

# BLURRY BORDERS. FROM HEROES TO CELEBRITIES

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**Abstract:** The primary objective of this paper is to analyse the connection between historical heroes and celebrities in contemporary Hungary. According to my hypothesis the historical heroes and contemporary celebrities are in close relation. Their formations were generated by similar circumstances but their cult and its peculiarities accommodate to the parameters of a given historical period. Through the case study of the "best known Hungarian" Ferenc Puskás, the legendary soccer-player, I would like to examine whether the "hero patterns" of Joseph Campbell are present in the life story of an outstanding celebrity. Besides, this paper tries to introduce the forms of manifestation of his cult and at the same time to understand its effect on the life of fans and followers.

**Keywords:** Celebrity cult, Hero cult, fandom, hero-pattern, Ferenc Puskás

It is a well known fact that contemporary popular culture abounds with simulacras and pseudo events.<sup>1</sup> Usually these are based on and similar to prior cultural phenomena, function in a similar way, fulfil similar roles in the structure of culture but there is always a faded difference in between. If the question "who are the saints or heroes of our age?" is posed some might easily answer "celebrities". We have three different words (saint, hero, celebrity) with a different cultural and temporal background, however, they are all used for the same kind of "well-known" people of a given age. This paper tries to enlighten the border between historical heroes and contemporary celebrities.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BAUDRILLARD, Jean *Simulacra and Simulation*. [www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Baudrillard-Simulacra\\_and\\_Simulation.pdf](http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Baudrillard-Simulacra_and_Simulation.pdf), accessed 24.03.2011, BOORSTIN 1982.

<sup>2</sup> It is impossible to give an overview of historical, psychological motivations. For the complex analysis of the cult of heroes and celebrities see POVEDÁK 2011. During my research I analyzed Hungarian material, so my further examples derive from that context as well. The research work was supported by the OTKA Grant K68325.

## 1. THE CONCEPTS

The concept of hero is basically used for three types of characters. First, the central characters of historical myths that were once outstanding figures, however, their memory is primarily present in written culture. Second, such historical actors, primarily politicians, are the so-called “historical heroes” whose memory and cult is still alive in society. Third, the term hero may also refer to the outstanding figures of our age, the “postmodern heroes” or celebrities. The Hungarian Ethnographical Encyclopaedia defines “folk hero” as a positive or negative character in the centre of the plot representing the given community’s ideal type as well.<sup>3</sup>

All historical ages have their own heroes brought to life by a characteristic void. Different historical periods are marked and characterized by different ideal heroes. That is why heroes in medieval legends were patrons of the poor or the leaders of ethnic communities in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The scientific discourse has not yet coined a term that could be well applied to celebrities. In everyday language use the concept of celebrity is often associated with well-known persons. Celebrities are “the ones in the news and headlines”, which is only partly true. The basic precondition of a celebrity is being well-known, however, being well-known or famous does not necessarily mean being a celebrity. Someone famous does not become a celebrity at once; however, the word “celebrity” in Hungarian (“*sztár*”) is often used in this interpretation as an adjective. Therefore, in the Hungarian language we must differentiate celebrity as a noun since this covers a significantly broader category. The word “celebrity” originates from the Latin “*celeber*”, which does not only refer to “being famous” but it also means that huge crowds celebrate, praise and idolize the hero.<sup>4</sup> In contemporary celebrity culture the basis of fame is not necessarily the given person’s knowledge or any other indigenous ability but the image constructed by the mass media and added to the viewer’s way of thinking. As Boorstin mentioned: “The celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness.”<sup>5</sup> Naturally, these celebrities can produce valuable achievements for the whole society but as for this definition it is not necessary for being famous. Besides fame, another basic criterion is to have a continual impact on the audience, that is to have a group formed of people who acknowledge a given well-known person and their adoration is manifested through certain activities as well. The cult can be defined as adoration manifested through actions.

As it can be clearly seen there are hardly any differences between the two definitions. However, somehow it is necessary to separate them.

