

**HUNGARIAN HARDCORE:
USES AND PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH IN
BUDAPEST'S ROCK SCENE**

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the way that English is used and perceived within Budapest's contemporary rock scene. It ultimately portrays the rock scene in a way that splits it into three typological segments, which are respectively punk rock, cover bands, and standard rock. Above all, these divisions highlight the multitude of ways in which English functions in Budapest's rock scene overall. In the analysis of punk rock, emphasis is put on the practicality of using English as a means of transmitting ideologies of resistance. The section on cover bands shows English as a medium through which bands recreate the object of the cultural idol. Finally, the section on standard rock focuses upon English as a way of producing a cultural European citizenship, which largely avoids being restricted by the boundaries of the nation-state. The primary conclusion of this thesis invokes the idea that the presence of English in Budapest's rock scene is ultimately a way in which Hungarian rockers have adapted to their perceptions of what constitutes modernity.

Key Words:

Hungary, Rock Music, English, Autonomy, Cultural Exchange, Normalization

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1. Introduction

Is practice predicated upon perception, is perception predicated upon practice, or do both mutually reinforce the other? This thesis will work off of the assumption of the latter. Within the context of today's deeply rooted global connections, English has played a vital role in facilitating cultural interaction. As geographer Chauncy D. Harris points out, "English has the widest distribution on the most continents" and is also "the language most utilized for international communication between and among language communities" (2001: 685). Music, in particular, has seen an explosion of cross-cultural exchange and influence (Kruse 1993; Hall 1990; Bennett 2004; Grazian 2004), and the place English, as a developing universal language, cannot be ignored in regards to this phenomenon. What I ultimately aim to do in this thesis is to therefore examine Hungarian perceptions and uses of English in Budapest's rock scene, so as to better understand how the globalization of rock culture affects non-native English-speaking localities. At the same time, I will highlight the ambivalence inherent within these uses and perceptions, showing them not as a homogeneous post-socialist pattern, but rather as a reflection of the musical and ideological diversity present within Hungarian rock music. In order to do this, I will focus on different sub-sects of the music scene, putting emphasis on punk rock, cover bands, and "standard" rock, which includes both the categories of hard rock and alternative rock, respectively. The question that ultimately poses itself in such an analysis is therefore: In what ways, and to what extent, can the perceived dominance of a particular language shape heterogeneous cross-cultural

exchanges, and what are some of the most important consequences of such pressures for comparatively small public domains, such as Hungary?

It would seem that since 1989, Western culture has become increasingly normalized in the sphere of Hungarian domestic life, as Krisztina Fehérváry points out (2002). She argues that, “With the removal of all apparent obstacles to rejoining Europe, the consensus has been that [Hungary] must strive to become what it would or should have been if its history had followed a ‘normal’ course” (2002: 371). In what ways, however, have Hungarians actually attempted to do this? Has it been through imitation or through a re-contextualization of what it means to be a “modern” European? This thesis ultimately argues the latter, using the lens of Hungarian uses and perceptions of English in rock music to do so. As Sociologist William G. Roy points out, this is completely possible when one takes into account the concept of homology, which “posits a specific relationship between the structure of the musical universe and the structure of society” (2004: 266). This thesis will therefore put a strong emphasis on the conscious agency of musicians, so as to underscore their creative processes and uses of English as manifestations, or refutations, of a larger socio-cultural structure at work in Hungary.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Place of Hungarian Rock in Broader Post-Socialist Debates

While an examination of Hungarian rock music is indeed embedded within Hungary's historical context and artists' political engagement with the socialist state – as indirect as such engagement could be – this by no means forces the conclusion that contemporary uses of English can be viewed as examples of post-socialist practices as such. Especially in regard to music, it would be far too simple, and convenient, to simply juxtapose socialist era rock to modern-day rock in order to define the cultural boundaries of either one. Therefore, this thesis will not dismiss the ideologies, politics, and social norms comprising socialist era rock as obsolete. Instead, it will provide a foundation upon which an analysis of present-day rock can be built, highlighting how socialist era rock was not a static cultural fixture, but rather in a perpetual state of transformation that has informed today's rock. In this way, contemporary Hungarian rock is not seen as a distinct phase that is now detached from socialist era rock, but instead functions as an instance of how the lines between socialism and post-socialism become increasingly blurred in complex cultural settings. Ultimately, the reason for introducing this continuity here resides in the fact that socialist era rock, especially that of the underground, was often produced privately, as it is now, in a cultural realm in which the state held little public investment. In this way, both the rock scenes of the socialist era and now have been forced to legitimize themselves and have thus remained mostly distinct from other more typically state-sponsored genres of entertainment, such as classical music or operas.

The benefit of blurring the lines between socialist and post-socialist rock is that it avoids the inadequacies and irrelevancies that the concept of post-socialism brings up in the context of rock music. Caroline Humphrey, for example, although still embracing this concept “in order to maintain the broadest field of comparison,” nevertheless notes that, “it is important to recognize that changes in post-socialist countries are not simple and unidirectional” (Hann, Humphrey, and Verdery 2002: 12-13). She even goes so far as to say that she believes many people, especially younger ones, in ex-socialist regions, have themselves begun to discard the concept, deeming it a “constricting, even insulting label” (Hann et al. 2002: 13). She thus argues that, “If people themselves reject the category, we as anthropologists should not cling on to it, but pay attention to whatever other frameworks of analysis arise from these countries themselves” (Hann et al. 2002: 13-14). Following in the wake of this idea, I therefore intend to avoid an emphasis on post-socialist explanatory theories and instead aim to construct this thesis with terms that fit more usefully to the results of my fieldwork. This is not to say, however, that post-socialist terms will be rejected altogether in this thesis, but rather that they will be used to describe instead of prescribe the subject matter under the microscope of analysis.

What will perhaps connect this thesis most directly to broader debates on post-socialism is the way in which it will be forced to take into account the neo-liberalization of Hungary’s music industry (Szemere 2000) and the consequences this has had on Hungarian perceptions of Western popular culture more generally (Fehérváry 2002). In doing so, it will acknowledge how Budapest’s rock scene has become increasingly open to internationalism both in terms of influence and actual participation. This thesis will therefore go beyond reducing its analysis to national boundaries and instead focus upon

issues of trans-locality (Kalb 2002) in Budapest's rock scene, thus framing the city as an emerging regional core in Central-Eastern Europe since 1989.

2.2. Historical Context of Hungarian Rock Music

In analyzing the uses and perceptions of English in Hungarian rock music as a relatively new normative phenomenon, it is first necessary to say something of the history of rock in Hungary. Above all, rock under state socialism maintained its own multiplicity of symbolic meanings, and it would thus be difficult to fit it into the fairly narrow scope of studies on socialism. Anna Szemere argues that, "The 'high art' paradigm – the idea that art is insulated from other societal institutions, especially politics – served as a form of resistance in the underground art community during state socialism" (2000: 158). She explains that musicians sought to transform the status of rock as a way of simply criticizing the state into an aesthetically autonomous object of art (2000: 158-59). At the same time, she shows how such a move was political in and of itself, since it provided "an effective response to the long-standing colonization of culture by politics" (2000: 159).

