

# METAPHYSICAL ESSENTIALISM – THE PICTORIAL HARMONY OF BÉLA TARR’S FILMS

JARMO VALKOLA

Tallinn

jarmo.valkola@gmail.com

*Landscape setting provides a solution  
to the problem of showing situations  
in process: nature never stands still.*

Claude Monet.

*All is connected.*  
Estike in Satantango

In the following article, Jarmo Valkola investigates the originality of the Hungarian director Béla Tarr’s filmmaking practice. Tarr represents European pictorialism that is motivated by the commitment to develop and increase the function and effectiveness of images, sounds and performances that aesthetically formulate, translate and change the effects of contemporary cinema to higher dimensions and qualities of art. Tarr emphasises the selective and manipulative role of the camera in orchestrating his narrative concerns. The significance of the form comes forward, and the photographic dimension of the narrative creates static and momentarily captured intensities. Like Jancsó before him, Tarr also invests the narrative with plan-sequences. Some of them can be very long, involving continuous and intricate camera movements, like simultaneous track-tilt-pans, compounded by the ‘virtual’ movement of the omnipresent camera. Tarr’s filmic iconography sets standards for pictorial filmmaking in the sense of an increasingly personal touch of dramatics defining and distilling a cinematic language that is endless in its search for the almost silent colloquy between the artist’s visions and aspirations. *Sátántangó*, *Werckmeister Harmonies*, *The Man from London*, and *The Turin Horse* are the films referred in this article.

**Keywords:** Béla Tarr, pictorialism, Hungarian cinema, aesthetics, formalism, orchestration, performance



III. 1 *Kárhozat*

Hungarian director Béla Tarr (b. 1956-) is one of the truly original filmmakers of our time. His filmmaking style is highly self-conscious in cueing the viewer to recast assumptions and expectations about the narration's own procedures. In its broadest compass, his special use of time, space, and extremely long takes puts him into the front row of European pictorialism, a way of stylizing narrative. His films' thematic organization and stylistic texture suggest the presence of implicit meanings in the narrative. The mixture of meticulous attention to composition, framing, lighting and editing is profoundly characteristic of Tarr. In that field his closest cousins are another Hungarian, Miklós Jancsó, Russian Andrei Tarkovsky, and Greek Theo Angelopoulos. We can assume that certain philosophical, epistemological and aesthetic views inform all Tarr's films, and the variation from one film to another is a matter of modifications of a fundamental outlook. Through philosophical connections we can find traces of the ideas of Gilles Deleuze, Friedrich Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl, and Jean-Paul Sartre behind Béla Tarr's universe.

Béla Tarr's films are fine examples of artistic originality, because he can invest the narrative with direct perceptual and imaginative engagement with the films themselves, and can give rise to a distinctive aesthetic mode surrounding the films. Tarr is a European filmmaker who molds sensuous or imaginatively intended material into original symbolic form. He brings the rational, sensible and historical aspects of experience into an internal relation. All different elements of his films are, in a way, inseparable, coherent, and mentally and physically embodied. Philosophically, Tarr proposes a complex and ambiguous concept of reality, and its representation, as both perceived reality and with more abstract qualities of life itself. The circle of life seems tragic or tragicomic with associations of amnesia and immobility: people living in an absurd and hopeless search for something or somebody to liberate them. On the other hand, Tarr offers a strange

and stylized collection of sensations, the indescribable reach out for something, stored in the subconscious level of the images and sounds, and trying to catch our innermost feelings of harmony and desire often in the midst of an upbringing chaos. He proposes an alternative way to reach out our obscure memories and experiences of time and space. Behind all this is that inner experience of ideas and sensations, a pure phenomenon of aspects and perceptions, a world of visual perceptions and virtual entities as proposed by Gilles Deleuze. Tarr's cinematic style is a distinctive manner of expression: it features a particular mode of filmmaking process and technique, created, and performed, and also a set of characteristics that enables his films to be classified with others into an aesthetic type of his own specific outlook. Tarr's cinematic style is also a specific manner and method of performing with his distinctive and characteristic mode of address in pointing out and expressing a certain punctuation of audiovisual arrangement and display. In this chapter I will examine how Tarr's specific cinematic balance invests the narrative with equilibrium between the contrasting or interacting elements, resulting in an aesthetically strong integration of audiovisual material. I will also take a sample of selected films to argue and see how he understands time and space and how he uses them in his cinema.

In various ways, Tarr shows that cinematic language is labelled by selectivity, viewpoints that function as developed through choices. The essential cinematic strategy contains the idea by which one can hide things in a film in order gradually to reveal them. Through this kind of mechanism a series of cinematic shots shape into a series of emphasises, throughout the selective and manipulative role of the camera. That is why film is not a reproduction of reality, because, once a scene has been cut into shots, we are not working anymore with the reproduction of reality; instead, we are working with the statements referring to that reality. In a world of Tarr, film seems 'real', because it reproduces the way we see things in the world. In film, cutting into shots sometimes corresponds to selection and manipulation but selection can rely on natural processes, natural perception, and it can rely on manipulation as a trick made by the filmmaker. Such ideas suggest that most of our thinking goes on in the intervening areas between these areas of reality and fiction, which can be called speculation or hypothesizing, an area of uncertainty. Most minimally, Béla Tarr's world is present, both actual and virtual, and despite the seemingly realistic portrayal of the world stricken by aimlessness, poverty and corruption, the reality constructed in the films is not that of social realism, nor is it the representation of historical events, but a creative exploration of reality. The resulting cinematic experience is the sum of several processes operating together, because audiovisual forms converging with factors of meaning create tensions and cinematic language solves the problems of functioning on so many perceptual levels at once through its own specific structures.



III. 2 *Kárhozat*

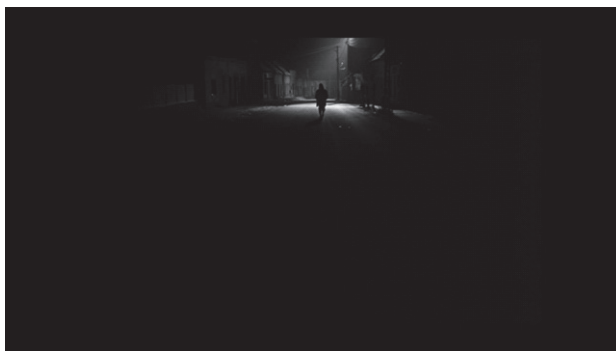
### *Audiovisual Aesthetics*

At a broader level, Tarr's cinematic syntax makes possible an increasingly complex combination of shots, which can generate an even greater variety of messages and meanings. Such combinations touch on the mystique of cinema: a peculiar and original cinematic reality. His film phrases, constructed through fragmentation, also tamper with reality by showing the total geography of a setting and spatial relationships between the shots. Tarr shows that the intensity of viewer involvement depends on the energies, which radiate from the screen according to the filmmaker's arrangement of dramatic sequences. All of this might imply that the resulting cinematic experience is the sum of several processes operating together. Tarr shows that audiovisual forms converging with the factors of meaning invest the narrative with tensions. His films function on many perceptual levels at once through their own specific structures, properly arranged according to the rules of performance.

In addition, art films are usually expressive of national concerns, and they are characterized by the use of self-consciously artful techniques designed to differentiate them from merely entertaining popular cinema. This strategy enables the art film to be viewed at home as part of a national culture and abroad as exotic and sophisticated, and therefore as worthy of attention. The resulting inference is that in evaluating a work of art, like a film from Béla Tarr, we should take into consideration not only the formal properties of a work of art but also such elements as the philosophical ideas contained in the work, emotional expressiveness, the fidelity to the represented external reality, the depth of insight into, and an analysis of the moral and psychological problems. In the reception and evaluation of a work of art, we do not limit ourselves to appreciation of its formal properties. We need also to look for possible cognitive dilemmas and moral endorsements presented in the work. In Tarr's films, formal elements and larger-scale patterns

are referred to as choices, since when an artist contemplates the best way to articulate essential points she has an array of options before him. Creating an artwork involves electing the forms that the artist believes will function optimally toward realizing the purpose of the work.

Accordingly, forms are formal choices and marked stylistic events because they are elected from a certain amount of options. Also, forms are selected because they are designed or intended to perform certain functions. For example, Clive Bell thought that painting is art if it possesses a significant form. Though the importance of form was made especially apparent by the tendency of modern art toward abstraction, significant form was a property said to be possessed by all artworks, past, present, and future. Significant form is comprised of arrangements of lines, colours, shapes, volumes, vectors, and space. Genuine art, on this view, addresses the imagination like the figures of Gestalt psychology, prompting the viewer to fill the artwork in such a way that we apprehend it as an organized configuration of lines, colours, shapes, vectors and spaces. Films renew our perceptions and other mental processes. Art is as sort of mental exercise. The spectator's relationship to the artwork becomes active, so she is involved on the levels of perception, emotion and cognition, all bound up together.



III. 3 *Werckmeister Harmonies*

An important aspect of the presentation is that there is often a special attention to the constant movement of light and to the arbitrary character of natural phenomena. Béla Tarr is a particular master of rendering the motion inside the still moment in terms of life out of doors. He seems especially to have addressed the idea of showing the small moments of the world depicted in his films as if there were the model and paradigm for all action. Tarr's assessment of cinema as a medium of references materializes itself in his films that explore the language of cinema through their existence as works that cover audiovisual design ideas con-

nected with architecture, photography, and painting. Tarr's approach to pictorial stillness, as referenced earlier with other cases (Angelopoulos, Hitchcock, and Kaurismäki), relates to his understanding of the compositional efforts aligned with the image, and shot lengths, and their unusual nature in the hands of Tarr. 'The stilling of the image', a term used by Christine Ross in her study of contemporary art *The Past is the Present; It's the Future Too* (2014), fits well to Tarr's approach in using extreme shot lengths with minimal movements inside them, and orchestrating the cinematic flow towards eagerly expected resolutions in his treatment of filmic language.<sup>1</sup> Tarr's idea concerns a certain renewing of film's ancient capacities through this stilling of the image. It gives possibilities to work with findings that try to expose the pictorial state of depicted events. How these connections between the characters, and their movements, and the camera, with its movements, can collide and work together to achieve the contested equilibrium of filmic transpositions? Tarr's aspiration deals with pictorial understanding of the image, and the hold of it, to express fully pictorial levels of narration.<sup>2</sup> In a Tarr film, the movements of the characters are described and photographed as statically positioned and visually pinned against a vast background. Characters are arranged in lateral groupings extending from left to right on the screen. Tarr orchestrates the spectacle within what happens to be a largely spatial image in which the performers move from one side to the other through this representational space. When the individual performers move, the camera follows their movements and generally confines them to the representational space of the narrative. The significance of the form comes forward, and the photographic dimension of the narrative creates static and momentarily captured intensity, which is also connected with the use of the soundtrack. Almost nothing happens in his images, which show moments filled mostly with the passage of time, for example, as in the opening moments of *Sátántangó* (1994) when we follow the slow movements of cows entering the frame. The best of these moments are mesmerizing for their tensions of expectation, pregnant with feelings and emotions of waiting, and devoid of incident. The freezing of the passage of time reaches its highest intensity, and with an utmost care Tarr's camera explores the aspects of the depicted scene in question. Another way Tarr experiments with the cinematographic medium is through associations. In many of his films, he plays with various combinations to see how events can be ordered to represent the world of his narration.



III. 4 *Sátántangó*

Béla Tarr is, in his way, documenting rural life with these passing moments. The cows are present in the images of *Sátántangó*, and their quiet responses match the pace of light and its dim presence. The composition itself moves slowly, as it seems to do so vigorously in many other scenes of Tarr's films. There, the cineaste stirs the world of his scenes, the air, and the sky with his own brilliant vision, maintaining his compositional outlook toward the happenings. He seeks to keep anything definite from occurring so that we as spectators can supply all the possibilities, and still be alert for the surprises to come. Tarr's compositional values consist of audiovisual mixture of various ingredients arranged in proper filmic form often in highly evolved manner. Tarr's cinematic code in his landscape images centres round flat panoramas, which invite scanning and seem themselves to be flowing past over us as we are intact upon them. They have their own specific arrangement created by the horizon in them. The sky and earth are present creating the fact that the worldview in them is in current flux. The spectator's eye patrols and travels over the images without a certain feeling forced to rest on any eminence or prominence. The emotion implied by the act of looking must be in control and stay fluid enough to keep moving, and never maintaining solely so that everything could be possessed in one glimpse.

### *Images and Intentions*

Tarr seems to be saying this to himself: he is scanning his own images in this way. Although the theme of things seems to be shifting, showing all the slow changes in the image, there seems to be no easy way to pack the intention of the image. Views in this kind of cinema are simply further configurations of the landscape, visions with foreground, middle, and background intermingling without setting themselves as totally separate entities. Tarr frequently uses the minimal



appearance technique for landscape-lighting. This means that the spectator gazes straight at the light source, and all of the objects in the image rise up in some degree of silhouette against it. This method could be construed as a pointedly anti-classical device, since the effect occurs frequently in actual experience but is not often seen in film. Tarr uses also side-lighting effects to balance the appearance of characters and objects in his landscape images that are still committed to classical ideals. They have their specific atmosphere and proportionate arrangements within fixed boundaries. For example, lighting a scene from the rear, like in *Damnation* (1988), Tarr dazzles the spectator's eye and shows a keen interest in recording natural phenomena for their direct emotional affects, showing how important they are when considering the compositional outlook. In this process, however, pictorialism becomes a practice by which film is transformed into what must be called a pictorial reality. *Damnation* was the first in Tarr's production to shift the focus from the performer to the audience. In the absence of musical sound, the observer becomes alert to the ambient noises occurring over the duration of the film's various movements. (The same idea continues in *Sátántangó*). Tarr's visions validate the image as surface, but they never abandon the depth of the landscape whose elements stand forth and convey an unresolved mystery.



III. 5 *Kárhozat*

Sometimes one can see a certain luminous harmony in Béla Tarr's visions, a magnetic gaze that derives ultimately from the relentless eye of the actual that gives Tarr's camera its strength. Tarr actualizes many themes in his films by casting them in his style of artistic reality. The camera-calligraphy plays central role in this. Tarr's predecessor Miklós Jancsó developed the *mise-en-scène* in his strenuously physical way, pacing the terrain back and forth in all directions to work out the movements of the performers and those of the camera. Pure, unattached movement is usually hard to find but In Tarr's visions it exists.<sup>3</sup> At any partially



observed moments, we may not know what comes next, but we must not dismiss from our consciousness what we have heard or seen before, since a film and any kind of work of art grows step by step into a whole, and as we can gradually build our understanding of this development, it is possible for us to comprehend what has disappeared from our direct vision and what has survived in memory. With Tarr, our perception is organized so that things in front of us on the screen persist spatially simultaneously, and influence one another and are modified by new incoming stimuli. Tarr's performances build a challenge and a constant charge for the viewer since they are organized sequentially, which means that different phases (orchestrations) inside a sequence need director's active pushes to maintain the gradually shifting forces of movements that are the controllers of the rhythm of his filmmaking practice. Tarr's conceptual ideas of filmmaking are somehow concerned with the idea of awaking a new stream of audiovisual consciousness into which his narratives could then penetrate with efficiency. His desire to create cinematographic impulses connected with emotional accentuation of the mind works as a demonstration of his emotional and psychological assertions. As a consequence of this, Tarr changes his lighting even within a continuous scene in order to record these specifically planned and rendered visions governing his audiovisual design of the narrative. In the different states of *Sátántangó*, we can see and comprehend how these changes of lighting are executed in the structures of a same scene. The cineaste's delicate use of chiaroscuro, connected with the scenic moods and overall characterization, is also related to the compositional aspect and arrangement of the scene. The black and white world is thus elevated to the level of audiovisual poetry to ensure its artistic power and narrative methods. He could not have done this without the full support of his filmmaking crew. Especially the work of his editor and wife Ágnes Hranitzky is crucial, and her artistic accomplishment is extremely vital by whatever standards. Tarr's artistic solutions are recklessly inventing and combining filmic planning and techniques to achieve the desired outcome. In his works, Tarr develops unsuspected implications of his canonized themes and personal properties concerning his imagery, gradually intensifying the mood of the scenes with ambient sound and music overtures used collaboratively in linked scenes throughout the narrative. He combines painterly and graphic effects, used in fascination with a narrative mode of consistent expressiveness where the tonal possibilities of the works are properly exemplified.

Like Jancsó before him, Tarr also invests the narrative with plan-sequences. Some of them can be very long, involving continuous and intricate camera movements, like simultaneous track-tilt-pans, compounded by the 'virtual' movement of the omnipresent camera. In certain sequences, the camera seems to be exploring, reacting to actions, and also proceeding autonomously around the happenings on the screen. Tarr's production methods form patterns of thought, emotion, and impulse connected to the control of his mise-en-scène, the various aspects

in the representation of images and sounds, and how the elements are joined together. Tarr's *mise-en-scène* is built on stylized efforts that stretch and expand the nature of the narration, and might sometimes go even beyond it. The film's true narrative mode can be described as symbolical fantasy, enriched by a strong phenomenological sense of realism. Most unusual, as in the case of Jancsó, is the choreography of walking with its changing positions of body-language creating a sense of impassivity, especially in *Sátántangó*, *The Man from London* (2007), and *Damnation*. Characters are in a continuous state of waiting while Tarr's camera creates its changing rhythms, and shifting vectors. The dimension of pictorialism is impressive, especially in the landscape images, often revealed gradually, and controlled by the shifting camerawork around them. Camerawork can have an independent visual command which usually is a sign of complex aesthetic choices done by the filmmaker. These choices are concerned with lines, volumes, movements and figurations, all related to the overall visual design that controls the work. With Tarr, already single images are filled with these aesthetic evaluations. The framing and grouping of the performers in *Damnation* and *The Man from London* has the arbitrariness and immediacy at the same time, different from their more fixed presence in *Sátántangó*.



III. 6 *Sátántangó*

Tarr shows how the camera movements themselves can become a focus of attention: they have their own kinetic presence with their definitely and in many cases elegantly created movements. This is camera-calligraphy in the true sense of the word: Tarr's camera seems to move across the scene accentuated and punctuated by a tightly controlled orchestration of cinematic ideas.<sup>4</sup> This is something that differentiates Tarr from others since calligraphic camerawork does not always do this. Tarr's camera movements are especially intricate and persistent they do not simply change the shape of a scene. Also the meticulously wrought soundtrack is

extremely important in Tarr since the overlaid sounds of a scene create and add a sense of the aural space to the images, and to the pictorial/visual space. This laid interaction of sounds and images produces a new texture into the narration. The sparse, piecemeal, and oblique verbal narration is comprehensive in its shortness, and the ideas involved in this invest the narrative with an extended and enlarged atmosphere to these actions, which also work on wider patterns of historical understanding. Kovács describes:

The camera almost never follows the characters. It is consistently independent from the characters' movements. Either the characters walk out of the frame or the camera moves away from them. When there is, however, some sort of following movement, it is very short and compensated for by other independent movements (2013: 57).<sup>5</sup>

Tarr's orchestration of appearances relies on the physicality of moving, restless bodies, on vividly photographed landscapes, and on faces, which create an aura of personal, atmospheric, and changing expressions. They can be motionless but occasionally also vibrate with life and, instead of repeating the usual characters' roles, they weave dissonances, riddles, and a specific human ambiguity around them. Kovács again:

By far the most frequent technique to slow down the narrative of Tarr's films is the following of an action sequence in all of its most significant details. This creates a sense of radical continuity meaning that virtually no element of an action sequence is omitted through the continuous representation of the given action sequence. *Sátántangó* abounds with scenes of this kind. The most spectacular of them is the doctor's episode, in the first part. This episode lasts exactly one hour. It recounts the doctor's everyday activities, consisting mainly of reading, spying on the neighbors, taking notes of their activities and commenting on them, drinking and satisfying his biological needs. As he is very fat and ill, he does everything very slowly and with great effort (2013: 124).<sup>6</sup>

Tarr's microcosm means the private application of general mystery, and it is shown by emphasizing arrangements inside small circles. Main characters in *The Turin Horse* live their life privately indoors, with only a provisional relation to the outdoor happenings. This invests the narrative with a conduct of private phenomenology of feelings. The landscape around them is a continuation of this private vista suggested mainly through a window. Light and spatial arrangements are disposed with the same intensity throughout the narrative. Tarr's filmic atmosphere mirrors the psychological state of the two inhabitants, father (Janos Derzi) and daughter (Erika Bók) in *The Turin Horse* (2011) through a passage of glances and facial responses with a camera moving in on them and focusing on their small

interchanges. The mystery and intimate expressions of the characters in *The Turin Horse* form a staged tableau of events, intensified only occasionally when something that happens outside of their interior-world becomes an influence in their life. They very much have the flavor of a recurring dream: each view of the room is the same, but each set of details is slightly different. Each image is full of its own complete suggestive movements and situations. The subjective consciousness of the characters is invoked anew each time. This all creates a figuration of destinies doomed in their own behaviour. At any moment, the camera can establish them or move besides them and concentrate on the small amount of visual details around them. The whole pictorial outcome is a frame from a larger story that goes beyond them, and in which these isolated figures are only passers-by of the dramatic whole. This assertion sums up Tarr's attitude to his narrative, meaning that he and his audience are continually introduced to various functions of 'reality' corresponding human perspectives, which would ideally continue to be brought into new existence along a continuum of aesthetics and technologies of representation.

The whole world lies in this chamber of events, which works as a visualization of certain happenings, and yet nothing is really happening. The atmosphere is rendered through the use of slightly muted light, creating the arbitrary oblique angles of vision, the suggestive use of figures, emphasizing the painterly affectation through which the characters pose as emblems of this tableau. The dim rendering of spaces and the ambiguous personages half shadowed under the minimal light, portray not just the overall structure but more likely moments of waiting, of uncertainty about the future happenings. This general uncertainty, in a still-like universe, contains a double vision: one that is based on light and appearances; and another that is based on deeper carried visual quality of solutions in editing, acting and the use of music. Faces have the restrained expressiveness of half-emotional presence, incorporating ordinary realism, embodied in certain moments with the presence of almost motionless environment. The light is used idiosyncratically, bringing forth the compositional aspects of design, concerning Tarr's complex schemes for expanding his black-and-white cinematic reality in the mode of describing some phenomena and revealing others. The use of shadowy radiance that illuminates the whole world gives the lighting affectation a shimmering surface glow, reflecting the sensibility of this 'realism'. The dramatic events are in slow progress, uniting a sense of classical mythology rendered as part of these appearances where the cyclic human spectacle seems to have a specific cosmic significance. This is the Hungarian way, where the controlled disposition of bodies in space is conjoint with the overall compositional logic of the narrative, and the arrangement of subject matters, and the interaction between the characters conveying the idea of a controlled duration of artistic presence. Tarr's images have this unity of sweep and coherent motion. The old and modern subjects are united in *The Turin Horse*, where the true originality lies in the creative modernization of something very old.

III. 7 *Werckmeister Harmonies*

There is a sense of doom in the air, the Nietzschean recollection of solitary moments, the eternal return faced by these transitory situations of unfinished quietness and sensual despair in process. The notion of eternal return displays a paradox, since usually history implies change and development, but looking at history over the long term, it seems that it may be perceived through an understanding that certain patterns of events seem to recur regularly. Nietzsche's paradox concerned with the eternal return is connected with the idea that what returns will never actually be the same, but will be, more or less, recognized as the same by virtue of its temporal difference. What recurs returns in the form of misrecognition, for it is only what the present recognizes of itself in the past, not the past itself. This is crucial in understanding the relations between the present and the past, and how the perception between them is founded. It also explains the temporal elements of duration and succession, how they are experienced and intentionally structured, constituting through their flow a temporality that suggests the very being in the world, characterized by this process of unity in experiencing stages of past and present.

Tarr's scenes, whether pictorial views of the outside world or more limited side-views, echo the gaze of the filmmaker and his receptive consciousness, which is inspired by this specific point of view created into the narration. Characters occasionally seem to be indifferent to emotional shifts and discharges, unforeseeable regroupings or other formations, while the narration goes on. What follows is an extended cinematic vision, featuring scenes that are unique compared to others. Usually, not much is explained, the emotional and social circumstances of the characters are hinted in some moments when there are shifts and changes between the scenes, or something surprising will happen. The total flavor of Tarr's cinema is in fact uneven, as if each film, instead of being a complete example of a filmmaker's ongoing struggle for perfection, looks rather one of an endless series of trials, experimenting and executing private visions, many of

which come out brilliantly and some seem more restrainedly constructed. The atmospheric charge of Tarr's oeuvre is connected with the placing of figures in cinematic space. There might be signs of restraint and prudery in Tarr's characters, which appear more like figurations inside the narrative. This features an affinity with a slight awkwardness concerned with the rendering of their personal affections. Such a stylization of corporeal being of the characters in the images seems a deliberate design to keep the flavor of reflected, sometimes unfortified emotions stronger but still controllable in the overall effect of the work. Tarr's style is, in this sense, a figurative screening of bodily co-ordinations as a determinative force of the representation of the characters. Characterization works in context with the depicted landscapes, similarly conceived on the filmic canvas, across which the action is unfolding, sometimes affected by sudden uncontrollable forces like in the end of *Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000), or in single scenes of *Sátántangó*, and *The Man from London*. The atmosphere of the situation is the point in many cases, and, from time to time, scenes are worked out like captions with notions of ambience. The captions may help but they are not doing all the work. The spectator immediately understands that she will need to be active to make sense of a particular narrative. Tarr is often more or less ambiguous in his depiction of direct forces (human or nature) that are driving the circumstances into conflict, and by being not always very specific about the immediate causes behind these reflections. Showing a figure, a face, or group convocation, gives Tarr the prospect to spotlight a line, a form, or a simple gesture.

These illustrations are illuminative, not always on the level of the story than of a certain condition or state of being, which includes also the way the surrounding scenery is affecting the events. This is the narrative and aesthetic mode of Béla Tarr, through which the images, pictorial formations of the narration, light up the flow of the recital and individual incidents. The tales have their objectifications since the images and sound are selected for the described moments, and, in this fashion, there is no need to clarify a strict storyline. Tarr can rely more on encounters and personal discoveries fabricating and establishing sequences in the middle of which we are engaged. Tarr's films are full of such distinctions or the suggestion of them; and they are delivered as if the audience would be engaged in that same forward movement toward a shadowy future. For instance, the lighting of *The Man from London* shows the foreground of an image in light contrasted against a shadier distance, no matter what else is in the image. The film works as an example of a specific strain in the development of an expressionist lighting effect that relies on the controlled form of these chiaroscuro-affects. This is essential for Tarr's cinema and creates an inflection of possible specifications to treat lighting and camerawork as transcendental impulses of art generally, and encompassing that steady pull of excitement in place at Tarr's oeuvre. His films have an advantage of flourishing unexpectedly,

and tempering the audience to uncertain conclusions. In Tarr's hands, the art of the events reconstitutes its own terms as to be personally inflected, and to deal with the elements of his spectacle. The Hungarian way to do it relies on a wide range of overtones from the earlier artistic past including references to symbolism. Tarr sticks to his exact individualism in conveying his worldview and his acute attention to stylistic details. Such material pinpoints and purports a plain recollection of events and tries to convey a deliberately built environment under tactile artistic control in which the drama usually includes several people, giving meanings to human fantasies in the middle of their very existence. This includes a filmic form that is different from exaggeration or a sense of spectacular effects. The impulse behind everything is a conscious one, opening a reflexive and sometimes 'muted' photography of ideas and happenings, suggesting the presence of character plainness composed into pictures of pure observance and eternal waiting.



Ill. 8 *Kárhozat*

Tarr's filmic iconography sets standards for pictorial filmmaking in the sense of an increasingly personal touch of dramatics defining and distilling a cinematic language that is endless in its search for the almost silent colloquy between the artist's visions and aspirations. Through his stylization Tarr extends the standard perspectival methods of optical depth in keeping the action of an individual scene as a fixed entity staged in the distance, showing these dimensions on the screen and using them as extended impressions of the described 'photoplay' on the overall picture plane. This is the pictorial landscape created by the cineaste. The consequences are diverse, and customarily the 'story' happens outside of our imaginative sympathies. In Tarr's universe, there is room for detached pictorial information that exists in uniform with a meticulous, diligent style, demonstrating an apparatus of relations and associations from a stable distance, scene



after scene, and tableau after another with the characters prominent in the middle of this spectacle. Tarr establishes dialectic of near and far appearances, inner and outer states of mentality, and private and public acknowledgements.

### Notes

- 1 Ross, Christine, 2014. *The Past is the Present; It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art*. New York, London: Bloomsbury, 168.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 134.
- 3 See about the Miklós Jancsó style in Durgnat, Raymond, 2003. *Psaume rouge*. In: Feigelson, Kristian and Valkola, Jarmo, eds. *Cinéma hongrois: le temps et l'histoire*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 111–26.
- 4 Valkola, Jarmo, 2003. *L'esthétique visuelle de Béla Tarr*. In Feigelson, Kristian and Valkola, Jarmo, eds. *Cinéma hongrois: le temps et l'histoire*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 181–92.
- 5 Kovács, András Bálint, 2013. *The Cinema of Béla Tarr*. New York: Columbia University Press, 57.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 124.

# SCREEN MEMORY: THE JEWISH QUESTION

KRISTIAN FEIGELSON\*

Sorbonne Nouvelle University Paris  
kristian.feigelson@univ-paris3.fr

CATHERINE PORTUGES\*

University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
portuges@complit.umass.edu

This paper explores intersections of memory and cinematic representation in contemporary Hungarian film culture. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, with the concomitant financial crisis in Hungarian cinema, a number of films have foregrounded questions of Jewish identity, a taboo subject on Hungarian screens after 1945 when nationalistic historiography supported an official government culture of denial with regard to responsibility for the deportation and extermination of some 550 000 Hungarian Jews. The production of relatively few narrative and documentary films on this subject, the essay suggests, is perhaps in part attributable to the fact that the Hungarian uprising of 1956 tended to eclipse the drama of Jewish deportation and genocide. The authors consider post-socialist filmmakers' uses of the past in the context of the country's current nationalistic climate, interrogating the impact of controversial films such as László Nemes's *Son of Saul* (2015, Grand Prix, Cannes Film Festival ; Academy Award for best foreign film) within a Hungarian society still conflicted about its Holocaust trauma.

**Keywords:** Hungary, cinema, History, Jewish question, genocide, memory, remembrance.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and after a long period of crisis in the Hungarian cinema's finances, a number of films have dealt with the question of Jewish identity, a rather taboo subject on Hungarian screens after 1945. How then – in Hungarian public space – can we consider the role of films that have become the focus of intergenerational debates about the Holocaust? What approaches to the past has Hungarian cinema initiated since WWII in revisiting this trauma?

## The Cinema: Place of Memory?

Through this theme, cinema has once again become a place of memory, a crossroads of Hungarian history. At the beginning of the post-war period, concentra-

tion camps had not yet become an object of historical inquiry, nor of a public striving to forget this history. Few testimonials or narratives appeared at a time when the traces of war were being erased in the interest of rebuilding society as quickly as possible<sup>1</sup>. In spite of international pressure to learn the truth, the case of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who died in the Soviet Union in 1945 after saving some hundred-thousand Hungarian Jews, crystallized post-war paradoxes in Hungary and abroad. Such treatment of the Holocaust is more specific to the filmic work of a second or third generation of postwar filmmakers, who focus on the place of Jewish identity in Central Europe,<sup>2</sup> posing questions of truth and probability. Is it possible to evoke the concept of intergenerational transmission when the filmmakers' imagination is confronted with a history built on traumatic gaps<sup>3</sup>? Without going back to the origins of Theodor Herzl, born in Budapest in the Austro-Hungarian Empire before beginning his own reflection on the Zionist project in Vienna, filmmakers today are rediscovering a very different Jewish history – that of the Holocaust – divided between family memory and the absence of official writings on the subject<sup>4</sup>. As in other European societies, it took Hungary some twenty five years – nearly a generation – to gradually address these Jewish questions on the screen.



Birkenau (2010) photo Kristian Feigelson

The construction of the nation state in Central Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century no doubt made it possible to take the measure not only of the idea of nation, but also of the gradual appearance of new nationalist discourses around “Magyar” identity and its anti-semitic corollary<sup>5</sup>. Does one remain Jewish after becoming Hungarian? Jewish communities in Hungary were well integrated

at the end of the nineteenth century, and 60% of families assimilated through mixed marriages. This community, which enjoyed an unprecedented level of development after its political emancipation in December 1867, was also the first to suffer discriminatory legislation after WW I and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While the first anti-Jewish laws of the 1920s were not widely applied, they were well implemented in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1938, Jews were directly targeted as a subversive community by a fascist government openly collaborating with Nazi Germany. From Hungary's entry into the war in 1941 to the German invasion in March 1944, the Jewish community in the Budapest ghetto of nearly 70,000 people was preserved, unlike the exterminated Jewish communities in Poland, before mass deportations were undertaken following the Hitler-Horthy pact of March 18, 1944<sup>6</sup>.

The Christian churches also allowed a number of converted Jews to escape deportation despite a climate of indifference and international pressure at the time. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Hungarian society has, we argue, fallen short of the task of proposing a clear history of its responsibility in the Shoah, as Hungary proved unable to defend its citizens who were left to witness the mass disappearance.

### From Disappearance to Emptiness

Hungarian narrative cinema has accorded relatively little space to these questions.



Géza von Radványi's *Somewhere in Europe* (1947)

In 1947, Géza von Radványi's pioneering film *Somewhere in Europe* was the first to portray the disasters of war, evoking abandoned children wandering the countryside, including Jews not openly identified as such, and the first to suggest the responsibility of the Arrow Cross Party in the disaster. Released in the middle of the Stalin era, Félix Máriássy's 1953 film, *Spring Comes to Budapest* is an allusive and somewhat anecdotal reading of Ferenc Karinthy's short story about

a young man who joined the resistance movement and fell in love with a young Jewish woman. Until the late 1960s, nonetheless, the Jewish question remained a minor one in order to circumvent Communist-era censorship, which tended to privilege allegorical representations. Subsequently, the director Miklós Jancsó, for whom “Hungarians always feel trapped in an immense space,” examined the extent of what was not said<sup>7</sup>. In *Silence and Cry* (1968), for example, and *Agnus Dei* (1970), the director probed the origins of Hungarian fascism and counter-revolution after 1919, filming immense, windswept plains in an aestheticization of a vacant landscape that proposes the Jewish question as a metaphor for disappearance.

The Jewish question had already appeared in István Szabó’s films during the Communist period as an autobiographical narrative, eventually returning to that of repressed personal Jewish identity that had been so difficult to express at the time.



