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Contents

"The City of the Magyar:" On Julia Pardoe's Travel Writing

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Abstract. Julia Pardoe, an English poet and historian, was among the first travel writers who described Hungary's institutions and contributed to the shaping up of the nineteenth-century British image of Hungary. In her book *The City of the Magyar or Hungary and Her Institutions* (1840), she thoroughly reported her experiences and observations regarding a country that, although being part of East-Central Europe, had not stirred the interest of the British public. Pardoe's narrative contravenes the patriarchal ideology of travel writing as well as the act of travelling per se as masculine preoccupations, while, in my view, it seeks to negotiate the gender norms of her age by adopting an equally acceptable colonialist perspective as well as a conventionally feminine, a gentlewoman's narrative perspective on the page. By making use of Andrew Hammond's theory of "imagined colonialism," I shall demonstrate that Pardoe's text can be interpreted as a negotiation between the conflicting demands of the discourse of female travel writing and of colonialism. In discussing Pardoe's travel account, I am also interested in the (rhetoric) ways in which the female traveller formulates her observations on Hungarian landscapes, people, and culture as civilized or less civilized – according to her own British national ideals and class norms. Pardoe's portrayal of Hungarian otherness served to raise the curiosity as well as the sympathy of the British towards a nation that was in need of and ready for progress/reform in the years before the Hungarian Revolution of 1848.[1]

Keywords: travel writing, Julia Pardoe, Hungary in the nineteenth century, imagology

Julia Pardoe, an English poet and historian, was among the first writers in the nineteenth century who provided a quite detailed account of Hungary in her three-volume travelogue published in 1840. According to Johnson, by the time she visited Hungary, she had already become a well-known traveller with her

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famous accounts on Portugal and the Ottoman Empire and had earned herself quite a reputation in the genre of travel writing (Johnson qtd. in Domotor 2014, 91). She was a single woman travelling on the Continent escorted by her mother (Fest qtd. in Domotor 2014, 91). Her travel to the less known parts of Eastern Europe, outside the geographical boundaries of the British Empire resulted in an extraordinary journey that not only strengthened Pardoe's writing career in her homeland, but it also raised the interest of British society towards a nation that, although being initially considered less civilized as compared to other European nations, showed great promises in terms of progress and the development of national identity. Pardoe's book is in fact considered to be "one of the founders of the nineteenth-century British image of Hungary" (Kádár 1990, 227). Pardoe, indeed, provided a very sympathetic picture of Hungarians, as she claimed at the end of the last volume: "in the full and earnest hope that my volumes may not contain one word to wound, nor one sentence to mislead; but they may serve to induce the interest and sympathy of my own countrymen towards the inhabitants of the Nation and City of the Magyar" (vol. 3. 1840, 402). In this endeavour, she is similar to her contemporary, John Paget, a fellow British traveller, who also provided a quite favourable picture of Hungary and the Hungarians for the Western audience.[2]

Male vs Female Travel Writing

In literary history, the general assumption about travelling and writing travelogues was that these are almost exclusively masculine activities. According to Thompson, travel "has often been regarded as an important rite of masculine self-fashioning. The journey is, therefore, construed as a test or demonstration of manhood, or, in some variants, such as the eighteenth century Grand Tour, as a rite of passage from boyhood to full, adult masculinity" (2011, 173–174). The goal of masculine travelling was not only to test one's physical and moral strength in a great quest[3] but also to form strategic (political as well as economic) alliances with the elite representatives of another culture and to come back to his homeland with practical, sometimes even scientific data regarding any form of relationship with the visited cultures. This agenda of bringing back knowledge of

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2   On Paget and other male travellers in Hungary and Transylvania, I have written extensively in a previous research. See: "Representations of Hungary and Transylvania in John Paget's *Travelogue.*" *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica* vol. 9, no. 1 (2017): 87–98; "(De)Constructing 19th Century Hungarian Stereotypes in John Paget's Travelogue." In *English Language & Literatures in English 2016,* 29–38. Budapest: L'Harmattan, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2018.

3   The conventions of the male quest go back to ancient stories, not to mention the mediaeval heroic journeys, during which the traveller had to demonstrate a chivalrous attitude, a strong religious belief, and noble virtues.

other countries and nations has often been, as Thompson argues, "gendered in a variety of different ways" (2011, 174).

Thus, certain gender norms and expectations have emerged regarding travelling and travel writing: masculine travel and travel writing was considered to be of great intellectual contribution, with a tone of seriousness, while female travel was culturally unacceptable, and female writing was determined as frivolous, trivial, and shallow, meant for mere entertainment. Such stereotypical associations influenced both "the differing modes of travel writing adopted by men and women, and also the reception that male- and female-authored travelogues received from reviewers and readers" (Thompson 2011, 175). Subsequently, the question arises: are male- and female-authored travelogues fundamentally different, does the aforementioned stereotyping result in specifically feminine and masculine characteristics of such accounts?

Some critics believe that the perspectives of female travellers are different from those of masculine travellers – as Mary Morris argues, women travellers are typically more focused on depicting the "inner landscape," and the "writer's own inner workings" than their male counterparts (2007, 9). Jane Robinson asserts that "men's travel accounts are to do with What and Where, and women's with How and Why" (1990, xiv). Yet, such generalizations and categorizations seem problematic since there is a great diversity of female travel writing; moreover, in order to get a more nuanced image of a specific travelogue, one must look beyond gender issues. Gender is part of a more complex set of factors that shape up a traveller's identity and her/his travel writing. As Foster and Mills argue, there are many more variables that should be taken into account while analysing a travelogue, such as "race, age, class, and financial position, education, political ideals and historical period" (2002, 1). Also, one has to take into consideration the historical as well as social context in which the journey takes place.

The heyday of travel writing started at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with travel becoming a common social practice, accessible for everyone via the emergence of common means of transportation: the train and the steamer. Very quickly, travel became not just a new type of entertainment for the higher social classes but also a form of escapism, as well as a way of satisfying one's (scientific) curiosity of the world. Moreover, "travel provided an opportunity, especially for women, to escape the rigidity of Victorian society and, very often, to write exemplary travel accounts" (Blanton 2002, 20).

In addition, such democratization of travel also brought with itself the democratization of women's status in Victorian society and provided them a possibility to travel alone to remote places, a practice that had previously been restricted to travelling with a man or travelling in a larger group of several women with a male escort. Julia Pardoe also exercised the freedom of travelling alone to faraway lands, accompanied only by her mother. However, we learn

from her travelogues that she was always helped by noble gentlemen, and during her journey in Hungary she was received and assisted by the well-educated Hungarian elite. Her encounters with the civilized Hungarian upper social class and her appreciation of the nation not only generated a sympathetic reaction in the eyes of English readers but also made her journey as well as her travelogue socially and culturally acceptable.

Pardoe was amongst the first women writers who wrote travelogues on a par with men, by producing a more "factual" and a less "romantic" text. *The City of the Magyar*, however, successfully combines the previously stereotyped male and female narrative conventions: it is equally intellectual and scientific, while it is also entertaining, especially in those parts in which Pardoe describes landscapes in a quite lyrical tone, retells local myths and legends, or provides an account of cultural customs and manners. Thus, by providing detailed descriptions of the Hungarian political and social institutions, by discussing the commercial possibilities between Hungary and England, she is being objective and "useful," on the one hand, while through giving beautiful and lyrical descriptions of landscapes, people, and local legends she moves to the realm of fiction writing, on the other hand. This negotiation of various literary conventions (and social discourses) ultimately determines the three-volume book to reveal a typically masculine perspective as well as a conventionally feminine narrative voice on the page. Many travelogues written by women in the nineteenth century have this double-voiced quality. As Sara Mills argues, the writing of these women "seems more of a contest between masculine and feminine discourses, and other textual determinants" (1991, 44). Even if women's writing may differ from male travel writing, "they still uphold the basic metaphorical description of landscape" (Mills 1991, 44). Thus, it is safe to say that female travel writing shares a great number of narrative elements with male travel writing. As Mills claims, "the difference is not a simplistic textual distinction between men's writing on the one hand and women's writing on the other, but rather a series of discursive pressures on production and reception which female writers have to negotiate, in very different ways to males" (1991, 5–6).

One typical convention used by women travel writers in the nineteenth century was the pretence that their writing is, in fact, a private text made public, "so as to forestall the criticisms liable to be levelled at women who trespassed too conspicuously on a supposedly masculine domain" (Thompson 2011, 180). The implicit transgressiveness of Pardoe's extraordinary journey is also balanced by a certain display of a conventionally feminine attitude, such as modesty in her writing style and modesty in talking about her initial motivations, thus diminishing the value of the endeavour and even apologizing for undertaking such a risky travel. Such a disclaimer appears right in the preface to the first volume: "In putting forth the present work, I have not sought to deceive myself with regard to the difficulty of the undertaking; […] I cannot, as a woman, presume

to suppose that any weight can possibly be attached to my particular sentiments on that subject" (vol. 1. 1840, v–vi).

As Domotor argues, such "apologies and confessions were essential to preserve the genteel position of the woman author in British society" (2014, 93). It is evident that later Pardoe often uses certain phrases that would express her sentiments, her emotional attachment to the nation when writing about how much she has become interested in the country and its inhabitants, in this way reassuring her gentility.

> I confess that I have learnt to feel so sincere a sympathy with Hungary, such a respect for the phoenix-like spirit which dwells within her, and which is rapidly renewing a strong and smart existence from the ashes of the past (…) (vol. 1. 1840, 156)
> I am enabled through the kindness of competent persons, to give a fair and true account of their nature and extent, I become more anxious to place them in such a point of view as may attract the attention, and awaken the sympathies, of England. (vol. 3. 1840, 304–305)

Personal, sentimental observations are often followed by detailed descriptions of politics, industry, as well as other social institutions, in this way restoring the balance between masculine and feminine travel writing conventions. It is safe to say that the travelogue has a very balanced structure: unladylike chapters, that is, dealing with "masculine" topics, such as politics, economy, or various industries, are followed by "feminine" topics such as visiting cultural institutions, retelling local legends, describing beautiful landscapes, romanticizing certain places and people.

When writing about certain topics, such as the establishment of the Hungarian Academy, or when talking about important historical events, she strives to maintain the objectivity and the scientific accuracy of her account by providing sources in the footnotes (vol. 3. 1840, 82, 129–132). When giving a detailed enumeration of Hungarian literary journals and magazines, she provides a whole chart with several categories and titles, and the exact numbers of journals in each category (vol. 3. 1840, 92). She employs the same strategy when discussing more intellectual, that is, economic or political issues, such as Hungary's annual production, the amount of export, and the current value of each article (see charts and tables on pp. 308–309 in vol. 3.). After "serious" topics, she frequently switches to lighter subjects, and thus the tone of writing also becomes lighter. In volume 3, Chapter IX, for example, she provides a detailed description of the Turkish tomb at Buda, recounting the story of the Father of Roses, that of Gül Baba, and then she offers a detailed and beautiful description of the Königs-Bad, or King's Bath, a description that would fit any nowadays tourist guide book (vol. 3. 1840, 135).

In many chapters in which she approaches political and social issues, such as the condition of the Hungarian peasantry, the different political parties, various political developments and struggles of the nation to progress, she seems to be very careful when fashioning her on-page persona and, accordingly, plays down the extent of her expertise. In the chapter on the political and social situation of the Magyar peasantry, she claims that "I have only just been enabled, through the kindness of a friend, on whose testimony the most perfect reliance can be placed, from his long and practical knowledge of the subject, to understand and appreciate the actual position of the Magyar peasant" (vol. 3. 1840, 195).

In the third volume, she describes her visit to the hospital of St Roch, thus fulfilling a typical social role of a truly genteel woman (visiting healthcare institutions, being concerned about the well-being of sick and poor children, etc.), and later she also provides an extensive description of the Convent of the English Ladies, founded by Maria Theresa, which, in fact, was "a scholastic establishment that Maria Theresa patronized […] and the fact suffced to fill their classes, and consequently to hurry on the denationalization of the Hungarian ladies" (vol. 3. 1840, 62).

On another occasion, her writing style mixes detailed descriptions of places and buildings with fictional elements such as retelling certain legends and fairy tales. While providing the description of the Fortress in Chapter X (vol. 3), she retells a famous Hungarian folk tale, that of the Vasfogú Bába, and, at this point, the travelogue turns into a work of fiction, making use of every narrative convention used in fairy tales: opening-closing patterns, dialogues, good and evil characters, and so on. Such inserted stories obviously served entertaining purposes while providing a glimpse into the couleur locale. "There was one old woman, however, known in the neighbourhood by the name of the Vas Fogú Baba, or the Iron-Toothed, whom neither gold nor threats could prevail upon to sell her little garden, for therein grew the iron-herb through whose strange virtue she possessed the power of opening all locks, and loosening alike bolts and fetters" (vol 3. 1840, 147).

She tells another local legend in a similar manner: on another occasion, she goes on a short trip near Buda, spending a day in the lovely mountains called the Fair Shepherdess, or Szép Juhászné, a name that evokes a story of King Mathias Corvinus, who fell in love with a beautiful shepherdess. The description of the trip makes use of the literary devices of the picturesque:

> Our route lay amid vine-covered hills, where the ripe fruit was blushing in gold and amethyst […] Their [the youth's] fancies are wandering among the roses of the present – their spirits dance on the zephyrs, and their glad voices answer to the melody of the forest-leaves. […] On the very crest of the height we found the fountain; a sparkling spring, looking like liquid

diamonds in the hollow of the dark stone into which it flows. (vol. 3. 1840, 171, 175–176)

Such romantic descriptions dominate the entire chapter, leaving space for entertaining storytelling. In her careful balancing between "masculine" writing, that of offering political and economic information, and "feminine" storytelling, she oftentimes uses the narrative method of addressing the reader directly, apologizing for the supposedly less exciting or trivial parts of her narrative, while promising to offer an even more exciting story in the forthcoming chapters, as in the case of Chapter XX, vol. 3, where she visits Visegrád and retells the bloodiest story of Hungarian history, that of Klára Zách: "I have forborne to weary the reader with an account of our occasional excursions in the neighborhood of the capital, where there was no remarkable feature to render them matter of general interest; but it is impossible so to pass over our pilgrimage to Vissegrád, the ruined stronghold of Magyar luxury, and regal vengeance" (vol. 3. 1840, 318).

Another typical "feminine" tendency in travel writing would be a detailed description of plants, almost at the level of botanical science (a domain acceptable for both male and female travel writers in the nineteenth century). Pardoe, on her part, offers such typical description especially in those chapters in which she recounts her visits to the estates of the Hungarian elite, houses that were famous for their huge gardens, usually designed after the pattern of typical English gardens, or hosting rare, exotic plants, as in the case of Prince Eszterházy's estate in Eisenstadt. Sketches of such gardens and landscapes reminded the readers of sceneries in Great Britain that were always associated with genteel lifestyle. As Domotor argues, "Pardoe's eyes were trained to spot park-like environments, areas demarcating the social class in a position to occupy land for leisure and not simply for labor" (2014, 96).

The Image of the Magyars in the Eyes of an Englishwoman

According to Joep Leerssen, the "nineteenth century becomes the heyday of national thought, affecting not only political developments (the rise of nationalism and of national movements) but also the field of cultural production" (2007b, 73), and, as contrasted with the eighteenth century, "the nineteenth [century] will always define national identity on the basis of international difference" (2007b, 73). Manfred Beller argues that "when people from various countries and cultures meet each other, real experience and mental images compete. Earlier meetings with others shape our pre-expectations – which in turn predetermine further meetings with other Others" (2007, 7). He also states that "with collectives, which

we subsume into one concept as groups, peoples or races, these emerge in the formulaic form of stereotypes" (2007, 7). Leerssen adds that in the representation of nationalities subjectivity is at play, as the one represented is always discussed in the context of the representing text/discourse. Therefore, there is always a particular dynamic between "those images that characterize the Other (*hetero-images*) and those which characterize one's own, domestic identity (*self-images* or *auto-images*)" (2007a, 27).

In Pardoe's travel writing, the hetero-images of the people of Hungary can be close to, or far from, the traveller's auto-image based on many reasons: geographical, political, cultural, as well as economic factors. Whenever she encounters civilized, Western-oriented Hungarian middle-class people or members of the Hungarian nobility, hetero-images become very close to the traveller's self-image, that is, her own British national standards. When she visits the country's peripheries and encounters "less civilized" nationalities, the tone of the travelogue becomes judgmental and, sometimes, patronizing.

In her praising of Hungarians, Pardoe highlights the cultural as well as political similarities between the British and the Hungarian nations, appreciates the spirit of reform and progress that pervaded the contemporary Hungarian society, and writes extensively on the possible economic relations between the two countries. "There is no country in Europe with which the trading interests of England might be so closely and profitably united" (vol. 3. 1840, 313), she claims, adding that "the increase of traffic on the Danube is slowly but surely working out the prosperity of Hungary" (vol. 3. 1840, 313).

On many occasions, she praises the high level of literacy among the Hungarian elite and the great improvements in the fields of literature and journalism: "I have already given a sufficiently favourable idea of the periodical press of Hungary to convince my readers that there is no mental lethargy at present in the country" (vol. 3. 1840, 89), and about the practice of bookbinding she claims that it is of great quality, and "the whole put together in a style which would not disgrace a first-rate London bookseller" (vol. 3. 1840, 90). She is also extremely enthusiastic about the social and cultural life at Budapest. In vol. 3, Chapter XXI, she describes the ball organized by the medical students, and she claims that "there is not probably a more handsomely decorated room in Europe than the great saloon of the Redoute at Pesth" (1840, 341). Very often, she compares Hungarian buildings and institutions to English ones, thus measuring everything against her own cultural standards. About the architecture in Budapest she speaks with great enthusiasm: "I confess that I love the light and fairy-like effect produced by this long line of graceful buildings when the sunshine rests upon them, and their majestic shadows fall far across the river" (vol. 3. 1840, 1–2). She goes on and praises the Casino, which, in its interior design, is as perfect "as any club in Europe" (vol. 3. 1840, 2) thanks to Count István Széchenyi, and

in the Library "Englishmen will find the Quarterly, Edinburgh, and Westminster Reviews [...] and all the best Continental journals" (vol. 3. 1840, 2). Moreover, she enthusiastically enumerates the similarities between the English and the Hungarian legislative systems. She is impressed by the Hungarian Diet, which has "endured for seven centuries, having been instituted only five years later than the Parliament of England. [...] It is composed, as with us, of an Upper and Lower Chamber (or, as they are here designated, "Tables")" (vol. 1. 1840, 218). From the previously mentioned Hungarian–British comparisons, one can easily deduce Pardoe's political standpoint: she is sympathizing with the liberal politicians, urging reforms, especially in terms of freedom from the Austrian hegemony.

Pardoe praises the progressive spirit of the Hungarians and expresses her passionate concern for their well-being, yet, on many occasions, she engages in the description of the Magyar national character in ways that can be seen as stepping into a colonialist attitude. Her narrative is abundant in descriptions that contrast Hungarian buildings, ethnic groups, landscapes, and cultural habits with British standards. Pardoe's perspective on Hungary could be interpreted with the term coined by Andrew Hammond, that of "imagined colonialism" (2006, 89), that is, a certain imperial viewpoint on local inhabitants and landscapes that stems from the traveller's specifically British cultural background and national ideals. British travellers in the nineteenth century, according to Hammond, often look at the image of the "Other" in non-colonial territories, more specifically in the Balkans, with a sense of superiority, "signifying the possibility and propriety of national domination" (2006, 89). While in Pardoe's text one can find many instances of such sense of national and cultural superiority, especially when comparing British and Hungarian cultural standards, there are also many occasions when the perspective of the "imagined colonialism" is suspended, and instead of displaying a narrative position of power and dominance, Pardoe shows a genuine concern for the Hungarian nation worthy of improvement and integration.

According to Sara Mills, female travel writers were often caught between the demands of the discourse of femininity and of imperialism, and such demands brought about various distinctive narrative elements of their travelogues. "The discourses of colonialism demand action and intrepid, fearless behaviour from the narrator, yet the discourses of femininity demand passivity from the narrator and a concern with relationships" (Mills 1991, 21–22). Such demands are often challenged and negotiated in Pardoe's text: one can see the female narrator as an adventurer, a fearless traveller, sometimes being on par with "the bold adventuring hero of male travel texts" (Mills 1991, 22), suspending the discourse of femininity in various situations that might have been considered improper for a woman (examples here include the visits to the jail in Pest in vol. 2, 78–89 or to the mine in Schemnitz in vol. 1, 194).

Moreover, in Pardoe's narrative, one can find several passages that describe the Hungarian nation in a patronizing way. Interestingly, when formulating her opinion on the characteristics of national identity, Pardoe mentions the question of industry and economy, as well as adherence to English standards as a measure of civilization. Also, when discussing the backwardness of the nation and the less civilized conditions of the country, she comes to the conclusion that these are not only caused by the country's old-fashioned laws, that is, the remnants of the old feudal system, but also by the domineering Habsburg rule and the historical traumas the nation had to endure. She compares Hungary to a Phoenix bird, since Hungarians have a passionate spirit, which is "rapidly renewing a strong and stalwart existence from the ashes of the past" (vol. 1, 156).

About the estates of the Hungarian elite, she talks with great admiration, mentioning the "principles of English farming brought into profitable action, under the persevering and intelligent surveillance of the proprietor" (vol. 3. 1840, 235). But what characterizes Hungary, according to Pardoe, is a general condition of mediocrity, since it has almost no external commerce, the roads are bad, and the export taxes on the frontier are extremely high. "[T]he demand for home-consumption is that of a needy and a comparatively uncivilized nation, demanding necessities, rather than luxuries" (vol. 3. 1840, 234). Summing up the state of rural economy of the country, she claims that Hungary "requires only an increase of external commerce and encouragement to become one of the gardens of the world" (vol. 3. 1840, 232). Such observation demonstrates a certain imperial perspective, but also a patronizing, almost motherly attitude towards a nation that she considered to be at its infancy, both economically and culturally. Domotor claims that women travellers often embraced a certain motherly attitude, which in the case of Pardoe seems to be a "motherly concern for the moral development of a […] country" (2014, 93).

A cultural shock can be observed in the chapter, when Pardoe visits the hospital of St Roch, and the Director shows her a famous painting, an original Guido. Pardoe, a well-educated upper-class woman, who had already visited the most important art galleries of the world, cannot help but smile at the infantile enthusiasm of the Director.

> His excitement and agitation were beyond description – he seized us alternately by the shoulders to place us in the most advantageous positions for distinguishing the peculiar beauties of the painting; he threw himself into attitudes of admiration and delight more suited to seventeen than to seventy – he wiped the dew from his forehead – he vibrated in every nerve. (vol. 3. 1840, 21)

In this case, Pardoe's attitude of superiority led to a misreading of various social codes, because she did not register the fact that the Director was, in fact, demonstrating his social refinement as much as his culture by this gesture.

While discussing the national characteristics of the locals (against British national standards), Pardoe's travelogue often mentions the issue of being lazy or industrious as the defining feature of a certain ethnic group. Pardoe refers to Hungary as a multi-ethnic country and offers extensive analysis of various ethnic groups, for example, the Gypsies, the Slavonic and the German population, as well as the Wallachians. About the Wallachians, she says that they "are the least civilized of progressive inhabitants of Hungary […] all their clothes except their hats and sandals are made by their women, who are proverbially industrious" (vol. 3. 1840, 255).

About the Gypsies, she claims that they are so different from the other inhabitants of the country as if they were an entirely different race. "The Zigeuner of Hungary are a much darker race, being little removed from black" (vol. 1. 1840, 167). Apart from their physical appearance, what stuns Pardoe the most is their laziness at work and aimless wandering across the land. Moreover, their extremely poor living conditions shock her: "the extremity of the filth amid which they live, wither them very soon, and in old age they are hideous and disgusting. […] They exist in a sort of social commonwealth, not recognizing marriage either as a sacrament or as a ceremony […] the children wear no clothes until the age of ten or twelve years; and resemble imps rather than human beings" (vol. 1. 1840, 168).

It is precisely this barbaric, nomadic lifestyle, the lack of education and civilized way of living that shocks the English genteel woman. According to Domotor, the "absence of home-like building displeased respectable English women for whom the house represented an essential element of their identity" (2014, 95). Certainly, such stereotypical images stem from the social and cultural background of the traveller. According to Mills, women "may travel outside the home but they display all the conventional characteristics of women within the home" (1991, 34). And, as Zsuzsa Ajtony correctly points out, the development of stereotypes can be traced back to the so-called attitude, which appears in the form of one's value judgement against his/her own or other cultures (2011, 20).

Pardoe criticized the otherness of the Gypsies not only against her own national values but also against Hungarian standards, describing Hungarians as a respectable nation, ready for emancipation and moral progress. She notes that the Magyars, "instead of spreading themselves over many lands, are condensed and isolated as a people" (vol. 3. 1840, 34) and also mentions that there is a great conflict and contempt between Slavic nations and Hungarians, and even if some Slavs have learned a few Hungarian words, "no Hungarian will ever suffer himself to utter a sentence in Sclavaque" (vol. 3. 1840, 34). Judit Kádár claims that "one reason why Miss Pardoe understood the prejudices harbored by the

Magyars against the Slavs is that she herself shared their misgivings in that it could be basically attributed to fear of a possible Russian expansion" (1990, 15). Elsewhere, Pardoe mentions that Hungarians do not even consider Slovaks as humans, and they use a common proverb: "A tót nem ember! – the Sclave is not a Man!" (vol. 2. 1840, 273). With such descriptions, Pardoe is one of the first travellers who noted the emerging hostilities and mutual stereotyping among the nations of Hungary. Moreover, she also mentions how the Germans express their hatred towards the Magyars: "The German applies to the Hungarian the term betyár, or groom, to imply his inferiority in civilization" (vol. 2. 1840, 273).

As for Hungarians and their language, she expresses a deep appreciation and claims that it is "essential to a full development of the national character, its memories, and its resources" and that "the productions of the Hungarian writers are now beginning to be appreciated by the German public, and are consequently almost universally translated into that language" (vol. 3. 1840, 35).

All in all, Pardoe's approach to Hungary and the Hungarians is evident: apart from merely sympathizing with the nation, she provides the image of an independent state, a stronghold of liberty, as well as a nation who "dared, despite the intrigues of the cabinets, and the threats of power, to assert their rights" (vol. 1. 1840, 218). As for dealing with the growing contempt and conflict between the various nations of Hungary, Pardoe's solution would be the nationalization of non-Hungarians via extending the use of Hungarian language, this being one of the greatest efforts of the Diet of 1939–40, as Pardoe asserts: "to develop nationality and to diminish foreign influence" (vol. 2. 1840, 261–262). Kádár rightly concludes that Pardoe argued for Magyarization "by evoking Russia's expansionist policy not only in terms of Hungary, but also with a view to the Habsburg Empire. She was convinced that the stability of the empire could only be maintained by a unified Hungary of Magyars and Magyarized Slavs and Germans" (1990, 15).

Conclusions

All in all, *The City of the Magyar* was amongst the first travelogues that offered a positive image of Hungarians for the British public. Pardoe's travel account successfully combined the male and female conventions of the time, thus creating a text through which she negotiated the gender norms of her age by writing about issues that belonged to the public sphere and that might have seemed unladylike for a respectable genteel woman. Besides constantly formulating her observations on Hungarian cultural and social issues as contrasted with her British national background and ideals, she also adopted a certain colonialist perspective, a somewhat patronizing tone, yet stressing her good intentions, interest, and care for a nation she considered in a state of great progress and reform.

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Wilhelmina Wittigschlager's Minna: The Portrait of a Dazzling Jewish Feminist, Anarchist, and Nihilist

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Abstract. Wilhelmina Wittigschlager's novel, *Minna: Wife of the Young Rabbi*, published in 1905, serves as a case in point for characterizing a young audacious Jewish female protagonist who, against all odds, by breaking societal conventions and exercising a strong will and remarkable determination, attains individual freedom and struggles for political and social justice. This study has yielded some important insights regarding the key role Minna's multiple racial, religious, and national identities play in the construction of her fictional self. By examining the cultural, historical, and societal influences upon Wittigschlager, as she was in the process of writing the novel, this paper aims at showing how the fictional portrayal of a Jewish defiant female protagonist is interlaced with the factual lifestyles, culture, and representations of some actual contemporary female rebels such as Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman, and Hesya Gelfman. Minna's Jewishness serves as the central point of her characterization, while the exploration of the pertinent socio-historical, cultural, political, and economic aspects outlines the environment in which her character was conceived.

Keywords: Jewish female revolutionaries, nihilism, anarchism, feminism, social justice

> "Anarchism stands for the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion and liberation of the human body from the coercion of property, liberation from the shackles and restraint of government. It stands for a social order based on the free grouping of individuals." (Goldman 1910, 68)

A popular 2020 Netflix mini-series, *Unorthodox*, inspired by Deborah Feldman's 2012 autobiographical novel, *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots*, documents a young Satmar Hasidic woman's course of defiance of the values and norms that dominate this fully segregated and fanatical Orthodox

community.[1] James Poniewozik, in his review of the series, comments that "it is, unambiguously, the story of a woman's escape from a society that she finds suffocating and unsustaining" (2020, n. p.). In 1905, Wilhelmina Wittigschlager[2] published her only autobiographical novel, *Minna: Wife of the Young Rabbi*. The novel, among many other themes, depicts a Jewish girl, aged thirteen, who (similarly to the seventeen-year-old Esty, the protagonist of *Unorthodox*) is compelled to marry a Yeshiva student whom she has not encountered prior to the marriage ceremony. In both novels, soon after the marriage takes place, the young female protagonist leaves her husband and the repressive Jewish community and escapes overseas, where in spite of her physical freedom, she finds herself in an emotional and spiritual limbo, trapped between two worlds. In both novels, the Jewish community is depicted as narrow-minded, intolerant, and harshly abusive towards its disfellowshipped members. Moreover, both feature a young protagonist who goes through a complicated acculturation process and eventually relatively successfully, though at times gruellingly, incorporates the values, beliefs, language, and mores of her new country.

