“Such a smoking nation as this I never saw…”: Smoking, Nationalism, and Manliness in Nineteenth-Century Hungary.

Alexander Maxwell

Abstract. Tobacco smoking became an important marker of Hungarian national identity during the nineteenth century. This national symbol ultimately had an economic origin: Hungarian tobacco producers resisted the tobacco monopoly of the Habsburg central government, and led an ultimately successful consumer boycott of Austrian products. Tobacco nationalism, however, became a common theme in Hungarian popular culture in its own right, as tobacco use came to symbolize community and fraternity. The use of tobacco was also highly gendered; smoking as a metaphor for membership shows that the Hungarian nation was a gender-exclusive “national brotherhood.”

During the nineteenth century, tobacco played an important role in Hungarian society. Consider how Hungarian nobleman János Majláth described Hungarian smoking habits to the Austrian Reichsrat:

One often hears that tobacco is a luxury article and for this reason a legitimate object of taxation. I do not want to dispute this principle in general, but I believe that Hungary… is an exception. We all know that nowhere else in the world is so much tobacco smoked as in Hungary, and that smoking has become an integral requirement in the life of the people. Anybody who has ever crossed over the [river] Theiss will have noticed that the impoverished inhabitant of the heath, who is often required to wander back and forth across the steppe for weeks on end, loves nothing more than his horse and his pipe.¹

Another Hungarian deputy even described tobacco as having “become second nature, like one’s daily bread.”² These statements might be dismissed as the special pleading of politicians, but consider how American traveler Charles Brace described Hungarian tobacco in an 1851 travelogue:

The great luxury, I might say, almost necessity, of the whole nation, is their tobacco. Every man uses it. The clergyman walks the streets with his pipe in his mouth; the Bauer [farmer] smokes at every meal and all through the long evenings; the gentleman plies the cigar, wherever he is, from morning to night, in fair weather and foul, in work or in play. It has become a national habit. There is hardly a farm in the land which does not contain its little tobacco field.³

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Given that tobacco smoking was common in many different parts of Europe during the nineteenth century, why did so many observers believe that smoking occupied a special place in Hungarian society? What does the belief in Hungarian tobacco exceptionalism reveal about nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalism?

A concatenation of events in Hungary’s political and cultural life lent tobacco a singular importance as a Hungarian national symbol. As Majlákth and Brace suggested, smoking did indeed become an important marker of Hungarian patriotism in the nineteenth century, and thus acquired an unusually dense collection of social meanings. This essay begins by tracing the political events that invested a private habit with such public significance. It then explores the cultural meanings of tobacco in Hungarian fiction, showing that Hungarian smoking practices symbolically linked nationalism, xenophobia, leisure, and masculinity. A final section explores the gender dynamics of Hungarian tobacco nationalism through gender attitudes toward tobacco use, and suggests that these gender dynamics in turn influenced Hungarian national concepts.

Tobacco cultivation was introduced to Hungary via the Ottoman Empire in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. The crop became quite widespread during the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648). Hungarian authorities outlawed tobacco in 1650, and again in 1683, 1686, and 1689, though this apparently was no more effective in slowing the spread of the habit than equivalent Austrian legislation from 1652, 1653 and 1682. Financial incentives eventually tempted the Habsburg government away from prohibition. In 1682, citing “financial considerations,” the government granted Jewish merchant Gideon May permission to import tobacco into Tyrolia, even as the commodity remained illegal in the province. In 1723, all Habsburg citizens gained the right to grow and sell tobacco.

Tobacco became an important commodity in the economy of the Habsburg monarchy, and in 1784 Maria Theresa sought to exploit this trade by placing the Austrian hereditary Crownlands—upper and lower Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Carniola and Galicia—under a tobacco monopoly. The Tabakregie, also known as the Apaldo, was expanded to Bukovina in 1800, to Tyrolia and Dalmatia in 1830. The Austrian tobacco monopoly proved an enduring phenomenon, outlasting the Habsburg monarchy itself. In 1939, under Nazi occupation, the monopoly was reorganized as the Austria Tabakwerke; this was in turn renamed the Austria Tabakeinlöse- und Fermentierungsgesellschaft in 1949. Only the Austrian Republic’s accession to the European Union eventually forced the privatization of Austrian tobacco.

The Habsburg monopoly, however, harmed Hungarian economic interests. Though Austria had several cigar and cigarette factories, Austrian tobacco production was negligible, and the Austrian tobacco industry depended on imported leaf. Several Hungarian farmers, by contrast, were producers of tobacco. Tobacco grows well in Hungary; in 1802, for example, Hungary produced 254,973 pounds of tobacco (115,897 kg), of which over a million florins worth
was exported to Austria, around 5% of the total Austrian-Hungarian market. As early as 1730, the large tobacco factory near Bratislava (then known as Poszony or Pressburg) was an attraction for foreign visitors. Richard Bright, a British doctor who traveled to Hungary in 1812, described tobacco production as the dominant industry in Tolna, an important part of the local economy in Pécs and Debrecen, and even described a village in Bakony forest that specialized in manufacturing pipes. He also wrote picturesque descriptions of “native merchants… smoking at their shop doors, a bale of tobacco on this side, a huge tub of caviar on the other,” and noted that in Hungary as a whole “almost the whole male population are constantly consuming this article.”