*Apa* (1966) István Szabó

His 1966 film *Father* highlighted the power of Jewish subjectivity, although the portrayal of the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 eclipsed the drama of deportation in 1944. Not unlike in the Soviet Union, a thaw became a necessary precursor to the process of bearing witness to trauma and Hungarian culture’s Jewish heritage. The arrests and deportations in *Father* were recreated in the center of Budapest in 1966 with the dogged perseverance of a filmmaker born in 1938 to a Jewish family, although later criticized for being an informant under the Communist regime’s secret police<sup>8</sup>. In order to play the role of a Hungarian Nazi, the hero, Takó, sews a yellow star on his jacket before going to meet his companion, Anni, who recalls her family’s disappearance in Auschwitz. Their serious dialogue raises questions of dual Jewish and Hungarian identity. Similarly, in *Cold Days* (1966), András Kovács returns to the same period through the lens of the

Serbian massacres of 1942 and the criminal proceedings that followed, sealing the shared fates of Jews and Hungarians. Despite the East/West Cold War context, these two films are undoubtedly inscribed in the aftermath of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961. How can the responsibility of ordinary citizens, a general passivity in the face of deportations, or the notion of collective crime or responsibility be explained in a communist State where ideology has replaced the rule of law? Perhaps it can be said that, in a certain sense, through the prism of WW II, when the Soviets served as new liberators, the repressed Jewish question gradually re-emerged on the public stage. In *Impostor* (1965), Zoltán Fábri foregrounds the origins of the Hungarian fascism and its visceral anti-Semitism. Likewise, in *Silence and Cry* (1968) Jancsó portrays the climate of oppression and domestic violence conducive to anti-Semitism. Hungarians could, however, also be depicted behaving righteously, as in Jancsó's 1968 film *The Confrontation*, in which seminarians hide a young Jewish boy, or later in Fábri's *Fifth Seal* (1976), which addressed the rescue of young persecuted Jews. In any case, the debate on the Hungarian Jewish question seems to remain external to the society in question, primarily commented by historians,<sup>9</sup> while visual representation is almost absent. In von Radványi's *Circus Maximus* (1980), the escape of fugitives becomes a common cross to bear. Much later, in Imre Gyöngyössi and Barna Kabay's *The Revolt of Job* (1983), at the end of the war, a Jewish child is faced with the arrest of his adoptive parents. In Pál Sándor's *Deliver Us from Evil* (1982), the allegory of a tragic and evil national history is all but religious.

### A Fragmented Imaginary

The Jew within becomes a metonymic reprise both of suffering and of collective responsibility in the face of disappearance. The revival of the Jewish question was a minor part of Hungarian cinematic production after 1989<sup>10</sup>. How can this representation of trauma by omission be understood? How does it proceed from a fragmented imaginary? How can the unspoken parts of history be told in a post-totalitarian context now dominated by vindictive populism? By the time the debate had been re-opened, nearly a decade had passed since the fall of the Berlin Wall. István Szabó's fictional fresco *Sunshine* (1999) was produced largely with foreign capital and outside Hungary; and, Judit Elek's 1995 film *Awakening* was a portrait of a young Jewish girl in the 1950s<sup>11</sup>. Given that some 15 to 20 feature films have been produced each year and, since the end of the war, Hungary has produced more than 800 fiction films, relatively few have approached an issue so central to the history of Hungary<sup>12</sup>. Since 1945, worldwide, nearly 500 feature, documentary and television films have been devoted to this aspect of history or to the impact of the Holocaust<sup>13</sup>.

In Hungary, it was not until the mid-1960s that these questions were evoked. Many years later, Szabó's *Sunshine* depicted an epic fresco of lost collective Jewish identity,<sup>14</sup> thematizing assimilation in its many contradictions and sufferings, associating archival images with fiction.



*Sunshine*, (1999) István Szabó

The family's original name, Sonnenschein, later changed to Sors (meaning 'fate'), serves as a reference for understanding a return to Jewish identity. The film relates the tale of four generations of a Jewish family, the Sonnenscheins, marked by the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867–1918) during WW I, the Horthy regime (1920–1944) after the Treaty of Trianon and the collapse of the Empire in 1920, which partially explains the rise of a nationalist spirit of revenge, culminating in the Arrow Cross Party (1941–1945). Until then, despite having been better protected in comparison to other Jewish communities in Central Europe, the mass deportation of 550,000 Hungarian Jews to the extermination camps accelerated at the end of the war, under the impetus of the occupying Nazi forces. Sovietization (1945–1956) after the 1947 elections and Mátyás Rákosi's rise to power, as well as the domination of the Hungarian Workers' Party repatriated from the Soviet Union, considered Jewish questions to be taboo until the arrival of Imre Nagy in 1953, executed in 1958 after the Hungarian Uprising. Henceforth, the symbolic date of 1956 excluded in-depth debate on the reality of the Jewish genocide of 1945. The Jewish question was modified in the Soviet perspective, a liberating and dominating power in which Stalinism appeared as a doctrine imported and reappropriated by the victors. Already in *My Way* (1964), Jancsó had recalled these memories of war marked by social schizophrenia wherein the Soviet liberator assimilates the Russian occupying force in 1956. While it was ultimately only in the post-1989 period that any real debate was opened, in alternating phases, the Kádár era made several timid ventures into the taboo territory of Hungarian collaboration in these massive deportations. In fact, *Sunshine* romanticised the integration of the Jewish elite in Hungary. The policy of integration led to a loss of Jewish identity whereby the Jewish community gradually dissolved into a collection of isolated individuals by late 1989 after reliving this generational history in search of its roots<sup>15</sup>.



### Between Testimony and Representation

If fictional treatments remained strangely silent or in the background, only addressing the deeply-rooted traumas of the Jewish genocide in Hungarian society in the mid-1960s, what may be said with regard to Hungarian documentary film? In 1985, Gyula Gazdag made *Package Tour*, an account of a group of Auschwitz survivors' pilgrimage in search of their history, which in its own way recalls Emmanuel Finkiel's films on the subject. Edith Köszégi and Sándor Simó's *Pictures for Our Children* (1990) is a search for the Jewish children of the pre-war era found in a family album. Judit Elek, a Jewish filmmaker who experienced the Occupation first-hand, directed *Memoirs of a River* (1989) regarding the anti-semitic Tiszaeszlár case which divided Hungary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A similar theme appears in her documentary *To Speak the Unspeakable: the Message of Elie Wiesel* (1996), in which the Nobel laureate retraces his footsteps from Transylvania to Auschwitz.. Could it be, then, that the Holocaust was more a literary preoccupation than a cinematic one, the latter being less capable of representing the unrepresentable and the unnameable? After 1989, heroes were confronted by the guilt of the survivors: in *Glamour* (2000), Frigyes Gödrös shows the fate of persecuted Jews, whereas in Andor Szilágyi's *Rose's Songs* (2003), Jews take refuge in an opera singer's Budapest villa, sheltered only by their protector's song. In Ildikó Szabó's *Chacho Rom* (2002), the fate of the Jews and the persecution of the Roma takes the form of a folkloric performance. In the interstices between documentary film's challenges with regard to bearing witness and fictional representations, the question of what is representable then arises.

This debate had, however, already been addressed in Imre Kertész's Nobel prizewinning semi-autobiographical novel, *Fateless*, written in 1975 and adapted thirty years later by István Szabó's former director of photography Lajos Koltai's dreamlike triptych. The gradual development of the plot offers a dramatic progression of the narrative around a succession of scenes that illustrate the experience of the concentration camps.<sup>16</sup>



*Fateless* (2005) Lajos Koltai

While it may have failed to bridge the gap between on-screen testimony and representation, the film succumbs to the lure of naturalism, highlighting the discrepancy between narrative testimony and visualplausibility<sup>17</sup> thereby reconstituting the violence s of the Holocaust. The gap then becomes clear between lived experience and a *posteriori* testimony conveyed in a fictionalized space. How can film translate literary language or aesthetic research? Can it shed as much light on the cinematic apparatus as on the gravity of the problems brought to the screen? If *Fateless* claims to retrace the writer's own experience in Buchenwald in 1944, it is as much about the Holocaust in general terms as about the exceptional destiny of a human being.

Yet despite its marginalized impact, cinema partially succeeds in negotiating the zone between public and private space. At once marginalised and central, the return to the issue of Jewish identity despoiled or denied is the work of a generation of younger directors, struggling to find the traces of a taboo history. These films include amongst others, András Salamon's *Lost Family*, János Szász's *The Witman Boys* (1997) and *They Were My Neighbors* (2006), Laszló Martinidesz's *From Mauthausen to Dob Street* (2004), Zsuzsanna Gellér-Varga's *Synagogue for Sale* (2007), Barbara Spitzer's *Memories of a Journey* (2005), and Diana Groó's *Miracle in Krakow* (2004). These films draw on a series of ambiguities, evoking the ghostly memory of a culture that is both present and vanished as in Georges Zsiga's *Starry Budapest* (2011) with interviews of survivors depicting the Jewish life in « *Budapest étoilée* ». Unlike in Germany, the disappearance of the Jews does not play a central role in a Hungarian national recovery of history.

In this reactivation of memory, Péter Forgács' untiring work in the reconstitution of amateur archival films goes the furthest. *The Bartos Family* (1988) and *Free Fall* (1996) from the *Private Hungary* series (1988–2002), recount the destiny of European Jewish families caught in the turmoil of the rise of Nazism.



*Maelstrom* (1997) Péter Forgács

The Jewish question then becomes no longer necessarily a Hungarian one, instead denoting a universal referent. In family chronicles such as *Maelstrom* (1997) and *Danube exodus* (1998), the missing Dutch Jewish families and rescued Slovakian Jewish families are portrayed at the turn of the 1940s<sup>18</sup>.



*Danube exodus* (1998) Péter Forgács

By placing themselves on the side of the victims, Forgács's films suggest the executioners' indifference. Using sound, silence and color film, Forgács' juxtaposition of the fate of the executioners with that of the victims offers a profound meditation on the banality of evil.



*Danube exodus* (1998) Péter Forgács

The montage puts these traces of the past back into perspective, foregrounding a history that had never really been accounted for. Péter Forgács' revisited archive makes it possible to reconstruct and reinterpret a history that is still evolving. As the past became eradicated, a threat against jewish identity , history became a main task for the filmmaker. The fragments of individual and anonymous history, reconstituted in this patient work on film archives, testifies – beyond documentary or fiction – to the force of the return of the repressed. The past of the



Csanád Szegedi in *Keep quite* (2016) Sam Blair

concentration camps then extends beyond Hungary's borders, becoming a common European crisis of identity. Although the Holocaust was the common lot of European Jewry, each society experienced its own particular relationship to it. Lately, *Keep quiet* (2016) directed by Sam Blair, a UK-Hungarian coproduction, raised a new debate about Hungarian anti-Semitism.

The film described the different faces of the extremist neo-Nazi Jobbik party, when Csanád Szegedi, its leading figure and European deputy, learned that he was himself a Jew as his grand-mother was also deported in Auschwitz. His whole world forever changed and gradually he became a practicing Jew. The film tracked the life transformation of this man.

### **From *Shoah* to *Son of Saul*: An Intergenerational Dialogue**

As a counterpoint to the silence that marked productions from this period little known outside of Hungary, László Nemes's *Son of Saul* (2015) brings the Nazi slaughterhouse to world screens. The film's long takes show the links between the Sonderkommandos and deported Auschwitz-Birkenau prisoners in the autumn of 1944. Filmed in Hungary in a most artisanal fashion, the film launched a debate about the concentration camps in Hungarian public space upon its release. A hybrid film based on historical events, and the only first fiction feature selected in the main competition category at the Cannes International Film Festival, *Son of Saul* was awarded the Festival's Grand Prix, the first time in thirty years that a Hungarian film has been thus acknowledged. It went on to win the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film (2016) and the New York Film Critics Circle Award for Best First Film, the Independent Spirit Award, and the Oscar for best foreign film at the 88<sup>th</sup> Academy Awards.

The film's treatment does not suppress the brutality of the concentrationary experience. To the contrary, this experience is amplified by a narrative that is supported by the soundtrack for the necessities of staging. The camera is completely immersed in the gas chambers. The generational drama is transposed in a fictional mode in this unlikely portrayal of a man, Saul, who amidst the horrors of Auschwitz, searches for a place to bury a child he thinks is his son in order to restore a semblance of humanity and meaning to life. In contrast to earlier Hungarian films, the representation of the concentration camps in *Son of Saul* is no longer elliptical or metaphorical; rather, it frames the industrial scale of extermination in an excessive style. The aestheticisation of the concentration camps disguises the narrative in an effort to depict the unimaginable and invisible aspects of everyday life in the *univers concentrationnaire*.

But, as we know from Hungarian and indeed global film history, cinema and the Holocaust has a long and complicated relationship. In the 72 years since

the end of WW II, what had once been a prevailing discourse that insisted upon the absolute and unquestioning unrepresentability of the Holocaust has come under increasing scrutiny, as younger generations of filmmakers, writers and philosophers argue for the ethical necessity of reconstructing or imagining Holocaust representation. As we see from the proliferation of film festivals and film studies scholarship as well as journalistic, fictional and poetic texts, Holocaust representation has continued to flourish well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, gaining momentum even as its perspective shifts, as a third generation adds its voice to the chorus of post-Holocaust filmmakers. In negotiating these complex thematic imperatives and representational strategies, bold new works examine those tropes and tensions for a generation removed temporally and spatially from the extended trauma, under the aegis of evolving notions of post-memory, the intergenerational transmission of trauma, inherited memory, questions of Jewish cultural identity and assimilation, and imaginative reconstructions of the past.<sup>19</sup>



*Son of Saul* (2015) László Nemes

Claude Lanzmann's magisterial nine-and-a-half-hour long *Shoah*, originally released in 1985 and re-released in a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition, at once embodies and advocates the primacy of testimony and witnessing so prevalent in the post-war era while proscribing the use of archival images in favor of eyewitness testimony, then the most urgent focus for survivors and historians of the period. As a counter-narrative to visualizations of the camps, the début fiction feature *Son of Saul* brings to the screen a controversial chapter of Holocaust history: the role of the Sonderkommando (the special command unit known as Geheimnisträger, bearers of secrets), teams of Jewish prisoners forced to assist the SS in the gas chambers and crematoria, themselves in turn condemned to extermination. The film is directed by the then 38-year-old Hungarian director, László Nemes, whose own family were Holocaust victims: « *A part of my family was assassinated in Auschwitz. It was something we talked about every day. When I was little, I had the impression that "evil had been done". I imagined it like a black hole buried within us; something had broken, and my inability to grasp exactly what it was kept me isolated.* »



*Son of Saul* (2015) László Nemes

Nemes was inspired by his discovery of the publication of hidden manuscripts written by Sonderkommandos buried in the grounds of the crematoria in 1944: from 1945–1980, eight sets of documents by five known authors were recovered. Retrospectively known as the Scrolls of Auschwitz, they are of extraordinary immediacy, composed as they were within the camps, and include witness accounts, letters and lists in Yiddish, Greek, French and Polish that raise critical questions with regard to the ethics, memory and interpretation of Holocaust testimony.

Saul (played by Géza Röhrig) is forced to lead prisoners into the fictitious showers of the gas chambers; in over-the-shoulder point-of-view throughout, extended shots of his impassive face against a blurred background, and an immersive wall of chaotic sound design, Nemes creates a claustrophobic hell of confusion and incomprehension. Indeed, in contrast to Primo Levi's view of the Sonderkommando as numbed servants of the Nazis, the writers of the Scrolls engaged in acts of resistance of which the writings themselves were an important part. Saul's moral dilemma—to participate in the extermination machine or join its victims—is a foregone conclusion. Because the Sonderkommando were summarily executed to remove evidence of Nazi atrocities, his own demise is simply a matter of time, as Nemes explains his own conception of the film's visual representation.

What connection can we find between *Shoah* and *Son of Saul*? Unlike in certain Holocaust films motivated by a redemptive narrative, there is no savior here, no heroic or rescuing figure, only victims trapped in the killing zone. « *I didn't want to make a film with a distant, detached point of view,* » says Nemes, instead seeking to « *place the audience from the point-of-view of one person in the middle of the killing machine. Otherwise the Holocaust becomes an abstract concept and the audience can back away.* »<sup>20</sup>

Nonetheless, as a descendant, so to speak, of *Shoah*, *Son of Saul* is perhaps after all not a film about the Holocaust, seeking neither to denounce nor describe its horrors; rather, it places the spectator in the Sonderkommando's cinematic body, evoking the sensation of seeing through his terrorized gaze, hearing strictly



what he hears. Every shot is tightly framed and often in close-up, accompanied by a disorienting sound mix of SS voices in Hungarian, German, Polish, Russian and Yiddish, mixed with concentration-camp slang. The set, designed by Hungarian architect László Rajk, who was also responsible for designing the Hungarian exhibition at Auschwitz, is essential to the film's taut energy. Long takes, at times of as much as four minutes duration, executed with a hand-held camera, required sets of complete rooms that could accommodate 360-degree takes for which Rajk recreated a Nazi crematorium in an abandoned 1912 warehouse on the outskirts of Budapest.

It is at this point that Saul seems to realize that, in Röhrig's reading, « *this boy belongs to him and he belongs to the boy. Even for a second the boy survived the gas chamber—he survives and then is killed by the Nazi doctor.* »<sup>21</sup> This death, then, is different from the others, offering Saul a moment of emotion, of empathy and identification. Whether or not it is his own son—a question left ambiguous in the film—through Saul's seemingly random dedication to the fate of this one individual, can the viewer, too, engage authentically with the otherwise overwhelming reality of the camp? Desensitized and psychologically annihilated by his inhuman tasks as a Sonderkommando, Saul is suddenly galvanized, consumed by the desire to recover the child's body for burial and to identify a rabbi to recite the mourners' Kaddish. The dénouement, criticized by some critics as a *reductio ad absurdum*, sees Saul swept up in the Sonderkommandos' attempted escape that takes him across a river, where the precious body he has 'saved' drifts away in the current, and ultimately taking refuge in a shed in the forest where his fellow fugitives plan their next moves. Suddenly, a small blond (Polish, we may imagine) boy appears, glimpses the men and quickly runs off. The ambiguous conclusion may be read as a moment of transcendence for Saul, whose face grows beatific at the sight of him, perhaps imagining in his madness that his 'son' is alive, or simply from the joy of seeing a living child.

Unlike Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, in refusing to depict the Holocaust as 'décor'—a trivialization for which Lanzmann has reproached Spielberg—Nemes proposes instead to limit himself to the raw reality of quotidian details while resisting the lure of voyeurism, instead de-coupling each frame from familiar or unquestioned representational modes. This is accomplished through Saul's gaze alone in images often blurred, out of focus or oblique, and through the deafening, often unbearable diegetic noise heard off-screen. Resisting the kind of redemptive discourse notoriously rejected by Lanzmann, Saul's obstinately determined struggle may be read as leaving open the possibility of a hopeful gesture even from the depths of despair.

*Son of Saul* thus reframes the camp without engaging in the kind of 'mirroring' or repetition of violence and atrocity that has been the object of so much critical debate Holocaust representation. Its boldly existential terms counter the



more conventional narrative approach of a film such as *Fateless* a decade earlier (with its embrace of iconographic images of beauty despite horror) without betraying Lanzmann's ethical proscription of fictionalized portrayals of the *univers concentrationnaire*—indeed, of representation itself—as if cognizant of Adorno's proscription that « *to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric.* » In press conferences at the film's Cannes premiere and often thereafter, the lead actor, Géza Röhrig, urged greater understanding of—and renewed debate on—the controversial role of the Sonderkommando. Considering that cinema may always be regarded with suspicion with regard to the Holocaust, these debates continue to fuel controversy. As Lanzmann has noted, the autumn of 1944 was a particular moment in the chronology of Auschwitz when some 250 Jews assigned to the Sonderkommando unit organized a mutiny, succeeding in exploding crematorium No. IV and the adjacent gas chamber before being massacred by the Nazis. The revolt, a documented historical event, is suggested in *Son of Saul* as background to the fictional narrative of a man seeking to bury a child with dignity. To embody the daily life of an Auschwitz Sonderkommando, Nemes chose a hybrid representational mode, neither fully fiction nor documentary, inhabiting a « *grey zone* » in the interstices of the inferno: “*Even in the darkest hours of mankind, there might be a voice within us that allows us to remain human. That's the hope of this film.*” Nemes believes Hungarians have not dealt with the trauma of the Holocaust, during which some 600,000 Hungarian Jews perished, almost all after Nazi Germany invaded in March 1944. « *Every kid should watch it,* » he said of the film, « *not because the cinemas should be full, but that many of them lack empathy.* »<sup>22</sup>



Hungarian Jews arriving to Auschwitz (1944)

Like Spielberg, who approached the Holocaust via the true story of a thousand Jews rescued by a single German industrialist, Nemes tells the singular story of a man determined to bury a boy he believes to be his son. How can cinema make history visible? And how can images help us reimagine history? As suggested

above, the Holocaust has traditionally been understood as beyond the limits of representation, as unimaginable, an idea that can be traced from Adorno's caution regarding the impossibility of poetry after Auschwitz: « *These four photographs deeply affected me. They attest to the extermination, they constitute evidence, and ask essential questions. What should be done with an image? What can it represent? What viewpoint should we have when faced with death and barbarity?* »<sup>23</sup> The four photographs Nemes references became notorious in the aftermath of a photographic exhibition, "Mémoire des camps", in Paris in 2001, remarkable in that they are the only existing photographs taken from inside the gas chambers documenting the process of mass extermination<sup>24</sup>. Taken in 1944 by a member of the Sonderkommando, the photographic images were smuggled out of the camps in a tube of toothpaste destined for the Polish resistance. Didi-Huberman's catalogue essay accompanied the exhibition and marked a distinct turn in Holocaust discourse by interrogating previously sacralized boundaries of the unknowable and unthinkable. The first two blurred images were taken inside the gas chambers as Sonderkommando members carry out their grotesque tasks in outdoor funeral pyres: « *But you, dear László Nemes, you have chosen not the radical black or the radical silence. Your film is terribly impure, sonorous and colored...you have therefore not forgotten the dark, but instead you have taken it out of its abstraction.* »<sup>25</sup> At the same time, Georges Didi-Huberman sustains an ongoing dialogue with Claude Lanzmann around questions of representability<sup>26</sup>. And by making the Sonderkommando and the gas chambers the subject of *Son of Saul*, Nemes may be seen to refute the idea of imaginative retreat as an ethical response to the Holocaust: in contrast to Lanzmann's privileging of word and testimony over images, Nemes incontrovertibly positions the image at the heart of his project, thereby radically extending and significantly advancing the inter-generational dialogue.

### A Symptomatic Cinema?

The fall of communism has led to manifold changes in the representation of the Holocaust, opening access to archival sources in Central and Eastern Europe that have altered the way younger generations of filmmakers are engaging with this history. It seems to be a sort of turning point for a new generation of young filmmakers. Still a minority in a Hungarian climate that has remained rather passive, if not outright hostile to such issues, often displaced in public debate by that of discrimination against the Roma. A number of directors used the microcosm of family to explore this topic, producing plausible narratives ranging from comedy to tragedy in the silence of the postwar period. The collective experience of the Holocaust in Hungary is no longer ignored but harbors a kind of bitter nostalgia.

Over the course of history, these directors gradually freed themselves from post-war victimization, appearing as true historical subjects in their own right within the set of problems raised by those films' personal rewriting of history. How can an accurate filmic representation of such a complex collective history be achieved when one's work is determined by a concern for truth and reconciliation in a public debate still marked by anti-Semitism? This intermittent questioning of Jewish identity is endemic to Hungarian culture; today, it is either disparaged or misused by Victor Orbán and a majority supported by the extreme right. Thus it remains divided between an often inaudible collective debate and a still-traumatized individual memory. The smooth transition from Communism after 1990 was replaced by a new nationalist reconstruction. The Hungarian Nation today fuses a mythical and mystifying past, as the new Constitution of 2012 places itself under the aegis of Saint Stephen and the Christian doctrine of the Holy Crown formulated as early as 1222. In response to the enduring weight of the Holocaust in Hungary and its quasi-collective repressed discourse, and in the populist context of draconian laws, an identity-symptom, as it were, is being constructed in the cinema. The power of these images, in Freud's term "screen memory," survives. More than seventy years after the Holocaust, the contribution of cinema as a « *place of memory* », reimagining and reexamining also images or events, is one might argue more and less to a kind of gesture towards self-recognition and ultimately responsibility in the complex process of coming to terms with the Holocaust in Hungary to-day. These cinematic representations have managed over the course of a generational history to finally legitimize a taboo topic in the near silence of contemporary society.

\***Kristian Feigelson** is a sociologist and professor of film studies at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University. The author of various articles on Hungarian cinema (*Cinéma hongrois: le temps et l'histoire*, *Théorème* 7, 2003), this paper was the subject of a debate at the Paris Memorial de la Shoah in April 2012 and the Hungarology Symposium in Pécs in August 2016.

\***Catherine Portuges** is Professor of Comparative Literature, Director of the Interdepartmental Program in Film Studies and Curator of the Massachusetts Multicultural Film Festival at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is the author of *Screen Memories: The Hungarian Cinema of Márta Mészáros*, Indiana University Press, 1993; *Cinema in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe After 1989* (eds Catherine Portuges and Peter Hames), Temple University Press, 2013, and numerous articles and books chapters on Hungarian cinema.

## Notes

- 1 The authors wish to thank Precious Brown for her work proofreading and translating. See Elie Wiesel's *Night* published in Paris in 1958 (Les Editions de Minuit) with a preface by François Mauriac. Elie Wiesel was born in 1928 in Sighet, Kingdom of Romania. He recounts the experience of death and dehumanization during his fam-

- ily's deportation in May 1944 to Auschwitz-Birkenau with thousands of Hungarian Jews: "Never shall I forget that night, the first night in the camp, which has made my life a long night, locked seven times. Never shall I forget that smoke..."
- 2 The notion of second generation referred to the children who had Jewish descendants who survived the Holocaust, who bore the scars of the trauma without having been directly confronted with it. See Suleiman, Susan, 2002. The 1.5 generation: thinking about child survivors and the Holocaust. *American Imago*, 59 (3), 277–295.
  - 3 In this respect, see Catherine Portuges' article, 2007. Intergenerational transmission: the Holocaust in Central European cinema. In: Sabbadini, Andrea ed. *Projected Shadows*. New York: Routledge and London Institute of Psychoanalysis, 73–91.
  - 4 See Imre Kertész's writings, particularly *Kaddish for an Unborn Child*, Actes Sud, Arles, 1995 published in 1990 in Budapest. Also see other Hungarian writings such as György Konrád's autobiographical novel, *Departure and Return*, Mille et une nuits, Paris, 2002, or Adam Biro's *Ancestors of Ulysses*, PUF, Paris, 2002.
  - 5 See Patai, Rafael, 1996. *The Jews of Hungary: Culture, Psychology*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
  - 6 See, amongst others, Deák, István, 2004. The Holocaust in Hungary. *Hungarian Quarterly*, 15 (176), 50–70.
  - 7 Miklós Jancsó, *Image et Son*, No. 217, May 1968.
  - 8 Regarding the Jewish question in the films of Szabó, see Hirsch, Joshua, 1999. István Szabó: Problems in the Narration of Holocaust Memory. *Journal of Film and Video*. Spring 51(1), 3–21. See also István Szabó's interview with Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, 2006. La recherche de l'identité. *Positif*. 542, April, 97–100.
  - 9 Braham, Randolph, 1994. *The Politics of Genocide: the Holocaust in Hungary*. New York: Columbia University Press; Fejtő, François, 1997. *Hongrois et juifs*. Paris: Balland,
  - 10 See Portuges, Catherine, 1995. Exile and return: Jewish Identity in Post-Communist Hungarian Cinema. *Discourse: Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, 17 (3), Spring, 24–37 and Portuges, Catherine, 2013. Memory and Reinvention in Post-Socialist Hungarian Cinema. In: Portuges, Catherine, Hames, Peter, eds. *Cinema in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 104–131.
  - 11 *Sunshine* was released in Canada in 1999 and in Europe in 2000, produced by a Canadian-Hungarian producer, Robert Lantos. The team is primarily Anglo-American and the film was shot in English in Hungary.
  - 12 On the variations in the Hungarian historical narrative and its uses in cinema, see Gradvolh, Paul, Klimo, Arpad von, 2003. Représentations et usages de l'histoire. In: *Théorème 7, Hungarian Cinema*, Paris: PSN, 10–23. Also see Identité nationale et histoire en Hongrie, *Historiens et Géographes*, 366(1999).
  - 13 See Loewy, Hanno, 2003. Contes tragiques, *Heimatfilme* ou mélodrames? Les générations allemandes et l'Holocauste. *Questions de communication*, 4, 343–364.
  - 14 See Susan Suleiman's excellent article, *Sunshine* et les juifs de Hongrie. In: *Théorème 7, Hungarian Cinema*, PSN, Paris, 2003, 132–147; initially published under the title Suleiman, Susan, 2001. Jewish assimilation, the Holocaust and Epic Film: Reflections on István Szabó's *Sunshine*. *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14 (1), 233–252.

- 15 Returning to this past allows for the reconstruction of this identity as evidenced by the Viennese sociologist Michael Pollak's *L'Expérience concentrationnaire. Essai sur le maintien de l'identité sociale*. Paris: Métailié, 1990 and Annette Wievorka's, *L'ère du témoin*. Paris: Plon, 1994.
- 16 As explained by Imre Kertész in an interview: "A book and film are two different things. In the novel, there is a different relationship to my own experience. In this way, while writing the novel, *Fatelessness*, I was very strict in terms of formal considerations, and I removed everything that was anecdotal. For the script, I was more flexible and I added some elements of my memories, moments that I lived and that I had not dared to put in the novel." Interview with Michel Ciment, *Positif*. 542, April 2006, 88. Also see Bori, Erzsébet, 2005. The second wave: speaking out on the Holocaust. *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Spring, 177. Concerning it's kitsch, Catherine Coquio *La réception d'Etre sans destin*, de Lajos Koltai : scandale et énigme, *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah : Les écrans de la Shoah*, 2011/2/n° 195, pp 587-619.
- 17 A debate which raised a number of controversies outside of Hungary, e.g. Friedlander, Saul, ed. 1992. *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the Final Solution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Elizer, Barbie, ed. 2001. *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, London: Athlone Press; Hornstein, Shelly, Jacobowitz, Florence, eds. 2003. *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Saxton, Libby, 2008. *Haunted images: Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust*. London: Wallflower Press.
- 18 See Feigelson, Kristian, 2011. Cinematic archives and the rereading of European history in Forgács's cinema: A filmmaker of the anonymus. In: Hagin, Boaz, Meiri, Sandra, Yosef, Raz and Zanger, Anat eds. *Just Images: Ethics and the Cinema*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 142–157; Renov, Michael, 2011. Historical Discourses of the Unimaginable: *The Maelstrom*. In: Renov, Michael, Nichols, Bill, eds. *Cinema's Alchemist: The Films of Peter Forgács*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 85–95.
- 19 Portuges, Catherine, 2012. Jewish identities and generational perspectives in Hungarian cinema. In: Imre, Anikó, ed. *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 101–124.
- 20 From Nemes's Q&A following the U.S. premiere of *Son of Saul*, 53rd New York Film Festival, Walter Reade Theater, New York City, October 5, 2015, and from C. Portuges's personal interview with the film's editor, Mathieu Taponnier, Paris, November 5, 2015.
- 21 Television interview broadcast, Charlie Rose (WGBY-TV), January 4, 2016.
- 22 László Nemes, Golden Globes Foreign Film Nominee Directors Symposium, American Cinémathèque/Egyptian Theater, Hollywood, January 9, 2016.
- 23 Georges Didi-Huberman's controversial book, *Images malgré tout*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2004, prompted this comment from Nemes.
- 24 In 2001, an exhibition entitled *Photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis (1993–1999)* took place at the Hôtel de Sully; it was curated by Clément Chéroux.
- 25 Georges Didi-Huberman subsequently wrote a text as an open letter to Nemes published in a volume *Sortir du noir*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 2015, just after the release of *Son of Saul*.

- 26 With regard to the previously cited exhibition in 2001, Claude Lanzmann's reaction was as follows: « *J'ai réalisé Shoah contre toute archive. J'ai vu pendant que je préparais Shoah, un film muet d'une minute, tourné par un soldat allemand qui montre des juifs exécutés par des Einsatzgruppen. Ce sont des images sans imagination...Le vrai problème dans cette histoire, est celui du statut de la photographie. Elle atteste quoi? La question n'est pas celle du document comme le pense Chérourx (commissaire de l'exposition), mais celle de la vérité* ». in *Le Monde*, 19 janvier 2001. The four photographs of executions of Jewish deportees taken by the SS in Birkenau were shown again in the exhibition *Soulèvements* at the Musée du Jeu de Paume/Paris in 2016, entrusted to Georges Didi-Huberman.





# THE EVIDENCE OF THE AVANT-GARDE FILM

KÁROLY KÓKAI

University of Vienna  
karoly.kokai@univie.ac.at

**Abstract:** The Hungarian neo-avant-garde appeared in such diverse artistic fields as fine art, conceptual and visual literature, happenings, theatre performance and film. For the avant-gardists Tibor Hajas, Miklós Erdély and Tamás Szentjóbý, film was both a theoretical and a practical issue. There are films documenting avant-garde activities, and there are films that are truly avant-garde. Thus, the field of film seems to provide a considerable amount of material through which scholarship can evaluate the Hungarian neo-avant-garde. This paper discusses how the evidence of film fits the interpretation of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde as belonging to the “second public”, as part of cultural opposition, and as something forbidden.

**Keywords:** Avant-garde, Avant-garde Film, Cold War, Eastern Bloc, Tamás Szentjóbý, Kentaur

Films are called documentary if they make heavy use of visual and sound sequences showing non-professional actors in their everyday environment, or even an environment without any human actors. Films of this kind aim to reveal the “strange worlds” of their subjects, showing how something “really is”. Of course it is well known that this approach can never achieve its goal. All films are by definition artificial, and it is impossible to avoid the influence of the filmmakers. This is why the dividing „line” between documentary and fiction film is never a sharp one, and it is better to understand the documentary as a genre of fiction than to try to argue that both constitute two entirely different categories.<sup>1</sup>

Avant-garde film is an ongoing discussion, with new arguments arriving with every new avant-garde wave; the central issue of each is mostly to challenge everything established and traditional, and hence the past avant-gardes too. It has been argued that experimental, independent (in the sense of not being part of the movie industries), underground (in the sense of representing so-called deviant or at least sub-culture circles), counter culture, non-mainstream, non-commercial films are avant-garde.<sup>2</sup> Certain film groups appeared with manifestos<sup>3</sup> and therefore fulfilled one of the criteria of the avant-garde. Thus, there are numerous reasons to talk about avant-garde film. But perhaps we should recall that at the time of its invention, around 1895, film was genuinely avant-garde: technically new and thus experimental, exploring new and unknown artistic territories, pushing

the limits, and creating a new art form. The few avant-gardists of the laboratory of Thomas Alva Edison<sup>4</sup> were followed very soon by the garde of the film makers of subsequent generations.

While documentary film flourished in the Eastern Bloc of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, avant-garde film could exist only in a limited sense. Since film-making is a technically complicated process – technical equipment is needed to make the film, a chemical laboratory to process analogue film –, a crew is usually involved, including artistic and technical personal as well as actors, and since film is a time-based art, which usually means that making and viewing a film is a sophisticated process, so-called amateur artists have very little chance of being able to make a film, especially in the Cold War period in the Eastern Bloc.

Nevertheless, numerous avant-garde films were made in Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, some of the most prominent being: Naško Križnar *Nadstavba* (Superstructure) 1966 Yugoslavia, Věra Chytilová *Sedmíkrasy* (Daisies) 1966 Czechoslovakia, Dušan Makavejev *Misterije organizma, W.R.* (W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism) 1971 Yugoslavia, Pawel Kwiek *1, 2, 3... ćwiczenia operatorskie* (1, 2, 3... Cinematographer's Exercises) 1972 Poland, Zelmír Zilnik *Crni film* (Black Film) 1971 Yugoslavia, Ion Grigorescu *Boxing* 1977 Romania, Petr Skala *Hledání rovnováhy* (Searching for Balance) 1973 Czechoslovakia, Sanja Iveković *Osobni rezovi* (Personal Cuts) 1982 Yugoslavia or Pavel Barta *Mat* (Checkmate) 1983 Czechoslovakia. To name a few films from Hungary: Dóra Maurer *Megtanult önkéntelen mozdulatok* (Perfunctory Movements) 1973, Miklós Erdély *Partita* 1974, Gábor Bódy *Négy bagatell* (Four Bagatelles) 1975, László Najmányi *A császár üzenete* (The Message of the Emperor) 1975, Tamás Szentjóby *Kentaur* 1975, Tibor Hajas *Öndívatbemutató* (Self-Fashion Show) 1976.<sup>5</sup> The coming into existence of each of these films has its own story, naturally. Nevertheless, we see it was possible to achieve what should have been impossible – in a schematic and retrospective interpretation, which for the sake of simplicity tends to paint matters black and white.