While Esty escapes to Germany aiming to pursue a musical career, Minna slaves in Hamburg for years as a housemaid and then in London as a seamstress and an actress. Upon arriving to the United States, "the Land of the Free" (Wittigschlager 1905, 99), she toils again as a seamstress and later works as a midwife in a New York City hospital. Next, Minna moves to Chicago, where she attends an evening medical college, gets a degree, and becomes a successful doctor. Wittigschlager's novel, though mixing several literary genres (sentimental, sensation first-person confessional memoir, historical novel, as well as Bildungsroman and a "ghetto story"), at times teetering on the edge of soapy melodrama and featuring some incredible coincidences and plot twists, is an extraordinarily unique document that does not merely record a rather early feminist trial but delves into a universal human struggle to achieve personal freedom, first from the despotic frame of a repressive religious community and its patriarchal pressures, then when

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1   The Satmar Movement was established by Yo'el Teitelbaum (1887–1979). "In 1944, he escaped the Germans in the 'Zionist' rescue train […] reaching Switzerland and going from there to Palestine. After a brief stay, he left for the United States, where he reestablished his court, making it the largest Hasidic community in existence after the Holocaust" (Assaf 2010, 2).

2   There is almost no biographical information about Wilhelmina Wittigschlager. The only records I found on the Internet site of The Ellis Island Foundation, Inc. state that she was born in 1869, had both a German and a Russian passport, and entered the United States by ship in 1921 and 1924. *https://heritage.statueofliberty.org/passenger* (Last accessed 30 July 2021). *Minna: Wife of the Young Rabbi* (1905) is Wittigschlager's only published novel. I assume that the book was quite popular, as it has been reprinted nine times since its publication. In 1925, Wittigschlager published a book of essays, *Emanuel: The Kiss of the Rose: The Philosophy, Wisdom and Power in Psychology, with the Key to the Eternal Shrine*, which has not been republished since. Interestingly, there are two patents on her name (a hatpin, registered on 26 April 1904 and an astronomical toy, registered on 8 March 1940).

disputing the ills of America's pitiless capitalism, and, finally, when challenging the oppressive Tsarist rule in Russia.

This paper intends to examine a nineteenth-century female protagonist's convoluted path from repression by tyrannical forces towards attainment of relative personal liberation and coherent self, achieved mainly thanks to her strong character, grittiness, high moral values, and intellectual growth. Moreover, it investigates, through feminist and cultural lenses, important historical events and political movements in Russia, Britain, and America that have been interpreted and commemorated by Wittigschlager in her autobiographical memoir, taking place during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The paper shows how Wittigschlager's novel echoes various actual occurrences such as women's participation in the Chicago anarchist movement, as well as their dominant role in the Russian nihilist movement during the revolt against the Tsarist regime, which eventually results in Tsar Alexander II's assassination in 1881. In addition, the paper demonstrates how the literary image of a Jewish female rebellious protagonist is interwoven with the factual lifestyles, culture, and representations of some actual contemporary female rebels such as Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman, and Hesya Gelfman. Thereby, this study explores the reciprocal interaction between art, politics, and culture, as Minna's fictional construct might have been modelled after real female rebels of the period.

The novel starts with Minna's father's announcement that she is about to marry a Yeshiva student whom she has never met. Minna, an illiterate girl of thirteen, is constantly verbally abused and beaten by her adoptive parents, whom until the age of thirteen she considers as biological ones. For her, the news of her hasty and non-consensual betrothal is even harsher than the parents' abuse. Minna is devastated when hearing the stark predicament: "Perspiration covered my forehead and then again I was shivering cold. All that that woman who called herself my mother had said, pierced me through and through" (Wittigschlager 1905, 6), she cries out. Then, a lengthy description of the mores of the Jewish community follows, mainly centred on the debased physical and moral state of the Yeshiva students, who are

> a lazy, worthless set: they do not care to learn a trade, as they have no desire to work. They prefer to lead an idle life. They never study, but lie about the beishamedres [Yeshiva] willing to be dirty, filthy and hungry so long as they do not have to work. They are sharp, for when they see a citizen enter the beishamedres, they open a prayer-book, droop their heads, wrinkle their foreheads, and look like the hardest-working students present. (Wittigschlager 1905, 15–16)

Wittigschlager does not spare her criticism from the hypocrite and morally depraved Jewish community whose members take bribe (the Yeshiva's caretakers),

cheat brides and grooms and their respective families (matchmakers), fabricate documents and official records to evade military service, and abuse children and community members who are old, weak, or unprotected. The ruthless and sadistic behaviour is mostly shocking among the women who during a bride's preparation ceremony for her wedding night insult and molest her. The female bath attendant brutally cuts the bride's finger- and toenails, and "being in a hurry, she sometimes cuts so deeply that the poor girl has a sore toe or ringer to nurse for weeks after the wedding" (Wittigschlager 1905, 32). The attendant also spanks the bride and

> as a general joke everybody [all women present at the bride's preparation] joins in spanking the bride, so there is usually a pretty lively time. Her torture is further increased by all manner of vulgar jokes, perpetrated at the bride's expense. Every woman asks her embarrassing questions and demands a reply; and if the poor bewildered girl refuses to answer, she is badgered all the more. (Wittigschlager 1905, 32)

Meanwhile, Minna accidently discovers that she is the daughter of a Christian nobleman and a Jewish mother, who was cruelly forced to give her up for adoption. She decides to escape the community a day after her wedding night and searches for her true parents. Helped by a friend, Minna moves to Hamburg, Germany, where she discovers that she is pregnant. After giving birth to a boy and toiling as a servant for several years, the local authorities discover that a Jewish woman illegally resides in Germany, contrary to German laws, which do not allow Jews to settle down. Minna is deported to England, where she works as a seamstress until her adoptive parents (who, unbeknown to her, moved to England while she lived in Germany) find her and soil her reputation. Consequently, after a short attempt of being an actress in a local Jewish theatre, Minna has no choice but to move out since the adoptive parents tarnish her name wherever she goes. Looking for a chance to escape, Minna encounters a lady who promises to take the former with several other young women to America where they will seemingly be trained as midwives. On the ship to America, Minna accidently discovers that she and her fellows have fallen victim to a scam, and they are about to be employed as prostitutes. Minna, a true fighter and a feminist, protects herself and her mates by revealing the ploy to the ship's captain, hence saving the young women from bondage. Upon arriving to New York, she works as a seamstress and later enrols to a college and becomes a midwife. Minna's friend and former doctor, who delivered her son back in Germany, helps her along the way, encourages her to move to Chicago and study medicine. Eventually, Minna finishes her training and becomes a surgeon.[3]

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3   According to Eve Fine, "In nineteenth-century Chicago, a medical degree was not always needed to practice medicine. No licensing laws yet governed medical practice, and doctors

The incredible events and the far-fetched coincidences, typical to sensation novels, though at times exaggerated, do not mar the novel's impact when presenting a realistic account of the Russian-Jewish community's vileness, the debased status of women, and the hardships one has to overcome to achieve moral development and self-sufficiency. Although some gaps in the narrative, trivial incidents in the text, its fractured development, and breaks between events may conceal the hidden occurrences and mirror the difficulties of Minna's passage to maturity and self-reliance, the protagonist still attains the readers' approval for successfully pulling herself out from a lowly stance. Garrison justly argues that "the sensation novel inspired a new form of reading, one that depended first on the physical effects it inspired in the reader and secondly on the psychological effects that occurred as a result of this form of reading" (Garrison 2010, xii).

Hence, the brutal and harsh scenes coupled with Wittigschlager's ironic comments, often peppered by colourful Yiddish vocabulary (Minna's native tongue), add to the emotional effect on the reader. Choosing the first-person confessional genre, though time and again reputed as being too sensational and tabloidish, in this case adds to the story's credibility. "The confessional form," according to David M. Earle and Georgia Clarkson Smith, "denies the primacy of literary genius and privileged authorship, and as such empowers liminal voices" (Earle and Smith 2013, 35). As such, it addresses largely working-class audience, mainly urban one, who can empathize with new American immigrants, labourers (Minna's fellow seamstresses and manual labourers), and ethnic and gendered minorities.

Minna's tale, especially its first part (consisting of five long chapters), may also be considered as one belonging to the then popular genre of "ghetto stories," but also differing from it. Like many "ghetto stories,"[4] Wittigschlager describes the Jews' dreary existence and offers minute details about their daily routine and traditions. Appropriating this genre allowed Wittigschlager to reveal, among other themes, such as Russian anti-Semitism and harsh physical and economic conditions Jews were subjected to, the roots of patriarchal oppression of women

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commonly learned medicine by apprenticeship or by reading medical texts […] except for one woman, Mary Harris Thompson, who received her second medical degree from the Chicago Medical College in 1870, women could enroll but could not graduate from medical school in the nineteenth century. In 1871, the newly established Woman's Hospital Medical College, later renamed the Chicago Woman's Medical College, and then the Northwestern University Woman's Medical School, provided Chicago women with access to formal medical education" (2005, n. p.). Most female college students, similarly to Minna, were employed in factories or shops during the day and studied medicine in the evenings.

4   Kenneth H. Ober asserts that the "ghetto story seems at first glance rather stereotyped and uniform, but a close examination of the entire body of this literature reveals a great variety. A wide range of social and religious problems within the ghetto are openly dealt with; while persecution by the surrounding Christian populace is a presence constantly hovering menacingly in the background of most of the stories, it rarely plays a central role in the plots" (Ober 2000, 72).

within the Jewish community. Moreover, the novel often emphasizes the difference between the ruthless anti-Semitism that Jews were put through in Europe and the relatively liberal atmosphere they benefited from in their adoptive land, America. Nevertheless, although anti-Semitic feelings are not featured in the tale as a threatening determinant in America, the strong capitalistic forces that are at play are not less intimidating and oppressive to both Jews and non-Jews.

The novel, to some extent, also complies with the genre of a female Bildungsroman,[5] especially as it addresses Minna's belief in constructing a coherent self, faith in the possibility of moral growth, intellectual advance and spiritual development. Pin-chia Feng asserts that such novels show "a linear progression toward knowledge and social integration, and an upward movement toward spiritual fulfillment" (Feng 1998, 2). While some early "coming-of-age" novels ordained female protagonists' compliance with anguish and cruelty, as an appropriate means of training a young girl to face hardships (Pratt et al. 1981, 13–14), Minna's position is different, since at no stage in the novel she abides by strict societal norms.

Another characteristic trait of the Bildungsroman genre is that its male or female protagonist, as in Minna's instance, is described as a provincial, and thus, on occasion, a naïve person. Minna's moving to a big city in a far-off country detaches her from the evil but still a familiar small Russian shtetl's setting and compels her to deal with new challenges in an alienated and menacing setting. Her pursuit is even further aggravated as the foreign urban setting may be seen in this case as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it frees Minna from the limits of her hometown (where she was both physically and emotionally abused); on the other hand, it puts her at risk – while in Hamburg, London, and New York – of dealing with harsh financial, moral, and cultural challenges, especially as a single fourteen-year-old mother who needs to provide for her newly born son. Later, when she is back to Russia, searching for her biological parents, Minna has to struggle against the malevolent forces at the scene of crime (a place where she was kidnapped from her mother and given for adoption). If the new urban and seemingly more progressive setting is presumed to set her free from the oppressive Jewish community's bullying, it is not always the case. As an unwedded mother, a Jewess, and a woman without family or friends, Minna becomes an easy prey

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5   The term "female Bildungsroman" was first used by feminist critics in the 1970s. Annis Pratt in *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (1981) classifies the "female Bildungsroman" and discerns it from its male counterpart. Feminist critics maintain that the initial epitome of a Bildungsroman that portrays a male hero as an individual who matures and evolves to become a better and self-sufficient person is wrong, and thus the genre should also consider female protagonists. In reply to the disregard of female heroines as Bildungsroman's protagonists, Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland published *The Voyage in: Fictions of Female Development* (1983), a collection of articles on the female "novel of emergence." Such an outlook helps to examine the ways in which nineteenth- and twentieth-century female writers depict the suppression of female personal and artistic freedom by the governing patriarchal rule.

for cheaters and charlatans, such as in the case of a woman who promises the naïve Minna a midwife training in New York City, pays for the latter's travel but soon turns out to be a brothel keeper, gathering several young and desperate women, including Minna, and locking them on a ship.

Several critics point at another underlying feature of the Bildungsroman novel – namely, in the case when the young hero's or heroine's misdeeds or carelessness are later amended and eventually lead to his/her re-education and redemption. In Minna's case, it is not true, as the obstacles are not posed by her own transgression. On the contrary, they are set by the outer world (mainly by the patriarchal Jewish community), by an abusive family, and/or by an anti-Semitic Russian and German society. For Franco Moretti, a Bildungsroman protagonist learns to socialize and to live with the outer world's conflicts and contradictions and even manages to turn them into a tool for survival (2000, 10). This is exactly Minna's way to achieve her goals; by closely observing every new setting she arrives at, by adapting herself to new societal mores (in Germany, England, and America), by never complaining of the hardships and the hostility she often faces, Minna manages first to survive and later to thrive fairly well in her new world.

Using a first-person autobiographical memoir allows Wittigschlager to resort to excessive dramatization, which often characterizes women's autobiographical genres and the sensation novel genre. For Marlene Kadar, life writing is a self-probing genre, and as such it corresponds well with women's contemplations of their condition.

> The most broadened version of the term "life writing" as a specific genre is the one often celebrated by feminist literary critics concerned with the proliferation, authorization, and recuperation of autobiographical writing, especially in recent decades. Here, life writing is the subject of "gynocritics," a literature that has been identified according to its subject matter – women's texts, personal narratives […] It is a kind of writing about the "self" or the "individual" that favours autobiography, but includes letters, diaries, journals, and (even) biography (Kadar 1992, 5).

Such contemplations, quite unusual for a very young and, at the time, illiterate girl, drive Minna towards action. Moreover, after attaining personal liberation, Minna progresses fast to the social realm, making quite a remarkable movement from inner development to outer social participation. Despite being somewhat mechanical and even overdramatic, the narrative is fairly effective since it immerses in actual experience. The first-person viewpoint, in addition to the realism of the genre, promotes subjective identification and, hence, an active reading.

Moreover, it should be noted that the novel was not just meant to entertain the audience. Probably, in an attempt to promote her newly-published novel, but

surely also wishing to voice her protest against the oppression of Russian Jews, and thereby enlist American Jews to act against it, Wilhelmina Wittigschlager gave a lecture about the former's suffering. The anonymous writer of a short article, published in *The Pittsburgh Press Newspaper* on 26 January 1906, states that:

> Wilhelmina Wittigschlager, author of *Minna: Wife of the Young Rabbi*, held her audience spellbound when […] she talked to a gathering of patriotic societies and women's clubs on Russian life and conditions. Much of this is told in her book; and if she has written of it, the lecture must have been both pleasurable and profitable for her listeners. Madame Wittigschlager has spent many years in Russia studying the life of both Jews and peasants and ought to know whereof she speaks and writes.[6]

This interesting piece shows how Wittigschlager uses her novel to propagate political and communal change. Similarly to her protagonist, who acts against the injustice enacted towards oppressed workers in Chicago and against Russia's oppressors who torment peasants and working class, Wittigschlager uses the public stage to advance humane, patriotic, and national goals. The novel is mobilized or, to be more precise, feels mobilized to give prescriptions of what should be done to enlist public opinion and action against social and economic inequality.

Minna's involvement in the Chicago anarchist movement is detailed in great length in the novel and serves as a precursor to her much more risky association with the anarchists in Russia. Minna is invited by her friend, Ella, to attend one of the meetings of a labour organization. "The first one [meeting] was a shock," Minna confesses, "but now I wholly sympathize with them even if they are Anarchists" (Wittigschlager 1905, 196). Minna's involvement in the Chicago labour protest movement, which advocated shortening labourers' working hours and increasing their wages (Heberman 2004, 977),[7] is minutely described. The movement that started in the 1870s, with modest protests aimed at instituting an eight-hour workday to provide more rest for workers, as well as to offer additional jobs for the unemployed, became more persistent during the economic slowdown occurring between 1882 and 1886. The uprising eventually led to an anarchist riot, known as "The Haymarket affair" ("The Haymarket massacre"), an aftermath of a bombing that took place at a labour demonstration on 4 May 1886, resulting in the deaths of seven police officers and at least four civilians. Eight anarchist

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6   Untitled article, *The Pittsburgh Press Newspaper*, 26 January 1906, 5.
7   According to Michael Heberman, Chicago workers were employed for more than 60 hours a week and were paid an average of $1.5 a day (Heberman 2004, 971). According to Kemmerer and Wickersham, "the first union to become national in scope, and also to survive a major depression, was the Knights of Labor, founded in 1869. But its growth was slow until the 1880s. Between 1880 and 1885 membership expanded from 28,000 to 100,000, and in 1886 it mushroomed to an estimated 700,000" (Kemmerer and Wickersham 1950, 213).

organizers were convicted in a sham trial, and in the end four were executed by the state, the most famous of whom was Albert Parsons.

Albert's wife, Lucy E. Parsons, the only female leader among the protesters, was a well-spoken revolutionary and the founder of a newspaper, *Freedom*, which addressed labour organizing. The fictional Minna might have been modelled after Lucy E. Parsons.[8] Both are feminists, and both have moved the boundaries of their roles as mothers and working women, as well as ethnic and religious ones (Lucy, a woman of colour and a former slave, and Minna, a Jew and formerly "enslaved" by tyrannical adoptive parents). During one of the anarchists' meetings, Minna decides to give an enthusiastic speech in support of the Russian labourers, in which she supports their Russian comrades. Minna's speech at first seems to subvert the anarchists' cause, as the speaker extols the American labour system, saying that "I've been here long enough to know that you are the best paid workers on earth [...] In Russia, where I come from, the wages you get would make the average worker feel like a prince. You, shoemakers, you get in a week what your fellow workers in Russia get in six months!" (Wittigschlager 1905, 197). Nevertheless, in an ironic twist, after being almost removed from the stage, Minna wins back her audience, turning their attention to the hardships of the Russian workers. In a fervent address, aimed at evoking the unionists' solidarity with their fellow workers, speaking against the latter's abuse, inequality, physical and economic insecurity, and despair, Minna emerges as a true social leader, confident, assertive, and convincing. Speaking about Russian peasants' hardships, Minna eloquently proceeds:

> There (in Russia), they have the government to fight and there is no law with them. They ask for a voice in making the laws and they are beaten and cast into prison! They rise in defense of their rights and are shot down like dogs! They cry for bread and get the knout! Fellow workers, I want your help to assist those people. Help me to help them and I will help you to help yourselves. (Wittigschlager 1905, 196)

As a true Bildungsroman heroine, Minna, a recent immigrant to America, a single mother, a foreigner, a Jew, and, till recently, a lowly seamstress, has finally

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8   Minna's address echoes Lucy Parsons's speech "I am an Anarchist," in which Parsons calls labourers to action, saying "count the myriads starving; count the multiplied thousands who are homeless; number those who work harder than slaves and live on less and have fewer comforts than the meanest slaves [...] They are not objects of charity, they are the victims of the rank injustice that permeates the system of government, and of political economy that holds sway from the Atlantic to the Pacific [...] The constitution says there are certain inalienable rights, among which are a free press, free speech and free assemblage. The citizens of this great land are given by the constitution the right to repel the unlawful invasion of those rights [...] Liberty has been named anarchy. If this verdict is carried out it will be the death knell of America's liberty. You and your children will be slaves" (Parsons 1998, 657–660).

accomplished her private mission. She went through a successful acculturation process, went to university and became a medical doctor. Now she feels powerful enough to help unprivileged workers in her professional capacity of a doctor, as an active participant in workers' insurgence, and as a feminist who promotes women's rights. Ironically, though, we should not forget that the same capitalist system that she and her fellow rebels protest against has allowed her and many other immigrants to gain high education and improved status.[9] Noteworthy, the first part of Minna's speech in which she contrasts America's relatively non-violent treatment of protesters with Russia's brutal tyranny, and which has almost led to her banishment from the stage, turns out to be prophetic. The Haymarket affair has proved that the Russian government's brutality is akin to the American one, as a quiet workers' protest turned into a violent riot, causing the death of eight people and the conviction of eight others despite a lack of evidence against them.

Interestingly, Lucy Parsons's speech "Southern Lynchings," published in 1892 in *Freedom*, a newspaper she founded, responds to and, at the same time, offsets Minna's speech at the anarchists' meeting. Parsons asserts that Americans do not have to travel to Russia to "drop a tear of sympathy over the persecuted Jew. If they tread behind Mason's and Dixon's line, they will encounter such atrocities before which those of Russia, bad as they are, pale into insignificance! [...] Where has justice fled?" (Parsons 2004, 70).

It cannot be verified whether Wittigschlager read or heard Parsons' speech. Nevertheless, the reference to the persecution of Russian Jews and to Russian labourers' destitution attests that these struggles were well known to the American readers, and hence it explains why Minna's address at the meeting was eventually empathized with. On the other hand, Parsons' speech undermines Russian despotism, since, according to her assertion, the atrocities that people of colour endure in America are much graver than those suffered by the Jews and the Russians.

When modelling Minna, in addition to envisioning Lucy Parsons as an ultimate female rebel, Wittigschlager probably had in mind the figure of Emma Goldman,

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9   Interestingly, William M. Feigenbaum (1886–1949), a Jewish statistician, politician, and journalist, who immigrated to America from Belgium and was member of the Socialist Party of America, addresses the same controversy as Wittigschlager does with regard to the costs and benefits of the capitalistic system. In his article "Have We a Country to Defend?" (1917), Feigenbaum maintains that, on the one hand, "the capitalist class owns the nation; hence, it owns everything within the nation; hence, the working class owns nothing within that nation," but, on the other hand, "there are flaws in the reasoning. The poor worker — no matter how poor — HAS a home. It may be a few poor rooms in a tenement. It may be a shack in a mining camp. But he has a home, and the few sticks of furniture that he has purchased with so much sacrifice, the few ornaments, the few dishes, mean more in actual life stuff to him than all the palaces of millionaires, who have homes in every summer and winter resort in the land" (Feigenbaum 1917, 1). The price of capitalism is dear, but without it, Minna could neither receive an opportunity to attain personal freedom and relative equality nor attain professional and economic success.

the most renowned female anarchist at the time. Goldman was born in Kovno, Lithuania, in 1869 to a Jewish family, and after moving to St Petersburg in 1882, the young Emma made contact with radical students who shared revolutionary ideas. Despairing from the prospect of changing Russian reality and picturing of a new reality epitomizing equal opportunity and liberty, Emma and her sister Helena immigrated to the United States in 1885. Goldman, similarly to Minna, was employed as a low-wage seamstress in Rochester, NY, and suffered from poverty and abuse. Her dream for a better and just life was shattered by the dreary realities of working-class life. Goldman understood that life in America could be as restrictive as that she had left behind. Emma Goldman, like Minna, left her husband after a very short and unsatisfactory marriage and moved to New York City to become a revolutionary. She was sentenced to a year in prison in 1893 for a speech at a demonstration of the jobless. After her release, she triumphantly proclaimed that the authorities "can never stop women from talking" (Goldman 1910, 207).

Goldman experienced political repression for several years but avoided arrest until 1917, when she was jailed for eighteen months for speaking out against American soldiers' draft during World War I. In 1917, Emma and her lover, Alexander Berkman, were jailed for revolting against compulsory draft. After spending two years in jail, they were deported back to Russia. Initially sympathetic to the Russian October Revolution, Goldman changed her opinion and condemned the Soviet Union for its brutal despotism. Consequently, Goldman left the Soviet Union and in 1923 published a book about her experiences, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (McKay 2017, 38). The fictitious/semi-biographical account of Minna's life has many parallels with that of Goldman, including their revolutionary spirit, joined by their rebellion against patriarchy. Both women sought justice and invested untiring efforts to improve workers' conditions. Both triumphed over gender restrictions and constructed identities outside marriage. Both were jailed, persecuted, abused, disillusioned, and ultimately set free.

After settling in Chicago, working as a doctor and actively participating in Chicago's labour meetings, Minna decides to go back to Russia and realize her long-term dream, that of finding her biological mother. Helped by a Russian nobleman, Count Karapot, whom she meets in Chicago, Minna arrives to Russia and resides in the Count's castle while the Count sends detectives to trace Minna's parents. Meanwhile, Minna secretly joins a group of Russian anarchists/nihilists. In an overly melodramatic speech, Minna confesses that:

> while I drink at the fountain of Nihilism and find it sweet to my taste. Oh, to do something for humanity! To serve the world as a ministering angel sent to relieve its suffering! Everywhere I go there are thousands in want and only a few in luxury. I see on every hand people downtrodden and oppressed; and Nihilism the only salvation for Russia. To help them I

must help the cause. Up with the good cause, then! Life and liberty for the people! (Wittigschlager 1905, 227)

The narrator, similarly to her protagonist, using a sensational and possibly an ironic undertone, comments being "consumed with the fire of such thoughts, the American Socialist opened her arms with a welcome and took the Nihilists in" (Wittigschlager 1905, 227). The comment is worthy of notice, since mostly throughout the book the narrator sides with Minna's actions and seems to admire her protagonist for her firm determination and lucid judgment. In this case, the text implies that Minna was acting irresponsibly and irrationally, which foreshadows tragic outcomes and perhaps also entails some disapproval. Minna collaborates with a group of revolutionaries and communicates intelligence about the whereabouts of the Russian Tzar, Alexander the II, which eventually leads to the latter's assassination in St Petersburg on 13 March 1881. The ten members of the nihilist group Executive Committee of the Narodnaya Volya ("People's Will") are seized, tried by the Special Tribunal of the Ruling Senate, and sentenced to death by hanging. Minna is also arrested by the police and after a trial is sent to "katorga," a forced labour camp in Siberia, where she slaves as a mining and timber labourer under terribly harsh conditions until her unexpected release a year later by Count Karapot.

The Narodnaya Volya's radical nihilist group that was involved in the Tsar's assassination included seven men and three women – Sophia Perovskaya, a Russian aristocrat, Vera Figner, a descendant of Russian and German nobility, and Hesya Helfman (1855–1882), a young Russian-Jewish revolutionary, whose biography, similarly to Goldman's, echoes that of Minna. Like Minna, Hesya runs from home (a small rural town in Belarus) to the big city, Kiev, at the age of sixteen, supposedly to avoid an arranged marriage. There, Hesya is employed, similarly to Minna (while living in London and New York) in a sewing sweatshop. In 1881, Helfman joins the Narodnaya Volya group, runs a conspiratorial apartment, and is accused of actively participating in the Tsar's assassination. Hesya is sentenced to death, but after her conviction declares that she is in the fourth month of pregnancy. Consequently, her execution is postponed until after childbirth. Helfman remains in custody during pregnancy, and several months after giving birth to a girl dies in jail due to postnatal complications. Her daughter is taken to an orphanage where she dies shortly thereafter.

Helfman has become quite famous at the time, and several important newspapers, such as the Russian *Golos* and *The Times of London,* published numerous articles about her trial and conviction. I speculate that Wittigschlager, due to her frequent trips to Russia and her thorough acquaintance with Russian culture and politics, was well aware of Helfman's heartbreaking fate. Hence, when writing her novel, she might have modelled Minna's story after the life story of

Hesya Helfman or/and of Emma Goldman or combined both accounts within Minna's story. The fact that the three women were Jewish is of importance, though none of them, especially after leaving their small town or shtetl, is an orthodox or an observing Jew. What connects them as Jewish women is certainly their desire to escape arranged marriages at an early age and a strong yearning for a life different from that of their mothers or other women in their respective Jewish communities. For them, receiving education and joining progressive social or political movements are the only means for evading a gloomy predicament.

In *A Price below Rubies*, Naomi Shepherd portrays six remarkable though frequently neglected Jewish female revolutionaries (one of whom is Emma Goldman) who embraced various political directions ranging from social democracy, revolutionary communism to anarchism. Shepherd rightfully affirms that these women are most noteworthy historically as Jewish women, not just because of their involvement in politics but thanks to their "efforts to create a new identity for themselves as women, in defiance of the norms of their own society" (1993, 290). Since they grew up within repressive vicinities that presented little chance for personal and intellectual development, they have to reject their cultural and religious heritage, a rejection that comes with a heavy price. When travelling to Russia in search of her parents, Minna leaves her friends, job, and son behind (the latter under the care of acquaintances). She cannot imagine that her journey will last several years and that she will eventually be sent to labour camps, get sick, recover, and be miraculously rescued by a friend. Similarly, Emma Goldman and Hesya Gelfman sacrificed their familial and marital bonds, their motherhood and, their health, and in Gelfman's case, even her life.

