

**LES ÉLÉMENTS FABULEUX DE L'HISTOIRE  
HONGROISE DANS UNE CHRONIQUE FRANÇAISE  
DU 13<sup>e</sup> SIÈCLE.  
LE TÉMOIGNAGE D'ALBÉRIC DE TROISFONTAINES<sup>1</sup>**

C'EST LA VERSION ABRÉGÉE DU TITRE, ON PEUT L'OMETTRE

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L'article vise à examiner les éléments fabuleux de la description de la Hongrie médiévale dans une source narrative rédigée au 13<sup>e</sup> siècle : la chronique universelle d'Albéric de Troisfontaines. Dans un premier temps, nous étudierons les caractéristiques du texte, composé sur la base de plusieurs sources écrites ainsi que de témoignages oraux. Après une présentation générale du *curieux* et de l'*étrange*, nous nous attacherons à décrire, à travers l'analyse philologique de quelques extraits, la difficulté de séparer les différentes couches de la tradition qui coexistent souvent à l'intérieur d'une même phrase de la chronique. Les quelques éléments fabuleux de cette source champenoise apportent une contribution de valeur à nos connaissances sur la formation de la tradition historique dans la Hongrie du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle.

**Mots-clés :** Albéric de Troisfontaines, éléments fabuleux, philologie, l'origine du servage, l'évêque Kalán, les *Paludes Méotides*, tradition historique orale et écrite

Les sources narratives occidentales de l'histoire de la Hongrie procurent peu de description précise du royaume des Árpád : les chroniqueurs médiévaux issus du territoire français ont montré peu d'intérêt pour ce pays situé aux frontières du monde chrétien. Hormis les quelques passages des textes des croisades, riches en informations sur la Hongrie médiévale et maintes fois étudiés par les experts de la période, il existe très peu d'œuvres historiographiques qui permettraient de mieux nous renseigner sur les trois premiers siècles de l'État hongrois.<sup>2</sup> Nous présentons, dans le cadre de cette étude, une chronique qui surprend par la quantité et l'exactitude de ses connaissances sur le royaume oriental. Le cistercien Albéric de Troisfontaines<sup>3</sup> – dont la compilation, rédigée entre 1227 et 1251 dans un latin assez laconique, a sans doute moins d'importance pour la médiévistique occidentale –, témoigne d'un intérêt particulier pour le pays d'André II et Béla IV. Il en relate l'histoire dès ses origines jusqu'à l'an 1241 en insérant de nombreuses petites

remarques au sein de ses notes annalistiques.<sup>4</sup> Nous avons récemment examiné les origines possibles des informations d'Albéric sur la Hongrie : l'analyse détaillée d'un fragment de la chronique, consacrée au règne de Ladislas I<sup>er</sup>, nous a permis d'illustrer la complexité de cette dernière problématique. Nous pouvons noter que – même si le moine champenois semble avoir esquissé l'histoire de la Hongrie sur la base de renseignements oraux – quelques passages de sa chronique peuvent refléter une certaine connaissance, selon toute vraisemblance indirecte, de la tradition écrite hongroise.<sup>5</sup> Nous traiterons dans cet article une autre question, celle des quelques épisodes fabuleux ou mythiques de l'histoire du royaume des Árpád, conservés par l'œuvre de l'historiographe de Troisfontaines.

De nombreux passages de la chronique, empruntés à des romans, des légendes arthuriennes ou à la tradition orale,<sup>6</sup> peuvent témoigner de l'attirance particulière d'Albéric pour le *curieux* et l'*étrange*. Plutôt que donner une présentation générale de tous ces passages, nous nous contenterons de citer ici en exemple sa description de la croisade des enfants (1212). Le moine de Troisfontaines, intéressé par les événements d'Outre-Mer, ne manque pas de résumer – et de revêtir d'un caractère mythique – l'histoire des jeunes garçons rassemblés pour combattre les Musulmans. Selon une analyse récente de Gary Dickson, Albéric – qui construit son récit au moins en partie sur des relations orales – serait parmi les premiers historiographes à avoir fait de ces enfants des martyrs. L'armée, corrompue par des hommes malveillants et trahie par des commerçants marseillais, fait naufrage en traversant la Méditerranée : les noyés seront vénérés comme les Nouveaux Innocents.<sup>7</sup> Les fables et les histoires miraculeuses ne sont pas rares dans les narrations des historiographes de la littérature médiévale.<sup>8</sup> Ce qui distingue l'œuvre d'Albéric des autres chroniques universelles de son temps est l'utilisation d'un grand nombre de sources souvent même inidentifiables de nos jours, ainsi que son intérêt spécial envers la Hongrie, dont l'auteur fait mention 87 fois en répartissant ses informations entre les années 837 et 1241.<sup>9</sup> Même si László Latzkovits ne manque pas de souligner la grande exactitude des informations d'Albéric sur la Hongrie – surtout celle de ses renseignements sur le royaume du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle<sup>10</sup> –, celles-ci ne sont pas exemptes d'éléments étranges. Nous voudrions souligner qu'en parlant d'éléments fabuleux chez Albéric, nous prenons en considération tous les fragments hongrois de sa chronique qui peuvent frapper le lecteur d'aujourd'hui par leur caractère curieux. Nous ne nous occuperons pas, en revanche, des passages de sa narration empruntés de toute évidence à d'autres témoignages écrits tels que les textes d'Otton de Freising ou de Sigebert de Gembloux.

Les informations relatives aux campagnes militaires menées par les Hongrois encore païens avant l'an mil et celles qui sont consacrées au premier siècle de l'État hongrois seraient arrivées au chroniqueur de Troisfontaines par l'intermédiaire de ses confrères cisterciens. Il n'existe aucune correspondance philologique directe entre les sources narratives hongroises et le texte du moine français qui uti-

lise même les noms propres dans des formes différentes de celles qui apparaissent dans notre tradition.<sup>11</sup> Nous pouvons cependant noter que plusieurs fragments de l'œuvre d'Albéric ont quelque lien, dans une forme plus ou moins altérée, avec les chroniques hongroises. Pour ne citer ici que l'exemple le plus frappant, nous pouvons mentionner l'image négative de la reine Giselle : « (...) cette reine Gisla, comme l'on dit, fit beaucoup de mal dans cette terre et fut enfin assassinée selon ses mérites après la mort du saint roi.<sup>12</sup> » Sinon la chronique hungaro-polonaise, rédigée probablement dans les années 1220–1230,<sup>13</sup> la narration d'Albéric serait la plus ancienne source parvenue à nos jours présentant l'épouse de Saint Étienne sous les traits d'une personne malveillante. D'après les recherches de Gyula Kristó, nous savons que cette tradition ne serait apparue en Hongrie qu'après le meurtre de Gertrude, la femme d'André II, perpétré par les barons du roi (1213). À l'époque, l'historiographie hongroise, au lieu de respecter la vérité historique, aurait transposé les péchés de la feuée reine à un autre personnage féminin également d'origine germanique, ayant vécu deux siècles auparavant.<sup>14</sup> D'autres éléments de la chronique champenoise – tels que la présentation du prince Émeric en tant que le *seul* fils de Saint Étienne ou celle de Saint Adalbert comme l'évêque de Prague ayant baptisé le jeune roi – font également partie, malgré leur manque de véracité, de la tradition historique médiévale de notre pays.<sup>15</sup>

À partir du tournant des 12–13<sup>e</sup> siècles, Albéric donne sur l'histoire hongroise des précisions qui n'ont pas le moindre rapport avec nos sources narratives : les éléments fabuleux dans les remarques du chroniqueur nous informent avant tout sur les récits qui sans doute circulaient à l'époque de manière orale. Le moine cistercien, attiré par le curieux, semble s'intéresser spécialement aux assassinats. Au sujet de la dynastie des Árpád, il mentionne deux faits : tandis qu'il n'ajoute aucun détail particulier à la relation sur l'attentat contre la reine Gertrude, très connue dans l'historiographie de son temps,<sup>16</sup> Albéric nous informe sur une hypothèse plutôt surprenante concernant la fin du règne de Béla III. Selon lui, le roi, fréquemment mentionné dans les sources étrangères en raison de son mariage avec la sœur de Philippe II de France, serait mort empoisonné en 1196.<sup>17</sup> D'ailleurs, ce n'est pas seulement l'histoire hongroise qui permet à Albéric de décrire des meurtres au sein des maisons royales. Parmi les événements de l'an 1197, il note par exemple que « l'empereur Henri mourut en Sicile, empoisonné, comme l'on dit, par sa femme Constance ». <sup>18</sup> L'auteur cistercien donne d'ailleurs toute une nécrologie des personnages prééminents de la période : il fait mention du décès du grand théologien Alain de l'Isle ou de celui de Jacques de Vitry, évêque d'Acre.<sup>19</sup> Albéric montre aussi un goût particulier pour les petits poèmes lorsqu'il recopie dans son œuvre l'épithaphe de Philippe, chancelier de Paris, ou insère une prophétie versifiée dans une fable sur les Balkans. De même, il cite la lettre ambiguë de l'archevêque d'Esztergom adressée aux nobles de la Hongrie la veille de l'assassinat de Gertrude.<sup>20</sup> Le passage de la chronique qui nous surprend le plus est un

conte populaire dont le moine champenois aurait été informé par l'intermédiaire des cisterciens du monastère de Kerc et qui garderait probablement le souvenir d'une attaque des Coumans. C'est ainsi que les confrères d'Albéric ont décrit l'histoire merveilleuse :

La même année [1235] apparut, comme l'on dit, une illusion démoniaque en Transylvanie, à côté de Kerc : des hommes rouges apparurent, arrivés des montagnes sur des chevaux rouges et d'une plus petite taille que celle des nôtres, environ 200 hommes qui galopèrent par ici et par là sous les yeux du peuple. Lorsque ceux de la ville firent une sortie contre eux, ils allèrent dans leur cave et ne réapparurent plus. L'un parmi eux, attrapé pendant un moment par l'un des citadins, rendit toute rouge la main de ce dernier et ainsi s'enfuit. La main de l'autre resta rouge aussi longtemps qu'il vécut. Un malheur ou un autre arriva encore la même année à presque tous ceux qui les avaient vus.<sup>21</sup>

Chez le moine champenois, nous pouvons souvent lire des phénomènes naturels auxquels l'auteur essaie d'attribuer un caractère fabuleux. Selon Albéric, il y aurait eu une pluie de sang au diocèse de Passau et en Carinthie en 1227 : on aurait observé l'événement au moment où le duc Frédéric se livrait à un combat près du Danube. En ce qui concerne l'histoire de la Hongrie, la chronique mentionne, outre l'incendie consumant la ville d'Esztergom et le château de Buda (1223) ou la peste bovine (1224), une pluie de sauterelles « mémorable » entre la Drave et la Save (1194).<sup>22</sup>

Après un bref parcours des éléments curieux identifiables parmi les nombreuses informations d'Albéric sur la Hongrie, nous allons présenter trois passages dont l'analyse plus approfondie nous permettra de donner une image plus précise de la méthode de travail de l'auteur du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle.

### **1. L'origine du servage chez Albéric et dans les sources narratives hongroises**

L'une des remarques les plus intéressantes et les plus controversées d'Albéric se trouve parmi ses informations concernant l'an 957 :

Et de ces sept Hongrois qui restèrent en vie [après la grave défaite dans la bataille d'Augsbourg] l'un fut fait roi. En revenant dans leurs terres, ils réduisirent au servage tout le peuple qui n'était pas allé avec eux dans la guerre ; et ceux qui sont nés de ces sept sont maintenant des hommes nobles dans la terre de la Hongrie, bien que leur noblesse soit soumise à une grande servitude.<sup>23</sup>

Le passage mêle trois sortes de traditions : celle des sept chefs des tribus hongroises, celle des sept soldats qui sont retournés en Hongrie après le désastre de la campagne militaire en 955 et celle relative à une explication mythique de l'origine du servage, apparue dans les sources narratives hongroises dès le 13<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>24</sup> C'est cette dernière problématique, abordée déjà par la médiévistique hongroise, que nous traiterons plus en détail.

Jenő Szűcs a présenté dans une vaste étude les influences du droit coutumier français ainsi que les éléments reflétant des notions de droit romain chez Simon de Kéza (Kézai Simon), historiographe de Ladislas IV (1272–1290). La *Geste des Hongrois*, rédigée entre 1282 et 1285, donne la même explication sur l'origine du servage que celle mentionnée par Albéric quatre décennies auparavant.<sup>25</sup> Selon la théorie de Szűcs, le chroniqueur hongrois aurait inséré dans son œuvre une tradition occidentale que l'on peut rencontrer dans la *Coutume de Beauvaisis* : celle-ci, du reste, aurait puisé à la matière des chansons de geste. Szűcs donne d'ailleurs une place à la chronique universelle d'Albéric dans sa thèse. Selon lui, le moine champenois aurait mêlé les narrations sur l'histoire hongroise au conte sur le servage issu de la littérature française. Or à l'époque de la rédaction de la chronique de Troisfontaines, il devait y avoir une autre explication pour la soumission de certaines couches de la population. Selon l'auteur anonyme de la *Geste des Hongrois*, composée vers 1210, ou selon Thomas, archidiacre de Spalato, les Hongrois ont réduit à la servitude les peuples qu'ils avaient trouvés dans le bassin des Carpathes à leur arrivée.<sup>26</sup>

György Györffy, dans sa monographie publiée en 1993, a opté pour une autre hypothèse. Selon lui, la remarque sur l'origine du servage aurait pu préexister dans les chroniques hongroises même avant Simon de Kéza. C'est ainsi que le prêtre de la cour de Ladislas IV aurait recopié le passage semblable à celui d'Albéric dans l'ouvrage d'un prédécesseur (probablement le maître Ákos, chroniqueur du début des années 1270), tout en inventant lui-même une autre explication sur l'existence des serfs, fondée sur le *ius gentium*. Il présente en effet ce point de vue à la fin du deuxième livre de son ouvrage, où il affirme que les couches soumises sont les descendants de ceux qui ont naguère été réduits en captivité par les Hongrois.<sup>27</sup>

Sans vouloir prendre une position définitive dans le débat présenté ci-dessus, nous voudrions y ajouter quelques remarques. Paul Freedman s'est récemment occupé de la question du servage dans les textes juridiques de la Catalogne médiévale et a trouvé l'origine possible de la tradition répandue dans cette région dans une œuvre littéraire française née au 12<sup>e</sup> siècle qui raconte les exploits de Charlemagne.<sup>28</sup> Cette chanson de geste, connue dans la recherche contemporaine comme la chronique de Pseudo-Turpin, a été l'une des sources principales d'Albéric pour la description des événements du 8<sup>e</sup> siècle.<sup>29</sup> Il est donc bien probable que l'auteur champenois ait connu la référence à la servitude de l'*Historia Karoli Magni et Ro-*

*tholandi*, il a donc pu ajouter cette remarque à ses informations sur la Hongrie. En suivant cependant l'hypothèse de Györffy,<sup>30</sup> nous pouvons imaginer que la tradition occidentale est arrivée en Hongrie avant la rédaction de l'œuvre d'Albéric. Dans ce cas, l'explication française de l'origine du servage aurait été appliquée à l'histoire hongroise sous le règne d'André II au plus tard :<sup>31</sup> les cisterciens auraient donc informé le chroniqueur champenois probablement déjà sur la base d'une source écrite.

## 2. L'évêque Calanus et le soupçon du régicide

Albéric note, en présentant les événements de l'an 1196, une nouvelle répandue dans toute l'Europe : celle de la mort de Béla III. Ce qui nous intéresse est l'information que le chroniqueur ajoute à ce dernier renseignement : « le soupçon de son empoisonnement se porta sur un certain évêque Calanus ».<sup>32</sup> Le chroniqueur tient donc pour vraie une information qui selon toute probabilité est fautive, c'est une rumeur qui ne figure dans aucune autre narration de l'époque.<sup>33</sup> On peut s'interroger tout de même sur les raisons pour lesquelles une telle tradition se serait formée et serait arrivée jusqu'au moine de Troisfontaines. Pour quel motif a-t-on noirci la figure de l'évêque de Pécs, mort en 1218 ?