In an article written in 1983, Szemere showed that the overt detachment between rock music and politics was further solidified by "financial factors, which have contributed to the subordinate position of all *light* music (including jazz!) in the cultural apparatus" (1983: 131). Musicologist Kati Agócs (2006) also shows this to be the case in her investigation of Hungarian classical music since 1990. She explains that composers rather than light music artists received the bulk of state financial support during the

socialist era. Today, on the other hand, she points out that, “Composers complain that the support that formerly went to new concert music has been redirected to ‘könnyű zene’ – light or pop music” (2006: 6). Therefore, with minimal state funding during socialism, “a large portion of the equipment owned by [rock] groups [had] been acquired from abroad, privately, at enormous expense” (Szemere 1983: 133). Rock in Hungary was therefore very costly enterprise that forced a significant portion of rock bands to fall back on “self-management consuming energies which might have gone to artistic development” (Szemere 1983: 133).

Together these two authors thus paint a picture of light music, which includes the category of rock but also goes beyond it, as a form of art and entertainment that was far from what Pierre Bourdieu ([1979] 1984) calls legitimate taste, or cultural taste validated by the ruling class. In the case of rock, however, Szemere argues that it was precisely this lack of state validated prestige that ultimately contributed to the economic and artistic success of certain types of rock. She explains that, “Some of the ‘hard rock’ groups which appeared in the second half of the seventies and managed to attain popularity in spite of limited market potential, owed little to the mass media. Paradoxically enough, their marginal position became the condition of their fan’s favor” (1983: 133).

Given this disjuncture from the state, rock music in Hungary developed its own distinct qualities during state socialism, qualities which are undoubtedly still present in contemporary Hungarian rock, though not in the same degree or precisely the same way. Szemere points out that, “Back in the early 1980’s, underground rock songs had a unique concern with a postmodern theme, the temporal and spatial disjointedness of social

existence in late-socialist Hungary” (2000: 163). In her examination of these themes, Szemere also points to the traditional importance of lyrics within Hungarian rock music generally, adding that in the underground lyrics are particularly emphasized (2000: 161). The empirical aspects of her work show numerous instances of these postmodern elements in Hungarian rock under state-socialism. She cites the song “We’ve Kicked the Habit” by the rock band Sziámi as a case in point, arguing that “the music and the lyrics conveyed a whole new and different temporal sensation, a radical change of pace formulated in the paradoxical perception of time being simultaneously accelerated and slowed down: ‘We’re watching time / It’s shrunk / It’s grown!’ ” (2000: 162). From this, it becomes possible to relate Szemere’s idea to Katherine Verdery’s understanding of the “etatization” of time, which is ultimately understood as the state’s expropriation of citizens’ control over how they spend their time (1996: 40). The self-management practices described above reflect an excellent example of this control, while the lyrical themes of the song hint at an awareness of it. In particular, the lines “We’re watching the time / It’s different from what it used to be” focus upon what Szemere sees as the artists’ perception of impending social change wherein “what previously had seemed a stationary and familiar disorder was now set in motion” (2000: 162-63).

In conjunction with these temporally and socially postmodern themes, Szemere also touches upon a certain self-reflexivity within rock during this period. She explains that by the time the late 80s approached there was a revitalization of public activity in the political sphere, followed by a general the feeling that a new period of political change was inescapably on its way to Hungary (2000: 162-63). Szemere goes on to argue how these sentiments were not only reflected, but also adopted by rock musicians themselves

during this era (2000: 163). Most notably, she explains how this feeling of impending transformation affected the autonomy of rock musicians, arguing that the freedom to produce culture without restraint mixed up the social identities of artists and the ways they related to the world. On this she states, “The end of the party-state, which had defined societal repression, resulted in a burgeoning public sphere that forced underground cultural producers to reappraise the nature and relevance of their art” (2000: 159).

2.3. Theoretical Approaches to Analyzing Contemporary Hungarian Rock

The reason that this thesis analyzes Budapest’s present-day rock scene through the lens of English is ultimately twofold. First, it allows for an overlapping analysis of both the structural aspects comprising Budapest’s rock scene and the agency of particular musicians. The significance of adopting such an approach resides in the fact that it allows for an analysis of agents’ perceptions of the socio-cultural structure in which they produce their music and which simultaneously serves to regulate their perceptions. From this, it becomes possible to construct an argument that avoids treating agents as passive objects incapable of navigating through the all-encompassing structure of Budapest’s rock scene. Instead, this structure can be taken into account as a framework through which agents themselves operate based on their statuses as thinking individuals instead of a submissive, indistinguishable collective. In short, there are multiple ways of navigating through the maze of Budapest’s rock scene, all of which lead to different ends and are not

necessarily predefined by the maze itself, while subjects maintain the autonomy to “knock down structural walls” and take self-made paths.

Above all, this theoretical amalgamation of structure and agency avoids rigidifying the positions of musicians within the structure of global and local rock scenes, and instead underscores the theme of ambivalent identity construction. That is, it shows how the participants of Budapest’s rock scene are simultaneously engaged with the global rock scene and their own local manifestations of rock culture. Given the significant lack of commercial viability in Hungary’s rock industry, musicians have been forced into the position of actively adopting methods of appealing to wider audiences, and using English has indeed proven to be one such method. In a case like this, English has indeed been used consciously as a means of achieving a pre-established goal – financial, ideological, or otherwise – while at the same time musicians with a strong English speaking ability have indeed mastered an important operation necessary to attain this goal. Of course, structure also continues to play an important role here given that it at least partially defines the logic through which agents actually act. (I am not promoting rational choice theory here, but rather intending to highlight the idea of agency as a structurally restricted enterprise). To assume that agents are completely unconscious of the social structure within which they produce their music would be to pretentiously assume their ignorance. This thesis therefore emphasizes agents’ consciousness of structure. In this way, it is worth noting that my fieldwork has partially determined the theoretical framework of this thesis, thus “grounding” it to at least some degree so that it may provide an accurate analysis of how English is used and perceived in Budapest’s rock scene.

Since examinations of structure are nevertheless present in this thesis, it becomes necessary to introduce Bourdieu's understanding of capital, for "it is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory" (Bourdieu [1986] 2004: 15). Of these forms of capital there are, of course, the economic, the cultural, the social, and the symbolic. In order to avoid reducing capital to a singular form, ignoring the variety of ways that English is used and perceived in Hungarian rock, this thesis focuses on the conversions that take place between the forms of capital. Bourdieu points out that such conversions are necessary because there are certain goods and services can only be "purchased" by a particular form of capital ([1986] 2004: 24). Taking the question of conversion a step further, Andy Blunden criticizes Bourdieu on the grounds that the latter does not provide a principle upon which these conversions are based (2004). Blunden, clearly coming from a Marxist perspective, argues that these conversions are a product of a set of power relations that determine how much of one form of capital a particular individual can receive in exchange for another (Rikowski 2008). Clearly, Blunden's reasoning for this resides in his notion that "use and maintenance of the various forms of capital is not a matter so much of enjoyment (i.e., of wealth) but of work (i.e., of production)" (2004). He therefore goes on to explain that "capital can span across different social formations, not only bourgeois society, representing the degree of command a subject has over whatever it is in a given society or social stratum, which confers the right to subordinate others" (Blunden 2004). In tracing the conversions between the forms of capital that English provides musicians in Budapest's rock scene, it thus becomes necessary to take Blunden's understanding of

power into account, as well as the source of this power, whether it be explicitly class based or not. With this mind, the second way that the lens of English will be useful to this thesis now comes into the picture.