While yearning for an inspiring life-changing existence and looking for intellectual challenges as well as when toiling for collective advancement and advocating progressive ideas, the fictional Minna as well as the factual Hesya and Emma are epitomes of "a new woman" who exercises personal and economic control over her life and fights for radical change. As a Jewish woman, a foreigner, and a female revolutionary, the figure of Minna is the ultimate "Other;" actually, she is a triple "Other." As such, Minna has the leeway and the audacity to break societal conventions, which I speculate that Wilhelmina Wittigschlager, like her protagonist, would like to do as well. The cultural influence of actual Jewish female anarchists and rebels on the literary depiction of a fictional Jewish woman, Minna, and on the literary work produced by a Jewish female creative writer of this period is of importance. Shepherd maintains that defiant women unrelentingly stood for their political beliefs. As "women of ideas they tried to evolve a new, difficult, but more rewarding way to live as a woman" (Shepherd 1993, 290), which made them thoroughly modern and worthy foremothers for today's generation of young Jews.

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The Image of Woman by Three Contemporary Hungarian Women Writers: Réka Mán-Várhegyi, Anita Harag, and Rita Halász

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Abstract. Since the turn of the millennium, the position of women writers in Hungarian literature has changed – they became more and more visible. We can speak of a real and increased interest in women's writing. It is important that this change, which is of inclusive character, relates not only to the reconstruction of the literary past of women writers and the re-evaluation of the literary tradition but also to the interest in contemporary authors and their works. At the same time, the continuation of previous literary achievements of women is emphasized. Following a brief theoretical and historical introduction, the paper offers an analysis of three books written by women writers of the younger generation: *Mágneshegy* (Magnet Hill, 2018) by Réka Mán-Várhegyi, *Évszakhoz képest hűvösebb* (Rather Cool for the Time of the Year, 2019) by Anita Harag, and *Mély levegő* (Deep Breath, 2020) by Rita Halász. The paper explores the image of woman that can be found in the analysed texts, examines the social dimension of these texts as well as the ways in which they correspond with and answer to the discourse on social changes in today's Hungary.

Keywords: Hungarian literature, contemporary literature, women writers, the image of woman, social changes

Introduction

The collapse of the communist system marked a change for women writers in all Central European countries, where for decades only a few women managed to enter literary canon. The 1990s saw expanded literary activity by women – women writers of older generations continued their work with increased interest on the part of readers and critics, but they were also accompanied by the younger generation, where many female authors made their debut. As far as Hungary is concerned, the

following authors should be mentioned here: Magda Szabó, Anna Jókai, Zsuzsa Rakovszky, who continued their work, and Anna T. Szabó, Krisztina Tóth, Virág Erdős, Agáta Gordon, and others, from the debuting generation. At the same time, the first monographs and anthologies on women's writing were published.

Hungarian feminist criticism is often called "belated" (Séllei 2007, 140; Várnagyi 2011, 24–25). Like in all Central European countries, also in Hungary, feminist literary criticism gained importance only after 1989. But in the case of Hungary, we can speak of increased developments only after the turn of the millennium (with works of such authors as Nóra Séllei, Edit Zsadányi, or Györgyi Horváth). This belatedness is even more evident when we compare it with the situation in other countries of the Central European region. When the first translations of Western feminist criticism were published in Hungary, in Poland research using the tools of feminist criticism had already been conducted on a large scale and in a short time several major monographs were published.[1] It is important to remember difficulties that feminist criticism encountered in the region. It was (and still is) entangled in social, historical, and political changes that have taken place in Central Europe, and, therefore, the ideological context is imposed on it on a much larger scale than in the Western world. Feminist criticism is seen by right-wing parties as an alien ideology that threatens the identity and existence of the nation. Moreover, as Judit Kádár points out, not only did feminist criticism arrive in Hungary late, but at the same time there also arrived a critical debate about it (Kádár 2003). This situation meant that feminist criticism as methodology not only had to deal with accusations of political agenda, but it also had no time for the organic development of its own discourse. Another problem was the focus of analysis. As researchers point out, the process of examining women's literary works should not be limited to reconstructing women's literary past and to re-interpreting and re-evaluating the literary tradition. Feminist criticism should also focus on contemporary female authors, which will enable the faster inclusion of women's works in the literary canon and will help to identify continuity in their literary activity. In Hungary, many of the first contributions of feminist criticism focused on foreign (mainly English and American) authors[2] or on re-discovering the past, mainly nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century women writers.[3] As Roguska and Györke point out, contemporary Hungarian women's literature remains under-researched (Roguska 2012, 217; Györke 2020, 235).

With my paper, I would like to contribute to this third aspect of feminist scholarship. I will focus on contemporary women writers. But as many feminist

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1   These monographs were: Janion 1996, Borkowska 1996, Kłosińska 1999, Kraskowska 1999.
2   The following publications should be mentioned: Séllei 1999, 2001; Szalay 2002.
3   The following publications should be mentioned: Fábri 1996, Borgos and Szilágyi 2011, Menyhért 2013.

critics point out, not all books written by women should be considered by definition as feminist or *écriture féminine* (see, for example, Borkowska 1995, 44; Várnagyi 2011, 25; Györke 2020, 238). However, examining the works of female authors who do not identify themselves with feminist criticism, or who do not explicitly thematize it in their works, also brings valuable findings to feminist criticism.

Several recurring thematic groups can be noticed among the numerous works by women in contemporary Hungarian literature. The first consists of different variants of historical novels in which one of the main issues is the question of female identity. The historical novel and its variants have been constantly present in Hungarian literature since Romanticism, but in the 1990s this genre sought to find new ways for representing the past – we can mention here the works of János Háy, Zsolt Láng, László Darvasi, or László Márton. Continuing this historical turn, the twenty-first century novels written by women brought a revival in terms of both aesthetics and language. Moreover, one distinct topic (although not always explicitly expressed) is also present, namely the identity of woman understood as identity constructed by reflection accompanying her existence. Zsuzsa Rakovszky's *A kígyó árnyéka* (The Shadow of the Snake, 2002) should be recognized as a turning point for the works of women writers in Hungary at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Although the novel cannot be considered as a purely feminist work, in a way it follows a path close to the objectives of feminist criticism in terms of both subject-matter and language – it presents a specific female life experience described from women's perspective.[4] The individual perspective and the fate of woman marked by history is also the main theme in other novels by Rakovszky – *A hullócsillag éve* (The Year of the Falling Star, 2005) and *VS* (SV, 2011). Andrea Tompa also places the action of her novels in historical settings. An individual forced to confront a period of history that directly affects people's lives is present in all her novels.

Apart from great historical narratives, contemporary women's prose in Hungary is also characterized by a focus on everyday life, even mundane matters. In this case, the authors rather opt for short narrative forms – short stories and novellas – instead of epic structures. The stories are set in the present or the near past. They show problems of everyday life but at the same time present a multidimensional insight into female subjectivity. Those stories make us feel that it has happened or could happen to us personally; they portray the complexity of human relationships and depict the barrier we have in communicating with others, both on the personal and the social level. They often show claustrophobic environment and entanglement in toxic relationships. We should mention authors like Edina Szvoren or Krisztina Tóth.

Another theme characteristic of contemporary women's texts is the question of female body, carnality, and sexuality. The first step in taking up this subject on a

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4   Rakovszky's predecessors, such as Erzsébet Galgóczi and Alaine Polcz, should not be forgotten.

wider scale was the feminist literary project called *Kitakart Psyché* (Uncovered Psyche) that explored female sexuality and body in two volumes: *Éjszakai Állatkert* (Night-Time Zoo, 2005) and *Szomjas oázis* (Thirsty Oasis, 2007).[5] Of numerous works that deal with this subject, we should mention at least *Inkognitó* (Incognito, 2010) by transgender writer Tibor Noé Kiss. The novel describes the life and coming out of a transgender person in the 1990s Hungary. *Incognito* shows experiences that today's Hungarian society still knows very little about. The issue of LGBT is dominated by superficial images in the mass media and government campaigns. The recent developments of Hungarian authorities further demonize and marginalize this social group.

This brings us to the next group of texts that thematizes many types of border crossings: emotional, sexual, geographical, social. This group will include such works as *Trans* (2006) by Noémi Kiss or *Vonalkód* (Barcode, 2006) by Krisztina Tóth. Yet another important theme is uncovering layers of violence – both physical and social. Many female writers, among them Kriszta Bódis, Virág Erdős, or Agáta Gordon, give voice to the excluded ones contributing to the inclusive quality of contemporary Hungarian literature.

Looking at the contemporary literary scene in Hungary, I have tried to capture common elements in the works of women writers. Furthermore, in all thematic groups we can observe one shared theme, which is the image of woman. Although it is present in many works, I will focus on three of them: *Mágneshegy* (Magnet Hill, 2018) by Réka Mán-Várhegyi, *Évszakhoz képest hűvösebb* (Rather Cool for the Time of the Year, 2019) by Anita Harag, and *Mély levegő* (Deep Breath, 2020) by Rita Halász. The authors belong to the young generation of women writers, and the works analysed are their debut, either as the first novel (Mán-Várhegyi) or as their literary debut in general (Harag and Halász). All three fall into the listed thematic groups – border crossing, focus on everyday life, and violence. All of them have also received in the past years both critical and readers' acclaim.

In Between Worlds – *Mágneshegy* (Magnet Hill) by Réka Mán-Várhegyi

The novel starts with a quote from Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* dedicated to Margaret Cavendish, the seventeenth-century poet, writer, and philosopher. This reference is important because it immediately indicates the theme of the novel – the novel will discuss not only women's writing interests but also the social, cultural, and economic situation of women who (would like to) engage themselves in writing or generally in creative work. Similarly to Woolf, for Mán-Várhegyi, the

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5   The other two volumes covered the relationship between mother and daughter and between father and daughter.

two spaces are strongly correlated – the socio-economic situation of women in a given cultural context has a direct impact on their creative potential. In the novel, women's attempt to break through the glass ceiling is portrayed in both scientific and literary fields, both by well-positioned protagonists and by women from lower social classes. The author admitted in an interview that the reason for choosing the motto was not only her sympathy for feminist literary criticism and Woolf's work. She was intrigued by the comparison of a noble lady to a cucumber, which she felt made Cavendish both a tragic and comic figure and evokes empathy in the reader for this extraordinary woman (Mán-Várhegyi 2018b).

In her eclectically constructed novel, Mán-Várhegyi presents the fates of several women who are very different in terms of age, social position, and life experience. The fates of the individual heroines, who can also be described as different types of women, intertwine and constantly influence each other. Moreover, the plot is placed in the broad context of the social changes of the 1990s and the turn of the century. As a result, we are not dealing with a monolithic image of woman and a totalizing narrative but more with a living mosaic where individual parts, though different, form a single image. The aforementioned dichotomy can be applied to all the female characters – the women in *Magnet Hill* are both tragic and comic figures. They all have something of the Duchess of Cavendish about them.

The first female character is Enikő Böründ, a feminist and sociologist who comes from a well-off Budapest family with academic traditions. The novel's opening scene of a scientific conference seems to bring a clear picture of Enikő – a strong, courageous, modern, and successful woman who fights for equal rights on behalf of the weak. She seems to symbolize the changing position of women in a world ruled by men. However, the closer we get to know her, the more this picture changes. We become aware of the problems she faces, the sense of lack, unfulfilment, uncertainty, the constant fear that she will not be able to prove her worth. We see how she cannot cope with her family relationships, and despite efforts to cut herself off from the past, she repeats the same mistakes. When a friend offers to help her, Enikő comments on her divorce, pregnancy from a fleeting love affair, abandonment of New York for Budapest, and moving back in with her mother as follows: "I have to work through my traumas, my frustrations, my fears, my maladies and everything that is connected to my mother. You know, if I can do that, then finally I can have a clean slate, my writer's block will go away, love and happy future will find me. I'll let you know if things turn out differently" (Mán-Várhegyi 2018a, 150).[6] Underneath these psychological platitudes, however, doubt can be felt as to whether this is possible at all. The ironic tone of these words suggests that Enikő, nevertheless, suspects that there is no chance of a clean slate and things will not work out differently for her. And this is indeed what happens. At the end, we do not see a happy and fulfilled

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6   The translations from Hungarian literature are my own throughout the article.

woman and scientist but a woman who has given up and resigned herself to a fate below her dreams and aspirations.

The character of Enikő has a symbolic dimension also in another perspective – the confrontation of two worlds: a generations-long intellectual family from Budapest and the first-generation intellectuals who managed to escape from a small provincial town. In the novel, on the opposite side to Enikő, there stand both other women (for example, Regina, a sociologist from a provincial university) and men (for instance, Tamás Bogdán, who moved to Budapest from a small town in southern Hungary and with whom Enikő had an affair for some time). As a woman trying to succeed in the world of science, Enikő is seen not by her knowledge or her achievements but by her social background and the fact that she is a woman. She has been called the "flagship whore of the social sciences" (Mán-Várhegyi 2018a, 29) who – after all – could not have achieved anything without getting into bed with professors. This is the opinion of a young sociology student, Levente, a favourite of Tamás Bogdán, which is all the more significant because Levente himself wants to quicken his career by becoming acquainted with his professor. In this world, no man will hear that he owes his career to connections, acquaintances, or romance. However, such a harsh opinion is rooted in the reality of the hierarchical system prevailing in the scientific circles – Enikő was profiting from her origin whether she wanted to or not. The problems Enikő faces with her work (inability to finish her project) also raise the question of whether the life path she has chosen, i.e. a scientific career, was really her own decision or perhaps the pressure of her family and community.

Placing the plot in the academic world of sociologists is of particular importance and makes it necessary to look at the novel also from the perspective of social description. Mán-Várhegyi has a sharp eye and presents her observations in a highly ironic manner. *Magnet Hill* is full of mocking descriptions of academics. It is the social group that should be the one to actively work for social change and should carry the torch of education and progress. Instead, it appears to be the greatest bastion of the old world, maintaining an outdated social model that operates on the basis of hierarchical structure, prejudices, connections, favouritism. It is an environment full of stagnation and complexes in relation to the Western scientific world, trying to make up for decades of backwardness in a few years, but in fact it is closed and unwilling to accept what is new, different, and unknown. The picture of academia – and more broadly of the Hungarian intelligentsia – is extremely critical and indicates that this group actually produces more and more inequality and prejudice. As David Szolláth points out, social theory in *Magnet Hill* resembles the Bourdieuian field, "in which all players share common illusions and imaginings, thus contributing to the maintenance of the system" (Szolláth 2021, 212). Moreover, there is another accusation against this group: the self-centred academia and intelligentsia failed

to recognize the historically important moment of social change. This failure first resulted in the revival of national movements and then in their transformation into nationalist movements rejecting the values of liberal democracy (the theme of militant groups in Békásmegyer). This necessarily led to increasing social conflicts between different social groups.

The other prominent female character is Réka, a sociology student from a poor working-class family living "at the end of the world" in the mythical Békásmegyer, who tries to enter the privileged world of the Budapest intelligentsia. Despite the fact that Enikő and Réka are divided by practically everything, their fates are similar in the end – from dreams and aspirations to resignation and apathy. The character of Réka can also be seen as a symbol of the change that Hungarian society was to undergo with the political transformation of 1989 and the opening up to the West – allowing career opportunities regardless of gender and origin as well as rejection of decades of established social divisions and roles. In the character of Réka, however, the author shows how deeply rooted intersectional discrimination is in Hungary, which takes place on the basis of gender and social class. A talented and ambitious young student, who dreams of breaking out of the backward environment of Békásmegyer, returns to where she came from. She does not manage to establish herself in the salons of the elite for long, not even after her affair with a lecturer.

The character of Réka gains an additional dimension through the auto-biographical game the author plays with the reader – the same name, unknown "double surname," sociological studies, but above all literary aspirations. Right at the beginning of the book, Réka confesses that she would like to be a writer and is working on her first novel. It may seem that *Magnet Hill* is precisely Réka's book, from which she as the protagonist disappears after a few chapters. However, Réka is unable to choose the right structure for her book. As she states: "As a woman writing about a woman, I have several things to worry about, for example, that future readers – whether they will occur or not is irrelevant – will identify the protagonist with me. A special difficulty is that there is love in the story, there are emotions, the protagonist has a spiritual life, and therefore there is a danger that the novel will be seen as a light summer reading" (Mán-Várhegyi 2018a, 81). In these two sentences, the author, through the voice of one of her heroines, has summarized the stereotypes that women writers still have to battle against.

The mixture of tragedy and comedy, which evokes sympathy in the reader, also applies to other female characters: Márta, Enikő's mother, on the terrace of a café indulges in sexual fantasies instead of focusing on her sister's success; Zsóka herself, Márta's sister, who has remained in her sister's shadow and who has been trying to write her novel for decades, trembles over every sentence and word as to whether it is the right one; Regina, assistant at the University of Debrecen, learns style and English from a popular British fashion show and

tries to hide her provincialism at an international conference. All the women of *Magnet Hill* have one thing in common – the lack of a place where they would feel safe, fulfilled, or happy, which leads to frequent mood swings, depression, and mental problems. Women in this world are constantly trying to balance the desire for self-fulfilment with the expectations of family or society, often making wrong and irrational decisions. Once they are strong and powerful, some other times they are weak and submissive (in the novel, this often applies to the same character who in individual chapters shows us a different face, or rather reveals a face hidden behind a mask intended for society). Even if women dare to step outside the established framework of artistic or scientific discourse, to propose something valuable and innovative, they face ostracism or at least disapproval, which has a negative impact on their psychological life and their work. Like Enikő's groundbreaking interdisciplinary research and the book she would like to write, it seems more like a burden than a dream, and the more she wants to realize her dream, the more impossible it seems.

The role of irony in the novel cannot be overlooked. Irony is used both for the description of individual characters and for descriptions of collective events, where it serves as a mechanism to characterize the group as a whole. Just to mention a dinner scene, where the fate of the poor is discussed over roast pheasants, or the numerous descriptions of eminent scientists who have not published any significant work for many years or depictions of scientific conferences where all participants are interested only in coffee breaks. Moreover, the author extends irony to the concept of genre as such. The novel's eclectic structure reveals the disintegrating reality in which its protagonists are forced to live. This allows irony to be seen as a dominant feature of the novel, which thus becomes a critique aimed at society or, more precisely, at the particular group of society. Irony is also aimed at feminism and other fashionable turn-of-the-century theories (in addition to feminism, post-structuralism and deconstruction are mentioned). In one of the chapters, Bogdán, who is an opponent of feminism, is chased by his former partners, and they do not let him take respite, just like phantoms in horror films. The character of Enikő can also be interpreted ironically. Although she is trying to introduce gender studies in Hungary, she herself upholds the system against which she wants to fight; she wants to do research on poverty and at the same time she spends a fortune on a handbag in Vienna. These examples, however, should not be read as directed against feminism itself but rather against the problems feminism had (still has?) to face in Hungary, where it is usually interpreted by its opponents as an empty ideology (in the novel, this view is represented by Bogdán) or as incomprehensible (represented by Regina) as well as against focusing on the theory itself and applying it unreflectively, transplanting it from a Western context into the context of post-communist Hungarian society which will unlikely contribute to a quick solution of problems faced by society (the

character of Enikő). Still, in the opinion of students, i.e. the younger generation, feminism is unambiguously positive: "my life has changed on your seminars" (Mán-Várhegyi 2018a, 267). Thanks to this polyphony of views and irony, the author managed to avoid falling into didactic literature.

Despite some shortcomings and the novel's peculiar structural chaos – which, on a metaphorical level, can be read as a symbol of society's decline and as poetics of self-reflection –, Mán-Várhegyi succeeded in two things. Firstly, she showed how women's socio-economic situation influences their development and everyday life, and as a result determines their whole life, making it difficult, if not impossible, to break out of the ruts defined by their predetermined social status. Secondly, she portrayed two different social classes that in a dynamically changing world had to start not only to notice each other but also to respect and interact. Did it happen in the real world? Although the author set her novel at the turn of the millennium, it seems to depict an up-to-date picture of Hungarian society with strong stratification, ever-widening gaps between different social groups, and an invisible but still vibrant patriarchal culture.

Struggles of Everyday Life – *Évszakhoz képest hűvösebb* (Rather Cool for the Time of the Year) by Anita Harag

Anita Harag's collection of short stories *Rather Cool for the Time of the Year*, similarly to Mán-Várhegyi's novel, shows the image of woman from multiple perspectives. The protagonists of all thirteen stories are women, and the topics covered range from cancer, alcoholism, and senility experienced within the family to loss, grief, depression, and social alienation. The short stories reflect an everyday life full of nuances, entanglements with past events, and dependencies that are lost in a hasty generalization. However, unlike *Magnet Hill*, there is neither a strongly defined historical situation nor highlighted social transformations. There are no political references, explicit debates on social issues, or dramatic plot twists, which is perhaps why the image that emerges from the entire volume is so evocative and familiar. The collection tells the story of an average person, and yet it is able to show its social commitment. Each story is different, but they all share similar themes, characters, objects, places. Thanks to these thematic repetitions, we can speak of a specific relationship that arises between the individual stories, whereby the volume shows a broader picture of contemporary society. A certain image of woman can also be drawn from it.

The main motif is coolness, chilliness, sense of cold, which appears in the title of the entire volume (it is also the title of one of the short stories). Short stories deal with relationships marked by misunderstanding and lack of communication

between generations – grandparents, parents, children, spouses, and partners. Most stories are presented through the eyes of a child or a young woman. Although the protagonists are surrounded by family, friends, and colleagues, they remain lonely. The author has also incorporated coldness into the physical lives of the characters, which only intensifies the coldness on an emotional and psychological level. The water in a swimming pool is cold, the back of a chair in a waiting room is cool, or the look in a doctor's eyes is cold. The sense of coldness and remoteness is often complemented by the motif of silence, e.g. in "Huszonöt méter" (Twenty-five Meters), where the family is silent when visiting the father's grave, or in "Magyarul" (In Hungarian), where the protagonist wears headphones at work not to have to speak in foreign language with the colleagues.

However, women in their loneliness remain entangled in the system of social relationships (family, relationship, work). Harag interestingly shows how a woman's identity can be constructed by others, family or partner. An excellent example of this is the short story "A Lánchíd északi oldala" (The North Side of the Chain Bridge). The protagonist and narrator gradually adopts the views and behaviour of her boyfriend. The girl tries to please the boy in everything, imitates his manner, does not allow herself to express her own opinion if it differs from his. We see the gradual assumption of power over the protagonist and making her dependent. The girl starts to violate her own norms, allows herself to be persuaded to do things she would never agree to on her own. However, those incidents are not great crimes – leaving the pathway on the Gellért Hill to get to the secret bastion, simulating illness at work to go to a café with a boyfriend, breaking into an abandoned and ruined house. From the point of view of the narration, the author applied an interesting technique. The girl, who is the narrator, hardly speaks at all, only constantly recalls the boy's statements. We are not quite sure whether the girl does not want to do all these things because she really does not feel like it, or maybe she has not had the courage to do them until now. From the few childhood memories she weaves into the story, we guess that she was taught to follow the rules. The story's closing episode of swimming in the icy Danube suggests, however, that we are dealing with a subtle but very real taking of control over the girl. This is indicated by the sentence-quote of the boy's words, which begins with the imperative in the first person singular and ends with the first person plural: "I am supposed to stop thinking, let's just run" (Harag 2019, 67).

Identity constructed through influence and relationship is also visible in the motif of woman taking her husband's name after marriage. The name has an identity-forming function here and the procedure of taking the husband's surname turns out to be a kind of abandonment of part of one's own identity. It should be noted here that this custom in Hungary can take on a form – one might say – of an extreme one: after marriage, a woman takes not only her husband's surname but also his name and adds only the suffix *-né* [Mrs] to her new surname. Her

maiden name and surname disappear. She becomes formally the woman of her husband: "We buried mum above dad […]. I didn't want to engrave what I saw on notices and documents from the bank, my father's name and that né. My mum was someone more than my dad's name and the né stuck to it" (Harag 2019, 99).

Corporeality also plays an important role in the construction of identity. The experience of the female body is an integral theme of the short stories. Biological and genetic connection with parents is highlighted on many levels – from breastfeeding to the thought of a mother's body already decomposing in the grave. Appearance is determined by genes, i.e. by parents, and when the relationship with them is not a happy one, the physical resemblance influences the perception of one's own body. This is well illustrated in "Szekesfehérvártól nyugatra" (To the West from Székesfehérvár), where the protagonist cleans up a run-down house after the death of her alcoholic father and tries to deal somehow with the complicated relationship she had with him. She finds old family photographs, and when she looks at her own reflection in the mirror, she says: "Now I neither love nor hate being so much like him" (Harag 2019, 33). In "Twenty-five Meters," female corporeality is shown from several perspectives. It tells the story of a family relationship that includes the father's alcoholism, the wife's faithfulness for better or for worse, and then the husband's death and the family's attempt to work through the loss. But yet another element is the mother's breast cancer. The narrator, when she is still a child, is aware of her mother's attractiveness and builds her own awareness of female body and identity in relation to her. But her mother gets sick and loses her breast, which was an attribute of her femininity. We see how, along with the illness, it is not only the body but also the mental state that suffers. An attractive, proud woman is transformed by her illness (but also by her husband's alcoholism and his death); she stops taking care of herself and becomes depressed. When choosing new clothes, she no longer chooses those that emphasize her strengths but those in which she can hide. Breast cancer is also the theme of "Családi anamnézis" (Family Anamnesis). Here, in turn, the protagonist's life is filled with fear that, like her mother, she will also die of breast cancer. This is why she constantly undergoes all possible examinations. But instead of being calmed by the good results, she is becoming more and more obsessed. To get next referrals, she even plans to make up symptoms. The mother's illness and death becomes the element that directs the daughter's life and thus constitutes her identity.

In Harag's minimalist short stories, suffering, fear, and trauma are hidden behind everyday situations that may seem insignificant to the outside observer. The lives of the protagonists are filled with loss, illness, misunderstanding, and conflict with loved ones. The plurality of perspectives presents a picture of the 2010s and the world that young women had to face on a daily basis.

How to Get Out of the Circle of Violence – *Mély levegő* (Deep Breath) by Rita Halász

Unlike the two books discussed above, Rita Halász's novel *Deep Breath* focuses on the fate of one woman, Vera, who decides to leave her husband along with two children. The story is seemingly banal, but it uses a socially important topic that has been breaking through into the public discourse in recent years, nevertheless manages to avoid stereotypical approach to the issue.

We meet Vera when she decides to leave her husband, Péter, and moves into her family home. Over the course of several months, she recounts her journey of trying to rediscover herself and her self-worth. The whole story is presented from her perspective. She intersperses current events with descriptions of past events, the recent ones, showing the gradual breakdown of her marriage, but also the remote ones, when as a child she observed and witnessed the relationship between her parents. On the one hand, we gradually learn about Péter's emerging aggression – from unpleasant remarks about her family through insulting Vera, bullying her and humiliating in front of the children to physical aggression. On the other hand, the story of a single marriage is brought up to the level of the entire society.

Vera's story depicts a common social model: a woman, just after graduation, gets married and has a child and after two-three years another one, for which reason she does not work for a few years, and one day it turns out that at the age of thirty she has neither a job nor work experience and is financially dependent on her husband. The story of Vera and Péter's marriage itself is a transition from youthful love to the boredom of everyday life, unfulfilment, and emptiness, the consequence of which is an increasingly destructive relationship. One day, aggression also appears. At first, only verbal, but it develops into physical aggression in a short time. It is interesting that despite the presence of physical violence the language of violence and its destructive power have been placed at the centre of the novel. Physical violence, although present, does not represent the form that it is usually identified with in social discourse, i.e. the extreme form. Thanks to this, *Deep Breath* shows a much broader picture of social relations entangled in violent behaviour as well as a picture of family violence, which at the level of social discourse is often denied, i.e. it depicts physical violence that is socially condoned. Exactly that kind of relativizing explanation of Péter's aggression is given by Vera's father: "In marriage, this and that happens. During an argument, a slap may be given. One slap is not a slap. It matters how somebody kicks you. It's not the same if he hits you from a standing position or off the bed" (Halász 2020, 14). After leaving Péter, Vera moves back into the family home, where her father lives alone after a divorce. Time seems to have stopped here. While trying to find a solution, which initially does not exclude being back with Péter, Vera analyses not only her marriage but also the marriage

of her parents. She starts to realize more and more clearly how their relationship and the atmosphere in home have affected her, the decisions she has made, and the role she has taken on as a wife and mother: "If I'd been taught how to stand up for myself, how to argue, how to say no, maybe Péter wouldn't – I stop here, I don't know how to say it – maybe Péter wouldn't have hurt me. But the only thing I've learned was how to shut up, because I was good when I shut up" (Halász 2020, 73). We observe how role models and patterns are invisibly reproduced, those at the most individual level but also those at the collective level. Vera can see what patterns she has learned from her parents. This recognition, though, does not mean that she is blaming someone for her own mistakes, such as the affair with a childhood friend. She admits them all and takes responsibility for them. This is one of the strongest features of the novel – the author has avoided presenting the story in black and white colours, and Vera herself is not a perfect female character. An element that rarely appears in books on this subject can be seen: Vera is an adventurous and lustful woman, who wants something more; she is not afraid to experiment and is capable of going to extremes. Behind the image of a woman determined by social expectations propagated by mass media and social media, which show an idyllic and perfect picture of family life, the novel reveals the reality, dilemmas, and desires of women, which are hidden behind the mask of "a good girl."

