how the Felvidéki Zeneszövetség [Highlands Music Association] was formed in 1914. The cultural associations of Eger, Leutscha (Hungarian: Lócse; today Levoča, Slovakia) and Sátoraljaújhely also joined but its activities were hindered by the First World War. *Inter arma silent Musae*.

Bertalan Balogh was both a practical and theoretical expert of public education. He published articles on the topic, but perhaps his most remarkable activity was organising popular lectures for the workers of the iron factory in neighbouring Diósgyőr starting in 1898. Later, he organised a twice-weekly workers' academy, with classes held from 8 to 10 p.m., attended mostly by railway workers who could become non-commissioned officers after passing the examination there. In 1912, a series of popular scientific lectures was organised for interested inhabitants of Miskolc under the title *Népszerű Főiskola* [Popular Academy].



Fig. 13: Manó Vesztróczy: Balogh Bertalan, 1912. Canvas, oil.
Miskolci Galéria, Miskolc. (Gyulai, *Miskolci portrék 1750–1950*, Cat. № 70, 26.)

The museum section of the association acquired the building of the former Reformed school (with foundations dating from the Middle Ages) for the Borsod–Miskolc Museum because an elegant modern building had been erected for the academic grammar school of the Reformed Church. With its collection and permanent exhibitions (organised from 1902 on), the museum became possibly the most important and most successful cultural venue of the era. At first, it was directed by the association and was only put under the legal authority of the town and county after the First World War. One of its founders was the headmaster of the vocational high school, Ignác Gálffy (1859–1940), who, similarly to Balogh, had a real civic attitude. As a matter of fact, his son Imre Gálffy (1897–1957) was mayor of the town for almost 5 years from 1944, with an interruption during the Nazi regime from October of 1944.

The first public municipal library was also established in the museum. Before that, bookshops and church and school libraries lent books only to clients, members of their congregation or their students. The only public library was maintained by the Lutheran church from 1876. In addition to the scientific library, the cultural association organised a people’s library. What is more, it also operated a mobile library in the county.

One of the nationally significant artistic initiatives at the beginning of the 20th century, the organisation of the Felvidéki Vándorkiállítások series [Highlands Travelling Exhibitions] in the major cities and towns of the Highlands of the Hungarian Kingdom (Eger/Erlau/Jager, Miskolc, Kassa/Kaschau/Košice, Eperjes / Prešov, Sátoraljaújhely, Gyöngyös), was another achievement of the association and Bertalan Balogh. As a matter of fact, the exhibitions were combined with fairs where visitors and local institutions (especially banks and museums) could buy the works of art. In the two travelling exhibitions, the most money was spent in Eger, residential town of the Catholic Bishop of Erlau/Eger, Miskolc came second with the amounts of 8,825 and 14,050 crowns respectively; while in Kassa (Kaschau/Košice), there was less interest and the two exhibitions made 6,887 and 11,010 crowns respectively.²⁰ Bertalan Balogh’s other objective was the development of local public collections, as it was impossible to develop public taste without provincial art collections. This is what he writes about as the topic in one of his articles in 1910:

Probably it is unnecessary to speak about the mission of provincial [art] collections that do not exist even in plans, but let me point out that without such collections, one cannot even speak about a substantial cultural and educational policy affecting the whole of the national public, as the basis and starting point of smart art policy is making artistic taste general, that is, the gradual education of the public from generation to generation. And without collections, this is an impossible task.²¹

²⁰ Guidó Zsadaányi, “A felvidéki vándorkiállítások története”, Herman Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve / Annales Musei Miskolciensis de Herman Otto Nominati 4 (1964), pp. 183–206.

²¹ Bertalan Balogh, “Jegyzetek művészeti politikánkhoz: Vidéki gyűjtemények”, Művészet 9 (1910), p. 110.