During the early nineteenth century, the Habsburg authorities attempted to centralize and standardize the chaotic administration of the Empire. By seeking to extend the tobacco monopoly into Hungary, however, the government was promoting Austrian economic interests at Hungarian expense. Tobacco thus became an important issue between Hungary and Austria. During Hungary’s Reform era (1826-1848), Hungary was not part of the Apaldo, but perpetual rumors that the monopoly would be extended to Hungary both reflected and aggravated Hungarian mistrust of the Habsburg government in Vienna. The Apaldo furthermore enjoyed a monopoly over all tobacco exports from the Habsburg Empire; this monopoly was a continuing source of Hungarian resentment. One 1802 study of the Hungarian economy concluded that

If Hungary were able to export its tobacco freely, it would be able to compete with American tobacco, which has become practically universal in northern Europe. The English-American war, which interrupted the supply of American tobacco to Europe, would have been an opportune time for expanding this industry and commerce. Apaldo used this opportunity, but not Hungary. But even today American tobacco is expensive in the Baltic… Hungarian tobacco could be introduced there with great advantage.

Since the Apaldo was a government monopoly, these economic grievances led to anti-government feeling. This sense of grievance led Hungarian authors to express their patriotism through tobacco. The salience of tobacco to Hungarian economic nationalism meant that Hungarian patriots enjoyed describing the shortcomings of Austrian tobacco and extolling the virtues of Hungarian leaf. Indeed, Karl Georg Rumy even reported that a merchant in Košice (Kassa, Kashau) “gave smoking tobacco a very pleasant taste by soaking it in sweet, strong Tokaj wine,” thus combining two famous articles of Hungarian luxury consumption into one hyper-nationalist consumer product.

During the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, radical journalist Lajos Kossuth unsuccessfully attempted to withdraw Hungary from the Habsburg Empire. This affected the tobacco trade: Kossuth’s revolutionary government shut down Apaldo’s Pest offices as early as June 1848. The Hungarian revolution, however, was decisively defeated, and by 1850, Hungary had been integrated into a centralized Habsburg empire. The neo-Absolutist “Bach regime”
(roughly 1850-60), named after interior minister Alexander Bach, incorporated Hungary in the Apaldo monopoly.\textsuperscript{18}

Hungarians never accepted the Bach regime; the period witnessed intense Hungarian-Austrian cultural confrontation in many spheres of everyday life.\textsuperscript{19} To show their dissatisfaction with the detested Apaldo monopoly, several farmers burnt their seed crop or refused to plant tobacco at all.\textsuperscript{20} In 1859, a British diplomat described the economic consequences for Hungarian farmers as follows:

After harvest the Government takes the whole crop at a fixed price for each of the three qualities into which tobacco is divided. It is said that this classification into “best, middling and common” is very arbitrarily and unjustly applied. The Government also reserve for themselves the right of rejecting such of the produce as they consider unfit for use, and I was informed that on this plea large quantities are destroyed without payment by the government when they find the yield of the year to be inconveniently abundant.\textsuperscript{21}

Brace spoke with a farmer in Heves county who estimated that a centner of tobacco (around 50 kilograms) would sell for 40 Gulden on the market, but complained he was forced to sell to the government at 7 to 12. The same farmer then had to purchase smoking tobacco at 10 Gulden a centner!\textsuperscript{22} The tobacco monopoly proved a particularly potent symbol of Hungarian disaffection, presumably because it affected both economic interests and national pride. Alexander Hübner, in a letter to the Habsburg Emperor, described the abolition of the monopoly as one of four essential demands for Hungarian patriotism, thus ranking it alongside the use of the Hungarian language in public life and the restoration of the Hungarian constitution.\textsuperscript{23}

Hungarians also organized a consumer boycott of Austrian tobacco; this was a protest not only against the Austrian monopoly, but against Austrian rule. Brace met a prisoner in Petrovaradin jail (in Novi Sad), “a tall, fine-looking man, with the immense moustache of the genuine Magyar,” who had brought with him into imprisonment “a good stock of Hungarian segars [sic], which is a great blessing to the others, as they will not smoke the ‘Imperial Austrian,’ though they are a little cheaper.”\textsuperscript{24} While Hungarians preferred to demonstrate their patriotism by smoking Hungarian tobacco, several were apparently willing to brave the torments of nicotine withdrawal. Brace claimed to have met several Hungarians resolved to give up “Imperial tobacco,” though he also doubted “the ability of the Hungarians to give up their old habit, even for such patriotic motives.”\textsuperscript{25}