The use of English in Budapest's rock scene is a testament to the notion that Hungarian rock is not an isolated cultural form, but rather a product of both mutual and unidirectional global influences. As David Grazian broadly points out, "Contemporary studies of globalization argue that international flows of immigrants and capital impact the cultural geography of local spaces and places" (2004: 205). Grazian is also keen to note that these flows function differently within the world system depending on whether or not they are occurring within core or periphery nations (2004: 204-205). In a similar style, Andy Bennett propagates the concepts of the local and trans-local scene as theoretical tools through which music culture can be analyzed (2004). He argues that these concepts are more useful for analysis than the concept of the subculture, since the subculture "implies a relatively fixed relationship between specific aspects of post-war style and music with the class background of those who appropriate it" (2004: 225). The scene concepts therefore function as alternatives to the fairly reductionist concept of the subculture. In this thesis, the concept of scene is to be understood in structural terms as a cultural context in which agents act. The scene will not be considered completely enclosed from other segments of society, since the morality, ideologies, and perceptions of agents within the scene undoubtedly overlap with these other segments. At the same time, however, it the scene also is to be regarded as distinct from these other segments of society. This is because the scene is understood as having the capability to produce a

particular set of norms that in turn encourage agents functioning within the scene, but not outside of it, to act in particular ways.

As Bennett points out, however, concepts of scene themselves can differ greatly from one another. For example, he argues that the concept of the trans-local scene is an attempt by theorists to move beyond the “culturally bounded space” of the local scene concept. In making his case, he points to Mark Slobin’s idea of trans-regionalism, which suggests that music has a “very high energy that spills across regional boundaries, perhaps even becoming global. This category of music is increasing rapidly due to the mediascape, which at any moment can push a music forward so that a large number of audiences can make the choice of domesticating it” (qtd. in Bennet 2004: 229). With a very similar focus on trans-locality, Holly Kruse argues that many local musicians understand their participation in their scenes “as something that both identifies them with and differentiates them from individuals and groups in other communities” (1993: 38). Therefore, given subject matter under examination in this thesis, the concept of the trans-local scene is utilized as major theoretical tool through which I can establish a broad cultural setting, rather than define a culturally bounded social class. In turn, this setting can be used to engage with the flow of musical influences that cross through Budapest, thus functioning as a structural backdrop for analyzing those uses and perceptions of English that are ultimately products of human agency.

Of course, in examining these flows of musical styles and trends, it is necessary to note their directionality and thus take into account the cultural power relations between Central-Eastern Europe and the West. This allows for a deeper analysis of how the artistic potentialities of English perceived in rock music are affected by what Bourdieu

calls symbolic power ([1979] 1984). Bourdieu frequently uses the term class in his analysis of symbolic power and argues that it is representative of aesthetic taste. In terms of taste, he says that class is defined by “the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which give its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices” ([1979] 1984: 106). Given the stress Bourdieu puts on evaluation and practices in his concept of class, it very nicely syncs up with the analysis of the *perceptions* and *uses* of English that follow in this thesis. It is also necessary to note that tastes associated with class that are presented in Bourdieu’s investigation of symbolic power are structurally relative. He explains that, “Dispositions are adjusted not only to a class condition, presenting itself as a set of possibilities and impossibilities, but also to a relationally defined position, a rank in the class structure. They are therefore always related, objectively at least, to the dispositions associated with other positions” ([1979] 1984: 246). Therefore, in analyzing the symbolic power relations between Central-Eastern Europe and the West, it becomes apparent that such an analysis by no means entails some form of cultural purity on either end. Instead, questions of valuation arise in regards to Budapest’s symbolic power relationship with the West and thus help to explain how English is perceived and used.

In conjunction with the concept of symbolic power, Krisztina Fehérváry’s concept of the “discourse of the normal” (2002) also serves as a useful theoretical tool, as it informs an analysis of agential perceptions of English. Fehérváry argues that during the period of state-socialism, “Westerns standards of living set the implicit standard – however unattainable – by which Hungarians evaluated their own material world” (2002: 371). Now, however, she points to the fact that because Western consumer culture has

permeated nearly every aspect of Hungarian life, such glorification no longer exists as it did. Instead, “this standard has been often seen less as an ‘other’ to be emulated, than a measure of ‘true’ identity, or self, tied to a pre-socialist, bourgeois-democratic past, the development of which was suppressed or distorted by Communist rule” (2002: 371). This idea ultimately provides this thesis is framework through which the use of English in Hungarian rock can be understood not as an imitation of Western rock culture, but rather as a recreation of it that reconnects Hungary to Europe in its entirety.

Regardless of the fact that Fehérváry’s study most heavily focuses on how Western-style kitchens and bathrooms are perceived in post-socialist Hungary, it is thus clear that her concept of normality can be extended to the realm of music culture. Such a conceptual extension is lent even more relevance if English is considered a status good, for Fehérváry argues that, “While it was necessary to mark success in the post-socialist world with status goods, it was no longer appropriate to express delight with a commodity simply for its western origins or inventive design” (2002: 378). In addition, the idea of a status good can very well be considered within the context of Bourdieu’s forms of capital, thus framing English as a commodity through which “owners” maintain a certain type of cultural power. Indeed, this framework very well matches up with the idea that knowing English in Hungary today is a social expectation amongst younger generations, a high cultural prerequisite of sorts, which signifies one’s cultural connectedness to the West without idealizing it. Fehérváry herself backs up this point, arguing that, “Normalizing or even denigrating [status] goods was a way of demonstrating one’s active participation in and knowledge about a transformed social and economic order” (2002: 378). By therefore analyzing uses and perceptions of English

within the framework of the discourse of the normal, this thesis puts an emphasis on the idea that Hungarian engagements with Western culture are themselves increasingly blurring the line between Hungary and the West. In addition, the analysis that follows serves as an instance of how the uses of English are becoming less “Western” and are instead developing the capabilities to connect global regions in a way that undermines national borders.

3. Methodology

Given the fact that notion of perception plays such a significant role in this thesis, I have inevitably drawn much of my material from interviews. It was of the utmost importance that interviewees were able to tell me in explicit detail their thoughts and value judgments regarding the presence of English within Hungarian rock music, so that I could avoid coming to general conclusions that fail to acknowledge certain perceptions. The data that I’ve collected in my interviews has therefore influenced the theoretical framework through which I construct my analysis. It became clear that some of the original theories I’d planned on including in thesis could not adequately grapple with the data I’ve collected, and so I took it upon myself to find theoretical substitutes. Though as the social scientist here, I alone determine the knowledge that this thesis will ultimately produce, conducting interviews as a primary method of data collection has allowed me to come more closely into contact with perceptions that would otherwise have gone unaccounted for. In accounting for these perceptions, however, my interviewees are in

some ways writing through, thus forcing me to be self-reflexive of my place in Budapest's rock scene as an American.

Together, I conducted eight semi-structured interviews with currently active musicians throughout Budapest. The reason I chose to put the focus of my interviews on musicians alone is ultimately twofold. First, musicians are in a better position to explain to me their creative processes than anyone else, given the often-private nature of artistic productions. In learning to understand these processes in more depth, I was able to add another agential dimension to my analysis, which I would not have otherwise been able to take into account. The second reason I chose to interview musicians is because it is ultimately the decision of musicians to choose whether or not to incorporate English into their music, while in this way this thesis can maintain its strong emphasis on agency. Whether or not particular venues are only willing to host a band because of the fact that they perform in English is of no real importance to this thesis. What is important, however, is how musicians themselves perceive such pressures and act upon them. By drawing my data from interviews with musicians instead of club owners or festival organizers, I am thus able to give power back to the musicians and in turn limit the scope of my analysis to transformations in artistic autonomy.