## 2. DIFFERENCES

According to some superficial theories one of the most visible differences between heroes and celebrities is the fame, spreading through the channels of mass communication, which is typical only for the latter ones. As Boorstin articulates “For us, however, »celebrity« means primarily a person – »a person of celebrity.« This usage of the word significantly dates

<sup>3</sup> *Hungarian Ethnographical Encyclopaedia* III, 1987: 640.

<sup>4</sup> HANKISS 2002: 105.

<sup>5</sup> BOORSTIN 1982: 57.

from the early years of the Graphic Revolution, the first example being about 1850. Emerson spoke of »the celebrities of wealth and fashion« (1848). Now American dictionaries define a celebrity as a »famous or well-publicized person.« The celebrity in the distinctive modern sense could not have existed in any earlier age, or in America before the Graphic Revolution. The celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness.<sup>6</sup> This statement can be applied in the case of celebrities but it cannot be used for separating heroes from celebrities. If we take a closer look at certain well-known historical heroes it has to be mentioned that the subsistence or the re-formulating of their cult is often an effect of mass media processes.

Besides the difference in the channels of gaining fame, the methods of gaining fame differ as well. While in the pre-mass media societies the heroes first became local heroes and their cults spread orally from their smaller communities, the celebrities of our modern and post-modern age, however, gain wide publicity at once due to the emergence and instruments of the mass media.

In addition, it has to be emphasized that with the appearance of mass communicational devices heroes did not displace celebrities. The cult of heroes – historical heroes, politicians, writers, poets, etc. – still exist, however, the cult of the two categories vary greatly in the forms of manifestation. The cult of heroes is primarily present in world view, emotions and manifested commonly in ritual activities connected to remembrance. As opposed to heroes, in the case of celebrities the actions of fans (which often transform a manifestation of faith) gain a greater importance.<sup>7</sup> Even the elements of celebrities' life stories appearing in the mass media are similar to the "hero patterns".<sup>8</sup>

However, the most important difference between hero cult and celebrity cult is demonstrated in the dissimilar basic structure. Similarly to the differences between the following of traditional customs or following fashion, the common fact of following results in similarities on the surface, however, the essence is exactly the opposite: communal in the case of traditional customs and individualistic in the case of fashion. While historical or traditional heroes outgrew from a social/communal premise and their actions serve their social class, celebrities operate on an individualistic system of values. Celebrities emphasize a certain "civil mythology" that enhances the message saying that the individual's success can be achieved by anyone. Its "mythology" represents the success of "media heroes" as this would be possible for anyone without alienation. This way it legitimates the system of mass culture as a world-view.

Besides the differing basic structure, there is another well-formulated difference emphasized by Boorstin: "We can fabricate fame, we can at will (though usually at considerable expense) make a man or woman well known; but we cannot make him great. We can make a celebrity, but we can never make a hero. In a now-almost-forgotten sense, all heroes are self-made."<sup>9</sup> Therefore celebrity cult and hero cult cannot be confused.

<sup>6</sup> BOORSTIN 1982: 57.

<sup>7</sup> The celebrities often function as role models projected to the entire life (e.g. world-view, outlook, everyday habits, feast culture) of fans. It has to be emphasized that there are different levels of adoration. See POVEDÁK 2011.

<sup>8</sup> The "hero patterns" have been analyzed by many researchers for instance CAMPBELL 1993; RAGLAN 1936.

<sup>9</sup> BOORSTIN 1982: 48.

### 3. THE HERO MOTIVES

The analysis of the narrative sources on heroes and celebrities can expose both the similarities and the differences between the two phenomena. Owing to the great variety of narrative or mythological dimensions of the cult a broad, comparative phenomenology was necessary. I used Joseph Campbell's analysis for this purpose.