Even in the restricted situation of socialist Hungary of the 1960s and 1970s, there were different ways of making films. One was for a one-person crew to use amateur equipment. It was by this means that a 9-minute documentary film of the first Hungarian happening in 1966 came into being. The artist László Gyémánt was invited to the happening, took his small film camera and used three scrolls, each lasting 3 minutes. Today the film is available on youtube. The other possibility: state-founded film schools existed all over the Eastern Bloc, such as the Neoplanta Studio in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, the Workshop of the Film Form in Łódź, Poland, and the Béla Balázs Studio in Budapest, Hungary.

The Béla Balázs Studio (BBS) was first founded 1959 by Pál Gerhardt for the promotion of the young filmmakers just finishing the film school.<sup>6</sup> The focus was on screenings of Hungarian and not distributed foreign films, as well

as on discussions and – as a project – the creation of films (short, 16 mm, not for distribution). The BBS was reestablished in September 1960 and started to function in 1961.

The first thirty years of the BBS can be divided into four periods. This periodization does not mean that no other kind of films were made. Rather, it is based on the most productive, dominant and visible examples. The periods are 1. short films, 2. documentary or sociographical films, 3. experimental or avant-garde films, and 4. fictional films with “avant-gardistic” elements. In the third period, from the 1970s on, people were allowed to make films in the BBS without visiting the film academy, e.g. Tibor Hajas, Miklós Erdély and Tamás Szentjóby, the three most important avant-garde poets and artists of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s in Hungary. Erdély’s *Partita* and Szentjóby’s *Kentaur* were made in the framework of the Film Language Program of the BBS, Hajas’ *Öndívatbemutató* in the framework of the next project, the K3 Group, both organized by Gábor Bódy. As the previous list of periods illustrates, documentary and avant-garde films were made in the BBS. Thus we can ask how the two are related, or rather, and this is the central issue of this paper, what can we learn about the documentary by watching an avant-garde film.

To discuss this question, let us take a closer look at one of the avant-garde films produced in the framework of the Béla Balázs Studio, Tamás Szentjóby’s *Kentaur* 1975/2009.<sup>7</sup>



*Kentaur* consists of fourteen scenes: nature (sky and earth), railway (closed doors), sewing room, city bus, planning bureau, “presszó” (a kind of coffee-house), fieldwork, canteen, constructing hall, lottery tickets sorting room, waiting room, paper box making hall, workers’ home, and brush maker’s workshop. Thus we see the world of the proletariat and the peasants. Each sequence starts with an establishing shot, the camera giving an extremely long and expansive view of

the set. Then we see close ups and hear voices talking. Strange things are already happening during the long and static shots: we see balanced and well-composed pictures, with very few movements. We understand the scenery almost immediately, and we have to wait a relatively long time for a change. The time regime suggests something didactic or even doctrinaire. The next disturbing element is that the voices from the off and the visual information seem to be related but do not fit together entirely. We hear dialogues about the work what we see, but they are much more sophisticated, philosophical and ideological as that the voice could correspond with the picture. As the story unfolds, we see the same thing again and again, developing into an ironic, distancing, revealing and at the same time extremely realistic, disturbing and sad tableau. The last sequence shows blind women working in a brush maker's workshop and singing with happy faces a song about taking off to an unknown and fair land.

What is avant-garde in *Kentaur* 1975? First, the filmmaker. Second, the context in which the film came into being. Third, its reception. And naturally in terms of its features *Kentaur* fits into the avant-gardistic oeuvre of Tamás Szentjóbby.

Szentjóbby is considered one of the central figures of the Hungarian avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s. He started out as a poet, making subversive and visual poetry, and he continued as an action artist and made objects. He organized the first happening in Hungary in 1966, he was an active participant in the avant-gardistic circles in Budapest, and he repeatedly had problems with Hungarian official cultural politics. He was expelled from Hungary in late 1974; he had to leave the country within one year. During this year, 1975, he had his only exhibition in Hungary before 1989,<sup>8</sup> and he finished his film *Kentaur*.

*Kentaur* was made in the framework of the Film Language Series of the Béla Balázs Studio in the period when avant-garde artists were accepted to make their films. Szentjóbby submitted a short paper with his idea, and worked with the cameraman János Gulyás and the editor Éva Vörös for two years.

The film was finished in summer 1975, thus months after Szentjóbby was informed of the decision to expel him from Hungary because of his involvement in the activities of dissident intellectuals. It was first shown in the BBS for the members of the studio collective and a second time in the projector room of the Hungarian Film Industries for a more general public. In the BBS, as Szentjóbby recalls, the projection started, but only shaky and rattled pictures appeared on the screen. Szentjóbby went to the machine room and found two men working in coats and hats. It proved that these two strangers had sent away the projectionist and tried to sabotage the screening or at least to control it. And since they did not know how to use the projector, the film was not inserted properly, which explains why the screening went wrong. The proper reception of the film was delayed until 2009, for more than thirty years. It was confiscated in summer 1975 and was found in 1983 by György Durszt, who copied it and transferred to video immedi-

ately. Durszt showed the film in university courses before 2009 too. But the film of 1975 was only restored in 2009; the background sound, which had been lost, had to be reconstructed from tiny pieces of the voice record. Since then the film has been shown worldwide and has become part of the Hungarian avant-garde heritage of the 1970s.

*Kentaur* has the features of the avant-gardistic oeuvre of Szentjógy. It uses reduced and hence unambiguous formal means mixed with signs of protest in a provocative manner, something visible in all of his poetic, actionist and artistic works. Compared to the two other most-discussed Hungarian avant-gardists creating films, Hajas and Erdély, Szentjógy's approach is unique too. He uses long shots, contrapositions picture and sound, and directs this basic means against core values of the established cultural regime.

A brief glance at the documentary and avant-garde film production of the BBS and a closer look at a film made there raise a number of questions.

What is Szentjógy's film about? For the title, *Centaur*, Szentjógy has a specific interpretation. In 1964 he wrote a poem by the same title;<sup>9</sup> the idea of centaur seems to have occupied him since the beginning of his artistic production. According to Szentjógy, the figure of the centaur is a metaphor which shows how the world is basically structured. It is an epistemological metaphor that reveals the structure of the world – first of all the world of socialism but in reality our global situation – and it is a tool with which to interpret the film *Kentaur* too. The mythological figure of the centaur consists of two parts, the lower body of a horse and the upper body of a human. Thus we deal with a double consisting of two incongruous parts. This double is what Szentjógy is concentrating on: the horse represents the being, the given and objective, whilst the human represents the interpretation, the meaning, the function. This goes for everything and anything, for every object in the world, for instance a desk. A desk is first of all there in its being, like the horse. It is there as an object. So much for the first part, the lower half. But it is the function that humans give it that makes it a desk – the second part, the upper half of the centaur. In the case of the film, the picture is the horse. And the sound is what gives the film its meaning. Thus Szentjógy contraposes the image on the one hand and the sound on the other to be able to say something very basic about our world. The documentary-like images provide us with the objective world that is to be revealed.

If we consider the above mentioned periods of the BBS from the perspective of short films, sociography and experimental to feature films with experimental elements, the question arises how can we interpret *Kentaur* from this viewpoint? Szentjógy made use of documentary-like visual sequences, most of them looking like footage found from newsreels of the Stalinist period of the early 1950s. Its static and penetrating long shots seem to go in the same direction. Watching *Kentaur* decades later it is hard not to understand it as an ironic reference to the

sociographical documentaries of the young BBS filmmakers, eager to correct the mistakes of the really existing socialism of their state.

Seeing *Kentaur* recently raises a question as to why one would restore the film in 2009 and show it in exhibitions and shows in Hungary and abroad? Has *Kentaur* any relevance to the present or is our interest only historical? What is important here is to recognize that the restored film of 2009 is a recent one, with new meanings. It has a nostalgic value. It reinterprets the socialist and thus past era. And: it creates a past that never existed – by documentary means.

At the same time, all of this, the film itself, the censorship story, the place of *Kentaur* in the avant-garde film production of the Eastern Bloc of the Cold War period, raises the question: what does this film document?

*Kentaur* asks what documentary films are, especially what the documentary films of the BBS stand for. Szentjóby uses (as a poet, as an artist, as a filmmaker) as little as possible (almost nothing) to achieve as much as possible in the poem *Getting Dark* (the blackness of the type writer), in the object *Czechoslovakian Radio* (a brick and sulfide), in the action *Expulsion Exercise* (sitting silently), and in the film *Kentaur* (found footage like film and sound). His strategy of using a reduced formal vocabulary can be interpreted in different contexts. It can be seen as a reaction to the socialist repression of culture: the less material you have, the more difficult it will be to persecute you. If you do almost nothing (if you fulfill an everyday act, if you show simple motives), it is difficult to prove that you did something subversive. On the other hand, it can be interpreted as a minimalist or concept art strategy, and thus as part of a contemporary art movement. And, thirdly, it can be interpreted as using everyday, documentary, that is objective pieces of reality to show exactly that: what is out there.

The evidence of the avant-garde film is first of all that we see what the avant-garde was. In 1966 László Gyémánt's *Ebéd* (Lunch) documented the happening with the same title. *Kentaur* used documentary-style sequences to uncover a double, a story unfolding before our eyes and a story told by the voices.

The Eastern European avant-garde left very little evidence and was considered provocative. What little evidence there is consists of photos (documenting events), samizdat publications, typed or handwritten texts, a few artworks between montage of found objects and what was left over from an art event, and a lot of retrospective stories and interpretations. Thus the question regarding the evidence of these films is more than apt: what are we seeing while watching an avant-garde film?

We are seeing a document of the Cold War period in the Eastern Bloc showing that it was possible to produce avant-garde films in state-funded and state-controlled institutions. The production, distribution and reception stories nevertheless emphasize how difficult it was to realize the project, what rejection by the cultural policies meant and how the distribution of the film was made impossible



by means such as confiscation. This narrative naturally contains the next part too, namely how art objects became a legend. Since *Kentaur* was only screened twice in the years immediately following its release and completely invisible until 1983, there was sufficient time for rumours to develop. Between 1983 and 2009 only a fragmented version was in circulation, sustaining the legend regarding the original whole. This twenty-six-year period must be divided into two parts. In the six years before 1989, during the last years of Cold War Hungary, persecuted art objects like the scrolls of *Kentaur* symbolized an artistic heritage and an artistic milieu that was highly politicized and instrumentalized for the purposes of so-called criticism of the regime. After 1989 this narrative became the founding myth of a new open and democratic culture in Hungary as well as in other countries of the former Eastern Bloc.

In their content, form and techniques, avant-garde films are considered experimental, charged with politically and socially relevant ideas aiming at utopias. Hungarian avant-garde film of the Cold War period can be analyzed in these categories too. Szentjóby's *Kentaur*, as a film which at first glance matches the documentary practice of the young film makers' association BBS applies experimental means only unobtrusively. The contrasting of sound and image becomes clear during the screening only gradually. The social practices depicted are the preferred topics of the documentaries of the 1960s and 1970s: the everyday environment of the working class, the workplace itself, the breaks, travel to work or leisure activities afterwards. Again, the visual is experimental here only in very restrained fashion, for instance by means of the length of the individual parts, thus recognizable only after a delay – using the method of making conflicts conscious, something discussed by communist theoreticians from the 1920s on. And it is exactly that slow process of becoming aware of what is going on that becomes political, questioning the very foundations of the system of socialism. The argument amounts to a genuine depiction of the dreams of the proletariat, at the end of the film questioning the utopias of the twentieth century, be it the utopia of communism or that of the avant-garde.

After the system change of 1989, the established cultural narrative read the last two and a half decades, the period of the Kádár years since 1963, i.e. the formative years of the generation that 1989 received the opportunity to fill the available political and intellectual positions<sup>10</sup> – as the establishment of a second public,<sup>11</sup> which meant a public differentiated from the first, official one. According to this figure, a sharp line divided those who served the official culture and those who opposed it. This demarcation line concerned every aspect of the life of the actors, be it their education, culture – inventing the term counter culture –, social status, social life, travel possibilities, employment, involvement in publication projects or the opportunities to realize, exhibit and discuss their artistic output. At the same time it ignores the basic cultural achievement of the period, the compromise



between the rulers and those being ruled. The authority made the offer for everyone to get opportunities in the system, and many accepted the offer by entering higher education institutions – where, to name just one aspect, it was impossible to avoid involvement in the activities of the communist youth organizations –, testing the limits via critique from the left (e.g. by using Maoist arguments) as well as from the right (e.g. by “inventing” elements of the contemporary Western bourgeois culture in the East).

The films of the avant-garde in the Eastern Block prove to be avant-garde in every respect. They use the institutional means provided by the state to transcend limitations. They use experimental practices in all aspects of content, form and technique. They unveil the realities of the world called real socialism. And they testify to the myths under construction.

### Notes

- 1 For discussions on the division between documentary and fiction film see e.g. Rancière, Jacques, *Le Partage du sensible: Esthétique et politique*. Paris: La Fabrique 2000; on a definition what documentary films are see e.g. Nichols, Bill, *Introduction To Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2001.
- 2 See Gelencsér, Gábor red., 2009. *BBS 50*. Budapest: Műcsarnok.
- 3 E.g. *The Free Cinema Manifesto* 1956, *Oberhausener Manifest* 1962, *Dogma 95* 1995.
- 4 E.g. William Kennedy Dickson made films since 1891, the first sound film in 1895.
- 5 Some of these films or parts of them are available online, see e.g. Erdély, Miklós, *Partita*. 1974. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4rzhxxJTM64>, Bódy, Gábor, *Négy bagatell*. 1975. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAUSRaexQRE>, Hajas, Tibor, *Öndívatbemutató*. 1976. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRBLAZavqc0> [Accessed 5 May 2017]. Thus it seems to be possible to illustrate this paper with visual material. At the same time it is important to remark, that watching the above mentioned films online changes the artworks significantly, that is why Tamás Szentjóbby e.g. rejects any permission of a public show of *Kentaur* using inadequate technical infrastructure.
- 6 Gelencsér 2009.
- 7 Beke, László, 1978. Kentaur. Szentjóbby Tamás tanpályái (Centaur: Tamás Szentjóbby's Courses of Education). *Magyar Műhely*, 30 June, 16 (54–55), 66–91; Molnár, Gergely, 1978. Kentaur. Levél Szentjóbby Tamásnak (Centaur. A Letter to Tamás Szentjóbby) *Magyar Műhely*, 15 December, 16 (56–57), 18–26; Tábor, Ádám, 1983. Képrombolás – Kentaur (Picture Destruction – Centaur). *Aktuális Levél*, Summer, 5, 15; György, Péter, 1990. A lázadás esztétikája. Kentaur (The Aesthetics of Rebellion. Centaur). *Filmvilág*, March, 33 (3), 16–19.
- 8 Club of the Young Artists Budapest April 25–May 8, 1975.
- 9 Összenéző / két idő // partjuk között / egy rejtett árny / fordul egyre beljebb // És felfelé / üzik a dalt a paták – Two times / watching each other // between their banks / a hidden shadow / turns inside // And the hooves / chase the song to the top.
- 10 To avoid misunderstandings: this is valid for all acteurs regardless what position they took in the political spectrum after 1989, left, right or center.
- 11 See Knoll, Hans ed., 1999. *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit. Kunst in Ungarn im 20. Jahrhundert* (The second public. Art in Hungary in the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Berlin: Philo Verlag.

# REALITY AND METHODS IN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

LÁSZLÓ TARNAY

University of Pécs  
tarnay.laszlo@pte.hu

*Abstract:* The method and the formal-technical language of documentary filmmaking have expanded so much that the traditional divide between documentary and fiction cannot be reasonably held. Animation has also claimed its place among the possible devices of a documentary film. Consequently, a documentary no longer wears its 'truthfulness' on its sleeve. The cues of documentary that were used historically, like archival footage or talking heads, are eclipsed by cognitively engaging interactive camera work provoking viewer's identification. The dilemma that a would-be documentary filmmaker is necessarily confronted with is between perceptual realism and representational realism. An image cannot show the 'original': it can only declare it in a meta-communication about the image. In the history of film the self-referential 'dead-end' of the 'ontological' image is expressed by a camera filming the 'eye' of another camera. The self-referentiality of documentary filmmaking also entails that documenting is necessarily gappy: it always leaves certain things unsaid or hidden. The story it tells has its own important lacunae. It is the Unsaid of a documentary, and not so much the representation's truthfulness and that constitutes the ethical source for the viewer.

**Keywords:** aboutness, documentary, animation, interactivity, ethics, subjectivization, disposition to intervene, unsaid

## The Aboutness-relation and the Ontology of the Documentary

Documentaries are meant to be *about* reality. The only intriguing question is how we can know that a documentary is indeed about reality. The theoretical debate how to differentiate between fact and fiction goes back almost 50 years. According to a promising idea reality is independent of our mind and thus of the image representing it while fiction is mentally construed. Such an ontological difference, however, is of no practical use when we ask how we can *know* whether or not what we see in a film is "fact or fiction". No wonder that the term 'documentary' became obsolete around 1960s when Sadoul wrote that "it is not simply the truth that one records",<sup>1</sup> and was replaced by a series of terms like «cinéma vérité», direct cinema, observational cinema, etc. which were intended

to convey that the film is in immediate proximity with reality. But being close to reality would not help, either, in knowing whether what we see is about reality. Clearly, the aboutness-relation is a semiotic relation. We do not ask ourselves when we see, e.g. a tree whether it is a real tree for our perception is indeed in immediate proximity with the world: normally, it is veridical. But seeing *that* tree in a documentary would be mediated through and by the images. Moreover, it may be doubly mediated if the photographed tree is seen as part of a fictional scene. Bazin's ontological realism would predict that the images of the tree is about that real tree which stood before the camera at the moment of shooting, it is a *nominal* portray, while its image in a film *stands for* a fictional tree. The semiotic aboutness-relation is then a second-order relation which may or may not be parasitic on the first. The image need not be about a real tree in the first place in order to refer to a fictional tree for it can be drawn either manually or digitally. A documentary blocks the introduction of a second-order aboutness-relation. However, blocking fictional representation is not sufficient to warrant aboutness at the first ontological level if there isn't any *noticeable* difference between a real tree, its photographed image and its potential fictional counterpart. It is the case in most lifelike visual representations from historic *trompe-l'oeil* paintings, the photograph to digitally simulated interaction. It is this illusionary effect that mock-documentaries makes use of.

Take, for example, the new David Attenborough series, *Planet Earth II*, which was shot with the use of the most modern technology, including drones. The viewer experiences gliding with the monkeys from tree to tree, hunting antelopes with the big cats or diving with the crocodiles. Interactive documentary opens up a wholly new phase in the history of film in that it accomplishes what Dirk Eitzen described as the disposition to intervene which constitutes "the crucial difference between documentary and fiction films". In other words, a documentary is a film which "depicts a place where our actions would have made a difference".<sup>2</sup> Note that the concept of the documentary entails both that we are *removed* from the world portrayed in it and that, were it possible, we are disposed to intervene in it. In contrast, we can be easily immersed in fiction practically without limit and not feel necessarily the incentive to act in it – although interactivity is the most appealing feature of moving images today. Accordingly, while 'normal' documentaries depend on the past conditional possibility of interaction, interactive documentaries today shot with modern digital technology offer that possibility almost unconditionally. However, since there is no difference in the visually embodied perception of a digitally produced documentary and a fictional film the claim that documentaries come with an awareness of the inclination to intervene can no longer be substantiated. Unless we know independently that the film is *about* reality our inclination is nonspecific: it is caused by the high level of simulation that the filmic images exemplify. Is it the end of documentary film making or just

the beginning of a new era of documentaries through which we can intervene in their world, that is, reality?

My suggestion is that the answer depends on the *use* of technology. If an image-making device like a virtual reality helmet is used as a means of getting to know and making our way in the world in which we are embodied – be it the real or a simulated world – the device (and the images generated) become *prosthetic*: they function as sensory aids integral to, or inbuilt in, the body. Prosthetic applications dispense with the original aboutness-relation and reinstate a digitally improved *direct* perception.<sup>3</sup> However, we can still treat the images, simulated or not, as being *about* something other than themselves. It is precisely what *Planet Earth II* presupposes: it is still *about* the same world *Planet Earth* showed us. In other words, images constitute a means to access past, present or maybe future reality in which we are not necessarily embodied. But if this is the case, the indistinguishable character of documentary images and images representing a fictional world may turn out to be the end-all of the documentary. It is my firm belief that in order to avoid such a negative result documentary filmmaking has always tended to foreground certain traits which were meant to distinguish documentaries among the totality of films. The traits functioned historically – before the advent of fully interactive 3D documentary – as a *perceptual correlative* of the ontological difference between fact and fiction. Without such a correlative documentaries would be indistinguishable from fiction, the distance between us as viewers and the filmic world would collapse, and our awareness of an inclination to intervene would evaporate.

### Features of the Documentary

The distinguishing features of the concept of documentary can be arranged along two axes. The first axis is history. The forms of filming technique and film language historically functioned as cues of reality. The cues depended on the actual state of film technology. The list ranges from black-and-white archival footage to diversely corrupted or corroded filmstrips including granular images, private video footage, jerky handheld camera, unfocused images, speaking heads, etc. Thus documentaries are redefined every time there is a change in filming technique or viewing strategies or both. The image features mentioned above have both a strong distancing and an emotional effect. They create a distance between the viewer and the world portrayed and at the same time elicit the awareness of an inclination to intervene. The double-sided effect explains partly why animated documentaries can be perceived as documentary. For animation appears at the end of the scale of devices which remove the audience from the spatiotemporal world of the images by blocking perceptual identification with the charac-

ters while evoking fierce emotional reaction. As Orly Yadin explains animated documentaries have two important advantages vis-à-vis ordinary documentaries: firstly they can show the viewer locations which are either unreachable through photography or no longer exist. Secondly, they are less exploitative of its subjects by being less voyeuristic and less encroaching upon its subjects' personal domain.<sup>4</sup> In both cases animated documentaries prevent the viewer from perceptually identifying with the subject while by other means like non-diegetic narration elicit a strong emotional response.

The other criterion that qualifies images as documentary derives from visual cognition. Vision, among other senses, affords certain actions. For example, perceiving the door of the house affords entering it. Recorded images, however, block the action-oriented perception of the visual world or re-assign it to the character(s). Seeing a door in a film is perceiving an affordance *available to* the character present in the shot or scene.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, assimilating character's and viewer's vision by simulating the vision of the character through POV or advanced visual technology contributes to the immersion of the viewer in the represented world and increases the potential of intervention. While the traditional cues of reality preserve the spatiotemporal distance between viewer and the world portrayed the cognitive effects of contemporary digital interactive technology eliminate that distance by embodying the viewer in the projected world and creating an "online" feeling that he or she can intervene in it.

The dilemma with which a would-be documentary film maker is necessarily confronted is between *perceptual* realism and *representational* realism (in correlation with *ontological* realism). While it seems that the future will be dominated by new interactive technology the traditionally realist methods still carry a kind of authenticity that the events and characters in the film are real or close to real. Most commonly, the method that documentary filmmakers apply consists of utilizing and combining different filming techniques in a single "documentary". The complex method is in fact an assembly of filming techniques that different schools or tendencies made popular in the past 50 years or so. Cinema vérité, direct cinema, observational cinema, anthropological or etnofilm are some of the most influential ways of filmmaking that historically replaced the idea of 'documentary' from the 1960s. The term 'documentary' carried strong overtones of truth associated with Dziga Vertov's idea of *kino Pravda*. Although the term 'truth' did not disappear, the filmmakers are ready to acknowledge that recording reality also changes it. The presence of the camera cannot be ignored including the effect that it produces on the world to be documented. If the camera is participatory, what it documents is the *interaction* of the filmmaker and the world he or she wants to record. The film is authentic not because it shows the reality-in-itself of the world but because it records the filmmaker's intervention in a world unknown to him or her. Thus the film is not so much true,

but truthful, direct, sincere, honest, etc. However, when it comes down to a complex method of a garden variety of historic devices from interviewing to non-diegetic narration, the net effect may be more disconcerting or equivocal than highly realistic whatever it would mean. The reasons are not entirely clear. Maybe, it is that there is no unambiguous sign where the intervention of the filmmaker begins and ends. Maybe the audience response is too governed by the visual conventions and cognitive effects of fictional films to be able to distil a specifically 'documentary' meaning. When, for instance, during the shooting of Jafar Panahi's film, *The Mirror* (1997), the child actor, Mina suddenly steps off the bus protesting against the shooting and the microphone remains attached to her Panahi continues to shoot the scene, which avowedly was not planned. The child's abrupt protest became an integral part the film and in his autobiographical film, *This Is not a Film* (2011), Panahi compares the scene of Mina removing her cast to his own state of house arrest. In his latest work shot clandestinely in Teheran's streets, *The Taxi Tehran* (2015), Panahi's passengers are real amateurs who talk about their own problems. The film is almost like a documentary, however, not everything they do is spontaneous and we feel Panahi directed them and compressed too much in too short a film.

To sum up: there is no guarantee that what we see is indeed a true copy of – quoting André Bazin again – what took place in front of the camera at the moment of shooting. The complex method may convey a documentary or realist feeling to the audience but it remains essentially assertive: the filmmaker declares, either explicitly in advertising copies, promotional materials or public debates, or implicitly by filming technique which traditionally cue reality that his or her film *is about* reality. As the title of Panahi's film, *This is Not a Film*, borrowed from René Magritte's philosophical painting, *Ceci n'est pas un pipe*, indicates, the aboutness-relation of any documentary artwork suffers from an infinite regress (or a vicious circle): whether the image is indeed about a *real* pipe or a *real* amateur can only be declared at another level of communication or in a meta-work. In the history of film the self-referential 'dead-end' of the 'ontological' image is expressed – once again quoting Magritte's painting of a man reflected in a mirror, *Not to Be Represented*<sup>6</sup> – by the image of a camera filming the 'eye' of another camera. The moral is that an image cannot self-referentially *show* that it is about reality. It can only declare that it is in some separate communication. I would like to illustrate the *declarative character of documentaries* with two characteristic examples from Hungarian film history. The first is historical, the second contemporary.



**The Declarative Character of Documentary:**  
*Fotográfia*

First I would like to consider briefly an avowedly fictional film by Pál Zolnay, titled *Fotográfia* (Photography, 1973). The film recounts the story of a photographer and an editor whose task is to develop and retouch the pictures. They wander from village to village offering people to make portraits of the villagers which the villagers can hang on the walls. Soon, however, people start to show the photographer and the editor their own photo albums, images taken in the past, telling stories about themselves and their family members. After a couple of scenes at the house of an elderly couple a thrilling story unfolds about the first wife of the now invalid husband, a retired postman, who killed her two daughters and attempted to commit suicide. She survived, however, and after being incarcerated for years, now she lives alone. The final episode of the film takes us to the house of the old murderous woman. Having heard earlier the rumor version of the killing from the second wife of the postman, we are eager to learn about the mother's motives. We wait patiently with the camera outside the fence when the photographer tries to make the woman confess. But she is over-resistant and withdraws inside the house. Then there is a cut and next we are placed at an ambiguous point neither in, nor out of the house. Slowly we realize that the image we see is a reflection on the window taken from the outside while the dialogue between the old woman and the photographer we hear from the inside. That we are positioned on the paradoxical boundary between the outside and inside is further enhanced by the double 'reflection' on the window glass: on the one hand we see the outward reflection of the photo-editor who is walking to-and-fro in the garden and is trying to peep in; on the other hand we see the photographer inside through the glass so that his 'reflection' is projected over that of the editor. The windowpane is like a transparent canvas on which reality and the reflection of reality are equally reflected. It is an impossible place where the camera shut out of the house and the audio recorder inside the house meet. It also constitutes the audience's position, thus unifying literally the two spaces while the filmmakers (photographer and editor) are physically separated by the very same glass which is both a transparent and a mirroring plane. Placed literally at the crossroads of inside and outside, the windowpane is also an embodied metaphor of directly (audio perception and peeping through) and indirectly experiencing reality (reflections on the glass). My suggestion is that the recording and viewing situation is also a metaphor of the documentary mode of filmmaking. The ontological ambiguity of the windowpane is further enhanced by the film's narrative. Although our desire to become privy with the old woman through the camera comes true – however ambiguous it is – we would never know her 'real' reason for the killing. The woman would not tell the photographer, and thus us, what pushed her to the brink of existence



where killing is release from the tension of family life. The only things we come to know is that her postmaster husband was torturing them. The rest remains forever hidden from us.

### The Ethical Asset of Documentary

Now we know from other sources that many parts of the film were shot as a documentary. Especially the last scene at the house of the murderous woman. The filming team was indeed shut out of the house and it was the director who, after much hesitation, mastered his nerves and entered the house. The film proves to be true not only to the story but to the circumstances of the shooting: the *intervention* of the filmmaker. *Fotografía* shows not only that the fictional/documentary divide is not waterproof from the fictional side but that documenting is necessarily gappy: it always leaves certain things unsaid or hidden. The story it tells has its own lacunae. In other words, documentaries are not ‘objective’, or fully observational. Just as there is no omniscient viewpoint in reality there is no objective position to film reality. Consequently, the modern documentary filmmaker cannot aspire to give a full and impartial picture of anything ‘real’: the only thing he or she can attempt to do is to document his or her *intervention* in it. Thus, Zolnay, although he fictionalizes it, creates a situation in which both the potential and the limits of his intervention in the elderly woman’s life are reflected. He does not try to cover up the lacunae in her photographically illustrated story. Thus, the unsaid in a documentary may turn out to be as significant as what is said and shown. Moreover, it may add to its authenticity in that the film would not claim to know what it does not know or would remain silent on issues which might influence the audience’s assessment of the character(s). In most cases such issues belong to the private sphere, and the filmmaker’s ultimate decision to share it with the public is deeply ethical.

Although our age is determined by the right to unrestricted visibility meaning that what is not visually shared does not exist,<sup>7</sup> and consequently, that the public sphere encroaches upon the private domain and would, in time, make it disappear,<sup>8</sup> anyone shooting a documentary still faces the ethical dilemma whether it is legitimate to share visual and other information about its subjects with the audience—information which the subjects never meant to be divulged. Even Werner Herzog who is famous, and rightly, for many excellent documentaries was seriously criticized for the violation of the ethical norm of privacy when making his fictional documentary, *The Grizzly Man* (2008), about Timothy Treadwell. Herzog appropriated Timothy’s self-made videos, re-arranged and re-edited them. He also added his own commentary and the interviews he conducted with his parents and people who liked or knew him. Treadwell, who claimed to be the “saviour” of

the Alaskan grizzly bear but was to be brutally killed, together with his girlfriend, Amy, by a wild bear, shot hundreds of hours of videos mostly all alone speaking to the camera railing at the rangers of the national park, confessing things about his life, etc. Most dramatically, the camera was standing on a tripod in front of their tent and was running when the bear attacked Timothy. Although the cap lens was on and no image was recorded the tape preserved Timothy's voice as he was trying in vain to send his girlfriend away till he passed away. Nobody ever listened to that tape until Herzog came. Although he did not share that dreadful experience with the public – a truly ethical gesture – he did reshape Timothy's personality so as to make him resemble a maniac in the film. Herzog not only reinterpreted Timothy's videos but provided a psychologically integral picture of his personality. Thus, he may be guilty of using and abusing Timothy's private videos only to re-create him as a mentally ill person. If so, he violated the ethical norm of documentary filmmaking not simply in showing more of his character's private persona than he should have but by re-arranging Timothy's visual "self-portraits" and investing them with a new kind of meaning.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Children of Cain*

Here I cannot go deeper into the debate whether Herzog had the *right* to do so. Instead I propose to discuss at some length the contemporary documentary *Children of Cain* (2014) by the young Hungarian filmmaker, Marcell Gerő. The film tells the story of three middle-age men, Pál, Gábor and Zsolt, who in their teens committed murder and spent 12-15 years in juvenile prison. Gerő uses shots from a film made 30 years before by András Mész Monory called *Bebukottak* (The Fallen Ones, 1985), which is a classical documentary consisting mostly of interviews with six boys who were incarcerated for murder in the juvenile prison in Tököl, Hungary. Gerő decided to track down three of them to see how they managed to integrate into society. His new documentary showcases the complex method described above. He includes cuts from Monory's film as *archival footage*. But he also conducts both classical and non-classical interviews with the now grown-up men and their family members. While the ex-criminals have long monologues about their guilt and their present conditions of life, and they speak directly to the camera, interviews with family members are more like Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's ground-breaking *Chronique d'un été* (1960), in which the filmmakers sat around the dinner table with the family while 'interviewing' them. In *cinéma vérité* the camera is first made familiar to the people until its presence becomes unobtrusive or neutralized. Whether the process of familiarization requires a day, a week or months depends on the social milieu of the characters one would like to work with. Talking about his approach, Gerő explained that he spent four years

with his subjects to get them used to the camera and he shot hundreds of hours of video before he started to edit the footage into a feature-long film omitting a great deal of scenes., especially comic ones. While during the shots he himself is not visible, we can hear his voice every now and then, and more importantly, we hear the people call him by his first name which indicates they are on friendly terms. He also claims that none of the scenes was premeditated and neither were the characters instructed what to do. There must have been at least one exception, however. When Gerő interrogated Zsolt's mother (not in the film) about his son's youth she gave confusing answers. At this point he selected a go-between, a mediator from among the mother's acquaintances in the village and instructed her to chat nonchalantly with the elderly mother while asking the questions he wanted to ask. She still would not tell much (she can't even remember when she bore her son) so that, like at the end of *Fotográfia*, we are left in the void and have to do with a few vague allusions to what seems to be a kind of psychopathological relationship between her and her son.

The *participatory* or *interactive* role of the camera is most conspicuous in the opening and closing scenes where the director addresses Pál's children about their father. The girl responds rather clumsily as if talking about her father would be embarrassing for her. Here the camera is not trying to hide its presence, but rather acts it out. It is not that performative as, for instance, Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012), a film about the 1965 mass murders in Indonesia in which the perpetrators of the killings are allowed to reenact, reconstruct, comment upon and even fictionalize their horrible deeds. But the children, like Oppenheimer's actors, also become, to a certain extent, authors of the film.<sup>10</sup> The scenes they figure in are in a way *improvised* like their responses to the director's questions such as "Okay, let's move on" meaning: "Right, what's your next point?" It may appear to be improvised because Gerő's documentary is an "extract" of four years co-existence with the families whereas Oppenheimer directly staged the tragic events of the past in the present. The edited version of *The Children of Cain* is in fact an allegory of the 'real' film, a filmed version of reality with its accidental and routine, singular and repetitive, individual and social activities. Obviously the director's aim was to look for the motivations for committing the crimes but it is equally clear that the confessions we hear in the film came accidentally and unexpectedly during the four years of shooting. Although the confessions may shed some light on the circumstances of the actions in the past, the present lives of the grown-up characters seem considerably undetermined. As Gerő puts it in an interview, all the three men would have the possibility to change their lives for the better, to make use of their independence or to turn to their families, instead of doing nothing like Pál or living homeless like Gábor or being hospitalized again and again like Zsolt. However, in some undefinable way, they all prefer living marginalized. Gerő stresses that it is their

own decision to remain locked up in their own worlds. It is the most tragic consequence of their imprisonment, more tragic than the crimes they committed in the past.