Le régicide, mentionnée seulement dans la chronique française, n'était pas la seule accusation formulée contre Calanus à l'aube du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les documents de la grande querelle autour de l'investiture de l'archevêché d'Esztergom (1204–1205) nous révèlent l'existence d'un autre soupçon selon lequel l'évêque aurait entretenu une relation incestueuse avec sa nièce. Gábor Szeberényi, qui a récemment consacré une étude au personnage de Calanus, suppose que la légende de l'empoisonnement du roi n'existait sans doute pas encore au tout début du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle : autrement, celle-ci serait apparue dans les documents relatifs à la querelle ecclésiastique mentionnée ci-dessus.<sup>34</sup>

Le soupçon d'inceste se serait donc transformé, en une trentaine d'années, en une accusation encore plus grave, celle de régicide. Il nous semble peu probable qu'Albéric, qui ne pratique presque jamais la critique de ses sources,<sup>35</sup> ait déformé la relation de ses confrères cisterciens : nous pouvons plutôt croire que ce sont ces derniers qui ont transmis l'histoire de l'assassinat du roi à Troisfontaines. Sans pouvoir résoudre définitivement le problème de la formation de cette tradition, nous voudrions attirer l'attention sur deux faits. Lorsque le pape a fait examiner la vie de l'évêque au cours de la querelle sur l'occupation de l'archevêché, l'abbé du monastère cistercien de Cikádor a participé, parmi d'autres hommes d'Église, à l'enquête.<sup>36</sup> En 1213, les moines du même monastère de Cikádor se trouvaient en conflit avec Calanus : l'abbaye et l'évêque revendiquaient, l'un et l'autre, la dîme payée sur la production viticole. Calanus a présenté sa plainte contre les cister-

ciens auprès du pape Innocent III qui a menacé l'abbaye : si celle-ci ne remettait pas la dîme à la disposition de l'évêque, elle perdrait ses privilèges.<sup>37</sup>

Le conflit de 1213 ne nous permet pas de déclarer sans exagération que les moines de Cikádor ont communiqué à Albéric la légende du régicide. On peut cependant imaginer que les membres du couvent, plusieurs fois représentés aux congrégations générales de l'ordre,<sup>38</sup> ont tenté de peindre une image la plus négative possible de Calanus. Une autre information de la chronique du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle semble confirmer notre hypothèse. En 1194, Albéric parle d'un événement d'une importance locale : il évoque une invasion de sauterelles ayant lieu entre la Drave et la Save. Comme c'était notamment le monastère de Cikádor qui possédait des terres dans cette région de la Hongrie, Bálint Hóman a mentionné les moines de l'abbaye parmi les informateurs possibles d'Albéric.<sup>39</sup>

### 3. Les *Paludes Méotides* dans les traditions historiques hongroise et française

Le troisième et dernier thème que nous étudierons ici figure dans un fragment de texte à l'an 1239. Ce renseignement tardif du chroniqueur relève des questions concernant la formation de la tradition sur les débuts de l'histoire hongroise. En rapport avec l'invasion des Mongols en Hongrie, nous pouvons lire la remarque suivante :

Il [Béla IV] envoya donc contre les Tatares [Mongols] le comte de Transylvanie qui, dans un passage étroit des Paludes Méotides, brisa d'abord la corne de leur armée à tel point que les autres pensèrent, en regardant derrière eux, que leur mémoire a péri avec grand bruit.<sup>40</sup>

Les marécages des Méotides ne sont pas étrangers à ceux qui connaissent la légende hongroise, ils apparaissent dans le mythe sur l'origine des Hongrois et des Huns, le conte du cerf miraculeux.<sup>41</sup> Mais pourquoi Albéric les a-t-il insérés dans la description de la bataille, d'ailleurs perdue, des troupes du palatin contre les Mongols dans l'un des défilés des Carpathes ?

Selon l'hypothèse de László Latzkovits, le chroniqueur de Troisfontaines aurait simplement confondu deux événements : la défaite des Hongrois devant Verecke et le combat livré par les armées russe et coumane contre les Mongols dans la péninsule de Crimée – c'est cette dernière région qui devait correspondre à celle des Méotides.<sup>42</sup> Le contexte de la remarque d'Albéric laisse cependant supposer que le moine cistercien a travaillé ici avec des informations obtenues de Hongrie : il mentionne l'arrivée des Coumans dans le pays et l'assassinat de leur chef Kötöny.<sup>43</sup> En refusant de voir dans ce fragment un souvenir de la bataille de la rivière Kalka, livrée à proximité de la mer Noire (1223), il nous reste à savoir si les

*Paludes Méotides* auraient déjà pu apparaître dans la tradition hongroise au cours de la première moitié du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le premier historiographe chez qui nous rencontrons l'histoire du cerf miraculeux ainsi que le nom des marécages est Simon de Kéza : celui-ci a emprunté les noms géographiques de sa présentation de la Scythie aux *Gétiques* de Jordanès.<sup>44</sup> La tradition occidentale sur la parenté des peuples hongrois et hun est arrivée dans notre pays, d'après les recherches de Gyula Kristó, à l'époque de la troisième croisade.<sup>45</sup> Il faut cependant noter que les narrations du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle (telles que la *Geste* de l'auteur anonyme, la chronique hungaro-polonaise ou la relation du frère Ricardus), même si elles parlent déjà d'Attila et placent la patrie mythique des Hongrois en Scythie, ne font aucune mention des Méotides.<sup>46</sup>

On ne peut pas exclure la possibilité de l'apparition du terme des Méotides dans des textes dont nous n'aurions pas de trace. Il nous semble tout de même que c'est plutôt Albéric qui aurait ajouté l'appellation géographique à ses renseignements hongrois : il aurait connu les Méotides grâce à la légende de l'origine troyenne des Francs. Celle-ci, dans l'interprétation de Guillaume le Breton, décrit ainsi la ville mythique de Sicambrie :

Francion, avec son peuple, parvint jusqu'au Danube, bâtit une ville, appelée Sicambrie, et y régna. Lui, et ceux qui l'avaient suivi, s'emparèrent de tout le pays aux environs du Danube et du Tanais, et des Palus-Méotides, et devinrent une grande nation.<sup>47</sup>

D'après les informations géographiques souvent confuses des sources, le chroniqueur de Troisfontaines aurait bien pu arriver à la supposition selon laquelle les marécages s'étendaient au-delà des frontières du royaume hongrois.<sup>48</sup>

### Conclusion

Dans notre étude, nous venons de présenter la Hongrie de la dynastie des Árpád à travers les fragments d'une chronique française rédigée au 13<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'œuvre d'Albéric de Troisfontaines. Parmi les nombreuses références hongroises du texte, nous avons choisi celles qui, contenant une fable ou un renseignement curieux, peuvent nous surprendre par leur caractère étrange. Les informations d'Albéric concernant les 10–11<sup>e</sup> siècles montrent un certain rapport avec la tradition écrite hongroise. Nous trouvons cependant dans les récits évoquant des événements plus ou moins contemporains à la rédaction de la source des remarques qui circulaient sans doute à l'état oral. Par l'analyse des mentions d'Albéric notées aux années 957 et 1239, nous avons illustré la complexité de la tâche qui consiste à séparer les informations de différentes origines dans la compilation née en Champagne. La présentation de l'histoire du régicide nous a permis d'esquis-



ser les voies possibles de la formation d'une rumeur à l'époque d'André II. Cet article vise aussi à attirer l'attention de la recherche sur les passages fabuleux très fréquents dans l'historiographie du Moyen Âge. Ces éléments, qui peuvent sembler moins précieux à première vue, révèlent souvent des détails intéressants sur la tradition historique médiévale.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Pour une présentation plus détaillée de la problématique, voir la version en langue hongroise de cet article : « A középkori magyar történeti hagyomány mesés elemei Albericus Trium Fontium krónikájának tükrében » (manuscrit, en voie de publication dans la revue *Fons*).
- <sup>2</sup> Borosy 1996; Csernus 1999, pp. 133–143 ; Körmendi 2008, pp. 14–15 ; Csukovits 2009, pp. 13–14.
- <sup>3</sup> Albericus ; Gombos I, pp. 23–34.

- <sup>4</sup> Scheffer-Boichorst 1874 ; Molinier II, 155. RepFont II, 167–168. Pour la littérature hongroise du sujet, voir Hóman 1925, pp. 5–32 ; Latzkovits 1934, 85–92 ; Gericis 1961, pp. 53–56 ; Csóka 1967, pp. 647–672 ; Kristó 1974, pp. 229–238 ; Almási 1994.
- <sup>5</sup> Csákó 2012
- <sup>6</sup> Dickson 2008, p. 143.
- <sup>7</sup> Albericus, pp. 893–894 ; Dickson 2008, pp. 11–13, 52, 143–148.
- <sup>8</sup> Gombos I, pp. 23–34.
- <sup>9</sup> Sur la tradition orale dans l'historiographie médiévale, voir Guenée 1980, pp. 78–85. Peter Noble traite l'influence des chansons de geste sur l'historiographie française du 13<sup>e</sup> siècle : Noble 2004.
- <sup>10</sup> Latzkovits 1934, p. 83.
- <sup>11</sup> Latzkovits 1934, p. 89.
- <sup>12</sup> Albericus, p. 779 : « illa Gisla regina, ut dicunt, multas malitias in terra illa fecit et ad extremum post mortem sancti regis meritis exigentibus interfecta fuit ».
- <sup>13</sup> Chronicon hungarico–polonicum, p. 314 ; Kristó 2002, pp. 57–58.
- <sup>14</sup> Kristó 1974, pp. 235–237 ; Kristó 2000, pp. 221–224, Kristó 2002, 55–56 ; Körmendi 2009a, 201.
- <sup>15</sup> Albericus, pp. 779, 786, 947 ; Csóka 1967, pp. 654–656 ; Bollók 1986, 74–75 ; Rókay 1999, pp. 152–155 ; Körmendi 2003, pp. 82–83.
- <sup>16</sup> Albericus, p. 898 ; Körmendi 2009b, voir surtout pp. 174–175.
- <sup>17</sup> Albericus, p. 873.
- <sup>18</sup> Albericus, p. 875 : « moritur in Sicilia imperator Henricus ab uxore sua Constantia, ut dicitur, toxicatus ».
- <sup>19</sup> Albericus, pp. 881, 948.
- <sup>20</sup> Albericus, pp. 898, 940, 949.
- <sup>21</sup> Albericus, p. 938 : « Eodem anno ultra silvas iuxta Kerte apparuit quedam, ut dicitur, demonum ludificatio, apparuerunt rubei homines, qui de montana quadam exierunt in equis rubeis, minoris tamen stature, quam sint nostri, homines fere CC, qui discursus varios spectante populo faciebant. Irruentibus contra eos illis de oppido, caveam suam intraverunt, nec postea comparuerunt, unus tamen, aliquantulum ab uno de oppido retentus, fecit eius manum omnino esse rubeam et sic effugit, que quamdiu vixit rubea permansit. Fere omnes illi, qui eos viderunt, ali-quod infortunium eodem anno incurrerunt. » Sur cet extrait de la chronique, voir encore Körmendi 2008, pp. 156–157.
- <sup>22</sup> Albericus, pp. 872, 913, 914, 942 ; Körmendi 2008, pp. 11–12, 154.
- <sup>23</sup> Albericus, p. 767 : « Et de illis septem Ungaris, qui remanserunt, unus ex eis factus est rex. Hii venientes in terram suam totum populum, qui non exierat cum eis ad bellum, in servitutum rede-gerunt ; qui autem de istis septem nati sunt, ipsi sunt modo viri nobiles in terra Ungarie, quamvis eorum nobilitas magne servituti subiaceat. »
- <sup>24</sup> Hóman 1925, p. 7 ; Latzkovits 1934, pp. 89–91.
- <sup>25</sup> Simonis de Keza Gesta Hungarorum, pp. 147–148.
- <sup>26</sup> Szűcs 1973, pp. 581–597.
- <sup>27</sup> Györffy 1993, pp. 189–190.
- <sup>28</sup> Freedman 1994a, p. 306 ; Freedman 1994b, pp. 13–14. Sur la littérature du sujet, voir les notes de László Veszprémy dans Anonymus – Kézai, p. 130.
- <sup>29</sup> Albericus, p. 721 : « Item Turpinus archiepiscopus, tangens illa gesta breviter, que de Karolo Magno scribere omittebat, inter cetera dicit (...) »
- <sup>30</sup> Györffy 1993, p. 190.
- <sup>31</sup> Sur les relations franco–hongroises de l'époque, voir : Koszta 1994.

- <sup>32</sup> Albericus, p. 873 : « Rex Hungarie Bela moritur in Cena Domini, de cuius potionatione contra quendam episcopum Calanum orta fuit suspicio. »
- <sup>33</sup> Marton 2007, pp. 94–95 ; Kőrmendi 2008, pp. 152–153.
- <sup>34</sup> Szeberényi 2002, pp. 231–233. Voir encore Sweeney 1993 ; Beke 2003 ; Zsoldos 2011, p. 94.
- <sup>35</sup> Latzkovits 1934, p. 17.
- <sup>36</sup> Sweeney 1993, p. 153.
- <sup>37</sup> Békefi 1894, p. 37 ; Szeberényi 2002, p. 233.
- <sup>38</sup> Voir par ex. Gombos III, pp. 2161–2165.
- <sup>39</sup> Albericus, p. 872 ; Hóman 1925, pp. 30–31.
- <sup>40</sup> Albericus, p. 946 : « Contra Tartaros vero misit comitem Ultrasilvanum, qui in quodam angusto transitu paludum Meotidarum ita confregit primum cornu illorum, quod ceteris retro respicientibus iam in illis partibus perisse putabatur memoria eorum cum sonitu. » Le chroniqueur périphrase dans ce passage un vers du Psaume 9 (« inimici defecerunt frameae in finem et civitates destruxisti periit memoria eorum cum sonitu ») , cf. la traduction de Lemaistre de Sacy : « Les armes de l'ennemi ont perdu leur force pour toujours ; et vous avez détruit leurs villes : leur mémoire a péri avec grand bruit » (Psaume 9:7).
- <sup>41</sup> Kristó 2002, p. 14.
- <sup>42</sup> Latzkovits 1943, p. 83.
- <sup>43</sup> Albericus, p. 946.
- <sup>44</sup> Simonis de Keza Gesta Hungarorum, pp. 144–145.
- <sup>45</sup> Kristó 1983, pp. 313–329.
- <sup>46</sup> P. magistri Gesta Hungarorum, pp. 34–35 ; Deér 1930 ; Chronicon hungarico–polonicum pp. 299–305 ; Grzesik 1996 ; Veszprémy 2004, 160 ; Relatio fratris Ricardi.
- <sup>47</sup> Vie de Philippe Auguste, p. 186 ; Eckhardt 1943.
- <sup>48</sup> Sur ce sujet, voir encore Kristó 1974, pp. 232–233.

**L'IMAGE DE LA HONGRIE ET DES HONGROIS  
DANS LE ROMAN *STRĂINUL* (« L'ÉTRANGER »),  
ÉCRIT EN 1955 PAR L'ÉCRIVAIN ET SCÉNARISTE  
ROUMAIN TITUS POPOVICI**

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Le roman *L'Étranger*, écrit par Titus Popovici en 1955 sur un événement tragique survenu en Transylvanie en 1944, est remonté, en même temps que son sujet, à la surface de la mémoire collective dans les années quatre-vingt, illustrant la persistance de l'antagonisme magyaro-roumain. Pourtant, le rôle du livre et de son auteur, de ses contempteurs et de ses détracteurs ne sont pas nécessairement ceux que l'on attend.

**Mots-clefs :** Transylvanie, relations magyaro-roumaines, littérature communiste

« Chacun cherchait sa liberté, et tous, ils auraient voulu apaiser leur conscience *égoïste*. Nous sommes des étrangers dans notre propre pays, songea Andrei, satisfait tout de même d'avoir trouvé cette formule... »<sup>1</sup>

Qui donc est ce « nous » ?

Et de quel pays s'agit-il ?

Je vis depuis ma naissance dans une région qui a, au cours du siècle dernier, appartenu à différents pays, notamment à l'Empire austro-hongrois (1867–1919), à la Roumanie (1919–1940), à la Hongrie (1940–1944) puis à la Roumanie de nouveau (depuis 1944). J'ai lu avec un grand intérêt *L'Étranger* dont l'action se déroule pour la plupart sur le territoire appelé Transylvanie (*Transilvania* en roumain, en hongrois *Erdély*). Née citoyenne roumaine, appartenant à une famille autochtone hongroise, je me suis proposée de regarder (dans) le roman comme dans un miroir.

