

HORIZONT

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ATTILA SZABÓ: CENTRAL RESERVE

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Opening: 29 May, 2019 6PM

Opening speech: József Tasnádi

On view: 3 July, 2019

"I observed the expression CENTRAL RESERVE on the display of a bus passing by a couple of months ago. The transport company's reading of this term is something like buses waiting in certain junctions to be put in use in any unexpected event, thus easing or preventing an existing or forming traffic chaos. I have tried to interpret this term in a wider sense as a group of people and I have imagined there is a base of people who live their lives inconspicuously in the tissue of the city, but to a central signal they, intoxicated with a zeal, solve the expected task to prevent a chaos. Although the nature and the importance of the chaos can be subjective, this is no pondering matter. The project aims to focus on traditions, habits and features that sometimes arise from pressure dictated by a certain era and through these to show how the stratification of different cultures is taking place unnoticed. Meanwhile a fictional biography is developing."

20 Accompanying Short Stories

by Attila Szabó

1. Test

They were talking about the Rorschach-test in the radio while I was having breakfast. I folded a slice of Zala cold meet and although its symmetry wasn't perfect, the visible darker patches in the pink mashed part still outlined something. I thought it was the shape of a big spider at first, at least its abdomen and the fore-part body was quite recognizable, and I could also perceive some of the chelicerae, but its legs yet didn't appear and therefore it didn't quite have the character of a spider. When turning it around though, I was almost astounded by what I saw. A well observable bearded, bald figure was looking at me with sly eyes resembling Rasputin.

2. Gunpowder

I would have liked to tell a story because I find it very funny and accidentally it would have just fitted the situation, which had been spookily similar to the situation many years ago, which I wanted to tell the others. I could have been about to start, because the TV had faded for some reason and T. had not been blasted either for at least half a minute, but I was overcome by anxiety. A memory reappeared in my mind for a second when in another similar situation I already told my story to B. If he knew it already then I wouldn't

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tell this time, I decided immediately. It's such a shame, I thought, because that case when I told it to B, wasn't as similar to the original story as this present one.

3. Patience

You can come up with all sorts of excuse to avoid waiting. The most simplest is when you're aware of your own abilities and the rate of the distance. You must know how long does it take for you to do a certain distance, even when all kinds of unexpected obstacles get in your way. For instance you meet someone you can't get rid of or you have to turn back home, because you left your purse in your other coat's pocket. You can lose valuable minutes like this, but with some practice you can even calculate for this. If you're a pro, you can reduce the waiting time to the minimum by knowing exactly when to leave. So that when you arrive you wouldn't have more waiting time than necessary.

4. Projection

You cannot know the exact reason why his current age is the most suitable for dealing obsessively with his memories. Perhaps, after the world-wide cataclysms that generation has completely disappeared, which has experienced the horrors and us, without any contrast by this time, pay attention more even to our less significant memories, enthused by a sort of incomprehensible romanticism. Of course different things are significant for different people. The scale of things has become very different and so have the tolerance levels. I wonder a lot as well about what people are able to get used to.

5. Eccentric

We could never exactly understand his point of view. He liked to be obscure when he talked, or simply he couldn't do it any other way. When it was necessary to express his opinion confidently, we still had to make it out from unclear messages about which option he chose, and rarely were we sure if what we judged being his choice actually is in line with his intentions. In this situation we sometimes made an attempt to make him confirm what he wanted, but instead he generated more dilemmas and after a few failures as a consequence we just deliberately forgot to ask him. We felt guilty at first for this. We searched for his movements with a fear but avoided his look, whilst we were looking for an explorable change in his behaviour. We didn't perceive any difference and still if there was at times something particular in his way of doing his job it was maybe because he noticed that he was being watched.

6. Readiness

The youth novels of my childhood prepared me for the struggle. I was happy to imagine that one day I would be the one needed to prevent some sort of mean-spirited intrigue and then many people could enjoy its beneficial effects. I must add I wasn't inspired by the acknowledgment coming from complete strangers, I rather thought of the people I knew at least by sight. I didn't wish to become a martyr to sacrifice myself for an idea I

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hardly knew anything about, that didn't attract me at all. However, if I could make that sacrifice for Julia living across the street, that is different and even then I could only imagine to perish in a painless way. And I used to believe in heaven because for such a great benefaction I could only get there, but also because of selfish motives, because looking back from the other side I definitely wanted to see the grateful reverent visage of the grievers over me.