### The Documentary-Fictional Debate Reconsidered

The similarities between fictional films and documentaries are clear. Disregarding the historical references of the narrated events both fiction and documentary aim at character description, either subjective or objective, and attempts to evoke sympathy in the viewers. They both narrativize history and reveal how people are living their past *in the present*. We have seen the traditional and mostly technical cues of historic reality no longer distinguish documentaries from fiction for the methods of subjectivization of the moving image from handheld camera to granular imagery, among many other technical and narrative cues, have been thoroughly adopted by fictional cinema. At least it is what works in mock-documentary such as Dusan Makavejev's *W.R.: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971), Ruggero Deodato's *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), Woody Allen's *Zelig* (1983) as well as the special film aesthetics of the Dogma Manifesto or *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) seem to have proved. What remains of the old documentary-fiction debate is the question of the ethical attitude of the filmmaker vis-à-vis the referential basis of his or her film. Timothy Treadwell of *The Grizzly Man* could have never existed, his videos could have been faked like the ones in *Cannibal Holocaust*, and Herzog's film would be equally thrilling. But it would not raise the same ethical questions it has raised.

We have also seen that in the age of visibility the diving line between private and public is evaporating. If what is publicly shared or posted *is* what exists the referential basis of images cannot be even formulated: the *indexical* picture of the real (whatever it means) would be tantamount to *the* picture (fictional or documentary) shareable in visual media. The reality of the image can be referenced only in a meta-discursive practice which is meant to accompany *and* evaluate the images. In a paradoxical and circular manner because nothing would better guarantee the referential basis of discourse than a picture. Consequently, if there is an ethic of the image it can sanction only the *circulation* of images but not the making of it. It is precisely the right to visibility – as Daniel Dayan puts it – that makes *The Grizzly Man* especially sensitive to criticism. But the ethical question that *The Children of Cain* raises is of entirely different kind. The film is immune of the porosity of the private/public divide for it wholly respects the personal rights of the three characters. The director had formally and substantially agreed with them that they can stop or censure the shooting at any time they feel it obtrusive or unjust. If we feel uneasy watching the film, this is not so much because of what

they say or do; it is rather that the scenes probe our comfort zone and *question* our thoughts about the world, about social coherence, exclusion and justification, and maybe even about what is right or wrong. If documentaries evoke the disposition to intervene *The Children of Cain* aborts such a disposition. As Marcell Gerő admits during the four years of shooting it was almost impossible to 'intervene' in the three men's lives. But it is also the impossibility to intervene that opens the ethical dimension in the viewer. It is the *Unsaid* of the film that frustrates the viewer's response. Gerő's approach is more sympathizing than overtly objective and distancing: it engages the viewer both intellectually and emotionally. It is the frustration that there remains forever a distance in the 'intimacy' or closeness that the film creates, a distance that the viewer cannot overcome.

Today, documentaries do not stand apart from fiction films through the sheer use of technology and narrative content. No wonder that documentary filmmaking have embraced various forms of animation, which constitute a further step away from the indexical or referential basis that once guaranteed the authenticity of documentaries. In the short animated documentary, *Silence* (Sylvie Bringas & Orly Yadin, 1998) it is the personal experience of the narrator, Tana Ross, rather than the archival cuts of fascism, that renders the film 'documentary'.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, documentaries are on an equal footing with fiction with respect to 'reality' whatever it can be but they still differ from fiction films in *the nature and the intensity of viewer's response*. Documentaries are more likely to question the viewer's attitude, stereotypes and conventions than fiction films. The tables are turned: it is the documentaries that tend to intervene their viewers' lives than vice versa. As *Silence* exposed racism in Sweden *The Children of Cain* questions our prejudices about young criminals as well as our faith in social institutions. When we are confronted with the victimization of the three men from their childhood living a life full of humiliation and being shamed by their family and others, our sympathy is heightened and our sense of moral judgement shifts toward the social environment. But we, the audience are also part of that environment. If we cannot intervene in the characters' lives we could intervene in *that* environment – *our* environment.

Whether it is the impossibility of integration or the vicious circle that crime and poverty feed upon each other that conflicts with the disposition to intervene, the frustration we feel heightens our ethical stance: how do *we* judge the situation of social outcasts? Can we dispense with the stereotype and routine reactions and see them in a different light? Are we ourselves prejudiced as the three men's relatives, mother and children are? It is in the context of the preceding questions that a certain criticism of the film's undue aestheticization is arguable. The almost black-and-white photography and visual language, the minimalist score, the otherwise puzzling and repeating blackouts within the archive footage of the older documentary, *The Fallen* – they all attenuate the unsettling effect of the docu-

mentary. Undue anesthetization brings the viewer's experience closer to that of a fictional film and does away with the disposition to intervene and consequently, causes less ethical concern. To put it roughly and generally, too much beauty can embellish the ugly, the emotionally stirring, or even the horrible. But while in fictional art aestheticization may add to the poetic or lyrical effect and thereby enhance the emotional level of the work, in documentary it neutralizes its ethical charge. In contrast, in animated documentaries like *Silence* the aesthetic quality and the lyrical effect generated by it heightens the subjective and personal drama of the narrator rather than tempering with it. As a conclusion we can say that although documentary filmmaking has embraced a wide range of filming technique associated with fictional film its "peculiar appeal" stays with us for some time, at least until the real world preserves its appeal vis-à-vis virtual space. But documentaries about virtual reality are not far in the making. When interactive documentaries have full sway differences between distant and proximal, subjective and objective, filmmaker and film viewer will ultimately collapse.

## References

- Dayan, Daniel, 2013. Conquering Visibility, Conferring Visibility: Visibility Seekers and Media Performance. *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013), 137–153.
- Eitzen, Dirk, 2005. Documentary's Peculiar Appeal. In: Anderson, J. D. and Anderson, B. ed. 2005. *Moving Image Theory: Ecological Considerations*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 183–199.
- Graff, Séverine, 2011. "Cinéma-vérité" ou "cinéma direct": hasard terminologique ou paradigme théorique? *Décadrage* 18. [online] Also available at: <https://decadrages.revues.org/215> [Accessed 19 November 2016].
- Nánay, Bence, 2005. Merleau-Ponty és a film. Akció és percepció a moziban. *Metropolis* 8/3 (2005), 52–61.
- Török, Ervin, 2016. Az ölés aktusa és A csend képe. *Apertúra*, 2016/nyár. [online] Available at: <http://uj.apertura.hu/2016/nyar/torok-az-eljatszott-tortenelem-az-oles-aktusa-es-a-csend-kepe/> [Accessed 19 November 2016]
- Yadin, Orly, 2003. But Is It Documentary?" In: Haggith, Toby and Newman, Joanna ed. *The Holocaust and the Moving Image. Representations in Film and Television Since 1933*. New York: Wallflower Press. [online] Also available at: [http://www.yadinproductions.com/but\\_is\\_it\\_documentary.htm](http://www.yadinproductions.com/but_is_it_documentary.htm) [Accessed 19 November 2016].

## Notes

- 1 «On ne fait pas simplement de la vérité en l'enregistrant ! » Quoted by Graff 2011.
- 2 Eitzen 2005, 180.
- 3 Of course, we can be deceived about what we perceive just as we can be deceived by mirages or other atmospheric phenomena or optical illusions. But it does not mean that what we actually see we does not see directly but mediated by projected images. We may reflect on how much we can trust our prosthetic eyes just as we may question what we see with our organic eyes. But that is all.



- 4 See Yadin 2005.
- 5 See Nánay 2005.
- 6 Magritte's painting is paradoxical. It depicts a man standing in front of a mirror, but whereas the book on the mantelpiece is reflected correctly, the man can see only the back of his head. That is the 'original' face cannot be shown in a mirror. True reality necessarily escapes representation.
- 7 Most probably, strongest evidence to now is the case of Abu Ghraib, the US military prison in Iraq. The story of torturing and abusing Arab prisoners by their American guards came to light in 2002 when the first photos appeared in Newsweek. Later on, Errol Morris shot a classical documentary, *Standard Operating Procedure* (2008), about the guards' motives for the sexual abuses and not less significantly, for visually recording the tortures. One of the key moments in the film is when the American ex-soldiers affirm that they made the photographs for their own pleasure and they would never have thought of making them public. Even if it were so it proves ironically that any photo ever made – despite the true intention of its maker – is *meant* to be seen, especially in a world where visibility is all there is, that is, where the relation between photograph and reality is reversed. As a result, Being and Image becomes one.
- 8 Dayan 2013 argues that in our age the right to visibility replaced the freedom of the press and truth has become a question of *mostration*. By the latter term he means that truth is essentially performative: it is a media event and not anything like an indexical or ontological relation.
- 9 To be fair to Herzog it must be noted that Treadwell's habit of recording himself and the bears may itself be a kind of self-treatment by means of which he tried to process the traumas he experienced earlier in the civil society.
- 10 Török 2016 argues extensively that there is a difference between postmodern and postclassical documentaries. While *The Act of Killing* belongs to the first, its continuation, *The Look of Silence* belongs to the second category. The main difference between them is that while postmodern documentaries stage events from various historic and social angles together with a clash of opinions postclassical documentaries show the events through the private lives of individuals focusing on their emotional responses and intimate scenes, i.e. they subjectivize and privatize history. *The Children of Cain*, however, displays features from both category. It showcases the private lives of three people voicing deep social criticism. On the other hand it also sets up a common *narrative* frame of their lives, a social perspective in which they all appear victimized worthy of our sympathy, maybe to the point of being acquitted of their crimes. Such a consequence would not normally follow from the postmodern documentary because of the irony that a multi-faceted approach is steeped in. In contrast, a subjectivized account of events may well end up with evoking deep sympathy with the actors. *The Children of Cain* lack the ironic overtone even though the director admitted that he did mean to produce a depressing and dark rendition of the lives of the three characters and that the staff recorded many good-humoured and electrifying shots which, however, did not fit into the final film.
- 11 The fact that the film is based on a tone poem by Tana Ross corroborates the idea that it is the subjectivity of the narrator's testimony that invests the film with the force of a documentary about the holocaust. According to one of its authors the animated documentary is "the most honest forms of documentary filmmaking" if "the filmmaker is completely upfront about his or her intervention with the subject and if we believe the film to be true it is because we believe the intention was true". See: Yadin 2005.



# IRONY AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN *CAT CITY*

ANITA DEÁK

Babeş-Bolyai University  
deak.anita89@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Most Hungarian cartoons were meant for the whole family rather than just children. Due to this fact, everyone could enjoy the stories, the little ones loved the animal characters, which were often in the center, and the adults could laugh at the ironic and caricaturistic situations and representations. In my research I analyze the hidden meanings of a classic Hungarian cartoon entitled *Cat City*, brought up through intertextuality, allegory, irony and other rhetorical devices that might communicate an underlying meaning. I also examine the kinds of television tropes and archetypical characters that are likely to appear in the cartoon. The cartoon's main situation is the fight between cats and mice, and it is a parody of several famous feature films, focusing mainly on the James Bond series. The main plot is about a special spy who is sent to the city of "Pokyo" to get the secret plan for a machine which could save the mouse civilization. These underlying meanings greatly added to the Hungarian cartoon's popularity, which sometimes represented the symbols and even flaws of the communist system.

**Keywords:** irony, intertextuality, popularity, *Cat City*, Hungarian animation

## Introduction

Even though nowadays the Hungarian animation factory isn't in the best shape, there were times when the Pannonia Studio was one of the five most successful studios in the world, alongside Walt Disney, Hanna-Barbera, Soyuzmultfilm, and Toei. The studio's best period was between 1980 and 1986. During this period it produced the most movie cartoons, and the era was known as the golden age of Hungarian animation film. The period was successful not only for the high number of cartoons created but they were great in quality as well, they even got several prizes from different countries around the world. Caricature and humor were always important parts of the Hungarian cartoons, but in the 1960s they begin to follow new guidelines and deal with important ethical, social or economic problems. In a way the cartoons become social mirrors to the viewers. In this period next to the children cartoons they made many animations for the adult audience too, but the most popular pieces were those for the entire family. These family cartoons usually had animal characters or at least animal sidekicks. Due to the ironic and caricaturistic representations and underlying meanings, adults were also huge fans.

### About the research project

In my PhD research, I analyze these underlying meanings and comical representations, and the current article examines one of the most popular Hungarian family cartoons, *Cat City*, from this perspective. *Cat City* was made in 1986, and it still has many fans. In 2007 they even made a sequel to it. What rhetorical devices were used in *Cat City* to communicate its deeper meanings, like irony, intertextuality, allegory, and what exactly was the message behind all this? Also, what kinds of television tropes are represented by the characters? In this essay, I address these questions.

According to my hypothesis, irony, intertextuality and hidden representations of society were the key to the popularity of these cartoons, as is the case today in popular American animation films. In my textual analysis, I use multiple methods, since I want to draw out latent themes within the text and make connections between them. In my assessment, the combined use of content analysis and semiotics is the best way to figure out the themes and issues in the media text.

The importance of my research is that media texts are parts of our lives, and by studying them, we can get a deeper understanding of certain cultures and how the different meanings and messages are created.

More or less every media text is permeated with intermedia and intertextuality, and the importance of these is greatly increased in situations in which free speech is forbidden, or at least censored carefully. This was the situation in Hungary and the neighboring countries when the animation film on which I am focusing were made. At the time, television and radio stations were in a monopoly situation, where both were in the hands of the state and they were mostly used for propaganda purposes, like other art forms in general. (Urbán 2005)

One of the premises of my paper is the realization of the importance of the recipients own experience and knowledge in order to interpret the true meanings of the cartoons. As Magdolna Orosz (2003) says, texts are truly expansible with an intertextuality research, but in order to do that you need serious background knowledge.

Considering that the cartoon I'm analyzing is audiovisual in its contents, I separate two types of intertextuality, namely verbal and visual intertextuality, to discover which is more preferable in the cartoon.

Irony is harder to define. It isn't enough just to look it up in a dictionary. Irony is a much more complex and confusing thing if we try to capture its true meanings and implications. Even in dictionaries one finds multiple explanations of it. "Irony has a hierarchical dimension, excluding some members of the audience from its 'other' or implied sense" (Greene et al. 2012, 732–735). Usually it is defined as an expression or utterance, marked by a deliberate contrast between apparent, intended meanings and a literary style, employing contrasts for humor-

ous or rhetorical effects. Many times it is also defined as an incongruity between what might be expected and what actually occurs. This last definition actually emerged from the misuse of irony. People began to use irony to describe situations which are simply unfortunate rather than ironic. In time this misuse of irony became a secondary explanation of the term, and it is called situational irony or cosmic irony, which is used to describe situations in which God or Fate is playing games with the characters, for example Murphy's Law.

Usually we are speaking about three types of irony: verbal (a use of words to mean something different than the person actually says, and it's always intentional by the speaker), situational (when fate is playing with the characters and the exact opposite of what is meant to happen, happens) and dramatic (when the audience knows more than the characters). On the other hand, the fourth edition of Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics distinguishes seven types of irony. For my current article I will use the three more commonly known types.

### **The history of Hungarian animation**

Media products usually represent the current needs of society, and thus their importance stops in the present. Due to the cultural and social references these products contain, a historical analysis could provide interesting information. These stories represent what's important for the audience, what's good or bad, what the current pop culture is built on. All of these media products, in a way, represent their audience's needs and tastes. (Angelusz et al., 2007)

Of course, in the research on the golden era of Hungarian animation films, we can't forget that these stories were made during communism, and even though at the time in Hungary there was only a softer type of dictatorship, which was more ready to compromise, media and art were still under the influence of the state.

In the late Kádár era, both, the Soviet media policy and the domestic media policy can be detected simultaneously in a changing social environment, because the regime began to face a deepening crisis in the 1980s. The state interfered less often and less aggressively with works of media, but still, even entertainment topics were politicized and everything was supposed to promote the state ideology. They loved to use the tools of propaganda to create images of enemies and depict a bipolar world and stereotypes. (Bajomi 2005)

The dawn of Hungarian animation is somewhere in the 1930s though there were attempts even before that. At the beginning they were making mostly advertisements with different animation techniques, but some of these were so sophisticated with such nice stories, that they could have been accepted as stand-alone animation films as well. Unfortunately the animators didn't get any other possibility in the country besides the advertisements, so most of them chose to

emigrate to the west. Cartoon making kicked off after the Second World War and the nationalization of the film industry, but even then they could only make maximum one cartoon per year.

The renaissance of the Hungarian animation industry came in the 1960s, when cartoons got renewed in both form and content. In this era caricature became one of the main tools used in the animation, and beyond children stories they began to represent the real problems of society and everyday life. Also in this time period the dominant genre were the serials.

In the 1980s, Hungarian animations reached their peak, most of the bibliography calls the 1980-1986 period as the Golden Age, because they made the most animation movies in this period, twelve movies in total, and in 1981 they even won an Academy Award in the animated short category with the *Fly*. Unfortunately, after the golden age the Hungarian animation industry began to fall, though they still exist today in different forms, the industry's glory never returned.

### Cat City

The animated film *Cat City* was released in 1986, and it was one of the fifth biggest blockbusters of the 1980s in Hungary (<http://imdb.com>). It was made in the Pannónia Film Studio, which worked together with the Hungarian national television. At the time this was the only television channel in the country. *Cat City* was directed by Béla Ternovszky, and the script was written by József Nepp, who was well known for his particular sense of humor and his stories, which were always full of puns. The cartoon was not only popular in Hungary but abroad as well. It was even selected as the Hungarian entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 59th Academy Awards, but at the end was not accepted as a nominee.

The target audience was not specified. The film was screened without a parental guide and it was probably for intended as family entertainment, like most of the other animation movies. While the little ones could enjoy the cute animal characters, the story which was filled with intertextuality and ironic humor was more for the adult audience who already have some lexical and film history knowledge. The cartoon is mostly filled with movie references, but we can find jazz song adaptations too. It is a little known fun fact, for example, that the cartoon was based on the song Four Brothers by Manhattan Transfer, which was one of József Nepp's favorite bands. In the cartoon, the adaptation of this song became the song of the four rats.

The cartoon's cat and mouse game is mostly a parody of several famous western feature film and contains classic characters from these films, most of them coming from the James Bond franchise, but almost everything that was part of 1980s pop culture can be found in the film. Even the first frame is a reference

to Gongman, the logo of the British Rank Organization, only in the cartoon it is represented by a cat gong and a mouse. After the Gongman imitation the movie opens with a Star Wars style text scroll which tells us the main situation of the story: *"In the year 80 AM (Anno Mickey Mouse), the mice of Planet X are threatened by humiliation and total apocalypse. The well-organized, fully equipped gangs of evil cats are aiming to wipe out the mouse civilization totally, not caring for the old conventions between mice and cats. But in the last moment, when the mouse leaders are beginning to consider leaving the planet, a new hope rises..."*

Even though the story is placed on the fictional X planet, the main locations are easily identifiable in the real world. The first metropolis we see is definitely symbolizing the big cities of the US, and most of the mice have at least partly English names. There are some Russian ones too, which makes us associate these things with the "good ones". In addition to the urban settings that resemble Western cities, other sites appear too, for example the jungle area where Lazy Dick crashes is similar to Central America around the Amazon. For the secret weapon plans the protagonist travels to a very stereotyped version of Tokyo called Pokyo.

The cartoon uses an alternative timeline: 80 Anno Mickey Mouse, which contains elements from the 1940s or 1950s swing style to the 1980s pop culture and political situations. It also has a science fiction feeling which was not common in the Hungarian movie industry at the time. Alternative or made-up timelines are pretty commonplace in the cartoon industry, because this way it's easier to give a timeless meaning to the story or in certain situations to mask the underlying meanings. The bipolar world of *Cat City*, with their secret super weapons for example, greatly resembles the Cold War threats, the arms race or the experiments in different areas.

The scene containing the title can be interpreted as an allegory. The cityscape first seems futuristic, yet as the sun rises the buildings are somewhat similar to those built in the time of communism. Even the appearing *Cat City* title is, in a way, like a communist version of the Hollywood sign, with full red color and red reflectors with the rising sun.

All the characters in the cartoon are well known movie tropes, so it's not surprising that the opposing sides are cats and mice, whose fight is a well-established storytelling strategy, like the sides they represent. Mice are usually small, weak and innocent characters, but also smart, kindhearted and heroic. In contrast, cats are represented as evil and manipulative creatures who oppress and torture the weaker just for fun. This story trope can be traced back for a number of reasons: the independence and stubbornness of cats, which is seen by many as a negative trait (as is the fact that they like to hunt for fun), though the negative representation of the poor creatures goes back to the Middle Ages, when they were associated with witches.

The cartoon's protagonist is Nick Grabovski, a retired mouse super spy, who got tired of his job and now lives in a secluded little house. He wears a red and blue t-shirt with a big yellow G on the front, being a drawn metaphor of Superman, but as the story goes on he also represents some James Bond personality traits. Without doubt he is the story's ace character, the legendary super-agent with super mouse abilities. Yet we don't meet him right at the beginning of the film. For a while, we only hear about his reputation, and we learn that nowadays he is retired and reads Thoreau. The mention of Henry David Thoreau in a communist family cartoon is certainly an interesting detail, considering that Thoreau is mainly known for his essay *Civil Disobedience*, an argument for disobedience to an unjust state. Unlike the communist rulers, our ace protagonist has a weakness, much like James Bond, he has a soft spot for the other gender and when he meets Chino San, he begins to put her safety first, thus losing his focus, which leads to both of them being captured. This makes him seem more human.

As Grabovski's counterpole stands Sergeant Lazy Dick, who is a very optimistic and kind mouse, but who is fat and not so smart. He is sent on a mission as bait, to divert attention from Grabovski. He mostly represents the unfortunate common folk, who are often the victims of tragic irony, but at the end of the day he saves everyone, despite his clumsiness.

In the evil cat party, the more important character tropes include, for example, Mr. Fritz Teufel. Teufel is kind of a CEO among the cats. His name in Hungarian sounds like the word "tejföl," or sour cream, while in German it means devil, and he shares the name with a German activist from the 1960s, who was a Spaßguerilla member and was protesting for social change, liberalism, and in support of a less materialistic society. In the cartoon, Teufel resembles the bad boss trope, and like many other evil characters in different stories, he has physical defects. For the sake of comical impact these defects are strongly exaggerated. He also smokes, which is usually associated only with the bad guys in cartoons.

The head of the whole cat syndicate is Giovanni Gatto, a white Persian cat, who is a clear reference to Blofeld from James Bond. The only exception under the evil cat trope is Cathy, who is depicted as the innocent child, who is often in detention because she's making friends with mice. In addition, there are plenty of other interesting characters who also represent classic movie tropes and stereotypes. The four gangster rats represent some common stereotypes, and the composition of their team was very popular in the American movie narratives at the time. Their leader is Buddy, who has anger management issues. Billy, who isn't the smartest rat in town, is usually the target of Buddy's anger. The two women characters from the team represent a big contrast: Pissy is a black haired, cold but smart and professional girl, while Cookie is blond and simple-minded with loose morals. The damsel in distress character is represented by Chino San, who of course ends up with our protagonist.

In this short article it's unnecessary to analyze the whole cartoon, though I would like to highlight some moments from the beginning of the story to exemplify how irony and intertextuality are used in *Cat City*.

In the first scene of the story we see the mouse bank and we hear a desperate conversation between an employee and a customer about how nowadays cats can get in everywhere and loot their treasures. The bank employee tries to convince the lady that their bank is absolutely cat proof unless they come with a tank. And we see cosmic irony at its best when the cats immediately break into the bank with a tank. As a response to this, the bank employee yells over my dead body, and again immediately he gets shot by the tank. Finally the scene ends with the incompetent mouse police force, which isn't surprising. Postmodern artists always loved to make fun of the authorities.

Hereinafter we can see the story from multiple characters perspective. The main plot is about the search for the anti-cat super weapon. Most of the characters take part in this, but in some side plots we can get a better grip of what the world of the cartoon looks like, and how the characters live. For example, the cats are trying to get into the mouse holes and steal their cheese.

Shortly after the bank robbery scene we meet with the cat party, including Teufel, who is kind of the story's Darth Vader. He chokes his employee with cigar smoke rings instead of the Force. His assistant Safranek, a red headed cat, is maybe the least evil from the syndicate, but he is the constant target of Teufel's aggressiveness, and he gets beaten up every time something goes awry. We can also see in this scene the cat syndicate's secret experiments. Currently they are trying to miniaturize cats so they can walk in the mouse holes. Teufel, however, quickly recognizes the flaws in the plan. This makes it evident that he is a smart villain. We also get some easily recognizable verbal and visual intertextuality, i.e. a reference to a Tarzan movie.

After we meet the cats and get to know the main situation of the story, the cartoon takes us to the Intermouse, the secret headquarter of the mouse agents. The building is introduced by following a mouse agent, Edlington, through the over-complicated security procedure he needs to undertake in order to get inside. The security systems resemble the ones we see in spy movies, though in an overdone humorous way (tail prints instead of fingerprints, different kind of laser sensors and radiology screenings, password etc.). But in the form of dramatic irony we soon realize that all the security measures are useless and are only for the illusion of safety, because the cats are listening in. We also get a nice visual intertextuality in the form of the Intermouse table, what can represent both the Knights of the Round Table and a Hungarian cheese product.



## Conclusion

In general, *Cat City* is not an ordinary Hungarian cartoon due to all the references to the Western world and its movie industry, but the linguistic humor is quite frequent in their cartoons, and it matches Nepp József's works. Even though *Cat City* met with some negative criticism because of its Western feeling, it was and still is one of the most popular Hungarian cartoons. That means that even back then there was an attraction to the western world, and this worldview also drew attention to the democratic systems, which might be one of the reasons why the cartoon's script was refused at first by the state. As a cartoon built on Western movie blockbusters, it didn't contain enough communist propaganda. Of course traces of the symbols and ideas of the regime are noticeable. The stereotypes and bipolar world can be interpreted as both, a common storytelling strategy in the movie industry and also as the leading tools in media politics during the Kádár era.

Leaving politics aside, we can simply get a feel of popular trends and tastes in the 1980s, because almost everything that was representative in the 1980s pop culture can be found in this cartoon. Since it has a bunch of movie tropes and archetypal characters, it can also be interpreted as a caricature of the film industry itself.

Regarding intertextuality, the cartoon mostly uses visual allusions, and these visual references are usually inspired by movies. On the other hand, we can also identify plenty of verbal references too, especially in the Hungarian version. The interesting thing is that the verbal intertextuality is not limited to movies. We find references to mythology, philosophy and even history.

The question of how references stand the test of time is always a concern in the case of a work rich with intertextuality. The film may well have meanings for audiences today which differ considerably from the meanings it had for audiences in the 1980s. Interpretations of the film from the viewpoint of young adults who weren't even alive when the cartoon was made and grow up in a completely different world can hardly be compared to interpretations from the perspective of a view of the 1980s. The movie references mostly stood this test, because there have been innumerable remakes of and variations on the movies to which the cartoon originally alluded, so the genre remains familiar (for example James Bond and Superman movies). The political or social references are harder to catch today.

In the case of irony, we can identify all three types of irony (verbal, situational and dramatic) in the cartoon, though verbal irony is the most common, which isn't surprising, seeing as how this was the easiest form to introduce in the different situations. However, some of the more memorable scenes are built on situational or dramatic irony, which means that the creators didn't have a preferred irony type. Rather, they tried to use as many tools for humor as they could.

## References

- Angelusz, Róbert, Tardos, Róbert and Terestyéni, Tamás, 2007. *Média, nyilvánosság, közvélemény*. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.
- Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, 2005. Médiapolitika. In: Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, ed. *Magyar médiatörténet a késő Kádár-kortól az ezredfordulóig*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 19–51.
- Barthes, Ronald, 2010. A kép retorikája. In: Blaskó, Ágnes, Margitházi, Beja, ed. *Vizuális kommunikáció. Szöveggyűjtemény*. Budapest: Typotex, 109–124.
- Dizseri, Eszter, 1998. *Kockáról kockára (A magyar animáció krónikája 1948–1998)*. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó.
- Greene, Roland, Cushman, Stephen, Cavanagh, Clare, Ramazani, Jahan and Rouzer, Paul 2012, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics: Fourth Edition*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Hernández, María Lorenzo, 2007. The Double Sense of Animated Images, *Animation Studies*, 2. [online] Available at: <https://journal.animationstudies.org/maria-lorenzo-hernandez-the-double-sense-of-animated-images/> [Accessed 10 July 2017]
- Margitházi, Orsolya, 2002. A magyar rajzfilmművészet. *Filmtett*. [online] Available at: <http://www.filmtett.ro/cikk/1439/az-animacios-film-tortenete-4-3> [Accessed 10 July 2017].
- Orosz, Magdolna, 2003. „Az elbeszélés fonala” – Narráció, intertextualitás, intermedialitás. Budapest: L'Harmattan.
- Simon, Éva, 2002. Intertextualitás és struktúra. *Palimpszeszt – Tudományos és kulturális folyóirat*, 17. [online] Available at: <http://magyar-irodalom.elte.hu/palimpszeszt/zemplenyi/45.htm#fn1> [Accessed 10 July 2017].
- Stokes, Jane, 2008. *A média és kultúrákutatók gyakorlata*. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.
- Szilvássy, Orsolya, 2012. Üzenet a múltból és a jövőből. in *Médiakutató*, 4. [online] Available at: [http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2012\\_04\\_tel/09\\_uzenet\\_a\\_multbol](http://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2012_04_tel/09_uzenet_a_multbol) [Accessed 10 July 2017].
- Urbán, Ágnes, 2005. Rádió és televízió. In: Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, ed. *Magyar médiatörténet a késő Kádár-kortól az ezredfordulóig*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 89–111.

# SPRACHLICHE UND ETHNISCHE VERHÄLTNISSE IN UNGARNS LUTHERTUM AN DER WENDE VOM 16. ZUM 17. JAHRHUNDERT

ZOLTÁN CSEPREGI

Lutheran Theological University Budapest  
zoltan.csepregi@lutheran.hu

Ein besonderer Zug des Luthertums in Ungarn ist dessen ethnische Vielfalt. In der Studie wird der Frage nachgegangen, welche jene Volkssprachen sind, in denen Ungarns lutherische Geistliche um das Jahr 1600 ihre Gottesdienste feierten, predigten, sangen und schrieben. Wenn man aus den Quellen erhebt, mit welchen ethnischen Attributen die Prediger der mehrsprachigen lutherischen Kirchengemeinden damals bezeichnet wurden, kommt folgende Liste zustande: böhmisch, deutsch, kroatisch, polnisch, sächsisch, slowakisch, ungarisch und windisch. Wenn man also die Predigtsprachen zusammenzählt, könnte man (abhängig von der Zuordnung einzelner Dialekte) zu einer Zahl von 6 bis 8 Sprachen gelangen. Die Anzahl der liturgischen Sprachen ist hingegen viel geringer, denn diese standen bereits mit der Buchkultur und den Schriftsprachen in Verbindung. Liturgische Literatur (vor allem Agenden, Gebet- und Gesangsbücher, sowohl gedruckte als auch handschriftliche) stand nämlich nur in vier Sprachen zur Verfügung: Tschechisch, Ungarisch, Deutsch und Slowenisch. Für die Pfarramtskandidaten war es darum nötig, sich andere Volkssprachen anzueignen. Der Fremdspracherwerb geschah nicht mit schulischen Methoden, sondern in der Praxis, in der Umgebung von Muttersprachlern. Der hier unternommene Rundblick über Ungarns Luthertum vom Übermurgebiet bis zum Burzenland bezieht sich auf die Zeit um 1600. Die Mehrsprachigkeit war hier damals noch alltägliche Praxis, heute existiert sie jedoch nur noch als kulturelle Erinnerung und als weitestgehend untergegangene Tradition. Die Lutheraner konnten sich aber dank ihrer historischen Wurzeln doch eine besondere Offenheit und ein Verhalten gegenseitigen Respekts und gegenseitiger Annahme aus dieser Zeit herüberretten.

**Keywords:** Lutherans in Hungary, multilingualism, 16th century

## Liturgische und literarische Sprachen, volkssprachliche Prediger

In der kirchengeschichtlichen Literatur zählt die These zu den Axiomen, dass der lutherischen Reformation viel an den Volkssprachen lag. Obwohl die volkssprachliche Predigt bereits im Mittelalter gang und gäbe gewesen war, können die Liturgie, der Schulunterricht und der Buchdruck in Volkssprachen eindeutig mit den reformatorischen Bestrebungen in Zusammenhang gebracht werden.

Es darf als bekannt vorausgesetzt werden, dass in Ungarns ethnischer Vielfalt auch die reformatorische Botschaft in mehreren Sprachen erklang. Innerhalb der

Konfessionen wurde aber dieser ethnische, sprachliche und kulturelle Pluralismus vor allem von der lutherischen Richtung beibehalten, während sich die reformierten und unitarischen Landeskirchen (von wenigen Ausnahmen und kurzlebigen Versuchen abgesehen) nur der ungarischen Ethnie verschrieben.

Obwohl hier bisher allgemein Bekanntes wiederholt worden ist, kann man jedoch auf überraschende Erkenntnisse kommen, wenn man die ethnische Karte der ungarischen Reformation aus der Nähe betrachtet. Die erste Frage dieser Studie lautet: Welche Volkssprachen genau sind es, in denen Ungarns lutherische Reformatoren einen Gottesdienst feierten, predigten, sangen und schrieben? Zweitens wird hier der Frage nachgegangen, inwiefern die modernen Stereotypen wie „Calvinismus ist eine ungarische Religion“ oder „Ungarns Lutheraner sind entweder Wenden oder Schwaben“ auf das Reformationsjahrhundert selbst zutreffen.

Diese Fragen werden hier in einem Rundblick über Ungarn in einem Zeitausschnitt um das Jahr 1600 erörtert. Ich habe diesen Zeitpunkt in Ungarns Geschichte gewählt, weil der Prozess der Glaubenserneuerung bis dahin im Wesentlichen abgeschlossen war und sich die Konfessionen ausdifferenziert hatten (wenn auch nicht überall schon mit kirchenorganisatorischen Konsequenzen). Andererseits war die gewaltsame Rekatholisierung zu diesem Zeitpunkt noch nicht in Schwung gekommen, die im darauffolgenden Jahrhundert die Konfessionskarte Ungarns neu zeichnen sollte.

Wenn man anhand der vorhandenen Quellen erhebt,<sup>1</sup> mit welchen ethnischen Attributen die Prediger der mehrsprachigen lutherischen Kirchengemeinden bezeichnet wurden (in einer sprachlich homogenen Gemeinschaft waren ja solche Beinamen nicht nötig), ergibt sich folgende Liste (in alphabetischer Reihenfolge): böhmisch, deutsch, kroatisch, polnisch, sächsisch, slowakisch, ungarisch, windisch. Die Attribute „deutsch, sächsisch, slowakisch, ungarisch“, die eindeutig auf Ungarns und Siebenbürgens Nationalitäten hinweisen, bedürfen hier gewiss keiner näheren Erläuterung.