The question of whom I have chosen to interview has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the data that I've collected. With such being the case, I attempted to spread myself out across Budapest's rock scene as much as I could in conducting my interviews, so that I would obtain the broadest possible picture of the presence of English in Budapest's rock scene. I operated like this under the assumption that there are numerous corners of the rock scene that are not directly connected to one another and

thus use and perceive English in different ways. What this broad spread throughout the rock scene has therefore offered me is a way of conceptualizing the vast diversity within rock music in Budapest, both in terms of influence and purpose.

Although my analysis of perception is largely a product of the data I've collected from interviews, I also implemented the method of participant observation as a way of deepening my analysis of the uses of English. The reason for this is composed of several factors. First, there are some uses of English, such as the use of song lists and the way in which musicians communicate with audience members between songs, that go largely unacknowledged in interviews focusing upon the uses of English in musicians' creative processes. Using participant observation therefore allows me to take these phenomena into account in my analysis. Secondly, participant observation allows me to engage with audience members in order draw conclusions that might otherwise be distorted by musicians on stage who are focusing solely on their performance. At the same time, this method provides a safety net of sorts that allows me to test and either reaffirm or refute the data that I've collected in interviews. Finally, participant observation has provides me with an empirical basis upon which I can frame my theoretical arguments concerning the structure of Budapest's rock scene. This is done by observing interactions between bands and audience members before, during, and after shows, in an attempt to highlight how audience members organize themselves in different musical contexts. In contrasting the ways in which audiences organize themselves in different settings, much can therefore be said about the ways in which these contexts determine behavior. In addition, this emphasis on examining structure through participant observation is particularly

important due to the fact that my interviews are largely concerned with the conscious agency of musicians, rather than structure.

4. Analysis

4.1. Punk Rock and the Significance of Global Cultural Flows

In both this section and the one following it, my analysis treats the punk rock scene as a sub-sect of Budapest's rock scene as a whole. I make this distinction because the perceptions and uses of English embodied within the punk scene are often products of conscious agency that intentionally differ from those of Budapest's more general rock scene. The punk scene will not, however, be considered *completely* separate from the larger rock scene, since there are still many commonalities in musical influences that each scene shares. What I therefore attempt to show through this blurry distinction are the multitudes of ways in which English is perceived and utilized in Budapest's rock scene, thus highlighting the diversity inherent within it.

With this being said, one of the newest bands to have sprung up in Budapest's punk scene goes by the name of Exterminating Angel. The band's name, says its vocalist, Benedek, is derived both from a song by the American hardcore punk group Catharsis and a 1960's Mexican surrealist film involving the psychological entrapment of a group of bourgeois party-goers (personal communication, May 20, 2013). As is often the case with serious punk groups like this one, the significance of both of these

references resides in their conscious critiques of conformity, capitalism, and consumer society at large, while the references also connect the band with an artistic scope that goes beyond the music of the band itself. As Benedek puts it, “You have to have a big face with a name like that” (personal communication, May 20, 2013).



Fig. 1. Exterminating Angel

It became clear in my interview with Benedek and Mátyás, the latter of whom plays guitar in Exterminating Angel, that the band indeed strives to integrate a wide variety of sounds into its music, while at the same time its members themselves have musical influences and tastes extending far beyond the fairly limited realm of punk rock. (It will later become clear that such large ranges of influences are not just present in

Budapest's punk scene, but in the rock scene as a whole.) Benedek says that before he'd even heard his first punk record, he'd enjoyed many different genres of music, largely due to the fact that his father ensured music was a large part of Benedek's childhood. Some of Benedek's major influences growing up included classical music, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, and a large assortment of classic rock groups. In his adolescence, Benedek found that there was a sudden shift in his musical taste, and he purchased his first heavy metal album, "Best of the Beast," by Iron Maiden, "And basically for like a year I was listening to only – mostly – Iron Maiden" (personal communication May 20, 2013). Eventually, at about age 13, he got heavily into the black metal of Scandinavia, but notes that he would still listen to bands like The Beatles or The Rolling Stones. "I was never like switching styles," Benedek states, "It was more like an evolution for me all the time" (personal communication, May 20, 2013).

Benedek notes that during his childhood and adolescence, he and his family were living in London. He says that it was there that he learned to speak English and discovered much of the music that he still listens to. Given his geographical and cultural distance from Hungary during this period of his life, most of the music he found ended up being Western in origin. What is particularly interesting here is how Benedek's musical influences are not entirely different from many of the other Hungarian rock musicians I have interviewed. In Benedek's case, there was little opportunity to delve into the music of Hungary; back in Hungary, however, Western music was virtually accessible everywhere. What therefore presents itself in the story of Benedek's musical influences is the idea of a largely one-way international directionality of cultural exchange. This is not to say that in Benedek's case either he or the British amongst whom he lived

necessarily devalued Hungarian rock, but rather that it went largely ignored due to the difficulties of actually obtaining it.

These difficulties correlate with Benedek's statement that it was not until the late 1990s when English really began to flourish in Hungarian rock, especially in the punk scene. While British and American punk bands like The Ramones, The Clash, and The Sex Pistols were widely known on a global level even by people who didn't listen to punk music, the biggest Hungarian punk bands of the late socialist era and early 90s, such as CPG, Auróra, and Marina Revue were all but unknown except by only the most underground fans. In the case of each of these Hungarian groups, their music was performed almost exclusively in Hungarian. At the same time, the political subject matter in hand often related to very local problems and people. For example, in 1983, CPG released a demo EP, which included a song called "Erdős Péter." Erdős, a member of Hungary's socialist party, had been attempting to censor the band's performances, according to Benedik, Mátyás, and several others. CPG had thus retaliated with a very personal song in which they proclaim they'd like to poke out his eyes, finishing with a chorus that repeats, "Erdős Péter a kurva anyád" (translated, "Péter Erdős, your mother is a whore"). Comparing this to what is perhaps one of the well-known songs by The Sex Pistols, "Anarchy in the UK," the extreme specificity of CPG's music stands out in the forefront. Whereas CPG's song is focused upon the band's animosity towards a local and relatively unknown socialist party member, "Anarchy in the UK" propagates a very general image of punk ("I am an anti-Christ / I am an anarchist / Don't know what I want, but I know how to get it / I want to destroy the passerby").

Part of the specificity of older Hungarian punk rock and the generality of Western punk may very well be due to the fact that Western bands had – or have – a larger audience base. With such being the case, the music, like any many other forms of mass culture, must appeal to a larger group of people, thus becoming increasingly generalized in the process. One doesn't have to be from the UK in order to adopt the general punk rock attitude and politics of the song into his or her own life. With the rise of English in Budapest's contemporary rock scene, however, it has become noticeable that lyrics performed in English have shifted away from traditional Hungarian stylistics and have indeed embraced the generalized lyrical quality of well-known Western punk bands. Exterminating Angel's song, "Pro-Gay Marriage Song," serves as a case in point. Even the title of the song lacks any of the lyrical "poetry" seen in other genres of music. It is, above all else, an informative, matter-of-fact statement that gets straight to the point. This is also true for the song's lyrics. In addition, the lyrics don't appear, as was the case with CPG and other older Hungarian punk bands, to be focused upon exclusively local issues, but rather reflect a more general political concern that would make just as much sense in Budapest as it would in, say, Russia or the United States.