It does credit to Bertalan Balogh's taste that in 1912 he commissioned his modern portrait from Manó Vesztróczy (1875–1955), one of the artists of the travelling exhibition who had also worked in the Nagybánya artists' colony. In this portrait, Balogh can be seen in an elegant, modern suit in front of a painting, thus expressing his commitment to modern arts and culture. In spite of this, until the First World War, the fine arts scene in Miskolc remained superficial.²² The works of the painters working here still represented academism and were of a relatively low level. Following his studies of fine arts, Elemér/Elemír Halász-Hradil (1873–1948), who was born here, only returned to Miskolc for a short period before the First World War but then went to Košice, where he became the emblematic painter of the Czechoslovakian city. In Miskolc, the trade association ordered an academic portrait of chairman Ferenc J. Pfliegler (1840–1922), which depicted him from the knees up, from him in 1910 for the clubhouse salon.²³ However, it was in Kassa (Košice), which was taken over by Czechoslovakia after the war, that Halász-Hradil became a real 20th century artist.

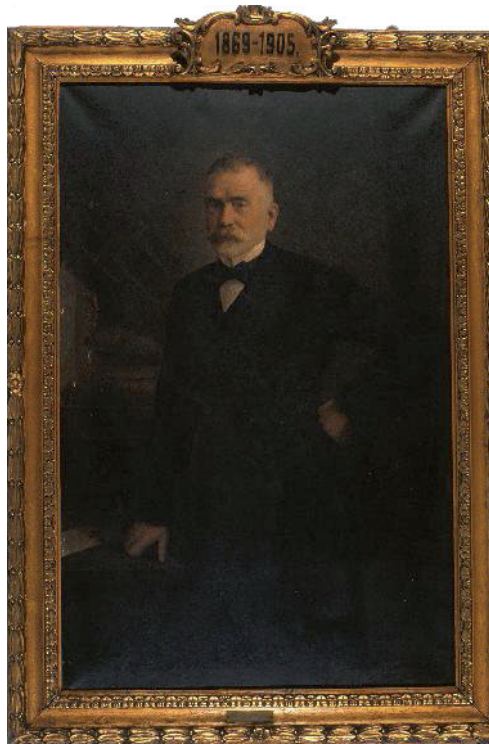


Fig. 14: Elemér Halász-Hradil, *Ferenc J. Pfliegler*, around 1910. Canvas, oil. Private collection, Miskolc (Gyulai, *Miskolci portrék 1750–1950*, Cat. № 54, 22.)

²² Éva Gyulai, “Miskolci portrék 1750–1950. Miskolc régi képeslapokon”, [Exhibition catalogue], eds. Éva Gyulai and István Dobrik, Miskolc: Miskolci Galéria, 2000, Cat. № 70, p. 26.

²³ E. Gyulai, “Miskolci portrék 1750–1950”, Cat. № 54, p. 22.

In addition to supporting musical life and the causes of museums and fine arts, the cultural association made an effort to give an impetus to literary life as well. At the beginning of the 1910s, it advertised a literary competition several times but no quality works were submitted, so the organisers had to conclude that not even the foundations had been laid for literary life in Miskolc. The town was reluctant to adopt new ideas and trends. In Miskolc, there was a cult of József Lévay, a representative of conservative, academic and official poetry, although modern poets like Margit Kaffka (1880–1918) also lived in the town, though only a few and for a short time. Together with other poets, Margit Kaffka published a modern volume of poetry entitled *We Are Seven* in 1909, but their attempt was not followed by other achievements in modern poetry.²⁴

The Borsod–Miskolc Association also played a major role in spreading of another cultural medium that appeared in this period and spread unbelievably rapidly: cinema. Moving pictures appeared in Miskolc in 1901, and, similarly to many other towns, the performance venues were the existing halls, large rooms in the theatre, residential buildings and hotels like the café of the Lloyd Hotel, and, from 1907, a room in the Vigadó [Entertainment Hall] Restaurant located in the municipal park, which was transformed into an “electric theatre” called Apollo. Right from the beginning, Miskolc also had a “tent cinema” in the marketplace located on the boundary of the inner city, which was called Búza [Wheat] Square after its grain market. It is an interesting fact that the popular scientific films of the Urania Hungarian Scientific Theatre of Budapest were also mainly shown in the tent in Búza Square. In 1911, the Urania Cinema was set up in the cellar of one of the most elegant mansions on the main street, the Weidlich Palace. It moved into another mansion during the First World War. The cinema not only became the most popular cultural venue and form of entertainment, beating even the theatre, but also the most profitable business enterprise of the era.²⁵

