

MIKLÓS VAJDA was born in 1931 in Budapest. He is a writer, essayist and translator: his works include a great number of translations from British, American and German authors, and about five dozen plays for the theatre. He was the editor of the review *The New Hungarian Quarterly* until 2005. *Portrait of a Mother in an American Frame* is his first novel which contains his own family story and the fatal history of Hungary in the 20th century.



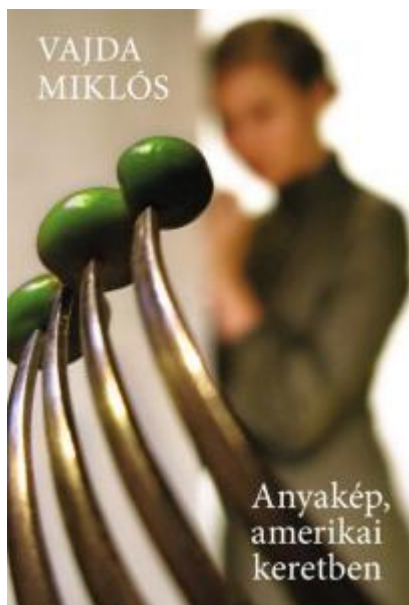
PORTRAIT OF A MOTHER IN AMERICAN FRAME

(ANYAKÉP, AMERIKAI KERETBEN)

Memoire-novel, 2009, 207 pages

„Elegant, reserved but not unemotional. Ironic, but not cynical. So this portrait, or this fragment of an autobiography is the triumph of good taste and the sense of proportions. But above all, it is touching. And we can also add, without further ado, that it's beautiful.”

– Litera.hu



Vajda grew up in a rich family in the first half of the century. His father was a lawyer who represented the Hungarian investments of the Habsburgs. His mother was born into a noble family. Because of the special family background they were fugitives during the WWII and after that in the communist era alike. His father died right after the war and his mother spent years in prison than moved to America immediately after her release. Their son stayed in Hungary because he fell in love with somebody else's wife. Since that time mother and son lived their lives far from each other.

The key figure of the family's hard years was a beautiful woman, the most famous actress around the middle of the century, Gizi Bajor – the godmother of Miklós Vajda. Gizi Bajor also died tragically in 1951, murdered by her husband. She, as the favourite actress of the two dictators Horthy and Rákosi, tried to do everything to save her friend, Vajda's mother and her godson. She hid the whole family during the war and then frequently wrote letters to the dictator Mátyás Rákosi pleading for her friend's release (those letters are the supplement of the book).

The three of them are the protagonists of the novel – the antagonist is the History itself. Vajda as narrator tries to tell the memories of the mother and understand her years in America as well as the death of his godmother. The novel is a confession of a son who couldn't tell how thankful he is to these women.

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