In many of Exterminating Angel's songs, as with the band's name, one may also find references to other musical works. In the song, "Self Redemption/Survival," the line "Your love is like a tidal wave appears" appears, referencing a similar line from Pat Benatar's song, "Heartbreaker." In "Everyday Ritual," comes the line, "My love for life runs dry," referencing the song "If" by Bread. In "Lack of Interest is Fascism," one line reads "You get what you need," referring to the song "You Can't Always Get What You Want," by The Rolling Stones. Again, in "Self Redemption/Survival," are the lines, "So

hard to be / The boy with the thorn in his side,” referencing a song of the same name by one of Benedek’s favorite bands, The Smiths. All of these references, Benedek pointed out, are completely intentional, connecting the symbolic meaning of the band’s lyrics to the meaning produced by other revered bands. Benedek’s almost native-level English speaking ability as a form of cultural capital therefore expresses itself in terms of symbolic capital in the integration of these references into Exterminating Angel’s lyrics. The symbolic significances of these particular Exterminating Angel songs are not isolated, but rather build off of Benedek’s perception of what these other songs are trying to convey. As Kobena Mercer points out, this is not at all uncommon. He says that, “Across a whole range of cultural forms there is a ‘syncretic’ dynamic which critically appropriates elements from the master-codes of the dominant culture and ‘creolises’ them, disarticulating given signs and re-articulating their symbolic meaning” (qtd. in Hall 1990: 236). Implicitly, Benedek thus claims the meanings of these songs for himself and actively utilizes them as a way of expressing his own values. No longer, then, are these songs external from Budapest’s rock scene and something to therefore be idolized. Instead, they become a part of Budapest’s cultural locality in a way that allows participants of the rock scene to “experience [their] subjectivities as unitary and non-contradictory – to see [themselves] as whole individuals,” rather than the product of a fragmented and incomplete adoption of Western culture (Kruse 1993: 34).

It is interesting to note that there was yet another reference to Western rock music in Exterminating Angel’s lyrics, but one that Benedek pointed out that was not intentional. This is in “Pro-Gay Marriage Song,” which includes the lines, “Look back and laugh at yourself / And your mindless hate.” The phrase “Look Back and Laugh” is a

significant one in hardcore punk rock, having been both the name of a song by renowned American hardcore punk band Minor Threat, and also the name of a notable hardcore punk band from Texas. The fact that the phrase was not used on purpose highlights the notion that the use of English in Budapest's rock scene unconsciously affects the ways in which musicians present their ideas. In using English, they adopt a linguistic structure that at least partially dictates the ways in which they can express themselves and subsequently maintain the lyrical stylistics of rock music.

With the English language thus being used to recreate the symbolic meanings of other well-known songs and unconsciously influence the production of songs detached from any intentional references, it is possible to say that the cultural field of the participants of Budapest's rock scene is in a state of transformation. No longer is English speaking music simply being listened to or even mimicked, but rather it is performed in a way that actively engages with, adopts, and transforms the meaning of some of the most symbolically significant Western rock bands. It is important to note that these engagements do not only occur lyrically, however, but also pervade Budapest's rock scene in more covert ways. During a rock show at Budapest's Szféra Klub, for example, the local punk band Back Off played a short set. Each member of the band had a list of songs to look at. On the lists were written the names of old American hardcore punk bands and songs, such as "Minor Threat," (a band from Washington DC) "Poison Idea," (a band from Portland) "N/A" ("Negative Approach" – a band from Detroit), and "Kill a Commie" (a song by the band Gang Green from Boston). What was interesting about this was that Back Off didn't play a single song by any of these bands. The band and song names appearing on the song list were simply used as a way of signifying which of

Back Off's untitled songs would be played next by referring to the major influence of that particular song. In a broader context, English therefore provides a basis upon which musicians in Budapest's rock scene may ground their music within a cultural flow that extends far beyond Budapest itself, regardless of whether or not such a connection is explicitly exemplified in a group's actual music. What this ultimately highlights is therefore the idea that, "Local scenes are bonded globally through a vibrant exchange of musical styles and influences," while language plays a significant part of this process (Bennett 2004: 229).

4.2. Punk Rock Ideologies and the Practicality of English

Perhaps no other music genre has, as much as punk, been able to claim for itself not only the status of music, but of a social movement, as well. In punk rock today, as in many other genres of music that emphasize certain lifestyles, terms such as "poser," "sell-out," and "fake" have been thrown around with high frequency. For people who take the music not only as entertainment and self-expression, but also as a paradigm of resistance, punk rock is synonymous with anti-commerciality. As David Pottie points out, punk rock can be read as a "self-reflexive parody of mass media and mass culture. The 'creators' of punk rock are understood as active and self-aware, albeit with a cynical awareness of the temporary and mass produced nature of much popular culture" (1993: 11). In my interview with Benedek, he told me that at the second rock concert he ever attended, the mainstream American metal band Cradle of Filth had performed. Sounding a bit embarrassed about this admission, he pointed out that, "But back at the time they

were still a pretty cool band. I think that if Cradle of Filth broke up in like 2001 or 2002, they would still be a really good, like respectable band” (personal communication, May 20 2013).

The idea that Cradle of Filth somehow lost respect from serious punk rockers after the band “made it big” thus reinforces the idea that the music of punk rock and the people that produce it must challenge the capitalist system in order to be validated within the ideological sphere of punk. How, then, has the introduction of English as a major stylistic aspect of Budapest’s rock scene changed the ways in which participants transmit such ideology? In the case of Exterminating Angel, the answer is rooted in the fact that, not only in terms of not only stylistic influences, but also in ideology, punk rock is a definitively global phenomenon.

On Exterminating Angel’s new record, the first song on the album, entitled “Lack of Interest is Fascism,” begins with a roughly two minute monologue by Dick Lucas, the singer of the well-known underground British punk band Subhuman. (It is also worth noting that Exterminating Angels covers the song “Mickey Mouse is Dead” by Subhumans, adding in their own metal-influenced sounds.) In his monologue, Lucas condemns the United States’ war with Iraq and British Prime Minister Tony Blair’s total apathy regarding it. Near the end, Lucas states:

Is it money you want? You print yourself billions and billions of dollars, you already got that. So it can’t be money. You have all the power you want, you could be President of the United States. But nope, shit, you’ve already got that, so what the fuck do they want, you know what I mean? All they want is more oil, to run their fucking SUVs in order to... make... more... money. And then

they've already got the money, so it beats me what they want. I think they're in league with the devil, or some sort of pact, or supernatural source. Or they're just complete *bastards* no fucking souls whatsoever, I think that's the final conclusion you have to make. Which is why you have to stand up for what little rights are left over and take control of your own life and get together with other people who are sort of thinking the same thing.