Academic research and publication relied on individual achievements and no academic circles or teams were formed. However, several teachers, medical doctors and intellectuals were present in the academic life of the country and were members of national scholarly societies. One such person was the medical doctor Gábor Doleschall (1813–1891), who moved to Miskolc in 1843, and not only founded a medical association in the town, experimented with animals and published scholarly articles in national medical periodicals, but also dealt with plant physiology. The name of Miskolc probably became widely known in academic circles in this period only once, through the publication between 1886 and 1911 of a 5-volume monograph on the history of the town.²⁶ It had nationwide importance both as an enterprise and as a scholarly achievement.

²⁴ Heten vagyunk (Miskolcz: Szelényi & Tsa, 1909).

²⁵ István D o b r o s s y, “A ‘mozgóképek’, ‘mozgósínházak’, ‘mozik’, a filmvetítés története”, [in:] *Miskolc története* IV. 1848–1918, I–II., ed. László Veres, Vol. II, 986–1101, Miskolc: BAZML–HOM, 2003,

²⁶ J. S z e n d r e i, *op. cit.*, Vol. I–V.

The editor and author of this positivist monograph, which barely relied on the modern achievements of historiography, was the renowned cultural historian and Miskolc native János Szendrei (1857–1927).²⁷ Naturally, he used the work of a number of anonymous local and Budapest contributors as well. Szendrei was among the organisers of the Millennium celebrations in 1896, he was main organiser of the Rákóczi Relics Exhibition in Kassa (Košice) in 1903 and in 1906, he planned the march from Budapest for the 1906 funeral of Prince Rákóczi and his brothers-in-arms in Kassa (Košice).

At this time, table societies were special institutions of intellectual and cultural life. They were formed in wine cellars and private residences of the town as well as in the editorial offices of newspapers. Mihály Tompa (1817–1868), a renowned poet living in county Gömör, and the above-mentioned “domestic” poet of Miskolc, Lévay, were members of such literary tables together with artists, teachers and professionals. Their company had its own set of glasses that they used in their literary and social meetings. Another table was formed by the above-mentioned teacher and editor, Mihály Váncza, “for warriors of the spirit”. One of the members was an outstanding figure in Miskolc cultural life, the learned chief physician of the county, Albert Bódogh (1829–1886), who had a number of publications in scientific periodicals. In the 1870s and 1880s, this small intellectual circle gathered in the editorial office of Mihály Váncza’s newspapers.



Fig. 15: Antal Simonyi, photographer: Dr Albert Bódogh.
Sitting portrait, Pest, around 1865. Private collection

²⁷ Éva Gyulai, “One Century, One Town, Three Monographs – Town Monographs on Miskolc (1886–1911; 1929; 1996–2007)”, [in:] *The Monograph Research In Central Europe (1990–2010). International Conference*, Oradea, October 7, 2011, ed. Antonio Faur, 24–36, Cluj–Napoca: Romania Academy Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2012.

1920–1930: the first decade of the Interwar Period

After the First World War, when the borders of Hungary were changed by the Treaty of Trianon, Miskolc gained enhanced importance due to its geopolitical situation. The majority of many counties along the border had been taken over by Czechoslovakia, together with such cities as Kassa (Košice), Rozsnyó (Rožnava) and Rimaszombat (Rimavská Sobota), and the remaining corners of several of these former counties were attached to Borsod County. Therefore, in the part of the region left in Hungary, Miskolc had to take over the political and social role of those cities with a high level of urbanisation.