According to Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*<sup>10</sup> numerous myths from disparate times and regions share fundamental structures and stages which he called "monomyth".<sup>11</sup> Owing to Campbell's theory heroes' life and journey consist of three main phases: departure, initiation, and return.<sup>12</sup> "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man."<sup>13</sup>

As the theory has been well elaborated in the case of heroes I only deal briefly with celebrities' life from a folkloristic perspective. The life stories appearing in the media are usually simplified versions with certain parts emphasized and other insignificant or embarrassing elements left out, resulting in a life that resembled to that of folktale heroes.<sup>14</sup> The themes became part of popular culture, and fans started making and circulating their own versions orally. During media-analysis we can recognize similar features that are the characteristics of the popular poetry of previous centuries. The boulevard media function as a "popular literature" or "semi-literature" of our age.<sup>15</sup> This "semi-literature" is not produced by the folk but it is intended for the folk. There is an author, however, the author's person is not important; therefore the contents are variable and variants emerge in contemporary folklore that are already anonymous and spread orally. While in the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries popular literature provided the main sources, in the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries the products of the mass media contribute to this genre.<sup>16</sup>

The key stages of the life stories are the following: youngest child, exceptional birth, exceptional talent, poverty, wandering, returning home, success, mysterious death and religiosity. Comparing these with Campbell's theory we can find *The Crossing of the First Threshold*, *The Road of Trials*, *Woman as Temptress*, *Apotheosis*, *The Ultimate Boon*,

<sup>10</sup> CAMPBELL 1993.

<sup>11</sup> We have to mention that besides the numerous followers of his ideology there are several critics as well articulating that Campbell's theory is universalist and cannot be completely applied even to heroes. DUNDES 1980: 231. As Dundes mentioned "However, it is doubtful whether an overly ambitious attempt to define a universal hero pattern allegedly applicable to all human societies or an intensive study of one specific incident, e.g., the exposure of infant heroes, is as useful as an empirical study of the entire life stories of individual heroes." DUNDES 1980: 232.

<sup>12</sup> CAMPBELL 1993: 49–94, 97–192, 193–243.

<sup>13</sup> CAMPBELL 1993: 30.

<sup>14</sup> During my research I analyzed the life stories of certain Hungarian celebrities (Jimmy Zábó, Magdi Rúzsa – singers; Ferenc Puskás, Tibor Simon – football players; and Viktor Orbán – politician) appearing in the following media: *Blikk*, *Szines Mai Nap*, *Mai Nap*, *Story*, *Kiskegyed*, *Nők Lapja*, [www.rmfc.hu](http://www.rmfc.hu), [www.velvet.hu](http://www.velvet.hu), *Nemzeti Sport*, *Magyar Hírlap*, *Magyar Nemzet*, *Délmagyarország*, [www.index.hu](http://www.index.hu), [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org), [www.puskasferenc.hu](http://www.puskasferenc.hu); and on the basis of interviews and questionnaires.

<sup>15</sup> The "semi-literature" and "semi-folklore" have been discussed by KESZEG 1991; KÜLLÖS 2004.

<sup>16</sup> DÉGH 1994.

*Master of the Two Worlds, Freedom to Live* stages. We can only partly find *The Call of Adventure, Supernatural Aid, The Belly of the Whale, The Meeting with the Goddess* while the *Refusal of the Call, Atonement with the Father, Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold* stages cannot be found.<sup>17</sup>

To sum up, Joseph Campbell's heroic patterns can only be partially discovered in the case of celebrities. Although the listed elements show significant similarities with Campbell's heroic patterns for mythical heroes, the elements listed by Campbell are not necessarily true for celebrities. On several occasions the life story of celebrities becomes similar to the use of time in myths, therefore the story is simplified, becomes more schematic and the miracle is less important. Moreover, in several cases we could only prove their presence by broadening the interpretations of the frameworks. We can experience a progress of decrease as also seen in the aesthetic level of the transforming "folk art" of our age. Moreover, the lack of mysterious elements, the absence of serving the community and the increasing importance of individual career are the most striking difference. However, we can find connecting links between historical heroes and celebrities, for instance politician celebrities or the ones whose lives have a significant relevance to politics and contemporary history. One of the best examples for this is the life story of Ferenc Puskás, the legendary Hungarian soccer player.