**Miroir, miroir, dis-moi, qui est la plus belle ?**

L'historien de la littérature, Gyula Dávid, constate avec une certaine amertume la persistance des images hostiles qui empêchent les Hongrois et les Roumains de trouver une résolution psychique à leurs problèmes réciproques: Nous devons

constater que les efforts entrepris ont donné très peu de résultats: que la multitude d'œuvres traduites du hongrois en roumain et du roumain en hongrois – dont les titres à eux seuls remplissent trois volumes – n'a pas été en mesure de contrebalancer la propagande officielle, n'a pu neutraliser l'image d'ennemi que celle-ci a popularisé avec constance et application.<sup>2</sup>

Le titre nous rappelle le roman de Camus (Paris, 1942), mais comparer les deux livres ne va pas de soi. Titus Popovici (1930–1994) fut un écrivain et scénariste roumain, membre correspondant de l'Académie Roumaine. Homme politique dévoué à Ceausescu, il ne fut pas exclu de la société des lettrés après la disparition de son protecteur et la transformation du système politique du pays en décembre 1989. Les générations d'aujourd'hui le connaissent avant tout à travers l'histoire du cinéma roumain. Dans la revue littéraire *România Literară*, Alex Ștefănescu apprécie sa carrière comme étant éminemment dédiée au film.<sup>3</sup> Le film *Străinul* (durée: 168 min), tiré du livre éponyme, fut présenté en 1964 par le metteur en scène Mihai Iacob (1933–2009). En outre, dans l'œuvre cinématographique impressionnante de Titus Popovici, nous devons aussi remarquer l'adaptation du roman de Liviu Rebreanu, *Pădurea spânzuraților* (« La forêt des pendus »), film de Liviu Ciulei (1964).

Quant au roman *L'Étranger*,<sup>4</sup> Alex Ștefănescu affirme qu'il s'agit d'une construction épique volumineuse, d'une satire pleine de sarcasmes sur le style de vie bourgeois – à la grande satisfaction des idéologues officiels roumains de l'époque. Le critique littéraire excelle en euphémismes: « ce sont ses dons littéraires évidents qui le portèrent [Popovici] au premier-plan de la vie culturelle, mais aussi sa réceptivité quant à l'idéologie officielle. »<sup>5</sup> Du reste, Ștefănescu est d'avis que l'ennemi social n'a pas été désigné avec précision par l'auteur de *Străinul* (« L'Étranger »), mais aussi de *Setea* (« La Soif »), et qui « ... a lui-même admis après 1989 [qu'il avait, dans ces romans] tout simplement transféré le mal existant dans la société en rendant coupables les légionnaires des méfaits des communistes ».<sup>6</sup>

Le récit se concentre sur les changements intérieurs affectant le héros, Andrei Sabin, qui devient, au terme d'un détachement psychique total de l'ancien régime, d'un lycéen rebelle un adepte du communisme. À l'école, déjà, un professeur lui avait fait mention d'un livre qui « finit ainsi : les prolétaires n'ont rien à perdre, sauf les chaînes ; ils ont un monde à gagner. Prolétaires de tous les pays, unissez-vous ! »<sup>7</sup>

Au titre du deuxième Arbitrage de Vienne (ou *Diktat*), le 30 août 1940, un territoire de 43 492 km<sup>2</sup> revint à la Hongrie sous le nom de Transylvanie de Nord. Les événements de ces années (1940–1944) sont décrits dans le roman comme une suite d'aventures. Dans l'inventaire roumain de l'histoire du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle (vers 1954, à l'époque de l'élaboration du roman), la période 1940–1944 pouvait déjà



avoir l'allure d'un entracte, même si en 1940, l'entrée des Hongrois en Transylvanie avait bel et bien pris la forme d'une marche triomphale à la romaine. Le chapitre XVI de *L'Étranger* est consacré aux événements apocalyptiques vécus par la population terrorisée d'un village hongrois de Transylvanie, torturée par les volontaires de Maniu en automne 1944.<sup>8</sup> Ils finissent par être sauvés par un jeune Roumain (Andrei, le personnage central du roman), qui fait appel aux soldats soviétiques stationnant dans les alentours pour mettre fin au massacre.<sup>9</sup>

### Le contexte

Après l'arrivée au gouvernement du Parti communiste, à l'ère de l'effervescence réformiste de type soviétique (1950–53), la politique intérieure roumaine recourait volontiers à l'arme culturelle: elle faisait des efforts pour populariser l'idéologie communiste, notamment à travers des œuvres littéraires. Le roman de Titus Popovici fut considéré comme un outil de transformation des mentalités; on le traduisit très vite en plusieurs langues – en français (1957, trad.: Ana Vifor), en anglais (1962, *The Stranger*, trad.: Lazăr Marinescu) et même en hongrois (1957, trad.: Nagy Bálint).<sup>10</sup>

La variante hongroise est basée sur la deuxième édition roumaine du roman (1956). On peut supposer qu'elle était essentiellement adressée aux lecteurs appartenant à la minorité ethnique hongroise de Roumanie. Pour comprendre le sens politique de cette traduction, je renvoie simplement aux tirages mentionnés sur la couverture: l'édition de 1957 est paru en 5100 exemplaires, celle de 1963 à 6013 exemplaires. Or le tirage de la cinquième édition du texte roumain (en 1979) ne compte pas moins de 100 000 exemplaires. En préparant l'édition en langue hongroise (1955–1956), les autorités roumaines n'ont sans doute pas envisagé s'adresser aux lecteurs de Hongrie, étant donné les mauvaises relations existant à l'époque entre les deux pays. Les notes ajoutées à la fin de la deuxième édition en hongrois, signées par Ion Vîtner (1914–1991), écrivain et idéologue communiste, réitèrent les phrases typiques du stalinisme sur l'importance de la transformation individuelle ayant pour but la réforme politique. L'œuvre de Vîtner comporte d'ailleurs un livre<sup>11</sup> sur Camus (membre du Parti communiste français entre 1935 et 1937).

Titus Popovici avait sans doute lui aussi lu les œuvres de Camus. Le choix du titre de son roman, les modalités d'approche du protagoniste (Andrei) ainsi que le concept camusien de l'essai (*L'Homme révolté*, 1951) semblent avoir réellement influencé l'auteur roumain. L'athéisme est là, la cruauté absurde, le sang aussi... Mais, chez Popovici, l'intention est souvent documentaire, même si le fond est parfois douteux.

### Les durées parallèles

Il y a la durée de l'action, et celle du récit (1939–1945). Il est en effet important de savoir à quel contexte se rapportent les événements du roman, que je qualifierais volontiers de roman d'engagement.<sup>12</sup> La dimension historique exerce un pouvoir inquiétant, puisque la période en question est très chargée en événements politiques, en conflits aux lourdes conséquences à l'échelle régionale. Dans la période qui suivit immédiatement le dictat de Vienne, début septembre 1940, le général, futur maréchal, Antonescu prit le pouvoir et instaura une dictature personnelle en s'appuyant sur la Garde de Fer. Toutefois, après l'émeute de janvier 1941, baptisée « émeute légionnaire », les chefs légionnaires qui avaient pensé pouvoir manipuler Antonescu tombèrent en disgrâce et quittèrent le pays pour aller s'établir à l'étranger (en Italie, en Allemagne, etc.).

Il y a aussi le moment de la parution du livre (1955), et celui de sa traduction en hongrois (1957, 1963). On envisageait sans doute d'offrir les mêmes lectures aux différents groupes d'habitants du même pays... L'homogénéisation de la population était un objectif du gouvernement communiste. Du reste, en l'absence de quelques indications sur les conditions de lecture, il nous serait difficile de comprendre l'impact du texte sur ses lecteurs. Le livre de Popovici parut à une époque qui n'était pas favorable aux relations roumaines-hongroises. La Hongrie officielle, de son côté, qui semblait désirer la paix, ne faisait aucune allusion à l'histoire qu'on eût pu interpréter comme l'expression de mécontentements d'ordre territorial et culturel. Sur le total de la population de la Transylvanie en 1956 (un peu plus de six millions d'âmes), environ un million et demi était d'ethnie hongroise,<sup>13</sup> dont une large partie avait de la famille en Hongrie. Le public n'était pas informé sur les relations officielles entre les deux pays. Le bureau des passeports vers la Hongrie, à Cluj, fut fermé le 25 avril 1955. Malgré certaines avancées, comme la convention passée en été 1955 sur le paiement réciproque des retraites, les citoyens des deux pays n'avaient toujours pas la permission de se rendre visite. Et les contacts culturels étaient réduits au minimum, sinon inexistant.

Ce n'est qu'en 1957 que les relations diplomatiques furent relancées ; après la révolution hongroise de 1956, les chefs des partis communistes et ouvriers de la Bulgarie, Tchécoslovaquie, Roumanie et Hongrie eurent une rencontre à Budapest où ils affirmèrent leur soutien au gouvernement hongrois.<sup>14</sup> Même si l'ordre du jour était essentiellement politique, et non culturel, les délégations hongroises et roumaines se crurent en mesure de constater que l'on arrivait au terme d'une décennie de contacts culturels « qui se développaient bien ».<sup>15</sup>

N'oublions pas que la « relecture » des œuvres de Titus Popovici a commencé en Roumanie après la mort de l'auteur. Or il semble bien que l'interprétation de sa vie et de son œuvre ne peut se limiter à une affaire d'ordre littéraire, comme si les sujets qu'il avait touchés étaient restés d'actualité (la responsabilité des groupes

militaires et politiques, la vision de l'histoire comme moyen de réconciliation politique, la relation œuvre/vie dans le discours théorique, l'implication des écrivains dans les affaires politiques etc.). L'œuvre littéraire et cinématographique et l'activité directement politique de Popovici posent en effet des questions convergentes.

### L'auteur

Gyula Dávid, né en 1928 (qui, outre ses activités de critique littéraire, fut prisonnier politique entre 1956 et 1964), a passé en revue les techniques littéraires de l'après-guerre et construit des catégories d'auteurs selon leurs sujets cardinaux. Aux années 50, qui sont celles de *L'Étranger*, il associe une conception combattante de la littérature et l'application rigide de la théorie du réalisme littéraire. Il souligne également, avec le collectivisme politique, des penchants pour l'expérimentation littéraire, il parle de nouveautés en évoquant un à un les différents genres et termine en constatant que c'est le processus du changement socialiste de la société qui se trouve au centre de la prose de ce temps-là. On y analysait d'abord les choses sous leur aspect le plus général, économique et social, puis l'homme, envisagé comme subissant un changement radical à travers ses conflits d'ordre à la fois politique et psychique. Gyula Dávid associe Titus Popovici (1930–1994) à Marin Preda (1922–1980), prête attention à Eugen Barbu (1924–1993) et même à Alexandru Ivasiuc (1933–1977).<sup>16</sup> L'écrivain et critique littéraire roumain, Nicolae Manolescu (1939–), quant à lui, a déclaré tous ces écrivains « très nuisibles », car ayant déplacé toute la responsabilité politique des communistes aux légionnaires.<sup>17</sup>

### Le romancier devient politicien

Andrei, étant encore lycéen, avait fait la critique de toute la société, mais d'autres de sa génération trouvaient le mal dans la figure généralisée du Hongrois. Le roman donne une description de la propagande politique sous la forme d'un journal que ses rédacteurs transforment en une sorte de revue littéraire. La haine reste une affaire de limbes, mais elle existe:

en fouillant dans le dossier des manuscrits non-insérés, ils y découvrirent une poésie de l'élève Suciu qui voulait massacrer tous les hongrois, sans exception, y compris les femmes et les enfants:

Vous, pour qui rien n'est donc sacré,  
On vous aura – même enterrés !<sup>18</sup>

Or, bien après la parution de *L'Étranger*, l'auteur, Titus Popovici, se trouve en conflit avec ses lecteurs hongrois ! Il s'agit d'une polémique d'ordre politique qui va parler de Roumains et de Hongrois comme de partis qui se blessent réciproquement. On est déjà dans les années quatre-vingts. Le premier pas, c'est un livre roumain publié en 1982 par Ion Lăncrănjan (1928–1991), *Cuvant despre Transilvania*,<sup>19</sup> qui offre une image inacceptable aux Hongrois sur leur histoire. Le second: la parution à Budapest de l'*Histoire de Transylvanie* en trois volumes (1986), dirigée par l'historien et ministre de la culture, Béla Köpeczi.<sup>20</sup> Le livre de Lăncrănjan donna pour la première fois depuis longtemps l'occasion de parler des faits décrits dans *L'Étranger*.

Cet hymne, « éloge de la Transylvanie » – affirma Francisc Pacurariu (1920–1998), auteur de romans historiques et diplomate roumain – ne contribue pas aux bonnes relations entre nos peuples. Il donne naissance à la haine et au soupçon chez les Roumains et à des sentiments contraires, à la peur, chez les Hongrois. Il présente les faits d'une manière unilatérale, il oublie de faire allusion aux livres fascistes roumains, oublie même des faits dont Titus Popovici fait état dans son roman *Străinul*. Pourquoi ne parle-t-il pas des paysans hongrois décapités à la hache ou des actions des volontaires de Maniu ? Comme si la théorie migrationniste avait été créée par les Hongrois et comme si c'étaient eux qui la « chevauchaient » sans cesse.<sup>21</sup>

À la suite de la publication de *Erdély története* (« L'histoire de Transylvanie »), c'est pourtant Titus Popovici qui attaqua avec véhémence l'œuvre et ses auteurs. La revue *A Hét* publia son article, *Módszerek és stílusok a szándékos történelemhamisítás szolgálatában* (« Méthodes et styles en vue de la falsification de l'histoire »),<sup>22</sup> traduction hongroise d'un article publié peu avant dans la revue roumaine *România Literară*. Le bureau de presse pour la Transylvanie de la « Hungarian Human Right Foundation » émit une dépêche sur T. Popovici critiquant son attitude à l'égard de la vision des Hongrois sur l'histoire et surtout de ses convictions sur les libertés dont aurait joui la minorité hongroise de Roumanie.<sup>23</sup>

Toute une série d'articles semblables aboutirent à des gestes politiques et même à des mesures d'ordre diplomatique. On découvrait un terrain miné, les ellipses du roman devenaient soudain univoques.

La critique de l'ancien régime devrait quitter le terrain des mythes, a dit Lucian Boia – il faudrait évaluer les faits selon un principe équitable.<sup>24</sup> Il s'agit en effet d'un mythe idéologique, qui d'ailleurs reste inaperçu ou sans importance pour les contrôleurs d'idéologies.

Les personnages de *L'Étranger* doivent être envisagés à la lumière des analyses qui juste après l'époque stalinienne trouvaient un argument éthique pour esquiver les responsabilités, rejetant celle-ci sur les non-roumains dont on affirmait le poids spécial dans le mécanisme politique, de propagande et de répression. Lucian Boia, par exemple, a remarqué qu'au début des années 50, des quatre mem-

bres du secrétariat du Parti Communiste roumain, il n'y eût que Gheorghiu-Dej qui fût véritablement roumain. Mais cette idée de culpabiliser les « étrangers » peut mener à des idées préconçues voire à une fausse image de soi-même.

### Les personnages hongrois du roman

Une certaine image d'un groupe ethnique pourrait être esquissée dans le roman ; considérant les dimensions de l'œuvre (vingt chapitres, sur un total de 708 pages) et le territoire géographique en question, on devrait pouvoir s'attendre à y voir quelques personnages ayant un coloris « hongrois. »

Or les personnages d'identité hongroise y paraissent en nombre assez réduit. D'autre part, qu'ils soient propriétaires terriens d'origine noble (*groful* Bornemissza, le baron Földessy) ou fonctionnaires (Kullos), ils sont des figures également répugnantes. Leur situation est fragile: par exemple, Orban, le chef de Gare, « est devenu fou de terreur. (...) Il se promène tout seul sur le quai en tenant des discours. »<sup>25</sup> Il est ridicule: il avait planté sa casquette rouge sur son crane, mais il avait oublié de mettre son veston. « Sa chemise en loques n'avait plus un seul bouton et une jambe de son pantalon était déchirée de haut en bas. »<sup>26</sup> Il est ridicule et en même temps pitoyable.

Comme il s'agit d'une période de bouleversements politiques sur un territoire qui va bientôt de nouveau appartenir à la Roumanie, on voit se construire au long du roman tout un labyrinthe d'informations, de souvenirs et même de récits surgis de l'imagination. Les parties analytiques extrêmement lentes deviennent, tout d'un coup, de manière inattendue, un tourbillon horrible et inévitable de crimes, puis une sorte d'apothéose de la bonté individuelle sur un fond de solidarité internationale ; tout cela réalisé par la rencontre de la foule attendant son « nouveau rédempteur » et l'homme lettré. L'avenir prend des couleurs attrayantes.