7. Sacrifice

I once saw a dog frozen into ice, years later I got to know the owner of the dog. He told his story, that he was skating in the dark and he only noticed the ice-hole when his dog fell into it. He believed that he himself would have fell into the ice-hole, meaning the puppy saved his life this way. Although we both were children that time, the small lake where this happened, even after the spring rainfalls hadn't reached the two meters depth anywhere. We both knew it, we were still happy to ignore the fact in the interest of not to let the death of the dog seem useless. I came across it near the shore and was congealed under the ice it looked like as if it was swimming. It swam towards the shore, lead by some strong instinct it knew where it could get out of the ice.

8. Mole

I didn't know the film would make such an impact on him, which we watched together about the scatterbrained guy, who collected all kinds of useless objects. As a result of his accumulation, his anyway small flat, acquired as a heritage of his grandmother became almost uninhabitable. At the end, he could only move between the kitchenette and the room like a mole in the underground tunnel. Twice a year during the junk-clearance even his posture has changed quite a bit. Somehow, as if he became younger, his otherwise slightly stopped figure became straighter, his moves became faster, his speech speeded up and he was always in a hurry. He was going out to collect stuff and he was talking fast because of the excitement, because of the hyper state of mind lasting for days that the joy of acquiring unexpected objects meant to him.

9. Pilgrim

Kölcsey was 41 years old when he wrote an epigram entitled „Huszt”, exactly as old as my great-grandmother on 4 June 1920, on that day when Sub-Carpathia, her birthplace due to the contract, signed in the Castle of Versailles had been ceased to be a part of Hungary. She was born in Técső, barely half day walking distance from Huszt. The younger and only brother of my grandma beside her two elder sisters and a younger one lost their lives in the war. On her date of birth, 29th May, they used to go every year to the mass in Huszt on horse-carriage with my great-grandma youngest daughter, my grandma's sister, Lidia in each year from 1946 till the death of my great-grandma in 1963. Lidia died in 1989, at the age of 72, never married despite she was such a beautiful girl at her young age.

10. Drawing

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Once when I was 12 I made a drawing of Lenin. Later, when I was looking at the drawing I thought it was an act worthy of a pioneer. It came out quite well, although I didn't rely purely on my memory, but rather copied it from a photo published in a newspaper. It didn't only look similar but it was exactly like the photo, I could authentically replace the fine grey shades by the graphite's grey tones. I was still doing tiny improvements for a few days and erased the fingerprints from the edge of the sheet, while I was becoming more and more proud of my performance, wanted to get some acknowledgement for it at school as well. I brought it to the drawing class but that day our task was to draw letters by ink and redistol and our teacher was stricter than usual, he didn't have time to deal with such things.

11. Choreography

I liked watching my father during reaping, I was observing that recurring elegant movement for minutes. He was quite young when my grandfather thought him, but this lightness can only be achieved through long years of work. They used to put down the scythe by its haft against the ground and make the child stand next to it. If the child's shoulder reached the horn of the scythe, the lessons could start. By the afternoon he already cut the lucern by himself, but my grandpa didn't allow him to sharpen the tools yet, he still needed to grow a little for that.

12. Typography

There is a small fast food restaurant or rather buffet in the settlement, which is located quasi halfway by geometric accuracy between the two county seats. It's Algerian owner is nice and direct to everyone. The kebab is not better than anywhere else, but there isn't even any other in this village to be able to compare. We were sitting at the street-facing table drinking Fanta with our hamburger, on our right the red and yellow Chinese lettering could be seen on the facade of the Asian corner shop. Blocking out the view the view of the park a Russian tanker was stranded in front of us, a cylinder vehicle on tow of which metre high Cyrillic letters advertised the transport company. Behind us Arabic epigraphs, probably Quran quotes were legible on the wall of the little restaurant, of course only for those who knew these beautiful calligraphic characters.

13. Conjecture

The day on which something is going to happen, it is perceptible already early in the morning; there are signs of it which I usually can't decode in time. I don't mean that a black cat crosses the street in front of me, nor that on an average unlucky day a series of small annoying events happen before the one that causes a big annoyance. Rather it can be that something happens inside of me, and as a result in the usual state I spot a detail I haven't even noticed earlier. Which starts bathering me and doesn't leave me alone.

