

To the Editor:

Case report: A consciousness-related experience

I would like to report an unusual experience of consciousness that occurred in the early 1980s in Budapest. The student concerned (pseudonym M. K.) experienced this event spontaneously—it was neither sought nor induced—and it clearly had autobiographical features. It involved detailed spatial impressions of a location previously unknown to him, which were later found to be historically verifiable.

During a planned train journey from Budapest to Pécs, M. K. encountered an unexpected situation: the train he normally used was not running that day. With about two hours to wait and a return to his student dormitory, about an hour away, being impractical, he deposited his luggage in a locker at Déli station and began aimlessly walking around the area.

It was a clear spring day in 1984. While ascending a staircase in the 12th district near the station—about ten metres high with a short flat section in the middle—M. K. suddenly perceived the intense scent of blooming acacias and other plants. This olfactory stimulus triggered a strong and immediate feeling of familiarity. A vivid impression arose: he knew this place; he felt he had lived there. Everything appeared familiar and personally meaningful. Cars and streetlights seemed out of place—like disruptive foreign elements in an otherwise coherent and harmonious environment.

M. K. experienced a spontaneous certainty: he had walked this street daily on his way to work. In this memory, he led a completely different life—orderly and structured. He worked in a hospital in an administrative role, always wore a suit and carried a walking stick. At midday, he returned home to eat with his wife and children before going back to work. This stood in stark contrast to his actual life, which was unstructured then (and later), without fixed times for sleep or meals.

He decided to follow the feeling of familiarity—to ‘go home’. Trusting his instincts, he crossed a small park and entered an adjacent wooded area. After about 100 metres, he discovered the ruin of a house that exactly matched what he had somehow already ‘known’: an Art Nouveau building with a square central atrium, an interior staircase running around it, and a visible gallery on the upper floor. The roof had collapsed. The entrance door was slightly ajar.

On the floor inside was the inscription ‘*Isten hozott!*’ (‘God has brought you’). Directly opposite the door was a fireplace.

M. K. immediately understood the significance of this arrangement—he had wanted it that way. Without thinking, he knew he had designed this house so that the fire would be the first thing seen upon entry. To him, fire symbolized warmth and family.

When he looked up at the gallery, he was suddenly gripped by intense fear. Although he was not prone to fear and usually remained calm in dangerous situations, he felt a compelling urge to leave the place immediately. He did so at once—and never returned.

He left the site with a powerful emotional impression that he had once lived there with his wife and children in safety and security—and that everything had ended abruptly. A sense of certainty arose that everyone, including himself, had been killed at that place and that the life he had led in that house had been violently terminated.

At that time, M. K. was a student with a scientific orientation and no interest in esoteric subjects. Later in life, he interpreted this experience as a kind of *déjà vu*. Nothing similar ever happened to him again.

About 40 years later, M. K. came across a YouTube video titled *A gyilkosok emlékműve* (*Monument to the Murderers*; Ács, 2021). It documents mass executions of Jewish civilians in precisely that part of Budapest’s 12th district during the final phase of the Second World War—including shootings in a hospital located very close to the described site. That hospital no longer existed after the war. This prompted M. K. to contact one of the historians featured in the video, who had studied these events in detail. The historian sent him a photo of a now-renovated building that might correspond to the one M. K. had visited. Although a definitive identification based on the photo was not possible, M. K. recognized several architectural features consistent with his memory.

Since he apparently possessed information about this place that corresponded strikingly with historical events—with the probability of coincidence being extremely low—M. K. has decided to share this experience with your journal, in the hope that a scientific explanation may one day be found.

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REFERENCE

Ács, D. (Director). (2021, June 17). *A gyilkosok emlékműve* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ygZB1MTRR4>