Die Bezeichnungen „Böhme“ bzw. „böhmisch“ entstanden zumeist dadurch, dass sich die Slowaken der tschechischen Schriftsprache bedienten und dass dies auch auf ihre Bibelübersetzung, Agenden, Katechismen und Gesänge zutraf. Liest man also über eine „böhmische“ Gemeinde, Kapelle, oder einen „böhmischen“ Gottesdienst in Ungarn, so ist darunter jeweils „slowakisch“ zu verstehen. Der Ausdruck „böhmischer Prediger“ ist hingegen schon differenzierter zu betrachten, denn unter den Slowaken Ungarns standen tatsächlich auch gebürtige Tschechen im Kirchendienst, vorwiegend diejenigen, die dann nach 1620 in die Emigration gezwungen worden sind. Aus diesem Grund ist nicht definitiv zu sagen, in genau welcher Sprache die Predigt damals tatsächlich erklingen sein mag: Sowohl für das Tschechische als auch für das Slowakische kann man sprachgeschichtlich und soziolin-

guistisch sinnvoll argumentieren.<sup>2</sup> Weil die Beantwortung dieser Frage weit mehr von den konkreten Personen und jeweiligen Orten abhängt als von der Sprache der Liturgie oder der Kirchengesänge, ist es gut vorstellbar, dass – einerseits durch Abstammung, Ausbildung und Überzeugung des Pfarrers, andererseits abhängig von den Ansprüchen und Traditionen der Gemeinde – sowohl muttersprachlich-slowakische als auch hochsprachlich-tschechische Predigten gehört wurden.

Der Reformator der slawonischen Kroaten war Mihály Sztárai und auch unter den Wittenberger Studenten befanden sich manche Kroaten aus Slawonien und der Murinsel. Die Bezeichnung „kroatischer Prediger“ bezieht sich aber nicht nur auf diese, sondern auch auf ihre Amtsbrüder in Westungarn, meistens auf dem Gebiet des heutigen Burgenlandes: in Güssing, Rechnitz, Schlaining, Deutschkreutz und Steinberg.<sup>3</sup> Auch aus Ödenburg (Sopron H) kamen Seelsorger zu den Kroaten in Kohlenhof (Kópháza H), wenn einer der Prediger zufällig Kroatisch konnte, wie der Körmender Gáspár Dragonus.<sup>4</sup>

Das Attribut „polnisch“ ist in ähnlicher Weise zu hinterfragen wie die vorhin erwähnte Bezeichnung „böhmisch“. Es kommt z. B. in Bartfeld (Bardejov SK) vor, wo man (wenn man nicht die Herkunft eines Predigers bedachte) die örtliche slowakische Gemeinschaft als passenden Sprachbezug heranzog (denn der Scharoscher Dialekt ähnelt sehr dem Polnischen). Dasselbe Attribut „polnisch“ wurde aber auch in den 13 verpfändeten Zipser Städten und deren Zentrum Käsmark (Kežmarok SK) gebraucht, die jahrhundertlang zu Polen gehörten. Es ist gut vorstellbar, dass „die polnischen Prediger“ im Käsmarker Schloss dem Hof und den Soldaten des Statthalters – sofern unter diesen Evangelische waren – wirklich auf Polnisch predigten.

Die Bezeichnung „windisch“ konnte sich regionsabhängig auf Slowaken im Norden, auf Slowenen im Südwesten des Landes oder auf Kroaten in Slawonien beziehen. Über Letztere war bereits oben die Rede. Mit den „Wenden“ des Übermurgebiets (ein Endonym) und mit den „Wenden“ der nördlichen Komitate (ein Exonym) wird sich unten je ein eigenes Unterkapitel beschäftigen.

Wenn man also die Predigtsprachen zusammenzählt, könnte man (abhängig von der Einordnung des Tschechischen und Polnischen) auf eine Zahl zwischen 6 und 8 gelangen, denn nicht einmal das Siebenbürgisch-Sächsische lässt sich ohne weiteres mit dem Deutschen gleichsetzen. Nach unseren Kenntnissen ließen die dialektalen Unterschiede in der Reformationszeit sogar nur ein beschränkt mögliches Verstehen zwischen diesen beiden Sprachgruppen zu.

Die Zahl der feststellbaren liturgischen Sprachen ist hingegen viel geringer, denn diese standen bereits mit der Buchkultur und den Schriftsprachen in Verbindung. Liturgische Literatur (vor allem Agenden, Gebet- und Gesangsbücher, sowohl gedruckte als auch handschriftliche) stand nur in vier Sprachen zur Verfügung: Tschechisch, Ungarisch, Deutsch und Slowenisch.<sup>5</sup>

## Das Verhältnis von Konfession und Volkssprache

### *Übermurgebiet*

In den Steuerverzeichnissen vom Raab-Mur-Kreis des Komitats Eisenburg sind eindeutig auf evangelische Geistliche hinweisende Einträge erhalten geblieben. 1599 gab es in 16 Dörfern, 1601 in 19 Dörfern evangelische Prediger (*concionator*), in Tišina zusätzlich auch einen Kaplan.<sup>6</sup> Ihre Namen sind zwar nicht überliefert, aber es steht doch fest, dass um die Jahrhundertwende in den meisten im Mittelalter gegründeten Pfarren des Übermurgebiets bereits evangelische Pfarrer anzutreffen waren.<sup>7</sup>

In den Zentren des transdanubischen Kirchendistrikts, auf den Herrschaftsgebieten der Familien Nádasdy und Batthyány, begannen sich die reformierten und die lutherischen Richtungen erst in den 1590-er Jahren, sich in Lehre und Organisation auszudifferenzieren, und diese langsame Trennung hat zwanzig Jahre gedauert. Das von den Verwaltungszentren (Güssing, Csepreg, Sárvár, Pápa) entfernt liegende, größtenteils anderen Grundherren gehörende Übermurgebiet folgte diesen Ereignissen noch später.

Eine bewegte Episode der örtlichen Reformationgeschichte war jene Epoche, als der reformierte Sprengel hier vorübergehend die Oberhand gewann. Die Calvinisten konnten in mehr als zwanzig Gemeinden eigene Seelsorger aussenden, die ein selbstständiges Seniorat bildeten. Dieser Prozess wird in der Historiographie traditionell mit einem Konfessionswechsel der Grundherren erklärt. Am Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts bildete der Calvinismus in Ungarn tatsächlich eine relative Mehrheit, mit einem Schwerpunkt in der ungarischen Ethnie, und viele Adelige aus dem Übermurgebiet folgten tatsächlich dieser Richtung. In der Methodik von heute kann man aber nicht jede reformationsgeschichtliche Frage mit der *Cuius-regio*-Antwort abhaken, deshalb versuche ich im Folgenden eine eigene Erklärung, wobei ich einräume, dass jede örtliche Geschichte einzigartig ist, deren individuelle Situation und genaue Motivlage nicht mehr nachzuvollziehen sind.

Nach der Eroberung von Szigetvár durch die Osmanen 1566 zog sich die Bevölkerung des Komitats Somogy hinter die neue Grenzburg Kanizsa im Westen zurück, wobei die Bauern freilich weniger mobil waren als die Handwerker und die Kaufleute. Ihr Umzug verursachte in den Marktflecken und Dörfern des Übermurgebiets einen Madjarisierungsprozess, der sich allerdings nicht auf die kleineren slowenischen Dörfer erstreckte. Die Neuankömmlinge, zum Großteil ungarische Reformierte, bildeten eine Basis für die calvinistischen Prediger,<sup>8</sup> die jedoch seitens der in kleineren Dörfern lebenden slowenischen Mehrheit keinen Rückhalt und keine Unterstützung erhielten und sich deswegen nicht lange halten konnten. Dieser Gegensatz drückt sich explizit in den Akten des sog. Kirchenprozesses von Martjanci aus.<sup>9</sup>

In den 1620-er Jahren unterzeichneten immer mehr reformierte Geistliche die Konkordienformel, d. h. sie unterstellten sich dem lutherischen Bischof, und dieser Bischof ordinierte immer mehr Wenden in Kirchenämter auf dem Übermurgebiet. Schließlich wurde dieser Wechsel 1627 durch eine lutherische Kirchenvisitation besiegelt. Zu jener Zeit wurden zehn Gemeinden visitiert und das erhaltene Visitationsprotokoll enthält neben dem kirchenhistorischen Sachverhalt auch sehr wertvolle wirtschaftsgeschichtliche und ethnographische Daten.<sup>10</sup>

Dass sich die Wenden über der Mur um 1600 des Krainer Dialekts des Slowenischen als liturgischer Sprache bedienten, ist abgesehen von diesbezüglichen Vermutungen nur durch zwei Quellen unterzumauern: Erstens listet das Visitationsprotokoll von 1627 neben anderen Büchern auch Luthers Hauspostille in Krainer Mundart auf (*Lutheri Postilla Domestica Carniolica*).<sup>11</sup> Zweitens gab Johannes Manlius 1587 in Eberau eine *Agenda Vandalica*, d. h. eine windische Agenda heraus, die heute leider als verschollen gilt.<sup>12</sup> Der Druckort im Komitat Eisenburg und der Titel weisen darauf hin, dass das Werk für das Übermurgebiet bestimmt war. Anhand von Manlius' Laufbahn und fachmännischen Erfahrungen kann man es als sicher annehmen, dass die Agenda im Krainer Dialekt fertiggestellt wurde, zumal Manlius vormals in Laibach als Drucker slowenischer Literatur in Erscheinung trat.

### „Slavonia“

Im Wittenberger Ordiniertenbuch taucht manchmal der geographische Name *Slavonia* / *Sclavonia* auf, wobei er zu dieser Zeit noch nicht das zwischen Save und Drau gelegene Slawonien bezeichnete, sondern die in Nordwestungarn gelegenen Komitate Trentschin und Neutra, wo die Mehrheit der Bewohner Slowakisch sprach.<sup>13</sup> Dieser eigenartige Namensgebrauch ist erstmals 1569 zu belegen, als ausnahmsweise Käsmark aus der Zips zu *Slavonia* gehören wollte,<sup>14</sup> sein letzter Beleg stammt aus dem Jahre 1601.<sup>15</sup> Diese geographische Vorstellung scheint danach aus der Mode gekommen zu sein.

Die im 18. Jahrhundert verbreitete Selbstbezeichnung von Intellektuellen und Bürgern unterschiedlicher Muttersprache im Königreich Ungarn als *Hungari*, also als Ungarländer,<sup>16</sup> war im 16. Jahrhundert noch nicht selbstverständlich. So schrieb sich der Schulmann und Hebraist Nicolaus Colacinatus (†1583/84) aus dem mehrheitlich von Slowaken bewohnten Komitat Trentschin in die Wittenberger Matrikel nicht als *Hungarus* oder *Pannonius*, sondern als *Slavus* ein.<sup>17</sup>

Die meisten Städte im Nordteil des ungarischen Königreiches waren ethnisch gemischt, nur das prozentuale Verhältnis der deutschen, ungarischen und slowakischen Bevölkerung wechselte entsprechend der geographischen Lage und dem Lauf der Zeit. Diese Mehrsprachigkeit bedeutete, dass – wie oben gesagt – in den



Kirchengemeinden deutsche, ungarische und slowakische Prediger, Diakone oder Kaplane angestellt wurden und je nach den örtlichen Verhältnissen die jeweiligen Minderheiten eventuell über ein eigenes Kirchengebäude oder eine Kapelle verfügten, wobei die städtische Kirchengemeinde eine einheitliche und gemeinsame Institution blieb.<sup>18</sup> Wie ich weiter oben anhand des Attributs „böhmisch“ erläutert habe, hat es sich herausgestellt, dass die auf die Kirchensprache und Prediger der Slowaken angewandte ethnische Bezeichnung in den Quellen nicht einheitlich ist, und dass es sich hier lohnt, auf diese Frage besonders einzugehen.

Die Slowaken und ihre Sprache heißen in den – gedruckten und archivalischen – Quellen um 1600 lateinisch *S(c)lavus* oder *S(c)lavonicus*, auf Deutsch „windisch“ und auf Ungarisch *tót*.<sup>19</sup> Dieselben Adjektive können zwar in anderen Gegenden z. B. für die Bezeichnung von Slowenen vom Übermurgebiet oder von Kroaten aus Slawonien gelten, aber Letzteres hat mit den Slowaken nichts zu tun. Falls es in den Quellen um Gottesdienste des örtlichen Slowakentums geht, finden sich meistens die obigen Wörter als Attribute zu den Begriffen wie Prediger, Kirchengebäude und Gemeinde.

Manchmal kommt zwar – wie oben dargestellt – in Zusammenhang mit Geistlichen auch das Wort „böhmisch“ vor, das weist aber immer auf die Abstammung der genannten Personen hin, die man eben um ihrer tschechischen Muttersprache willen gern als Prediger unter Slowaken angestellt hat. In vier Fällen aber beziehen sich die lateinischen Adjektive *Bohemus*, *Bohemicus* unmissverständlich auf den kirchlichen Dienst und Gottesdienst und nicht auf die dabei wirkende Person selbst:

- Jacobus Schröter aus Neusohl (Banská Bystrica SK) wird 1580 in eine *böhmische* Kaplanstelle in Deutschliptsch (Partizanská Ľupča SK) berufen;<sup>20</sup>
- die Obertrentschiner Kirchenordnung aus dem Jahre 1580 sieht vor, dass die Gläubigen am Gottesdienst auf *Böhmisch* singen;<sup>21</sup>
- 1616 und 1619 betonen zwei Schreiben, die Pfarrer- und Lehrerberufungen betreffen, die ungarischen und *böhmischen* Sprachkenntnisse der Kandidaten.<sup>22</sup>

Diese Daten unterstützen die Vermutung, dass – wie auch die Sprache der erhaltenen Agenden<sup>23</sup> – die liturgische Sprache in den Gottesdiensten der Slowaken das Bibeltschechische (*bibličtina*) war. In diesem Fall muss um der genauen Bezeichnung willen von einem volkssprachlichen und nicht von einem muttersprachlichen Gottesdienst die Rede sein.<sup>24</sup> Über das Problem der Predigt ist oben bereits das Wichtigste gesagt worden.

*Transdanubien*

Der transdanubische Kirchendistrikt erstreckte sich um 1600 auf das Gebiet zwischen Donau und Plattensee, vorwiegend auf die Komitate Wieselburg, Ödenburg und Eisenburg, aber es gehörten auch Kirchengemeinden aus den benachbarten Komitaten Szalad, Weißbrunn und Raab dazu. Der Bruch zwischen den Konfessionen AB und HB wurde erst 1612, also erst nach der hier untersuchten kurzen Zeitphase vollzogen. Die westungarischen Bauern blieben vor allem durch die Autorität und Macht der Familie Nádasdy und besonders wegen deren traditioneller Rivalität mit den benachbarten reformierten Batthyánys im lutherischen Lager. Eine einzigartige Quelle für die vorliegende Untersuchung ist ein Exemplar des gedruckten Konkordienbuches mit den Unterschriften von 663 Pfarrern und Lehrern aus der Zeit von 1596 bis 1672 (sie befindet sich heute in der Széchényi Nationalbibliothek Budapest).<sup>25</sup> Bis 1610 unterzeichneten hier 133 Personen die Konkordienformel, meistens frischordinierte Prediger, die keinesfalls theologisch undefinierbare Evangelische oder gar Katholiken waren, sondern eindeutig Lutheraner. Bei den Unterzeichnern wird manchmal kein bestimmter Pfarrer- oder Predigerdienst genannt, also kann es sich in solchen Fällen auch um Laien wie Schulrektoren handeln. Trotzdem habe ich diese Personen in die Untersuchung miteinbezogen, weil ihre spätere Beförderung in den geistlichen Dienst nicht nur möglich war, sondern sogar typisch, auch wenn die Quelle darüber schweigt.

Ich habe versucht, die Pfarrer nach ethnischer Zugehörigkeit und Muttersprache – anhand von Familiennamen, Herkunftsorten und Dienstorten – einzuordnen. In dieser Untersuchung, welche die Unterzeichner der Konkordienformel erfasst, bilden die Ungarn die bestimmende Mehrheit.

|               |      |
|---------------|------|
| Ungarn        | 70 % |
| Deutsche      | 16 % |
| Slawen        | 10 % |
| Ungarn/Slawen | 3 %  |
| ungewiss      | 1 %  |

Die „Slawen“ sind meistens Kroaten und Slowenen, die auf dieser lückenhaften Quellenbasis sehr schwierig von einander zu unterscheiden sind (Namen wie Belechich, Jagodich, Miholics, Musics, Ratkovicz, Tsebenich). Weil die ans Konkordienbuch angehängte Liste bis 1610 so gut wie keinen Ortsnamen aus dem Übermurgebiet enthält,<sup>26</sup> könnten diese Südslawen eher westungarische Kroaten sein.

Unter den vier „Ungarn/Slawen“ verstehe ich Personen mit slowakischen Namen und slowakischen Geburtsorten, die in Transdanubien eindeutig einen unga-

rischsprachigen Kirchendienst leisten mussten (Perich, Andreades, Stephanides, Havar). In die Gruppe der „Ungarn“ gehören madjarisierte Kroaten, wie Dianovits, Klaszekovits, Thokoych, Zvonarich, deren literarisches Werk entscheidend in der Beurteilung der Frage nach ihrer Muttersprache war. Die einzige Person, die sich sprachlich nicht einordnen lässt, ist ein nirgends sonst aufscheinender Mann namens Joannes Mallo.

Im alten transdanubischen Kirchendistrikt sind also neben einer ungarischen Mehrheit deutsche und kroatische Minderheiten anzutreffen. Dienstorte aus dem Übermurgebiet kommen auf der Liste bis 1610 überhaupt nicht vor. Nur der Geburtsort „Pusczini“ deckt sich vielleicht mit dem heutigen Puconci in Slowenien. Die bescheidenen Erfolge der kroatischen Reformation sind oben bereits erwähnt worden.<sup>27</sup> In den Konkordienformel-Unterschriften taucht der Ort Schützen in Ödenburger Komitat (Lövé H) auf, wo ausschließlich Prediger mit kroatischen Namen dienten (Belechich, Miholics, Musics).<sup>28</sup> Wahrscheinlich war dies die einzige rein kroatische Kirchengemeinde in Transdanubien (neben den erwähnten, sprachlich gemischten Rechnitz, Schlaining, Güssing, Deutschkreutz und Steinberg), auf deren liturgische Sprache man aus den kroatischen Gesangsbüchern von Gregor Pythiraeus schließen kann.<sup>29</sup> Mit der Region am linken Ufer der Donau (historisch „Oberes Donaugebiet“ genannt, die sich auf die Schüttinsel und das nördliche Flachland erstreckt) entwickelte sich eine eigenartige Wechselwirkung. Beide Gegenden verband besonders die gemeinsame Volkssprache, das Ungarische. Ziemlich viele Prediger bewegten sich zwischen den zwei Donaufern, d. h. sie bekleideten sowohl im Oberen Donaugebiet, als auch in Transdanubien kirchliche Ämter.<sup>30</sup>

### *Oberes Donaugebiet*

Am längsten hielt sich nämlich das Miteinander von Lutheranern und Reformierten im Oberen Donaudistrikt, zu dem Gemeinden auf der Schüttinsel sowie am linken Donauufer gehörten und wo mehrheitlich ungarische Reformierte lutherische Oberhirten wählten, wenigstens so lange, wie die lutherische Familie Thurzó dort ihren Einfluss bewahren konnte.<sup>31</sup>

Zur friedlichen Trennung der zwei Konfessionen kam es hier in den 1610-er Jahren.<sup>32</sup> In diesem Zusammenhang entstand ein den transdanubischen Konkordienformel-Unterschriften ähnliches Dokument, nach dem 69 Geistliche der Gegend zwischen 1614 und 1618 die *Confessio Augustana Invariata* unterzeichneten.<sup>33</sup> Wenn man Familiennamen, Herkunftsorte und Dienstorte mit der vorhin dargestellten Methode untersucht, kommt man zu den folgenden Prozentsätzen:

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Ungarn            | 55 % |
| Ungarn / Slowaken | 16 % |
| Slowaken          | 13 % |
| Deutsche          | 3 %  |
| ungewiss          | 13 % |

Personen, die sich nicht einordnen lassen, tragen latinisierte Namen wie Davidis, Molitoris und Scripta, die bei mehreren Nationalitäten vorkommen, darüber hinaus sind ihre Herkunftsorte oder Dienstorte auch mehrsprachig. Kroatische Namen tauchen auch in rein ungarischen Kirchengemeinden auf (Dianovits, Radicz). Das einzige Beispiel aus dem Übermurgebiet, ein Jacobus Kothay aus Olsnitz (Murska Sobota SLO), gesellt sich zur ungarischen Fraktion.

Die Gruppe „Ungarn / Slowaken“ umfasst Geistliche, die durch ihre Familiennamen und Herkunftsorte mit der slowakischen Minderheit verbunden sind, die aber ihre Karriere in ungarischen Gegenden machten. Zu ihnen gehört der oben erwähnte Liptauer Michael Andreades, ordiniert in Sárvár, der in Ödenburg ein ungarisches, in Pressburg (Bratislava SK) aber ein ungarisch-slowakisches Predigeramt versah und der im ungarischen Milieu Andrásfy hieß; oder Michael Stephanides, der sowohl südlich als auch nördlich der Donau in ungarischen Dörfern, in Szopor und Csallóközkürt (Ohrady SK) Pfarrer war.<sup>34</sup>

Die absolute Mehrheit der „Ungarn“ ist somit auch im Oberen Donaugebiet bestimmend, aber an zweiter Stelle folgen hier nicht die „Deutschen“, sondern die „Slowaken“. Dieses ungarische Luthertum ist während der Rekatholisierung im 17. Jahrhundert fast spurlos verschwunden (denn nach der Aussterben der Familie Thurzó wurden hier die katholischen Esterházys die größten Grundherren); neben einigen ungarischen Predigerstellen in Stadtgemeinden wurde es nur noch durch manche Dörfer wie in Alsószeli und Felsőszeli (Dolné Saliby, Horné Saliby SK) vertreten.

### *Gömör*

Zu den eingangs zitierten wohlbekannten Tatsachen gehört, dass man in drei Regionen des Königreichs Ungarn im Konfessionellen Zeitalter auf ungarischsprachige Lutheraner traf: in Westungarn auf der Kleinen Tiefebene, in Oberungarn im Komitat Gömör und im siebenbürgischen Burzenland. Aus diesen Regionen ist die Geschichte der Gömörer Lutheraner am wenigsten untersucht.<sup>35</sup>

Leider kann der bis 1735 selbstständige, einmal „Muraner“, dann wieder „Gömörer“ genannte Kirchendistrikt keine solche umfangreiche Pfarrerlisten aus den Jahren um 1600 bieten, wie sie im Falle von Transdanubien und dem

Oberen Donaudistrikt untersucht werden konnten. Es stehen jedoch die Muraner Artikel von 1590 und 1596 sowie die Gömörer Artikel von 1604 zur Verfügung, mit insgesamt 41 Unterschriften von 36 Geistlichen – wenn man die Laien nicht dazurechnet.<sup>36</sup> Unter den Unterzeichnern ist kein ungarischer Pfarrer anzutreffen (nur unter den Laien gibt es ungarische Adelige: János Borbély, János Kisfaludi, János Bakos). Die erhaltenen Daten ordnen die überwiegende Mehrheit der Geistlichkeit den Slowaken zu – neben manchen Deutschen (Atzmann, Friedt, Radler, Schrötter), die vor allem in der Burg Muran (Murán SK) sowie in den Bergstädten Dobschau (Dobšiná SK) und Rosenau ihr Amt versahen. Wenn man aus diesem Befund auf die Sprache der Kirchengemeinden schließen darf, kann man neben der slowakischen Mehrheit<sup>37</sup> und der deutschen Minderheit von einem ungarischen Luthertum um 1600 keine Spur entdecken.<sup>38</sup>

Es ist bekannt, dass Gömör genau am Rande des ungarischen Sprachgebiets liegt und hier eben im 17. Jahrhundert eine ethnische Veränderung, nämlich ein rascher Madjarisierungsprozess vorging. Die Ursache war dem ähnlich, was ich vorhin über das Übermurgebiet geschrieben habe: Die osmanische Eroberung drängte einerseits die ungarische Bevölkerung der Tiefebene nach Norden, andererseits verlagerten sich die Märkte aus demselben Grund vom nördlichen Rand der Tiefebene in die Täler der Flüsse Rima und Sajó. Diese Zuwanderung erhöhte den Prozentsatz sowohl der Ungarn als auch der Reformierten in den Marktflecken und Kirchendörfern von Gömör und Kleinhont. Vermutlich nicht aus dogmatischer Ungewissheit oder grundherrlicher Willkür oder wegen der Wankelmütigkeit eines Geistlichen, sondern wahrscheinlich wegen der massenhaften Zuwanderung wechselten einige Gemeinden wie Alsóbalog und Uzapanyit (Uzovská Panica SK) in der Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts vom lutherischen ins reformierte Lager.<sup>39</sup> Der Rest der madjarisierten Dörfer ist aber, sofern sie die Rekatholisierung überstehen konnten, lutherisch geblieben.

### *Burzenland*

Wenn Gömör zuerst slowakisch-lutherisch war und erst später ungarisch-lutherisch geworden ist, verlief dieser Vorgang im Burzenland in der entgegengesetzten Richtung: Hier war die Bevölkerung ursprünglich ungarisch-reformiert, um in Laufe der Zeit ungarisch-lutherisch zu werden. Die betreffenden zehn Dörfer im Burzenland wurden, wie unten noch zu erläutern sein wird, erst im 17. Jahrhundert durch die Siebenbürger Sachsen zum Konfessionswechsel gezwungen. Erste Zeichen der Identitätsverschiebung tauchten bei den Siebenbürger Sachsen im 17. Jahrhundert auf. Bis zum Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts störte es diese nicht, dass ihre ungarischen Leibeigenen, so etwa in den Dörfern im Burzenland, calvinistische Prediger holen ließen, meistens aus dem reformierten Kollegium

in Strassburg am Mieresch (Aiud RO). Damals waren die Siebenbürger Sachsen noch nicht streng lutherisch und der Inhalt ihrer Kirchenordnungen über die Verwendung von Glocken, Orgeln und Bildern sowie gesäuertem und ungesäuertem Brot oder die Art der Beichte, Liturgie und Kirchengesänge exemplifiziert eher ein Vorherrschen des Kryptocalvinismus.<sup>40</sup>

Unter katholischen Fürsten bereitete ihnen die konfessionelle Heterogenität der Siedlungsgebiete der Siebenbürger Sachsen noch kein Problem. Als jedoch die reformierten Fürsten Gábor Bethlen (1580–1629) und besonders György I. Rákóczi (1593–1648) 1613 beziehungsweise 1630 den Thron Siebenbürgens bestiegen und sich für das Kirchenwesen und das Seelenheil der ungarischen Untertanen in den sächsischen Gebieten verantwortlich fühlten, änderte sich die Lage. Die Siebenbürger Sachsen freilich, die jegliche Einmischung in ihre autonomen Angelegenheiten vermeiden wollten, versuchten, sich an die theologischen Richtlinien der Zentren im Heiligen Römischen Reich anzupassen, die bereits durch die Konkordienformel bestimmt waren. Deren Prinzipien rechtfertigten den Anspruch der Siebenbürger Sachsen, die konfessionellen Verhältnisse in ihren autonomen Siedlungsgebieten zu homogenisieren.

Als erster Versuch ließ die Stadt Kronstadt (Braşov RO) zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts die ungarischen Prediger des Burzenlandes auf die Augustana vereidigen und unterstellte sie dem sächsischen Superintendenten.<sup>41</sup> Das beeinflusste aber den Inhalt ihrer Predigten gar nicht und die durch die Fürstenmacht ermunterten reformierten Pfarrerkandidaten verweigerten später immer öfter diesen Eid. Nach den erhaltenen Pfarrerlisten<sup>42</sup> zu beurteilen, waren diese Geistlichen noch bis zur Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts größtenteils Ungarn aus Siebenbürgen. Die Burzenländer Peregriner (und deren berühmtester, János Apácai Csere) waren ausnahmslos bestrebt, in reformierten Hochschulen zu studieren, und daraus kann man getrost auf den Konfessionsstand der Dörfer selbst schließen.<sup>43</sup>

Weil jedoch ihre eigenen Prediger der Aufgabe, den ungarischen Leibeigenen die „rechte“ evangelisch-lutherische Lehre beizubringen, sprachlich nicht gewachsen waren, ließen sie theologisch zuverlässige slowakische Prediger aus dem Komitat Neutra holen, die das Ungarische beherrschten.<sup>44</sup> Mit deren Hilfe konnte die Verbreitung der Calvinischen Lehren unter den Ungarn im Burzenland innerhalb einer Generation zurückgedrängt werden und die ungarischen Dörfer auf sächsischem Gebiet ohne Blutvergießen in die lutherische Landeskirche integriert werden.<sup>45</sup> So erlangte aus innenpolitischem Interesse anstelle der Priorität der Muttersprache nun die konfessionelle Zugehörigkeit die Vorrangstellung.<sup>46</sup> Genauso wie es im Falle von Gömör dargestellt wurde, sind auch die Burzenländer nicht ursprünglich ungarische Lutheraner, um 1600 sind sie ja noch ungarische Reformierte.

*Slowakische Reformierte? Die evangelische Union  
in Zemplin und Ung*

Dank seinem Senior, István Miskolci Csulyak, ist die Geschichte des Seniorats Zemplin und Ung in Nordostungarn um 1600 sehr gut dokumentiert. Zu dieser Organisation gehörten sechs Jahrzehnte lang sowohl ungarische Reformierte als auch slowakische Lutheraner. Die Fachliteratur mag dieses gemeinsame Seniorat als eine frühe protestantische Union bezeichnen,<sup>47</sup> obwohl die Quellen nicht verraten, ob es hier um ein freiwilliges oder gezwungenes Zusammenleben ging, ob diese Kooperation nur rein administrativer Natur war, oder ob sich auch in die Seelsorge in den Kirchengemeinden einmischte. Der Initiator dieses Zusammenschlusses kann der Grundherr gewesen sein, aber von einer Gewaltanwendung ist keine Spur zu entdecken.<sup>48</sup>

Im Visitationsprotokoll des reformierten Seniors springt 1611 ins Auge, dass man im nördlichen Teil des Sprengels, in der Gegend von Frönel an der Töpl (Vranov nad Topľou SK), lateinisch protokollierte, während die Daten aller anderer Kirchengemeinden auf Ungarisch erfasst worden sind. Aus dieser Beobachtung ist der logische Schluss zu ziehen, dass jene ungefähr zwanzig Mutter- und Tochtergemeinden nicht ungarisch, sondern slowakisch sein konnten. Die 1629-er Visitation nennt hier auch einige Gemeinderäte, deren Namen mit geringer Ausnahme slowakisch sind.<sup>49</sup> Schließlich hatte das Protokoll aus dem Jahre 1660 diese Gläubigen und ihre Pastoren eindeutig als „Lutheraner“ und zum „Augsburgischer Bekenntnis“ gehörig eingestuft<sup>50</sup> – was den reformierten Senior doch nicht davon abhält, seine Visitation auch auf sie zu erstrecken. Laut Protokoll trugen die Geistlichen zum Teil eine Alba, zum Teil nicht.<sup>51</sup> Daraus kann man aber nicht auf eine sprachlich gemischte (ungarisch-slowakisch), sondern eine dogmatisch-liturgisch-konfessionell gemischte Organisation schließen (HB – AB).

Im Marktflecken Frönel gab es zwei Kirchen, eine ungarische und eine slowakische, und der Pfarrer war immer der ungarische Geistliche, während sein slowakischer Kollege mit größerer Hörerschaft, aber niedrigerem Gehalt nur den Titel eines Kaplans führte.

Für die angebliche Union ist weder ihre Entstehung noch ihre Auflösung schriftlich genau festgehalten worden. Die Senioratssynoden behandelten die Frage nur insofern, als 1597 der Pfarrer von Frönel mit der Aufsicht der umliegenden slowakischen Gemeinden beauftragt wurde.<sup>52</sup> Diese Maßnahme war wahrscheinlich sprachlich motiviert: Der im Süden residierende ungarische Senior konnte am ehesten vom Fröneler Pfarrer annehmen, sich mit seinen Nachbarn verständigen zu können.

Diese verordnete Praxis soll sich in der Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts – laut Aussage einer einzigen Quelle – bereits auf einige slowakische Dörfer im benachbarten Unger Seniorat erstreckt haben, als seien inzwischen auch diese zu Mitglie-



dern der Zempliner Union geworden.<sup>53</sup> Die Bezeichnung „Union“ taucht zuerst in der Synode von 1662 auf und ebendieses Protokoll bewahrt die Ausscheidungs-erklärung der Lutheraner auf,<sup>54</sup> die im nächsten Jahr ins Scharoscher lutherische Seniorat hinüberwechselten, um das (dann noch lange bestehende) Scharosch-Zempliner Seniorat zu gründen.

### **Sprachkenntnis und Spracherwerb**

Im Folgenden stelle ich die frühesten Quellen darüber zusammen, dass Eltern ihre Söhne gezielt in anderssprachige Gebiete schickten, damit diese Fremdsprachen lernten, und dass das ungarländische Bürgertum – vor allem das deutschsprachige – das Ziel formulierte, mehrere Landessprachen zu erlernen.<sup>55</sup> Diese Bestrebung ist reichlich belegt durch die in den Ordinationsmatrikeln aufbewahrten Autobiografien der ungarländischen Pfarrerkandidaten (siehe Anhang).

Unter den frühesten Daten springt zuerst der Lebenslauf von Jacobus Stenczll aus Neusohl ins Auge, der 1579 berichtet, sich der Türkengefahr zum Trotz das Ungarische in Rosenau angeeignet zu haben.<sup>56</sup> Dieselbe Gefahr wurde später von solchen Schülern betont, die um der ungarischen Sprache willen die Schule in Erlau (Eger H) besuchten – noch unter ungarischer Herrschaft (die Festung und die Stadt fielen erst 1596). Ihre Sätze wollen andeuten, dass sie sich dem Spracherwerb zuliebe nicht einmal vor Opfer und Risiko scheuten. Der Ausdruck „um einer Sprache willen“ selbst liest sich aber erstmals 1588 in der Autobiografie des Michael Kawicky aus Priwitz (Prievizda SK), der „um des Deutschen willen“ auf Anraten der Eltern hin nach Deutschproben (Nitrianske Pravno SK) in die Schule ging.<sup>57</sup> Danach wiederholen und variieren die Pfarramtskandidaten diese Floskeln nur in den Ordiniertenbüchern.

Die beliebtesten Schulen für den ungarischen Spracherwerb waren Erlau (4 Vorkommnisse), Sárospatak (3), Wartberg (Senec SK, 2), Gönc (2), Frauenbach (Baia Mare RO, 2), Beregszász (Berehovo UA, 1), Debreczin (Debrecen H, 1), Eperies (Prešov SK, 1) und Rosenau (1). Dem Deutschen zuliebe wählten Slowaken die Schulen von Deutschproben und Schemnitz (Banská Štiavnica SK), während einzig der deutsche Stephanus Holtzmann-Xylander nach seinem Eperieser ungarischen Sprachkurs nicht das Böhmische, sondern das Slowakische (!) in Deutschlipisch und das Polnische im schlesischen Krappitz (Krapkowice PL) erlernen wollte.<sup>58</sup>

Dass der Fremdsprachenerwerb nicht mit schulischen Methoden, sondern in der Praxis, in der Umgebung von Muttersprachlern geschah, stellen die obigen Beispiele überzeugend dar. Dieser Schulwechsel und Schüleraustausch führte jedoch zu einem ernsten, prinzipiellen Problem, denn die aufgelisteten Gymnasien waren ausnahmslos humanistische Lateinschulen, denen am Kultivieren der

biblischen und klassischen Sprachen viel mehr lag, als an der Entwicklung der volkssprachlichen Kompetenzen. Die Schule von Tarcál regelte diese Frage um 1600 folgendermaßen: „Der ertappt wird, seine Muttersprache zu gebrauchen, soll einen Denar pro Fall bezahlen, falls er aber von Rektor ertappt wird, bezahlt er 2–10 Denaren und lernt auswendig ein Gedicht von einem verdienten Dichter. Allerdings ist jeder berechtigt, mit einem Gastschüler der Sprachübung zuliebe auf seiner Muttersprache zu sprechen, sonst aber keinesfalls.“<sup>58</sup> Die Tarcáler Regel war gewiss kein Unikum, in allen Schulen der Epoche dürfte man in ähnlicher Weise verfahren haben. Und welche Gastschüler sind „um der Sprache willen“ nach Tarcál gekommen? Kaum Ungarn und kaum Türken. Die zitierten Sätze aus dem Schulgesetz einer kleinen reformierten Institution machen darauf aufmerksam, dass diese ungarischen Lehranstalten auch für die deutschen und slowakischen Lutheraner Nordungarns recht anziehend sein konnten.