Hungarian patriots in the 1850s may have drawn inspiration from an Italian patriotic boycott during the 1840s. Indeed, a tobacco-related street brawl between smoking soldiers and boycotting Italians had set off the 1848 Revolution in Austrian Italy: Radetzky had described the boycott as an attack “against the state revenue, against an article of commerce which the state along produces and sells!”\textsuperscript{26} For Hungarians determined to resist the Austrian administration in any way possible, the Italian example made an attractive model.
The Hungarian tobacco boycott, in turn, spread to Hungary’s dependent nationalities: at the end of the century, Croatian author Gustav Matoš described households “in which only Croatian (i.e. Bosno-Hercegovian) tobacco was smoked.” Tobacco patriotism inside the kingdom of Hungary, note, differed considerably from its German counterpart: while at least one Viennese paper suggested a campaign against foreign cigars during the Revolution of 1848, the most salient tobacco-related demand of German patriots was that ordinary citizens gain the right to smoke in public parks.

The Hungarian boycott had considerable economic impact on the Hungarian economy. According to the 1860 deliberations of the Reichsrat, Hungarian tobacco exports totaled 150,000 centner (3,000 kg) in 1848; this had fallen to 50,000 centner by 1860 (1,000 kg) though these figures may have been exaggerated or influenced by smuggling. To judge by the concern Reichsrath deputies Apponyi, Barkóczy, Majláth and Jakabb voiced about the need to improve the quality of Hungarian seed, Hungarian tobacco may also have declined in quality.

The Bach Regime collapsed in 1860, ushering in a brief period of constitutional instability. This instability eventually resulted in the famous Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867, which granted the Hungarian parliament the right to regulate the Hungarian economy as it wished. After 1867, tobacco ceased to be a major issue in Austro-Hungarian politics: self-governing Hungary no longer had to fear the prospect of the Austrian tobacco monopoly. This victory, combined with tobacco’s declining economic significance as Hungarian industrialization gained momentum, meant that tobacco-related questions drifted out of the spotlight of Hungarian national politics.

Tobacco’s patriotic symbolism in the popular Hungarian imagination, however, endured throughout the nineteenth century. The German stereotype of hard-smoking Hungarians had some basis in fact: Hungary indeed consumed more tobacco per capita than the Austrian half of the monarchy throughout the nineteenth century. Roman Sandgruber gives consumption statistics for the monarchy as a whole, and for the Austrian half on its own. The Austrian consumption was consistently less than that of the Empire. Figure 1 compares tobacco consumption in Austria to that of Austria and Hungary.

![Figure 1. Austrian per capita tobacco consumption (in kgs)](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Austria and Hungary</th>
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<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<td>1880</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
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Hungarian love for tobacco also dominated caricatured national stereotypes. Figure 2 shows Hungarian caricatures from two of Vienna’s satirical newspapers. Both stereotypical Hungarians wear semi-military jackets, both carry a *fokos* (a Hungarian long-handled axe), and both are smoking.
At the beginning of the nineteenth century, most Hungarian tobacco was smoked in pipes or cigars. Cigarettes, introduced in 1865, became important in at the end of the nineteenth century. Snuff, highly favored in eighteenth-century France and only gradually replaced by cigars during the nineteenth, was a minority product in Hungary. Even in 1802, the ratio of tobacco smoked to snorted was around 20 to 1.

Between nationalist boycott and evolving consumption practices, a Hungarian’s choice of cigar contained considerable social information. Consider the troubles of Pál Gregorics, a character in Kálmán Mikszáth’s novel *St. Peter’s Umbrella*:

> The day he came back from Pest, where he has been reading for the bar, he went into a tobacconist’s shop and bought some fine Havanas, which at once set all the tongues in Besztercebánya wagging. “The good-for-nothing fellow smokes seven-penny cigars does he?… He’ll die in the workhouse. Oh, if his poor dead father could rise from his grave and see him! Why the old man used to mix dried potato leaves with his tobacco to make it seem more, and poured the dregs of the coffee on it to make it burn slower.

When the luckless Gregorics became aware of the scandal, he switched to short half-penny cigars, but this did not please anybody either: “Really, Pál Gregorics is about the meanest man going, he’ll be worse than his father was! What a loathsome miser!” Mikszáth presumably exaggerated Gregorics’ woes for comic effect, but the anecdote suggests that Hungarians judged each other’s character on the basis of cigar preference.

Tobacco smoking inspired some concern over its possible adverse affects on the health of regular users. Given the ubiquity of the habit, however, condemnations were usually offset with qualifiers about moderation and claims to unspecified medicinal uses. In 1808, for example, Rumy expressed some surprise that tobacco use was so widespread, given that “the taste is unpleasant, and smoking at first, before one is used to it, causes headaches, dizziness,
and vomiting,” but felt wrote that "smoking tobacco can be helpful to some, for example the very fat or phlegmatic; it is also a stimulant, like drinking wine or taking opium. Tobacco has many healing powers and is often used as a medicine by people and animals.” This somewhat contradictory description resembles that of contemporary German doctor Christian Wilhelm Hufeland, who claimed that tobacco “ruins the teeth, dries out the body, makes one thin and pale, weakens the eyes and the memory, draws the blood to the head and lungs and thus leads to headaches and breast pains,” but still granted it some medicinal value. Passionate smokers, of course, preferred to emphasize tobacco’s medicinal advantages. The first stanza of Károly Kisfaludi’s “Pipesong,” an ode to the pleasures of smoking, described the pipe as the “Thermometer of my health” [egészségem hőmérsője, literally “my health’s ardor-meter”].