In Lucas's monologue there is a clear set of social alignments being constructed based upon what can only be described as a power struggle. On the one hand, there are the powers of evil, which, through their greed, have waged a global war against humanity and justice. Then there are the people who oppose the powers that be and seek to take control of their own futures. In turn, it comes apparent that the movement of punk rock is perceived to be a place where these like-minded rebels can gather and thus make a difference on a larger scale than what would have been possible alone. In this way, "Senses of shared identity are alliances formed out of oppositional stances" (Kruse 1993: 34). The fact that Exterminating Angel decided to add Lucas's monologue into the introduction to their album thus shows two important things. First, it becomes apparent that the band has adopted Lucas's mentality of social factions, defining itself as one that fights against the injustices of power. Secondly, the group links itself with an ideological movement that goes far beyond the scope of the band's actual music or even Budapest's rock scene.

The actual lyrics of Exterminating Angel's songs, all in English, only reaffirm this idea. I explicitly asked Benedek why he would perform in English if his band plays, at least for now, exclusively in Hungary. He told me, "Because English is the new Latin"

(personal communication, May 20, 2013). He said that the band plans on playing shows outside of the country soon. They even have a ten-day tour set up for this fall when they will play in Denmark, Italy, France, and Germany. As it is, the band is now having ongoing discussions with a friend of Benedek's from Sweden who may be willing to take them onto his small record label. Benedek went on to say that hardcore punk is a very international scene and that no local scene is really isolated from another. "I have friends from all over the world," he says, "Bands sleep at my place, like tomorrow there's going to be two bands sleeping at my place [...] And I get a lot of feedback, I send songs to my friends" (personal communication, May 20, 2013). In this way, it is apparent that English serves Benedek and Exterminating Angel as a way of keeping the international aspect of punk rock alive in Budapest and open to a wide multitude of bands around the world. English thus functions as a feasible means of communication that allows for the transmission of punk ideologies on a global level. This is especially important for Exterminating Angel, since, like many punk bands, they have a political agenda that they would like to disseminate to as many places as possible. The medium of English, explains Benedek, is simply the most practical way to do this. "Of course," he states, "it's not good if everything ends up being the same, that's the bad side. But it's also very good that some kid, maybe in Russia or China or Japan, might find, through some blog or something, my band, and listen to it and read the lyrics [...] If even they don't agree with it, if I can just make somebody think about it, that's already a positive thing" (personal communication, May 20, 2013). Geographer Chauncy D. Harris concurs that homogeneity is a danger of English's increased role as a means of communication, but like Benedek, nevertheless points out that, "There is urgent need for some language of

intercommunication for effective exchange of ideas across linguistic boundaries” (2001: 686).

English, because of its practicality, has thus become the unofficial channel through which the ideologies of punk rock are transmitted globally, with Budapest being no exception. The work that Mátyás, one of the guitarists of Exterminating Angel, puts into Budapest’s punk scene is a testament to this idea. Currently, Mátyás is in four punk bands in Budapest and, from what I have seen, knows virtually everyone in the scene. At the same time, he alone is responsible for putting on many of the shows that happen in Budapest, which often include international bands, such as Bi-Marks from Portland. In this way, one can see active conversions in his use of English as a form of capital. Although for Mátyás, English begins as a seemingly inactive form of knowledge, it can nevertheless be considered an important part of his cultural capital when one takes into account that Mátyás also works part-time and is currently going to university for a degree in Finance and Accounting. Together, these facts provide Mátyás with a cultural prestige that allows for him to be socially mobile beyond the punk scene alone. In putting on shows, however, especially international ones, it becomes clear that Mátyás at least temporarily converts his knowledge of English as a form of cultural capital into a form of social capital. His knowledge allows him to negotiate with foreign bands and develop social networks that benefit both Mátyás and Budapest’s punk scene as a whole by bringing new musical influences into Hungary and thus establishing Budapest as a heavily trans-local scene that bands from all over the world are willing to visit.

As is the case with many other local punk scenes, Budapest’s scene is built on a “Do-It-Yourself” (DIY) work ethic, “which contributes to the perception that performers

and audience members are interchangeable” (Kruse 1993: 39). Numerous other authors writing about punk rock, such as Dave Laing (1985), have shown similar ideas regarding DIY. They argue that the punk scene is a place in which there is virtually no hero worship, since anyone can contribute to it, wherein interactions between bands and audience members are not restricted by notions of hierarchical segregation that are typically apparent in other forms of music. I myself have seen this idea is accurately reflected in the vast majority of punk rock shows I have attended in Budapest, especially in regards to the use of space.

As opposed to large concerts put on in arenas, many punk shows either take place in small pubs, basements, or abandoned buildings. Consequently, there are rarely actual stages upon which bands perform. In punk rock especially, given the aggression and speed fueling the music, band members, usual vocalists, tend to engage with the audience members directly in front of them, pushing them, dancing with them, and letting audience members shout into the microphone. It is therefore not the bands alone, but also the audiences that “produce identity and meaning” in punk rock performances (Pottie 1993: 8).



Fig. 2. Mátyás performing in his band Think Again

Between songs, vocalists typically speak to the audience and it is not at all uncommon for audience members to shout back at the vocalists. When international bands perform at shows like this in Budapest, communication between bands and audience members almost always therefore takes place in English. What is interesting about this is the fact that audience members are oftentimes forced to interact differently with these bands as a consequence. When a local band like Exterminating Angel, Back Off, or Mudpie is performing, audience members are usually wilder, many being familiar with the members of the band on a personal level. At the same time, these local bands, whether or not they perform in English, engage with audience members using Hungarian, saving English exclusively for their music. When English is used during a show to

communicate beyond the actual musical performance, however, it is often the case that a show takes on a more impersonal form. As a result, audience members are more hesitant to engage with the band between songs and typically stand in place bobbing their heads during the musical performance. In this way, it becomes apparent that English unintentionally functions as a way of distancing foreign bands and local audiences during performances themselves.

In Budapest alone, bands from all over the world come to the city to perform. During my fieldwork, I encountered groups from the USA, Canada, England, Australia, Germany, Russia, and a multitude of other Eastern European countries. In observing how the locals of Budapest's rock scene interacted with these foreign groups between sets, I noticed that virtually all conversations took place in English. As opposed to the distancing that took place during performances and between songs, it became apparent foreign bands were, before and after shows and between sets, ultimately treated as peers by Hungarian audiences. Foreign bands and locals would often have discussions fueled by common ideologies of DIY ethics and anti-commerciality, which would in turn shrink the cultural distance between them. In this way, foreign punk bands were not understood in terms of difference and exoticism, but were instead engaged with according to the ideological similarities they held with Hungarian audiences. It therefore became apparent that English is utilized as a way of maintaining global punk ideologies that make sense in a multitude of political contexts. This in turn feeds the notion that the ideological relationship between Budapest's punk scene and the West, which is ultimately predicated upon the use of English in discussions such as these, is not considered by Hungarians to be anything special or out of the ordinary. Instead, these discussions reaffirm the idea

that the cultural linkages between Hungary and the West are considered normal in the post-socialist context (Fehérváry 2002).