#### 4. CASE STUDY: PUSKÁS 'ÖCSI'

According to mass media products the life story of Puskás consists of the following: he was born in a poor Swabian (Hungarian German) family, he spent his early life in an apartment-block at Kispest where they had 32 adult and 132 children neighbours. *He was such an exceptional talent* and was recognized at an early age. *As they lived in great poverty* and had hardly any money he played soccer sometimes even 10 hours a day with a ball made of rag. He was 15 years old when he first played in the Hungarian premier league in the famous Kispest team. That is why he had a nickname "Puskás Kid" (Puskás Öcsi). At the age of 18 he became the member of the Hungarian national team. The most famous Hungarian national coach, Gusztáv Sebes was amazed by his *exceptional talent* and he *predicted that one day Puskás would be the best football player of the world*. The Hungarian national team organized with Puskás in the centre was *unbeatable* between 1950 and 1954. On his 85 matches played in the national team Puskás scored 84 goals while as a club player 358 goals on 349 matches. In 1956 when the anti-communist revolution broke out their team was in Spain and because of the Soviet repression some decided *not to return home*. As an emigrant sportsman he had no license for playing as the Hungarian Football Association (MLSZ) asked the FIFA to ban them all for 18 months. Puskás *moved* to Italy then to Spain but being more than 30 years old and overweight most of the football teams rejected him. Finally he played for Real Madrid until the age of 39. This was one of the most *successful* periods of the team. He was temporarily allowed to visit home in 1981. It is a widespread

<sup>17</sup> For a more detailed analysis of hero motives in celebrities life stories see POVEDÁK 2011.

opinion that this was one of the symbolic inspirers of the change of the regime in Hungary.<sup>18</sup> He permanently *returned home* in 1991. He died in 2006. As a player he was: Olympic champion, World Championship silver medallist, European Cup winner, 5 times Hungarian Champion, 4 times top goal scorer in Hungary; helped Real win La Liga 6 times and the Copa del Generalísimo twice; won the Pichichi (top goal scorer of Spain) 4 times, won the European Cup 3 times, the UEFA Cup Winners' Cup 2 times, and the Intercontinental Cup; Puskás was European Cup Top Scorer twice, Golden Boot of the World in 1948 with 50 goals, Silver Ball European Footballer of the Year in 1960, World Soccer Player and European Player of the Year in 1953, European Player of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (L'Equipe). As a manager Puskás played in the final of the European League with Panathinaikos, was 3 times Greek Champion, won the National Soccer League and the Dockerty Cup of Australia. He received several state honours in Hungary. The *Complete Encyclopaedia of Soccer* contains two pages<sup>19</sup> with "the magic left foot" title about Puskás in the "Great Players" Chapter. In 2009 the FIFA created the Puskás Award designed to celebrate "the most beautiful goal of the year" in honour and in memory of Ferenc Puskás.

After his death several prominent persons – leaders of international soccer associations, legendary football players, leading politicians – offered their condolences. The Hungarian President of State, Prime Minister, leaders of the Parliamentary Parties appreciated his life and career. The most frequent attributes were the following. "The greatest person in Hungarian sport history, one of the best football players in the world." "His name is equal to Hungary." "He did the most for the international fame and honour of Hungary." "He creates unity in Hungary." "All Hungarians have the same opinion about Him." "He was deservedly raised at the highest public esteem." "He always fought in the name of Hungary." "After his success he still stayed a familiar person who loved his family, his Hungary and his brethrens honestly."

Ferenc Puskás with similar impact on the members of the society was a real "pan-Hungarian" celebrity representing the whole nation. The attitude toward him was similar to the social attitude towards historical heroes. As the hero of the nation he affected all members of the society. The gratitude towards Puskás and historical heroes is partly the gratitude of the nation.