Hungarians frequently associated smoking with sociability, particularly with leisurely story-telling. In Mikszáth’s “Prakovsky, the Deaf Blacksmith,” an amusing anecdote about Czech musicians can only be told with a pipe in hand. German traveler Jozef Martin wrote in his diary that peasants in western Transylvania (then part of Hungary) listened to stories “sometimes lying flat, some sitting, often filling the short pipe.” Gyuri György, another character in Mikszáth’s St. Peter’s Umbrella, found that after lighting a cigar, “the curling smoke and the words of the silly song gave a fresh turn to his thoughts.” Communal smoking also created an atmosphere of camaraderie. In Mikszáth’s novel Strange Marriage, one plotter says to another “light yourself a pipe, my boy. It’ll be much nicer to discuss my plan over a pipe of tobacco.”

Some Hungarians treated the friendship engendered by communal smoking as a metaphor for the bonds of society and nationality. The inability to share tobacco prevented such bonds from being formed. In his ode to the pipe, for example, Kisfaludy cemented his friendship with true Hungarians through communal smoking:

\begin{verbatim}
De ha jő egy lelkes Magyar,
Szikcesérére kész velem,
Szembe nem méz, hátal nem mar,
Nyiltan leli kebelem;
Sókat ugyan nem adhatok,
Legfelébb egy dalt mondhatok:
De felcsapván jobbjával,
Megkinádom pipával.
\end{verbatim}

But when a Hungarian calls, Spirited, to have a chat, No honeyed words no knife in back, Open he will find my heart; Much, in truth, I cannot give him, Just a simple verse at most: But I shake his hand with pleasure, And offer him a pipe to smoke.

One might interpret the friendship of smokers as a link between men of a certain temperament, but Kisfaludy himself described it in explicitly national terms: smoking linked one Hungarian to another. Kisfaludy similarly excluded non-smoking fops from his company:

\begin{verbatim}
Ha egy úr, pézsmán hízott
Feltürtőzött üres kép,
\end{verbatim}

When a dandy, reeking musky, Hair in ringlets, vacant face,
Szűk elméjű, de elbízott,  
Nagy gőgösen hozzám lép,  
Magát, javát fitogatja,  
Drága időm elragadja:  
Fegyver leszen pipámból,  
Kifüstölöm szobámból.  

Mind a blank yet brazen sanguine,  
 Comes to see me filled with pride,  
 Brags about himself, his fortune,  
 Wasting thus my treasured time:  
 Then my pipe becomes a weapon,  
 And I smoke him from my room.  

The inability to share tobacco thus prevented the formation of social bonds. In Mór Jókai’s *Debts of Honor* as a magistrate brings a group of soldiers to the estate of Samuel Topándy. Topándy offers cigars, but since he is a reputed atheist with a poor reputation, he is brusquely told: “We did not come here to smoke, sir… We are on official business.” This refusal to share tobacco created tension and confrontation: the officials had, in effect, refused to acknowledge Topándy as a member of polite Hungarian society.

At the same time, solitary smoking implied disinterest in “official business” and inner calm. Consider how an island-dwelling recluse dismisses the narrator’s attempts to discuss current events in Jókai’s most famous novel, *The Man with the Golden Touch*:

I informed him that Hungary was now united to Austria by the word “and” [i.e. by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867].

He blew a smoke from his pipe, and the significance of that cloud of smoke was “my island has nothing to do with that.”

I told him of our heavy taxes, and the smoke replied, “we have no taxes here.”

There was at that time a great panic on the exchanges… Only his pipe’s steady puffs seemed to say, “thank God, we have no money here.”

I described to him the bitter struggle between parties, the ambitious strife between religions and nations.

The old man shook the ashes out of his pipe, as if to say, “we have neither bishops, nor electors, nor ministries here.”

Hungarian patriots respected this individualism: the island recluse is, in fact, the novel’s hero. Mikszáth similarly considered it “an insult to disturb the pleasant day-dreaming of a man quietly smoking his chibouk.” But even when a Hungarian withdrew from public life, the very act of smoking formed a bond with the values of the community at large.