Au début il n'est question directement ni de la Hongrie ni des Hongrois. On est mis devant le tableau d'une société bourgeoise à l'ancienne (on peut identifier la ville d'Oradea/Grosswardein/Nagyvárad) qu'un adolescent, avec « le noble, le naïf, l'ardent héroïsme humanitaire des dix-huit ans »<sup>27</sup> voit et décrit dans une copie d'école comme un théâtre de mensonges. D'ailleurs, il résume le contenu de son écrit qui a provoqué le scandale ainsi: « que toute cette vieille baraque s'en aille un jour au diable ! »<sup>28</sup> Il faut savoir que c'est la société d'une Roumanie capitaliste, dont la disparition va être désirée et favorisée par le personnage central. C'est justement le discours elliptique, l'affirmation indirecte qui par sa présence sous-jacente, déconcerte et ôte toute énergie de réplique.

D'autre part il y a dans les dialogues, dans l'expression spontanée de la population des affirmations « spontanées », des souvenirs et des idées préconçues, des souhaits et des projets qui entretiennent une image du Hongrois identique à celle

de l'ennemi.<sup>29</sup> Les uns deviennent ridicules, comme le chef de gare, Orban. D'autres sont d'une méchanceté satanique. Popovici décrit les changements politiques et administratifs imposés sur le territoire avec un pathos convainquant, évoquant notamment l'atmosphère qui régnait parmi les gens simples: « Durant l'automne de 1940, la Transylvanie fut cédée à la Hongrie. À Budapest ! – criait-on aux soldats. Que les opinci du paysan roumain [sandales paysannes roumaines] piétinent encore une fois dans le parlement des grofs » ;<sup>30</sup> « les Allemands et les Hongrois (...) nous ont pris la sainte Transylvanie. »<sup>31</sup> L'auteur réalise une sorte de transformation mentale: il s'agit de personnes qui accomplissent les événements et non de formations politiques.

L'événement tragique qu'il intègre au chapitre XVI de son roman est le crime des légionnaires dont le personnage principal devient témoin oculaire. Andrei Sabin identifie parmi les légionnaires une ancienne connaissance qui se vante des crimes accomplis pendant la nuit, « toute la nuit, je n'ai fait que monter sur des femmes... Deux des nôtres les tenaient... ».<sup>32</sup> Une danse macabre ; les gardistes tirent les paysans de leurs maisons et leur coupent la tête à la haches. « Ne bouge pas, sale Hongrois, ta place est là !... Le nez dans la boue, devant les Roumains ! (...) et maintenant on est venu pour exterminer tous les Hongrois de Transylvanie. » « Nous faisons payer aux Huns tous nos souffrances. » Dans le déferlement de cette scène, on peut réaliser la signification des menus phrases ou anecdotes « parsemées » dans les chapitres précédents du roman et qui font allusion au désir d'une sorte de « vendetta » pour le fait même du Dictat de Vienne ou pour les souffrances causées aux Roumains par les Hongrois pendant toute leur histoire (commune).

Témoin de ces horreurs, Andrei Sabin s'adresse (en hongrois) aux paysans effrayés en leur demandant un cheval pour aller chercher secours chez les soviétiques qui ne sont pas loin.

Pour revenir aux événements décrits dans ce chapitre XVI, entre le 12 septembre et le 14 novembre 1944, sur le territoire occupé par les troupes soviétiques et roumaines, la population a dû supporter les agressions, les crimes et les exactions des « volontaires de Maniu » et des gendarmes locaux. On peut même parler de groupements terroristes qui se sont déplacés dans les villages habités par des Hongrois – ils ont pillé les maisons et ils ont fait couler le sang, uniquement parce qu'il s'agissait de Hongrois.

### Conclusion : miroir de punition

Dans ce roman, la Hongrie et les Hongrois sont vus à travers les effets sur la vie des Roumains de l'*Anschluss* de la Transylvanie du nord en 1940. Les Hongrois – on peut les grouper en catégories (toutes négatives): 1. des insaisissables – des

nobles, des officiers, des agents corrompus (ayant un nom hongrois) : Varga, Papp, Laboş, Kullos ; 2. des identités douteuses – étrangères ; 3. des agressifs, venus de Hongrie – des étrangers ; 4. des villageois « sans aide » en Transylvanie – des faibles enfermés dans leur langue : des « muets. »

Le parcours d'André, du dégoût de l'adolescent vers l'action politique – un volontarisme bénéfique en comparaison avec celui des volontaires armés –, laisse entrevoir une multitude d'images mentales, autant d'êtres répugnants que la haine traditionnelle maintient telles pendant des générations.

Tout de même, il faut reconnaître que la réconciliation des groupes ethniques dépend entre autres de la connaissance des récits et des images les plus terribles de la mémoire et de l'imagination. Miroirs, miroirs ! Au lieu de tabous.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Titus Popovici, *L'Étranger*, 1957, p. 212.
- <sup>2</sup> Gyula Dávid, « Román irodalom magyarul » [La littérature roumaine en hongrois], in *Erdélyi irodalom – világirodalom*, Csíkszereda, Ed. Pallas Akadémia, 2000, pp. 250–251.
- <sup>3</sup> Scénarios : *Columna*, récit cinématographique, Buc., Mil., col. « Columna », 1968 ; Judecata, roman cinématographique, Iași ; Mihai Viteazul (Michel le Brave), Buc., Mil. 1969 J., 1984 ; (sur la révolte des paysans roumains de Transylvanie dirigée par Horia, Cloșca et Crișan). *Romania Literara*, 2002. 24.
- <sup>4</sup> *Străinul*, roman, București, 1955 (éd. II, 1956 ; éd. III, 1959 ; éd. IV, revue, 1972 ; ed. V, 1979 ; éd. revue et complétée, Timișoara, 1989).
- <sup>5</sup> Alex Stefanescu, « La o noua lectura, Titus Popovici » [Une nouvelle lecture. Titus Popovici]. *Romania literară*, 2002. 24 [http://www.romlit.ro/titus\_popovici ; lu le 30 mai 2012]
- <sup>6</sup> Ibidem. Les légionnaires appartenaient au mouvement d'extrême droite de la Garde de fer, dans les années trente et quarante.
- <sup>7</sup> *L'Étranger*, 1957, p. 57.
- <sup>8</sup> Iuliu Maniu (1873–1953) : homme politique austro-hongrois, député de Transylvanie au parlement de Budapest, devenu plusieurs fois Premier ministre du Royaume de Roumanie après 1920 (en tant que Président du Parti national paysan). Il fut incarcéré en 1947 et mourut en prison. Sa participation personnelle aux actes commis en Transylvanie en septembre 1944 n'est pas documentée, mais tant l'historiographie hongroise que roumaine admet qu'il n'y fut pas totalement étranger.
- <sup>9</sup> Il faut savoir qu'il s'agit de la période où l'armée soviétique se trouve déjà sur le territoire de la Roumanie.
- <sup>10</sup> Je ferai allusion au texte français (1957, trad. : Ana Vifor) qui remonte à la même variante du *Străinul* que la traduction hongroise (1957, trad. : Nagy Bálint). Nagy Bálint est le pseudonyme de Géza Nagy (1914–1981), professeur, écrivain, traducteur.
- <sup>11</sup> *Albert Camus sau tragicul exilului* / Ion Vitner. – București : Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1968.
- <sup>12</sup> « Le roman d'engagement prend pour sujet l'action militante ou guerrière sans offrir une vision idéologique univoque, ni toujours prôner une morale de l'engagement » (*Littérature* 1989, 506).
- <sup>13</sup> *South Eastern Europe in Maps*. Edited by Károly Kocsis, Geographical Research Institute, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, 2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> Revised and Expanded Edition, p. 46.
- <sup>14</sup> Archives Nationales Historiques centrales, fonds Comité Central du PCR, Section Externe, dos. 16/1958. 4. f.
- <sup>15</sup> ANIC, fond CC al PCR Secția Externă, dos. 53/1958. 28.
- <sup>16</sup> Gyula Dávid, Román irodalom [Littérature roumaine], In *Világirodalmi kisenciklopédia II. (M–Z)*, 1966, 731.
- <sup>17</sup> Comme ses parents ont été tous les deux emprisonnés par des motifs politiques, Manolescu est très sensible aux problèmes ethniques de la société roumaine et surtout à ceux qui concernent le comportement de la classe politique. Il est originaire d'une famille d'enseignants de Sibiu, ville importante de la Transylvanie.
- <sup>18</sup> *L'Étranger*, p. 377.
- <sup>19</sup> Ion Lăncrănjan, *Cuvant despre Transilvania* [Quelques mots sur la Transylvanie], București, 1982, Ed. Sport-Turism (ed. II, 1995).
- <sup>20</sup> Béla Köpeczi (dir.), *Erdély története három kötetben* [L'histoire de la Transylvanie en trois volumes], Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986.



- <sup>21</sup> Propos tenus dans la revue *Luceafărul*, 15 mai 1982, à propos de *Cuvant despre Transilvania*. Théorie migrationniste: thèse antagoniste de la continuité daco-romaine, selon laquelle les Roumains ne sont pas autochtones en Transylvanie, mais y ont migré après l'arrivée des Hongrois dans le bassin carpatique.
- <sup>22</sup> *A Hét*, 2 avril 1987.
- <sup>23</sup> Document du 27 mars 1987. <http://www.hhrf.org/dokumentumtar/irott/emh/1987.052.pdf>
- <sup>24</sup> Lucian Boia, *Történelem és mítosz a román köztudatban* [Histoire et mythes dans la mémoire roumaine], Trad. János András, Bukarest–Kolozsvár, Ed. Kriterion Könyvkiadó, 1999, p. 221 (première édition en roumain en 1997).
- <sup>25</sup> *L'Étranger*, pp. 37–38.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 39.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.
- <sup>29</sup> La description du sentiment d'iniquité lié à l'attachement de la Transylvanie à la Hongrie se trouve expressis verbis au chapitre VII – fragment qui ne se trouve ni dans la traduction française, ni dans la traduction hongroise. Cf. *Străinul*, 1979, p. 143.
- <sup>30</sup> *L'Étranger*, 1957, p. 117.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 571.

## LA DOUBLE IDENTITÉ DU COMTE PETŐFY : DILEMME MORTEL<sup>1</sup>

THÉODORE FONTANE, *LE COMTE PETŐFY*,  
SERPENT À PLUMES, 1997, PREMIÈRE ÉDITION EN 1884

HENRI DE MONTETY

EPHE, Paris, France

Dans le *Comte Petőfy* (personnage littéraire à ne pas confondre avec le poète éponyme), Fontane propose de comparer le destin d'un vieil aristocrate hongrois et d'une jeune actrice allemande avec le sort de la Hongrie : entre indépendance et alliance étrangère, entre l'idéal et la réalité, entre le possible et l'insupportable. La vie hongroise est un théâtre sur lequel on donne toujours une pièce tragique. Cela se termine en suicide.

**Mots-clés** : roman métaphorique, Autriche-Hongrie, le point d'honneur, caractère et destin hongrois, 1848

Théodore Fontane (1819–1898) est un écrivain berlinois d'origine huguenote. Derrière ses intrigues sociales, parfois sentimentales, il décrit, en s'appuyant sur le parcours de quelques personnages typiques, les mouvements profonds liés à la nature et au destin des peuples du monde germanique et de ses marges au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Le comte Petőfy est un vieil aristocrate austro-hongrois passionné de théâtre, partagé entre sa loyauté curiale et sa passion magyare. Fontane lui fait rencontrer son double féminin plus ou moins renversé en la personne d'une jeune actrice originaire du nord, prussienne et luthérienne, mais peut-être depuis toujours fascinée par le catholicisme méridional (en tout cas, sa femme de chambre, fille de pasteur, lui reprochera régulièrement son indulgence à l'égard des superstitions catholiques).

L'intrigue est simple. Le vieux comte s'amourache de Franziska ; ils se marient. Par la force des circonstances plutôt que par vilenie, elle finit par le tromper ; il se suicide. L'histoire se déroule partiellement à Vienne et dans une station de montagne autrichienne, partiellement dans la propriété de Petőfy en Hongrie. Une observation rapide et superficielle situerait ce livre à la charnière du roman épique et du roman social (pour ce qu'il met en scène de la « morale mécanique et conventionnelle » du vieux comte, stigmatisée en son temps par Georg Lukács).

Une autre analyse pourrait s'appuyer notamment sur l'omniprésence du théâtre dans la vie des protagonistes (une actrice et un amateur d'art dramatique). En mettant ainsi en scène ses personnages, Fontane se serait semble-t-il élevé contre la sacralisation de l'art et l'esthétisation de la vie en posant le suicide comme destin du malchanceux héros.

Lorsqu'il apprend la nouvelle (de l'adultère), en effet, le comte s'interroge sur la réaction adéquate. « Il y avait un point sur lequel il ne voyait pas clair : sur ce qu'il fallait faire. »<sup>2</sup> Certes, il admet que sa jeune femme a le droit à l'épanouissement physique ; c'est lui-même qui le lui a prestement autorisé avant leur mariage, quelques mois plus tôt. Néanmoins, sa bonne volonté n'est pas à la hauteur de la vérité brute et brutale. Le fait est qu'il est jaloux, terriblement jaloux. En lui la nature reprend ses droits sur les lubies abstraites. Mais l'homme du monde reste néanmoins maître de ses passions. Et c'est le théâtre qui lui donne les moyens de s'exprimer.

L'une des apparitions les plus importunes dans la vie et dans la société a toujours été pour moi le trouble-fête ; je ne veux pas jouer son rôle. [...] Cela aussi peut être un bonheur ultime et suprême que de frayer le bonheur des autres.<sup>3</sup>

Il refuse donc d'être le trouble-fête malgré lui, il veut s'effacer devant l'amant qui, par ailleurs, est d'extraction convenable et ferait un bon mari (c'est son neveu). Bien sûr, il ignore que sa jeune femme a en son for intérieur renoncé à son aventure, au demeurant passagère et liée à des circonstances très particulières (un naufrage sur le lac). Ce double décalage provoqué par de hauts et aveugles sentiments a pour issue un suicide spectaculaire et inutile. La cause de ce geste tragique est l'impossibilité de jouer son rôle ou plutôt le fait que le comte perçoive son rôle comme d'une intolérable contradiction.

Or, en parallèle à l'histoire sentimentale et à la critique sociale, une troisième lecture possible est métaphorique, pour un roman que l'on placerait alors dans la catégorie de la philosophie historique (voire géopolitique). Cette hypothèse est soutenue par la présence d'un troisième personnage au sein de l'intrigue, la sœur du comte Petőfy, une vieille dame bigote et prévenante en même temps qu'insaisissable, qui est à la fois un modèle et un contre-exemple pour la petite actrice éprise de beaux sentiments.

### **L'Autriche et la Hongrie dans le même hôtel**

De près, l'hôtel des Petőfy à Vienne est comme mort et dépeuplé. Il faut s'éloigner jusqu'au trottoir d'en face pour commencer à voir des signes de vie.<sup>4</sup> C'est, en quelque sorte, une vue d'ensemble sur la double monarchie qui est nécessaire ;

et même, il faut le sens de l'observation et la longue expérience des vendeuses du magasin situé, justement, sur le trottoir d'en face pour être capable de formuler une analyse précise de ce qui se passe dans ce palais. « Du côté gauche, – disent-elles – là où habite le comte, là, c'est vrai, tout est hongrois ; mais du côté où habite la comtesse, tout est allemand [comprendre : autrichien]. Et d'ailleurs, le comte et la comtesse sont toujours en guerre. » « Quand la comtesse Judith a épousé le vieux Gundelskirchen [...] alors adieu le diable et la Hongrie. “Magyar plus connaître” (paroles du vieux domestique). Et elle [est] devenue une bonne styrienne. »<sup>5</sup> C'est ainsi : la femme adopte les manières de sa nouvelle famille. Mais le comte Petőfy n'a que mépris pour ces règles qui continuent à imposer leur contraignante inertie même après la mort du mari de sa sœur. En lui, le frère et le Hongrois se révoltent d'un seul mouvement, car, jadis, dit-il à Franziska, sa sœur Judith avait du charme, jusqu'à ce qu'un « prosaïque Styrien [finisse] par substituer à sa grâce naturelle de Magyare la dignité ou, plus vulgairement, la lourdeur allemande ; l'Eglise ensuite [a] fait le reste. »<sup>6</sup>

La comtesse Judith n'a pas seulement perdu la beauté, le charme hongrois. Elle a aussi égaré la liberté que seule donne l'absence de calcul. D'ailleurs, elle est si bien changée qu'elle se félicite indirectement de cette métamorphose en stigmatisant la persistance de ces traits chez son frère. Ainsi aime-t-elle à dire que la vie du comte est « un enchaînement de folies juvéniles » en ajoutant un pressentiment macabre : « ce sera encore une folie juvénile qui conclura [sa] vie ». À cela, l'intéressé répond : « en tout cas, ce serait bien hongrois ». <sup>7</sup> Oui, le suicide : une « folie juvénile » et en même temps quelque chose de « bien hongrois »... Tous les éléments sont disponibles pour le dénouement de l'histoire imaginée par Théodore Fontane, le destin du comte Petőfy envisagé comme un précipité du caractère hongrois.