The female models that Vera is confronted with are taken from the socio-cultural context. On the one hand, it is Saint Rita, on the other, a mermaid from Andersen's fairy tale. The Catholic saint is the patron of marriages, of difficult and hopeless cases and is the model of marital virtues despite the unhappy and violent marriage that was her fate. The second model is promoted by the fairy tale of the mermaid who sacrifices everything for a prince. Not only does she abandon her world for him by taking on a human shape, but she also gives the witch her beautiful voice. She becomes mute. The novel shows how deeply rooted is the stereotypical role of woman as a mother – she should clean, cook, take care of the house, and devote herself fully to her family and husband while losing her voice in the process. We see this in many scenes, e.g. when Péter accuses Vera that she does not come from a normal family because her mother is not keen on cooking and cleaning, or in the scene when Vera accidentally overhears a conversation between her children and her mother: "I think dad would be a better mum than mum. […] Why do you think so? – asks my mother. Because he likes to cook and sew our clothes. Mum doesn't like to cook and she can't sew. And because of this is someone a good mother? Yes. And not because someone loves you, cares for you and looks after you? I can't hear what they answer" (Halász 2020, 154). We can see how imposed social norms and expectations deprive the protagonist of her self-worth and the sense of life: "Apart from my two children I have nothing, I am nobody, I have disappeared" (Halász 2020, 136). The culturally

constructed image is confronted with the devastating consequences it has on the lives of ordinary women. The propagated models are eventually rejected by the protagonist, and she creates her own image of woman-mother that is lacking the requirement of being perfect at the cost of losing her identity. When telling the fairy tale to her children, she comments on the mermaid's choice as follows: "She's doing a stupid thing. She shouldn't have given up her voice" (Halász 2020, 84). Vera decides to find herself and to maintain a balance between the various social roles she is challenged with. How they are to look is no longer accepted unreflectively – instead, as she states, "I'm experimenting" (Halász 2020, 193).

Deep Breath creates a complex and credible image of woman struggling for her place in the world. The novel shows that marital violence is not a marginal phenomenon and equally affects well-off families. However, it does not fall into shallow psychology offering an easy happy ending. It shows the difficult process of leaving a toxic relationship that does not end with a decision, a move-out, or even a divorce, but that is a long process marked by ups and downs. Thanks to its balance, *Deep Breath* becomes a universal and socially important story, skilfully fitting into the discourse on family violence and the role of woman in society.

Conclusions

As I have argued in this paper, representatives of contemporary women's prose in Hungary share a social commitment in their work. They can contribute to social discourses on different problems such as social changes, socio-economic determinants, or domestic violence. They undertake to talk about difficult, divisive, and complex social and psychological issues. They also answer the questions as to what the image of woman is like in the modern world, what problems she has to fight against, and how she deals with everyday problems. Thanks to this, Hungarian women writers bring valuable insight into the social context and provide diverse and multilayered perspectives on women's situation in today's Hungary.

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Power Structures in *După gâşte* (After Geese) by Lucian Dan Teodorovici

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Abstract. The distribution of power is present at all levels of our existence: race, religion, ethnicity, culture, military level, politics, and economics. The power structures have never been based on equality because there is always a person or a group that wants to impose his/her/their view upon others. The present study follows these balances at multiple levels: from the point of view of the macro- (societal) and the micro- (individual/private) sphere, but also from the perspective of ethnicity and gender as they are represented in *După gâşte* (After Geese) by Lucian Dan Teodorovici. The main stream of the short story has a rather simplistic pretext – the theft of some geese by the Gypsies in a Romanian village –, which masterly introduces us to the problem of power structures.

Keywords: power structures, Gypsy tradition, macro- and microsphere, public and intimate sphere, interaction

1. Introduction

"The structure of every legal order directly influences the distribution of power […] within its respective community. This is true of all legal orders and not only that of the state. In general, we understand by 'power' the chance of a man or of a number of men to realize their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (Weber 1978, 926). If the

power is held by a man/group of men, this assumes that there is a man/group of people who are imposed the point of view of those in power.

The paper discusses the distribution of power at different levels. On the one hand, the power structures can be dealt with at a macro and a micro level, where the former embodies the social, economic, cultural, ethnic, and gender aspects, while the latter refers to problems related to individual identity, individual biological and mental aspects. The two spheres can be linked by interaction viewed as "an occasion when two or more people or things communicate with or react to each other" (*Cambridge Dictionary*). On the other hand, the paper will refer to the macro level as one being identifiable as a public sphere and to the micro level as one representing the intimate, private sphere.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. The Macro Level

Speaking of the economic, administrative, or political fields, it can be seen even nowadays that at the institutional/organizational level it is still men who dominate worldwide, mostly in the power positions. Regarding gender structures, the European Institute for Gender Equality states the following:

> One of the most persistent patterns in the distribution of power is that of inequalities between women and men. The set of roles, behaviors and attitudes that societies define as appropriate for women and men ("gender") can be the cause, consequence and mechanism of power relations, from the intimate sphere of the household to the highest levels of political decision-making. ("Gender Power Relations")

If and when there is a biological woman in such a position, she "acts as a social man" (Acker 1990, 139). Some changes can be sensed in this way, "perhaps due to the changing demography of the scientists. As women entered the academy there was more interest in, and attention to, women's lives, and eventually the impact of gender more fully" (Risman 2018, 11). This change can be felt only from the middle of the twentieth century onwards. Before that, "[s]ociologists thought the traditional family helped society to function and addressed issues of gender when they wrote about women as the 'heart' of families with male 'heads.' At the same time […], psychologists used socialization theory to explain how we could train girls and boys for their socially appropriate roles as men and women, husbands and wives" (Risman 2018, 11); so, to follow a gender script, shows Risman, speaking about the discovery of sex and gender by social sciences.

The basic social unit is the family, which has had, until recently, the biological function of reproduction (changed by the possibility of adoption) and social functions, as seen in Folsom's classical categorization, who, in fact, speaks about the changing state of these functions, which are overtaken by institutions:

> (1) to reproduce the race; (2) to produce and prepare for final consumption some of the material goods we use (economic junction); (3) to provide space, facilities, and organization for recreation, or pleasant use of leisure time; (4) to train, educate, and socialize children in certain ways and especially during certain age periods (educational function); (5) to maintain certain social controls, whether called "discipline" or otherwise, over its members, in the interests of the larger society; (6) to provide certain direct emotional satisfactions to individuals, including security, love, sex, and affection. (1940, 64)

The second half of the twentieth century and the twenty-first century came up with new theories of the family, due, among other factors, to the changes that the family forms are undergoing in the industrialized society, says Weggemans (1987, 247). "Traditional family forms are losing their fixed boundaries and become one of many options in the supermarket of living arrangements. New 'products' in this supermarket are, for instance: unmarried cohabitation, single-parent families, Living-Apart-Together (LAT) relations, serial monogamy, the swinging bachelor, and communes" (Weggemans 1987, 247). Even though the mid-twentieth century family theories[1] can be regarded as "classics" today, they still function, alongside the new ones, in many situations due to the worldwide variations in family compositions, functions, models.[2] This kind of "cohabitation," even though it seems paradoxical, illustrates the reality of Gypsy family structures.

"Roma/Gypsy reality is enormously varied. The historical experience of various groups, their encounters, stopping-places, routes travelled and intersected, and the diversity of their contacts with constantly changing surroundings, have given rise to a great variety of cultural and social characteristics within various groups – and continue to do so" (Liegeois and Gheorghe 1995, 29). Liegeois and Gheorghe's report states that the Gypsy's immersion in other cultures resulted in "the invention and development of strategies of adaptation and negotiation" (1995, 29) and that there is a "[p]ublic misunderstanding of Roma/Gypsies – and even research concerning them, by seeking to establish constancy and uniformity where in fact there is only change and variety" (1995, 29).

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1   Joseph K. Folsom (1940), G. P. Murdock (1949), or Talcott Parsons and Robert Freed Bales (1955).
2   As is the case of gender structures not only as concerns the Gypsy family but also the Romanian one (in some aspects) in Lucian Dan Teodorovici's short story. These families cannot be placed in the late or postmodern family types.

This variety can also be found in their appellations, which are ascribed and self-ascribed. The ascribed terms are the ones used by the majority community that holds a Roma community. Among these appellatives, Bunescu (2016, 16–17) enlists the term Gypsy,[3] which is used by several majority populations; it refers to the Egyptian origin of the Roma, as the Spanish term *Gitano*. Along these two, there is also Hajkalija, used in some territories occupied by Turks. There are other ascribed terms, too, generally pejorative, intended to offend, like Tsigani,[4] which, according to Bunescu, is also a self-ascribed one: "[s]ome Roma refer to themselves as *Tsigani* in certain circumstances" (Bunescu 2016, 18). A generally accepted self-ascribed term is Roma, which can derive from the Greek Rhomaion (Eastern Byzantine Empire) or, according to Indian authors, from Sanskrit, and it can mean "[o]ne who pervades and operates all, […] one who roams about […] 'non-stop, moving,' [d]ark-colored, […] *Husband*, […] [p]leasing, delighting, charming" (Bunescu 2016, 18). Other self-ascribed terms, differing by geographic area, are as follows: Sinti (Austria and Germany), Manouche (French Sinti groups), Calé (or Kalo) for the Andalusian Gitano and the Northern European groups. Also, there are appellatives used among them, and sometimes by outsiders too, which derive from occupations: Lohars (blacksmiths), Rabagi (transporters), Chergari (fortune-tellers – mostly from former Yugoslavia), Arlia (musicians), Gabeli (acrobats, dancers), or some special occupations for the groups from Balkans Calderas (cauldron makers), Ursari (bear trainers), and Lautari (musicians), Rudari (they made objects out of wood), Lovari (horse traders).

Accepting the principle of variety does not eliminate some characteristics (structures, laws, customs, some being "mediaeval") that are available at least for some Gypsy families – understood as a nuclear family but also as a regional ethnic group. These families/tribes preserved their ethnic and cultural identity, propagated some of the laws (for example, the Romaniya, the law of the Rom) and customs for centuries, living "amongst a larger homogenous population of the majority" (Bethlenfalvy 2000, 74). Bethlenfalvy says that we have to "keep in mind that the Gypsies have taken along with them their Indian social structure of the caste-jati rules; and if we remember the survival of practically every ethnic entity within India not for centuries, but for millennia. Each Gypsy tribe is like an

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3   My choice throughout the paper to use this term derives from the fact that the community is depicted through the eyes of a Gadjo, a non-Roma. As such, the short story uses an ascribed appellative.

4   "The translation of the pejorative *ascribed* term of *Tsigan* in different languages is as follows: French *Tsigane*; Albanian *Cigan*, *Maxhup*, *Gabel*; Bulgarian: Цигани (*Tsigani*); Czech *Cikáni*; Dutch and German *Zigeuner*; Danish *Sigøjner*; Lithuanian Cigonai; Russian Цыгане (*Tsyganye*); Hungarian *Cigány*; Greek Τσιγγάνοι (*Tsingávoi*); Italian *Zingari*; Romanian *Țigani*; Croatian and Serbian *Cigani*; Polish *Cyganie*; Portughese *Cigano*; Spanish *Gitano* and in Turkish Çingene" (Bunescu 2016, 18).

Indian *jati*, by continuing the same traditional occupation, not marrying outside the caste" (2000, 74), and obeying the inner laws and customs.

In a Gypsy family,[5] gender structures have not changed almost at all for centuries, and the roles of members show only slight differences from one region to another. The Gypsy culture is a patriarchal one, where the man is the head of the family, and the woman obeys him. Interesting in this structure is that a woman also has "masculine" functions, because she "must work and earn money and take care of the family's material well-being" (Afanasieva et al. 2020, 289). From a gender perspective, the "factors of gender-role socialization are such as: gender guidelines as a system of ideas about men and women; ethno-cultural stereotypes of masculinity and femininity; excellent means of upbringing the boys and the girls; specific types of work of each sex; differentiated male and female roles" (Afanasieva et al. 2020, 290). And all these roles are specific for each age stage: from an early age to the status of a married woman.

2.2. The Micro Level

At this level, the most fundamental aspect that comes into question is the biological one, pertaining to sex, to different theories along the way (hormonal, neurological, etc.). Wade explains that environmental and social contexts can affect our bodies, just as our bodies affect human behaviour. She speaks about the field of epigenetics, which deals with the fact that environmental experiences may be detectable in the bodies of one's descendants. Moreover, "[t]hese developments in research on genetics have implications for both individual and group level phenomena. Some genetic profiles, for example, increase the risk that a child will be a violent adult, but only if that child is exposed to violence when they are young" (2013, 281), says Wade, referring to Kristen Jacobson's 2009 study "Considering Interactions between Genes, Environment, Biology, and Social Context."

2.3. Interaction between the Macro and Micro Level, between the Public and the Private

Interaction itself is a dominant characteristic of the human being, as one is born to be a social being, thus, ultimately, a social construct. Generally, one needs to interact with others for different purposes – biological, social, economic, or cultural –, so the interaction is the link between the macro and the micro level, between the public and the private. Consequently, human beings develop a series of interactional forms as family interaction, group interaction, individual interaction, or social interaction, where each has specific types and styles. Only to illustrate

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5   The term family covers in this paper the nuclear family but also the group/tribe/community.

the complexity of the idea of interaction, social interaction includes different behaviour types, for example, cooperation, exchange, competition, conflict, and coercion. From the point of view of the communication pattern, it can be pluralistic, consensual, protective, and laissez-faire. The paper discusses only the ground zero of interactions, from the social point of view, illustrating some examples of the individual–individual, individual–institution relations in contemporary Romanian writer Lucian Dan Teodorovici's short story *După gâşte* (After Geese).

3. "The Gypsy Case" – From a Child's Perspective

3.1. Intro

The theoretical apparatus above is meant to introduce some aspects of Lucian Dan Teodorovici's short story *După gâşte* (After Geese), which – even if it reads individually – according to the author is part of a "a puzzle novel, which completes and creates a whole" (Talabă 2017) by the time one has finished reading the book. The 2013 novel *Celelalte poveşti de dragoste* (*The Other Love Stories*) employs a single narrator depicted at different ages – from childhood to the age of thirty-five. In the novel, "the theme of love is approached from distinct angles: the narrator being less able to understand it as a child, then over time understanding more and more, and at the same time less and less" (Talabă 2017).

The short story begins with the inciting incident from which we learn that someone has stolen the family's seven geese. The narrator-protagonist finds out from a hissing, hare-lipped friend that someone has stolen their geese and notifies his grandfather, who goes to the Gypsy part of the village to retrieve the geese. The narrator accompanies him to the house of the thieving Gypsy, where the two are forced to stay for a while because there is a case of domestic violence in the neighbourhood. From the image filtered through the child's eyes, we learn that the young Gypsy is being beaten for having an affair with a married Gypsy woman.

3.2. Breaking the Patterns

The story is a real balancing act between the macro (public) and the micro (intimate) sphere, touching on deep and complex issues in just a few pages. But, finally, these multilevelled universes, settled on collision course, are all spinning around the idea of a closed social system – represented by the institution (police), the traditional village community, and the authoritarian, unequal type families – that sanctions any deviation from the rule, written or – especially – unwritten law.

The first "disturbing" element is the explanation of the habits of the geese and their "masters," the peasants. The geese were left free in the streets (public space)

because they "did not mix with each other"[6] (Teodorovici 2013, 121) and stayed "grouped together after the household they belonged to" (Teodorovici 2013, 121). Moreover, in order to recognize their belonging, "the peasants considered that a goose or a crazy duck might still leave their group and wander off, they marked their property with paint on their wings" (Teodorovici 2013, 121). This leads us to think, on the one hand, of the practice of stigmatization, but also of the fact that people are afraid of what is different, of someone who behaves outside the norm. A good example in this sense is the peasant who painted a phallus on the wings of the goose with brown paint, his gesture being a pattern violation that had to be sanctioned immediately. Consequently, the neighbours made a complaint to the police and the man had to pluck the feathers of the eight geese *adorned/ennobled* with the brown phallus and draw a square instead. So, exposing a sex symbol in public is considered to be immoral, and society immediately reacts collectively and institutionally, because when the man tells the policeman that he wants to see the law prohibiting the painting of a phallus on geese, the policeman explains "at first calmly, then more and more nervously, that [...] he is the law, and at the end he even swore at him and showed him his cane threateningly" (Teodorovici 2013, 122).

The situation of the goose is, in fact, foreshadowing the "Gypsy case," where the family in general and men in particular are in power position and "mark" the woman by marriage, though we find out that "what the hell, Gypsies don't mark theirrrr geessse" (Teodorovici 2013, 123). This is not necessarily true because the fact that they are not visible only means that they are not public, that they are kept within their own community.

3.3. Breaking the Rules

Following the grandfather and the eight-year-old homodiegetic narrator, we approach the Gypsy ghetto, a mysterious land with its own rules and "legislation," where "[n]o one had the courage to go [...], because at that time they lived in another world. Even the militia didn't pay them any attention" (Teodorovici 2013, 123). On the way, the boy's eyes are drawn to a courtyard where there are several men and women. But the narrator and his grandfather enter the neighbouring courtyard where the boy who stole the geese lives and are greeted by a pig. When the boy's father finds out that the boy stole the geese, he does not worry about the stealing act itself, reinforcing the stereotype that Gypsies steal, but rather about the fact that he stole them from the narrator's grandfather, whom the Gypsies respected. The father punishes his son by beating him and comes to terms with the narrator's grandfather. Just when we think the conflict has been resolved, in the neighbouring courtyard, two vigorous Gypsy men drag a third one, who was seriously beaten, but they do not stop there and start whipping him on the back. The grandfather asks the old

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6   Translations from Romanian belong to the authors of the paper.

Gypsy man what the issue in the neighbouring courtyard is all about, and the old Gypsy man replies "*n-apoi, d-ale noastre*" (Teodorovici 2013, 131), making it clear that this is something that concerns the Gypsy community, something that does not concern the Gadji. The Gypsies use the ascribed term Gadji for someone who is "'an outsider,' tolerated perhaps, but never accepted. Attention, not totally, brutally rejected (except in some rare situations that require total 'closure' to strangers), but neither received with ease: with naturalness and hospitality, with kindness even, but not with complete openness" (Bănică 2019, 50). What is more, even though he is not a Gadji, and he knows what it is all about, he consistently repeats "not our business" / "not my business." So, the power of the ethnicity, community imposes that a family as a group and men as representatives of the family are especially "untouchable," they are in a position of power, in the position to implement the rules, to be judges and executioners. This probably comes from their roots, as in the Gypsy community disagreements are generally judged by the *bulibaşă*,[7] but "in the more serious cases, by virtue of some old laws of the Gypsy, are resolved by either demanding a sum of money or by taking justice into their own hands, sometimes even with the knife?" (Cherata 1993, 56).

And what would cause this disturbance? The old man considers the young Gypsy who was beaten up a fool, not because he did an immoral thing by committing adultery but because of the fact that he spoke about it while being drunk. He did not name the married woman who broke her vow, he just specified that she was seventeen. The four seventeen-year-old wives are rounded up by their in-laws and forced to watch the bloody and cruel scene of beating the young man up, in which they try to get him to utter the woman's name. The four "weren't crying, they weren't scared. They were just sitting" (Teodorovici 2013, 133). This attitude may come from their environment or "inherited" collective identity, which is "a balancing process where the internal cohesion and external distinctness of the group overweigh the group's internal diversity and its external similarities" (Beller and Leerssen 2007, 337). Group identity is a homogenous core, identifiable mostly in small-scale rural communities or in specific ethnic groups (Beller and Leerssen 2007, 338), and our opinion is based on these images that materialize in the way we construct a world. But their silence can be interpreted in other ways, too: as a revolt against their situation or even as a defence, because we learn from the old Gypsy man that the adulterous woman in question could be hanged by her husband. Even though we find it outrageous, it seems that in the Gypsy world it shows how powerless women are, in all fields. Stewart shows that:

> The subordination of the Gypsy woman to the man is not limited to formal aspects of social life. From birth, the social status of the girl makes it impossible for her to be as full and unquestioned a participant in Roma

7   Gypsy chieftain.

social life as the boy. The birth of a daughter provokes no reaction or even hostility from some fathers. […] Boys learn early on to assert their superiority over girls in all areas. […] This form of relationship continues into adulthood, when […] women do the work of running the household and men engage in more public and spectacular business. When a Gypsy couple go to town together, it is the wife who trudges behind her husband, and it is the wife who carries a huge bag on her back without her husband to help her. And if one of them doesn't want to get muddy […] it's the woman who carries the man on her back, not the other way round. At home, it is the husband who eats and washes first, and in most things he has first priority. In the occasional "trials" (kris), only the men take part, suggesting ways of resolving disputes. And, finally, since a woman's social identity is less likely to be expressed publicly throughout her life, the death of a woman causes much less social trauma for the Roma than that of a man. (1994, 208)

This is also reflected in the fact that the women in question are hardly present in the short story even though they are the tragic victims of the *kris* (traditional Gypsy court)[8] we are reading about. The publicly adulterous woman is a rare case in the Gypsy world. Ostentatious behaviour is not desirable in the Roma society. Sexual self-denial is a good quality of a Gypsy girl – who has to be a virgin until her marriage –, "unlike the Gadjis, whose shamelessness is proverbial. In the summer, the Romany men go to the beach baths […], but none of the girls go with them because, as they say, they are ashamed to undress in public – unlike the Gadjis, who expose their bodies in public. From the Gypsies' point of view, this is an amusing, even grotesque sign of the shamelessly shabby and promiscuous sexual relations of the Gadjis" (Stewart 1994, 219–220). All of these doubled by things like menstruation, sexual intercourse, or pregnancy are taboo themes, even among female representatives.

In such a secluded way of life, it is not surprising that "within the Gypsy society, women were often subjected to cruel laws. For instance, "an English Gypsy could kill his wife if he liked, without suffering for the crime" (Macritchie quoted in Rădulescu 2008, 197). The most common reason for a Gypsy man to kill his wife was adultery" (Rădulescu 2008, 197). The Roma women are mistreated by both Roma and non-Roma men (look at the families of the four women, but also at the narrator's grandfather, who accepts the fact that one of the four women could be hanged by her husband). Rădulescu states that "no matter how oppressed and marginalized a group of people may be, there is always another group that is going to be even more oppressed and marginalized: the women of that group. In fact, history and statistics have shown that it is precisely within marginalized and

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8   The kris-Romani, or assembly of Rom elders is a "convened administer justice under the Romaniya (law of the Rom)" (Lee 1997, 346).

oppressed groups that domestic violence is most rampant" (2008, 197–198). These kinds of family structures can be influenced by the above-mentioned theories of the genes or by environment, but also by social and economic outcomes that influence the patterns of family structure (Duranton et al. 2009, 25).

Alexandra Oprea, a Roma feminist scholar demonstrates that we tend to turn "a blind eye to patriarchal practices, excusing them as the 'other culture'" (quoted in Rădulescu 2008, 198), as we can see it in the discussed short story in the grandfather's attitude or even in that of the representative of the law, the policeman: "The village militiaman, who had cursed and shown his stick to the neighbour with the geese which had the painted phallus, kept saying that the gypsies were not his problem, that they could form their own militia if they wanted to, he wouldn't interfere" (Teodorovici 2013, 123–124).

3.4. The Representatives of Power

As seen from the case of the policeman, individuals with institutional power make abuse of their status, turning into an authority. Authority can be represented by an individual, the family, or an institution, and this short story illustrates very well all of these cases. It is interesting that all power positions are held by men.

Our first such case was that of the policeman, but then we could also talk about the case of the grandfather who, although never beats his grandson, continuously threatens him. The grandfather is also in a power position in the Roma community because he is a controller on the train and the Roma depend on him when they travel. The old man earned their respect because he facilitated their free transport; they even called him "Boss." They also respected him "because they still needed him, as he was a few years away from retirement" (Teodorovici 2013, 124). The grandfather exercises his authority over the old Gypsy when he forces him to promise to send the son to work for four days as payment for the two geese consumed even though the old man tries to imply that the boy is lazy and probably would not work. The old Gypsy man is the authority in his family, and he beats the hell out of his son for stealing the "wrong" geese. But this authority is limited to his family, as in the case of his neighbours he repeats all the time that it is not his business. That probably means that he is not related to them.

In addition, there has to be remarked the *in absentia* power position of the husband, who has, even though only potentially, the right to hang the woman because "We have a law," which transcends not only state laws but also human rights.

4. Conclusions

Teodorovici's short story perfectly illustrates the macro sphere through the depiction of the abusive institutional representative, the traditional village community, and almost all the points from Folsom's classification – the latter by the reproduction of the race (multigenerational representation); economic aspect (procuring – here stealing – the goods or trading them; not paying for train tickets because they know the conductor, and, in return the Gypsies do not steal from him); the education and socialization of children in certain ways (by community laws); the maintenance of certain social controls – whether called "discipline" or otherwise – over its members in the interests of the larger society (the case of the man who painted the phallus, the Gypsy women's brothers beat the lover, and the girls do not have the right to say anything). According to these examples, the classification works for those parts that can be applied to the collective and misses those that would apply to individuals: "to provide space, facilities, and organization for recreation, or pleasant use of leisure time; […] to provide certain direct emotional satisfactions to individuals, including security, love, sex, and affection" (Folsom 1940, 64).

In the case of the characters, the micro sphere can be linked to the macro one because the individuals are determined by society in all its forms: family, ethnic belonging, economic and cultural situation. So, they act only according to expectations, and even when somebody tries to stand out (the man who painted the phallus on the geese), s/he is hushed by the "institution," obligated to re-enter the "normal" way of life, to make amends for his "mistake." Accordingly, the interactions between institution and individual, individual and individual, between the public and the private are set on showing the unequal relationships where men are in power, are the heads of the family, of the institution, act as decision makers. Also, the interactions in this literary work reinforce some of the prejudices and stereotypes inoculated by socialization, which, after they are formed, become "resistant to change on the basis of new information" (Aronson et al. 2005, 434).

Another conclusion is that breaking the patterns and breaking the rules can lead to tragic outcomes – the exposure of a very young boy to fatal physical violence (nobody of his age was taken in the Gypsy land before, and he was quite proud of this), the beating of the thief by his father, the beating of the lover, and, most importantly, the punishment of the four wives and the possibility of murdering the adulterous woman – which, according to Wade, could have, on the individual and group level, repercussions "in the bodies of their descendants" (2013, 281).

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Trends in Young Adult Literature.
A Glance at American and British Fantasy with an Eye on the Transylvanian Variant

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Abstract. The present paper looks at the main contemporary trends in writing literature for young adult readers. The theoretical part focuses on possible definitions and characteristics of young adult literature by distinguishing it from children's literature and adult fiction, as well as by establishing the different age groups these novels are written for. The practical part of the paper gives examples of different types of novels written for this particular audience, such as J. K. Rowling's prominent *Harry Potter* series, but also Lois Lowry's *The Giver* or Meg Cabot's *Abandon* trilogy. At the end, the study also presents a Transylvanian author who has recently started writing fantasy for young adults, namely Balázs Zágoni, and his *Black Light* series.

Keywords: young adult fiction, fantasy, myths

Young adult fiction is a relatively new field with its emergence usually linked to the publication of S. E. Hinton's *The Outsiders* in 1967, but which has thrived ever since (Trupe 2006). It is to be considered a literary category embracing several genres such as fantasy, science fiction, or dystopia. Though there was literature written for young adults before 1967, a switch then took place. Young adult fiction has been characterized by a more complex plotting, motivation, and moral ambiguity than prior to the 1960s. There has also been a higher interest in experimenting with the form of the novel within the category beginning from the mid-twentieth century (Trupe 2006).

Nevertheless, young adult fiction or adolescent literature does not have an equivocal definition. It is difficult to define because the line that separates it from children's literature and from adult fiction is quite flexible, on the one hand, and because the group of young adults or adolescents is hard to set as a fixed one, on the other. Adolescence generally refers to "the years between the onset of puberty and the establishment of social independence" (qtd. in Curtis 2015, 1). However,

this is quite a vague definition since, according to some, this is true of youngsters between the ages of ten and twelve (Moje et al. 2008, 110), while others widen the range, stating that teenage years overlap the phase starting from age nine up to eighteen but "may incorporate a span of nine to twenty-six years (APA, 2002)" (Curtis 2015, 1). A further way of grouping adolescents is roughly putting these years between the ages of eleven and twenty-one, with three different stages called early (eleven/twelve–fourteen), mid- (fifteen–seventeen), and late adolescence (eighteen–twenty-one) (Swartz and Wild 2012, 203). If we look at the issue from the perspective of literacy, then adolescence begins in the fourth grade, when the spectrum of texts broadens. There is also a shift from predominantly story-based narratives to "expository or informational texts" (Moje et al. 2008, 110). The widening of text types is possible due to the increasing ability of the students not only to understand what they are reading but also to integrate and critically reflect on it, as well as to apply the knowledge they have gathered and, for example, write something based on that (Guthrie and Metsala 1999, 382).