Perhaps because Hungarians associated smoking with community, Hungarian patriots smoked intensely in nationalist institutions. The Pest Casino is the most dramatic example: István Széchenyi founded the casino in August 1827 as a national center where Hungarian elites could meet and socialize. He modeled the institution on the English gentlemen’s club, and sought to overcome feudal hierarchy by admitting both nobles and merchants. He also intended it as a place where one “could have a real good time… One could smoke a pipe, exchange ideas, read different papers, and if one would stay longer, one could even have supper.” The Pest Casino was a huge success, and by 1833, 29 similar Casinos or reading rooms had been opened in Hungary. John Paget, who visited several Casinos, reported that they were filled with tobacco smoke, even when, as with the Casino in Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg), they
had some non-smoking rooms:

If I complained that the Casino of Pest was invaded by the pipe, what shall I say of that of Klausenburg? Its air is one dense cloud of smoke, and it is easy to detect any one who has been there by the smell of his clothes for some time after. Such a smoking nation as this I never saw; the Germans are novices to them.  

Café Pilvax, where Petőfi first read his “National Song” aloud, also welcomed smokers, though it was primarily devoted to the bean instead of the leaf.

The debating chamber of the Hungarian Parliament, as a place where official business was conducted, did not allow smoking. The Parliament building, however, paid homage to tobacco in the hallways outside the main debating chamber. When Berkeley Smith visited parliament, he met “all the respectable heads of political Hungary… smoking and chatting before the final bell rang to announce the session.” When parliament adjourned, “fresh cigars are lighted, stories are told.” To provide Hungarian parliamentarians with a fitting environment for smoking, the hallways outside the debating chamber were fitted with brass cigar holders. In Figure 3 notice that each slot is numbered so that members would not lose track of their cigars. Indeed, journalists sometimes judged the excitement of parliamentary debates by the numbers of cigars burning outside.

Ubiquitous smoking may have created a sense of Hungarian national community, but this community was highly gendered. Hungarian women, as a whole, did not smoke, and this contributed to their disenfranchisement and exclusion from the national community. Hungary was not the only society that restricted tobacco to men during the nineteenth-century: Schivelbusch even described tobacco as “a symbol of patriarchal society.”

![Figure 3. Cigar Holders in the Hungarian Parliament](image-url)
accounts were less enlightened. Vienna’s *Allgemeine Moden-Zeitung* complained that when a man smoked a cigar at home, his wife punished him with “a strong fit of coughing, leaping up and opening all doors and windows.”

Paget, who seems to have been only a moderate smoker, criticized the hardships Hungarian smoking caused Hungarian women:

> I am sorry to say smoking does not confine itself to the Casino or the bachelor’s bedroom, but makes its appearance even in the society of ladies. In some houses, pipes are regularly brought into the drawing room with coffee after dinner, and I even heard of a ball supper being finished with smoking. I never knew a lady who did not dislike this custom; but they commonly excuse it by the plea that they could not keep the gentlemen with them if they did not yield to it.

Even lower-class men claimed tobacco privileges over elite women: “a coachman thinks it a great hardship if he may not smoke as he is driving a carriage, although it may happen that the smoke blows directly into the face of his mistress.”

A female traveler corroborated Paget’s claim: Nina Mazuchelli wrote that her coachman “Jözsef” smoked continuously, and that even when a rainstorm finally put out his pipe (“and high time too”), he continued to hold the pipe in his mouth “pretending to smoke.”

Hungarian women expressed their frustration about male smoking habits to Paget during his stay in Balatonfüred:

> Before the ladies had finished supper the gentlemen had already begun their pipes, and the whole room was soon in a cloud of smoke. As soon as the music struck up, a scene of such riot commenced—some were dancing, some singing, others smoking and applauding—that I was heartily glad when the countess B– declared it was no longer to be borne, and left the room, followed by the whole party of ladies.

Discussing the incident in the hallway, Paget attempted to persuade the assembled ladies that “it only depended on themselves to banish smoking and such abominations from their drawing rooms whenever they pleased,” but was told that “such men easily find compensation for the want of our society, and they prefer their pipes to our drawing rooms at any time; besides the woman who should attempt such a thing would be exposed to neglect and insult of every kind.”

Hungarian men understood that women did not like their heavy smoking, but seem to have hoped that they would put up with it. An idealized wife in Johan Genersich’s play “Idylls” greets her husband at the door with the words “so sit yourself down in the armchair, smoke yourself a little pipe, and tell me a story.” Mikszáth probably describes a more realistic family dynamic in “Prakovsky, the deaf Blacksmith:”

> All the week my grandfather would smoke his pipe and curse, my mother would be cross with him because of the pipe—for she had a weak chest and the smoke irritated her throat—whereas grandmother, a god-fearing woman, would be annoyed... on account of his blasphemy.
A concerned father in Mikszáth’s *Strange Marriage* complains that his daughter “has a disordered stomach or something. What I don’t like is the way she has been unable for some time now to stand tobacco-smoke. I fear her lungs must have been affected.” Finally, in *St. Peter’s Umbrella*, Mikszáth describes a shrewish wife who pesters her husband about his excessive drinking, consumption of bacon fat, and smoking habits: “that strong cigar will harm you, Wladin, you had better put it down.”