Miskolc, which formerly had never had a institution of higher education, immediately got a college in the new political situation. In 1919, the law academy of the Lutheran College of Eperjes (Prešov), with its rich past, fled to Miskolc. Although the Hungarian cultural administration considered law academies to be out-dated and hindered their operation, the Lutheran academy operated until 1949. The new higher education institution settled in one of the wings of the Town Hall, and did not manage to move into a new building for 20 years. The law academy brought a highly educated group of professors from the Highlands, who represented a new feature in the cultural life of Miskolc. In addition to teaching, the lecturers of the law academy published scholarly papers, started a series of micro-monographs and even established the first scholarly monthly periodical of the town, *Miskolci Jogászélet* [Lawyers' Life in Miskolc]. The academy was the first coherent intellectual and scholarly centre in the town.

Cultural conditions became a social issue, and a professor of the academy, Béla Zsedényi (1894–1955), wrote a micro-monograph entitled “A Portrait of Intellectual Life and Culture in Miskolc.”²⁸ The author concluded that after the war, the municipality spent more on schools and culture than before the war. In 1910, 7.6% of the budget was spent on schools and culture, while in 1928 this figure amounted to 11.8%. He also acknowledged that there are cities where this figure approached 20%. Zsedényi considered Miskolc a new centre of cultural life in the Highlands and as the cultural centre for the region (after Kassa was taken over by Czechoslovakia): from a “town of bootmakers” – a reference to the most populous guild in Miskolc – Miskolc had become a cultural centre.

²⁸ Béla Zsedényi, *Miskolc szellemi élete és kultúrája*, Miskolc: Ev. Jogakadémia–Magyar Jövő Rt., 1909 (Miskolci Ev. Jogakadémia Tudományos Értekezéseinek Tára, 33).



Figs. 16–17: Prof. Béla Zsedényi (1918) and Dr Kálmán Mikszáth (around 1930). Photos. Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Történeti Fényképtár [Hungarian National Museum, Historical Photo Collection]

After the First World War, the issue of the cultural development of Miskolc moved into the focus of both national and local politics. It was due to the new cultural policy that the cultural association, established in 1893, launched a cultural periodical called *Miskolci Szemle* [The Miskolc Survey] in 1927. However, this periodical only had two volumes and then ceased to exist. It indicates a shift in the approach of the formerly modern civic association that it adopted the name of late poet laureate Lévy, a representative of academic poetry, and one of its leaders was the lord lieutenant of the town. As Miskolc was awarded the right of jurisdiction i.e. municipal rights in 1909, the head of state appointed a lord lieutenant to enforce the intentions of the state as the leader of the town in addition to the mayor. Only counties with a high level of self-government had been entitled to have such an office previously. The Lord Lieutenant, Dr Kálmán Mikszáth, Jr., (1885–1950, Lord Lieutenant: 1926–1932), had a degree in law and was the son of the outstanding writer of the age of Dualism, Kálmán Mikszáth, whose short stories about “Slovak kinsmen” are among the best Hungarian literary works.

In his 1926 inaugural speech, Dr Mikszáth proclaimed the most important trend of the culture of Miskolc, which was the same one proclaimed by the cultural administration for the whole country: to strengthen culture in order to express cultural supremacy over the neighbouring nations. In his programme, the lord lieutenant criticised decadent modern literature (which, as we have seen, had no wide public reception in Miskolc): “In public life, literary decadence has degenerated morals, undermined the idea of nationalism, struck at the roots of respect and made religious feelings a matter of sarcasm.”²⁹ Thus, the programme

²⁹ Kálmán Mikszáth, “A magyar kultúra útja”, *Miskolci Szemle* 1 (1927)/1 (September), pp. 3–7.

was given and it was a pity that the articles published in the cultural periodical could not efficiently support this objective, as the few issues published were full of weak and substandard literary works and shallow political texts. In the newspaper *Magyar Jövő* [The Hungarian Future], started in 1919, literary works by contemporary local writers and poets, especially by journalists, were published several times. A selection of these was published in 1926 in an anthology of almost 70 local writers, called *The Bouquet*.³⁰ This was the greatest literary enterprise of the decade, but this volume was rather a list or collection of Miskolc poets than a coherent anthology of contemporary poetry. The objective of the volume was to raise the provincial literary circle to a national level, but most of the authors remained local, as there was no literary personage among them who was acknowledged nationwide.