"Yes, state burial and national mourning day! For whom if not him! [...] The whole nation mourns [...] Hungarian nation bemoans one of its greatest sons. I'm so sad. The last Hungarian hero is dead."

"One thing is surely fix. We don't have any other value that could maintain the national fame! I'm sorry [...] If I could change all the politicians' life for Puskás Öcsi! If only he would be alive! My condolences to His family! Let the most famous Hungarian rest in peace! I will miss him always!"

"Thank you very much for all You did for Hungarian soccer and for Hungary! 15 million of your compatriots mourn and are proud to be the member of the same nation as you. Rest in Peace Uncle Öcsi!"

<sup>18</sup> Puskás' visit was interpreted similarly to the first visit of John Paul II to Poland in 1979.

<sup>19</sup> RADNEDGE 2000: 482–483.

“Rest in Peace! Thank you for what you did for us! There was a time when He was acclaimed to be treasonable by some, in contrast He is still the greatest Hungarian!”<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, not only personal desires and hopes are projected to his person but feelings towards the nation as well. Several opinions were revealed around the time of Puskás' death describing him as a person affecting the “whole spectrum of life”. We certainly must keep in mind that the grief and trauma generated exaggerated feelings. The moment of his death is considered the withdrawal of hierophany created by his person since a “sacred” person left the frameworks of the profane world. This was a moment which was commented by the media – the “advocate” of public opinion – describing that the heterogeneity of time ceased. “Time stopped in the world, Friday early morning in Budapest, Ferenc Puskás died in Kútvolgyi Hospital at the age of 79. Millions mourn the football legend, candles are lit in the Hungarian capital.”

We must note, however, that public opinion was not manipulated by stories and opinions told on occasions of his death. Even during Puskás' lifetime similar views circulated which were only kept alive and intensified by the media.

The stories of Ferenc Puskás appearing in the media became varied. This fact created a situation that the missing elements from the stories were replaced by stereotypical patterns related to the events, although these patterns are exaggerated in order to entirely comply with the values and taste of the audience. Consequently stories might evolve on the personal charitability of the celebrated football legend even saving human life. “Öcsi saved people from being sent to ÁVH<sup>21</sup> prisons.”<sup>22</sup> “Uncle Öcsi was not only a unique football genius but a true man as well. Although he always had conflicts with Czibor on and out of the football field, Puskás saved his life when the communist dictatorship wanted to make away with the hell-raiser Czibor. Öcsi bácsi stood up for Czibor and replied to Mihály Farkas that if they don't have Czibor, there is no »Golden team of Hungarians« and there is no Puskás.”<sup>23</sup>

An urban legend spread that Puskás Öcsi hired Spanish unemployed on his own money in December 1963 to cheer for Laci Papp<sup>24</sup> with Hungarian fan-verses in the finals boxing for European Championship. “Puskás Öcsi was not stuck-up. He remained to be friendly, open, humble and had a nice word to everybody. His attitude and behaviour on the football field remained to be exemplary towards his opponents and group members even among the football mentality of his age.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.nemzetisport.hu/cikk.php?cikk=127822>, last accessed 17.11.2006.

<sup>21</sup> ÁVH: State Defence Authority of the Communist State.

<sup>22</sup> <http://blog.as.hu/contra/date/2006/11>, last accessed 07.11.2008.

<sup>23</sup> <http://blog.as.hu/contra/date/2006/11>, last accessed 07.11.2008. Zoltán Czibor (1929–1997), left-winger or striker of the “Mighty Magyars” National Team. After the 1956 revolution he became a prominent member of FC Barcelona. Mihály Farkas (1904–1965) was a leading communist politician of the Communist Rákosi-era (1948–1956) in Hungary.

<sup>24</sup> László Papp (1926–2003) was a three-time Olympic Champion Hungarian Boxer.

<sup>25</sup> T. D. 16-year-old man, Szeged, 04.11.2007.