Ein besonderes Charakteristikum am Luthertum Ungarns war dessen ethnische Vielfalt, gegenüber den dominant madjarischen Reformierten oder Unitariern, oder auch im Vergleich zu den reinen Nationalitätenkirchen der Griechisch-Katholiken oder Griechisch-Orthodoxen. Über die einstige Multiethnizität und liturgische Mehrsprachigkeit der Lutheraner zeugen heute meist nur noch die ererbten Familiennamen, und nur eine Handvoll Kirchengemeinden bietet den Kirchendienst parallel in mehreren Sprachen an. Die heute in Vergessenheit geratenen Minderheitssprachen sind heute nur noch rudimentär erkennbar, etwa in Form eigens zum Kirchengang angezogener Volkstrachten sowie in einigen liturgischen Traditionen deutschen oder slowakischen Ursprungs.

An der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert, als Ungarns politische Elite eine gezwungene Madjarisierung forcierte (Austausch von Ortsnamen, einheitliche Unterrichtssprache in den Schulen, ungarische Familiennamen), leistete die lutherische Kirche einen stillen Widerstand, sabotierte oft die gesetzlich vorgeschriebenen Maßnahmen und bewahrte sich ihre auf einer vielfältigen Identität fußende tolerante Kultur. Mehrsprachigkeit war damals noch alltägliche Praxis (so korrespondierte die Kirchenleitung mit den Gläubigen auf drei Sprachen und die Pfarramtskandidaten studierten die Liturgik dreisprachig), heute aber – nach dem Friedensvertrag von Trianon, dem tschechoslowakisch-ungarischen Bevölkerungsaustausch und nach der Vertreibung der Ungarndeutschen – existiert sie nur noch als kulturelle Erinnerung und als untergegangene Tradition. Trotzdem scheint es, dass sich die Lutheraner dank ihrer historischen Wurzeln eine besondere Offenheit und ein Verhalten der respektvollen gegenseitigen Annahme aus diesen Tagen herüberretten konnten.

## Abkürzungen

- AAV 2 = *Album Academiae Vitebergensis. 2: 1560–1602*. Niemeyer, Halle, 1894.
- ELEM = Csepregi Zoltán: *Evangelikus lelkészek Magyarországon. I: A reformáció kezdetétől a zsolnai zsinatig (1610)*. I/1–3. MEDiT, Budapest, 2014–2016.
- MEEE = Prónay Dezső – Stomp László (Hgg.): *Magyar Evangelikus Egyháztörténeti Emlékek. I*. Hornyánszky, Budapest, 1905.
- MPEA = *Magyar Protestáns Egyháztörténeti Adattár*. 1–15. Magyar Protestáns Irodalmi Társaság, Budapest, 1902–1934.
- RMNy = Borsá Gedeon et alii (Hgg.): *Régi magyarországi nyomtatványok. 1–4: 1473–1670*. Akadémiai, Budapest, 1971–2012.
- RMSz = Wix Györgyné – P. Vásárhelyi Judit (Hgg.): *Régi magyarországi szerzők: RMSZ. I: A kezdetektől 1700-ig*. OSZK, Budapest, 2008.
- VD 16. = *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts*. 1–25. Hiersemann, Stuttgart, 1983–2000. [www.vd16.de](http://www.vd16.de)
- WO 1–2 = BUCHWALD, Georg: *Wittenberger Ordiniertenbuch. 1–2: 1537–1572*. Wigand, Leipzig, 1894–1895.
- WO JGPÖ = Buchwald, Georg: Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Evangelischen Geistlichen und Lehrer Österreichs aus den Wittenberger Ordinirtenbücher seit dem Jahre 1573. *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte des Protestantismus in Österreich* 16 (1895) 29–34, 176–202; 17 (1896) 25–63, 157–186; 18 (1897) 56–72, 239–258; 19 (1898) 111–126; 21 (1900) 113–128; 23 (1902) 183–203; 24 (1903) 78–96, 236–263.

## Literatur

- Bak, János M., 1993. Linguistic Pluralism in Medieval Hungary. In: Meyer, Marc Anthony, Hg. *The Culture of Christendom. Essays in medieval history in commemoration of Denis L.T. Bethell*. London: Hambledon Press, 269–279.
- Bariska, István, 2000. Kísérlet egy menekülő népcsoport reformációjára. In: Vugrinec, Jože, Hg. *Protestantizem – zatočišče izgnanih na Petanjcih (Nádasdyjev dvorec)*. Murska Sobota: SAZU, 193–204.
- Benczik, Gyula et alii, 2008. Hgg. *Források a Muravidék történetéhez = Viri za zgodovino Prekmurja. Szöveggyűjtemény = Zbirka dokumentov*. 1. Szombathely–Zalaegerszeg: Vas Megyei Levéltár – Zala Megyei Levéltár
- Binder, Pál, 1993. *Az erdélyi magyar evangélikus egyházközségek és iskolák története és névtára, 1542–1860*. [Ungarisch-Lutherisches Seniorat von Kronstadt]. Brassó.
- Breznayik, János, 1883. *A selmecbányai ágost. hitv. evang. egyház és lyceum története*. 1–2. Selmecbánya: Joerges Ágost özv.
- Csáky, Moritz, 1982. Die Hungarus-Konzeption. Eine „realpolitische“ Alternative zur magyarischen Nationalstaatsidee? In: Drabek, Anna M., Plaschka, Richard G., Wandruszka, Adam, Hgg. *Ungarn und Österreich unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II. Neue Aspekte im Verhältnis der beiden Länder*. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 71–89. (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Geschichte Österreichs 11.)
- Csepregi, Zoltán, 2017. Merkmale der lutherischen Reformation im Donau- und Karpatenraum vom 16. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert. Ethnische vs. konfessionelle Identitätsbildung. In: Schindling, Anton, Fata, Márta, Hgg. *Luther und die Evangelisch-Lutherischen in Ungarn und Siebenbü-*

- gen. *Augsburgisches Bekenntnis. Ethnie und Politik vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*. Münster: Aschendorff (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte, im Druck).
- Csepregi, Zoltán, 2015. A magyarországi iskolázás a reformáció századában (1540–1610). A wittenbergi ordinációs anyakönyvek tanúsága alapján. In: Szabó, Lajos, Hg. *Teológia és oktatás. Az Evangélikus Hittudományi Egyetem oktatóinak tanulmánykötete*. Budapest: Luther, 53–70.
- Dienes, Dénes, Hg. 2001 *Református egyház-látogatási jegyzőkönyvek. 16–17. század*. Budapest: Osiris (Millenniumi Magyar Történelem. Források).
- Dienes, Dénes, 2008. Hg. *Zempléni vizitációk 1629–1671. Miskolci Csulyak István zempléni es-peres és hivatali utódainak feljegyzései*. Sárospatak: Sárospataki Református Kollégium Tudományos Gyűjteményei (Acta Patakina 21.).
- Dienes, Dénes, 2009. Református-evangélikus unió Zemplén vármegyében a 16–17. században. In: Kónya, Peter, Hg. „*Nezameniteľné je dedičstvo otcov...*“. *Štúdie k dejinám a súčasnosti protestantizmu v strednej Európe k osemdesiatym narodeninám biskupa Jána Midriaka*. Prešov: Prešovská univerzita, 171–177. (Acta Collegii Evangelici Prešovienis 10.)
- Fabó, András, 1869. Hg. *Codex evangelicorum utriusque confessionis in Hungaria et Transsylvania diplomaticus = A Magyar- és Erdélyországi mind a két vallású evangélikusok okmánytára*. I. Pest: Osterlamm Károly.
- Hain, Caspar, 1910–1913. *Zipserische oder Leütschaverische Chronica vndt Zeit-beschreibung = Hain Gáspár Lőcsei krónikája*. 1–3. Lőcse: Szepesmegyei Történelmi Társulat.
- Heltai, János, *Műfajok és művek a XVII. század magyarországi könyvkiadásában, 1601–1655*. Universitas – OSZK, Budapest, 2008. (Res libraria 2.)
- H. Hubert, Gabriella, 2015. A Martjanska pesmarica (Martyánci énekeskönyv) és a 16–17. századi magyar gyülekezeti énekek. In: Gáborjáni Szabó, Botond, Oláh, Róbert, Hgg. „*Kezembe vészem, olvasom és arról elmélkedem*”. *Emlékkönyv Fekete Csaba születésének 75. és könyvtárosi működésének 50. évfordulójára*. Debrecen: Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerületi Gyűjtemények, 368–384. (A Tiszántúli Református Egyházkerületi Gyűjtemények kiadványai)
- Iványi, Béla, 1990. *A körmendi Batthyány-levéltár reformációra vonatkozó oklevelei*. I: 1527–1625. Szeged: JATE. (Adattár XVI–XVIII. századi szellemi mozgalmaink történetéhez 29/1.)
- Käfer, István, 2009. A Biblia a szlovák nemzeti művelődésben. In: Heltai, János, Hg. *Biblia Hungarica Philologica. Magyarországi Bibliák a filológiai tudományokban*. Budapest: Argumentum, 197–203. (A Magyar Könyvszemle és a Mokka-R Egyesület Füzetei 3.)
- Käfer, István, 2016. A keresztény Magyarország szlovák építőkövei – Pázmány Kalauzának szlovák fordításai. In: Maczák, Ibolya, Hg. *Útmutató. Tanulmányok Pázmány Péter Kalauzáról*. Budapest: MTA–PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, 205–208. (Lelkiségtörténeti tanulmányok 14.)
- Katona, Tünde, 2011. *Caritas und Memoria. Eine Leutschauer Stiftung im Dienste der Bildungsförderung in der Zips des 16. Jahrhunderts*. München: Oldenbourg, (Buchreihe der Kommission für Geschichte und Kultur der Deutschen in Südosteuropa 41.)
- Klaniczay, Tibor, 1993 Die Benennungen „Hungaria“ und „Pannonia“ als Mittel der Identitätssuche der Ungarn. In: Klaniczay, Tibor, Németh, S. Katalin, Schmidt, Paul Gerhard Hgg. *Antike Rezeption und nationale Identität in der Renaissance insbesondere in Deutschland und in Ungarn.*, Budapest: Balassi, 83–100. (Studia humanitatis 9.)
- Kónya, Annamária, Kónya, Péter, 2013. *Szlovák reformátusok a XVI–XVIII. században*. Sárospatak: Hernád.
- Köblös, József, Kránitz, Zsolt, 2009. *A Dunántúli Református Egyházkerület prédikátorai és rektorai*. 1: 1526 – 1760. Pápa: Pápai Református Gyűjtemények. (A pápai református gyűjtemények kiadványai. Forrásközlések 10.)

- Kubinyi, András, 1986. *Ethnische Minderheiten in den ungarischen Städten des Mittelalters*. In: Kirchgässner, Bernhard, Reuter, Fritz, Hgg. *Städtische Randgruppen und Minderheiten*. Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 183–199. (Stadt in der Geschichte 13.)
- Kuzma, Dóra, 2014. Adalékok Besztercebánya 16. századi egyháztörténetéhez. In: Érfalvy, Livia, Hg. *A tudomány vonzásában. Evangélikus iskolák kutató tanárainak I. konferenciája*. Budapest: Luther, 93–98. (Opera scholarum 1.)
- Mikulik, József, 1917. *A Gömöri Ág. Hitv. Evang. Esperesség története, 1520–1740*. Pozsony: Wigand, (Magyar protestáns történelmi emlékek 2.)
- Payr, Sándor, 1910. *Egyháztörténeti emlékek. Forrásgyűjtemény a Dunántúli Ág. Hitv. Evang. Egyházkerület történetéhez*. I. Sopron: Dunántúli Ágostai Hitvallású Evangélikus Egyházkerület.
- Payr, Sándor, 1924. *A dunántúli evangélikus egyházkerület története*. I. Sopron: Székely és Társa.
- Šebjanič, Franc, 1977. *Protestantsko gibanje panonskih Slovencev (Od začetkov reformacije do obdobja dualistične ureditve Avstro-Ogrske)*. Murska Sobota: Pomurska založba.
- Šebjanič, Franc, 1978. *The Protestant Movement of Slovenes in Pannonia*. Murska Sobota: Pomurska založba.
- Szabó, Előd, 2012: A „lutheránus” és a „kálvinista” egyház viszonya a XVII. században Dunántúlon. In: Horváth, Erzsébet, Literáty, Zoltán, Hgg. *Történelmet írunk. Tisztelgő kötet Ladányi Sándor 75. születésnapja alkalmából*. Budapest: Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem–L'Harmattan, 69–92. (Károli Könyvek. Tanulmánykötet.)
- Szabó, Miklós, Tonk, Sándor, 1992. *Erdélyiek egyetemjárása a korai újkorban, 1521–1700*. Szeged: JATE. (Fontes rerum scholasticarum 4.)
- Szegedi, Edit, 2008. Was bedeutet Adiaphoron – Adiaphora im siebenbürgischen Protestantismus des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts? In: Wetter, Evelin, Hg. *Formierungen des konfessionellen Raumes in Ostmitteleuropa*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 57–74. (Forschungen zur Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mitteleuropa 33.)
- Szende, Katalin, 2009. Integration through language. The multilingual character of late Medieval Hungarian towns. In: Keene, Derek, Nagy, Balázs, Szende, Katalin, Hgg. *Segregation – Integration – Assimilation. Religious and Ethnic Groups in the Medieval Towns of Central and Eastern Europe*. Farnham: Routledge, 205–234. (Historical Urban Studies)
- Thury, Etele, 1998. *A Dunántúli Református Egyházkerület története [1908]*. I–II. 2. Aufl. Pozsony: Kalligram (Csallóközi Kiskönyvtár)
- Wien, Ulrich A., 2010. Die Formierung des konfessionellen Raums in Siebenbürgen. Zur Wahrnehmung der Reformierten durch die siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Evangelischen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. In: Fata, Márta, Schindling, Anton, Hgg. *Calvin und Reformiertentum in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen. Helvetisches Bekenntnis, Ethnie und Politik vom 16. Jahrhundert bis 1918*. Münster: Aschendorff, 441–452. (Reformationsgeschichtliche Studien und Texte 155.)
- Wien, Ulrich A., 2011. Wirkungen des Calvinismus in Siebenbürgen im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert. In: Dingel, Irene, Selderhuis, Herman J., Hgg. *Calvin und Calvinismus: Europäische Perspektiven*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 127–153. (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte. Beihefte 84.)
- Zoványi, Jenő, 1934. Protestánsok állítólagos uniója Zemplénben 1597-ben. *Protestáns Szemle*, 43, 226–228.

## Fußnoten

- 1 Die unten dargestellten Daten sind zum Teil der jahrelangen Forschung am ungarischen Pfarerbuch (*Evangelikus lelkészek Magyarországon* = ELEM) und teils auch den elektronischen Suchmöglichkeiten im Ungarischen Lutherischen Digitalen Archiv (Magyar Evangélikus Digitális Tár = <http://medit.lutheran.hu>) zu verdanken.
- 2 Dieselbe Spannung besteht zwischen dem Frühneuhochdeutschen und dem siebenbürgisch-sächsischen Dialekt wie auch zwischen dem Krainer Slowenischen und der windischen Mundart des Übermurgebiets, aber auch zwischen jeder Hochsprache und deren örtlichen Dialekten. Die funktionale Linguistik kennt eine bewusste Unterscheidung der „heiligen“ und „profanen“ Spracharten. Diese Gegenüberstellung konnte auch durch das Außenstehen des Geistlichen betont sein, der meist kein Ortskind war, sondern oft weit aus der Ferne kam. Die Gläubigen erwarteten es nicht nur keinesfalls, sondern fanden es sogar anstößig, in den Mauern der Kirche anstatt eines gehobenen Stils ihre alltägliche Mundart zu hören. Dieser Auffassung und dieser Tradition entgegen formierte sich von Zeit zu Zeit das Programm der „muttersprachlichen“ Liturgie und Predigt als Erneuerungsbestrebung, d.h. der Einzug der Alltagssprache in den Kirchenraum. Auf dieses Problem geht István Käfer in seinen Arbeiten sehr genau ein (Käfer 2009; Käfer 2016).
- 3 Payr 1910, 37, 45, 150; Iványi 1990, 203–204; Bariska 2000.
- 4 Payr 1910, 37; Payr 1924, 21; ELEM I/1: 394.
- 5 Heltai 2008, 82; Csepregi 2017; Hubert 2015. Die einzelnen Beispiele aus RMNy siehe unten.
- 6 MPEA 7: 104–107.
- 7 Payr 1910, 62, 110–111, 120; Payr 1924, 258, 263, 607; Köblös – Kránitz 2009, 431, 592; Benczik 2008, 133–135 (Nr. 46); ELEM I/1: 761; I/3: 253–254.
- 8 MPEA 8: 23–24, 31, 52, 54–55, 73.
- 9 Thury 1998, I: 354–369; Payr 1924, 236–267; Šebjanič 1977, 21–24; Šebjanič 1978, 12–14; Benczik 2008, 152–153 (nr. 55); Köblös – Kránitz 2009, 61–62; Szabó 2012, 69–92.
- 10 Payr 1910, 102–128; Šebjanič 1977, 17–21, 27; Šebjanič 1978, 10–12, 15–16; Benczik 2008, 132–135 (Nr. 45–46).
- 11 Payr 1910, 120; Benczik 2008, 133–135 (Nr. 46).
- 12 RMNy Nr. 597A.
- 13 Vgl. die Eintragung von Joannes Lazyczkius Pannonius (1587): *Interea Prividiensi schola, cui praefuit Doctissimus vir Albertus Hussellius, in nostra Slavonia tum celeberrima facta [...]*. WO JGPÖ 18 (1897), 65 (Nr. 306); MEEE 90; Georgius Crinaceus de Brodek (1588): *Deinde contuli me in Schlavoniam in oppidum Bischae, vbi versatus sum sub R. V. domino Nicolao Bacciceo Arvensi [...]*. WO JGPÖ 18 (1897), 68 (Nr. 319). Siehe weiter: WO JGPÖ Nr. 170, 317, 353, 510, 649.
- 14 WO 2: Nr. 907: *prophectus in Schlavoniam Tiropolie sub Praeceptore D. Richardo*.
- 15 WO JGPÖ Nr. 649.
- 16 Die Hungarus-Konzeption ist ein von dem Literaturhistoriker Tibor Klaniczay (1923–1992) geprägter Begriff. Vgl. dazu Klaniczay 1993. Ausgearbeitet wurde die These von Moritz Csáky (Csáky 1982).
- 17 AAV 2: 161 (1569): der in Kľače geborene Colacinatus hat danach ungefähr anderthalb Jahrzehnt lang verschiedenen Schulen Ungarns vorgestanden (RMSz 145). Der 1584 in Wittenberg eingeschriebene Hieremias Sartorius aus Veličná war ebenfalls ein *Slavus* (AAV 2: 320; RMSz 700). Es haben sich auch als *Sclauus* vorgestellt die in Wittenberg ordinierten Martinus Holecius aus Oslany, Alexander Zielinus aus Sillein und Nicolaus Haras aus dem Komitat Trentschin: WO 2: Nr. 141, 799; WO JGPÖ Nr. 502; MEEE 115; ELEM I/1: 650, 705.
- 18 Kubinyi 1986; Bak 1993; Szende 2009.



- 19 MPEA 2: 6–9, 11–13, 15–16, 18, 59, 79, 82; MPEA 7: 9; Breznyik 1883, 1: 35–37, 39, 46, 48, 71, 210, 216, 218, 288, 291, 298, 301, 323, 333–334, 350; Hain 1910–1913, 278; Katona 2011, 142, 275, 298, 309; Kuzma 2014, 95. Diese Daten stammen aus Neusohl und Schemnitz, sowie aus Leutschau und den Protokollen der Fünfstädte, schließlich aus den Muraner und Oberpoprader Artikeln. Vgl. RMNy Nr. 1033(47), 1632(11).
- 20 WO JGPÖ 17 (1896), 47 (Nr. 156): *oblata est mihi uocatio [...] Ecclesiae Lipschensis ad munus ecclesiasticum loco sacellani Boemici*. Die Muraner Artikel schreiben 1590 trotzdem ein „slowakisches Singen“ im Gottesdienst vor, dieselben nennen 1596 auch den Katechismus „slowakisch“, obwohl dessen erhaltene Stücke eindeutig auf „Bibeltschechisch“ geschrieben worden sind. MPEA 2: 17–18, 59; RMNy Nr. 479.
- 21 MPEA 7: 28: *Ubi autem desunt docti scholastici, canantur omnia Bohemicae [!] vel pia cantiones de temporibus*.
- 22 MPEA 15: 212, 239.
- 23 Bibeltschechisch = „slowakisch“: RMNy Nr. 479, 564 (Katechismus, Gebete und Gesänge, nur sehr fragmentarisch erhalten), App. 95, 104, Nr. 1594 (Katechismus, Gebete und Gesänge), Nr. 1632, 1655 (Tranoscius' Gebet- und Gesangbuch).
- 24 Die Muraner Artikel schreiben aber 1590 eindeutig vor, dass das Abendmahl in der slowakischen Volkssprache ausgeteilt werden soll, damit jeder verstehe: *nec in administratione sacramentorum alia, quam vulgari sclavonica utatur lingua, eaque clare et distincte, ut omnes audire intelligereque possint*. MPEA 2: 16. Ist es möglich, dass sich dieser Satz nicht auf das gesprochene Slowakische, sondern auf die tschechische Literatursprache als Volkssprache bezieht? Oder kann man hier eine geographisch geteilte Praxis annehmen, wonach man sich auf den mehr urbanisierten Gebieten der mährischen Grenze entlang eher einer tschechischen und mehr südlich, in der ländlichen Gegend am Rande des ungarischen Sprachgebiets, eher einer slowakischen Liturgie bediente?
- 25 Concordia. Pia et vnanimi consensu repetita confessio fidei et doctrinae electorum, principum, et ordinum imperii, atque eorum theologorum, qui Augustanam confessionem amplectuntur et nomina sua huic libro subscripserunt. [...] Leipzig, Steinmann, 1580. VD 16. K 2005. Széchényi Nationalbibliothek Budapest, Handschriftenabteilung, Quart. Lat. 1177; die Unterschriften sind abgedruckt: Payr 1910, 52–99.
- 26 Nur der Geburtsort „Puszcini“ deckt vielleicht das heutige Puconci in Slowenien (Payr 1910, 58).
- 27 Die Forschung erklärt dieses Scheitern in der Regel mit dem Umstand, dass die Kroaten bereits vor der Reformation eine verständliche, volkssprachliche Liturgie (die auf den altslawischen Ritus von Method zurückging) gehalten haben – ein Sonderfall in der Westkirche!
- 28 Vgl. MPEA 6: 43.
- 29 RMNy Nr. 982, 1021. Vgl. ELEM I/2: 365.
- 30 ELEM I/1: 337, 339, 707–708; I/2: 227, 235; I/3: 123, 202.
- 31 Thury 1998, I: 123–158; Köblös – Kránitz 2009, 45–49.
- 32 Fabó 1869, 123–136; Thury 1998, I: 405–407.
- 33 Fabó 1869, 102–105.
- 34 ELEM I/1: 43.
- 35 Bei diesen kann – ähnlich wie im Burzenland – außer den unten schilderten Prozessen eine lutherische Mission durch die örtlichen Grundherren, d. h. die oberungarischen deutschen Bergstädte Rosenau, Göllnitz, Schmöllnitz (Rožňava, Gelnica, Smolník SK) usw. angenommen werden.
- 36 MPEA 2: 15, 21–22, 68–71, 117.
- 37 Beide Varianten der Muraner Artikel (1590 und 1596) sprechen konsequent über „Slowakisch“ (*Slavonica lingua; slavice*), als es um eine Liturgie, ein Singen oder einen Katechismus in der Volkssprache geht: MPEA 2: 16–18, 59.



- 38 Der erste bekannte ungarische Prediger, der oben erwähnte Jacobus Kothay, ist 1618 zum Hofprediger des Gömörer Obergespans, György Széchy geworden (Fabó 1869, 105), später taucht derselbe als lutherischer Senior in Alsóbalog (Nižný Blh SK) auf (Mikulík 1917, 53, 61–62). In der Umgebung der Familie Széchy sind ab 1621 ungarische Kaplane der Burg Muran anzutreffen. Zur selben Zeit gab es in Rosenau auch eine ungarische Predigt, die von einem das Ungarische beherrschenden Kaplan gehalten wurde, aber diese Kaplane trugen nicht alle einen ungarischen Namen (MPEA 2: 117).
- 39 Mikulík 1917, 74–76.
- 40 Szegedi 2008, 63–64; vgl. Wien 2010; Wien 2011.
- 41 Binder 1993, 15–16, 110–111.
- 42 Binder 1993, 112–140.
- 43 Binder 1993, 141; Szabó – Tonk 1992, Nr. 759, 1265, 1740, 2783 (Geist: 1648; Kriesbach: 1647, 1698; Langendorf: 1673).
- 44 Lucas Prividensis: ELEM I/2: 354. Sowie Georgius Szeli und Michael Matthaeides.
- 45 Binder 1993.
- 46 Csepregi 2017.
- 47 Zoványi 1934; Dienes 2009; Kónya – Kónya 2013, 169–174.
- 48 Dienes 2009, 173–174; Kónya – Kónya 2013, 170.
- 49 Dienes 2008, 7–65. Die hier protokollierte vernichtende Kritik des Pfarrers von Parchovany über seine Gläubigen spricht für sich: *vocavit eos pogányzski*. Dienes 2008, 39. Das Epistolar von István Miskolci Csulyak nennt 1633–1635 diese Prediger und Gemeinden schon eindeutig: *Slavonici*. MPEA 11: 186–187; 12: 215.
- 50 Dienes 2008, 112–113, 274–275; Dienes 2009, 172.
- 51 Dienes 2008, 30; Kónya – Kónya 2013, 149.
- 52 Zoványi 1934, 226; Dienes 2009, 173. Zu dieser Zeit war der slowakische Andreas Mednensky Pfarrer in Frönel, ein Schwiegersohn vom Bibelübersetzer Caspar Károlyi, späterer Senior in Zemplin (ELEM I/2: 54). Während der Zeit seiner Nachfolger kam es zur Arbeitsaufteilung, dass der Pfarrer in Frönel ungarisch war und dessen slowakischer Kaplan als Konsenior den umliegenden Gemeinden vorstand. Das führte oft zu Dependenzstreiten und Prestigekämpfen. MPEA 13: 139.
- 53 Dienes 2001, 254; Dienes 2009, 175; Kónya – Kónya 2013, 173–174.
- 54 Dienes 2009, 174.
- 55 Unter „Landessprachen“ (*linguae patriae*) verstanden die Pfarrerkandidaten mindestens drei Sprachen, nämlich Ungarisch, Deutsch und eine der in Ungarn gesprochenen slawischen Sprachen wie Slowakisch, Kroatisch, Serbisch oder Slowenisch, die regional wechselten. Vgl. die Ausdrücke *causa Slavonismi*, *Hungarismi gratia* (1716); *linguae patriae causa* (1731): MEEE 193, 206.
- 56 WO JGPÖ Nr. 133; MEEE 55.
- 57 WO JGPÖ 18 (1897), 71 (Nr. 329); MEEE 92: *discendae Germanicae linguae gratia*.
- 58 WO JGPÖ 24 (1903), 90 (Nr. 580); MEEE 120: *ad linguas Slavonicam, Hungaricam et Polonicam addiscere*.
- 59 MPEA 11: 167: *Qui nativo sermone licenter loqui ab aliquo deprehensus fuerit, pro singulis erratum numum, si a Rectore, duos, aut decem pendito, versus probati autoris expedite recitato; cum peregrino interea linguae discendae gratia unicuique potestas nativo sermone loquendi conceditur, secus non.*

## Anhang: Ungarländische Pfarrerkandidaten über den Spracherwerb

| Name, Ordinationsjahr                                     | Zitat   | Literatur   |
|---|---|---|
| Jacobus Stenczll<br>Nouosoliensis Panonius,<br>1579       | [...] in ciuitatem Rosnauiam [...] ibi studui Vngaricam linguam sub D. Martino Vnterbaum Tyropoliensi per vnum annum.   | ELEM I/3: 198; MEEE 55–56; WO JGPÖ Nr. 133.             |
| Michael Kawicky<br>Prividiensis Pannonius,<br>1588        | Hinc instinctu et suasu parentum meorum contuli me discendae Germanicae linguae gratia Pronam Germanorum, ubi vixi sub Domino Andrea Schormanno annum cum dimidio.  | ELEM I/1: 803; MEEE 92; WO JGPÖ Nr. 329.                |
| Isaacus Abrahamides<br>Hrochotius, 1595                   | Egressus tandem [litterarum] necessariorum pietatis linguarumque causa Schemnicium primo sub Abrahamo Schremellio totum quadriennium in studio literarum honeste vixi.  | ELEM I/1: 3; MEEE 112; RMSz 29; WO JGPÖ Nr. 458.        |
| M. Stephanus Xylander<br>Leutschoviensis, 1599            | Postea vero ad linguas Slavonicam, Hungaricam et Polonicam addiscere missus Teutoliptoviam.   | ELEM I/3: 511; MEEE 120–122; RMSz 910; WO JGPÖ Nr. 580. |
| Michael Pentekius<br>Zdanenus,<br>1600                    | Hinc Schemnicium studiorum et linguae Germanicae ediscendae causa profectus Rectore M. Joanne Heinoldo annum cum semestri usus sum. [...] Unde Ungarici sermonis desiderio flagrans Agriam me contuli ibique triennium sub scholae praefectis Balthasaro Miscolcio et Valentino Sarkozio exegi. | ELEM I/2: 263; MEEE 124–125; WO JGPÖ Nr. 612.           |
| Nicolaus Marihowsky<br>[Marikowsky]<br>Belluschenus, 1600 | Sequentibus annis ueni Zemtzinum ad discendam linguam Ungaricam, ubi quinquennium consumsi, praeceptoribus usus Valentine Zarnias, Daniele Köui et Francisco Vasarhelino.   | ELEM I/2: 28; MEEE 126, 133; WO JGPÖ Nr. 631.           |
| Michael Guttowianus<br>Liptowiensis, 1601                 | Traditus postea sum extraneis praeceptoribus in superiorem Ungariam ediscendae linguae gratia, ubi quoque annos aliquot exegi, utpote Rivulis dominarum mansi per biennium, Berexasini et Goncini annum, Cassovia per duos annos, Agriae quae nunc occupata est a Turcis, per biennium.         | ELEM I/1: 619; MEEE 130; WO JGPÖ Nr. 663.               |
| Daniel Corvinus<br>Wesselinus, 1608                       | [...] anno 79. Iglaviam propter germanicam linguam est promotus.  | ELEM I/1: 280; MEEE 145.                                |

## SIGN – SYMBOL – DECORATION: THE RELATIONSHIP OF IMAGE AND TEXT IN 16<sup>TH</sup> –17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY HUNGARIAN CALENDARS

ÁGNES DUKKON

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest  
dukkonagnes@gmail.com

This study tries to give an overview of the varied connections between word and image in the calendars and other popular works (penny books, manuscript song collections) of the late Renaissance and Baroque. The author investigates the associations and influences from different fields of culture, considers ancient topoi and archetypes which underwent a great many transformations over space and time. In the first part of this paper are examined some non-traditional figures in the calendar for 1578 (Koložsvár-Cluj, Heltai's office) like mermaids/sirens in the role of Aquarius and Virgo, and the appearance of these figures on the painted furniture and ceiling panels of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Calvinist churches in Hungary.

The second part of this article deals with some typical title pages of calendars, edited in different printing houses of Upper Hungary (by Lorentz Brewer in Lőcse/Levoča, the serie *Calendarium Tyrnaviense*, Nagyszombat/Trnava) from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and with the calendars of David Frölich, published in Breslau (Wrocław, PL) between 1623 and 1646.

**Keywords:** Heltai's *Cisio*, siren, Virgo, Zodiac signs, astrology, David Frölich, Christoph Neubarth, jesuits, *Calendarium Tyrnaviense*, *Immaculata Triumphans*

Popular prints from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, from the Renaissance to the late Baroque, offer interesting examples of the connection between word and image, sign and symbol, the transformation of forms and meanings. Sometimes it is very difficult to decide whether the given picture is a sign, a symbol, an emblem or a decoration. The appearance of *mermaids/sirens* among the Zodiac signs in the woodcuts of a 16<sup>th</sup>-century Hungarian *Cisio*<sup>1</sup> (as Virgo and Aquarius), and on the ceiling panels of 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century Calvinist churches, prompts a particularly rich array of cultural historical associations. Similarly, over space and time, *representations of Saturn* underwent a constant transformation in the various literary, graphic and folklore versions of calendars. Personifications of the planet Saturn proved to be an extremely versatile field of study: Aby Warburg and Ervin Panofsky wrote detailed studies on these figures. Warburg's analysis<sup>2</sup> is based on an old German calendar from Lübeck (1519), Italian engravings and German mural paintings (in Lüneburg, Hildesheim, Goslar, Göttingen): he

investigates the astronomical predictions in pictures and words, as the title of his book suggests.

The *labours of the month* (Monatsbilder) are likewise the concentrations of a remarkably complex world. The *themes* of the *title page illustrations* (towns, castles, portraits of famous astrologers, other compositions) also offer rich sources for investigation: they seem to be mere decoration, but sometimes we can discover an organic connection with the content of the given calendar, or recognize in them allegories of current events (e.g. the triumph over the Turks at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century).