According to the age group a literary work is destined for, young adult fiction can be differentiated from the canon of children's literature as addressing youth of nine and above. However, this also implies a difference regarding the subject and genre of the texts between narratives meant for children and those for adolescents. Grenby relies on Perry Nodelman's view, who says: "children's literature is frequently about coming to terms with a world as defined and governed by grownups and not totally familiar or comprehensible to children" (Nodelman qtd. in Grenby 2008, 165). Good fantasy, for example, renders this experience by transporting its characters into another, often strange and perplexing world. Thus, children are not put at disadvantage and can feel equal to adults since in the new realms presented in children's books nobody – neither they nor the adults – know the rules (Grenby 2008, 165). Among the genres frequently used in children's literature, we can find nursery rhymes, fairy tales, fables, myths and legends, picture storybooks, or fantasies – appealing also because they can easily be adapted to give moral, practical, and psychological lessons (Grenby 2008, 166).

Delineating young adult fiction from literature for adults is also quite difficult. Most scholars set the age group between twelve and seventeen/eighteen (e.g. Trupe 2006, Donelson and Nilsen 2009); however, as we have seen, the upper age boundary can vary from eighteen to twenty-one or twenty-six. There are many topics and genres that are frequently read by both teenagers and adults. This is due to the fact that there are many similarities between writing for the two target audiences. Teenagers are taken just as seriously by authors of young adult fiction as adults are. There is no need to refine or dumb down these texts. Young adults need the same demanding language use, the richness of feelings, style, complexity, and honesty. They live in and perceive the same world as grownups do; the only

difference might be that they do not have the necessary tools to deal with this reality (Kalapos 2021). One of the tasks of young adult fiction – representing the core of the difference between adult and coming-of-age literature – is precisely to provide teenage readers with a world where they are not lied to, where they are taken seriously, and where they can hide if they feel like it. Books written for them should trigger reactions, feelings, changes on their part and should start a dialogue about uncomfortable and painful issues (Kalapos 2021).

Adolescence, puberty, or young adulthood is an extremely turbulent period in any individual's life; it is the time of both great physical and emotional changes and of growth. It is the age of becoming someone (else). According to Patty Campbell:

> The central theme of most YA fiction is becoming an adult, finding the answer to the question "Who am I and what am I going to do about it?" No matter what events are going on in the book, accomplishing that task is really what the book is about, and in the climactic moment the resolution of the external conflict is linked to a realization for the protagonist that helps shape an adult identity. (2000, 485)

Thus, the end of the book should always refer to a new beginning. Literature for young adults should deal, and it mainly does so, with topics that help the youth understand and handle the changes they undergo, touch upon serious issues, such as life and death, the human psyche, the labyrinth of rationality and emotions, family against individuality, gender questions, the journey of self-finding and sexuality.

Another interesting aspect to take into consideration when writing for and talking about young adult fiction is that literary texts for this group always have to be up to date and talk about things that youth can relate to. Thus, this type of literature is continuously changing, just as the group of age it is intended for. Becoming an adult also means that teenagers try to show that they are different from their parents, which means that each generation tries to be unique. This, in turn, makes young adult fiction into a contemporary medium, where each generation wants to have and has their own stories (Donelson and Nilsen 2009, 1). If we look at what is trendy among adolescents, we mostly find contemporary fantasy works instead of the canonical classical books by Lewis Carroll and his *Alice in Wonderland*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, or J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. By taking a look at the titles mentioned above, we can easily recognize that the fantastic literary mode has been present in previous literary epochs too, building the core of the genres of allegory, fairy tale, or mediaeval romance. In modern and contemporary literature, fantasy has evolved into a genre (Shippey 2000, viii).

The genre of modern fantasy is hard to define because it deals with a variety of subjects and applies several topoi. The widest approaches stem from Tzvetan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson, who define it as an "impossible and unexplainable" narrative (cf. Mendlesohn and James 2012, n. p.). While Todorov highlights that in the case of fantastic texts readers are in doubt about the (ir)reality of the narrative, to Jackson fantasy is a sort of "desire" (in Mendlesohn and James 2012, n. p.), as well as "the literature of unreality" (in Havířová 2007, n. p.).

Modern fantasy can thus be perceived as "a conversation that is happening […] between the authors of the texts and the readers" (Mendlesohn and James 2012, n. p.), revolving around the credibility of the narratives. Accordingly, there are several categorizations of fantasy. For example, fantasy narratives can be grouped based on the fantastic tropes they use. Some texts have tropes at their centre that are completely impossible, while others share only a small number of tropes at the periphery or ones that make the reader doubt whether the text is fantastical or not (cf. Attebery in Mendlesohn and James 2012, 29).

Another viewpoint of categorizing fantasy takes into consideration the way the fantastic enters the text as well as the rhetorical devices needed to build the distinct realms. There are four such modes: 1. the portal quest, which introduces a new world; 2. the immersive fantasy, in which the narrative is part of the fantastic world; 3. the intrusive fantasy, where the fantastic intrudes into the primary world; 4. the liminal fantasy, in which magic might or might not happen (Mendlesohn and James 2012, 29–30). For example, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* belongs to the mode of immersive fantasy, where "the protagonist is part of the fantastic world." These types of fantasy are written based on the tradition of the great epic poems but are set in an imaginary realm (Mendlesohn and James 2012, n. p.). In his trilogy, Tolkien created a very credible world within the imaginary, with a geography, i.e. Middle-earth, and inhabitants, i.e. people, hobbits, elves, the good and the evil, with languages and a valid mythology and history. Thus, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is considered the first piece of modern fantasy setting further characteristics for the works of its type. The last mode mentioned by Mendlesohn is also important because it allows us to view fantasy according to its own criteria and not to those of mimetic fiction or the canon (Mendlesohn and James 2012, 29–30).

Thus, every piece of modern, or, I would dare to say, contemporary fantasy, is situated somewhere between reality and the fantastic, and at times it is quite unclear where one begins and the other ends. The resulting ambiguity gives the genre its strength: "the supernatural and the normal exist together in fantasy texts, in various proportions and combinations, but […] there is no ratio which governs their relationship. To increase one is not to diminish the other" (Grenby 2008, 150). Though it may serve as an escape from reality, fantasy is usually rather a way of just rewriting it. Even if fantasy seems disengaged from reality, one can

spot its entanglement in the ideologies of its day, for example (Grenby 2008, 154). In my opinion, it is this intricate relationship with reality that distinguishes fantasy from other related genres, such as science fiction and dystopia, and at the same time turns it into what I would call an umbrella genre. Science fiction novels and dystopias also deal with the connections between the real and the fantastic, just from different perspectives.

While, for example, magical realism – e.g. Jorge Luis Borges and Gabriel García Márquez – presents events that are unbelievable but still realistic, science fiction works on a similar basis, yet the other way around: "If magic realists revel in the impossibility of the things they show, goading readers into accepting them in spite of their better judgement, science fiction writers delight in the plausibility of their fantasies, daring their readers to disbelieve things which have been made to seem almost true" (Grenby 2008, 150). Dystopias, or anti-utopias, are often seemingly indistinguishable from science fiction works or combine the elements of the two genres (cf. Cuddon 1999, 960), proving that they, too, are a type of fantasy, with an eye on apocalyptical themes and worlds.

The difficulties of defining fantasy let the genre be best characterized by an in-betweenness, that is, between genres, different canons, between high or low literature, the literary canon or popular fiction. It may well be due to this liminality that young adult readers find contemporary fantasy works so intriguing. This is part of the reason they can identify with the world of fantasy so easily. Young adults do not necessarily want and get a mirror to the world in these novels, what they are looking for is much rather an experience, a form of living. The works they read connect them, "literature becomes a way of sharing lives together, to communicate sorrows and joys" (Sinha 2018, III).

If we look at some of the bestselling authors and novels out on the market for young adult readers, for example, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, or Meg Cabot's *Abandon* trilogy, we can see that all of them belong to the umbrella genre of fantasy, being either pure fantasies or dystopias, dealing with slightly different topics, but all related to the coming of age. All of these novels were awarded different prizes, usually within the category of best children's book in the case of *Harry Potter* and *The Giver*, with Meg Cabot's *Abandon* labelled as young adult fiction. Thus, if we were to talk about the canon of young adult fiction, the above-mentioned novels would be part of it. In the consumer society of the twenty-first century, only a text that is widely read, one that has enduring literary quality and has influenced the field, can be considered canonical (cf. Malo-Juvera and Hill 2020, 6). In this respect, the novels to be discussed here are representative of the category of contemporary young adult fiction.

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* are both situated at the centre of the canon of young adult literature (Malo-Juvera and Hill 2020,

6–13). They engage readers in lived or imagined teenage experiences and despite the point of view – third-person narrative – enable identification, bring about empathy with the narrator and/or the main character. Young adult fiction always deals with the dominant norms of the society that the protagonists have to traverse (Malo-Juvera and Hill 2020, 3).

Though the first three volumes of the *Harry Potter* series are recommended for children from seven to ten, the other volumes are meant for older generations, entering adolescence. At the time the story begins, Harry's character is eleven years of age, and he turns seventeen when the story ends. Young people tend to read about people of their age or older, which would mean that the series is actually roughly read by youngsters between seven and sixteen or seventeen years old. However, in spite of the early age at which they read these stories, their effect can be seen later on, even during their university years. We have many students whose favourite book is *Harry Potter*, probably due to the fact that they could grow up together with the characters of the novels and consider these as part of their own development. The themes of the volumes become more serious as the story unfolds and as the characters grow older. The shift occurs in book four when Harry witnesses the return of the Dark Lord and the death of one of his schoolmates. When his parents were killed, he was only an infant, not conscious of what was happening. This time, with Cedric Diggory's passing away, Harry understands the meaning of death (cf. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*):

> He had no memory of ever being hugged like this, as though by a mother. The full weight of everything he had seen that night seemed to fall in upon him as Mrs. Weasley held him to her. His mother's face, his father's voice, the sight of Cedric, dead on the ground all started spinning in his head until he could hardly bear it, until he was screwing up his face against the howl of misery fighting to get out of him. (Rowling 2000, 714)

In the next book – *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix* –, he is already able to see the Thestrals too, which only those are capable of who have met death.

As far as the type of fantasy is concerned, in the case of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, we partly have to deal with the Tolkienian line, that is, immersive fantasy, or mythopoeia, using Tolkien's terminology. Rowling creates a new world using known creatures and characters from world mythology and combines them in creative ways, adding new elements to them as well. However, when the story starts, we are not fully aware of this fantastic world, yet it is as if Harry were part of our everyday environment; thus, the first mode, that of the portal quest, is also present. Closely connected to this type of fantasy is also the intrusive category through the presence of the Dursleys and their point of view concerning the magic world. The Dursleys are horrified whenever magic events or phenomena

happen; however, these do not alter their everyday life, which is another sign of the intrusive category. At the same time, Rowling's series fits into the fourth category listed by Mendlesohn, namely liminal fantasy. In this case, there is a borderline between the real and the magic world. The characters of the real world, e.g. the muggles, may not notice the presence of magic traits around them, yet they can still perceive the presence of wonder. On the other hand, characters belonging to the magic realm take good care of not being disclosed to men of flesh and blood.

Lois Lowry's novel *The Giver* was awarded the Newbery Medal in 1994 and was a bestseller at the time, ranked eleventh on the list of the American Library Association in the 1990s, being one of the four best children's novels according to a 2012 survey. The protagonist of the novel is a twelve-year-old boy, Jonas. Thus, we can conclude that, again, the target readers would be aged between seven-eight and twelve-thirteen; if we take the identification criterion of the readers into account, just at the beginning of adolescence.

As far as the genre is concerned, in the case of Lowry's novel, we are dealing with a piece of fantasy, yet this time the fantastic world is of a dystopic sort. It depicts a world in which communities are isolated from each other, where we cannot speak about traditional families but families consisting of nurturers instead of parents, to whom the children are not biologically connected. There is a Committee of the Elders who assign each child a work at the age of twelve. This way, twelve becomes a threshold in the life of children within the novel. This is when they officially become adults and have to undergo an initiation. Jonas does not get a usual place of work, as it is called the next Receiver of Memory; the novel then follows his traineeship. His assignment leads to his alienation from his friends and is extremely difficult because of the high level of responsibility he has to take. The Receiver of the Memory bears all the history of humanity, which no one else has access to. The other members of the community are void of memories and do not know what they have been trained to do; their whole way of life is a lie lacking human values and feelings such as love or free thinking. The Giver, Jonas's teacher and mentor, and Jonas decide to give people back their memories. At the end of the novel, Jonas flees together with baby Gabriel, the next Receiver; however, we do not get to know whether their escape was successful or not. Yet, memories return to the community once they have left the territory: "Behind him, across vast distances of space and time, from the place he had left, he thought he heard music too" (Lowry 2014, 189).

Lowry later expanded the series to a quartet, adding *Gathering Blue* (2000), *Messenger* (2004), and *Son* (2012) to the series. The latter ones are already labelled young adult fiction – Jonas appears in them, and so his development can be followed, just like in Harry Potter's case. The fantastic world created by Lowry manifests itself in the form of an imagined future. The dystopia also

allows the readers to identify with the protagonists, however, in a different way to that of Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. This is not a magic realm with mythic creatures and the mythic battle of good versus evil but a dehumanized world – "it underscores the dangers of creating a peaceful and egalitarian society at the price of rigid conformity that stigmatizes not only intense emotion and spontaneity but also privacy and creativity" (Trupe 2006, 126). In this world, one has to regain emotions and basic human values.

A third type of contemporary fantasy for young adult readers is represented by Meg Cabot's *Abandon* trilogy, which consists of the volumes *Abandon* (2011), *Underworld* (2012), and *Awaken* (2013). The protagonist of the series is a seventeen-year-old girl named Pierce Oliviera, and thus the addressed age group is presumably between fourteen-fifteen and from seventeen to twenty. The trilogy fits into the mode of the portal quest, since the fantastic appears in the text after Pierce's drowning: "Once, I died. No one is really sure how long I was gone. I was flatline for over an hour. […] That's the first thing everyone wants to know when they find out I died and came back" (Cabot 2011, 2). The moment she finds herself in the Underworld, where she then escapes from, she is followed in everyday life by the Furies and Hades. Thus, just as with Rowling's *Harry Potter*, we can speak of the intrusive category as well since magic, unreal elements intrude into everyday life with Pierce's return into the world of the living.

Cabot's series is built upon the ancient myth of Persephone and Hades and discusses themes such as death, love, sexual relationships, and friendship. Death and going to "Heaven" or "Hell" afterwards are associated in the trilogy with the thought of every action having its consequences. The fact that Pierce falls in love with John is not simply another love story between two young people but is a proof of acknowledging that we are mortal, the world and we are in a continuous change, and everyone dies. Pierce's battle with her foes is an example of real-life situations, which can be unpleasant. However, she finds the strength in herself to protect her world and learns how to adapt to new challenges. Pierce does not only embody the archetypes of the immature child and the maiden but also that of the independent leader. Her path is of the kind that young adult female readers can identify with. Having lost the comfort of being a child and of not finding her place in a new, unknown environment, the story gives a hand in the process of growing up, in the process of individuation.

A further taboo the trilogy deals with is sexuality and sexual relationships. Through Pierce and John's relationship, the readers are confronted with the roles of dominancy. It is only after John lets go of his dominant male pride and Pierce accepts her role as female partner that they can talk about a serious relationship with children, parenthood, and marriage.

Lastly, Cabot's trilogy is also notable due to its new interpretation of the ancient myth of Persephone, Demeter, and Hades: "You don't have to worry about that

girl, though. She's just a character from a book. Her name was Persephone, and her being kidnapped by Hades, the god of the dead, and taken to live with him in the Underworld was how the Greeks explained the changing of the seasons. It's what's known as an origin myth. What happened to me? That's no myth" (Cabot 2011, 1). This way the author brings a piece of old culture closer to the young generations and applies it to their world. She uses a style and language that are enjoyable for adolescents and can show them patterns that work in their everyday struggles.

The above-mentioned young adult novels are well-known international bestsellers, on the one hand, following in the footsteps of classic canonical literature, on the other hand, setting the path through experimenting with old and new creative techniques and subjects for further accomplishments within the field. Some of them, for example, *Harry Potter* and *The Giver*, have also been adapted and brought to the big screen. Within the genre of modern and contemporary fantasy, there are thus certain patterns that characterize works written for adolescents. Most of these patterns are based on one or on a mixture of the four modes of fantasy mentioned by Mendlesohn and are closely connected to Tolkien's theory of (sub)creation as a role model.

Transylvanian writer, film critic, and editor Balázs Zágoni – born in Cluj-Napoca in 1975 – also applies these patterns in his two-part series *Black Light* meant for young adult readers – namely *A gömb* (The Sphere, 2018) and *Odaát* (On the Other Side*,* 2019). The author himself considers the novels heterotopic ones; next to the presence of the fantastic elements, they contain sci-fi and dystopic traces. From this perspective, his series is best comparable to Lois Lowry's already discussed *Giver Quartet*. The author started out from the question what life would be like in this region in fifty years' time. The protagonist is thirteen-year-old Vic, a boy who lives with his father in a mushroom colony outside the city. Vic encounters a sphere, which is a strange transparent entity that saves his life and with which he can communicate telepathically: "The Sphere is the opposite of drones in all aspects, though each can fly. […] It is a flawless, transparent thing. About as big as I am"[1] (Zágoni 2018, 28). Throughout the novels, Vic struggles to choose between his family and the benefits stemming from his friendship with the mysterious sphere. While the plot is adventurous, it cannot really be considered a novelty based on its structure; however, it discusses problems that are of interest and are closely connected to Transylvania and East-Central Europeanism due to its language, for instance. It handles food and fuel shortage, climate change, the falling apart of the European Union and the emerging city-states, the differences and divergence between cities and colonies, or the rapid technological developments:

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[1]   Translated by the author of the present paper.

It is true that three years ago, when horsefly drones appeared, they caused huge distress in all the colonies. There had been those tiny drones in use earlier with four small propellers, which had been developed decades before in order to deliver not too big items to houses. Then I noticed that these drones would fly more often towards us, the woods and the colonies, where it is uncommon for anyone to order anything at all.[2] (Zágoni 2018, 7–8)

All these subjects are seen through the eyes of the first-person narrator, Vic himself, who among these troubling times is confronted with the everyday problems of teenagers, family relationships and love, but also with having to grow up quickly and taking adult-like decisions.

The first part of the series, *The Sphere*, was awarded the best young adult novel in Hungary in 2019, recommended for ages twelve and above. It was a great success both in Transylvania and in Hungary. A slight criticism hinted at the choice of first-person narration in the first novel, which was changed in the second one to letters by Vic retold by Laila. While it is easier to identify with a first-person narrator, it seems improbable for a thirteen-year-old to be able to relate the happenings with the precision of an adult.

In fact, out of the four authors, Rowling and Lowry chose third-person limited omniscient narrators, which also make identification possible but at the same time give an outside view of the happenings. The last two writers, Cabot and Zágoni, opted for first-person narration, yet, while in the case of Pierce she is more credible because of her age, Vic is less convincing. Nevertheless, each of the authors finds it important to create characters that teenagers, i.e. the target readers, can easily identify with, which is another essential feature of young adult novels.

Summing up, based on the prevailing academic studies and the examples presented in this paper, young adult fiction is a highly prolific field worth keeping an eye on because it both mirrors and influences teenage readership. This field is in a continuous change just as the targeted group, liminal and often not taken seriously exactly due to its in-betweenness. The most important aspects that have to be taken into consideration when discussing young adult fiction are the public, the group of age, the topic handled age-specific, the style and language, the type of narrator and genre-specific patterns, as well as the way they build myths and mythic patterns into the narrative. The latter aspect proves and ensures the presence and continuation of literary tradition from the beginnings up to the present, engulfing the literary canon and popular fiction as well. At the same time, it highlights the existence of basic building blocks – i.e. mythic elements – that underlie human thinking and thus shape everyday life too. This way, a close reading of these books also makes it possible for us readers, regardless of age, to become more conscious of the patterns that influence our thoughts and daily lives.

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2   Translated by the author of the present paper.

Only time can tell which of the nowadays-popular young adult novels will persist and become part of the canon; however, from the perspective of the present time, the discussed books are certainly popular and influential among teenagers. Some of them – e.g. *Harry Potter* or *The Giver* – have already become part of the school curriculum or can at least be chosen instead of or next to classic young adult novels, precisely because of their popularity and actuality. Readers can relate to them more easily and enter a dialogue based on them. These novels often manage to make even those youngsters read who are reluctant to do so when it comes to mandatory books. In the age of computer games, television, and the Internet, this fact is definitely welcome by most teachers and parents.

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Prometheus in the Hungarian National Bloodline.
A Theory of the Origin of the Hungarians in Ferenc Otrokocsi Foris's *Origines Hungaricae…*

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Abstract. Although the end of the seventeenth century is considered as the beginning of the Hungarian scientific historiography, it does not mean that the famous mediaeval origin theories of the Hungarian nation disappeared. On the contrary, they continued to influence the historical thinking for many centuries. The well-known legendary and biblical theories get a new possible interpretation. The Protestant priest converted to Catholicism Ferenc Otrokocsi Fóris (1648–1718), using his distinguished education (he had learned and researched in Utrecht, Franeker, Oxford, and Rome), attempted to extend the scope of these theories with a new character: the famous *Prometheus* from Greek mythology. The aim of our paper is to present a critical analysis of Otrokcsi's theory and of the sources he used in his work entitled *Origines Hungaricae…* (1693).

Keywords: Greek mythology, Hungarian prehistory, identity

Research on identity is as old as mankind itself, and, although its forms of manifestation and definition (or indefinability) have changed throughout the centuries, in-depth self-discovery and, consequently, positioning oneself within a given social context has always been one of the major existential questions of the individual (Assmann 1992, Kertész 2019, Harmatta 1996). The Delphic maxim "know thyself" is the first school for the individual searching for knowledge of him-/herself (from Oedipus through Shakespeare to Tolkien). The concise definition (*gnothi seauton*) has retained its relevance throughout the centuries. Erikson successfully summarizes the essential elements of this complex phenomenon, highlighting the constructive factors of individuality (e.g. language, religion, origin) (Erikson 1977); Jan Assmann posits that collective

identity can appear as a result of the encounter between groups, societies, norms, mentalities, and values of different characters (Assmann 1992; 1996, 130). Historical myths and historical narratives have always played an important role in forming national identity (Smith 1999). As Homi K. Bhabha puts it:

> Nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye. Such an image of the nation – or narration – might seem impossibly romantic and excessively metaphorical, but it is from those traditions of political thought and literary language that the nation emerges as a powerful historical idea in the west. An idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force. This is not to deny the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress, the narcissism of self-generation, the primeval present of the Volk. (Bhabha 1990, 1)

István Bitskey draws attention to the role of historical narratives in forming national identity in Europe in general and Central Europe in particular and emphasizes the importance of contrastive studies on the phenomenon (Bitskey 2007). In his writing, Bitskey analyses the different forms of identity existing in the Carpathian Basin in the early modern times (from humanist patriotism through local identities to Protestant and Catholic national identities). Apart from religious belonging, the identity of the nobility was also influenced by the belief that they are actually descendants of an ancient belligerent people, the Scythians. Basing on written sources, historiographers elaborated the Scythian–Hun–Hungarian concept of ethnogenesis as early as in the eleventh– twelfth centuries, the influence of which can be traced in subsequent centuries as well. The main source of the theory on the Scythian ethnogenesis (proudly declared and accepted by the nobility of the Middle Ages and modern times) is *Regino of Prüm*, a monk whose seminal work entitled *Chronicon* (889) is the first writing written in the Latin language that provides a detailed (although not fully reliable) description of the Hungarians plundering the area along the eastern border of the Frankish Empire (Regino 1890). He writes the following: "They came from the Scythian provinces and from the marshes that were immeasurably extended by the flooding of the Thanais" (Regino 1890, 131). Of course, the author does not assume that the Hungarians are Scythians. He only mentions that they migrated westwards from the dwelling spaces of the Scythians. Following *Chronica Hungarorum* (1448) by János Thuróczi, István Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* (1514) settled the question regarding the identity of the nobility for centuries, the quintessence of which was the Scythian–Hun origins of the Hungarians (Szovák 2021, 179).

Historiography had an important role in the dissemination of the theory (Ábrahám 2012), a compelling example of which is Ferenc Otrokocsi Flóris's work entitled *Origines*. Otrokocsi, regarded as a prodigy of the seventeenth-century scientific life, prides himself with an unusual and spectacular life. He was born in Otročok (present-day Slovakia) in 1648. After leaving the college of Sárospatak (Knapp 2006, 201), the talented young man continued his studies abroad. First, he travelled to Utrecht (1671), where he learnt from the most prominent professors of that time. Later he returned to Hungary, where he worked as a Calvinist priest. His life, too, was affected by the violent Counter-Reformation of those years: between 1675 and 1676, together with other Protestant priests, he was sentenced to galley slavery. After completing his sentence, he carried out research in Utrecht and Oxford, and then, returning to Hungary, he worked as a priest again. At his last place of service, in Košice, he was accused of collaboration with the Catholics and removed from his position (Szabados n. y., n. p.). After that, he set out on another journey to Amsterdam, Oxford, and Franeker (Bujtás 2018, 127) to continue his activity as a researcher. In Franeker, besides works promoting the idea of reconciliation between religions, he published his seminal work on linguistics and history entitled *Origines* (1693).

After that, he returned to Košice, where – not being trusted by the Calvinists anymore – he enjoyed the Jesuits' support and converted to Catholicism. After Trnava, he travelled to Vienna and Rome (Galla n. y., n. p.), where he studied theology and law and obtained the doctorate in both sciences (Knapp 2006, 202). Returning home, he lived in Trnava, where he worked as an archivist and teacher until his death. Although it is difficult to judge Otrokocsi's religious frailty based on the circumstances characteristic of the centuries to come, Éva Knapp rightly points out that the limits of religious identity in Otrokocsi's time could be identified differently as compared to the nineteenth century, in which, in all probability, apart from the religious identity, fights for power also had a decisive role (2006, 203). He is known to have died in Trnava on 1 October 1717 (Galla n. y., n. p.). The field of science that required no compromises from (the Calvinist and Catholic) Otrokocsi was historiography.

His scientific interest was primarily focused on theology and history. There is little information on the circumstances of his death. Although the beginnings of scientific historiography are linked to other names (such as Melchior Inchoffer, Sámuel Timon, and György Pray), Otrokocsi also had an active role in the research of sources carried out by the Jesuits and made an undisputable contribution to the elaboration of the Scythian–Hun–Avar theory of ethnogenesis[1] (Szabados 2006, 26; László 1987; Pálfi and Tanos 2006). He published his main work in Franeker during his Protestant period, but it proved to be useful among the Catholics as well, being regarded as an outstanding achievement of the Hungarian scientific life of that time.

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1   For the origins of this theory, see Kulcsár (1973).

The work, entitled *Origines Hungaricae, seu liber, quo vera nationis Hungaricae origo et antiquitas, e veterum monumentis et linguis praecipuis panduntur* [The Hungarian Origins, or a Book in Which the True Origin and Antiquity of the Hungarian Nation is Published Based on the Ancient Documents and Main Languages], sets the Hungarian ethnogenesis into the focus of its investigations. Also, it is important to mention that the work is a proof of the author's remarkable knowledge of foreign languages, who tries to make use of his skills acquired in mastering biblical and ancient languages in order to work out the theory of the Hungarian ethnogenesis (Tóth 2012, 224). He identified correspondences between Hungarian and a number of European and ancient languages, often providing etymological and lexicon-like enumerations and analyses. Not without any bias, relying on his etymological investigations, Otrokocsi did not exclude the possibility that the ten tribes of Israel deported by the Assyrians were assimilated into the Hungarians[2] (Otrokocsi 1693, XXIX). Adopting the findings of earlier theories on languages, he held the position that European languages derive from the Scythian (Otrokocsi 1963, XV–XXVI). From here, it takes only one step to posit that the Hungarian is the primaeval language all European languages derive from. As far as the origins of the Hungarians is concerned, Otrokocsi's position coincides with the theories that can be found in the chronicles; what is more, he even reiterates these theories (Szovák 2021, 179–180). Otrokocsi skilfully manipulates the possible variants of the biblical theory of origins. In the first lines of the book, he posits that one who is familiar with history cannot deny the Scythian origins of the Hungarians: "No one with an even moderate knowledge of history can deny that the Hungarians are of Scythian origin…"[3] (Otrokocsi 1693, 3). In the preface to the readers (*praefatio ad lectorem*), he emphasizes that those who carried out research into the origins of the Hungarians neither had proper knowledge of languages (which is a major problem) nor were they Hungarians, and they did not speak Hungarian properly at all.[4]

In what follows, the author does not continue to present the approach to the topic taken from the chronicles. Instead, he goes on to tell Prometheus's story, who rebels against Zeus, fails, and, as punishment, is bound to a rock on the

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2   The Hebrew language had its own authority, which is why they were so fond of linking their own mother tongue with the ancient biblical language (Borst 1960, 132; cf. Borst 1957).