4.3. Cover Bands and the Recreation of the International Rockstar

In the realm of cover bands, it is apparent that English, like in the punk rock scene, is perceived as the new universal language. The difference, however, arises from the fact that English is seen to possess a form of symbolic power that on its own is often seen a precondition for the production of good rock music. This idea is accurately reflected in a statement by Attila, the lead singer of the pop-rock band The Smash, who posits that, “English is the language of rock” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). When I asked Attila why the English name The Smash was chosen for the name of his band, he told me that in Hungarian the name would be Zúzás, “but that would sound stupid” (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Thus, in addition to the fact that English is valued as the language maintaining the most symbolic authority in the sphere of rock music, it also becomes that its use has lead to a certain self-deprecation of Hungarian culture. In terms of agency, the source of this valuation is ultimately connected to the idea that some Hungarian rock musicians perceive a qualitative difference between the musical capabilities that Hungarian and English can offer them, differences that affect their desired ends. Attila says that when he was growing up, he mostly listened to English songs, and so when he would write music it would come out in English. He explains that the sounds of English were “more similar to those famous rock n’ roll bands” that have influenced the musical styles of The Smash (personal

communication, May 4, 2013). In this way, it becomes apparent that Attila's use of English in his lyrics connects The Smash to a rock scene that goes far beyond Budapest. As opposed to the punk scene, however, this is not to connect Attila, or The Smash, with an international movement, but rather to recreate the Western music that the band's members enjoy so much.



Fig. 3. The Smash

To be fair, The Smash is only partially a cover band. According to Attila and Balázs H., the latter of whom plays bass in The Smash, anywhere from 1/4-1/3 of the songs they perform at each show are actually covers (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Overall, they like to put the weight of their music on original pieces, most of which are written in English. Attila explains that the reason they intersperse their own music with the songs of well-known bands is because, “If people come to our shows who

don't know us, they couldn't sing along" (personal communication, May 4, 2013). The songs that The Smash covers include songs by a large variety of groups, such as Three Doors Down, Slipknot, Pantera, Queen, Tenacious D, Metallica, Stone Sour, Twisted Sister, Bon Jovi, AC/DC, Alice in Chains, Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath, Breaking Benjamin, and Guns n' Roses, amongst many others. Attila and Balázs pointed out that they've covered one song by a Hungarian band called Tankcsapda, but that in all other cases the bands they cover are Western-based, coming from either the United States or the UK. To cover songs by famous Hungarian rock groups like Depresszió, Tankcsapda, or Quimby would just be "too mainstream," says Attila. "If we would play these in Hungary in one of our gigs or concerts, it would be 'Oh, c'mon, why are you playing this?' " (personal communication, May 4, 2013). Thus, as familiar as the cover songs performed by The Smash are to Hungarian audiences, it nevertheless becomes apparent that they possess a certain foreign and exotic quality that Hungarian songs are thought to lack.

In thus playing Western songs that people know, The Smash encourages their audiences to participate in the admiration of well-known Western rock bands. As I saw during my fieldwork, Attila would often begin to clap his hands during the performance of cover songs, gesturing for the audience to do the same, while also encouraging them to sing along. In this way, the symbolic prestige fueling the songs that The Smash would perform had the effect of restructuring the way in which the band and its audience members would interact. In turn, it becomes possible to look at the social position of the band as a transformed enterprise, as well. By simply playing a recognized and globally celebrated song and engaging with their audience in a different way, the band, and

especially Attila, was temporarily elevated to the status of rockstar. The interchangeability seen between audience members and performers in the punk scene therefore all but vanishes. Whereas in the punk scene, even in spatial terms, there is often no “center stage,” The Smash becomes situated at the core of the performance. It is through the band, not the audience, that the identity and atmosphere of the performance is produced. At the same time, however, The Smash does not produce the meaning of the songs that they cover anymore than their audience does, and it is in this way that they are distinguished from the rockstars that have actually produced the music being covered. It therefore becomes possible to look at the Smash as a *recreation* of rockstardom – one in which the band itself is praised not because of their inherent prestige, but because of the perceived prestige of the material that they perform.

Similar instances of this recreation of the rockstar can be seen in the performances of 213, a Slayer tribute band, and Dekadeth, a Megadeth tribute band. Both groups are quite interesting in that they are dedicated to performing the songs of one particular band, respectively, and so attempt to distance themselves from the original bands as much as possible. When I saw 213 perform, it was only a few days following the death of Jeff Hanneman, a founding member of the band Slayer. During their performance, all the members of 213 wore identical black t-shirts with Hanneman’s face and the years of his birth and death – 1964-2013 – printed on them. In the middle of the show, they dedicated a song to Hanneman, (“One of the greatest musicians of our time, this one’s for him!”) and implicitly established themselves as his inferiors. Given that this was also the only time that 213 spoke in English between their songs, it thus becomes apparent that English was used in a very particular way here in that it functioned as the most suitable means of

paying respect to Hanneman and Slayer. Although, like The Smash, 213 took on the status of “rockstar” during their performance, it is clear that this was an intentionally watered-down version of the label that simultaneously showed the band’s humility and their admiration for both Hanneman and Slayer.



Fig. 4. Dekadeth

Dekadeth’s performance, on the other hand, was notable in the way that the band strayed away from the original stylistics of Megadeth. In three of the songs they

performed, for example, they used a Polish woman to accompany the band's lead singer and guitarist, István, during the choruses. In this way, they brought some originality to their covers and consequently avoided being a simple "imitation" of Megadeth. Of course, the symbolic power of Megadeth was still present in Dekadeth's music and performance style. Some aspects of this style can be seen in the image above, such as the long hair of the band's members and the "head-banging" that the band would often put into practice during their performance. As David Pottie shows, such stylistics are important in the construction of cultural identity, with fashion being no exception (1993: 5-6). Even so, the originality that Dekadeth brought to their cover songs allowed the band to define itself as a fairly autonomous group through their clever reinvention of English lyrics.

When I asked István if he'd composed any original pieces of music, he told me that he had. In fact, I learned that he was a former guitarist in The Smash (personal communication, May 19, 2013). When I asked him why he left, he told me that the band failed to conform to his own work ethics. István made it very clear to me that he only wanted to produce "top quality" music (personal communication, May 19, 2013). When I asked him how English fits into his definition of "quality," he said that English avoids the cultural clichés that are often seen in Hungarian music. "Hungarian rock music was always more simple," he says. "You write some lyrics that everyone understands, not something deep" (person communication, May 19, 2013).

In addition to the fact that István sees the use of English in Hungarian rock as a way of reaching deeper poetic meaning, it also becomes clear that English operates as a stylistically liberating tool for his music. He notes that, "Hungarian rock music was

lyrics based, so [bands] are not putting as much effort into the music to write some complicated riffs or something, just something simple” (personal communication, May 19, 2013). English, on the other hand, is seen to function as a more balanced means of performing lyrics, which does not overtake the rest of the instruments in the band, but rather works in harmony with them. In a tribute band like Dekadeth, then, where all music is performed in English, it becomes apparent that English is used for its perceived minimalism. It allows István to focus on the music he is playing in order to make it as close to perfect as possible, while also giving him the chance improvise solos and therefore provide the audience with a more complete rock experience. It is not the lyrics that people go to rock concerts for, István point out, but rather the quality of the music (personal communication, May 20, 2013).

4.4. Rock n’ Roll and European Cultural Citizenship

Perhaps it was for the best that my interview with Robert, the lead guitarist of the Hungarian hard rock band Krinkle, evolved – or perhaps devolved – into a discussion about the European Union. This evolution began when Robert brought up the idea of Hungarian nationalism as a refutation of English in Hungarian rock. He states, “There is a very, very thin layer of the population of the audience who wouldn’t really like that you sing in English. This is that nationalist part that says, ‘Why would you sing in English if you could sing in Hungarian?’ [...] It takes us back to the 1930s” (personal communication, May 3, 2013). With this being said, it is apparent that Robert views such nationalism as temporally backwards worldview. Fehérváry’s work on Hungarian

perceptions of the West therefore helps to unpack this statement, especially her point that, “ ‘Normal,’ with its association with what is natural and healthy, is equated with the market capitalism and the bourgeois middle classes of European states” (2002: 374). Viewed in this way, Robert’s statement suggests that English has become a “modern” and subsequently “normal” form of communication in post-socialist Hungary. In addition, it would appear that one must embrace English, or at least accept its relevance in modern Hungarian society, in order to be considered enlightened about the transformed order of the global system since 1989 (Fehérváry 2002: 378).