In this paper I try to give an overview of the varied connections between word and image in the calendars and other popular works (penny books, manuscript song collections) of the late Renaissance and Baroque. I look at the associations and influences from different fields of culture, consider ancient topoi and archetypes which underwent a great many transformations over space and time. Two large groups of illustrations offer interesting examples from the rich choice of the material: the Zodiac signs and the decorations of the calendars' title pages. In the first case I examine some non-traditional figures, like mermaids/sirens in the role of Aquarius and Virgo. How did they find their way into the *Cisio*? Do these images have a meaning or are they neutral? How did the images develop? How does the calendar, a vehicle mixing elements of high and popular culture, function? In the calendars we often meet an inorganic, occasional connection between the illustrations (like the mermaid/siren) and the text. The calendar itself is a quarry of very diverse – scholarly and popular – knowledge, and the application of pictures can be irregular, even inaccurate. For example, in the abovementioned *Cisio*, the illustration for May – a man and a woman taking a bath in a tub, under the trees – reappears as a symbol of autumn, because the tub resembles one used for wine making. This was a widespread motif for the vignettes of September and October in calendars all over Europe, but the compiler of the *Cisio* seems to have mixed up the illustration for May with the autumn pictures. He may have been unfamiliar with the conventions of the old calendar symbols, and chosen the illustration at random. We know similar defects in the coupling of the planets and the Zodiac signs (errors in the composition of woodcuts), and several calendars give the labours of the months in the wrong order.<sup>3</sup>

In the other group of illustrations, on the decorative front pages of calendars, we can observe an opposing logic: the difficult, extravagant compositions often build on a given idea, in connection with the (supplementary) text of calendars. Sometimes they are compact, enigmatic summaries of the content. They are meant to decorate, but if we can read the pictures, they will reveal hidden messages, bring the sign-meaning function into relief. What are individual designs usually include familiar details, emblems (personification of Astrology) and other old topoi, like instruments of geometrics and astronomy (globe, compasses etc.), landscapes and

portraits of great mathematicians and astronomers. One important example is a calendar printed in Norimberg in 1616, and now kept in Sopron, Hungary: in coloured medallions on the quarto page, there appear Euclid, Albategni, Masshalah, Pythagoras, Hipparchus and Ptolemy.<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 1)



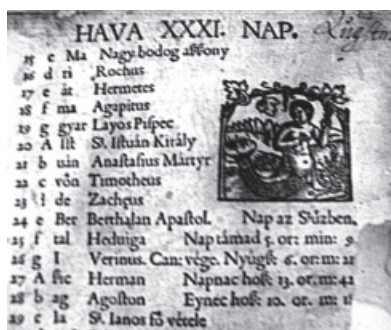
In the second part of this paper I will take a look at some typical title pages of calendars, edited in different printing houses of Upper Hungary (as in Lőcse/Levoča, Nagyszombat/Trnava) and Breslau (Wrocław, PL) from the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

### **I. The siren as a Zodiac sign, and its other roles and associations**

We can register the appearance of the mermaid/siren in different contexts and forms: as the illustration of calendars and other kinds of popular books, in Hungarian coats of arms during the Renaissance period, on seals, glazed tiles and tombstones from the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries on, and on the ceiling panels of protestant churches ever since the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Derived from Greek mythology, it metamorphosed into a great many forms, with different meanings.<sup>6</sup> It appears in sacred and profane spaces, in stone, in mosaics, in medieval sculpture, Renaissance furniture, in the woodcuts of popular prints. Multifarious as the subject is, I cannot hope to discuss it in a single study, but allow me to point out a few characteristic appearances in popular culture.

In Heltai's *Cisio*, printed in Kolozsvár (Clausenburg/Cluj) in 1592, we encounter the mermaid figure as a Zodiac sign twice, in two variants. One of the pictures is the sign of the Virgo, the well-known female figure, with a beautiful face and a single-fin fish tail (Fig. 2), the other is the sign of Aquarius (Fig. 3), a man's trunk with a forked fish tail.<sup>7</sup> Founded in 1550 by Georg Hoffgreff and Gáspár Heltai, the workshop became very prosperous by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Both found-

ers were of Transylvanian German origin and studied in Wittenberg in the 1540s. In 1547 Hoffgreff went to Norinberg to study the art of book printing, and spent a year in the printing house of Johann von Berg and Ulrich Neuber. After his death in 1559, Gáspár Heltai managed the office in Kolozsvár. In some respects, his life reflects the typical Transylvanian fate of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, though his talent was far superior to most of his peers': born as a Catholic, he later adopted Lutheranism, only to take up Calvinism in 1551, and then Unitarianism in 1668. He was already an adult when he learned Hungarian, yet he was to become one of the greatest prose stylists of the language in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1546 he settled as a preacher in Kolozsvár, and lived there for the rest of his life.<sup>8</sup> After his death in 1574, the printing office was directed by his widow, and then by his son, Gáspár Jr. Throughout this half a century, the shop issued more than two hundred publications, most of them in Hungarian. They include Heltai's own translation of the Bible, Bonfini's history of Hungary, also translated from the Latin into Hungarian by Heltai, religious and secular literature, calendars, a free translation of Aesop's *Fables*, a collection of short stories on the life of Pontianus (based on Georg Rabe and Weygand Han's edition, "Die sieben weisen Meister", 1565), etc.



Beside the publications, the illustrations made at the print shop – animal, floral and grotesque initials, calendar pictures and other book decorations – also represent an important chapter of Hungarian culture. Certain parts of these woodcuts (e.g. initials) were made by Jacobus Lucius, of whose activity in Transylvania there is documentary evidence.<sup>9</sup> Other series (headings, vignettes, printer emblems) show a variety of influences from contemporary woodcutting. The German connections of Heltai's printing office help us to understand how the literary and visual topoi and genres wandered in 16<sup>th</sup>-century European culture: their irradiation was boundless, they appeared wherever a receptive audience could be found.

This is why it is important to look into the appearance and meaning of the two siren figures of Heltai's *Cisio*. In no other calendar or cisio have I seen such



figures function in the role of Zodiac signs in a similar manner. Nor does Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*<sup>10</sup> make mention of it, though the author describes all traditional calendar illustrations, the planets and the labours of the months. The customary representations of Aquarius make one recall ancient stellar mythology, as they resemble the cupbearers of Zeus: Ganymedes, or rarely, Hebe. The question is when these non-typical Zodiac signs arrived in Heltai's printing house, or who cut them, and whether these signs have a second, hidden meaning (whether they symbolise something) or if they denote only the given subject/phenomenon?

The old calendars and *cisios* were compilations in the overwhelming majority of cases, therefore the woodcuts used by the publishers travelled from one office to the other. Meanwhile, they underwent various changes: elements of the Zodiac cycle could be lost or damaged, whereupon the publisher replaced them with some other picture from another series. In her book, Teresa Higuera<sup>11</sup> quotes several interesting examples of the combination of disparate elements: traditions mingle in the Zodiac illustrations, like representations of Gemini in several medieval prayer books. There the original myth of Castor and Pollux was ignored and either two women or a man and a woman appear in the pictures. In these cases the tradition – the “original” mythological sign – is altered, the new combinations suggest different shades of meaning. The woodcuts in Heltai's *cisio* can be traced back to Norinberg workshops. These connections were discovered and analysed by two Hungarian scholar-librarians, Gedeon Borsa and Elizabeth Soltész, who studied the set of letter types and woodcuts (among them Gospel illustrations, Zodiac signs, planets and month illustrations) used in Heltai's printing house. Borsa has identified the Gospel illustrations as copies of a series by Hans Sebald Beham, a master from the school of Albrecht Dürer.<sup>12</sup> Yet, Borsa did not deal with each picture separately, and I think the non-typical mermaid/siren figures as Zodiac illustrations require further explanation.

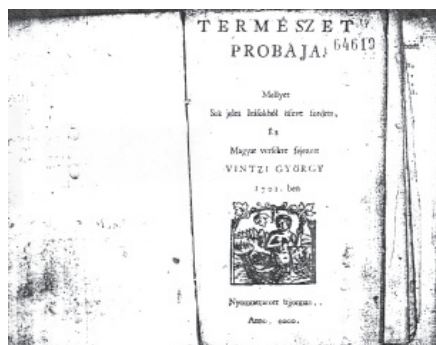
We do not have much documentary evidence of the last decade of Heltai's printing house, and we do not know who exactly compiled the *Cisio*, but the errors in the use of the signs suggest that this person was not very well-versed in the iconography of calendars (cf. the abovementioned mistakes in the illustrations for May and autumn). Nonetheless, these two sirens as Aquarius and Virgo indicate that the choice was not entirely arbitrary: the associations with water and virginity are supported by mythology – if their role is not prominent in the iconography of astrology. The workshop may have had access only to these woodcuts, but since no other *cisios* of the office have survived from previous or later years, we can only register the appearance of these non-typical Zodiac characters.

Two notes on the Norinberg contact mentioned above. A fragment of a richly decorated wooden wall panel from the house of Leonhard Hirschvogel is exhibited in the Stadtmuseum. This masterpiece by Peter Flötner (1534) shows the mermaid figure with a forked fish tail and a crown on her head. The other link



to Norinberg is Anton Coeberger's illustrated Bible from 1483<sup>13</sup>: the illustrator depicts Noah's Ark between two mermaid/siren figures: one is a maiden, the other is a man, both with a single-fin fish tail. Noah and those in his company – his family and the animals – are looking at these tempters like Ulysses at his sirens. These occurrences support Borsa's opinion that the woodcuts of Heltai's workshop came from this environment.

These late-16<sup>th</sup>-century woodcuts – the two sirens, Gemini and Libra – play a very important role in the history of Hungarian book publishing: their reappearance a hundred years later evince that the old woodcuts (i.e. blocks) were still being used, while the ancient mythological and astrological archetypes themselves had become distant, neutralized by then. The “user” (book editor, typographer etc.) could assign to them the optional meaning or decorative function he wanted, and he could illustrate a variety of publications with them, not only calendars or *cisios*. The Zodiac signs of Heltai's *Cisio* reappeared in three Hungarian publications at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: the Libra on the title page of a legal-economic tome,<sup>14</sup> the Aquarius – the male trunk with the forked fish tail – on the front page of a Latin grammar book,<sup>15</sup> both printed by the famous Hungarian punch cutter and printer, Miklós Tótfalusi Kis (1652-1702). The other mermaid figure, Virgo can be found in a penny book, containing a long verse about physiognomy<sup>16</sup> (Fig.4). This book was published without date and place of origin, but I think it is an 18<sup>th</sup>-century reprint of an earlier edition, one from the press of Tótfalusi, like the other two books mentioned above. The little mermaid figure also helps us to establish the date of publication. For a proof, consider the following. The 16<sup>th</sup>-century printing stock of Heltai's office was preserved and used by the printing house of the Reformed Church in Kolozsvár during the whole of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In 1694, Miklós Tótfalusi Kis<sup>17</sup> – coming back from Amsterdam to Transylvania with the aim of promoting Hungarian book printing – took over the office. He “agreed with the Reformed Church authorities on establishing a well-equipped printing office, using and recasting for this purpose the type material of the Transylvanian Reformed Diocese and that of the press owned jointly by



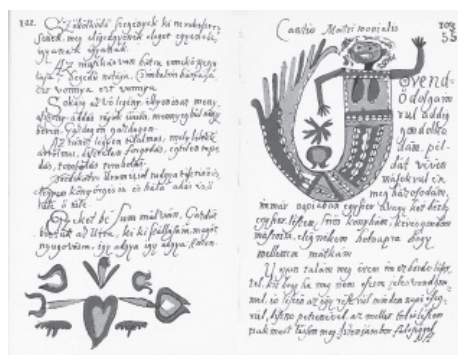
the Kolozsvár Reformed Parish Church and college.”<sup>18</sup> In this way he inherited not only the letter types but also the old printing blocks of cisio/calendar illustrations, which material was already incomplete by that time. The Zodiac signs, among them the mermaid figures, were consequently used to decorate books with contents entirely remote from the world of calendars and cisios. Although Tótfalusi also put out calendars of a relatively high quality, they were not illustrated. At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century we find the typical calendar pictures (labours of the months, planets and Zodiac signs) rarely in Hungarian calendars. Only the decorative front pages remained and some astronomical illustrations in the editions of the university press of Tyrnava (the *Calendarium Tyrnaviensis* series, on which more presently), and in a few Hungarian calendars edited in Bártfa (Bardejov) and Lőcse (Levoča).



The next station in the wanderings of the mermaid/siren figure is the painted furniture and ceiling panels of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Protestant churches in Hungary. We can find very nice and original interiors – pews, choirs, pulpits – in these little churches which were made by village carpenters and joiners (Fig. 5, Szenna). One can be found in Szenna, a village in South-West Hungary, about 50 km from Lake Balaton. The North-East of Hungary and territories now belonging to Romania also have churches like this, with vegetable, floral and astral ornaments, and fantastic hybrid beings like the siren. These figures were discussed in a study by the excellent Hungarian art historian, Lajos Kelemen.<sup>19</sup> He points out one possible meaning of the mermaid figure: it may be a reference to the harlot Babel as mentioned in John’s Revelation 17:1. The seventh angel tells John: “Come hither, I will shew unto thee the judgement of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.”<sup>20</sup> The hybrid figure – upper part a woman, lower a fish – reminds Kelemen of the harlot of Babylon sitting “on many waters” and riding a beast. Kelemen’s argument is based on medieval art, namely the mermaid’s appearance in the Romanesque and gothic cathedrals and cloisters. The French scholar, George Duby also deals with this question in his book *Le temp de cathédrales* (Paris,

Gallimard, 1976). He interprets the siren figure as a symbol of sin; this hybrid of a woman and a reptile can be seen in many cloisters and cathedrals, and Duby includes a photo of the siren relief from the cloister of San Pedro de Galligans. (There are interesting variations on the siren, as in the Grossmünster Kloster in Zurich: here the fish tail is transformed into two serpents. Similar figures have survived in medieval Transylvanian churches as well.<sup>21</sup>)

Medieval iconography knows many hybrid beings, in a variety of roles, like the triton or centaur on coats of arms, in calendar illustrations, on furniture and wall decorations. Decoding their meaning is a multi-route investigation, the transformation from sign to symbol and to decoration is such a complex issue that here I can only indicate the shift of meanings and functions through a few examples. The question gets even more complicated when we consider the *Physiologus*, a book from the early Christian period in which different animals and fantastic beings are described, among them the siren and the centaur. The original text was Greek, originated in the Byzantine Empire, and later saw various translations. One Latin version<sup>22</sup> appeared in Hungary at the end of the 15th century; one of the owners of the illustrated codex during the 16<sup>th</sup> century was Johannes Sambucus (János Zsámboky, 1531-1584), a Hungarian humanist known all over Europe.<sup>23</sup> In this codex there is a picture of a siren, a woman-bird hybrid, and a negative commentary, in which she appears as a symbol of temptation. In the course of centuries, this ancient figure seems to have undergone quite a few metamorphoses through the profane and sacred spaces of Hungarian culture, from codices to penny books.



An interesting derivative of the mermaid (Virgo) in Heltai's *Cisio* can be found in the 1704 *Cantionale* of György Szentsei (Fig. 6).<sup>24</sup> This handwritten songbook contains the best of Hungarian popular poetry from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It preserves many love and wedding songs, with the regular topoi of Renaissance love poetry, with ancient mythological figures like Venus, Diana, Helene, Cupid and the sirens. The illustrations are also derived from late Renaissance book decorations: the coloured flowers, vines, arabesques and stylized figures

recall the illuminated codices, breviaries and calendars of the earlier centuries. It is in this vein that the mermaid/siren appears in an initial “J,” at the beginning of the *Cantio matrimonialis*, showing once again the *meaningful* siren figure of medieval and Renaissance art as being transformed from symbol into decoration. The copier of the *Cantionale*, György Szentsei was an educated man, he probably knew mythology, which was why he drew a mermaid for the initial of a poem about a false wife. Ever since antiquity, the siren has been connected with the idea of deceit, constituting one of the oldest topoi of European literature. In his *Iconologia*, Cesare Ripa also ascribes this meaning to the siren, under the title *Falsita d’amore, overo inganno*. Just as Tótfalusi “resurrected” and reinterpreted the *Cisio* illustrations of Heltai’s office, Szentsei – also working at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries – too salvaged the mermaid topos in his *Cantionale*, and turned the symbol into an allegory and decoration for the *Cantio matrimonialis*, a popular late variation on the *Adhortatio mulieris* type of songs.

The image is similar to the siren on the ceilings of the abovementioned Protestant churches: the conventional form, the naïve, coloured drawing comes from the same world; the medieval and Renaissance forms and meanings had become folklorized by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. By this time the figure was no longer identified with the great prostitute of Revelations, though still preserved negative connotations like unfaithfulness, temptation or weakness of character, as alluded to in Szentsei’s *Cantionale*.

Here I must mention the other siren figure, the one with a male or female trunk and a forked fish tail, often wearing a crown. It underwent folklorization just as the former, “single-fin” mermaid. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it appeared in a Hungarian fortune book as a complex emblem of erratic fortune (Fig. 7). Popular publications transmitted this figure from the medieval period through the Renaissance to the later centuries, with its meanings changing along the way.



The Aquarius figure in Heltai's *Cisio* – the “fish-man” with a forked tail that resembles the Greek letter  $\omega$  – also has a very interesting prehistory and associations. Let me refer to the findings of another Hungarian scholar, Zsuzsa Pekár.<sup>25</sup> She found interesting connections of this figure with Benedictine and Cistercian buildings and the heraldry of Italian families like the Colonnas of Rome, the Avogadros of Verona and the Monaldeschis of Orvieto; it occurs on seals, in Italian and French watermarks, on a majolica vessel (Museo di Capodimonte, Naples) and the tombstones of prelates – all in the 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Zsuzsa Pekár thinks the  $\omega$ -tailed siren – a female being – is connected to medieval theology, more particularly the visions of Hildegard von Bingen.<sup>26</sup> The ancient form referred to the Christian meaning of omega and became *Imago Ecclesiae*, the symbol of the soul, waiting for admission to the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why the shape repeatedly appears on the tombstones of bishops and other members of high clergy. The figure had widespread use in medieval Hungary: wall fragments, glazed tiles and seals featuring the siren have survived from the age of the Angevins and Sigismund of Luxembourg (13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> century), several of which are exhibited in the National Museum, Budapest.

If some of the woodcuts used in Heltai's workshop came from Norinberg, the figure of the mermaid/siren was sufficiently well-known in medieval and Renaissance Hungary to make it difficult to determine which meaning from the rich strata was alive at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The possible functions – sign, symbol and decoration – were probably mixed, and influenced one another. In any case, this theme offers still many interesting meanings for the semiotics, too.

## *II. The decorative title pages of calendars*

As for the image-text relationship, the title pages of calendars constitute an important and large group. I want to quote three series and several examples from the abundance of available material: 1. the calendars of David Frölich (1595–1648), published in Breslau (Wrocław) between 1623 and 1641; 2. Hungarian calendars appearing in the printing house of Lorentz Brewer and his heirs in Lőcse (Levoča) from 1639 up to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century; 3. the serie *Calendarium Tyrnaviense* edited in Nagyszombat (Trnava) in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the title-pages of quarto-sized, German language calendars of David Frölich we can discern two types: in the calendar of 1623 one can see the illustrations of the planets, well known from the calendars of Renaissance period, but in the following years appears a new type of decoration: it is a specific composition of the landscape of Breslau and the allegorical figures of Mathematics and Astronomy, depicted as two women. This type of title-pages decoration was widely believed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. The typography of Baumann in

Breslau, where the Frölich-calendars have been printed, used this type of title-pages also. The contacts of the Hungarian calendar edition with Breslau are traceable in the following decades, too. The cultural transfer came across well on the field of popular press: the woodcuts for illustrations, the general knowledge of astrology and astronomy and other supplementary materials for calendars seemed to be a common treasury in Europe. In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century two astrologer from Breslau, Christoph Neubarth and his son, Johann have made the calculations for the Hungarian calendars, their work constituted for a long time the continuity of the above mentioned contacts between Breslau and Upper Hungary.

We know of other title-page decorations of the Frölich-calendars, as well, for example the quarto-sized Latin calendar, published in printing office of Jacob Klöss jr. (Bártfa/ Bardejov, 1640)<sup>27</sup>: the title text placed in an oval field, which is bordered with grotesque figures and ornaments. Due to the two volumes about the old Hungarian book decoration, mentioned in footnote 5, the different calendar illustrations now can be easily studiable and comparable.



In the quarto-sized calendars of the Brewer's office in Lőcse one can observe a similar solution, like in the Frőlich' printings. For example, the calendar for 1676 Lőcse<sup>28</sup> has a symmetrically arranged title page (Fig. 8): attributes of astrology on the upper part, allegorical women figures on the left and right, and a view of Lőcse below. This is a typical composition, and one can find a lot of examples from German, Polish and Hungarian presses from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, all showing the influence of Ripa's *Iconologia*.<sup>29</sup> The connection or similarity of the allegorical figures, the personifications of Astronomy in the European graphic art of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries can be traced back to Ripa's collection, though as we know his emblem lexicon was a register of already existing symbols and allegories. By the description of "Mathematics" and "Astrology" we find the well



known-attributes: a woman in diaphanous clothes, with wings on her head, compasses in her right hand, and a globe with Zodiac signs in her left. Such representations already appeared in calendars from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, as in the one printed in Cracow in 1512.<sup>30</sup> In the Lőcse calendar, the wings are missing from the female figures, but the other attributes – compasses, globe, the book with numerals – are present. The “message” of the picture is not complicated, all the elements refer to the function of the calendar and the place of publication. The decorative title-pages of this kind, with landscapes, allegorical figures and planets appear only in the quarto-sized calendars; in the small, 16<sup>o</sup> printings there are more simple decorations: for example, an astrological sign related to the given year’s celestial phenomena (lunar eclipse, conjunctions of planets etc.) or the arm of the town, where the printing house is working.

In the examples of *Calendarium Tyrnaviense* there are more special and varied title pages. The first Hungarian university was founded in the town of Trnava/Nagyszombat in 1635, later moved to Buda, and then to Pest at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, where it still exists. The printing house of this university published calendars in Latin and Hungarian – the former with a more educational content, while the latter tended to borrow material from folklore, oral and written genres (showing the influence of medical manuscripts, mixing magic and natural phenomena, verses on the labours of the months, proverbs and anecdotes, etc.). The Latin versions were made by the Jesuit Martin Szentiványi, a professor of the university between 1675 and 1705. In each calendar, he published some kind of scholarly material – on botany, physics, history, astronomy etc. His knowledge in most fields was rather rudimentary, while his philosophy represented what was a conservative approach in cosmography, common among the Jesuits.<sup>31</sup> The images and texts of the 1678 calendar bear an interesting testimony to this. On the front page we can recognize several elements of Dürer’s *Melancholia I*: astronomical instruments, a globe and the figure of Saturn in the bottom left corner. The figure has the typical attributes of Saturn/Kronos: wings, a scythe, an hour glass, a bald crown and a beard (it is a combination with the emblem of Fortune-Kairos). There are interesting differences between the two illustrations: Dürer’s Saturn figure represents the metamorphosis of the cruel, gloomy demon of the planet into a humanised, creative, contemplative being; the artist spiritualizes the threatening symbol, the “memento mori,” and makes it the personification of human work<sup>32</sup> – in accordance with the mentality of the Renaissance. In the late Baroque Jesuit calendar of Nagyszombat/Trnava the traditional demon of the planet returns. The content of the calendar underpins the picture: in the appendix (on pages D<sub>3a</sub>-D<sub>6b</sub>) there is a long text, *Dissertatio Physico-mathematica Cosmographica, seu de Mundi Systemate*, in which the good Jesuit pater rejects Copernican astronomy from the perspective of medieval cosmography and puts forth the “true” system of the world – which is a syncretic system of the “hybrid” cosmography of Tycho



de Brache fitting together with the spirit of the Council of Trent (*De situ et ordine praecipuarum mundi partium*): the planets move around the Sun, but the Sun, the Moon and the fixed stars revolve round the unmoving Earth, the centre of the universe. ("In medio totius Universi est Terra. Circa terraquam Globum est expansus aër, circa aërem putatur esse ignis, quem tamen alii melius defoecatam aërem, seu aetherem appellant. Circa putatum ignem est coelum sydereum, sic dictum, tam errantia seu Planetae, quam inerrantia seu stellae fixae, huic teste scriptura supererminent aquae coelestes. Aquis vero coelestibus, coelum Empyreum, quod est sedes Beatorum. Ultra hoc sunt imaginaria spatia, nullo sine terminata. Ut ostendit figura hic apposita."<sup>33</sup>). This ideology was still obligatory for Jesuits in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and so their calendars teach this old cosmography. The other illustrations were also reflecting pre-Copernican cosmographies, one, for instance, references Dante's celestial zones as described in Cantos 27-28 of *Paradise*, in which he refers to Dionysos Areopagites' *De coelesti hierarchia*.<sup>34</sup>

This Jesuit calendar is a fitting illustration of its age, the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It represents the great argument with the spirit of the Renaissance and Reformation. Astronomers, artists and philosophers of Humanism tried to emancipate man's thought from the fear of demons (see the interpretation of Dürer's *Melencolia* by Warburg), while Baroque returned to the medieval doctrine of the world system and summoned the old, well proved fatalistic powers and symbols (like Saturn) from the subconscious. Both the Renaissance and the Baroque show signs of a syncretism between Christian and classical beliefs but the first tries to understand the Creator's mystery and to harmonize belief and reason. The second has recourse to respect for old authorities and operates with the fear of death, and the unforeseeable character of Fortune. The popular press, the calendars served this aim very well.



The next interesting title page I want to present is in the *Calendarium Tyrnaviense* for the year 1683 (Fig. 9). On the top of the picture we can see Patrona Hungariae, i.e. the Holy Virgin with the Child, with Hungarian saints on her left and

right, viz. Stephanus I, Emericus, Ladislaus and Adalbertus Pragensis. The latter spent a few years in the court of St. Stephen, took part in the conversion of Hungarian people to the Christian belief. At the bottom of the picture is a view of Trnava, and the central part is occupied by a wreath with the coats of arms of the lands of the Habsburg Empire. The picture corresponds to the content of the calendar, as in its appendix there is a chronology focusing on Hungarian history. Also, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries one can observe a great popularity of the different representations of the Holy Virgin and the Child (Gottesmutter) all over Europe: after the triumph over the Turks in Lepanto (7 October 1571), a whole class of images emerged, the “Immaculata Triumphans,”<sup>35</sup> and not only as altar-pieces and paintings, but also in books as woodcuts and engravings, on goldsmith’s works and reliquaries.<sup>36</sup> No wonder then that among the calendar illustrations of the Catholic printing houses (like that in Nagyszombat/Trnava) we often find this representation. Another historical theme in Hungarian Baroque religious painting was St. Stephen, the first Hungarian king, offering his crown to the Holy Virgin. This idea of Hungary as Regnum Marianum was encouraged by the troubled situation of Hungary during the Turkish occupation: belief in the heavenly protection of the Holy Virgin gave strength and persistence during the ongoing fight. From the 1640s till the 1770s, Nagyszombat/Trnava was one of the most important centres of Catholic book publishing in Hungary, with skilled engravers working in the university press, so the examples of *Calendarium Tyrnaviense* could reflect the main tendencies – both in image and text – of the epoch. In 1690 the same press published a book by Prince Pál Esterházy, palatine of Hungary,<sup>37</sup> listing various representations of the Holy Virgin. There is an obvious relationship between these images and the calendar illustrations of Patrona Hungariae or Immaculata Triumphans.

The calendar published in Trnava in 1688 shows another important connection of text and image (Fig.10). On the front page we see twelve representations of castles in medallions. Buda is on the top of the page, and the others are, counter-clockwise: Quinque Ecclesia (= Pécs, Hung.), Siklós (Hung.), Czanad (= Csanád, Hung.), Simontornya (Hung.), Novarinum (= Pilos, Greece), Napoli di Romania (= Nafplion, Greece), Argos (Greece), Modon (= Methoni, Greece), Hatvan (Hung.), Kaposvar (Hung.) and Segedinum (=Szeged, Hung.). The reader of the calendar will appreciate this composition when he comes to Appendix I and II at the end of the booklet: *Munitio in Hungaria, armis caesareis anno 1686 reoccupatorum descriptio*, and *Moreae seu Peloponnesi Peninsulae, rerumque memorabilium in ea descriptio*. The author of the Appendix, Martin Szentiványi describes the Hungarian and Greek towns that had been recaptured from the Turks. This example, as many others, shows that the calendars always reflected on the current events of the time, both with their images and text. It is important in the serie *Calendarium Tyrnaviense*, that the title-pages for each year are different: we see a consciously planned print, in which the decorative elements have

been harmonized with the texts. The calendar decorations of Brewer office in Lőcse show more accidental character, probably because this typography had not have such a definitely settled aim for religious conviction and teaching, as the university printing house in Trnava.



Summarizing this short survey on the connections of calendar illustrations and contents, we can state that by the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the former astrological illustrations slowly gave way to current political or ideological themes, like those mentioned above. The great age of astronomy and astrology in calendars was coming to its end. Its heydays coincided with Humanism and the Renaissance, it appeared in popular culture during the age of the Baroque, and it went out of vogue with the rise of the Enlightenment.



By way of closure, we present/mention two fragments of a calendar published in Zurich in 1587 (Fig.11). They are now held in the Library of the Protestant College in Csurgó, a small town in the south-west of Hungary, the same area where Szenna and its church with the decorated ceiling panels can be found. As

for the provenance of these fragments, all we know is that in 1889 they were presented to the College by Professor Endre Kalocsay, who was known as a collector of antiques. We do not know where he bought them or how he obtained them. They are, in any case, a concrete proof of the wandering of calendars and, *mutatis mutandis*, of the proverb “libelli, i.e. calendars habent sua fata.”

- Euclid, fig. 1
- Virgo, fig. 2
- Aquarius, fig. 3
- Virgo, penny book, fig. 4
- Mermaid, Szenna, fig. 5
- Cantionale* of György Szentsei, fig. 6
- Hungarian fortune book, fig. 7
- Calendar of Lőcse, 1676, fig. 8
- Calendarium Tyrnaviense 1683, fig. 9
- Calendarium Tyrnaviense, 1688, fig. 10
- Zurich, 1587 (front), fig. 11

### Notes

- 1 Perpetual almanacs were called “cisios” in Hungarian, the word being derived from “circumcisio Christi,” the first day of the year. Bibliographical data of this particular publication: “CISIO magyar nyeluen. [...]Colosvarat 1592.” [typ.Heltai] RMNy 684, Library of the Academy of Sciences, Budapest, RM 4° 224. This Cisio was based on a German edition of the perpetual calendar of Johannes Regiomontanus, renowned astronomer of his time, who worked in Buda in 1468-71, at the court of King Matthias Hunyadi.
- 2 Warburg, Aby, 1920. *Heidnisch-antike Weissagung im Wort und Bild zu Luthers Zeiten*. Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung. I used the Hungarian edition: Warburg, Aby, 1986. *Pogány-antik jóslás Luther korából*. Budapest: Helikon, 85. I also discussed this subject in Dukkon, Ágnes, 2003a. *Régi magyarországi kalendáriumok európai háttérben* [Old Hungarian Calendars in a European Context]. Budapest: Eötvös Kiadó, 26–38.
- 3 In the “Flemish Calendar” (ca. 1470), kept in Budapest, in the National Széchényi Library (Cod. Lat. 396), some of the Zodiac signs – Virgo, Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius – are coupled with the months incorrectly, as Libra with August, Virgo with September, Sagittarius with October etc.; in a Hungarian calendar from 1611, the labours of the months are mixed, or the same picture is used twice, as that of harvest in March and August. In the Hungarian Cisio edited in Lőcse (Levoča,) 1650, the Zodiac signs dominated by Mars, Jove and Saturn are confused. For more details see: Dukkon 2003a, 66–72, 105, 141.
- 4 Neuer und Alter Schreibealender sampt der Planeten Lauff und Aspecten Tag und Nachtleng Auff und Niedergang der Sonnen nach Christi Geburt MDCXVI. Geschrieben durch Georgium Albanum-Marium oder Halbmayern, Astrophilum zu Marckt Burckbernheim in Francken. Gedruckt und verlegt zu Nürnberg durch Abraham Wagenmann. A copy is kept in the Library of the Evangelical Secondary School, Sopron, A 521.

- 5 In the last years there have been published two large volumes about the letters and decorations of the old Hungarian typographies: V. Ecsedy, Judit, 2010. *A régi magyarországi nyomdák betűi és díszei. XVII. század. I. Nyugat- és észak-magyarországi nyomdák*. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó; Bánfi, Szilvia, Pavercsik, Ilona, Perger, Péter and V. Ecsedy, Judit, 2014. *A régi magyarországi nyomdák betűi és díszei. XVII. század. II. Kelet-magyarországi és erdélyi nyomdák, Lőcse, Kassa*. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó. The calendar illustrations, treated in this study are registered in these volumes.
- 6 To name only a few studies on this theme: Kerényi, Karl, 1951. *Die Mythologie der Griechen. I. Die Götter- und Menschengeschichten*. Zürich: Rhein-Verlag; Jung, Carl G., 1955. *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. Zürich: Rascher; Jung, Carl G., 1964. *Man and his symbols*. New York: Ferguson; Marót, Károly, 1958. The Sirens. *Acta Ethnographica*, 7 (1–2), 1–60. The relationship of Christian theology to the sirens was discussed recently by Heidl, György, 2005. *A kereszény és a szirének. Patrisztikus tanulmányok*. [Christian Man and the Sirens. Patristic studies.] Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, 9–32.
- 7 Dukkon 2003a, 73–74.
- 8 Klaniczay, Tibor, ed. 1985. *Old Hungarian Literary Reader. 11<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries*. Budapest: Corvina Kiadó, 139.
- 9 Fitz, József, 1959. Jacob Lucius der Ältere in Siebenbürgen. *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 171.
- 10 Ripa, Cesare, 1603. *Iconologia*. Roma, Lepidus Facius inventione. I used the Hungarian translation: Ripa, Cesare, 1997. *Iconologia*. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó. Transl., notes and afterword by Tamás Sajó.
- 11 Pérez-Higuera, Teresa, 1997. *Chronos. Die Zeit in der Kunst des Mittelalters*. Würzburg: Echter, 263–270.
- 12 Borsa, Gedeon, 1979. Die Illustrationen der ältesten ungarischen Perikopenbücher. Teil I. *Gutenberg Jahrbuch*, 238–290.
- 13 A copy of this Bible can be found in the National Széchényi Library, Budapest. Inc 22b I–II. vol.
- 14 Vectigal Transylvanicum. Claudiopoli, Ex officina Nicolai Kis de M.Tótfalu, 1700. OSzK, RMK I, 1560a.
- 15 Aelii Donati Viri Clarissimi de octo partibus Orationis methodus...Claudiopoli Anno 1701. OSzK RMK I 1623a
- 16 Természet próbája. melyet sok jeles Írásokból öszve szedett, És Magyar versekre fejezett Vintzi György 1701-ben. Nyomtatattott ujjonnan. Anno 0000. The penny book is now kept in the Library of the Academy of Science, Romania, Cluj/Kolozsvár (shelfmark: 64619), mikrofilm: MTAK 2567/II, Budapest.
- 17 His family name appears in the contemporary documents, among them the title pages of his own publications, in different variants, as Misztótfalusi Kis, Tótfalusi Kis, M. Tótfalusi Kis or only Kis.
- 18 Haiman, György, 1983. *Nicholas Kis: A Hungarian Punch-Cutter and Printer, 1650–1702*. Budapest: J. W. Stauffacher/Greenwood Press in association with J. Howell-Books, 31.
- 19 Kelemen Lajos, 1945. Mennyezet- és karzatfestmények a XVII. századból [17<sup>th</sup>-century ceiling and choir decoration]. In: *Művészettörténeti tanulmányok* [Studies in art history]. Bucharest, 1977, 41–81.
- 20 The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments.[...] Oxford. Printed at the University Press, M.DCCC.LXIII.
- 21 Jung, Károly, 1992. Folkloradatok egy középkori pillérfő értelmezéséhez [Folklore data towards the interpretation of a medieval pillar head]. In: *Köznapi és legendák* [Workaday reality and legends]. Újvidék/Novi Sad, 104–121.
- 22 Kádár, Zoltán, ed. 1986. *Physiologus. A Zsámboki kódex állatábrázolásai* [Physiologus. With animal representations from the Zsámboki codex]. Trans. by Mohay, András. Budapest: Helikon, 109.