### **L'Autriche et la Hongrie au coeur d'un vieux comte austro-hongrois**

Par ailleurs, le vieux comte n'est pas fait d'une seule pièce, bien que sa sœur le voie simplement comme un Hongrois incorrigible. Il aura suffi d'un séjour dans le château d'Arpa, berceaux des Petőfy, pour que la suivante de Franziska, sa vieille amie Hanna, perce à jour le secret. Ainsi remarque-t-elle qu'il manque au comte la « clarté et l'unité » propres à sa sœur. Au contraire, chez lui, tout est chancelant, dit-elle.

Même son patriotisme hongrois, pour entier et sincère qu'il fût, n'était pas tout à fait ce qu'il prétendait, et ainsi, malgré lui, il voyait toujours revenir des heures durant lesquelles il avait le sentiment de ne pouvoir proprement exister sans la cour et la capitale. Il y avait une faille dans sa vie et sa manière de penser.<sup>8</sup>

Cette remarque précisément détaillée pose un lien mystique entre l'atmosphère de prédilection d'un homme, son sentiment d'appartenance et sa « manière de penser ». Gare à celui en qui le lien se rompt ! La réalité de la vie lui sautera au visage.

Il n'est pas sûr qu'au moment de son mariage, Franziska ait eu la même sagacité que sa suivante. Lorsque Hanna lui énumérait tous les obstacles à son union avec Petőfy, elle répondait que ce dernier était « précisément assez viennois pour rappeler à l'ordre le catholique, [qu'il était] assez hongrois pour rappeler à l'ordre le Viennois, [qu'il ne restait] donc en réalité qu'un vieux comte et une jeune comédienne. »<sup>9</sup> C'est-à-dire une situation tout à fait admissible, étant donné que dans les très hautes sphères de la société, le mariage efface toute distance préalable. Certes, mais Franziska se situait dans la lecture sentimentale et sociale du roman de Théodore Fontane. En énumérant les différents rôles du comte qui selon elle se neutralisaient aimablement les uns les autres, elle négligeait la lecture métaphorique du roman, celle de l'homme rongé par des contradictions qui, au lieu de se neutraliser, s'exacerbent.

### Les Hongrois

Hanna est arrivée quelques jours avant sa maîtresse au château d'Arpa pour préparer sa chambre. Elle a fait connaissance avec le personnel, notamment avec l'excentrique Toldy, le violoniste, kouroutz<sup>10</sup> endurci, guerrier vaincu mais non découragé de la révolution de 1848 et père de treize enfants. Pour Toldy, raconte Hanna, « plus on est de Magyar, plus on est libre ».<sup>11</sup>

Toldy est notamment responsable de la galerie de peintures au château. En visitant la galerie, Franziska est frappée par un tableau historique dont le titre est « Világos 13 août 1849 ». Il s'agit de la capitulation des troupes hongroises. Toldy lui fait un rapport sinistre sur le mauvais comportement des Autrichiens. Franziska (Fränzl) décide d'avoir une explication avec Petőfy. C'est le tournant du livre, qui ne tient en rien aux rapports sentimentaux des deux protagonistes.

– Etant étrangère – dit Franziska – je ne suis ni pour l'Autriche, ni pour les Habsbourg, et s'il s'agit d'être hongroise, ou de devenir hongroise, il n'y a rien en moi qui m'en empêche.

– Dans ce que tu as vu ici – répond Petőfy – tu as vu juste ; tout est bien hongrois ; et mon vieux cœur ressent comme un bonheur et une grâce qu'il puisse en être ainsi. [...] Vois-tu, Fränzl, ma jeunesse et mes plus belles années d'homme tombent encore à une époque où des questions comme celles-là ne se posaient pas. Notre vieille Autriche était aussi bigarrée qu'elle l'est encore aujourd'hui, mais ses cou-

leurs s'accordaient entre elles. Chacun était attaché corps et âme à la maison impériale [...]. Cela était ainsi dans la tradition et avait toujours été ainsi. [...] [Et brusquement] Notre pays de Hongrie fut comme à l'envers ou, si l'on veut, comme envoûté. Sur chaque drapeau flottait l'inscription : "plutôt mourir pour la Hongrie que se ruiner pour l'Empereur". Sur chaque drapeau et dans chaque cœur. Oui, Fränzl, nous avons une révolution, et une époque de révolution est une rude époque, et plus d'un y a trouvé la mort. Demande à Toldy, qui en était, de te raconter comment on en a pendu sept à la porte du fort d'Arad, pendu pour quel motif ? Simplement parce qu'ils avaient plus d'attachement pour la terre hongroise que pour le serment prêté à l'empereur.

– Et toi, Petőfy ?

– Et bien, moi, j'ai fait ce qui passe d'ordinaire pour le plus mauvais et qui bien souvent l'est aussi, je n'ai choisi ni à gauche ni à droite. Mais cette fois c'était pourtant ce qu'il y avait de mieux à faire.<sup>12</sup>

Plus précisément : le comte est allé rendre son épée, qu'il ne voulait porter ni contre son empereur ni contre son pays. L'empereur le renvoya en grâce.<sup>13</sup>

– Et maintenant, tu connais le vieux Petőfy qui, malgré les vicissitudes de toutes les époques, est resté ce qu'il était : bien impérial et bien viennois, mais aussi en vérité bien hongrois. Et, s'il faut aller jusqu'au bout, bien hongrois par-dessus tout.<sup>14</sup>

Ces confessions font forte impression sur Fränzl, qui promet d'apprendre le hongrois en un an. Petőfy souligne qu'un an, c'est long, à son âge.

### **Le caractère hongrois – le jeu et la réalité**

En vérité, Petőfy est rarement sérieux (sa sœur lui en fait le reproche). Il faut tout de même le croire sur parole lorsqu'il se présente comme « bien hongrois par-dessus tout ». De même qu'il faut aussi lui accorder foi, au début du livre, lorsqu'il décrit une certaine scène dramatique. Voici la scène : un jeune homme en visite à l'hôtel Petőfy prétend qu'en se suicidant, un de leur ami commun a ruiné son honneur plutôt qu'il ne l'a sauvé ; à ces mots, Petőfy s'assombrit, plein de reproches et s'écrit : « Le point d'honneur ; l'honneur ! Chacun, si tant qu'il en ait, est seul à savoir en quoi, pour lui, cela réside ou ne réside pas. »<sup>15</sup>

D'ailleurs, le comte sait exprimer la même pensée sur un mode beaucoup plus épique. Alors qu'on va donner *Zrinyi*, la jeune actrice, qui est encore actrice au théâtre de Vienne, tremble de ne pas être à la hauteur.

– Alors, franchement – s’écrit le comte, vous êtes perdue. Car vous manquez ainsi ce qu’il y a de plus important dans ce rôle : le caractère national. Avoir peur est la chose la moins hongroise du monde.<sup>16</sup>

N’avoir peur de rien n’est pas non plus se bercer d’illusions. En tant qu’amateur de théâtre, le comte Petőfy voue une admiration sans borne à la France, qui diffère, selon lui, à cet égard grandement de l’Autriche. À Vienne, dit-il, le spectateur se sent invité. Le Français, en revanche, est chez lui au théâtre. « Une vie saturée de théâtre et un théâtre saturé de vie. Donc du réalisme ! ».<sup>17</sup> Voici son idéal : une vie réaliste et courageuse, admirable synthèse de l’esprit franco-hongrois, peut-être, contre les mièvreries acrobatiques autrichiennes.

### **La jeune actrice prussienne devient une comtesse hongroise**

La scène se passe au château d’Arpa. Fränzl veut accueillir « à la hongroise »<sup>18</sup> les Gundelskirchen et les Aspern (c’est-à-dire la vieille comtesse, sa belle-sœur, et le bel Egon, son neveu). Mais Egon – qui est son futur amant par accident – la taquine. Elle est venue les accueillir assise en voiture d’osier. Or une véritable comtesse magyare aurait, dans une telle circonstance, chevauché un cheval de race. Il poursuit sur le mode humoristique en soulignant que prendre des leçons de grammaire avec le petit prêtre du village est absolument trivial. Or « ce qui est trivial n’est pas hongrois. » Bien entendu. Enfin, pour condenser sa pensée, il a ces paroles énigmatiques : « Elle veut être magyare, ou du moins le devenir, et commence l’apprentissage par la correction alors qu’elle devrait à l’inverse tâter de l’incorrection. »<sup>19</sup>

Puis vient l’évènement fâcheux, puis la mort de Petőfy. Après une courte promenade à cheval, il se tire une balle dans la bouche. La jeune comtesse va se consacrer désormais à ses devoirs de veuve. Elle s’installera au château d’Arpa.

À Vienne, où l’on ignore – par miracle – le faux-pas de Fränzl, on interprète ainsi la mort du comte : il avait été question d’une charge disponible à la cour, mais l’empereur se serait opposé à ce qu’elle échût à Petőfy « soit à cause de la jeune comtesse ou bien en conséquence de l’année quarante-neuf et de la révolution. »<sup>20</sup>

On sait (en suivant une nouvelle fois Théodore Fontane) que la mésalliance n’a pas de conséquence dans une aussi glorieuse famille que celle des Petőfy, on sait de même que le comte est resté en grâce lorsqu’il a rendu son sabre en 1849. Donc, la rumeur est fautive, le monde se trompe. Car, en réalité, le comte Petőfy est simplement mort de l’impossibilité de vivre. D’ailleurs, ce fait lui est apparu tardivement, même à un âge très avancé. C’est la jeune comtesse, sa femme, qui lui en a fait prendre conscience, cette jeune femme qui veut devenir hongroise et le

pousse, involontairement, à admettre qu'il n'est pas fait pour le rôle – non pas celui de « jeune » mari (peu importe !), mais celui de hongrois intégral. Après la disparition du vieil homme, la voie est libre. La jeune comtesse va pouvoir devenir ce que le comte ne fut jamais malgré les illusions soigneusement dépeintes par Fontane : une vraie Hongroise. Apothéose.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Sándor Petőfi, héros réel de la révolution nationale anti-Habsbourg de 1848, n'était pas un comte, bien entendu. La confusion est impossible avec son quasi-homonyme, héros imaginaire du livre de Théodore Fontane. D'ailleurs, il faut bien admettre que le choix du patronyme est plutôt malheureux (à moins que Fontane ait justement voulu exprimer la double nature – hongroise et autrichienne – de son protagoniste).
- <sup>2</sup> p. 273.
- <sup>3</sup> p. 276.
- <sup>4</sup> p. 7.
- <sup>5</sup> p. 21.
- <sup>6</sup> p. 180.
- <sup>7</sup> p. 15.
- <sup>8</sup> p. 180.
- <sup>9</sup> p. 118.
- <sup>10</sup> Kouroutz : sobriquet désignant les troupes de Ferenc Rákóczi révoltées contre l'Empire autrichien (1703–1711). Par la suite, notamment lors de la révolution de 1848, le terme a été employé pour marquer l'attachement aux traditions et à l'indépendance hongroises.
- <sup>11</sup> p. 144.
- <sup>12</sup> p. 168–173. Le philosophe Alain (qui était de gauche) disait qu'un homme ayant la prétention d'être ni de droite ni de gauche affichait involontairement de cette manière son appartenance à la droite.
- <sup>13</sup> Cette clémence est peu plausible. Mentionnons, comme contre-exemple, le mauvais traitement infligé après 1848 au comte Széchenyi qui, effectivement, avait tenu à ne prendre parti ni pour les impériaux ni pour les révolutionnaires. Il mourut dans un hôpital psychiatrique près de Vienne en 1860.
- <sup>14</sup> p. 173.
- <sup>15</sup> p. 19.
- <sup>16</sup> p. 30.
- <sup>17</sup> p. 79.
- <sup>18</sup> p. 214.
- <sup>19</sup> pp. 221–222.
- <sup>20</sup> p. 286.



## CHICO BUARQUE : *BUDAPEST* (DÉCONSEILLÉ POUR LES HONGROIS)

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La Hongrie, non plus que la scène culturelle et la langue hongroise, n'est un thème recherché par les auteurs de fiction contemporains hors de Hongrie. Mais le roman de l'auteur brésilien Chico Buarque, *Budapest*, traduit en presque vingt langues, installe ses personnages et son histoire dans le décor hongrois, et semble faire carrière un peu partout dans le monde sauf en Hongrie. Pourquoi le public hongrois ignore-t-il ou critique sévèrement cet ouvrage que d'autres critiques jugent parfois « poétique et sensuelle » ou dont on dit que ses « analyses critiques révèlent sophistication et complexité ». Le roman, qui est l'histoire de l'initiation du personnage principal, le ghostwriter brésilien, dans une langue et une culture étrangères représentées par la culture hongroise joue sur la fictionalisation des références culturelles. L'article étudie pourquoi ce processus de fictionalisation fait naufrage lorsque le roman entre dans un contexte où les références perdent leur effet d'étranger.

**Mots-clefs :** littérature hongroise, littérature brésilienne, référence culturelle, fictionalisation, culture et langue hongroises, cultures étrangères, réception

La Hongrie, non plus que la scène culturelle et la langue hongroise, n'est un thème recherché par les auteurs de fiction contemporains hors de Hongrie. Mais, s'il arrive tout de même qu'un auteur étranger installe ses personnages et son histoire dans le décor hongrois, son expérience mériterait, en principe, par ce seul fait même, l'intérêt de la critique hongroise. Or ce n'est pas le cas du roman brésilien de Chico Buarque, *Budapest*,<sup>1</sup> déjà traduit en presque vingt langues, qui semble faire carrière un peu partout dans le monde sauf en Hongrie. Pourquoi le public hongrois ignore-t-il ou éreinte-t-il sévèrement<sup>2</sup> cet ouvrage que la critique anglaise juge parfois « poétique et sensuelle »<sup>3</sup> ou dont on dit que ses « analyses critiques révèlent sophistication et complexité ».<sup>4</sup>

Selon l'éditeur français, « tout en étant le héros et le narrateur de sa propre vie, José Costa – a priori condamné par sa profession de “nègre” à rester dans l'ombre – en est aussi le spectateur impuissant ».<sup>5</sup> L'impuissance est le terme juste. D'ailleurs, le hasard joue un rôle capital dans cette histoire qui est finalement toute

simple. José Costa, âgé d'une trentaine d'années, gagne sa vie comme "nègre" ou *ghostwriter* ; son métier consiste à écrire pour les autres des « monographies et dissertations, des tests de médecine, les requêtes d'avocat, les lettres d'amour, d'adieux, de désespoir, chantages, menaces de suicide » (20–21).<sup>6</sup> Or il se trouve à Budapest en raison d'un arrêt forcé : son avion, comme il va l'apprendre plus tard, a été victime d'une alerte à la bombe. Il passe une nuit dans un hôtel de l'aéroport de Budapest, regardant la télévision hongroise qui propose, toute les heures, le journal télévisé. Le lendemain, José Costa reprend l'avion, en route vers Rio de Janeiro, et retrouve sa femme Vanda, qui est présentatrice de télévision. Mais il éprouve des difficultés grandissantes à retrouver sa place dans sa propre vie. Poussé par une idée subite, il entre dans une agence de voyage où il achète pour lui-même et pour sa femme deux billets d'avion à Budapest. Mais, alors qu'ils sont déjà à l'aéroport, sa femme décide de changer son billet et d'aller à Londres au lieu de suivre Costa.

Le séjour à Budapest, qui ne devait être qu'une simple visite touristique, finit par s'étendre sur plusieurs mois. Dès son arrivée, dans une librairie où il rentre pour acheter un manuel de langue, Costa rencontre par hasard Kriska, une jeune hongroise, qui deviendra à la fois sa professeur de hongrois et sa compagne. D'ailleurs, ce qui mettra un terme à son séjour budapestois et à son initiation dans la langue hongroise, ce sera aussi le hasard et l'instinct : « Lors d'une de ces nuits, à l'étourdie, j'ai appelé à Rio » (66), écrit-il, et à partir du moment où il entend sa langue maternelle et prononce des mots en cette langue, une séparation s'impose avec la langue et la vie hongroise ; il retourne à Rio.