14. Notebook

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He came up several times and we always got the same conclusion about him. That he is indeed responsible and it would be way too easy to just explain everything with the fact that he doesn't believe anymore what he represented for many years. However, wherever he could, he even used to express his views, which is hard to imagine about him recently. T. once saw that he left a flat and then he still sat on the concrete stairs and took some notes into a little notebook. He didn't think it would be significant, he only found that situation unusual there. This happened three days before that.

15. Grimace

There is a much bigger variety of recipes to read in the topic than you would ever imagine. Because it will be surprising for you already that some people fry it in breadcrumbs. As you are watching that hopelessly unnecessary procedure when they are turning it into beaten egg, dipping it into flour and bread crumbs by slow but expert movements and finally drop it into sparkling oil, the smell of the oil is going to irritate your nose. I know well that grimace on your face. They crisp it, they tell you it's tasty and place the plate in front of you to have some, but you can't take your eyes off of the stained tablecloth and you rate it as a direct provocation.

16. Weed

There is another photo as well, on which he is standing proudly on a weedy meadow or such similar place and holding a bike in front of himself. An adult bike, I have no clue what size are the wheels but you can easily see on the picture that it's not a children's bike size and despite of this he is glowing with pride. I can't ask him anymore what he's being so proud of. Is it the fact that he is being shot at as he is holding the bike, or that it's his bike, the first one of his own? In that case it would be totally understandable, yet you can hardly ride easily in knee-high weed. Every time I got this photo in my hands I was wondering about the pride on his face and it took me a long time to notice there isn't even any treadle on the bike.

17. Three phases

There was no scarier gear than a straw-cutter on the whole ranch. It was propelled by electro-motor, black v-shaped belts and aluminium v-belt discs raced freely on its sides, it was noisy like hell and I was almost enchanted by the glimmering of its three times cambered web in the dim feed storage unit, when it was switched on. I couldn't get any closer to it even when it was out of order, because who knows what can happen no matter I saw it was unplugged. Oh, even the plug was different from the one in the house. This one is big and red with not only two, which we are used to, but lots of switch-bars. My uncle said it's three-phased.

18. Knick-knacks

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She took them off from the shelf and wiped the dust off of them always in the same order. She went from left to right as if she was reading. Each Friday afternoon she stroke their surfaces with a soft wet clothes. She pursued it by taking particular care, and that one, which formed two sort of eels spirally scrolled, in the crack between them she cleaned the hidden parts as well by crossing the tucker through it. In this respect that was the most delicate one. She washed the handmade embroidered crispy table-clothes every two weeks and put them back ironed to their place. You could find the pieces of this collection in every house of the street, there might have only been some random difference in the order they were placed.

19. Neighbours

I climbed up on the cherry-tree at the back of the garden in order not to hear it, but you couldn't hide from the noise. The rhythmic yowl lasted long, and I felt relieved when it faded. I just couldn't meet the boy from that house even though we spent all our time together. I knew it wasn't his fault, it was his dad who was like that and I rather not meet him so that he doesn't have to explain himself. But I couldn't avoid him for long and I didn't even want to, good friendship was formed between us, at the same time I didn't want to talk about that. He came up with the subject, for some reason he felt that he had to make something right. He ate the chickens, that's why.

20. Elderflower

No one has looked into it, so we cannot be sure, but even without any proof we are pretty convinced that he reported us. Only posteriorly some years later with our current knowledge it became suspicious why he succeeded so well, where he got the information from to know what business ideas are worth tapping into, since it wasn't typical in that environment. Those people believed in security and not in some entrepreneurships with dubious outcomes, especially with 3 children. When he was a herb engrosser, we were collecting elderflowers for two days, while imagining spending the expected fee in many ways, we crawled among the bushes, carried the packed sacks from bank to bank. We had to divide the very little between the three.

Attila Szabó (1972) graduated from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Pécs in 2004 and obtained his doctorate at the Doctoral School of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts in 2010. In addition to his artistic and curatorial activities, he taught at the Institute of Visual Culture of the University of Nyíregyháza in 2005-2017. He is currently an associate professor at the Painting Department of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts. He had individual exhibitions in Szentendre at the Vajda Lajos Studio Gallery, in the Miskolc Gallery, in the Fészek Gallery, featuring group exhibitions at the 2015 OFF Biennale, Mission Art, FKSE Studio Gallery, Nádor Gallery in Pécs, and in Athens, Munich, Pilsen and Brussels.

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