

Helen Hajnoczky

[MUG-yar-az-knee]

['Make it Hungarian']





Helen Hajnoczky

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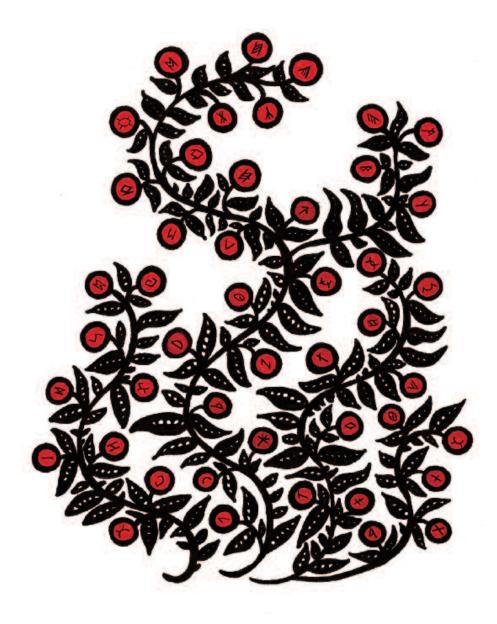
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I am a word in a foreign language – Margaret Atwood, The Journals of Susanna Moodie

My hovercraft is full of eels. – 'Dirty Hungarian Phrasebook,' Monty Python's Flying Circus

Save me your space-age techno-babble, Attila the Hun. – Zack Brannigan, Futurama

Diddynek [For my father]



### Pronunciation Guide

Bad, as an extended cat, as by absence, etc. Like a tsunami, check your cheek like an etching. The wide deck, like when you were a kid playing. Jam in the fridge, the edge of a bridge. You like less, on the edge of the bed.

You write a cheque, the same but without. In a café you find euphoria. Get on your legs, you go, etc. (Not used in English) Similar to speaking like here, not so in English. Basically, you say hi, but you're behind and mute. Human thick and thin.

You could lead, or leave sow seeds. Swim in the sea. Yes, you have faith, the key. Kiss, you're weak, make lists, you leave. Hey, your mind might assume a lying thing. (Anywhere else), knit bones.

You go, the snow, forced sorcery. (Not used in English; corresponds to the German Ö). (Not used in English; a longer, more closed variant of Ö). Your hands numb now from overuse.

You buy peas, apricots, you can hope. You can wish it, say it, share it, shout it. At least you can tell, or estimate. Feast on something similar to stew. (Not used in English) rude fool.

(Not used in English, corresponds to the german *U*). (Not used in English) from every view, you could evolve. Your room, clean, vacuumed. you leave behind roses. Pleasure, leisure, genre. Deserted.



## Altatódal

Doll, this altitude holds the night close to the dull moon. But here, gleaming like pitch, we're home again.

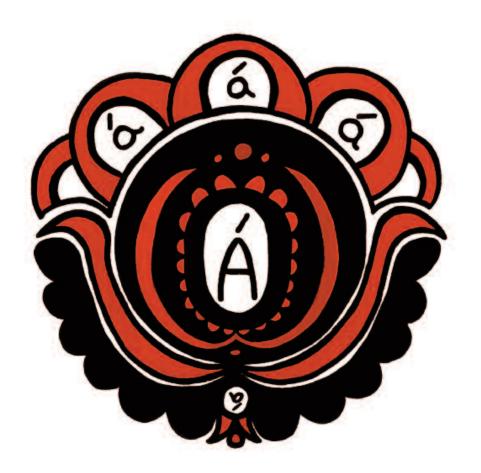
In English: peace attends the breeze. Angels watch you tumble from the trees, swaddled in nightlight, aching for daybreak.

In Hungarian: the peppers and carrots and onions take up flutes and fiddles, flailing stalks and jiving roots, they leap into the pot.

Instead of waiting for your branch to break, you're ebbed to sleep by a simmering cauldron, the English of your mother's song, Hungarian of your father's.

The nightlight dances on the wall like a pepper set for the soup. All to tell, not too dull. You sleep.