Legends on his exceptional talent and ability are still common in popular culture:

“Puskás, he had a cross in his feet, on the right foot. He mustn’t shoot inside the penalty area. He kicked the ball so strong that the goalkeeper broke his rib and died. In 48! He mustn’t shoot inside the penalty area. Once he shot a penalty just into the middle. The ball hit the goalkeeper that he died in that moment”<sup>26</sup>

“Puskás threw up a wet soap and he was able to take it with his leg without dropping it... Moreover, he used to take bottles of wine with his leg in the restaurants of Madrid.”

“He could play keepie-uppie with a piece of soap under the shower in the Real Madrid’s dressing-room. Even the great Di Stefano or Gento wasn’t able to copy that performance.”

The effects of media on popular culture – i.e. the media-communication has similar results to face-to-face communication – can be well investigated in the case of Puskás. As a direct consequence of the continuously growing time spent using electronic media, people considered Puskás more of a personal friend, a quasi-family member calling him by nicknames (“Öcsi”, “Öcsi bácsi”, earlier “galloping major” and “Pancho” in Spain). He was forced to leave his motherland but remained Hungarian, a “boy from Kispest”. His popularity was enhanced by the fact that his lifestyle fit the values of the bearers of popular culture mentioned by KAPITÁNY–KAPITÁNY. He was virtuoso but never boasted of it, he became rich but did not become stuck up, so he remained as before his “adventures”.

“In what was he different? In everything. Simply, in everything. He was a genius, he really played on the field. He really loved playing and did not only play for the money. If he had money, he did not make a big deal of it and did not boast for being so rich. He began as an average guy from Kispest and always remained one. [...] He was charitable and nice, but not for being popular, he was just like that. He was really like that. There is no one like him, no other sportsman or football player or anyone nowadays.”<sup>27</sup>

On the day of his death a spontaneous tribute pilgrimage emerged to the Kispest stadium, the Puskás Ferenc Sport arena, the national stadium renamed after the player in 2002, and to the club-house of the Association of Hungarian Football. Candles, pictures and flowers bound with Hungarian tricolour scarves and ribbons. “Jenő Buzánszky’s teardrop seemed to be the sign and one started the national anthem mourning and wailing our great compatriot, the best known Hungarian of all times.”<sup>28</sup>

A splendid memorial service was held in the national stadium, then his coffin was carried to St Stephen’s Baslica and buried on December 9. The day of the funeral was a day of national mourning.<sup>29</sup> The funeral was broadcasted by several radio stations and TV channels. Tens of thousands followed the funeral procession to the Heroes’ square, how-

<sup>26</sup> BALI 2008: 366.

<sup>27</sup> <http://forum.nol.hu/index.php?topic=85055.30>, last accessed 10.11.2008.

<sup>28</sup> *Nemzeti Sport* 18.11.2006.

<sup>29</sup> Day of national mourning can be ordered in honour of outstanding persons whose life served the whole nation.



ever, only 5–6,000 people could participate in the memorial service in the stadium. The astonishingly low number does not mean the rejection of Puskás' person rather the political atmosphere surrounding the funeral.

“He was ours during his life. After his death he became the victim of an attempt. The committer is well-known, called profiteering and self-interest. He would have rather stayed alive if he could just escape the upturn. Our over-active Prime Minister wanted to »polish his own ego«.”

“Rumours had spread that the funeral cost 500 million HUF. This is a huge amount in the time of ever increasing overhead expenses! Why did they not listen to the widow and stick to a moderate requiem?”<sup>30</sup>

After Puskás's death the search for his relics together with their traffic – i.e. “the cult of profane relics” – has begun. Besides, Puskás inspired both the “popular” and “high culture”. This eventuated that famous Hungarian poets wrote poems on Puskás. For instance, Zoltán Zelk's “Rhymed greeting telegram”, Lőrinc Szabó's “After the defeat”, the writer Péter Esterházy's “Puskás, Gödel, passz”, the Hobo Blues Band's song “6–3” or the movie “Puskás Hungary” by Tamás Almási preserves his memory. In 2010 an exhibition opened at Budapest, where pieces of 58 contemporary artists were exhibited.<sup>31</sup> Even the well-known Hungarian idiom “Small money, small game” is contributed to Puskás.