Il décide de retourner encore une fois à Budapest, sous l'effet d'événements qui se déroulent en l'espace de quelques minutes. Sa femme a rencontré (par une suite d'événements imprévus) un Allemand dont elle s'est entichée, un certain Kaspar Krabbe qui de plus est "l'auteur" d'un livre écrit en réalité par Costa lui-même. Costa décide donc de fuir cette situation qui s'est formée à son insu autour de lui. Ce nouveau retour à Budapest est une fois encore conditionné par le hasard, mais il rencontre également la volonté du personnage principal d'effacer l'aveu fait à sa femme qu'il est lui-même l'auteur de l'ouvrage qu'elle admire tant. Le voyage a pour objet d'échapper aux conséquences présumées de l'aveu par la force de l'oubli de la langue dans laquelle il a été formulé :

Pour oublier ces mots, peut-être était-il nécessaire d'oublier la langue même dans laquelle ils avaient été prononcés, tout comme nous démenageons d'une maison qui nous rappelle un mort. Peut-être était-il possible de remplacer dans ma tête une langue par une autre, graduellement, en défaussant un mot à chaque mot acquis. Durant un certain temps, ma tête ressemblerait à une maison en travaux, avec de nouveaux mots qui monteraient par une oreille et des gravats qui descendraient par l'autre. [...] Mais en contrepartie, une fois affranchi de

tout le vocabulaire latin, grâce à l'appui de Kriska je serais apte à parler un magyar châtié (109–110).

Lors de ce long séjour à Budapest, Costa retrouve le mode de vie qu'il a quitté peu avant. Kriska a (par hasard) des contacts dans le Club des Belles-Lettres où elle trouve un travail à Costa, qui permet à ce dernier d'approfondir ses connaissances de hongrois ; il devient même, cette fois-ci en hongrois, un *ghostwriter*, entre autres celui du poète hongrois Kocsis Ferenc. Les événements prennent d'ailleurs une nouvelle tournure lorsqu'il arrive devant « un hôtel d'apparence modeste » (126–127) qu'il a trouvé par hasard en marchant vers le centre de Budapest, après avoir quitté Kriska parce qu'elle n'a pas suffisamment apprécié le recueil des Tercets Secrets écrits au nom de Kocsis. Il apprend qu'il est, en quelque sorte, attendu, puisque l'hôtel Zakariás de Budapest accueille « le congrès annuel des auteurs anonymes » (127). D'autre part, il se rend compte que l'ancien mari de Kriska est lui aussi un *ghostwriter* (encore une coïncidence imprévue). Or la nuit même de cette révélation, la police débarque pour lui annoncer qu'il doit quitter le pays en l'espace de 48 heures, car sa « situation dans le pays [est] totalement irrégulière ». (130).

De retour à Rio, il ne rentre pas dans sa famille, mais descend à l'hôtel. Et pourtant, dès sa première sortie dehors, il rencontre son fils qui l'a déjà oublié et donc ne le reconnaît pas. Il passe ses journées à l'hôtel ou dans les rues, il épie sa femme mais il évite de la rencontrer ; il erre dans la ville sans prendre de décision tout en essayant de reprendre en main les fils perdus de sa vie ancienne. Peu à peu, il se retrouve sans ressource tout en accumulant une dette considérable envers son hôtel. Pour le chasser de la chambre qu'il occupe depuis plus que trois mois, on fait sonner son téléphone toute la nuit, mais il ne répond pas. Un jour, quand il rentre dans sa chambre, « quelque chose [lui dit] que cette fois [il doit] décrocher, [c'est] une bonne nouvelle, [c'est] une bonne nouvelle » (146). Et il a raison, car c'est le consul hongrois qui l'appelle pour lui annoncer qu'on lui offre un billet d'avion à Budapest et « un visa d'entrée en Hongrie, avec en plus un droit de séjour illimité » (146). C'est le grand poète hongrois Kocsis Ferenc et son éditeur, Lantos, Lorant & Budai, qui le rappellent dans la capitale hongroise :

pressé par ses éditeurs de renouveler le tonitruant succès des Tercets Secrets, Kocsis Ferenc leur aurait avoué son impuissance dans le domaine de la poésie. Avide, néanmoins, lui aussi des gloires renouvelées, entre quatre murs il avait suggéré que l'on importât du Brésil le dévoué poète Zsoze Kósta (146–147).

Son troisième retour à Budapest enchaîne une suite grotesque et surréelle d'événements : à l'aéroport, il est accueilli solennellement par la foule et les médias comme l'auteur d'un livre intitulé *Budapest*, qu'il dit n'avoir pas écrit, mais qui a

tout de même été publié sous son nom par le mari divorcé de Kriska. Kriska, qui est enceinte, dévoile la logique des événements : elle explique que « son ex-mari [a] un cœur en or, par l'intermédiaire de Pisti il [s'est] enquis de son état de santé et il [a] chargé Pisti d'assurer à sa mère qu'il n'épargnerait ni entregent ni moyens pour faire revenir son homme à Budapest ». (150) Le narrateur ajoute : « Entre-temps le salaud écrivait le livre. Il falsifiait mon vocabulaire, mes pensées et mes rêveries, ce salaud inventait mon roman autobiographique » (151).

Le livre finit donc de manière imprévue : le lecteur apprend, en même temps que José Costa lui-même, que ce dernier n'est pas l'auteur de l'ouvrage dont il est en train de terminer la lecture – le livre a été écrit par un autre. « Et [...] l'histoire qu'il imaginait, si semblable à la mienne, parfois me semblait plus authentique que si moi-même je l'avais écrite » (151).

Les allez-retours entre les deux scènes, Rio et Budapest, impliquent une réflexion sur la langue et la culture, surtout du côté hongrois. Or les références à la langue et au contexte hongrois sont problématiques, elles sont formées par l'imagination de Chico Buarque qui n'a jamais été en Hongrie avant d'écrire son roman et n'a pas étudiées le sujet en profondeur. Comme il le dit dans un interview :

L'intrigue [...] vient en second derrière les mots. Lorsque j'ai eu l'idée du livre, j'ai d'abord envisagé de le situer dans un lieu inventé, avec une langue inventée. Cet endroit imaginaire est finalement devenu la Hongrie, cela est probablement dû au fait qu'il m'est arrivé d'avoir une amie hongroise, et aussi aux souvenirs que je gardai de la coupe du monde en 1954.<sup>7</sup>

Le roman est construit sur une série de clichés qui sont destinés à évoquer une certaine « réalité hongroise », en toile de fond aux espaces imaginaires de la fiction. La différence entre la réception hongroise et ce que l'on a pu observer à l'étranger montre que la délimitation entre les références et la fiction est un effet de la lecture. Les clichés ou les éléments de référence fonctionnent comme des *shifters*, c'est-à-dire comme des éléments qui peuvent changer de nature en fonction des circonstances de leur émission ou réception (changement de temps, de lieu et de personne). Pour le lecteur hongrois, cette réalité (imaginaire) hongroise ne crée pas l'effet d'étranger ou d'étrangeté qui est sa fonction principale dans le roman lu dans l'original ou dans d'autres langues. Il n'y a pratiquement qu'un seul élément qui, pour le lecteur hongrois, s'intègre véritablement dans ce jeu double de la fiction, entre référence culturelle et image de Budapest comme monde imaginaire : Buarque donne aux lieux et personnages de son roman le nom des membres de l'équipe nationale légendaire du football hongrois (le Onze d'or, finaliste à la coupe du monde en 1954). D'ailleurs, le jeu avec les clichés culturels serait plus efficace s'il était plus régulier dans le roman, c'est-à-dire s'il concernait aussi d'autres indices culturels et surtout s'il se doublait d'une distanciation ironique et d'une ré-

flexion critique sous-jacente sur le rôle des clichés dans la construction identitaire d'un peuple étranger au sein d'une fiction. Comme il n'en est pas question dans *Budapest*, il est difficile au lecteur hongrois de créer de lui-même une lecture fictionnelle, ainsi son interprétation demeure-t-elle dans le contexte référentiel, qui de plus révèle de nombreuses incohérences ou anachronismes. Les cigarettes *Fecske* (l'une des marques favorites de l'époque socialiste), par exemple, sont d'un autre temps que *Kodak*, *Benetton*, *C&A* (56), qui se rattachent à l'idée de la mondialisation entrée dans la vie hongroise après le changement de régime en 1989, ou alors il est difficile d'imaginer un Budapest éclairé par « des lampadaires à vapeur de mercure » (47). « À Óbuda, la vieille Buda », dans les paillotes Kriska et Costa mangeaient « de la pizza crue » suivie d'une « bouteille de tokay » qu'ils avaient « emportée pour la boire » (64). Les décors des paillotes, pour le lecteur hongrois, renvoient directement à l'idée de cuisine hongroise, on ne fait donc pas de pizza (cuite ou crüe) dans ce type de restaurant. D'autre part, le vin de Tokay, relativement cher, appartient à un autre registre que la pizza. Budapest, avec l'île Marguerite où Kriska et Costa voient « des attractions dominicales : les clowns acrobates qui plongent dans le Danube, les courses de moutons, les marionnettes slovènes, le chœur des ventriloques » (64), semble être, plus même qu'un non-lieu<sup>8</sup> ou un *nowhere*, un monde véritablement cacophonique. Il est certain que l'auteur de fiction a pleinement le droit de modifier la réalité en transposant tout ce qu'il souhaite du monde réel dans un monde imaginaire. Mais le lecteur attend une certaine cohérence, qui lui permette d'entrer dans la complicité de l'auteur. Certaines références du roman *Budapest*, comme le « bazar bulgare » (au lieu du marché polonais)<sup>9</sup> où l'on achète « un vaste pardessus en peau d'ours » (107),<sup>10</sup> ou bien un enregistrement de « la ballade lancinante de la fille de Barbe-Bleue » (64, 133) (au lieu de celle de son épouse), sont des erreurs qui plus encore que les exemples cités plus haut bousculent la confiance du lecteur (hongrois) et font douter ce dernier des intentions de cohérence de l'auteur, y compris dans la fiction.

Plusieurs critiques (non hongrois) ont souligné l'aspect métalittéraire du roman et sa réflexion menée sur la langue, ils interprètent le roman comme le portrait du « *postmodern fractured subject* ». <sup>11</sup> D'une part, le personnage principal est un écrivain, d'autre part, l'histoire est celle d'un changement de langue et de culture. Les questions de l'identité et de la langue sont donc mises en perspective. Nous avons vu plus haut que José Costa était un personnage qui se laissait guider par les événements et son instinct. Tous ses actes sont des réactions spontanées à l'impulsion qu'il reçoit du monde extérieur ou de ses propres sentiments. D'ailleurs, il ne va jamais au fond des choses et la réflexion qu'il mène sur le langage, sur la littérature et sur le changement de culture est tout aussi improvisée que ses réactions. Comme il est lui-même le narrateur de son histoire, on peut parler d'une autonarration qui place l'histoire dans un passé que maîtrise le narrateur, mais cette autonarration ne se double pas d'une autoréflexion, c'est-à-dire d'une réin-

interprétation des idées au sein même de la narration. Ce manque d'autoréflexion est une conséquence de la structure du récit : Costa ne s'immerge pas dans la réflexion théorique sur la langue et la culture, au contraire, ses idées apparaissent au gré du hasard avant de rendre immédiatement le terrain à l'histoire, comme dans cette scène où, en plein milieu d'une phrase, l'expérience de la langue cède le pas à une expérience d'un tout autre genre :

Lors de mes premières leçons, elle me donnait soif, parce que je répétais eau, eau, eau, sans trouver la prosodie du hongrois. Tenez, les pains de potiron, un jour elle en a apporté une fournée au séjour, les a passées encore fumantes sous mon nez, puis les a tous jetés parce que je n'avais pas su dire leur nom. Mais avant de fixer et de prononcer correctement les mots d'un idiome, il est évident que l'on commence déjà à les distinguer, capter leur sens : table, café, téléphone, distraite, jaune, soupirer, spaghettis à la bolognaise, fenêtre, badminton, joie, un, deux, trois, neuf, dix, musique, vin, robe de coton, chatouillis, fou, et un jour j'ai découvert que Kriska aimait les baisers sur la nuque. Alors elle a fait passer par-dessus sa tête sa robe de sac, elle ne portait rien dessous et j'ai été déconcerté par toute cette blancheur (45).

C'est en partie cette technique caractéristique du roman de Buarque qui permet aux critiques d'invoquer, à juste titre, la méthode postmoderne de la fragmentation. Mais cette dernière n'explique ni les incohérences de la réflexion ni les contradictions. L'enjeu central de l'ouvrage est l'initiation du personnage principal dans une langue et une culture étrangères, le hongrois. Buarque émet au cours du récit des idées qui pourraient être fructueuses, mais qui ne parviennent pas à procurer une satisfaction intellectuelle au lecteur hongrois.

L'idée est bonne que Costa, écrivain en portugais, devienne poète en hongrois. Mais, selon notre logique, le fait d'être poète devrait être indissociable de la prise de conscience des limites de l'expression et permettre de trouver des chemins du signifié dans la nouvelle langue qui ne se sont pas ouverts dans l'ancienne. Or ces questions ne sont pas posées. Bien au contraire, l'histoire est encadrée par la déclaration de Costa : « En tout cas, aujourd'hui je peux dire que je parle hongrois à la perfection, ou presque » (11, 124). L'idée de l'appropriation entière de la langue revient à plusieurs reprises, sans relativisation : Kriska apprend à Costa « la norme cultivée de la langue » (114) au point que ce dernier affirme être « capable, ne comptant que sur [lui]-même, de retoucher le hongrois des meilleurs écrivains de Hongrie » (114). La contradiction saute ici aux yeux : qui sinon les écrivains pourraient connaître ces normes (si elles existent) dans lesquelles il a été introduit ? De plus, Kriska échoue face au lecteur hongrois initié lorsqu'elle apprend à Costa des formules que le hongrois n'utilise pas : « Il existe une façon

d'expier une faute, c'est l'expression familière magyare *végtelenül büntess meg*, c'est-à-dire punis-moi à l'infini, si on la traduit à peu près » (63).

Le ton pathétique qui se rattache souvent aux observations sur la langue ne réussit pas à imposer une distance ironique par rapport à l'idée exprimée, de sorte que l'ensemble se donne un ton plutôt grotesque. La poésie est considérée, sans nuances, comme intraduisible : affirmation à laquelle renvoie le refrain du poème de Kocsis Ferenc que Buarque a récité à Rio, dont le sens est « *unique, intouchable, intraduisible* » et que les traducteurs français et anglais ont inséré directement en hongrois dans le texte (« *egyetlen, érintetlen, lefordíthatatlan* », 37, 121). L'insuffisance de la traduction revient aussi lorsque l'idée prend la forme inverse : « Je savais que c'était de la poésie, parce que intraduisible, sinon en dialecte *székely*, où le mot *facsckë*, [!] hirondelle, évoque aussi ce battement d'ailes, *fecske* » (120). La scène de la lecture des poèmes hongrois que les interprètes n'arrivent pas à traduire au congrès des auteurs anonymes à Budapest tourne aussi au grotesque.

Le mélange de savoir et d'ignorance chez le narrateur est un sérieux obstacle pour le lecteur hongrois qui souhaiterait prendre plaisir aux germes de grotesque ou d'ironie du roman. Quand nous parlons d'ignorance, nous pensons aux clichés utilisés sans distance critique : par exemple, que le hongrois est « la seule langue du monde, disent les mauvaises langues, que le diable respecte » (12), ou que « la langue magyare est savamment riche » en onomatopées (114), ou que « l'interprète le plus virtuose ne peut rendre un texte hongrois en traduction simultanée » (130), et les pommettes de Kriska lui donnent « un air oriental » (132) et elle écoute des opérettes. Certaines erreurs de l'auteur sont difficiles à renvoyer dans l'ordre de la liberté fictionnelle (comme le « bazar bulgare » dont on a parlé plus haut) ; évoquons aussi des détails incompréhensibles : à la réception du poète Kocsis Ferenc, on sert « une liqueur très douce qui avait un arôme d'abricot » (37).<sup>12</sup> Sur ce point, le traducteur hongrois a certainement hésité entre deux erreurs : faire boire une liqueur douce à ses personnages, ce qui n'arrive pratiquement jamais en ce type d'occasions, ou prendre la liberté de leur offrir de l'eau de vie d'abricot, qui n'est pas douce du tout. Il a opté pour la deuxième solution, avec un léger contresens (« *nagyon édes, sárgabarack ízű pálinka* » [33]).