During our interview, Robert pointed out that English was used very rebelliously during Hungary’s period of state-socialism. When I asked him why he thought it was no longer so rebellious, he answer was simply: “It’s not banned anymore, so you can freely use it and nobody gives a fuck. Everything is rebellious when it’s banned, like smoking pot” (personal communication, May 3, 2013). With English no longer banned, but rather encouraged in Hungary, Robert appears to see an ongoing process of de-nationalization in Hungary, and he uses Hungary’s ascension into the European Union in 2004 as a case-in-point. Fehérváry’s work can again be used here as a way of understanding Robert’s mentality as a representative example of Hungarian consensus. She states that, “The difficulty of the ensuing years has indeed been a ‘reality check’ of sorts, as citizens have adjusted to the notion that it will take years, perhaps decades, for [Hungary] to ‘catch up’ to the West” (2002: 369). In this framework, Robert’s perception of English as a normalized global language thus opposes nationalistic mentalities of complete cultural independence and instead functions as a way of reconnecting Hungary with the rest of Europe.

Perhaps language alone, however, is not enough to culturally reconnect Hungary to Europe. If this is to be the case, it seems that standard rock music performed in English could potentially provide an excellent cultural vehicle through which Hungary can reestablish its linkages with Europe. Of course, perhaps it cannot function as the basis of such a reconnection. Robert appears to agree. “I don’t consider myself to be Hungarian,” he says, “I see myself as European [...] Agree with it or not, I think [the European Union] is a great thing to integrate European countries. It has its mistakes, of course, they need to be repaired, but I don’t think the big problem was caused by the European Union, I think the big problem was caused by the leadership” (person communication, May 3, 2013). Within this political framework, it appears that rock music can augment the political process of Hungary’s reintegration into Europe. As Mark Slobin’s concept of trans-regionalism (1993) shows, rock music has the capability of moving beyond national borders in a way that can culturally connect localities beyond the realms of economy and politics. With English as a new form of “universal communication,” it thus becomes increasingly clear that uses of English in rock music have the potential to do just this, in the process, for better or for worse, shaping the Hungarian identity into something increasingly less nationalistic.

5. Conclusion

In this section I would like to briefly take the time to discuss the future of Budapest's rock scene and the questions regarding artistic autonomy that are raised by frequent uses of English in Hungarian rock music. To begin, I will offer a short ethnographic analysis on the continuing relevance of the Hungarian language in the Budapest's rock scene. From there, I will highlight how the uses of Hungarian are ultimately quite compatible with the uses of English described above.

Upon joining up with The Smash and watching his song-writing skills develop, Attila, of The Smash, came to the conclusion that singing in Hungarian was a better way of reaching Hungarian audiences than singing in English. He says that the biggest problem with using Hungarian, however, is that writing Hungarian lyrics entails a more complicated process. Concurring with István, he points out that there are common themes prevalent in many Hungarian rock songs that are difficult to escape. Writing a song with strong lyrics that moves beyond these themes therefore takes time and skill, and only recently does believe he has been able to successfully manage this task.

Some of The Smash's new songs are thus now in Hungarian. Attila pointed out that this recent conversion was a practical move because the band is not looking at an international career. Balazs H. confirmed this point, saying that it is increasingly difficult to start an international career as a Hungarian band. The Smash thus takes on a very "indie" quality, not performing their music for financial gain, but for the love of rock (Kruse 1993: 35). This emphasis on locality largely contradicts the internationality of the punk scene in that there is no pragmatic reason, ideologically speaking, to directly associate with foreign bands. In addition, it contradicts many of the stylistic influences of

Western groups that are present in Budapest's tribute bands. Instead, rock music is kept on a very culturally confined level that is meant to reflect the implicitly "Hungarian" aspect of Budapest's rock scene. A similar thing can also be said about the alternative Hungarian rock band Pedig, since their lyrics are almost all in Hungarian. The drummer of the band, Pál, puts emphasis on the fact that the bands members are proud of representing Budapest, so much so that they actually covered the song "Budapest," recorded in the 1970s by Cseh Tamás, which will appear on their new album (personal communication, May 16, 2013).

Attila refers to his song writing in Hungarian as a "brave" personal venture (personal communication, May 4, 2013). In an interview with Balázs S., the singer of the Pedig, the idea of Hungarian lyrics as a courageous musical move was further validated. Balázs pointed out that singing in English gave him a boost of confidence when the subject matter of his songs was deeply personal or even embarrassing. He has only written one song in English for Pedig and it is called "She Shies," as is in "she shies away from me." "It's a rock ballad," he says. "I tried to put my current emotions into this song" (personal communication, May 16, 2013). It is therefore apparent that in those parts of Budapest's rock scene where music takes on a calmer, more sensitive flavor, English is at times utilized as a way of moving beyond the mental barriers that limit self-expression. In this way, English can be considered a psychological proxy to Hungarian, the latter of which is considered to be more revealing of emotional honesty.

By examining structural conditions produced by English and Hungarian in terms of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital, it is clear that there is little overlap between rock music performed in English and rock performed in Hungarian. Each

language has, in its own way, developed its cultural “niche.” In terms of economic capital, there is little money to be made in Budapest’s rock scene, regardless of the language that music is performed in, and so there is thus little financial competition between bands. In terms of cultural capital, English is used as a way of demonstrating one’s knowledge of the “foreign” in a way that lends them cultural status and social mobility. Hungarian, on the other hand, can still be used poetically and honestly in a way that gains its user prestige through the fact that, when used correctly, “no language is more beautiful than Hungarian” (Attila, personal communication, May 4, 2013). In terms of social capital, English can be used to establish international connections, while Hungarian can ultimately be used to establish local ones, thus offering users of each language multiple ways of networking that each lead to different ends. Finally, in looking at English and Hungarian in terms of symbolic capital, it is clear that English connects speakers to trans-local music scenes that have the potential to link them to particular ideologies or styles, while Hungarian can be used as a way of communicating one’s “self” with audiences more effectively (Balazs S., personal communication, May 16, 2013).

English has indeed been used as a newly adopted “normal” way of connecting Hungary, and Budapest’s rock scene in particular, with widely accepted Hungarian perceptions of post-socialist modernity (Fehérváry 2002). At the same time, musicians have perpetually reinvented its use in rock music, and so it is apparent that Western culture has not simply breached Hungary and forced artists to produce cheap imitations of Western rock music. The sheer multiplicity of the ways in which English is both perceived and used in Hungarian rock is ultimately a testament to this idea, reinforcing

the notion that Hungarian works of art are from homogenous in respect to both the West and each other. Although the balance of cultural exchanges between Hungary and the West are largely unidirectional, it is nevertheless apparent that, at least for the time being, Budapest's rock scene has successfully managed to maintain its cultural autonomy.

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