- 23 “He studied in Vienna, at German universities, then in Paris and Padua. From 1564 he lived in Vienna and from 1569 acted as the court historiographer.” In: *Myth and Reality. Latin Historiography in Hungary 15th–8th centuries*. Exhibition in the National Széchényi Library , 7 July – 3 September 2006. Catalogue. Budapest, 2006, p. 39.
- 24 Varga, Imre, ed. 1977. *Szentsei György Daloskönyve*. Facsimile. Budapest: Magyar Helikon. The original manuscript is kept in National Széchényi Library, Oct. Hung. 70.
- 25 Pekár, Zsuzsa, 1996. A román kori sellő megjelenése a középkori heraldikában és ikonográfiában. [The appearance of the Romanesque mermaid in medieval heraldry and iconography]. *Turul*, 69 (3–4), 78–102.
- 26 Pekár quotes extensive literature on Hildegard, e.g. Liebesschütz, H., 1930. *Das allegorische Weltbild der hl. Hildegard von Bingen*. Studien der Bibliothek Wartburg. Leipzig: Teubner; Rieth, F. ed., 1963. *Hildegard von Bingen. Naturkunde*. Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag; Pernoud, R., 1994. *Hildegard de Bingen*. Paris: Édition du Rocher etc.
- 27 FASTI, vulgo CALENDARIUM ...Davidis Froelichii. RMNy 1757.
- 28 *Neubarth Christoph Uj és O Kalendarioma*. Lócse, 1676. Brewer Samuel nyomdájá. 4° RMK I. 1200, National Széchényi Library.
- 29 The translator and editor of the Hungarian version, Tamás Sajó writes in the introduction: “During the two centuries of its golden age, the Iconology was translated into seven languages, appearing in almost forty editions throughout Europe and overseas, thus having direct and indirect influence on thousands of statues, frescoes and paintings from Mexico to Poland and from the Netherlands to Saint Petersburg.” Ripa, 1997, 8. We can add its influence on woodcuts for calendars and other prints.
- 30 Jacobus de Iſzlza: *Vaticinium Syderale*, 1512. Kraków, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Cim. 6009.
- 31 Horváthy, Péter–Németh, Gábor, 2007. A jezsuita kozmográfia emlékei a zirci könyvtárban. [Documents of the Jesuit cosmography in the Library of Zirc]. *Magyar Tudomány*, 168 (8), 1034–1044. The authors give a detailed survey about the cosmography of Jesuits, among others about the conception of Gábor Szerdahelyi and Martin Szentiványi, the professors at the university of Nagyszombat/Trnava in the last decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- 32 Warburg 1920.
- 33 Széchényi National Library, RMK II. 1223 “B”, F4b
- 34 A more detailed analyse about this calendar see: Dukkón, Ágnes, 2003b. Old calendars: an iconographical approach. In: Kadulská, Irena, ed. *Europejskie związki dawnego teatru szkolnego i europejska wspólnota dawnych kalendarzy*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 105–117.
- 35 For example: Unknown painter (1646): The Immaculata Triumphans over the battle by Lepanto, Győr, Church of Ignatius; Unknown painter (1670): The Immaculata Triumphans as Patrona Hungariae, Protector of the Hungarians against the Turks and heretics, Bozók, Hungary, Parish church. See a short analyse about this question in the following study: Dukkón Ágnes, 2011. A barokk szellemiség megjelenési formái a Calendarium Tyrnaviense sorozat példányában. [The Appearance of the Spirit of Baroque in the Examples of the Sserie Calendarium Tyrnaviense] In: Imre, Mihály, Oláh, Szabolcs, Fazakas, Gergely Tamás, Száraz, Orsolya, ed. *Eruditio, Virtus et Constantia. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Bitskey István tiszteletére*, I–II. Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, II., 497–503.
- 36 A very profoundly work about this theme is the book of Szilárdfy, Zoltán, 2003. *Ikonográfia, kultusztörténet*. [Iconography, history of cult]. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó. It contains 102 coloured and 408 black and white pictures, with Hungarian and German language annotations.
- 37 Esterházy, Pál, [1690] 1994. *Az egész világon lévő csudálatos Boldogságos Szűz képeinek rövideden föl tet eredeti...*, Nagy-Szombat, facsimile. Budapest: Balassi Kiadó.



# LA STRUCTURE TEMPORELLE ET SPATIALE DANS LE ROMAN DE DEZSŐ MALONYAY INTITULÉ « *AZ UTOLSÓ* » (LE DERNIER)

LÁSZLÓ GERGYE

Université Eötvös Loránd de Budapest  
dr.gergye@freemail.hu

## Résumé

L'article est consacré à un roman artistique peu connu de Dezső Malonyay intitulé « *Az utolsó* » (Le dernier), spécialement sous l'aspect de la gestion du temps et de l'espace. Il essaye de mettre à jour comment, dans ce roman, les structures de l'espace mythique et empirique sont disposées en miroir, en s'appuyant sur les hétérotopies foucaaldiennes telles que le miroir, le bateau, le jardin et la bibliothèque. La bibliothèque est le lieu fixe où, en réunissant les documents de la famille Kerbastik, le protagoniste, qui se préoccupe d'écriture, pourra finalement maîtriser l'extension du temps dont l'écoulement provoquait en lui une sensation de grande anxiété. Contrairement à l'autobiographie qu'il rédigeait avec difficulté, l'écriture biographique (des membres de sa famille) remet le temps sur les rails en transformant ce dernier d'ennemi en ami. Dans la présente analyse, une place importante revient au mythe celtique de la ville sous-marine d'Ys et à la variante actualisée de l'histoire de Sodome et Gomorrhe, en raison de leur lien étroit avec le raisonnement présidant à la construction du roman.

**Mots-clefs:** structure temporelle et spatiale, Michel Foucault, hétérotopies, mythes celtiques, ville sous-marine d'Ys, autobiographie, le roman artistique

Le temps joue indéniablement un rôle crucial dans le roman artistique, ce genre littéraire typique de la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il n'est pas question ici de relever une passion particulière pour l'histoire culturelle et ses différentes époques (surtout celle de la Renaissance), mais plutôt de valoriser certains aspects abstraits du concept de temps. Le passage du temps dans la vie de l'homme jette une ombre menaçante sur les artistes qui luttent pour la pérennité, pour conquérir l'éternel. Dans la perspective de la création de valeurs esthétiques, les notions de « temps vide » (« *leere Zeit* ») et de « temps rempli » (« *erfüllte Zeit* »), proposées par H.-G. Gadamer offrent un tableau suggestif de la différence essentielle qui sépare le temps gaspillé du temps utilisé consciemment et à bonnes fins. (Gadamer 1999 137-153) Un exemple par excellence de cette problématique est donné



dans le roman de Zoltán Ambrus intitulé « *Midas király* » (*Le roi Midas*, 1891). Cependant, c'est à un autre travail, peu connu, que je voudrais consacrer le présent article : « *Az utolsó* » (*Le dernier*), roman de Dezső Malonyay en trois tomes publié en 1896. Auteur fécond en son temps, Dezső Malonyay est tombé par la suite dans un oubli presque total. Il faisait partie des écrivains d'orientation française de la deuxième moitié du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle. Aujourd'hui, il est difficile de croire que Malonyay – tout comme Zsigmond Justh – était considéré comme l'écrivain hongrois le plus connu à Paris dans les années 1890. L'histoire de la littérature hongroise n'a d'ailleurs toujours pas identifié les œuvres qui, concrètement, lui ont valu le respect des lecteurs français. Sans doute n'est-ce pas le maître du roman léger “fin du siècle” qu'ils ont apprécié, bien que l'on doive attribuer clairement ses succès à l'époque en Hongrie à son activité dans ce domaine. Le fait est que si Malonyay s'est vu décerner le prix littéraire de l'Académie française, le roman en question n'a connu aucun écho en Hongrie au moment de sa parution.

Le protagoniste du roman *Az utolsó* est le dernier descendant de l'illustre famille aristocratique des Kerbastik d'Azincourt, il est en outre un authentique bel esprit, mais le sang de ses ancêtres commence à s'user en lui et leur énergie s'amenuise. S'il a des ambitions artistiques, son aspiration manque de persévérance et ne donne pas lieu à une vraie invention. Il apparaît comme une figure étrangère à la vie dont l'existence se déroule dans l'univers des livres. D'ailleurs, il s'identifie volontiers à Don Quichotte. Il cherche lui aussi sa Dulcinée, mais il veille à n'établir de relations trop tendres avec nulle femme. Sur le plan émotionnel, il ne s'attache fortement qu'à sa mère, alors qu'il est terrifié par son père, glacial et peu communicatif. L'expérience la plus traumatisante de sa jeunesse est celle de la mort de son père, dont les circonstances étranges dévoilent la part d'ombre secrète que recèle sa vie recluse : dans ses appartements, le vieux comte célébrait des messes noires, des séances satanistes. Tandis qu'il visite les lieux où les cérémonies étaient organisées, le fils ressent un plaisir mêlé d'horreur. Après les funérailles, Dénes, le serviteur de son père, met le feu à la maison et l'incendie dévore la bibliothèque du jeune comte. Ce dernier voudrait se débarrasser du lourd héritage du passé familial, épouvanté par l'idée que le destin paternel puisse se répéter à travers lui. Il décide alors de déménager à Fousnant, en Bretagne, dans un autre château familial qui est inoccupé et même à l'abandon. Il envisage d'y faire *tabula rasa* et de recommencer sa vie. Il fait ses valises et se met bientôt en route.

Comme l'a suggéré Foucault dans son essai intitulé « *D'autres espaces* », le 20<sup>e</sup> siècle est celui de l'espace. (Foucault 1994 752-762) Autrement dit, dans la vision foucauldienne, le temps s'est arrêté au tournant du siècle pour devenir, en quelque sorte, un système de dispositions spatiales. Dezső Malonyay est un précurseur de cette perception moderne du temps. Dans son œuvre parue aux dernières années du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, le héros annonce, dès le commencement de l'his-

toire, que le temps s'est arrêté : « *megállt az idő rám nézve* » et que : « *mindig egy helyt állott a korom* ». (Malonyay 1896 I, 6) Tandis que son train s'ébranle en direction de la lointaine Bretagne, le jeune comte n'a qu'un seul souhait, celui de s'enfermer dans le renoncement et la résignation, dans la plus parfaite monotonie, dans un moment figé pour toujours et de la perspective duquel tout passé semblera infiniment distant et improbable. Il souhaite que les roues cliquent et roulent au-dessous de lui indéfiniment « *sok éjszakán és sok napon át, folyton úgy* ». (Malonyay 1896 I, 6) Du reste, le concept de temps statique implique inéluctablement l'impression que le déplacement dans l'espace, lui aussi, est impossible. Le voyageur est saisi d'une illusion d'optique : il a l'impression que le train régresse plus qu'il ne progresse : « *nem előre, hanem ellenkező irányba, visszafelé* ». (Malonyay 1986 I, 6) Plus tard, il prend la voiture de poste et, à chaque relais, il abandonne une partie de ses bagages. Ce geste indique clairement qu'en réalité, c'est dans le temps que le protagoniste voyage en s'efforçant de se débarrasser des morceaux de son passé qui continuent à peser sur lui. Cependant, son avancement virtuel dans l'espace ne semble produire aucun déplacement dans le temps. En route vers Fouesnant, à Rosporden, il est envahi par une force élémentaire qui vient tout droit du passé, car chaque recoin de la maison de la mère Périne respire le souvenir de sa mère que l'on a été hébergée ici lorsqu'elle portait le jeune comte dans son sein. Dès lors, il est bercé par l'oscillation permanente entre le passé et le présent, dans une sorte de rêverie qui éveille en lui une affection étrange pour la fille de ses hôtes, Mathurine. Or il se trouve que Mathurine doit se rendre à Concarneau et les hôtes demandent au jeune comte si leur fille peut l'accompagner. Quand ils arrivent à Concarneau, Mathurine décide d'aller jusqu'à Fouesnant, la destination finale.

De Concarneau, pour atteindre le vieux château des Kerbastik, la route la plus courte passe par la mer, ils continuent donc en bateau. Toujours dans un état d'étourdissement, le jeune comte a de nouveau l'impression d'un retour en arrière – il croit voir une image renversée : « *mintha nem is mi mentünk volna, a part suhant előlem távolabb.* » (Malonyay 1896 II, 54) Signalons que d'après Foucault, le bateau n'est autre qu'un « *morceau flottant d'espace, un lieu sans lieu* », quelque chose qui demeure enfermé en soi-même tout en étant abandonné à l'infini de la mer. (Foucault 1994 762) Symbole ancestral, le bateau voguant dans le lointain élargit la conscience humaine alors que l'aspiration à la haute mer ouvre les écluses au flux de l'imagination artistique. Le comte qui se penche sur la balustrade observe les vagues transparentes et vitreuses. La forêt vert foncé de la végétation du fond marin, les sarments gracieusement entrelacés entre lesquels zigzaguent les bancs de sardines déclenchent son imagination. D'abord, il imagine qu'un homme est couché sous les buissons sous-marins, puis il se représente qu'il s'agit de sa compagne de voyage : « *Vagy ha Mathurine feküdnék ott ... Forrás idomaira simulna az ázott ruha, vörös haja szétterülve lebegne feje körül,*

*belepné az arcát, a mellét, az indák köré fonódnék, apró, gyöngyházás kagylók telepednének a vállaira, s úgy ereszkedném le az ölébe, mint az a medusa ... »* (Malonyay 1896 II, 58) Le comte se remet à peine de la torpeur étrange de sa vision quand Mathurine commence à lui raconter qu'ici où la mer éblouissante : *« olyan szép sötétkék színű és összeölelkezik az éjszakára barnuló éggel, – egy nagy város volt valaha. »* (Malonyay 1896 II, 58) Ses paroles font revivre l'histoire d'Ys, l'ancienne ville engloutie par la mer. Selon les ouï-dire qui circulent dans la région, de temps en temps, les vieilles femmes de pêcheurs voient à travers le miroir d'eau les toits brillants d'Ys, la cavalcade panachée de la foire du marché, elles entendent distinctement le carillon des églises et tout est *« csupa, csupa kastély, meg torony, meg ezer meg ezer nyitott ablak ! »* (Malonyay 1896 II, 60) Quand Mathurine termine son récit, le bateau arrive au port et les figures spatiales mythiques se matérialisent dans l'espace réel de Fouesnant : *« Ott a kastély' Mintha az is a meséből lett volna, a sáncokként huzódó fővénypadok mögött, a fekete partsziklák fölött látszott a kastély. »* (Malonyay 1896 II, 60)

Comme l'observe Ernst Cassirer, les espaces mythiques ne constituent pas des lieux au sens empirique-physique : ils sont dominés par des traits magiques et tout ce qui se passe là-bas est opéré par des dichotomies telles que le salut et la perdition, l'accessibilité et l'interdiction, la bénédiction et la malédiction, l'ambiance familiale et l'étrangeté. (Cassirer 1985 95-111) Cependant, la manière dont la conscience esthétisante relie les correspondances cachées entre les diverses figures spatiales du roman de Malonyay est très particulière. Tout comme le narrateur, à la première personne, perçoit dans l'espace de sa vie quotidienne, jour après jour, que pour lui « le temps s'est arrêté », ainsi cela devient-il l'expérience existentielle des habitants d'Ys, engloutie par la mer :

*« Mióta a várost elnyelték a hullámok, minden, minden ugy maradt, ahogyan akkor volt és azóta mindenki azt csinálja, amit akkor csinált. A rokka mellett ülő asszonyok azóta folyton pörgetik az orsót, a posztókereskedők azóta folyton ugyanazt a posztót mérik, ugyanazoknak a vevőknek. És ez így lesz, így, míg csak meg nem váltja őket a jó szerencse, amikor a város újra előtűnik majd a habok alul. »*

(Malonyay 1896 II, 60)

Les détails de l'action qui se déroulent respectivement dans l'espace empirique-physique et dans l'espace mythique se superposent en formant une sorte d'image miroir. Le principe de la symétrie en miroir est utilisé de façon consciente ; ce mécanisme apparaît aussi dans le fait que, d'un côté, le père sataniste du jeune comte célébrait des messes noires au fond de ses chambres secrètes, de l'autre, un évêque dans chacune des cent églises de la ville d'Ys murmure la liturgie de la

sainte messe. L'apparition d'un des pêcheurs de Douarnenez ne fait que renforcer le parallèle. Ce dernier raconte qu'un jour, lors d'une plongée sous-marine, il a vu un prêtre préparant la messe dans une des églises d'Ys dire à un enfant que ce devait être à lui de servir. Offrant une interprétation à son récit, le curé local dit au pêcheur qu'il aurait dû lui-même accepter de servir la messe à la place de l'enfant, car il aurait ainsi sauvé la ville d'Ys de la malédiction. Dénes, le serviteur du vieux comte Kerbastik ne dispose pas, quant à lui, d'un tel choix. Au lieu d'une cloche, c'est toujours l'inexorable sonnette qui le convoque à l'endroit du « service ». Il sait très bien ce qu'il devra faire, mais il n'aura jamais la force d'éliminer son maître, d'exécuter ainsi l'acte de violence capable de sauver tout le monde. C'est le même message qui se dégage de l'histoire de la femme goémonière qui trébuche sur la plage : « ... *mikor fölkel, egy rengeteg kaput látott maga előtt és az a rengeteg kapu szépen föltárult és ő bement rajta és egy pompás városba érkezett.* » (Malonyay 1896 II, 61) Selon la logique du conte, l'acte rédempteur n'a pas lieu parce que, faute d'argent, la femme ne peut rien acheter parmi les splendides étalages. Or la malédiction affligeant Ys ne peut être levée que de cette manière. Ici, ce n'est pas seulement la présence de la « multitude de portes » qui suggère une analogie directe – le site des rites sataniques étant également accessible à travers une multitude de portes cachées –, mais aussi la soie des nombreux vêtements coûteux accumulés devant la porte des magasins de la ville sous-marine (« *sok drága köntösre való selyem* »). Ces éléments visuels, eux aussi, évoquent les événements ayant eu lieu à la résidence du vieux comte. Dans ce lieu particulier, quand Dénes arrache la dernière porte d'armoire, le jeune Kerbastik voit devant lui les mêmes vêtements luxueux : « *női köntösök vannak benne.* » (Malonyay 1896 I, 135) Mais l'élément capital qui réunit les deux univers spatiaux est la clef. Ce motif émerge dès le commencement du roman, puis il demeure à travers le trousseau de clefs en possession de Dénes, qui donne accès aux chambres secrètes du vieux comte, pour enfin s'accomplir avec les clefs du château de Fouesnant que la mère du jeune Kerbastik a déposées, il y a fort longtemps, chez le curé local. Se joint à ce fil de signification la clef en argent du mythe celtique ouvrant la porte d'écluse de la fée Ahès-Dahut, dont l'acquisition par des mains non autorisées scellera pour toujours le destin de la ville tombée dans le borborygme du vice. Évidemment, la légende d'Ys n'est autre que la répétition de l'histoire biblique de Sodome et Gomorrhe. De fait, l'univers transcendantal celtique-breton et celui du christianisme ne cessent de se mélanger dans le cours des événements qui s'entremêlent, à leur tour, dans l'espace mythique et empirique-physique. À ce propos, il suffit peut-être de s'en remettre aux affinités respectives de Gradlon et d'Ahès-Dahut ou à l'effet sur les consciences des superstitions païennes des pêcheurs, bien connues de l'abbé Conan. Toutefois, chacun des deux schémas mythiques implique des éléments qui peuvent être mis en relation directe avec les questions existentielles qui tourmentent le héros

principal. Parmi ces éléments figure le dénouement des bacchanales d'Ahès-Dahut, aboutissant inexorablement au meurtre et en cela correspondant essentiellement aux rites sacrificiels de la messe noire. Apparemment, derrière la surface visible du miroir d'eau qui moutonne paisiblement, des mondes invisibles peuvent s'ouvrir – de la même façon qu'une personnalité qui, de l'extérieur, semble dure comme la pierre peut se désintégrer de manière quasiment inaperçue sous la force érosive des instincts libérés. Le seul antidote à cette menace génétiquement déterminée – d'après le médecin de famille du comte – est le travail artistique créateur. Le dernier Kerbastik d'Azincourt s'y prépare justement. Son plus grand désir est de transposer l'expérience de l'espace mythique dans l'espace esthétique afin qu'en apprivoisant les démons du monde magique, il puisse élaborer divers moyens de rendre compte des expériences vécues. Cependant, s'il veut réussir dans son entreprise, il aura besoin d'un assistant qui se sente à l'aise dans la réalité quotidienne aussi bien que dans l'univers du mythe servant de matière première esthétique. Le souvenir du fabuleux voyage en mer et le chuchotement des ombres respirant la brume des légendes celtiques dirigent ensemble les pensées du jeune comte vers Mathurine.

De fait, Dezső Malonyay révèle dès les premières pages que le lecteur va lire une autobiographie. Le dernier comte Kerbastik fait le projet d'enrouler le fil du temps par l'acte d'écriture afin de s'élever à un niveau supérieur de la connaissance de soi. Dans le même temps, le paradoxe de l'autobiographie tient précisément au fait que l'effort entrepris en vue de restaurer la fugacité « *by autography (the prosopopeia of the voice and the name) deprives and disfigures to the precise extent that it restores* » (Paul de Man 1984 81) ; ainsi, au lieu de mettre en évidence une connaissance de soi fiable, elle en démontre au contraire l'impossibilité. Paul de Man signale que le profil autobiographique s'inscrit dans une structure spéculaire particulière (« *specular structure* ») au sein de laquelle le narrateur et le matériau de la narration se définissent dans une sorte de substitution réciproque et réflexive. Selon son argumentation, le détail autobiographique prend forme au cours d'un processus d'alignement réciproque de l'auteur et de son matériaux, donnant lieu à une structure qui naît à la fois de la distinction et de la similarité : « *This specular structure is interiorized in a text in which the author declares himself the subject of his own understanding.* » (Paul de Man 1984 70) Le héros de Malonyay fait face à cette situation, sans parvenir à la surmonter. Plongé dans l'ardeur du travail, il se heurte en permanence au problème de son incapacité à écrire : « *Ha végignézek egy teleirt lapot s analizálom rajta a törléseket, javításokat, megkapom rajta az én egész életem pszikológiáját. Nyilvánvaló : - most, hogy így követem s ugyszólva újra átélem önmagam, ez annyira enervál, hogy szinte másodszor okoskodom bele magamat a tehetetlenségbe.* » (Malonyay 1896 II, 145-146)

Pour sortir de son état apathique, il faudrait évidemment qu'il puisse bénéficier d'une inspiration extérieure. Cependant, au cours du jeu pendulaire et frénétique de rapprochement et d'éloignement par rapport à Mathurine, le dilemme semble au contraire ne pas cesser de s'intensifier. Face au jeune comte esthétisant, la jeune et robuste bretonne, débordant de vitalité, apparaît tantôt dans l'optique du mythe et de son mystère plein d'élévation, tantôt dans la banalité presque gênante de son impulsivité crument sexuelle. À travers la figure de Mathurine, en tant que « conteuse », apparaît parfois la silhouette d'Ahès-Dahut, la séductrice que l'univers des croyances celtiques a associée avec l'abondance, la fertilité et la richesse aussi souvent qu'avec la fornication effrénée ou la perte. Un jour, Mathurine offre un coing au jeune comte. Dans la mythologie celtique, le coing est le symbole de la fertilité. Selon certains spécialistes de l'herméneutique biblique, la pomme défendue du Jardin d'Éden aurait été un coing à l'origine. Pourtant, on n'apprend pas grand-chose sur le mode de vie de la jeune femme. Sans doute aurait-elle peu de scrupules moraux à tromper Grégoire, son mari boiteux. Mais il n'apparaît pas clairement dans la narration qu'elle ait une véritable liaison avec le serviteur du comte, ou si ce n'est qu'une fantaisie apparaissant sur l'horizon mental de Kerbastik, toujours à la recherche d'analogies. Son serviteur à Fouesnant s'appelle Dénes, tout comme son serviteur actuel, et nous savons déjà que le vieux comte avait effectivement pris la maîtresse de son valet. Et le jeune comte de constater avec résignation : « *Ime, az első asszony, akit a sors elem társít, hozza magával azt, amit el akartam veszteni, az apám emlékét ... És milyen megdöbbenően hasonlít ez az eset az övéhez !* » (Malonyay 1896 II, 149)

Dans son œuvre intitulée « *Les mots et les choses* », Michel Foucault rappelle que l'histoire de Don Quichotte n'est autre que celle de la quête de ressemblances. Le chevalier se retrouve au bord de la folie parce qu'il parvient à intégrer partout les analogies trouvées dans les indices qu'il remarque. Ici, Foucault souligne que dans l'histoire culturelle de l'humanité, c'est précisément pendant la Renaissance que la relation entre le signifiant et le signifié s'est rompue. Depuis lors, les mots ne signifient plus les choses et l'écriture n'est plus la prose du monde. (Foucault 1966 60-64) Peinant sur son autobiographie, le comte Kerbastik aura la même expérience quand il se plaint que : « *nem találok kellő szavakat a kifejezésre* » ou « *hideg, üres valamennyi, amelyet én találok.* » (Malonyay 1896 II, 145) Si cette attitude de Don Quichotte laisse constamment des impressions négatives sur ses efforts artistiques stériles, elle fait aussi échouer ses timides tentatives amoureuses. Puisque toute sa vie ne fait qu'imiter le livre et l'écriture, il ne sait que faire dans la réalité d'une femme de chair et de sang. Lorsque finalement, Mathurine lui rend visite au château, rien ne se passe entre eux. Comme la femme déçue finit par le constater : « *No ezért ugyan kár volt idebolondítani az embert.* » (Malonyay 1896 III, 18)



L'(auto)biographie est une création intellectuelle spéciale. Virginia Woolf, par exemple, l'a plus considérée comme de l'"artisanat" que de l'art. C'est un genre qui navigue essentiellement entre les possibilités de l'art et celles de la science : pour l'articulation linguistique des expériences vécues, il faut absolument une imagination qui le porte plutôt vers l'art, mais le respect des faits le fait pencher quand même vers la philologie, c'est-à-dire vers la science. (Woolf 2015) L'(auto)biographie va devenir un point de bifurcation particulier des efforts du jeune comte. Pendant qu'il écrit l'histoire de sa vie, il s'oriente d'abord vers les genres littéraires au sens classique. Sous le charme des contes de Mathurine, il cherche un sujet qui lui permette d'aller et venir librement « *a mese és a valóság szívárányhídján* », mais, pendant quelque temps, il espère aussi trouver de la matière pour « *valami szép, gyengéd regényre* ». (Malonyay 1896 II, 109, 149) Plus tard, son intérêt se tourne vers la pièce de théâtre. Sa forte faculté d'abstraction se manifeste dans le drame qu'il se propose d'écrire et qui mettra en scène non des gens véritables mais seules les ombres projetées des personnages. Pourtant, ses trouvailles ne restent que des copeaux d'idées, des ambiances passagères, des impressions fugitives desquels rien ne se matérialise, parce que le comte manque d'invention, de faculté d'imagination créatrice. Un symptôme réitéré en est le vertige quelquefois presque gênant qu'il éprouve en haute mer, dans l'empire de l'imagination productive. En même temps, il s'avère aussi que l'écriture d'une (auto)biographie ne sera pas une arme efficace contre le pouvoir du temps qui subjugue tout. En effet, il est incapable d'éliminer la circulation perpétuelle. Pas même au niveau de l'expérience : « *Hisz ime, egyenesen megyek vissza oda, ahonnan menekültem, s hogy annál evidensebb legyen, még le is irom a naponkint tett apró utat.* » (Malonyay 1896 II, 119) Dès lors, il ne lui reste que l'autre direction : l'historiographie et l'univers de la science.

Outre le jardin représentant l'équilibre, la paix et le bonheur, l'endroit le plus important dans la structure spatiale du roman est sans doute la bibliothèque. D'ailleurs, Foucault classe le musée et la bibliothèque parmi les hétérotopies les plus typiques de la culture occidentale du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle. C'est la réaction défensive par excellence de l'homme moderne par laquelle il essaie de repousser les attaques perpétuelles du temps. La création de bibliothèques et de musées toujours plus nombreux est évidemment motivée par l'intention d'enfermer chaque époque et chaque goût dans un lieu concrètement défini. L'on ne peut se débarrasser de la diffusion floue et angoissante du temps que par la localisation, et cela en assurant l'accumulation infinie du temps dans un seul et même espace immobile : « *le projet d'organiser ainsi une sorte d'accumulation perpétuelle et indéfinie du temps dans une lieu qui ne bougerait pas.* » (Foucault 1994 759) C'est par cette stratégie que le héros de Dezső Malonyay tente maintenant de maîtriser le temps. Il se retire dans la tour d'ivoire de la science où il décide d'étudier avec une attention obstinée les livres consacrés à l'histoire de sa famille qu'il a trouvés



dans l'observatoire du château. Mais il ne se contente pas de cela. Il ordonne à son intendant de se rendre aux archives nationales afin de se procurer une copie de tous les documents sur lequel figure le nom de Kerbastik. Des établissements de toute la France se voient peu à peu inclure dans la portée de la recherche et un nombre croissant de livres liés au sujet arrivent au château. Le comte réalise ainsi, mot à mot, le programme foucaldien quand – au lieu de voyager à travers le pays – il observe avec satisfaction et d'un point de repère statique l'afflux du temps dans sa bibliothèque créée *ad hoc*. Le but auquel il a échoué pendant ses voyages, en se déplaçant constamment dans le temps, il semble désormais y parvenir enfin : il fait un pied de nez au temps. Auparavant, il a eu beau chaque jour abandonner volontairement une pièce de ses bagages, il était incapable de se débarrasser du poids de son passé hérité. Mais, maintenant, c'est le temps maîtrisé qui vient à lui, un temps qu'il peut désormais mettre à son service et qui d'ennemi, devient son ami dans la fièvre du travail. Sans s'interrompre, il dépouille la matière reçue. Le fruit de ses efforts tenaces sera un travail historique de six tomes qui lui vaudra le titre d'académicien. Contrairement à l'autobiographie rédigée dans la douleur, il découvre finalement la joie de la « création » – joie qu'il n'a jamais éprouvée au cours de ses précédentes tentatives littéraires – grâce à la biographie et tout porte à croire qu'il réussit, par son geste créateur, à remettre le temps sur les rails.

### Références

- Cassirer, Ernst, 1985. Mythischer, ästhetischer und theoretischer Raum. In: Orth, Ernst Wolfgang, Krois, John Michael, ed. *Symbol, Technik, Sprache. Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1927–1933*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 93–111.
- De Man, Paul, 1984. Autobiography as De-Facement. In: *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*. New York: Columbia Press, 67–81.
- Foucault, Michel, 1994. Des espaces d'autres. In: Defert, Daniel, Ewald, François and Lagrange, Jacques, ed. *Dits et écrits 1954–1988, IV, 1980–1988*. Paris: Gallimard, 752–762.
- Foucault, Michel, 1966. *Les choses et mots*. Paris: Gallimard, 60–64.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, 1999. Über leere und erfüllte Zeit. In: *Gesammelte Werke, IV*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.
- Malonyay, Dezső, 1896. *Az utolsó I–III*. Budapest: Athenaeum.
- Woolf, Virginia, 2015. The art of biography. In: *The Death of the Moth, and other Essays*. Adelaide: eBook.



## CONTEXTS AND MEANINGS AT THE CULTURAL CROSSROADS

Review by Lajos Somogyvári

János Géczi published his latest monography about the rose (*The Rose and its Symbols IV. Chapters from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century*) in 2015 as part of a series describing the history of the plant in a broad context – both in the Hungarian and European background. The main goal of the book (and the previous ones) is to explore an important cultural tradition, patterns of a partly forgotten knowledge about our European roots, beliefs, focusing on the so-called Classical Age (see: Foucault's influential work, *Madness and Civilization*), a period shaped the modern world dominantly.

The rose is a plant connected with the origins of the European civilization (the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin), and it appeared in the human environment at the earliest recorded stages. To reflect this review's title: the rose has meanings in various fields of knowledge, like medicine, the arts, religious beliefs, myths, literature, the sciences and so on. On the other hand, the diversity of the contexts emerged in the different cultures of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam, the overlapping and sometimes concurring regions of Eastern and Western Europe, or Northern and Southern area of the continent (to the forming of the specific European culture, see Rémi Brague's work, *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*).

In the former volumes of the rose-series, János Géczi analyzed three different ages from this perspective – Antiquity, the Christian Middle Ages and the Renaissance – with mostly homogenous images about the rose. In this volume the reader can observe the fragmentation of the traditions, the opposite tendencies of sacralization and profanization. The rose signified traditionally both Jesus and Mary, associated with other ethical and theological meanings, and added the discourses of medicine and the antique Humoral Pathology, in the transition from the Middle Ages to the Humanism and Renaissance. Meanwhile, the paradigm of the natural sciences became more and more relevant in the reception of the rose-images, and the appearance of the flower-gardens meant a new context, the representation. The new book's narrative (the story of the rose in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century) began after these changes.

A universal plant, the rose affects all of the senses, reflects to the human and sacral sphere – with the different cultural practices of nutrition, hygiene, rituals and medicine. There had been a lot of approaches to this phenomenon: for example, its smell evokes heaven, besides this, the rose cools the air, spiritually and

physically touches the body. But this organic attitude, the unity of body and soul, the Sacred and Profane World (Eliade, 1963) was not so clear and simple in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, than before. Images of the rose became more and more complex in the modern history: the first change was the before mentioned appearance of flower-gardens and *florilegia*, the latter were illustrated books, a collection of flowers. These marked a new point of view, the botany. Another sample of the abstraction is painting as emblems: word and picture together made the rose as an object of reading, resulted works like *Iconologia*, by Cesare Ripa, a dictionary to the world of symbols. The transformations reflected to the taxonomies of natural sciences, and the same way, reviewed and renewed the traditions.

The next important key question to discuss is the last cultural division in Europe: the duality of Protestantism and Catholicism. In the painting, genres, portraits and still lifes purchased by the protestant bourgeois in North-Western and Central-Europe, until the same dominated by the catholic aristocracy in Southern-Europe. The similarity continues, when we study the allegories of love or the mystic imagery of Mary – both of them signified by the rose, with different religious background (the first is protestant, the second is catholic). Mary and the rose influenced new forms of sacral activities very much: the Rosary, the baroque confessions and pilgrimage express this to the contemporary reader, too.

The literary tradition of those centuries incorporated the texts and images in specific ways and at different levels. The pictorial poetry is the first to mention, connected to the Jesuits and Piarists, with the characteristics of baroque grandeur and monumentality. To counterweigh this, we have to refer to the protestant side, the negative attitude against symbols, idea of the personal belief and the profane rose-imagery during the celebrations. The rose had an emblematic power in these centuries: the word itself evoked the image and sometimes the rose was part of the emblem, connection of texts and images (just like in the pictorial poetry). The mannerism allowed the antique-pagan allusions into the representations again (beside Jesus and Mary), thus emphasized the aesthetic function of the plant (see the fashion of rose crowns). Combination and utilization of the different traditions can be found in the botanical work of János Lippay and the poems of István Gyöngyösi in Hungary. A chapter about the rococo finished the monography: the rose became here the sign of the secret joy, the sin and the moment of happiness, as a possible ending point of the profanization.

## References

- Brague, Rémi, 2002. *Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization*. South Bend: St. Augustine's Press.

- Eliade, Mircea, 1963. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harcourt.
- Foucault, Michel, 1988. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. New York: Vintage.
- Géczi, János, 2015. *A rózsza és jelképei IV. Fejezetek a 17. és 18. századból*. [The Rose and its Symbols IV. Chapters from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century]. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.

*Lajos Somogyvári*

assistant lecturer at the University of Pannonia Faculty of Modern Philology  
and Social Sciences, Teacher Training Centre (Hungary, Veszprém)