Nineteenth-century European women who sought to smoke risked public censure, or at least ridicule. Matthew Hilton concluded that “the overwhelming Victorian attitude to smoking by women was that it was clearly unacceptable... smoking was associated with actresses and prostitutes.” Even educated and well-traveled nineteenth-century men reacted with exaggerated surprise when they encountered a smoking woman. Charles Dickens was even struck by his own astonishment: “I never was so surprised, so ridiculously taken aback, in my life; for in all my experience of ‘ladies’ of one kind of another, I never saw a woman—not a basket women or a gypsy—smoke before!” Smoking women were less of a rarity in Hungary, but Hungarians did share the pan-European belief that smoking was a masculine activity.

Since tobacco simultaneously symbolized masculinity and Hungarian nationality, the community of Hungarian smokers was, in effect, united against both the Austrians and Hungarian women. The coincidence of national and gender exclusion cannot but evoke Carole Pateman’s somewhat Oedipal analysis of the metaphor of “national brotherhood.” Pateman sees the national brotherhood as a group of roughly equal men who overthrow a monarchical father-figure and distribute access to women among themselves. Since nationalism and sexual desire are linked, nationalists think about women primarily in sexual terms: i.e. as the wives of patriots or the mothers of their children.

Since smoking was a symbol of national potency, women’s exclusion from this symbol reinforced a masculine understanding of the nation. Széchenyi, once again earning his reputation as the “greatest Hungarian,” even criticized Hungarian smoking for its alienating affects on national women:

> If we wish our ladies to become Hungarianized, then let us make what is Hungarian acceptable, pleasing… We cannot expect that our beauties would love to be in the company of a patriot, who, I daresay, would visit in greasy boots and fill up the house with pipe fumes.

In a November 1829 letter to countess Hunyady, Széchenyi himself expressed personal disgust at the smell of pipes, explaining that his self-denial would eventually enable him to soften Hungarian customs: “While I am talking about the horse, the sheep or the cow, I keep rasping, step by step and very gently, the prejudices of our compatriots. I can assure you that I have already caused some of them [to] quit spitting on the rug.”

Széchenyi tried to include Hungarian women in the nation by making Hungarian men more attractive. His plan was entirely consistent with Pateman’s
theory: Széchenyi understood that the smoking prevented women from participating fully in Hungarian life, but his solution is not to extend the symbols of nationality and sovereignty to women, but for men to be chivalrous. Hungarian men, however, did not always feel the need to be chivalrous. Franz Liszt’s heavy smoking, for example, drove his French lover Marie d’Agoult to distraction:

So your are smoking again! My God, shall I never be able to obtain for you the sacrifice of your cigars? Can it not be said that for once at least you will grant my request? You have renounced prayer, but you will not renounce cigars?  

Liszt was indeed a heavy smoker: during his time in Weimar, he ordered cigars by the thousand, specifying that they not be “too thin or too mild.” Given the importance of cigars in Hungarian culture, however, d’Agoult may have chosen the wrong battle. Liszt, for his part, subsequently sought the company of smoking women, notably George Sand and Carolyne Sayn-Wittengenstein.

Some Hungarian novelists urged Hungarian men not to smoke around women. Indeed, a man’s unwillingness to smoke around women is a sure sign of good character in the fiction of Mór Jókai. When the narrator of Dr. Dumany’s Wife is summoned to visit a lady, he regretfully concludes: “I had to obey her polite commands, so, throwing away my cigar, I bowed… and followed the lead of the valet.” Later in the novel, when the villain Siegfried blows cigarette smoke out the window in consideration of his aunt, the hero thinks to himself “it would have been more considerate still if he had not smoked at all.” The unsympathetic Brazovitch in The Man with the Golden Touch, whose “shaggy moustache was perfumed with smoke, snuff and various spirits,” and whose room was permeated with “the strong smell of tobacco, which clung to the books and furniture, and was perceptible even when no one was smoking,” drank coffee after dinner, “and had it served in the ladies’ sitting room, which he filled unmercifully with clouds of Latakia tobacco.” The squire Gerzson in Poor Plutocrats, by contrast, shows his quality by refusing to smoke around a woman even when given explicit permission. In following scene, Gerzson is guarding the orphaned Henrietta Lapussa, but is having trouble staying awake because he has been slipped a sleeping draught:

“I cannot understand why I am so sleepy—my eyes seem to be closing in spite of me.”
“Why don’t you have a pipe, then? Come, light up!”
“What, light up? Your ladyship will really allow me? You are sure you don’t mind tobacco smoke? You are, indeed, a blessed creature. But are you sure it won’t make your head ache?”
“On the contrary, I like tobacco smoke.”
Squire Gerzson half drew out his cigar case, but he immediately shoved it back again.
“No, I won’t smoke a cigar. One ought not to abuse one’s good fortune. I shall get on well enough.”

Gerzson took female dislike of tobacco smoke so for granted that he interpret-
ed Lapussa’s explicit encouragements as the generosity of a selfless hostess.