3   Hungaros Scythicae esse originis, nemo qui Historias vel mediocriter novit, negare potest…

4   "Neque etiam potuere illi, Origines Hungarorum veras ex asse tradere; scilicet e subsidio linguarum, quod hic maxime requiritur. Ut enim taceam, Hebraicae linguae et Chaldaicae raram eorum temporibus cognitionem; id quod principale hic e mediis est, Linguae videlicet Hungaricae exacta et vernacula scientia, eos defecit. Nullus enim eorum, purus fuit Hungarus" (Otrokocsi 1693, I). [Nor was it even possible for them to deliver the true origins of the Hungarians from nothing; that is to say, aided by language, which would have been highly required. For the knowledge of the Hebrew and Chaldaic languages was rare those days. However, the most important thing here was that they lacked the exact and vernacular knowledge of the Hungarian language. None of them was of pure Hungarian origin.]

land of the Scythians in the Caucasus: "Nota est celebris fabula gentilium, de Prometheo, ad Jovis imperium in Scythia vincto, juxta montem Caucasum, vel verius, in tractu Scythiae Europaeae remotius a Caucaso"[5] (Otrokocsi 1693, 3). Otrokocsi enumerates several authors whose works are referred to in his writing, among whom we can mention Aeschylus, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Ptolemy, or Flavius Josephus (Otrokocsi 1693, 3; Harmatta 1941). The author mentions a number of possible theories, some of which, he admits, are hardly acceptable. For example, a theory holds that the Scythians derive from a virgin (Otrokocsi 1693, 7). In Chapter VI, he provides a detailed analysis on the possible geographical position and extent of Scythia, using as source the authors mentioned above (Otrokocsi 1693, 10–11). He also refers to *Philippus Cluverius* (1627), a well-known geographer of the seventeenth century (Otrokocsi 1693, 11). Chapter XI expounds on the origins of the Scythian language and the languages of the peoples neighbouring them. He even includes the language of the Gipsies into the analysis (Otrokocsi 1693, 18–19). The most significant part of the book is Chapter XII, where he expounds on a genealogical analysis (Otrokocsi 1693, 19–21). Chapter XIII culminates in a remark according to which even the pagans admitted that Prometheus was the forefather of the Scythians: "Ipsi Gentiles quoque vetustissima sua fabula, agnoscunt Prometheum fuisse Scytharum progenitorem"[6] (Otrokocsi 1693, 21). The same ancient sources prove that the place of Prometheus's agony cannot be located anywhere else than in Scythia (although some authors mistakenly place it into the Caucasus), the most compelling evidence on which is provided by Aeschylus's drama *Chained Prometheus* – says Otrokocsi (1693, 22). Examining the text of the drama, it can be noticed that the word "Scythian" appears in the second line, for setting the scene: "We have reached the land at the furthest bounds of earth, the Scythian marches, a wilderness where no mortals live" (Aeschylus 2009, 445). At first sight, it is logical that the place of Prometheus's sufferings is Scythia. However, the problem is that research has proved that Ancient Greeks' knowledge on the geography of Scythia was rather inaccurate. As Margalit Finkelberg rightly points out:

> The Caucasus is the place where Prometheus' punishment is usually located in Greek tradition. Yet, of all the treatments of the Prometheus legend, it is the one that is ostensibly ignorant of the real location of the Caucasus that transfers Prometheus' punishment to the far north-west end of Europe. Hence, not only the Caucasus but Prometheus himself are misplaced in

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5　　The famous story of the Gentiles about Prometheus is well known – the hero was bound to Jupiter's empire in Scythia, near Mount Caucasus, or rather in the area of European Scythia, farther from the Caucasus.

6　　Even the Gentiles themselves, in their oldest legend, acknowledge that Prometheus was the progenitor of the Scythians.

this version. And this is not all: the Chalybes, traditionally represented as living south of the Black Sea, are now north of it (714–715), and the same is true of the Amazons, who are placed just below the "Caucasus," that is, again, north-west of the Black Sea, and not in their traditional habitat along its southern coast. (724–726)

Moreover, "it is worth remembering in this connection that, being exclusively associated with the specific ridge between the Black Sea and the Caspian, 'Caucasus' was also used by the Greeks as an inclusive term. Thus, when Alexander and his army met a great mountain range on their march east, transferred to it the name 'Caucasus,' or 'Indian Caucasus' together with Prometheus" (Finkelberg 1998, 122).

As Otrokocsi did not consider it persuasive enough for everybody, he raised readers' attention to the fact that Prometheus's son, Deucalion, was also named "the Scythian." Among other researchers, he also holds the position that Deucalion was first referred to as "the Scythian" by *Lucian* (120–180) in his work *De Dea Syria* (Dirven 1997). Although it cannot be denied that the name "Scythian" appears in Lucian's work, editors and researchers of modern times have formed a different position regarding this appellative. In the comments written to the 1967 translation, Roy Darcus remarks that "although Lucian says he has heard the story from the Greeks, the account he gives follows the Babylonian tradition rather than the Greek […] Consequently, Buttmann[7] proposed Sisthes" (Dracus 1967, 63). In Herbert Strong's translation, the appellative "Scythian" does not appear at all. Instead, the sentence in question appears in the following form: "The people, then, allege that it was Deucalion or Sisythus who founded the temple" (Lucian 1913, 50). In his commentaries appended to the Lucianian text, John Garstang remarks the following:

> This version of the deluge, though associated by Lucian's Greek informants with Deucalion, is clearly of eastern origin, having little resemblance to the Greek legend, and much in common with the Babylonian versions […] A fundamental difference is that in the Greek legend only Deucalion and Pyrrah were saved, and mankind was subsequently renewed miraculously in response to the oracle of Themis. Lucian's account of the animals coming in couples has its parallel in the Babylonian text. (Lucian 1913, 51)

The reasoning continues, and Otrokocsi finds another evidence to support his presupposition, arguing in favour of Deucalion's "Scythian" appellative, the *Chronicon Marmoreum* (Jacoby 1904, 1997) dating back to the third century

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7   Although it does not appear in the reference, it is presumably about Buttmann's *Mythologus* (1828).

(Otrokocsi 1693. I. 24–25). It goes without saying that Otrokocsi also included one of the remarkable epigraphic discoveries of the sixteenth century, the Parian Chronicle, in the sources of evidence to sustain his position. The marble stele containing the chronology of Greek history was found on Paros and was exhibited in Oxford in 1667 (Jacoby 1904, 1997). Otrokocsi, who was carrying out research here in the 1690s, had probably seen the remarkable discovery. The source of the information inscribed on the stele has not been clarified even to this day. Scientists, however, agree that the accuracy of the entries referring to the years that date back to ancient, mythical times is difficult or impossible to be proved, their main role being only to ensure chronological order (Young and Steinmann 2012). Rotstein remarks the following:

> The Parian Marble, as many have noted, may be disappointing as a historical source. What is more, chronology often differs from what we know from other sources. Nevertheless, to readers, ancient or modern, perusing it from beginning to end, the Parian Marble offers a compact version of Panhellenic history. In that sense, the inscription not only offers a chronology, as originally intended, but at the same time a historical overview. If read in this way, a national hero emerges and a plot seems to form. The hero is Hellas, at times identified with Athens; the plot is the rise and fall of political powers. (Rotstein 2016, 138–139)

Otrokocsi's reasoning is simple: if the son is Scythian, so is the father: "Si filius Scytha fuit, ergo et pater" (Otrokocsi 1693, 22). Moreover, he finds an even more interesting proof in the scholion written to Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica* (Radová 2009, 86), where it is claimed that Prometheus was the king of the Scythians: "Prometheum Scytharum Regem fuisse" (Otrokocsi 1693, 22). Owing to continuous floods, he could not provide food to the population, and therefore was toppled: "qui cum res ad victum necessarias, propter continuas Aquilae fluminis inundationes praebere non posset, ab illis vinctus est"[8] (Otrokocsi 1693, 22). Also, he is of the opinion that Iapetos was Prometheus's son, who could not be anyone else than the biblical Japheth, Noah's son. A compelling evidence to support the first statement could be Hesiod's *Theogony*. Otrokocsi also refers to it: "Now Iapetus took to wife the neat-ankled maid Clymene, daughter of Ocean, and went up with her into one bed. And she bore him a stout-hearted son, Atlas: also she bore very glorious Menoetius and clever Prometheus" (Hesiod 1936, n. p.). He rightly points out that there are close correspondences between the texts from the Old Testament (Genesis and Chronicles) and those belonging to early Greek literature (mythology). Researchers' opinions differ regarding the sources

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8   Who, since he could not provide the things necessary for life owing to the continuous floods of the River Aquila, was bound by them…

and direction of these correspondences (which one had an influence on the other), but the majority of specialists agree about the fact that these correspondences really existed. Presuppositions regarding earlier correspondences are problematic because they are probably inaccurate. As Louden points out in his monograph published in 2019: "Iapetos is grandfather of Deucalion, the Greek character corresponding to Noah (and the earlier Utnapishtim)" (Louden 2019, 41). This makes it evident that there are striking incongruities as far as the correspondence and bloodline of characters are concerned. Modern research considers Noah as Deucalion's biblical correspondent, who is father of the biblical Japheth, while Deucalion is the grandson of the mythological Iapetos. Although this is far from being a seamless correspondence, it is clearly visible that both Magog's and Prometheus's father was Japheth, or Iapetos. Therefore, he mentions two French Protestant authors who hold the opinion that the heathen Prometheus is nobody else than Japheth's second son, Magog: "Salmasius et Bochartus existimant Prometheum Gentilium ipsissimum fuisse Magogum, secundum nempe Iapheti filium"[9] (Otrokocsi 1693, 23). French philologist Claudius Salmasius (1588–1653) had an undisputed role in recognizing the fact that European languages can be traced back to a common Indo-European language (Önnerfors 1994). As nothing was known about this common language, it was identified with the Scythian language. *Geographia Sacra seu Phaleg et Canaan* was a popular Protestant biblical exegesis published by Samuel Bochartus in 1646. As Otrokocsi does not provide an exact text reference, it can only be hypothesized that he alludes to the theory expounded on in Book 1, Chapter 2 of the exegetical work mentioned, where, based on Hebrew etymology, Bochartus proves that the biblical Magog is identical with the mythological Prometheus (Bochartus 1681, 13–14). Otrokocsi finds this conclusion quite unacceptable, and jokingly remarks that even though Prometheus is not Iapetus's son, he might be his grandson (Otrokocsi 1693, 23–24). These two sources contributed with nothing new because attempts to regard the Hungarians as descendants of a biblical people and to derive them from Magog is one of the earliest objectives of Hungarian historiography. Mediaeval chronicles also regard the Hungarians as descendants of Noah's beloved son, Iapetus. Anonymus, the chronicler of King Béla III, even draws a sketchy genealogy: "The first king of Scythia was Magog, son of Japheth, and this people were called after him Magyar" (Anonymus 2010, 7). The mediaeval chronicles prove that the biblical origins of the Hungarians has never been a neatly elaborated theory. The *Chronicon Pictum* tries to justify the Japhetic theory:

> Whence it is clear for all to see that the words of those are not true who
> say that Hunor and Magor, the fathers of the Hungarians, were the sons of

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9   Salmasius and Bochartus think that Prometheus was Magogus, the Gentile himself, the second son of Japheth.

Nimrod, who was the son of Cush, who was the son of Kham, who was cursed by Noah. For then the Hungarians would not be of the seed of Japheth, as says the blessed Jerome; nor at any time did Nimrod live near the river Tanais, which is to the east, but he lived towards the seas of the ocean. (Kálti 1337–38, n. p.)

To sum up, Otrokocsi holds that Prometheus is the son of Japheth (more precisely Iapetus), the progenitor of the Scythians, whose son, Deucalion, already a real Scythian, could be the equivalent of the biblical Magog (by contrast, present-day research claims him to be Noah's equivalent). Although Otrokocsi's argumentation is rather erratic, and three hundred years later almost all his statements can be refuted, this clergyman – eager to present the Hungarian ethnogenesis with all its splendour – did not intend to add another work on Hungarian history to the ones written on the same topic in the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries (Szovák 2021). Instead, he tried to provide historiography a scientific basis. While it is true that Hungarian scientific historiography is linked to names such as György Pray or István Katona, the very first attempts were made by the "Protestant-Catholic" Otrokocsi. Endowed with distinguished education and outstanding qualifications, his aim was to prove the ancient origins of the Hungarian nation, placing it onto the map of ancient European nations. Although this is an objective that the mediaeval chroniclers also aimed to achieve, Otrokocsi, along the ancient Hungarian gesta and biblical roots, made attempts to prove that the Hungarians are related with European mythical figures through their Scythian ancestors.[10] This made it possible for the seventeenth–century nobility's cohesive identity to step on a superior level because, through the Scythian bloodline, the Hungarians could not only be the descendants of reputable ancient peoples, but they were also sons of Prometheus, Iapetus's son; and along the Scythian Deucalion line, close relationship could be demonstrated with civilizations of high culture, such as the Greeks and biblical Jews, which at a certain level was an attempt to prove the ancient character of the Scythian language, as well as the close relationship between Hebrew and Hungarian. All these objectives were triggered by the nobility's need to assert national identity, which also facilitated Otrokocsi's Catholicization, together with the *Hungarus attitude*, an outstanding representative of which was Otrokocsi, besides Matthias Bel (Tóth 2012, 234). Otrokocsi's Prometheus theory had an influence on the works of other representatives of Hungarian historiography such as Matthias Bel or István Horváth.

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10   In that period, many linguists and historians alike tried to link the origin of their own people to the ancient Scythians. See Borst (1957) and Hegedűs (2003).

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Existential Concerns in Anton Chekhov's Short Stories

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Abstract. Existential philosophy addressed questions that either had been overlooked by traditional philosophy for a long period of time (e.g. the individual's experience of anxiety in the face of death, the failure of rational thinking and science to inquire essential aspects of human life) or had resurfaced again following the disappointment caused by the destructions and absurdity of the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century (e.g. questions pertaining to the meaningfulness/meaninglessness of the human endeavour and of human life in general). Russian realist novelists Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Leo Tolstoy are often invoked among the earliest existentialist thinkers, along with philosophers Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. Drawing on the works of philosophers Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker, this paper will examine how the existentialist preoccupation with death anxiety, ethics, and authenticity is represented in two short stories by Anton Chekhov, one of Dostoyevsky's and Tolstoy's younger contemporary writers.

Keywords: Chekhov, existentialist philosophy, science scepticism, death anxiety

Introduction

The term existentialism encompasses various philosophies flourishing in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, which emphasize the concreteness and context-embedded nature of human existence. Under the circumstances of uncertainty created by the two world wars, existentialism was moved to focus on the negative aspects of life: pain, frustration, sickness, and death come into the spotlight of philosophical inquiry.

Intellectual historians trace back the roots of existential thinking as early as fourth-fifth century theologian St Augustine's claim that there exists no

unbreakable truth out there waiting to be discovered and understood by mankind. Rather, finding truth is the result of an inner, self-exploratory journey, for it resides within the individual, not outside. Almost fifteen centuries later, in a somehow similar vein but tinged with pessimistic overtones, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche contests the divine origin of all values and argues that absolute truth is just an illusion.

Another nineteenth-century scholar, Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard concludes that the most frequently employed truth-seeking instrument, human reason is inadequate to comprehend the mystery and meaning of life.

Although nineteenth-century Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky did not leave behind straightforward philosophical works, philosophical reflections on the nature of truth and the meaning of life pervade his entire literary oeuvre. Dostoyevsky's existential nihilism arises from the conviction that God does not exist, moral is relative, life has no sense, and the most one can aspire for is living an authentic life.

Twentieth-century French writer Jean-Paul Sartre explicitly identified himself as an existentialist condensing his ontology in the following maxim: existence precedes essence. In Sartre's concept, in the absence of an omnipotent creator, "life has no meaning a priori. Before you come alive, life is nothing; it's up to you to give a meaning, and value is nothing else but the meaning that you choose" (Sartre 1947, 58). The freedom of choosing our own life meaning and values, however, comes at the price of total responsibility: we are fully responsible for developing our authentic selves, setting our own values, and for the actions resulting from our choices. Sartre emphasized the importance of death consciousness (i.e. a constant awareness of life's finitude) in guiding our actions and helping us to distinguish between the trivial and the essential.

Sartre's contemporary and compatriot novelist, Albert Camus, also focused his philosophy around existential problems although he rejected to be identified as an existentialist. His main preoccupations remained questions pertaining to the inevitability of death, individual freedom and responsibility, the absurdity of enduring life in spite of its fundamental meaninglessness, which led him to seriously consider suicide as a reasonable answer to the incongruity of life (Camus 1955).

In my paper, I will argue that several of the main claims of existentialism are strongly represented in Anton Chekhov's stories. Actually, contemplation on such questions plays a crucial role in many of his works – a point discussed in a respectable number of studies written on Chekhov (e.g. Senderovich 1987, Rayfield 1999, Regéczi 2000, Coptseva 2008, Corrigan 2011, Grevtsova 2011, Tabachnikova 2012, Nankov 2013).[1] The aim of this paper is to provide further

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1   From the works mentioned above, Rayfield's book does not focus on Chekhov's existential
    themes, but it points out elements of existentialism in both Chekhov's plays and his short

support for the claim that the Russian author deserves to be considered among the forerunners of existential thinking.

Existential Psychology: Ernest Becker

In order to review some of the main tenets of existentialism, I will invoke American cultural anthropologist Ernest Becker, more precisely his book *The Denial of Death* (1973), for which he posthumously won the Pulitzer Prize in 1974. Becker, who was labelled as a melancholic existentialist, outlined a psychoanalytic version of existentialism.

He starts his reasoning with the assertion that – contrary to Freud's view – consciousness of death is the primary repression, rather than sexuality. He deliberately uses graphic language to deliver the bare reality about the human condition:

> The creatureliness is the terror. Once admit that you are a defecating creature and you invite the primeval ocean of creature anxiety to flood over you. But it is more than creature anxiety, it is also man's anxiety, the anxiety that results from the human paradox that man is an animal who is conscious of his animal limitation. Anxiety is the result of the perception of the truth of one's condition. What does it mean to be a self-conscious animal? The idea is ludicrous, if it is not monstrous. It means to know that one is food for worms. (Becker 1973, 87)

This awareness of the gloomy prospects awaiting all beings gives rise to a basic need specific to the human species: the desire to contribute to something outside the individual, which will live on even after one dies.

In order to repress death anxiety and to render significance to their lives, humans develop denial systems in the form of different types of heroism: religious heroism (which essentially loses its significance in an atheistic world), cultural heroism (including art, science, social activism), personal heroism (manifesting itself in the way one manages his/her personal life, including family relationships, social status, but also in building one's character).

Becker invokes Sándor Ferenczi, one of Freud's closest disciples, who claimed that "Character-traits are, so to speak, secret psychoses" (Ferenczi 1950, 291). So, according to Becker and Ferenczi, personality is nothing but a mask that keeps

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stories. Regéczy, Corrigan, Grevtsova, and Tabachnikova explore Chekhov's philosophical stance in general and his ties with existentialism in particular. Coptseva discusses the theme of "existence in the face of death" in Chekhov's dramas, while Senderovich and Nankov analyse several of his short stories from an existentialist perspective.

paralysing death anxiety at bay and gives the illusion of stability and coherence. All these defences support the grand illusion of transcending our physical reality, an illusion that we desperately need because "to see the world as it really is is devastating and terrifying" (Becker 1973, 60).

For Becker, the existential paradox consists in the discrepancy between the desperate human condition with all its creatureliness, its finitude, on the one hand, and the symbolic constructions of culture, science, and character designed to efface death anxiety, on the other. The big question is: how does one respond to this existential paradox? According to Becker, there are two options: we either ignore it, and conduct our lives as if this incongruity did not exist, or we become paralysed by anxiety, and develop neurosis. The first option makes it possible for humans to live a healthy, symptom-free life, but considering that this attitude is based on denial and distraction, it may be justified to enclose the word "healthy" in quotation marks. Becker evokes Kierkegaard claiming that to be a "normal cultural man" is to be sick – whether one knows it or not: "there is such a thing as fictitious health" (Kierkegaard 1941, 34). Fictitious health is the reverse of hypochondria: one looks and feels healthy, but in fact s/he is not. Denial systems, then, are adaptive means that spare us from total bewilderment and make life bearable and liveable despite the prospect of physical dissolution and sinking into oblivion.

Chekhov's Existentialist Short Stories

As many of his short stories testify it, existentialist themes like the ones discussed above were among Chekhov's main intellectual preoccupations. In her book written on Chekhov's relations with early existentialist philosophy, Ildikó Regéczi concludes that the writer regarded giving voice to the existentialist question with the deepest possible understanding as the main goal of literature (Regéczi 2000, 56).

The insoluble conflicts arising from the desire to be one's authentic self and the roles imposed by social games, physical and mental suffering, the cultural relativity of mental health, the inadequacy of scientific reasoning to address essential aspects of the human condition, science and philosophy as distractors and defence systems against the terror of looming death become the central themes of short stories like "The Black Monk," "A Medical Case," "Easter Eve," "An Actor's End," "A Nervous Breakdown," "The Man in the Case," "A Dreary Story," or "Ward No. 6." In order to yield a deeper and more thorough analysis, this paper focuses on the last two pieces of this list: the less cited "A Dreary Story" and the more widely known "Ward No. 6."

A Dreary Story (1889)

The short story subtitled "From the Notebook of an Old Man" recounts the end-of-life reflections of sixty-two-year-old medical professor Nikolay Stepanovitch. In the shadow of his impending death, the first-person narrator developed in himself the alertness of a hypochondriac and reacted in utter bewilderment to any sign of physical and mental decline. He was utterly perplexed by his experience of sudden estrangement from everything he had thought his whole life consisted in: his "honoured and distinguished" name (Chekhov 1918, 132) symbolizing the decent social status he had achieved,[2] his family of wife and two children, his colleagues, and the social circles he had previously frequented. Approaching death made him aware of the discrepancy between his symbolic self (his name and carefully moulded character) and his imperfect, failing flesh-and-blood self: "I am myself as dingy and unsightly as my name is brilliant and splendid" (Chekhov 1918, 132). But what alarmed him most was that he came to harbour feelings of contempt towards his wife, resentment against his children, and indifference towards his colleagues and students – all of which he interpreted as being signs of mental and moral disintegration. "I am full of hatred, and contempt, and indignation, and loathing, and dread" (Chekhov 1918, 177) – he confessed to Kathy, his adopted daughter, the only person he could open up to in his self-imposed isolation. Kathy's reaction was straightforward and shocking for him: "Illness has nothing to do with it […] it's simply that your eyes are opened, that's all. You have seen what in old days, for some reason, you refused to see" (Chekhov 1918, 178). And, indeed, from what the narrator reveals about the characters, the readers can conclude for themselves that the professor's wife was frivolous and hopelessly narrow-minded, his grown-up children were selfish and utterly inconsiderate of their father, who could hardly make ends meet while they were living an idle but extravagant life. So, from the reader's perspective, Nikolay Stepanovitch's emotions seem perfectly justified, the only problem being his suppressing his authentic feelings for so long that they bewildered him completely when they were finally released.

There was only one thing he managed to preserve intact from his previous life, namely his unflinching reverence of science, even if he had to admit the possibility of being deluded: "Just as twenty, thirty years ago, so now, on the threshold of death, I am interested in nothing but science. […] This faith is perhaps naïve and may rest on false assumptions, but it is not my fault that I believe that and nothing else; I cannot overcome in myself this belief" (Chekhov 1918, 148–149).

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2   It is interesting to note that the original title of the story was "My Name and Me," which – according to Regéczi – was later changed by Chekhov as a gesture of making a clear distinction between the author and the first-person narrator (Regéczi 2000, 39).

This is the reason why he so desperately clings to his job as a university professor although his declining intelligence and physical frailty make him "feel nothing but torture" during his lectures (Chekhov 1918, 147–148).

But what stands behind Nikolay Stepanovitch's stubborn faith in science? Just as Ernest Becker regards science as a defence system against the fear of death, Nietzsche identifies fear as the source of scientific inquiry: "For fear is the original and basic feeling of man; from fear everything is explicable, original sin and original virtue. From fear my own virtue too has grown, and it is called: science" (Nietzsche 1978, 302). Amid the ruins of his crumbling life, after losing all certainty, Nikolay Stepanovitch's faith in science was the last shelter from this deadly fear. The narrator informs the reader on several occasions about the intense fear he was experiencing: "I was possessed by unaccountable animal terror, and cannot understand why I was so frightened: was it that I wanted to live, or that some new unknown pain was in store for me?" (Chekhov 1918, 206).

Paradoxically, as he was desperately grasping at his faith in science as his final hope for salvation, he was in fact embracing nihilism. Nietzsche warns us that the rules of reason are abstractions with a doubtful validity to the real world: "The faith in the categories of reason is the cause of nihilism. We have measured the value of the world according to categories *that refer to a purely fictitious world*"[3] (Nietzsche 1968, 13).

Nikolay Stepanovitch's lengthy and strenuous ruminations led him to the important revelation that his life as he lived it was but a collection of actions, ideas, and judgments lacking any inner coherence, and in his mind this deficiency rendered his entire life absolutely meaningless:

> However much I might think, and however far my thoughts might travel, it is clear to me that there is nothing vital, nothing of great importance in my desires. In my passion for science, in my desire to live, in this sitting on a strange bed, and in this striving to know myself – in all the thoughts, feelings, and ideas I form about everything, there is no common bond to connect it all into a whole. Every feeling and every thought exists apart in me; and in all my criticism of science, the theatre, literature, my pupils, and in all the pictures my imagination draws, even the most skilful analyst could not find what is called a general idea, or the god of a living man. And if there is not that, then there is nothing. (Chekhov 1918, 214–215)

In his book, Ernest Becker invokes Otto Rank, who found the perfect term for the behaviour that made the professor so disappointed with his life: "partialization" (Becker 1973, 198). The term describes our capacity to narrow down attention to a single aspect of life at a time, losing sight of the bigger

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3   Nietzsche's italics.

picture charged with all the terrors of the world and inner anxieties, otherwise we would be impaired for action.

While partialization is an indispensable means of adaptation to circumstances, unconscious dependence on it leads to a vacuous and mechanical life. His illness and chronic insomnia compelled Nikolay Stepanovitch to face questions he had been unaware of during his "healthy" years. Kierkegaard's notion of "fictitious health" mentioned earlier in this paper (Kierkegaard 1941, 34) is a pertinent one when we envisage the professor's former, healthy self. He had been living his life in such a way as to meet the demands of his family and live up to the expectations imposed by society, simultaneously suppressing his emotions and genuine self. When approaching death put an end to his complacent slumber (he opened his eyes, as Kathy observed), he was deeply disturbed by his new reality: "everything is disgusting; there is nothing to live for, and the sixty-two years I have already lived must be reckoned as wasted" (Chekhov 1918, 190–191). He had the revelation that Shakespeare's King Lear had before him: he realized that he was nothing more than a barefoot biped animal (Regéczi 2000, 93).[4] The despair ensuing from this revelation is the beginning of authenticity. José Ortega y Gasset uses the powerful metaphor of the shipwrecked to demonstrate the necessity of experiencing utter despair for individual development to follow its course:

> The man with the clear head is the man who frees himself from those fantastic "ideas" and looks life in the face, realizes that everything in it is problematic, and feels himself lost. […] These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce. He who does not really feel himself lost, is without remission; that is to say, he never finds himself, never comes up against his own reality. (Ortega 1957, 157)

However, there was no further development for Nikolay Stepanovitch; he remained paralysed by the dismal discovery about the senselessness of his existence. So, when his stepdaughter turned to him in despair to ask for guidance ("'Only one word, only one word!' she weeps, stretching out her hands to me"), he failed to offer any kind of support, just like in every crucial moment of Kathy's life. The story ends with the professor's mixed feelings of shame and pity for the girl's foreseeable misery: "I look at her, and feel ashamed that I am happier than she. The absence of what my philosophic colleagues call a general idea I have detected in myself only just before death, in the decline of my days, while the soul of this poor girl has known and will know no refuge all her life, all her life!" (Chekhov 1918, 218).

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4   Regéczi is citing Lev Shestov, a Russian existentialist, who studied both Shakespeare's and Chekhov's works.

Ward No. 6 (1892)

The story is set in a provincial asylum and explores the philosophical conflict unfolding between Ivan Gromov, a patient suffering from paranoiac psychosis, and Andrey Ragin, the director of the asylum. Ragin, who was living a comfortable and relaxed life, was an advocate of stoicism, and he lectured Gromov about the non-importance of life circumstances: "In any surroundings you can find tranquillity in yourself," exemplifying his credo with the case of Diogenes, who "lived in a tub, yet he was happier than all the kings of the earth" (Chekhov 1921, 66).

He was not only a stoic but also a nihilist often contemplating on the meaninglessness of life. On one occasion, he cooled down Gromov's passionate speech about the wonder of life with the following words: "However magnificent a dawn lighted up your life, you would yet in the end be nailed up in a coffin and thrown into a hole" (Chekhov 1921, 65–66).

Gromov, who was suffering from starvation and beatings locked up in the asylum, indignantly refused Ragin's philosophizing, and he counteracted with his existentialist concept of life, in which suffering and death anxiety were unalienable parts of life: "to despise suffering would mean to despise life itself, since the whole existence of man is made up of the sensations of hunger, cold, injury, loss, and a Hamlet-like dread of death" (Chekhov 1921, 73). But, notwithstanding his wretched condition, he assumed the idealist position by giving credence to the existence of God and spiritual immortality: "I firmly believe that if there is no immortality the great intellect of man will sooner or later invent it" (Chekhov 1921, 66). It is interesting to see how the character living in misery was an advocate of idealism, while the one in the privileged position took the stance for nihilism.