Finally, regarding the cult, I must mention that the first street was named after Ferenc Puskás in Kispest, in 2007. In the selection process for street names the entire assembly of representatives univocally disregarded the rule that a street can only be named after a person deceased at least 25 years earlier. In Zalaszabar<sup>32</sup> a square was named after him and a bust was erected. In Zugló<sup>33</sup> a memorial plaque was placed on the house where Puskás and his wife lived for a while. In Szeged a statue of the ‘Golden Team’ was erected. An elementary school is named after him in Budapest. The abovementioned national stadium is named after him, as well as an award supporting talented players. In 2007 the Ferenc Puskás Football Academy was established by Viktor Orbán<sup>34</sup> at Felcsút. In 2001 the no. 82656 main belt asteroid discovered by Hungarian scholars in Calar Alto Observatory (Spain) was named after Puskás.

All these are instruments serving remembrance, *lieux de mémoire*<sup>35</sup> is created at the crossroads of reconstructed history, that is the meeting of tradition, history and personally lived and spontaneous memory at a point in time when the intended and wished historical memory can be based on something.<sup>36</sup> Péter Esterházy, the famous writer concludes: “Puskás created the unity of individual and community as he – the individual – would have not existed without the latter.”<sup>37</sup>

<sup>30</sup> <http://forum.nol.hu/index.php?topic=85055.30>, last accessed 10.11.2008.

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.homegaleria.hu/Archivum/Puskas/puskas.html>, last accessed 19.03.2011.

<sup>32</sup> Zalaszabar is a village in Zala County (West Hungary).

<sup>33</sup> Zugló is a district of Budapest.

<sup>34</sup> Viktor Orbán (1967–) Christian democrat/conservative prime minister between 1998–2002 and from 2010.

<sup>35</sup> NORA 2010.

<sup>36</sup> GYÁNI 2000: 82.

<sup>37</sup> ESTERHÁZY 2006: 114.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Ferenc Puskás was a pan-Hungarian celebrity. All generations have a positive attitude towards his figure. He became famous due to his individualistic talent, however, the charitable work for community also contributes to his cult besides the individual characteristics. He was not only the most popular player of the 'Golden Team' for his legendary and virtuous talent, but also for the fact that he symbolically or practically served the community with his actions.

He served the community of sportsmen and sportswomen, as well as the entire nation. He provided a symbolic comfort for the entire Hungarian nation following the hardships of 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian history (tragedies of Trianon and World War II, suppression of socialism) with his actions, behaviour and success. Consequently, we might regard his figure as a connection between heroes and celebrities. Achieving individual successes before the age of individualization, his success projects the primacy of communal values to the people of an individualistic era.

As the writer Esterházy wrote: "Puskás is the last public figure in football, a familiar personality, the last flash of light in modernity, the way towards the unique metaphor. After him, there are no more (only) stars, the situation of existence no longer has solutions, there are only versions of the answer, exemplary versions, of a high level (Cruyff, Pelé, Maradona). [...] It is with Puskás that the game stops and that the age of entertainment begins. [...] Puskás is the man with whom something disappeared from the world. Everything has changed and it would never be as it used to be. [...] Puskás is the first post-modern, who is not real only the ideas about him exist, the tabula rasa, that everybody can write on, the hero of folk tales who wins on behalf of us, the tricky Swabian who stiffed the communist dictators, the disloyal, the loser, the egotist. If there is one Puskás then thousand Puskáses exist, he is what we imagine about him (except from his left foot), Puskás is the advanced millennium, Puskás could be the eternal, the ego without personality, he is me, just like anybody."<sup>38</sup>

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