A psychological approach, attentive to what Slavoj Žižek called “the gap that separates penis-as-organ from phallus-as-signifier,” might conclude that the Hungarian cigar was a phallus. Smoking symbolized masculine power: both the collective political power of the masculine national “brotherhood,” but also men’s sense of entitlement over women. Hungarian men might be chivalrously deferential toward “ladies,” (Gerzson), demonstrate their superiority over women (Brazovitch), or take a middle course (Siegfried): the cigar could demonstrate all three attitudes. This analysis, furthermore, would explains why Franz Liszt’s female admirers took to collecting the composer’s cigar butts. As Alan Walker put it, “the overtones were clearly sexual.” One of Liszt’s admirers wore his cigar butt between her breasts, having set it in a diamond-encrusted locket. Whatever Sigmund Freud may or may not have said about his Viennese smokes, Liszt’s Hungarian cigar was more than just a cigar.

Nineteenth-century Hungarian tobacco culture, however, did not depend on Freudian symbolism for its importance. Tobacco’s economic importance led to political conflict with Austria. Italian and German-Austrian tobacco boycotts inspired Hungarians to adopt the same tactic. The political culture of the Habsburg Empire sufficed to turn tobacco into a symbol of the Hungarian struggle for self-government. Tobacco’s potency as a Hungarian symbol, furthermore, reflected cultural and gender concepts hegemonic in Hungarian national thought.

It has become a truism of consumption studies that consumer products reflect social identities and group loyalties, but most scholars, following Bourdieu, have examined cultural elites and their efforts to distinguish themselves from their social inferiors. Hungarian tobacco, by contrast, leveled class distinctions by creating a “national brotherhood” of Hungarian men, distinguished from Austrian men and Hungarian women. National communities, no less than social classes, produce and reproduce themselves through consumption patterns.

The social and gender meanings of a product, however, affect national symbolism. The cigar may have started its national career for economic reasons, but the masculine associations of tobacco smoking helped restrict female nationalism to a separate sphere. Hungarian men used tobacco not only to resist the Austrian government, but preserve their gender privilege in a Patemanian “national brotherhood.” The brotherhood of Hungarian smokers, however, was not a brotherhood in arms: it was contemplative, sentimental and associated with storytelling. Hungarian national tobacco united individuals into a gendered national collective, but also expressed the ideology and habits of the collective’s members.

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1. János Majláth, parliamentary speech printed in Verhandlungen des Österreichischen verstärkten Reichsrathes (Vienna: Royal and Imperial Court Press, 1860), 269-70. I was fortunate enough to examine an original version, but Gerhard Silvestri has prepared a modern edition (Vienna: Geyer, 1972).

2. [István?] Jakabb, in Verhandlungen des Österreichischen verstärkten Reichsrathes, 271.


6. Klagenfurt and Graz were also part of the original monopoly, Salzburg was added in 1809. See Harald Hitz, Hugo Huber, Geschichte der österreichischen Tabakregie, 1784-1834 (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1975), 191.

7. The tobacco trade was 1,143,189 florins, out of 24,515,078 florins. By comparison, the wine trade was 2,381,815 florins. Richard Bright, Travels from Vienna to Lower Hungary (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1818), 250.

8. Discussing Hungarian towns that have since become parts of other states leads to terminological problems. For all former Hungarian place-names, this paper anachronistically uses the modern names, giving nineteenth-century Hungarian and German names in brackets. I reason that scholars familiar with central European history already know the multiple names of these towns, but other readers who wish to consult an atlas will need the most current form. Note that the use of “Bratislava” when referring to the eighteenth century is particularly anachronistic: the pre-1918 Slavic name for the town was Prešporok. On the politics of Bratislava’s name, see Peter Bugge, “The Making of a Slovak City: The Czechoslovak Renaming of Pressburg/Pozsony/Prešporok, 1918-1919,” Austrian History Yearbook 35 (2004), 205-27.


11. Ibid., 209, 598.


15. Rumy claimed that Tolna, Pécs, Szeged, Debrő, Rakomasz, Janosház, Füzes-Gyarmath, Palánk, Kospolage, Kapuvár, Hidas, Arad, Megyimoracz, Szirmi, Debreczen, and Ratko produced particularly good tobacco. Berzeviczy lists the first five, and then adds Ugocsza and Szatmár. See Karl Georg Rumy, Populäres Lehrbuch der Oekonomie (Vienna: Karl Schaumberg, 1808) 2:227; Gregor von Berzeviczy, Ungarns Industrie und Commerz (Weimar: Brothers Gädicke, 1802), 33.

16. The merchant’s name was Dörner. Rumy, Populäres Lehrbuch der Oekonomie, 2: 226.

17. See Der Humorist 12 (June 23, 1848).


19. For an excellent study of this period, see Alice Freifeld, Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848-1914 (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center press, 2000).
20. One peasant argued that since the tobacco seed was his property, he had the right to dispose of it as he wished. The court acquitted him “in disgust at such stupidity.” Brace, Hungary in 1851, 226.