The meetings and discussions with his patient gradually changed Ragin's life. His colleagues and his superiors started to regard him with suspicion, and eventually he lost his job and comfortable income. Curiously, this change for the worse in his social status and financial situation provoked a positive turn in the doctor's attitude towards life. While earlier he was unsatisfied and often complained about his being buried in an intellectually undemanding provincial area populated by boring people totally absorbed in their day-to-day chores and petty interests, losing his existential security made him much more interested and involved in the events of everyday life such as peeling potatoes with his housekeeper or listening to the mass on Sunday – activities that he had despised so much previously.

As he was growing more authentic in his life, he became increasingly irritated by the fake care of his former colleague and the pretended joy and forced laughter of his former friend. Surprisingly, this mood totally changed his perspective on his nihilistic vision upon human life. At this point, the meaninglessness of all

human endeavour and concern, which he found so disconcerting and anxiety-provoking earlier in his life, became a soothing and comforting idea:

> To stifle petty thoughts he made haste to reflect that he himself, and Hobotov, and Mihail Averyanitch, would all sooner or later perish without leaving any trace on the world. If one imagined some spirit flying by the earthly globe in space in a million years he would see nothing but clay and bare rocks. Everything – culture and the moral law – would pass away and not even a burdock would grow out of them. (Chekhov 1921, 94)

Eventually, Ragin was locked up in the very same institution he had managed for more than twenty years, was beaten by Nikita, the guard, and died of apoplectic stroke the next day.

The story reflects a rather bleak outlook on life, and Chekhov does not come to the reader's rescue with any comforting explanation of Ragin's tragic destiny. Was there anything he could have done in order to avoid his dreadful demise? If we look closely at the cause of Ragin's downfall, we make a surprising discovery. His problem was not that he was indifferent or heartless, as we could have suspected – quite the opposite is the case.

Ragin's fault was that he was too agreeable, and for this reason "he was absolutely unable to give orders, to forbid things, and to insist" (Chekhov 1921, 47). His excessive agreeableness prevented him from confronting his inferiors although he knew too well that they systematically abused the patients by stealing their food, beating and mistreating them in every conceivable way: "When the patients complained to him of being hungry or of the roughness of the nurses, he would be confused and mutter guiltily: 'Very well, very well, I will go into it later . . . Most likely there is some misunderstanding . . .'" (Chekhov 1921, 47; ellipsis in the original). Another positive human ability that went awry in Ragin's practice was empathy. He became professionally paralysed by the sight of pain and suffering, and so his expertise was side-tracked from offering real medical assistance to getting rid of the patient by hastily prescribing some medicine and sending him/her away.

These two qualities, agreeableness and empathy, which are considered to be positive human traits, were distorted by the doctor to such an extent that they triggered a chain of events leading to disaster not only for his patients but even for Ragin himself. His misplaced empathy induced him to neglect his duties as a medical doctor, while by not confronting the debased personnel he enabled abuse to continue and perpetuated misery.

Although Ragin's sins were apparently rooted in his virtues, the narrator of the story reveals that he knew all too well what damage he was causing all along. In order to suppress his feelings of guilt, he recurred to such tactics

as self-justification and blame shifting. For not offering proper medical care to his patients, Ragin justified himself by making reference to the ultimate inevitability of death and the utter insignificance of ordinary people's lives: "why hinder people dying if death is the normal and legitimate end of everyone? […] Pushkin suffered terrible agonies before his death, poor Heine lay paralyzed for several years; why, then, should not some Andrey Yefimitch or Matryona Savishna be ill, since their lives had nothing of importance in them, and would have been entirely empty and like the life of an amoeba except for suffering?" (Chekhov 1921, 49).

The argument of insignificance was invoked once more by Ragin when he tried to explain away his choice of non-action in the face of evident abuse in his environment exempting himself from all responsibility and shifting the blame to society in general: "I am not honest, but then, I of myself am nothing, I am only part of an inevitable social evil: all local officials are pernicious and receive their salary for doing nothing … And so for my dishonesty it is not I who am to blame, but the times … If I had been born two hundred years later I should have been different" (Chekhov 1921, 60; ellipsis in the original).

By reporting on Ragin's innermost thoughts and ways of reasoning, the omniscient narrator makes it clear for the reader that it is not the aforementioned agreeableness and empathy on their own that rendered him impotent as a doctor and as the manager of the asylum but rather his decision not to take any action and turn a blind eye to the personnel's despicable deeds against the patients for twenty years. It was only when Nikita, the guard, struck him in the face while locked up in the same institution, and he felt the taste of his own blood in his mouth, that he came to realize the falsity and absolute worthlessness of his entire life philosophy, which crumbled in the first instant of suffering, just as his former patient, Gromov, had predicted. How phoney it had been from him to preach about ignoring physical pain and remaining content in all circumstances, to cite Diogenes and Marcus Aurelius to his patient undergoing constant torture and humiliation, and then go back to his cosy life crammed with mundane distractions, numbing his feelings of guilt with self-exoneration and nonsensical reasoning? His last conscious thoughts revolved around the realization that by avoiding pain and discomfort all his life he became insensitive to other people's suffering: "How could it have happened that for more than twenty years he had not known it and had refused to know it? He knew nothing of pain, had no conception of it, so he was not to blame, but his conscience, as inexorable and as rough as Nikita, made him turn cold from the crown of his head to his heels" (Chekhov 1921, 107). At the very end of his life, he finally understood what Ragin had known long before: that pain, suffering, and looming death are indispensable parts of human life, and that avoiding first-hand experience of these at all cost equals to avoiding life itself.

Ironically, the philosophical discussions with his mentally ill patient, which triggered Ragin's awakening to the true nature of life, also brought about his falling into misery and untimely death. His tragedy lies in the tardiness of his awakening: he came to understand his situation only a few hours before his death, when he could not do anything about it anymore.

Despite the protagonist's tragic demise, the story does not end in a nihilistic tone. In fact, Ragin's calamity curbed his empty philosophizing and his nihilistic outlook upon life. After losing his job and status as a medical doctor, he started to live more authentically by appreciating the small joys of life, refusing to participate in phoney social interactions and ditching his own shallow philosophies. In the final hours of his life, he even came to realize the untenability of his previous "nothing really seems to matter" nihilism, and he faced up to the feelings of guilt and remorse that he had been eluding for so long. He finally understood the lesson that had he been more courageous and made the right choices, he could have made a difference in the life of his patients.

Conclusions

Although Anton Chekhov is not generally referred to as an existentialist thinker, the philosophy exposed in his literary works and the considerable amount of literature discussing his intense preoccupation with such questions as existence as a concrete experience, dread of death, limits of scientific inquiry, the possibility of choice, and the ensuing individual responsibility qualify him a forerunner of twentieth-century existentialism.

The analysis of his two short stories, "A Dreary Story" and "Ward No. 6," published three years apart, demonstrates that Chekhov did not only dedicate a lot of attention to address the existential conundrum of life, but he also explored possibilities for action against the existential despair. Both professor Nikolay Stepanovitch from "A Dreary Story" and doctor Andrey Ragin from "Ward No. 6" experienced the lowest depths of misery where they were compelled to look death and nothingness in the face. But while Nikolay Stepanovitch remained petrified at the grim spot of desperation without the slightest clue how he should have lived otherwise (a situation reflected by his inability to offer a beacon of hope to his adopted daughter), Andrey Ragin at least came to the realization that his stoic "nothing really matters" attitude to life had been a fatal mistake. Apparently, the only person who could have lived a worthwhile life was Andrey Ragin's patient, Gromov, but he was denied the opportunity by having been locked up in the asylum for years under the supervision of doctor Ragin until they finally became roommates.

Just as the existentialist thinkers invoked in this paper, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Ortega, and Becker, Chekhov appears to view exasperation as a necessary step

towards spiritual awakening. Chekhov's two protagonists differ from each other in the way they face their ordeal: while Nikolay Stepanovitch sinks into life-denying nihilism, Andrey Ragin gains a new perspective of existence.

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A Postmodern Criticism of the Enlightenment: Anthropocene Disorder and Nihilistic Anti-humanism in Charles Bukowski's *Pulp*

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Abstract. The anti-detective novel, *Pulp*, the last book Charles Bukowski wrote, is among his most significant works. This article illustrates Bukowski's hostility towards the Enlightenment and modernism. Through a postmodern outlook, Bukowski parodies the rationality of the Enlightenment by depicting a world that is replete with irrationality and meaninglessness. The narrative involves a drunk detective who takes cases that are highly peculiar and irrational. Bukowski's detective constantly finds himself in irrational and meaningless conversations and in the author's attempt to portray the miserable condition of postmodern man. Moreover, from an ecocritical perspective, this article asserts that Bukowski is a nihilistic anti-humanist who fails to sympathize with humanity and finds no solution for the environmental collapse that is caused by the disorder in the Anthropocene. The only response to the parasitic nature of humanity is hatred and disgust for both himself and his species. As a result of his despair with the cause of humanity and anthropocentrism, Bukowski's Detective Belane is enraged with humans and frequently causes violent scenes.

Keywords: Charles Bukowski, *Pulp*, nature, postmodern condition, anthropocentrism

Introduction

Recent scholarship on Charles Bukowski's works is frequently centred around the style, language, and portrayal of female characters, particularly in his novels. On his route from anonymity to becoming "one of the best authors" of dirty realism (Debritto 2011, 309), Charles Bukowski established a firm ground opposing human rationality in many of his works. These texts are usually associated with "boredom and absurdity, meaninglessness and unproductivity" (Notash and Bordbari 2018,

132), and the failure of humans to define themselves within the predominant social and cultural structure of their societies. Considering Bukowski as merely "an underground author who championed only alternative periodicals" (Debritto 2012, 326) mainly results from his vulgar language and content while failing to account for his fame in the 1990s and onward. Bukowski's texts have also been labelled as misogynistic works in which female characters are consistently objectified. The popular diatribe against Bukowski's works tends to castigate both his style of writing and characterization. Yet, many of Bukowski's poems and novels are "drawn directly from his own experience and filtered through his sardonic, cynical wit" (Kane 2004, 413). Arguably, at the centre of the majority of his works, there lies constant anxiety in relation to the condition of humans. Thus, Bukowski's misanthropy stems from his pessimistic views on humanity and man's condition.

Published shortly after Bukowski's death of leukaemia in 1994, *Pulp* is the last work of fiction Bukowski penned; by then, Bukowski "had attained a recognized measure of success" (Madigan 1996, 449), and his major works had been canonized. The story circles around an ineffectual detective who fails to solve his cases, lacks morale, and is entirely ignorant of his surroundings, particularly the environment. Bukowski's anti-hero, Nicky Belane, represents the everyday encounter of postmodern man with a world that fails to correspond to any logic or reason, which used to be the means of understanding for man since the Enlightenment. As a sceptical school of thought, postmodernism came to oppose an established sense of identity, language, reality, and the condition of human existence. In fact, postmodernism "rejected many of the central tenets of modern western rationality" (Browne 2010, 79). Upon similar arguments, postmodern thinkers "presented the Enlightenment not as a common project of the advancement of knowledge, but as a vehicle of power" (Turnbull 2010, 6). Bukowski's *Pulp* can be considered postmodern fiction since it is entangled with specific elements of postmodern literature – for instance, impossible plots, dark humour, parody, and paranoia constantly appear in this anti-detective fiction.

As a postmodern metaphysical detective story, *Pulp* challenges the inaccessibility of truth and knowledge. The content and style diverge from the traditional detective fiction by distorting the logical order. The detective no longer represents "the instrument of pure logic" (Holquist 1971, 141); on the contrary, he/she is also bewildered, which stems from the chaotic disorder of his/her quest to find truth. By distancing itself from the everyday experience, "[p]ostmodernist writing, and the metaphysical detective story in particular, give us not familiarity but strangeness" (Marcus 2003, 250). The account of the cases that detectives encounter is illogical and eccentric. Additionally, the reliability of the narrator is sometimes at stake. Bukowski's *Pulp* is considered as an anti-detective novel rather than conventional detective fiction, in which the detective is "never able to unravel the conundrum, get to the bottom of the

mystery, and/or establish who is responsible for the crime or crimes" (Kravitz 2013, 45). In this sense, the whole genre parodies conventional detective fiction in which a series of clues are logically and chronologically anticipated. Unlike detective fiction, metaphysical detective stories imbibe mystery, chaos, bafflement, and uncertainty.

This article discusses Bukowski's *Pulp* as a criticism of the rational world and its reliability. Furthermore, it seeks to illustrate that the poor condition of human existence can be considered a fruit of the Enlightenment. Lastly, this article asserts that, in the context of Bukowski's *Pulp*, the Enlightenment's anthropocentric views can arguably be held accountable for the environmental disasters that are brought upon all species. Through a misanthropic view, Bukowski's novel indirectly celebrates deep ecology, which asserts that "anthropocentrism should be substituted by ecocentrism; a shift from Anthropos, the human, to eco, the Earth" (Montaño 2006, 181). This stems from, I argue, a hatred towards humans who have overpopulated the planet and are irrational, irresponsible, and violent beings. In this sense, his anti-hero, Belane, epitomizes postmodern man, who fails to make sense of the world around him; he is also irresponsible and violent, and although he seeks to find meaning and rationalize the world, he fails. Similar to several of his other novels, *Pulp* "is centred over [sic!] the second post-war period in the United States, in a moment and a crucial historical, sociocultural, and political context for people's lives" (Stefano 2017, 5). This is not a coincidence since the Second World War was arguably a turning point for the worse in human history, which contributed to the development of postmodern ideology. The dream of the Enlightenment to achieve a promising future was entirely ruined by the implications of the world wars.

A particular characteristic of Detective Belane, similar to the majority of anti-heroes in metaphysical detective fiction, is that he is an outsider; this characteristic is widely portrayed in most of Bukowski's works. Being an outsider is "being taken out of society or living an extreme alternative lifestyle with an inability or refusal to conform" (Clements 2021, 93). It appears that Bukowski's lifestyle was very similar, so the text is almost autobiographical in relation to this particular characteristic feature. Bukowski's anti-heroes represent people who fail to conform to rationality, which is entirely flawed and fails to correspond to the loneliness and meaninglessness of the postmodern man. His writings "commonly call that notion of knowability into question" (Swope 1998, 208). Analogously, the other characters in the novel "seemed lost in a bleak world which is incorrigibly characterized by misery, loneliness, and death" (Ebrahimi and Farahbakhsh 2020, 6). Portraying such characters, I argue, is rage towards the failure of rationality that the Enlightenment has offered humans. The characterization of Bukowski's *Pulp* questions the inherent power of rationality and human emancipation that was promoted by the Enlightenment. Both

Bukowski and his main characters were "plagued by self-doubt" (Baughan 2004, 67). Yet, arguably, this constant doubtfulness is an external factor, which brings man to the verge of absolute doubtfulness, rather than a psychological aspect of the author or his characters. In the following section, I demonstrate the postmodern perception of the Enlightenment in relation to the position of man and his relation to nature.

A Postmodern Criticism of the Enlightenment: The Centrality of Man and the Otherness of Nature

The emergence of the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement centralized the position of man as a rational and intellectual being who was in charge of his surroundings, himself, and nature. The period is also called "the age of Reason [which] is sometimes periodised by French historians as the years 1715, the death of Louis XIV, and 1789, the start of the French Revolution" (Peters 2019, 886). The Enlightenment can be considered as one of the most significant movements in the history of humanity. It is a turning point in history that changes the viewpoint of man towards himself and his surroundings. In fact, "Rationalism, enlightenment and the ideologies inspired by them are definable elements of modern European politics" (Mihailescu 2017, 270). This positivist view towards the state of knowledge and an indiscriminate trust in the rationality of humans are arguably accountable for the ramifications that were brought upon humans and the environment at present. Relying on the Scriptures, the Enlightenment asserts the superiority of man over his surroundings. Wolff argues that "according to Locke [...] while we have no natural superiors on earth, we do have one in heaven" (2016, 18). Relying on such narcissistic metanarratives stems from a belief "rooted in the great Judeo-Christian" (Baudrillard 1975, 63) tradition that "institutes a dualism of man and Nature" (Baudrillard 1975, 63).

Postmodern critics, however, criticize these views since they consider everything a social construct. The Enlightenment's promising view on the status of humans in society is nothing but a delusion, according to the postmodernist view. Hobbes, for instance, asserts that humans without society would be "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (2012, 186); and he argues that it is within society that humans can prosper. It appears that Enlightenment thinkers rely largely upon the virtuous essence of humans. Rousseau, for instance, pointed out that we have "an innate repugnance at seeing a fellow-creature suffer" (2004, 73). The plan of the Enlightenment thinkers for the future of humanity was radically utopian. The ramifications of two world wars made postmodern man rethink and question everything, including himself. In fact, the postmodern view abolished the "optimistic vision, according to which truth can be attained" (Diaconu

2014, 168). Truth is a construct, and there is no such thing as absolute truth; what exists, however, is relative and partial truth; that is what humans can only achieve. Moreover, the postmodern view of humanity is not naively promising; it is tremendously critical in which man is held responsible for the environmental, social, and individual destruction that occurs within societies.

Postmodern man is alienated, and society fails to correspond to his needs since the purpose of society that the Enlightenment thinkers proposed has never been met. Postmodern man is thus prone to investigate the difficulties he encounters on a regular basis. The concern of postmodern man is merely to survive rather than to create a steady life of bliss. The views of postmodern man are, therefore, rather pessimistic and antisocial. As Benatar states, "if people were prone to see this true quality of their lives for what it is, they might be much more inclined to kill themselves" (2008, 69). This pessimism arguably stems from the failure of the Age of Reason, which proved to be insufficient for the needs of the postmodern man. Postmodern man inhabits a solitary life within society. He is utterly lonely and is unable to communicate. He feels a void of meaning that cannot be filled either with the Enlightenment's rationality or any other social construct; it is an "environment void of meaningful communication" (Hatcher 1994, 200). Postmodern man is entirely desperate.

Yet, the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment is not solely in relation to the condition of man and the void of meaning. It goes beyond man's perception of himself and also encompasses the environment. It argues that, similarly to all other constructs, "nature is always in some ways culturally constructed" (Garrard 2004, 10). While the Enlightenment constructed nature based on its function to serve human greed, postmodernist and environmentalist thinkers assert that "we need to develop a value system which takes the intrinsic or inherent value of nature" (Garrard 2004, 18). The application of the Enlightenment's ideology towards nature has brought nothing but overexploitation, excessive use of natural resources, and environmental disasters; for instance, global warming and overpopulation. The problem with the Enlightenment's understanding of nature is that it is purely anthropocentric; that is, a "belief that value is human-centred and that all other beings are means to human ends" (Kopnina et al. 2018, 109). This view allows little room for humans to be concerned with other species and beings. The centrality of humans guarantees a world in which only the needs of humans are met. Enlightenment thinkers were not concerned with the consequences of overpopulation or overexploitation.

As a result of the Enlightenment's ideology, the Anthropocene emerged, which is dated "from the Industrial Revolution and the invention of the steam engine" (Clarke 2015, 1). The Anthropocene is "the geological epoch that the Earth entered with the Industrial Revolution, around 1800" (Clarke 2015, 1). As the failure of the Enlightenment's ideology became clear in the contemporary age of environmental

issues, postmodernists started questioning the value of humans and their centrality. The Enlightenment's faith in humanity was lost in the postmodern condition, and people became disillusioned. Environmental collapse, climate change, and the havoc caused by humans "stroke the credibility of any claim that moral value resides solely in humanity" (Clarke 2015, 147). Postmodern man castigates the Enlightenment's ideology for the unreliable assurance and trust that was bestowed upon human rationality. In this sense, "postmodern culture, then, has a contradictory relationship to [...] liberal humanist culture" (Hutcheon 2003, 6). In the following section, Bukowski's outlook is illustrated in relation to the condition of humans and the consequences of Enlightenment ideology in the context of *Pulp*. Subsequently, I demonstrate how Bukowski's opposition to the Enlightenment's ideology and anthropocentrism morph into misanthropy.

Bukowski's Critique of the Enlightenment: The Gloomy Condition of Postmodern Man

Bukowski's anti-hero, Nicky Belane, is an alcoholic detective in his mid-fifties who struggles with countless everyday problems only to survive. He accepts cases that are "all uncanny and strange" (Ebrahimi and Farahbaksh 2020, 5). The account of the cases seems very unrealistic, and the reader finds it difficult to rely on the narrator's storyline; there is an alien attack, a mysterious Lady Death who curiously kills people whenever she is present, the long-dead French novelist Céline, and the account of the Red Sparrow. Bukowski's choice to create such cases and characters arguably stems from opposition to, and hostility towards, human rationality, which does not suffice to bring meaning to this postmodern condition and this void of meaninglessness of postmodern man. Nicky Belane fails to make sense of the cases that he has taken. Accordingly, he constantly feels a void that troubles him considerably. Nothing in these cases responds to human rationality. The first case that he takes concerns Céline. A woman calls Belane and asks him to find Céline for him. Belane tells the woman that "Céline is dead" (Bukowski 2009, 1), but the woman insists, "he isn't, I want you to find him, I want him" (Bukowski 2009, 1). The French novelist Louis-Ferdinand Céline has long been dead, and the narrator is aware of this; however, this woman named Lady Death insists on finding Céline.

When Belane meets Lady Death and inquires about her name, she simply responds to call her "Lady Death" (Bukowski 2009, 2). Lady Death becomes another unsolved and enigmatic case for Belane. These names and cases do not seem logical to him; however, he accepts the situation and seeks to adapt to it. The meaninglessness and instability in the world that Belane lives in make him depressed, and "the world described by Nick Belane is a dark and vicious

place, where everyone is always dejected, depressed, and lost" (Ebrahimi and Farahbaksh 2020, 5). The reason why Belane accepts such wonderfully strange cases is that he does not largely rely on man's rationality; he understands that the world he lives in is not rational and meaningful. How Lady Death murders her victim never becomes known, and Belane never inquires about it. In this sense, "postmodernism, as a farewell to modernity and its discourse as a whole, would of necessity represent a departure from rationality" (Gasché 1988, 528). Belane is stuck in a world full of meaningless conversations, meaningless interactions, and meaningless cases.

The third case, which is shortly followed by the previous ones, is that of the Red Sparrow. Someone named Mr Barton phones Belane and asks him to "locate the Red Sparrow" (Bukowski 2009, 6) for him. Belane, who is now very confused, asks Mr Barton to give more information about the Red Sparrow: he asks, "this Sparrow doesn't have a name, does it?" (Bukowski 2009, 6), and Mr Barton replies, "No, it's just a Red Sparrow. I know you can find it. I've got faith in you" (Bukowski 2009, 6). The conversation between Belane and Mr Barton takes place several times, and each time Belane seeks to persuade Mr Barton to give up searching for the Red Sparrow, he fails since Mr Barton keeps telling him that he has faith in him. Indiscriminate faith is portrayed as a mockery of the Enlightenment's ignorant faith in humans. Bukowski parodies the Enlightenment's faith in the rationality of humanity and the hopeful delusion that with rationality man will always prevail. As Linda Hutcheon claims, "parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (2003, 11). Belane must constantly be on the watch for something that he does not know if it actually exists. He desperately says, "I was supposed to locate a Red Sparrow that maybe didn't exist" (Bukowski 2009, 125). These cases make Belane more confused, but he is not concerned with making any sense of these cases; in contrast, he only looks for earning money just to survive.

The encounter of postmodern man with the capitalist world gives him no space to rationalize the world around him. The condition of postmodern man, in Bukowski's view, is so dark that he claims, "just to get your shoes on in the morning was a victory" (Bukowski 2009, 67). Postmodern man is concerned with much more trivial issues; therefore, he finds no time to face matters like rationality behind which there "lies a barely disguised utopianism that makes it easier to understand" (Langford 1992, 24). The postmodern world, however, shares more with dystopias than utopias. On the other hand, the death of the detective at the end of the novel, which is symbolized by being eaten by the Red Sparrow, delineates the failure of the former to make sense of his cases. Dismayed and overwhelmed by the meaninglessness of his cases, Detective Belane wonders repeatedly, "this isn't the way it happens" (Bukowski 2009, 174). He does not believe that he is dying, and this disbelief represents the assumption that the

detective prevails in conventional detective fiction. As Ewert (1999) asserts, "the bodies of dead detectives (and their victims) warn the reader away from the quest for knowledge" (181). The death of Belane resembles the death of logic.

Another case that Belane took is even stranger than the previous ones. Someone named Mr Grovers calls Belane and requests help to save him from a space lady. When Belane inquires more about this space alien, Grovers tells him that he cannot get rid of her, since he says "she controls my mind" (Bukowski 2009, 57). This space alien, named Jeannie Nitro, is apparently an abusive space alien who has taken control of Mr Grovers. Bringing such unbelievable cases into his narration, Bukowski is exaggerating the condition of postmodern man, for whom meaning is lost and nothing makes sense. Simultaneously, he parodies both the rationality and seriousness of the modernist genre of the detective story by bringing extremely oppositional examples. Parody is an inseparable tenet of anti-detective fiction, and "due to the parodic nature of the genre and its endless uses, it is often considered as a facet of postmodern literature" (Tyers 2021, 274). The cases that Belane narrates are overly irrational and neither modernism nor the Enlightenment can comprehend the status of such cases rationally. The postmodernist view seeks to identify any establishment that has a claim over the truth to question and criticize it. Truth and rationality are not the only things that Bukowski ridicules. He depicts an indecent view of human beings, which does not correspond with the anthropocentric viewpoint of the Enlightenment. Chapter twenty-two of the novel illuminates the author's view towards humans; "we were all disgusting, doomed to our dirty little task. Eating and farting and scratching and smiling and celebrating holidays" (Bukowski 2009, 73). Bukowski's project of humanity attempts to illuminate the failure of the hopeful dream of the Enlightenment concerning humans. They are no longer dominant creatures who seek to bring justice and bliss to their world. Bukowski's humans are infinitesimal creatures who are constantly engaged with trivial jobs on a daily basis. Through Bukowski's lenses, Belane is shown to be a nihilist; "existence was not only absurd; it was plain hard work" (Bukowski 2009, 91). The cases Belane took were not the only absurd issues he faced. For him, existence turns out to be a burden rather than an opportunity. As Belane points out, "we were all chasing after a lot of nothing. Day after day. Survival seemed the only necessity" (Bukowski 2009, 107). Postmodern man is, indeed, very disillusioned, and hapless.

The conversations, and sometimes hostile arguments, with bartenders were also absurd and meaningless. In chapter twenty-nine, for instance, Belane gets into a conversation with a bartender. "I walked in and took a stool. The barkeep walked up. 'Hi, Eddie', he said. 'I'm not Eddie' I told him. 'I'm Eddie', he said" (Bukowski 2009, 98). By creating similar scenes and absurd conversations that usually end in violence, Bukowski parodies the rational dialectic of the Enlightenment. In another bar, Belane gets into another absurd conversation

with a bartender; "the bartender looked over. He caught my eye. 'I'm hungry,' the barkeep said. 'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse.' 'I wish you'd eat some of those I've bet on,' I told him" (Bukowski 2009, 53). The account of the conversations Belane has is almost always similar to all the other characters in the novel. Violent scenes are excessive, and vulgar language is very common in their conversations. There is no single account of truth. Nothing makes sense, neither the account of the cases nor the conversations Belane has with other people. The absurdity and meaninglessness of the world is not the only thing that Bukowski criticizes; anthropocentrism is another issue that Bukowski abhors.

The Enlightenment's Anthropocentrism and Bukowski's Nihilistic Anti-humanism

Ecocriticism is a moderately new school of thought, which is highly concerned with the encounter between man and the environment. Ecocriticism covers a wide range of interdisciplinary subjects such as "cultural differences, values, health issues, climate change, social and political discourses, identity issues, capitalism, racism, gender discrimination, language, religion, technology, as well as their interrelationships with human and nonhuman nature" (Özgün and Arargüç 2021, 326). Recent scholarship has been significantly ignorant of the ecocritical aspects of Bukowski's texts, and most works have largely focused on capitalism and gender studies. Ecological concerns, however, are a highly significant aspect of Bukowski's *Pulp*, in which he illustrates the ramifications of the Enlightenment ideology, which led to the Industrial Revolution and engendered countless environmental disasters. The fruit of Enlightenment is narcissistic anthropocentrism through which man has become ignorant of other species and his environment. The very beginning of the novel represents the encounter of Belane with his environment; "It was a hellish hot day and the air conditioner was broken" (Bukowski 2009, 1). These signs of global warming appear throughout the novel, and the only response of the characters is ignorance.

Another sign of man's revolting anthropocentrism is Belane's excessive hunger for killing flies. At the beginning of the novel, Belane asserts: "A fly crawled across the top of my desk. I reached out with the open palm and sent him out of the game" (Bukowski 2009, 1). In the fourth chapter, Belane expresses his hunger for killing flies: "I had work to do. I looked around for a fly to kill" (Bukowski 2009, 12). Killing flies, which seems to be a hobby for the detective, is portrayed as an insignificant issue; in fact, Bukowski's utilizing flies instead of any other creature illustrates how unimportant and trivial the environment is for people. In later chapters, Belane illuminates the state of humans and animals in the contemporary era – he asserts: "I killed four flies while waiting. Damn, death was

everywhere. Man, bird, beast, reptile, rodent, insect, fish didn't have a chance" (Bukowski 2009, 56). Postmodern man is a confused and confusing being. On the one hand, Belane is aware of human interference within nature, and, on the other hand, he keeps killing flies. As a result of human interference with nature, death becomes dominant in Bukowski's view. This is only inferred until Belane faces the alien that Mr Grovers talked about.