The greatest cultural investment of the first decade between the two world wars, perhaps the greatest in the whole era, was the construction of the Palace of Music. Although there had been earlier plans to build a palace of culture in Miskolc, the Palace of Music was finally built from a Speyer loan supporting the infrastructure and urbanisation investments in Hungarian cities within the confines of the “Trianon borders”. The two-storey building was primarily a music school and an institution suitable for minor concerts, as its concert hall could not house a symphonic orchestra. The architectural style of the palace followed the objectives of cultural policy and the trend gradually becoming dominant in society, called neo-baroque in both Hungarian historiography and in cultural history. The other large-scale investment was the rebuilding of the theatre: the building, erected in 1857, was enlarged to seat 1,000 people. The original plan, however, had been to build a new theatre.



Fig. 18: Palace of Music, Miskolc. Postcard, around 1930.
Private Collection of Dr Péter Gyurkó

³⁰ Csokor: *Miskolci antológia*, ed. Hajdú Béla and Bak János, Miskolc: Magyar Jövő Ny., 1926.

After the First World War, there were plans not only to build a new theatre but also to build a new cinema. Indeed, in 1925, the Urania Cinema was opened in a modern building designed by the Miskolc architect Pál Árva.³¹ In harmony with the film being a modern medium, the architectural style of the cinema made it one of the first modern buildings in the inner city, built at the time of Interwar Era. Together with the neo-baroque Palace of Music, it demonstrated that the leadership and society of the town really wanted to make Miskolc a cultural centre.

Directly after the First World War, an institution was established in the town that determined its cultural and artistic life until recently: the artists' colony. First, in 1919, the painter Dezső Meilinger (1892–1960) and sculptor Dániel Nyitray (1890–1971) established a free school of fine arts located in the Catholic academic grammar school. Then, they rented a villa that had earlier been used as a hydrotherapeutic institute or sanatorium. Here, the students of Budapest College of Fine Arts worked in summers, but talented local artists also had a place thanks to donated funds. Despite the multifunctional colony, no artist of national or international renown lived in Miskolc, and, what is more important, the statues in public places and the works of art displayed in public buildings did not reflect the influence of modern art either. Commissions to produce works of art to be put in public places were not awarded to the artists involved in the colony. While the representatives of modern art worked in Miskolc, hardly any works of art were made to be publically displayed, so modern art did not appear in the town's institutions. Statues were only erected in public places to pay respect or for political reasons, so no work was displayed in the town for purely artistic reasons.



Fig. 19: Free art school in Miskolc, 1920. Photo, private collection

³¹ István Dobrossy and György Barna, *Miskolc belvárosa: Házak, emberek, történetek*, Miskolc: Lézerpont, 2010, p. 124.

In contrast to other cities such as Szeged, Marosvásárhely (today Târgu Mureş, Romania) etc., no representative palace of culture was built in Miskolc either in the Age of Dualism or in the Interwar Period. This function was fulfilled by the headquarters of the various economic and social organisations. One such building that can be placed among the significant works of modern art was commissioned in 1929 by the Miskolci Kereskedők és Gazdák Köre [The Circle of Miskolc Tradesmen and Landholders], which was basically the social organisation of the local Jewish business elite. In the building, which also fulfilled the functions of a cultural centre, literary events were also organised. This was the place where Sándor Márai (1900–1989), a writer born in Kassa but at this time living in Hungary (formerly in Germany and Paris) made his debut.³²

The legal status of the museum that had been established at the end of the 19th century changed, but it remained in the same place. Legally, it was taken over by the authority of Borsod County and Miskolc from the cultural association so became an “official” cultural institution of the town and county, while professionally it was given the rank of a public collection, so it became a real museum. However, locally it remained in the former school of the Reformed Church, although by the end of the 1920s it had occupied all the rooms of the building. Of the cultural sectors, the libraries of Miskolc continued to receive the least financial support. The town had no real public library, so it occupied the last place among the cities in this respect. The association library continued to be located in the rooms of the museum, which regarded it as its own, and was intended to form the basis of a future public library with its 15,000 volume collection.