Le roman est construit sur un système surabondant (ou même un fouillis) de symboles et de jeux de réflexivités où la fragmentation et la discontinuité côtoient certaines voies d'interprétation plus facilement praticables. Le lecteur hongrois se trouve dans une situation paradoxale, sur la voie principale d'interprétation du roman, celle de la langue et la culture hongroises comme symboles ou fictions de l'étranger. Il y est en principe lui-même initié au point de perdre l'effet provoqué par la rencontre de l'étranger dans son étrangeté, et cette perte, pour lui, n'est pas contrebalancée par le plaisir de l'aventure intellectuelle ouverte par les autres voies du roman.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Édition originale: *Budapeste*, Editora Companhia das Letras, 2003; édition française : *Budapest*, trad. par Jacques Thiériot, Paris, Gallimard, 2005 ; édition hongroise: *Budapest*, trad. par Ferenc Pál, Budapest, Athenaeum, 2009; édition anglaise : *Budapest*, trad. par Alison Entrekin, London, Bloomsbury, 2005.
- <sup>2</sup> Dans une de ces quelques critiques, on lit que « les feuilles du roman abondent des bêtises », « tout cela pourrait être un jeu intéressant et fou. Mais il n’y a pas le moindre fond hongrois ! Et l’on a le sentiment qu’on se moque de nous. » (Laura Lukács, « Budapest, te csodás. Chico Buarque de Holanda *Budapeste* című regényéről », *Nagyvilág*, 2004/3, 267–268.)
- <sup>3</sup> JoV: *Between Budapest and Rio De Janeiro (Chico Buarque: Budapest)*, in *JoV’s Book Pyramid*, October 25, 2010, <http://bibliojunkie.wordpress.com/2010/10/25/between-budapest-and-rio-de-janeiro-chico-buarque-budapest/> [consulté le 31 mars 2012].
- <sup>4</sup> Martha LaFollette Miller, « Writing One’s Life: Budapest by Chico Buarque », *Eutomia, Revista Online de Literatura e Lingüística*, Ano II, n° 01, 130, <http://www.revistaeutomia.com.br/volumes/Ano2-Volume1/especial-destaques/Budapeste-de-Chico-Buarque-English.pdf> [consulté le 31 mars 2012].
- <sup>5</sup> Chico Buarque: *Budapest*, [www.gallimard.fr](http://www.gallimard.fr) [consulté le 31 mars 2012].
- <sup>6</sup> Les numéros de pages, sauf indication contraire, renvoient à l’édition française indiquée en note 1.
- <sup>7</sup> Jemima Hunt, « The lionised king of Rio », *The Observer*, 18 July 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2004/jul/18/fiction.features3> [consulté le 31 mars 2012].
- <sup>8</sup> Alice Toulemonde, *Chico Buarque, musicien, poète et romancier. Étude de son dernier roman*, Budapest [Mémoire sous la direction de Monsieur Daros, Master 2 de Littérature Générale et Comparée], *Voix Lusophones*, <http://voixlusophones.fr/wp-content/uploads/16895721.pdf> [consulté le 31 mars 2012].
- <sup>9</sup> Dans l’édition originale : « mercado búlgaro » ; dans la traduction hongroise « *bolgárpiac* » (106). Les marchés polonais (« *lengyelpiac* ») sont apparus en Hongrie après le changement de régime en 1989 et ont reçu leur nom des vendeurs qui à l’origine étaient surtout des polonais qui vendaient très bon marché toute sorte de marchandises (vêtements, outils, légumes, alimentation etc.).
- <sup>10</sup> Une telle affaire est exceptionnelle...
- <sup>12</sup> Martha LaFollette Miller, « Writing One’s Life : Budapest by Chico Buarque », *Eutomia, Revista Online de Literatura e Lingüística*, Ano II, n° 01, 131, <http://www.revistaeutomia.com.br/volumes/Ano2-Volume1/especial-destaques/Budapeste-de-Chico-Buarque-English.pdf> [consulté le 31 mars 2012].
- <sup>12</sup> Dans l’original: « um licor muito doce, sabendo a damasco ».



## RHETORISCHE UND LITERATURSOZIOLOGISCHE BESONDERHEITEN UNGARISCHER DEDIKATIONSPRAXIS IM 17. JAHRHUNDERT

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Die Studie hat den Gesamtkorpus der ungarischen Buchproduktion zwischen 1600 und 1655 zum Gegenstand, um die Gattung der Dedikation analysieren zu können. Anhand der 338 untersuchten Werke wird ein detailliertes Bild der paratextuellen Gattung in ihren rhetorischen, topos-historischen und dichtungstheoretischen Zusammenhängen gezeichnet, sowie das literarische Mäzenatentum der Frühen Neuzeit in Ungarn beschrieben. Neben der Analyse rhetorischer und literatursoziologischer Spezifika von einzelnen Dedikationen wird eine umfassende theoretische und historische Gattungsanalyse aufgestellt. Die Forschungsergebnisse werden mit Bezug auf bestehende Untersuchungen der englischen, deutschen und französischen Literatur in einen internationalen Kontext gestellt, so können die Besonderheiten der ungarischen paratextuellen Gattung und der Patronage festgestellt und analysiert werden.

**Schlagwörter:** Ungarische Literatur, Paratext, Dedikation, Mäzenatentum, Rhetorik, Topos, 17. Jahrhundert

Zwischen 1600 und 1655 sind in Ungarn nach dem *Verzeichnis Alter Ungarischer Drucke* (RMNy II und III.)<sup>1</sup> etwa 1684 Bücher erschienen, davon 610, also etwa 36 Prozent mit Dedikationsbriefen. Was, wie, wem und warum wurde dediziert? Die Geschichte und Entwicklung der Buchwidmung ist lang, wechselvoll und in wesentlichen Teilen – besonders was die ungarische Literatur betrifft – noch zu schreiben. Anhand einer widmungsgeschichtlichen Forschung kann man die gattungsspezifischen Eigenschaften der barocken Paratexte, sowie die historisch-politischen und sozialen Zusammenhänge feststellen, die sich der Entstehungsgeschichte und den hypotextuellen Zusammenhängen einzelner Werke annähern. Nicht zuletzt ermöglicht sie eine ausführliche Analyse der literarischen Patronage der Zeit.

Die Dedikation, die symbolische Darbringung eines Buches ist in der Frühen Neuzeit fester Bestandteil der Buchausgabe. Im späten Mittelalter und zum großen Teil auch in der Frühen Neuzeit wurden die Bücher in Ungarn von Schriftstellern zwar selbst herausgegeben, allerdings nicht auf eigene Kosten.<sup>2</sup> Diese wur-

den zum größten Teil von Mäzenen getragen. In einem Druck ist traditionell die Dedikation – selten auch die Vorrede – der einzige Textraum, der dem Autor die Möglichkeit bietet, den Patron anzusprechen und (Selbst)Reflexionen über den Text zu liefern. Über seine Person können – ausgenommen in wenigen Fällen, in denen Einzelheiten der Patronage in Korrespondenzen nachweisbar sind – ausschließlich literarische Rahmentexte, wie das Titelblatt, die Vorrede und vor allem die Dedikation Auskunft geben. Dedikationen sind also grundlegende Quellen zur Literatursoziologie des Barock: Beziehungen zwischen Schriftsteller und Mäzen sowie Formen und Modus der Unterstützung bilden historisch betrachtet die Entwicklung der künstlerischen Unabhängigkeit ab.

### Forschungsstand und Fragestellung

Das wissenschaftliche Interesse für Paratexte, also für Rahmentexte eines Buches, ist keine neue Erscheinung. Nicht nur Paratext-Sammlungen von bekannten Schriftstellern erschienen bereits am Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts,<sup>3</sup> sondern auch die ersten lateinsprachigen Studien über das Mäzenatentum der antiken Literatur und über die Geschichte der Dedikationen.<sup>4</sup> Seit der umfassenden theoretischen Arbeit von Gérard Genette aus dem Jahr 1987 wurde die Paratextforschung zu einem wichtigen Bestandteil des literaturtheoretischen Diskurses.<sup>5</sup> In der neuesten literaturtheoretischen Forschung wird die rezeptionslenkende Rolle der Paratexte<sup>6</sup> sowie deren Zusammenhang zu Derridas Begriff *parergon*<sup>7</sup> untersucht.<sup>8</sup> Traditionell werden Paratexte allerdings vor allem als historische und literatursoziologische Quellen interpretiert. Die wichtigsten umfassenden Untersuchungen über die mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Dedikationen der deutschsprachigen Literatur stammen von Karl Schottenloher<sup>9</sup> und neulich von Gabriella Schramm,<sup>10</sup> der französischsprachigen Literatur von Wolfgang Leiner<sup>11</sup> und Sharon Kettering,<sup>12</sup> der italienischen von Marco Paoli<sup>13</sup> und der englischsprachigen unter anderem von Kevin Dunn<sup>14</sup> und Dustin Griffin.<sup>15</sup>

Die ungarische Forschung konzentrierte sich bisher eher auf einzelne Gattungen oder Autoren. So untersucht zum Beispiel Emil Hargittay die Literaturauffassung von Péter Pázmány anhand seiner Paratexte,<sup>16</sup> Csaba Onder die Paratexte der ungarischen Gedichtsammlung aus dem 18. Jahrhundert,<sup>17</sup> und János Heltai die Patronage der Erbauungsbücher und religiösen Streitschriften im Zusammenhang mit der Buchproduktion des 17. Jahrhunderts. Übergreifende Studien zu literaturtheoretischen oder literaturhistorischen Perspektiven des Paratextes wurden bisher nicht durchgeführt.

Diese Forschung will an den grob beschriebenen internationalen Diskurs anknüpfen und hat die gesamte ungarischsprachige Buchproduktion der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts (1600–1655) zum Gegenstand, um die Gattung der Dedi-

kation analysieren zu können. Es werden einerseits die rhetorischen und literatursoziologischen Spezifika der einzelnen Werke dargestellt, andererseits wird anhand des gesamten Korpus eine umfassende theoretische und historische Gattungsanalyse aufgestellt. Die Forschungsergebnisse werden in Bezug auf bestehende Untersuchungen der englischen, deutschen und französischen Literatur in einen internationalen Kontext gestellt.

### Terminologische Fragen

Eine wichtige Aufgabe der Forschung war es, Definitionen der einzelnen Paratexte in der ungarischen Praxis zu klären und dabei vor allem Dedikation von der Vorrede terminologisch abzugrenzen.

Das Unterscheidungsmerkmal zwischen diesen beiden Paratexten des barocken Buches liegt gemäß der literarischen Tradition sowie auch nach Genette in der Person des Empfängers, die den Inhalt, den Aufbau und die Rhetorik des betreffenden Textes beeinflusst. Die Dedikation spricht herkömmlicherweise den Patron (des Autors beziehungsweise des Werkes) an. Mittels einer Dedikation wird, wie Genette definiert, „ein Werk einer Person, einer wirklichen oder idealen Gruppe oder irgendeiner andersgearteten Entität als Ehrengabe“ gewidmet.<sup>18</sup> Dagegen spielt die Vorrede die Rolle, den „gnädigen“ Leser anzusprechen, sein Interesse zu wecken und sein Wohlwollen zu erlangen. Die Dedikation wird also durch die Beziehung Autor-Werk-Patron, die Vorrede durch die Beziehung Autor-Werk-Leser in ihren thematischen Schwerpunkten bestimmt. Die Vorrede, als eine Art Bedienungsanweisung des Werkes, ermöglicht zwar seinem Autor die künstlerische beziehungsweise politische Selbstrepräsentation, ordnet sich aber grundsätzlich um das Werk und den Leser. Ihre wichtigsten Funktionen sind die thematische Einordnung und Beschreibung des Werkes sowie die Bestimmung, das Publikum anzusprechen. Genette beschreibt dies wie folgt: „Ich verallgemeinere den gängigen Begriff Vorwort und bezeichne damit alle Arten von auktorialen oder allographen Texten (seien sie einleitend oder ausleitend), die aus einem Diskurs bestehen, der anlässlich des nachgestellten oder vorangestellten Textes produziert wurde.“<sup>19</sup> Zsigmond Bellényi fasst dies in seinem Werk *Szent Hieronymus Savanarola elmékedései* (Kassa / Kaschau 1618) so zusammen:

Summáját pedig mind az egész könyvecskének, rövideden mindenik részének ez előljáró beszédben rendeltem, hogy az keresztyén olvasót az olvasásra inkább felindíttassam. Melyből megértvén, miről tractáljon, mivel biztasson és mire tanítson, hogy annak utána nagyobb vidámsággal és serinséggel az derék magyaráztatnak olvasásához is hozzá nyúlhasson.<sup>20</sup>

Laut Ciceros Definition ist das Exordium oder die Einleitung die erste Einheit in der klassischen rhetorischen Aufteilung der Rede – *exordium*, *narratio*, *argumentatio* und *peroratio*. Ihre wichtigsten Funktionen sind: „reddere auditores benevolos, attentos, dociles“,<sup>21</sup> also das Wohlwollen des Publikums zu erlangen, seine Aufmerksamkeit zu wecken und die Zuhörer in Bezug auf Rede und Redner wohlwollend zu stimmen. Cicero betont, dass das Exordium den Gegenstand der Rede behandeln soll. Genau wie die Narration selbst, soll es den Gegenstand in den Mittelpunkt setzen, um damit die Narration vorzubereiten. Dementsprechend können Dedikation und Vorrede, wie Zoltán Szabó G. und László Szörényi sowie Csaba Onder andeuten,<sup>22</sup> als funktionelle Verdoppelung des Exordiums verstanden werden, wobei die Dedikation sich auf die Gefühle, die Vorrede hingegen auf den Verstand auswirkt. Beide Paratexte verwenden den rhetorischen Apparat des Exordiums, allerdings die von Cicero beschriebenen Kriterien der „attentum parare, docilem parare und captatio benevolentiae“ sollten in diesem Fall einer Dedikation nicht im Zusammenhang mit dem Publikum, sondern mit den Mäzenen erfüllt werden.

Wie Genettes Definition verdeutlicht, unterscheidet er die Peritexte, also die im Buch vorliegenden Paratexte, nicht nach ihrer Stellung zum (Haupt)Text. Die gängigen Definitionen von Prätexten oder Präliminarien stammen aus dem wissenschaftlichen Diskurs vor Genette und werden – besonders in der ungarischen Fachliteratur – in mehreren Bedeutungen verwendet. Einerseits beziehen sich diese Definitionen auf den ganzen paratextuellen Apparat vor dem Text – inklusive Titelblatt, Verfasserangaben, eventuell sogar Stiche – andererseits werden sie enger, ausschließlich auf einleitende, textuelle Peritexte, also Dedikation und Vorrede begrenzt. Ich folge der Trennung beider Begriffe nach der wichtigsten deutschsprachigen Fachliteratur und verwende den Begriff *Prätext* ergänzend zu Genettes Paratext-Begriff, also in seiner engeren Bedeutung ausschließlich für die Textgattungen der Dedikation und der Vorrede und den Begriff *Präliminarien* für die gesamte einleitende Paratextbasis.