When Belane eventually meets the space alien, Jeannie Nitro, she explains to him the reason for their invasion; "I'm from the planet Zaros. We are overpopulated. We need the Earth for our excess people" (Bukowski 2009, 101). Leechlike, similar to humans, the space aliens seek to dominate and exploit the planet. This proposes a different outlook for detective Belane, one that involves empathizing with the planet as a host body that is condemned to be exploited and misused. Jeannie Nitro and Belane visit each other a few more times, and Belane secretly seeks to kill her and asks Lady Death for her help. The last time Jeanie Nitro visits Belane, she tells him that the space aliens have changed their minds about invading Earth; "we've thought it over, it's just too awful. We don't want to colonize your earth" (Bukowski 2009, 127). When Belane inquires more about the issue, she says, "the earth. Smog, murder, the poisoned air, the poisoned food, the hatred, the hopelessness, everything" (Bukowski 2009, 127). It appears that an alien creature is well aware of the circumstances of postmodern life.

The condition of postmodern man is not the only thing that the space alien mentions, she is more concerned with the condition of the environment; she says: "the only beautiful thing about the earth is the animals and now they are being killed off, soon they will be gone except for pet rats and race horses" (Bukowski 2009, 127). Jeannie Nitro illustrates the significance of this environmental crisis that has affected the condition of humans. She later says, "it's so sad, no wonder you drink so much" (Bukowski 2009, 127). The response to environmental disasters that are mainly caused by humans is melancholic. The aesthetic pleasure that stems from the unity of man and nature is beyond human's grasp. The imposed otherness upon nature forbids the unity of Detective Belane with his environment. Val Plumwood asserts that "Western culture has treated the human/nature relation as a dualism" (2015, 2); this dualism that was intensified in the Enlightenment separates humans from nature. This separation takes place by inferiorizing nature as unreasonable, irrational, and chaotic. Bukowski's creation of a metaphysical detective story nullifies this dichotomy by illustrating both man and nature as chaotic and unreasonable. Anti-detective fiction necessarily breaks away from conventional detective fiction by undermining the power of human rationality. Although this dichotomy is abolished, Belane fails to fully grasp the idea of unification with nature; he, therefore, remains distant and ignorant. Bukowski's response to such an environmental collapse that is caused by humans is a sense of disgust and hatred towards mankind.

While remaining distant from nature and its representations, Belane seeks to channel his anger and passivity towards environmental issues into sheer hatred. The fact that Belane does not envisage any viable alternative to protect nature and the planet stems from the mistrust of the postmodern ideology towards any established school of thought. In this sense, Belane is suspicious of any feasible solution to guard the planet. Concerned as he is, Belane is wholly disappointed and rejects the naivety of modernist viewpoint that promised redemption. In fact, he sees himself equal to the other people and not a saviour who seeks to protect the environment. For instance, he points out: "boring damned people. All over the earth. Propagating more boring damned people. What a horror show. The earth swarmed with them" (Bukowski 2009, 154) – yet, he does not foresee any remedy for overpopulation. Instead, he becomes fully disgusted by humans.

Bukowski's anti-hero, Nick Belane, has a very strong sense of hatred for other people. As Clarke points out, "Anthropocene disorder also affects a deep sense of bemusement and wonder at the nature of humanity itself, as well as disgust" (2015, 147). This sense of disgust is widely depicted throughout the novel. The failure of humans to live in harmony with nature provokes a sense of wonder and hatred; Bukowski is aware that "humanity is and must be parasitic [and] it lives only in its robbing and destruction of life that is not its own" (Clarke 2015, 153). Having this view in mind, Belane is a nihilistic anti-human who has accepted the gloomy condition of humanity but refuses to sympathize with his species. Chapter twenty-two elucidates Belane's hatred for humanity; "I decided to stay in bed until noon. Maybe by then half the world would be dead and it would be only half as hard to take" (Bukowski 2009, 74). The hatred towards humans is not only a way of thinking for Bukowski's detective, since Belane is also very violent towards other people. The novel is filled with violent scenes in which Belane rapidly takes violent actions. One of the accounts of his violent actions is when he gets into a fight with the mailman. "I walked over and scooped some broken glass from the floor. Then I came back, opened his mouth and dropped the glass in there. Then I rubbed his cheeks around and slapped him a bit" (Bukowski 2009, 37). Bukowski, however, never introduces a solution for the environmental problems that man encounters; in this sense, he is a nihilist. He has accepted the horrifying condition of humanity and the planet with despair and rage. It can be argued that his misanthropy stems from the condition of humans and the environment. Although there might be various reasons why Bukowski is a misanthrope, I have argued that one of the most significant reasons is the Anthropocene disorder that has dominated the postmodern era.

Conclusions

Bukowski's *Pulp* satirically illustrates a world in which rationality and meaning are lost concepts and the narrative circles around a drunken detective who fails to make sense of the cases he takes. Bukowski's exaggeration of an irrational world parodies the Enlightenment's rational dialectic. As an efficient postmodern element, parody is utilized in a sustained manner throughout the novel. The conversations between the characters are humorous and absurd; almost every conversation in the novel involves some misunderstanding, and the characters have difficulty understanding one another. This exaggeration is a vehement response to the Enlightenment's ideology. Moreover, Bukowski has taken a radically pessimistic view of humanity as a result of environmental crises. The misanthropy, which is dominant in the novel, I argue, is a response to humanity's ignorant exploitation of the environment. Bukowski is a nihilist in the sense that he finds the world and humanity absurd. He is also hapless concerning the environmental disasters caused by human beings, and his only response is enraged physical and verbal violence towards his fellow beings. Bukowski's anti-hero, Nick Belane, represents an environmentally hostile person who despises himself and his species while being aware of environmental circumstances. To Bukowski, I argue, there is nothing to be done to save the planet.

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Acknowledgments

In Patrick Leigh Fermor's Footsteps

Popescu, Dan Horațiu. *Layers of the Text and Context. Patrick Leigh Fermor & Friends.* University of Oradea Press, 2020. 258 pp. ISBN 978-606-10-2123-9

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Travelogue readers are most probably familiar with the works of Patrick Leigh Fermor (1915–2011). One of the most distinguished authors of the genre, he had a long and quite varied career in many walks of life, from being a soldier to his scholarly work. But primarily he was an ardent traveller and a keen and talented reporter on the wonders and details of the worlds he got to know. Walking from London to Constantinople (Istanbul, Turkey) with nothing but the *Oxford Book of English Verse* and a volume of Horace's *Odes* in his rucksack, falling in love with a Romanian aristocrat lady and living with her in Moldova, meeting people from all walks of life – politicians, soldiers, aristocrats and farmers, even disguising and living as a shepherd for two years to organize and lead the guerrilla fight against the German occupying forces in Greece during World War II; also travelling to all over the world – leave one with memories not only to cherish but also to share. Still, he became a published author quite late, in 1950, though then to instant acclaim and honours (his very first volume, *The Traveller's Tree*, won the Heinemann Foundation Prize for Literature).

Dan Horațiu Popescu's *Layers of the Text & Context. Patrick Leigh Fermor & Friends*, as the title already suggests, is a volume with a double focus. It closely examines Patrick Leigh Fermor's works and correspondence and places them in a biographical, political, and cultural context, thus shedding light not merely on the English author's oeuvre and aesthetic path to becoming one of the major travelogue authors of the twentieth century but also on the context of this development, people, places, and experiences that shaped this formation process, as well as on a turbulent period of Central-Eastern European history

between the 1930s and the Cold War era, also depicting how Romania is reflected in the eyes of a Westerner.

The double nature of the subtitle is also well sustained throughout the volume as Fermor's geographical, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic journey and accounts of all these voyages are juxtaposed with those of Durrell, Sacheverell Sitwell, Edward Lear, and Bruce Chatwin.

The book is logically structured and offers – also through its structure – a panoramic view not only of Fermor's travels, correspondence, artistic/aesthetic endeavours and challenges but also of other travellers/artists of the twentieth (and nineteenth) century(ies). The first section, "On Becoming a Writer," focuses on Fermor's road to writing and publishing, his struggles after World War II, when he found himself jobless and homeless. Though without a proper (university) education, he was capable of writing, and with support from friends, he managed to start on the twisting road of authorship. Popescu leads us along this path, presenting the manors, hotels, and abbeys Fermor resided in during this period of his life and how his art turned from writing at these shelters to writing about these places (in works such as *A Time to Keep Silence*, in which Fermor identifies St Wandrille as "a tower of solid ivory").

The second part of Popescu's book shows us the Romania of the early twentieth century as seen by Fermor and Sacheverell, who first met in person in Romania, Sacheverell being there at the invitation of Anne Marie Callimachi with the commission to write a book about Romania and Fermor returning from a journey of more than three years of travel. This section of the book also sheds light on how Sacheverell's *Romanian Journey* reports on this eastern part of Europe, including, but not limited to, for example, its cuisine, as well as Fermor's multiple Romanian ties.

The third section offers a reading of Fermor's *Between the Woods & the Water* from different angles, with special attention being paid to the images of the Other. The last section, "Walking to Byzantium," looks at three voyages to Mount Athos, Greece, and how the experiences of these journeys affected the travellers' artistic and spiritual development.

Popescu's book is written in a clear and elegant style, engaging the reader both intellectually and in enjoying the smart and witty mode of writing. References are precise and informative. They serve as a sound foundation for the author's arguments and as a reliable source for further reading for all those whose interest in the discussed topics is stirred by the volume.

Zénó Vernyik (ed.): *Arthur Koestler's Fiction and the Genre of the Novel: Rubashov and Beyond*

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021, pp. 299

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The "adventurous" life of Arthur Koestler has frequently been considered paradigmatic of the exigencies of the twentieth century. Indeed, in recent decades, the writer's biography has tended to overshadow the appreciation of his literary output. Mostly forgotten for decades, or wilfully ignored for the propagandistic strain and alleged dated topicality of much of his earlier writing as well as for the perceived crankiness of his later literary engagement with scientific ideas, it is only recently that Koestler's work has received renewed critical attention on a wider scale though there has always been a sustained interest in this once very prominent writer by a more narrowly circumscribed set of researchers. The discovery of the original manuscripts in German of Koestler's *The Gladiators* (*Der Sklavenkrieg*, 1939) and *Darkness at Noon* (*Sonnenfinsternis*, 1940) in the 1990s and in 2015, respectively, which had been lost for decades, has significantly contributed to the reinvigoration of the study of his fiction.

This collection of essays, edited by Zénó Vernyik, offers for the first time in more than three decades a comprehensive engagement in an English-language publication with all the novels published in the writer's lifetime. Propitiously, the volume takes cognizance of the linguistic versatility of Koestler and its implications with respect to the varied provenance of scholarly interest in the author, who, reflecting the various stages of his cosmopolitan existence, wrote in Hungarian, German, English, French, and – in some of his journalistic work – in Ivrit. Koestler's work has accordingly attracted critical attention from a variety of contexts, some of them defined by linguistic boundaries that have remained rather impermeable, as Matthias Weßel notes in his foreword to the collection of essays. The centripetal plurality of Koestler criticism is also acknowledged

in Vernyik's introduction, in which the editor gives a brief but comprehensive survey of research on Koestler and his narrative oeuvre that creates a painful, and tantalizing, awareness of the richness of Central and Eastern European criticism of the versatile author, which – because it remains untranslated into English – has largely eluded acknowledgement in the Anglophone and the Germanophone scholarly communities, who similarly have not fully probed the advantages of a productive conversation across linguistic barriers. To some extent, programmatically gathering contributions from the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, the UK, and the US, the volume offers a synthesis, if necessarily limited, of these different perspectives that extends also to the disciplinary and generational diversity of its contributors (xxvi). The synthetic perspective is, in fact, a mainstay of Vernyik's editorial concept, which is predicated on the productive conversation between his contributors. Vernyik's ambitious claim that the resulting effort is "less a typical edited collection of essays" but rather "a monograph with multiple authors" (xxvi) may be overenthusiastic, but the volume does indeed present a strong thematic cohesion that is frequently missing from other, more haphazardly assembled collections of essays.

This cohesion is achieved mainly by breaking up the chronological sequence of the publication of Koestler's novels and suggesting in its stead, with the headings of the five parts of the volume, a thematic progression. This commences with an exploration of "genres and subgenres" (Part I) before it narrows down to "the political novel" (Part II) and a focus on the individual and the investigation of "the self and its dilemmas through the prism of the novel" (Part III); it then widens again to the Zionist novel and its relation to questions of "nation, identity and race" (Part IV) to conclude eventually with "the novel as summary" (Part V). The implicit narrative of this thematic progression combines structural, narratological, and thematic categories to suggest that Koestler negotiated individual and collective identities in a highly politicized time through the medium of a shape-shifting but always politically inflected novelistic narrative. While this may, to some extent, be misleading in that the thematic subdivisions indicate relative parameters of inclusion and exclusion that appear to neglect the interpenetration of those elements across Koestler's oeuvre as a whole, it nevertheless invites the reader's synoptic view, which is further substantiated with mutual references by the volume's contributors to one another's chapters and with the tendency to situate individual works in conversation with other works and within the writer's oeuvre. Perhaps inevitably, there is some overlap among individual essays, in particular with respect to biographical details, but, generally, the "monographic" approach facilitates a comprehensive and focused discussion of Koestler's fiction.

The particular focus on the genre of the novel indicated in the subtitle is indeed a pervasive concern of the volume that informs all contributions and gives further

substance to its cohesion. It encompasses Henry Innes MacAdam's discussion of *The Gladiators* as a historical, rather than a predominantly political, novel and of the structural and metafictional significance of the inclusion of a Roman-style tragicomic farce. Revaluations of Koestler's overtly political novels are proposed in the essays of Stephen Ingle and Uwe Klawitter, which concentrate on a comparative discussion of *The Gladiators* and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) and the use of metaphors in *Arrival and Departure* (1943), respectively; and, with a particular focus on Koestler's engagement with Zionism and the construction of Jewish identities, by Jenni Calder and Motti Inbari. Alice Eged investigates the philosophical and ethical dimension of *Darkness at Noon* and, more particularly, explores another comparative angle by reading it alongside the theoretical writings of Michael Polanyi. The same text is discussed as a novel of disillusionment and of consciousness by Krisztián Kacsinecz and Szilvia Deisler, who, moreover, reveal structural and thematic parallels of the Chinese-British writer Jung Chang's novel *Wild Swans* (1991) and the Belarusian Nobel Prize-winning author Svetlana Alexievich's non-fiction text *Secondhand Time* (2013) to Koestler's novel and thus emphasize the continued relevance of his fiction. In his own contribution, the editor critically interrogates the prevalent identification of *The Age of Longing* (1951) as a roman à clef and the concomitant implications of literary inferiority. Louis Gordon offers, in conclusion, a reading of Koestler's final novel, *The Call Girls* (1972), as both a political novel and a campus novel. More specifically, Gordon persuasively argues that "Koestler's science works are not the elements of separate goals, but rather means to achieve the very same goals he adopted in fiction and autobiography" (225) and that the author's fiction was, in fact, from the outset informed by the critical engagement with scientific ideas.

The collection as a whole affirms that while the political aspect is pervasive in Koestler's novels, it is never exclusively so. Rather, Koestler's fiction incorporates a variety of frequently intersecting subgenres of the novel through which the author explores the interrelation of individual and collective. The volume moreover insists on the continued relevance of Koestler's works, which have frequently been described as ephemeral due to their topicality; it posits that Koestler's fiction is rather distinguished by a transcending topicality that is paradigmatic of political and human characteristics, which, like the author's works, are of enduring significance.

Arthur Koestler's Fiction and the Genre of the Novel is a timely reminder of the continued relevance of the fiction of a writer that has frequently been eclipsed by his experiences in an unsettled and challenging age. It is a real merit of the volume that it offers a well-developed and critically aware synoptic view of all of Koestler's novels written in, or translated into, English at a time when – as no one could have anticipated when the individual contributions were completed

– the transcending topicality of the author's work would forcefully reassert itself in response to war and the proliferation of a new refugee crisis in Europe. From the perspective of literary studies perhaps even more important, another true merit of the collection of essays is that it also promotes with much acumen and penetration a new sense of the literary quality of Arthur Koestler's fiction.

Henry Innes MacAdam. *Outlook and Insight: New Research and Reflections on Arthur Koestler's* The Gladiators

Coesfeld: Elsinor, 2022, 205 pp.

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Henry Innes MacAdam's relationship to the *The Gladiators* (1939) is of an unusual intensity and rarely paralleled devotion. Albeit only publishing his first article on the novel, to my knowledge at least, relatively recently (MacAdam 2006), he first read Koestler's story almost seventy years ago (84), and that reading had a momentous effect on his life: it sparked not only a lifelong fascination with the book itself, including corresponding with Koestler in the 1970s (87) and pursuing the decades-long project of reconstructing the story of Hollywood's abandoned project to film the novel, tracing and eventually retrieving its long-lost screenplay (MacAdam, Cooper, and Radford 2021), but it also caused MacAdam's "lifelong interest in Rome and Roman history" (MacAdam 2006, 85), leading to his decision to become an expert on ancient history and archaeology.

Notwithstanding his somewhat untraditional training for literary research, as a direct result of his fascination with the novel, Henry Innes MacAdam has become not only the foremost authority on *The Gladiators* but also one of the most prolific commentators of Arthur Koestler's fiction in English. Even prior to *Outlook & Insight*, MacAdam has co-authored a two-volume monograph and published at least seven articles on this book alone. It is thus probably not too much of an exaggeration to claim that if Koestler's Spartacus story breaks free of such doubtfully deserved judgments as being "rather dated" (Scammell 2009, xix), "static and talky," with "problems of language and construction" (166), and "replete with anachronisms" (Cesarani 1998, 150) and re-emerges as an intriguing and complex historical novel, then it likely achieves that feat mostly thanks to MacAdam's efforts.[1]

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[1]   Mostly but not solely. Others with an appreciation for *The Gladiators* include Jenni Calder

In other words, the publication of a monograph on *The Gladiators* by MacAdam is certainly a major event in Koestler studies, and the volume thus naturally raises high expectations in the reviewer. This is, admittedly, not an unambiguously desirable situation: the higher one's expectations are, the more likely it is that those expectations remain unfulfilled. Fortunately, however, as I am to show below, *Outlook & Insight* is in many ways just as momentous as one would expect, even if not without some minor flaws. While those, in my opinion, could have relatively easily been avoided, they do not detract from the volume's immense value for understanding one of Koestler's major novels.

What I see as the book's most important contribution is the publication and commentary of a whole range of manuscript material. Besides Arthur Koestler's complete correspondence with the translator of *The Gladiators*, Edith Simon, *Outlook & Insight* also includes Koestler's synopsis of books 1 and 2 of the novel. All of these documents are provided both in their German original and in English translation, alongside MacAdam's detailed yet concise commentary, discussing each document's contribution to our understanding of the novel or the process of its translation, as well as its context. What is more, these documents, with the exception of Koestler's synopsis, are not only shared with the reader in neatly typeset and edited form but also as verbatim reprints.

In most of the remainder of the book, MacAdam tackles the novel as a literary narrative. These parts are, unfortunately, much more uneven both in terms of their contribution to our understanding of *The Gladiators* and as far as the depth and meticulousness of the analyses are considered. Reading these parts of the volume, I cannot help the feeling that the care of a meticulous editor or reviewer would have helped overcome most, if not all, of these shortcomings, resulting in a publication much closer to MacAdam's usual standard.

Of these parts, the chapter "Structural Differences: Editorial Modifications" is probably the most uncontestably groundbreaking. It reveals that a whole range of changes were made to the structure of the text *en route* from Koestler's typescript to the published novel. Since, in the meanwhile, a new German edition has been published based on the former, and thus the question of the definitive version of the novel inevitably emerges, this, in itself, is far from a technicality. More importantly, however, MacAdam goes beyond merely presenting the changes and introduces his own theories on the genesis of these changes, their origins, as well as what further changes might be expected to be revealed following a closer analysis. While some of MacAdam's conclusions are both debatable and their reasoning unexplained, even the effort itself is laudable given that *The Gladiators* is a regrettably little-researched novel.[2]

(1968), who considers it "the most vigorous of Koestler's novels" (121), and John Atkins (1956), who goes as far as to label it "Koestler's most successful novel" (120).

2   For example, he attributes those changes with conviction to the publisher's editors, yet in the

Likewise, "From Brecht to Wilder: Literary Influences on *The Gladiators*" provides crucial service to the reception of an author who has been frequently, facilely, and mostly superficially and unfairly charged with writing stories allegedly without any organic relationship to the Western literary canon, or even without any literary value. Just as importantly, besides identifying potential literary influences on the novel, MacAdam also verifies, and at times corrects, similar claims by Michael Scammell, Koestler's most authoritative biographer. It is rather unfortunate, however, that the chapter has received less than five pages and the treatment of this key aspect of *The Gladiators* barely goes beyond listing names and works.

After these unambiguously important chapters, it is time to move to the discussion of the volume's weaknesses. Starting with what I see as the weakest point, it remains a complete mystery to me what the function, and even the point, of the chapter "Koestler at a Crossroad" is. It apparently summarizes Arthur Koestler's career and possible life paths in the 1950s, in a period more than a decade after the publication of *The Gladiators*. In fact, it is not until the third page of this five-page chapter that the novel is even mentioned, and when the reference is finally made, it is in the context of what Koestler called "The Law of Detours" both in *The Gladiators* itself and in his autobiography, *The Invisible Writing* (1954). Yet, while the publication of the latter in the 1950s might potentially provide a weak rationale for discussing the 1950s, MacAdam does not even mention the book in the chapter, leaving any reader not intimately versed in Koestler's biographies absolutely unable to fathom what the term even has to do with the 1950s. Rather than citing this source, or at least mentioning the term's weak links to the 1950s, he refers to Koestler's postscript to the Danube Edition of the novel published in 1967 and Edward Saunders's (2017) biography and the undergoing preparations for filming the text. All of this missing information eventually appears almost fifty pages later, in a chapter that, in retrospect, shares the same function as the rather unconnected fragments of thought shared in the present one: "Some Aspects of *The Gladiators'* Narrative." Working these two chapters into one and placing them at the position of the second one would have not only made the reader's job easier but also could have helped MacAdam's argument.

The above-mentioned law of detours, introduced early in the book by MacAdam, can be described in Koestler's own words roughly as follows: while aiming at any desired political goal, "[d]etours on the road are unavoidable" (Koestler 1945b, 153), and whether the "end justifies the means" (9) cannot be decided in any other way but retrospectively. "[T]he only means to decide the broad direction of a movement is to watch it a reasonable stretch of time and then draw the

Simon–Koestler correspondence published in this very volume there is ample evidence that those changes might have been made by Edith Simon and Arthur Koestler during one or more of their numerous meetings.

average curve of its oscillations" (153). This means, on the one hand, that while "[s]ubjective statements of [a movement's] leaders are of no interest, and the question of their bona fides is historically meaningless" (153); nevertheless, "if burdened with responsibility, and confronted with a practical decision to be taken, you have to choose one way or the other" (11–12). Yet the correctness of the decision is only available after the fact, and then not immediately. On the other hand, no radical social or political change can be achieved in vacuum, without the people. Unfortunately, however, "[w]hile you are moving up the road you never face the peak, your direction is the tangent, leading nowhere. If a great mass of people are pushing forward along the serpentine, they will, according to the fatal laws of inertia, push their leader off the road and then follow him" (11). Or, in the poetic formulation used in *The Gladiators*: "[Spartacus] had walked the straight road, evil past behind and goal in front, had turned neither left nor right. Or was this the very error, to walk the straight and direct road – was it necessary to make detours, to walk the crooked roads?" (Koestler 1939, 135).

Why exactly MacAdam has decided to devote a significant part of his book to the theme of the "law of detours" remains unexplained throughout. While it is a major motif not only of *The Gladiators*, but indeed "runs through all three of Koestler's earliest published novels" (MacAdam 2022, 13), in my opinion, this theme is so over-explained, it is hardly worth any further discussion at present. Besides Koestler himself referring to the law of detours being a central motif of his first three published novels both in his biographies and in numerous other places (most, if not all, of which are mentioned by MacAdam himself), not only do such early studies discuss Koestler's earliest fiction through the lens of the dilemma of ends vs means as John Atkins's (1956) *Arthur Koestler* (cf. e.g. 117–121, 185–193), Jenni Calder's (1968) *Chronicles of Conscience: A Study of George Orwell and Arthur Koestler* (121–144), or Wolfe Mays's (1973) *Koestler* (9–23) but so do already many of the earliest reviews of the novel as well (cf. e.g. *Birmingham Post* 1939, Muir 1939).[3] And discussions of this dilemma have stayed with us ever since (Levene 1985, 50–54; Ingle 1999; 2002, 68–76; 2021; Satkunanandan 2015, 171–183; Eged 2021; Steen 2009). In fact, Kirk M. Steen (2009) devotes the majority of his whole chapter on the novel to how the law of detours appears in the novels, while MacAdam himself has a published debate on this issue with Stephen Ingle (cf. MacAdam 2021b, Ingle 2021), not to mention that Ingle also devoted a whole article just to discussing the issue of ends vs means in Koestler's fiction, a source not even once mentioned by MacAdam in the reviewed volume (Ingle 1999).[4] What makes all

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3   Failing to refer to the instant recognition of this theme as early as 1939, at the novel's publication, is especially striking given that he admits as much in his earlier discussion of the novel's reception (MacAdam 2021a, 21–23).

4   He does refer, however, to Ingle's later, not very fortunate and somewhat oversimplified summary of some of the arguments of the article (Ingle 2002, 68–76) and calls it a "garbled account of the narrative of *The Gladiators*" (MacAdam 2022, 47).

of this even more striking is that in an earlier publication MacAdam provided a coherent, easily understandable, and very relevant discussion of the historical development of the discussion of the motif of ends vs means/law of detours in the reception of *The Gladiators* from its publication to the present day (MacAdam 2021a), discussing many, albeit not all, of the sources referred to above. In *Outlook & Insight*, however, no such overview is given, nor is it explained in what way his interpretation contributes to what seems to be a strong critical consensus on the centrality of this motif.[5]

Whatever the usefulness of yet another discussion of Koestler's treatment of the ends vs means conundrum, however, it is important to realize that while this theme is described, MacAdam also comments amply on other aspects of the novel. And it is important to emphasize here that albeit he has discussed this narrative multiple times, his commentary here still has a lot of new information to offer on Koestler's portrayal of ancient Rome, Spartacus and other historical figures, nationalities and their differing outlook on the revolt, and simply on the novel *as historical fiction*. It is somewhat surprizing, however, that albeit MacAdam briefly mentions Koestler's inclusion of a stage farce in the novel, as well as its affinities with his only published play, *Twilight Bar* (1945a), he does not point the reader to his extended treatment of the same issue published earlier (MacAdam 2021b).

Annoying details, such as discussing an overwritten point without explanation and contextualization, tackling Koestler's life in the 1950s without any explanation in a book devoted to a novel published in 1939 in two incomplete chapters (or rather one divided into fragments by the interjection of a number of others), and parts occasionally ending prematurely or staying in an extended draft stage (see my comments above) certainly do not help the reader of MacAdam's *Outlook & Insight*. Nor do the frequent typographical errors or that the volume has two "Acknowledgements," only one of which is listed in the "Table of Contents." As I have suggested above, it is almost certainly the result of the unusual choice of publisher. Elsinor Verlag in Coesfeld, albeit an important champion of Koestler's fiction and without doubt a first-rate publisher of fiction in German, they are not an academic press, and it is doubtful if they offer the editorial services, much less the same kind of meticulous peer review as an academic publisher would have.

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5   I consider the dilemma of ends vs means and the law of detours as the same basic conundrum, or at most the law of detours as a special application of the ends vs means paradox. While MacAdam would probably not agree with me, nor would for sure Stephen Ingle (2021), my interpretation is closely based on Koestler's own presentation of the problem (Koestler 1954, 267; Koestler and Koestler 1984, 29–32) and is also shared by other Koestler scholars: "What Koestler called 'the law of detours' was never clearly defined. […] It is the ends-and-means controversy under a different guise" (Atkins 1956, 190). The two terms are used in an interlinked manner by Wolfe Mays in his summary of Koestler's *The Gladiators*: "Koestler sees [the slave revolt] as an early example of a revolution which failed to achieve its objectives as a result of pressures from the masses who did not understand the 'law of detours' which their leaders found necessary to employ, and which involved them in a conflict between ends and means" (Mays 1973, 10).

In sum, while Henry Innes MacAdam's *Outlook & Insight* is not without its imperfections and shortcomings, considering the major contributions it brings through publishing, translating, and discussing a whole range of previously unpublished manuscripts, it is still a major achievement in the reception of Arthur Koestler's *The Gladiators*. One can only hope that MacAdam's unusual choice for a publisher is not going to be an obstacle in reaching British and American audiences. German-speaking markets are beyond doubt very well covered by this small but efficient and well-established publisher.

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