22. Brace, Hungary in 1851, 368.

23. “The average Hungarian would only be satisfied with a constitution for Hungary, lowering of taxes, the lifting of the tobacco monopoly, and the introduction of Hungarian as the language of administration.” Letter to the Emperor, September 6, 1859, in Eduard von Wertheimer, Graf Julius Andrassy, sein Leben und seine Zeit (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1910), 1:115.


25. Ibid., 103; 370.


28. See “Krieg den ausländischen Cigarren,” in Der Humorist, April 22, 1848, 399.


30. Verhandlung des verstärkten Reichsrathes, n259.

31. See Verhandlung des verstärkten Reichsrathes, 265-66; 69, 71-72. On many failed attempts to introduce American tobacco seeds in Hungary, see Hitz and Huber, Geschichte der österreichischen Tabakregie, 59-60; also “Wiener Stadtpost,” in Der Humorist, February 13, 1853, 143.

32. Sandgruber, Anfänge der Konsumgesellschaft, 213

33. Left: illustration of the apocryphal “Andreas Nyájassy de Nyáyas Nyáy,” see the ongoing column “Ungarische Briefe,” which first appeared in Die Bombe on September 5, 1869, 4. Right: one of two stereotypical Hungarians conversing in Der Floh, March 14, 1886, 4.


35. On the decline of snuff in western Europe, see Schivelbuch, Eine Geschichte der Genußmittel, 143.

36. Bright, Travels from Vienna to Lower Hungary, 595.


38. “Negative descriptions of tobacco as a foul, stinking weed were in practice restricted to recreational smoking. As soon as it found use as medicine or a disinfecting cholera prophylaxis, it was described positively.” One cigar company advertised its products as treatment for asthma and lung disease. See Klaus Pfeifer, Dicke Luft um Blauden Dunst (Marbourg: Jonas Verlag, 1998), 38, 47.

39. Rumy, Populäres Lehrbuch der Oekonomie, 2: 228

40. See Klaus Pfeifer, Medizin der Goethezeit: Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland und die Heilkunde des 18. Jahrhunderts (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2000), 137. Pfeifer does not make clear which of Hufeland’s many works he cites in this passage, but Aufklärungen der Arzneywissenschaft aus den neuesten Entdeckungen in der Physik, Chemie, und anderen Hülfswissenschaften (Weimar: Industrie-Comptoirs, 1793) and Lehrbuch der allgemeinen Heilkunde (Jena: Fromman, 1818) date from the period under consideration. For other sources discussing tobacco’s impact on health, see James Walton, The Faber Book of Smoking (London: Faber and Faber, 2000),
65–70.
43. Note that these peasants are Romanians. Entry of July 12, 1847, “Wanderungen im westlichen Siebenbürgen,” in Oesterreichische Blätter für Literatur, Kunst, Geschichte, Geographie und Naturkunde, no. 157 (1847), 653.
44. Mikszáth, St. Peter’s Umbrella, 169. Elsewhere in the novel, György smokes at breakfast; see 174, 202.
47. Mór Jókai [Marus Jókai], Debts of Honor [Mire megvénnülünk, literarly “By the time we grow old”] trans. Arthur Yolland (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1900), 76.
49. Mikszáth, “Prakovsky, the Deaf Blacksmith,” 121.
59. Paget, Hungary and Transylvania, 432.
60. Ibid., 432.
61. Nina Elizabeth Mazuchelli, Magyarland, Being the Narrative of our Travels through the Highlands and Lowlands of Hungary (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882), 104.
63. Ibid., 272–73.
65. Mikszáth, “Prakovsky, the Deaf Blacksmith,” 57.
66. In fact, the daughter is pregnant. Mikszáth, Strange Marriage, 40.
67. Kálmán Mikszáth, St. Peter’s Umbrella, 152, 54.
68. See for example the caricatures in Dieterich, Dicke Luft um Blauen Dunst, 47, 51; and the chapter “Women and Smoking” in Walton, The Faber Book of Smoking, 141–61.
70. See “Sitten und Gebräuche der Spanier,” *Journal des Luxus und der Mode* 24 (February 1809), 67-86, especially 83-84.
72. Mikszáth’s *Strange Marriage* described a quaint inn where the innkeeper and his wife both smoke. “They each had the same gesture of holding the pipe in one hand and the only distinction between them was that the woman’s arm was held akimbo over a skirt while the man’s free hand was in the pocket of his breeches.” Mikszáth, *Strange Marriage*, 11.
75. Lajos Kossuth first gave Széchenyi this title; historians of Hungary’s Reform Age repeat it with annoying frequency. Kossuth himself was quick to bestow this title: he described Miklós Wessely né Széchenyi with the same phrase. See Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism*, 372.
77. Quoted from Barany, *Stephen Széchenyi and the Awakening of Hungarian Nationalism*, 173.
81. Mór Jókai [Maurius Jókai], *Dr. Dumnany’s Wife* [Nincen ördög, which literally means “there is no devil”] trans. F. Steinitz (New York: Doubleday, 1891), 47.