# Állatkert

A K-car or school bus or Suburban to tour the living bestiary of the plains. Point and this is the North American land-dwelling water horse, the mountains, cold north, snow, and each hide is a map splotched with continents, aerial views of possible worlds where a cow is a hippo, where a hippo is a horse, where Hungarian is Latin, where the Suburban is broken down at the Petro-Can just outside of town, bus broken down in the Kananaskis, K-car stuck in the city snow. Black squirrels scramble up birch trees, cows graze, a field of hay bales a bowl of giant Shredded Wheat and the time rolls by, foothills roll into Rockies, snow settles, packs into ice on the sidewalk. You are a quiet little creature, snow mammal, prairie dweller, adapted from a temperate climate, the rhythm of your hibernation, the Latin of your silly jokes.





#### Belváros

You wait, this charming place, luminous towers, columns of bells, chimes that scrape the evening sky.

The inner city, sunset, sheer walls of light reverberate with all the tones and glow of your resentment, this place.

You have hated the wash of lustrous peach, you have missed the tinted clouds, the swell of incandescent night.

The gong of evening shimmers, clanging chorus of traffic signals, sprong of fluorescent signs in the twilight.

The glint of your reflection that rings off the ground-floor windows, alone you wait, cozy in the awning of dusk lilting from the buildings.

Sharp clang of memory. Twinkle of memory. Chime of the city.





# Cukorka

Your reflection splintered in foil these solemn treats

this bitter history sugary sweet

unhooked from the tree you melt

a plastic angel dipped in flames, blurred and bubbling

you unwrap the old world you chew and smile

you don't swallow until they look away.

C



Cserkészek

Check if you're ready Roll and tighten your neckerchief Roll on your stockings, stand at attention

Deliver your lines with conviction A more personable person A more magyar Hungarian

Paint eggs, throw rosewater Thread needles, weave leather Serve dinner to your elders

Recite your practised lines With your flawless intonation With your perfect lack of understanding

How well you know your friends Whom you cannot understand Who cannot understand you

Savour the illicit snippets of English Smuggled out to the parking lot Together you roll and ignite secrets





### Duna

The river flows clear or muddy you know the river flows cold or warm or

The river cuts across countries or it springs locally and ambles through every city or

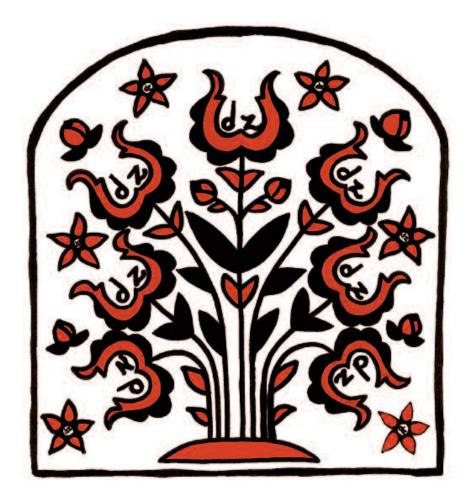
The river is shallow enough to wade or deep enough to drown in, the bed scattered with bombed-out bridges or

The iron was hauled back up on land you know the river ribbons the countryside or you know

The river slices through the city, one bank heaved up like a tidal wave, one bank spread out like a flood plain or

You knew the river's name before or you didn't know the river at all.





#### No common contemporary word

Sputtering drone, petticoats, embroidered vests, red leather boots.

No one cooks over an open fire, scratches words into wood, drinks by candlelight.

You want a sharp consonant, an axe of a word to split myths, to cleave false memories.

You want a word to spit this was no world, no time anyone lived in.

The truth was a city, baroque façades, paved streets, three-piece suits and hatpins.

But war is a dry husk to jam in people's mouths, so you'll let the letter rust and dull.

(The rhythm of that drone, that twirl of skirts, the burn of liquor in your throat.)





Dzsúsz

Every drop, this vocabulary squeezed to the rind,

these letters, down to the pith, this pulpy language, sugary thick.

You thirst for something smooth, something that flows, a cool rinse, bright and clear.

Watered down, no need to sip, you can slug it back, past your lips.

Swallow the meaning, diluted, it slips down easy.





## Elfelejt

Away, half, yet you still grasp, get out of the car, get up, the railing. Where once you, but now only, you leave the party to go dancing, you step out into the early morning air, the breeze whirling the skirt of your nightgown, the dew beneath your, yet then around you follow, in circles, you are after or being followed. No more, your hand or, could you make out, what days, no more language but that gingerbread man so cute with the icing and sprinkles how could you not laugh. You won't remember this but, long after you forgot, still the candles huddled in the church, empty pews echoing your children's sobs.