In 1930, the law academy invited Kálmán Mikszáth, Jr., who had attended foreign universities, to give a lecture in the public series, where the Lord Lieutenant of the city spoke about the place of Miskolc among Hungarian cities and towns. The highly cultured politician saw clearly that the town was rapidly growing economically, but was struggling with severe deficits in the field of culture. He accounted for this by the fact “that there is a lack of a leading class of patricians who would have identified with the town for generations, so this cannot have a beneficial influence on the higher level, long-standing economic and cultural development of the town.”³³ Within the boundaries of Hungary after Trianon, he saw the cultural mission of Miskolc in the joining and carrying on of the long tradition of Highland culture. This culture had been created by the ancient cities taken over by Czechoslovakia, but, for historical reasons, it was not alien to Miskolc either as it lies on the border of the Highlands and the Plains. According to Mikszáth, there had been and there were no “names of national renown” in culture and science in Miskolc, and the appearance of the law academy had not helped this situation either as it could only be helped by a university: “Despite

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 154–155.

³³ Kálmán Mikszáth, *Miskolc a magyar városok előretörésében*, Miskolc: Ludvig-Janovits Ny., 1930, p. 17 (Miskolci Jogászélet könyvtára, 64).

all its excellence, our law academy cannot create the universal, comprehensive connection with the high culture of the country that can only be the mission of a university.”³⁴



Fig. 20: “Urania” Cinema. Photo around 1930.
Private Collection of György Barna

Conclusion

The Reform Age was an outstanding period for Miskolc not only as far as politics, but also as far as culture is concerned. The printing press, the second permanent theatre in Hungary, the casinos, the 8-grade school, the famous young ladies’ seminary, the bookshop, the scholars’ private society and, most importantly, its liberal intellectual elite gave Miskolc a distinguished status. The Age of Dualism made Miskolc into a school town, the theatre that had burnt down was given an elegant building, the cultural association with its museum was a real civic initiative, and formal music education began. However, no buildings were erected for cultural purposes, as culture was not a top priority for the business elite. The cultural traditions of Miskolc bourgeoisie were not sufficient to create a really strong culture at that time. Miskolc had no large public library, nor was there an academic circle in the town. Modern literature had no receptive public. After the First World War, Miskolc acquired new social and cultural functions in the region. This was supported by the law academy, which was the first academic centre in the town. Between 1920 and 1930, the largest cultural project was the construction of the Music Hall (Palace of Music), but the Urania Cinema also got

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 17–18.

a modern home. The tradesmen's new residence became an important cultural venue as well. However, there was still no public library and no true modern cultural, literary or artistic periodical was published in the city. In spite of the development of its cultural institutions, Miskolc was unable to catch up with the cities of long traditions and higher education.

Éva Gyulai

INSTYTUCJE KULTURY I SCENY W MISZKOLCU W LATACH 1830–1930

Streszczenie

Okres reform był znaczący dla Miskolca tak w sensie politycznym, jak i kulturowym. Powstałe wydawnictwa, drugi teatr na Węgrzech, kasyna, szkoła podstawowa, znane seminarium dla panien, księgarnia, jak również elita intelektualna sprawiły, że prestiż miasta wzrósł znacząco. Mimo to nie powstały w tamtych czasach znaczące inwestycje kulturowe, gdyż kultura nie była priorytetem dla elit gospodarczych. Nie było biblioteki, szkół wyższych ani kółek literackich. Dopiero po pierwszej wojnie światowej Miskolc uzyskał nowe instytucje kultury, takie jak akademia prawa, filharmonia zbudowana w latach 1920–1930 oraz kino Urania. Siedziba towarzystwa handlowego również spełniała istotne funkcje kulturowe. Nadal nie było jednak biblioteki, jak również nie wydawano czasopism i gazet artystycznych. Pomimo poprawy sytuacji Miskolc pozostawał w tyle za innymi miastami o bogatych tradycjach kulturalno-oświatowych.