### **Der Korpus und die Mischformen der paratextuellen Gattungen**

Den Korpus der Forschung bilden die mit Dedikationsbrief versehenen, ungarischsprachigen Drucke zwischen 1601 und 1655. Der Forschungskorpus wurde anhand des *Verzeichnis[s]es] Alter Ungarischer Drucke* (RMNy II. und III.) festgelegt, der außerdem als Grundlage für die Klassifizierung, Gruppierung und Einteilung des Korpus und zur Gattungsbestimmung der einzelnen Werke diente.<sup>23</sup>

36 Prozent der in Ungarn herausgegebenen (ungarischen, latein- beziehungsweise fremdsprachigen) Drucke enthalten einen Prätext, das heißt entweder eine Dedikation, oder eine Vorrede, insgesamt also 610 Titel, wovon die Anzahl der



Das einzige bisher bekannte ungarische Dedikationsbild aus dem 17. Jahrhundert in dem Buch von Zacharias Trinkellius: *Divinatorium viae et vitae aeternae*. Wien, 1663. (OSZK, RMK III 2201.)

ungarischsprachigen Werke 338 beträgt. Die 610 Prätexte teilen sich in 495 Dedikationen (in Form von Dedikationsbriefen, -bild, -gedichten oder -tafeln) und 152 Vorreden auf. Eine derart starke Dominanz der Dedikationen gegenüber der Vorrede wurde im Zusammenhang der westeuropäischen Literatur nicht beschrieben. Das Überwiegen von Dedikationen im Korpus kann unter anderem mit der formalen und funktionalen Vermischung der Gattungen Dedikation und Vorrede begründet werden. Diese Erscheinung erklärt sich, laut Gertrud Simon, durch den gemeinsamen Ursprung der beiden Gattungen. Die Mischformen können auf die antike Einleitung zurückgeführt werden, in der die Präfationen mit Ansprachen ergänzt wurden und ihren inhaltlichen sowie stilistischen Besonderheiten unterliegen.<sup>24</sup>

In der ungarischen Praxis haben sich zwei solche Formen herausgebildet. Die erste Mischform stellt der Widmungsprolog oder nach István Geleji Katona auch „dedizierende Vorrede“ dar:<sup>25</sup> hier wird die Vorrede mit einer Adressierung oder eventuell mit Segenswünschen an den Patron ergänzt.<sup>26</sup> Der Widmungsprolog

schließt im Allgemeinen die Inhaltsangabe und die Genese des Werkes ein, das also abgesehen von der Adressierung in Form, Inhalt und Stil der Vorrede entspricht. Die gattungstypischen und festen Bestandteile der Dedikation wie Lob des Adressaten oder die Rechtfertigung der Widmungsgeste bleiben zumeist aus. Der Widmungsprolog kommt in der ungarischen Buchproduktion sowohl im 16. als auch im 17. Jahrhundert sehr häufig vor.

Die zweite Mischform der ungarischen Widmungspraxis wird weder in der internationalen, noch in der ungarischen Fachliteratur beschrieben, so dass ein dafür geeigneter Terminus fehlt, obwohl sie rhetorisch und inhaltlich von der Dedikation und der Vorrede ebenso klar zu trennen ist. Diese Form bezeichnet eine Mischung in umgekehrter Richtung, wobei sich die Vorrede an die Leserschaft in die Dedikation einfügt. In diesen Fällen übernimmt also die Dedikation die traditionelle Rolle der Vorrede. Es werden nicht nur der Patron, sondern auch die Leserschaft angesprochen. Weiters tauchen Elemente der Vorrede, wie Werkangaben, Genese, eventuell Quellenangaben usw. auf. Diese Funktionsausweitung der Dedikation ist besonders für jene Werke kennzeichnend, die ausschließlich eine Dedikation und keine Vorrede beinhalten. Bereits in einer der ersten ungarischsprachigen Dedikationen, in *Szent Pál levelek* von Benedek Komjáthi kommt diese Mischgattung vor: die an die „gnädige Gräfin, Fräulein Katalin, Gattin des ehemaligen gnädigen Gábrriel Perény“ adressierte Dedikation wendet sich im letzten Absatz ohne weitere Anrede an die „Leser von Paulus’ Briefen“ und stellt im Sinne einer Vorrede die Prinzipien der Übersetzung dar.<sup>27</sup>

Neben der formalen und funktionalen Mischung der paratextuellen Gattungen lässt sich in der ungarischen Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts eine allgemeine terminologische Unsicherheit beobachten. Während deutsch- oder englischsprachige Prätexte mit der antiken Terminologie (Dedikationsbrief oder Widmungsbrief vs. Vorrede; dedication vs. preface) konsequent umgehen, sind in der ungarischen Literatur Präliminarien keine Seltenheiten, in denen der Autor den Prätext, der nach formalen und inhaltlichen Kriterien als Dedikation verstanden werden kann, im Titel als Vorrede bezeichnet, oder einen im Titel Dedikation genannten Text später als Vorrede zitiert. Ein Beispiel zeigt die Dedikation des Werkes *Mennyei lámpás* (Göttliche Laterne) von János Bökényi Fülep an die Adelsherren des Komitats Ugocsa:

Tekéntetes, nagyságos, nemes, nemzetes és becsületes Uraim, hogy ez kis könyvecskét nem csak magyarul szólni tanétottam, hanem egyszersmind az Nagyságtok és Kegyelmetek méltóságos neve alatt is világra bocsátani nem átalottam, [...] mindenik okoknak előszámlálásának befoglalására ez könyvecske az ő kicsinsége miatt úgy ítélem elégtelen volna, mert így ez előljáró beszéd magánál netalám nagyobbra terjedni fogna, hanem a többbit elhallgatván légyen elég ok az én Nagyságtokhoz s Kegyelmetekhez és Hazánkhoz való buzgó indulatbéli szeretetemnek mivolta.<sup>28</sup>

Das Phänomen der terminologischen Unsicherheit lässt sich nur bis ins 18. Jahrhundert nachverfolgen; die formalen Mischformen existieren demgegenüber in der ungarischen Literatur bis zur formalen und funktionalen Umwandlung der Dedikationsgattung.

### Rhetorik

Die Rhetorik der Dedikation wird grundsätzlich von Ziel und Funktion der Gattung, vor allem vom Ansprechen des Patrons, der Repräsentation der Unterstützung und dem Ausdruck der Dankbarkeit bestimmt. Die Form der Dedikation ist im Allgemeinen der Brief, wie bereits erwähnt, nur in einzelnen Fällen – etwa als Ergänzung zum Dedikationsbrief – tauchen Widmungstafeln, -gedichte oder Bilder auf.

Obwohl die den mittelalterlichen Schemata folgende Dedikationspraxis in Ungarn etwa hundert-hundertfünfzig Jahre länger zu beobachten ist, und die Kritik der Dedikationspraxis viel später einsetzt, folgt die Rhetorik der ungarischen Dedikationen des 17. Jahrhunderts den zeitgenössischen europäischen Mustern.

Für den Aufbau der Widmungsepistel gelten traditionell die rhetorischen Regeln der Briefgattung. Orientierung bot dazu die Briefstellerkunst, die lateinischen oder in manchen Ländern auch in der Nationalsprache verfassten Briefrhetoriken. Die Dedikationen werden als die imposanteste Form der Briefgattung in vielen Briefstellerkunstbüchern, so in den Werken von Bohse,<sup>29</sup> Morhof,<sup>30</sup> Neukirch,<sup>31</sup> Harsdörffer,<sup>32</sup> Stieler<sup>33</sup> oder Stockhausen behandelt.<sup>34</sup> Diese stellen neben Beispieltexten auch Anleitungen zur Dedikation, zu Regeln und Aufbau und das angemessene Lob dar.

Für den ungarischen Forschungskorpus, ähnlich wie für den deutschen, ist größtenteils der aus dem Mittelalter tradierte, rhetorische Aufbau prägend: *salutatio* (Gruß), *captatio benevolentiae* (Erlangen des Wohlwollens), *narratio* (Narration), *petitio* (Bitte), *conclusio* (Schluss).<sup>35</sup> Die Tabelle (S. 52) zeigt anhand des Forschungskorpus das Aufbauschema der ungarischen Dedikationen.

Im Allgemeinen kann gesagt werden, dass jede Dedikationsepistel mit einer Anrede anfängt (*salutatio*). Eine generelle Regel der Anrede ist die Auflistung der gesamten Titulatur und Rangangabe des Adressaten. Oft kommt es vor, dass die *salutatio* eine eigene Seite bekommt, welche sich von der Dedikation auch typographisch absondert und eine so genannte Widmungstafel bildet. Der Name des Adressaten (im Fall einer weiblichen Patronin auch der Name des Mannes) ist sowohl auf einer Widmungstafel als auch in einem Dedikationsbrief versal gedruckt. Typographische Besonderheiten der Widmungstafel sind des Weiteren die immer kleiner werdende Schrift und der mittig gestellte Text.

SALUTATIO	CAPTATIO BENEVO- LENTIAE	(Eingang)	NARRATIO (Vortrag)	(Bestäti- gung)	PETITIO (Schluss)	CONCLUSIO
Einfache Anrede	Erneute Anrede	Themenangabe und thema- tische Abhandlung	Der illokutive Akt der Darbringung des Buches	Lobtopoi über den Mäzen	Bitte bezüglich des Mäzens	Glück- wünsche und Schluss- formeln
	Der illokutive Akt der Darbringung des Buches		Begründung der Adressierung der Dedikation		Bitte bezüglich des Werkes	
	–	Entstehungs- geschichte und Rechtfertigung des Werkes	Bescheiden- heits-topoi		Bitte bezüglich des Autors	
Einfache Anrede	und Segens- wünsche	Begründung der Adressierung der Dedikation	Weitere rhetorische und inhaltliche Elemente		–	

Die einführende Form der Widmungsepisteln, die *salutatio*, wird meistens mit Glück- beziehungsweise Segenswünschen und dem illokutiven Akt der Darbringung des Buches ergänzt (*captatio benevolentiae*).

Der Hauptteil der Dedikation (*narratio* und *petitio*) wird den Dedikationsregeln von Bohses Briefstellerkunst entsprechend meistens in vier Teile gegliedert: Eingang, Vortrag, Bestätigung und Schluss.<sup>36</sup> Diese Aufteilung kann man auch nach dem klassischen Briefschema interpretieren: zur Narration gehören demnach Eingang, Vortrag und Bestätigung, während der Schluss der *Petitio* entspricht. Diese Grundeinheiten der Dedikation sind inhaltlich um das Werk und den Mäzen geordnet. Dementsprechend besteht der Eingang entweder aus der Themenangabe einer inhaltlichen Zusammenfassung, oder aus den Lobtopoi über den Patron. Die Ausführung und Länge der Abhandlung über das Werk variiert je nachdem, ob im Buch ein Vorwort vorhanden ist. In ungarischen Dedikationen kommt es häufig vor, dass die Themenangabe einer ausführlichen Abhandlung zumeist über theologische Fragen folgt, die im Vortrag um Angaben zur Quellen, zur Stil oder manchmal zur Gattung sowie bei Übersetzungen um die Art und Weise der Translation ergänzt wird. Dies ist besonders für Werke ohne Vorwort



typisch; in diesen Mischformen übernimmt die Dedikation, mit dem Ansprechen der Leserschaft und dem Erlangen des Wohlwollens, die Rolle eines Vorwortes. Falls im Buch auch ein Vorwort vorhanden ist, werden diese Angaben in der Regel dort angeführt.

Der Eingang der Narration dient eigentlich dazu, das Rühmen des Patrons vorzubereiten – so drehen sich Vortrag und Bestätigung fast ausschließlich um den Mäzen. Die festen Bestandteile der Narration bilden folglich die Darbringung des Werkes (sowie gegebenenfalls die Wiederholung derselben), die Begründung der Adressierung und stehen in Zusammenhang mit diesem Bescheidenheitstopos oder -topoi. Die Lobtopoi über den Mäzen, seine Person, seine Taten und seine Güte werden in ungarischen Widmungsepisteln überwiegend im letzten Teil der Narration, in der Bestätigung aufgezählt.

Auf die Narration folgt die Bitte, also *petitio*, welche sich entweder auf das Werk oder den Autor bezieht und von der Patronage bestimmt wird. Beispiele dafür wären die Bitte, dass der Patron das angebotene Werk annimmt oder die Bitte um weitere Unterstützung. Darüber hinaus kann sich die *petitio* auf den Patron beziehen, das heißt, der Autor bittet um das Wohl seines Patrons.

Aus der grundlegenden Funktion der Dedikation, der Repräsentation der Patronage, erklärt sich, dass das wichtigste und häufigste rhetorische Mittel der Lobtopos darstellt. Die Lobtopoi werden in der antiken Redeart durch den *genus demonstrativum* konstituiert. Das Objekt der Verehrung ist in diesem Fall selbstverständlich der Mensch (*a persona*), der Patron. Nach dem hellenistischen Zeitalter waren für Lobtopoi über Herrscher oder hohe Persönlichkeiten feste Schemata im Gebrauch. Das wichtigste Schema ist nach Curtius die aus drei Elementen bestehende Konstellation von Schönheit – hoher Abstammung – Tugendhaftigkeit, deren Variante ist die Viererkonstellation von Schönheit – hoher Abstammung – Macht – Reichtum.<sup>37</sup> Die Quellen dieser Formeln sind vorwiegend in antiken Texten zu finden, die durch biblische Analogien ergänzt werden.

Diese Formeln werden in der ungarischen Dedikationsgattung stark modifiziert: die Topoi über die Person des Patrons werden gar nicht oder nur oberflächlich ausgeführt, wohingegen die Wohltaten des Mäzens gegenüber dem Autor und seine allgemeine Patronentätigkeit detailliert dargelegt werden.

Die Lobtopoi in ungarischen Dedikationen können in drei Gruppen eingeteilt werden: persönliche und religiöse Topoi sowie das Lob der Patronage. Zu den persönlichen Lobtopoi gehören nach der Einordnung von Quintilianus das Lob der hohen Abstammung (*genus* und *natio*), der Tugendhaftigkeit und Waffentüchtigkeit (*fortitudo* oder *virtus*), der guten Bildung und der Aufgeschlossenheit für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur (*educatio et disciplina*) und der Schönheit (*forma*).<sup>38</sup>

Nach Leiner ist das Lob der hohen Abstammung der wichtigste Topos der Dedikationen.<sup>39</sup> Sein Gebrauch war in der mittelalterlichen Literatur in ganz Europa

weit verbreitet. In ungarischen Dedikationen des 17. Jahrhunderts ist es auch zu finden, allerdings begnügen sich die Autoren damit, die hohe Abstammung in der Anrede oder in kürzeren Wendungen hervorzuheben wie: „Nemes vér pozsdul testében“, „gerjedez nemesi vér benne“,<sup>40</sup> „Felséged nemzetségének fejedelmi híre“<sup>41</sup> oder „nagy királyi dicsőségnek fényességével felséged nemzetsége részéssítetik“.<sup>42</sup>

Wie bereits Cicero betont, geht die Tugend der Waffentüchtigkeit und Heldenmut der Abstammung vor: „virtute, non genere commendari“.<sup>43</sup> Die Verbreitung des Topos der Tugendhaftigkeit knüpft an Homers *Odyssee* und wird bereits bei Vergil mit dem Topos der Pietas ergänzt. Aeneas wird dementsprechend wie folgt beschrieben: „...pietate insignis et armis“.<sup>44</sup> In der ungarischen Dedikation wird fast ausschließlich diese Vergilische Form, der Topos *fortitudo et pietas* benutzt. Ein Beispiel zeigt die Dedikation des Werkes *Az pápisták között és mi közöttünk vetélkedésre vettett három fő articulusokról* von János Kecskeméti C. an Ferenc Darholcz:

Hallottam és értettem, sőt minekutána kegyelmednek ismeretségében jutottam, láttam az kegyelmed istenfélő keresztyéni voltát, és az igaz vallásban való oly fondaltatását, hogy efféle dolgokban senkitől semmit nem röttög kegyelmed, sőt, ha kívántatnék, hiti s vallása mellett halált is szenvedni kész volna kegyelmed.<sup>45</sup>

Die Topoi der *educatio et disciplina* kommen in dieser Gattung entsprechend häufig vor. In ungarischen Dedikationen existieren zwei Formen: eine allgemeinere und eine, die auf die Patronage Bezug nimmt. In der zweiten wird also die Aufgeschlossenheit für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Literatur bezüglich der Patronentätigkeit gelobt.

In der ersten Form werden die Bildung und das Wissen des Patrons hervorgehoben. Diese Form kommt besonders in Zusammenhang mit Patroninnen zum Ausdruck. So widmet János Samarjai sein Werk *Magyar harmónia* Orsolya Echi:

anny tudománnyal ajándékozta meg az Úr Isten te Kegyelmedet, hogy magad is olvashatod az Szent Írásokat, mely dolog az Asszonyállatnak bizonyára sokkal nagyobb ékességére vagyon, mint sem homlokán tündöklő koronája, avagy ujjáiban csillámló gyémántja.<sup>46</sup>

Das Lob über den Alphabetismus im Hauptwerk von Samarjai, der Frieden zwischen der lutherischen und kalvinistischen Kirche anstrebte, ist nicht überraschend, da die Lesefähigkeit der Frau gerade eben mit der Reformation eine besondere ideologische Bedeutung bekommen hat. Ihre Wichtigkeit wurde selbst von Luther betont, der öfter hervorhob, dass die Lesefähigkeit der Frau die Lektüre der Bibel und weiterer erbaulicher Texte ermöglicht.<sup>47</sup> Dieses Lob bekommt im

Text von Samarjai dadurch eine besondere Bedeutung, dass es gegenüber der Schönheit betont wird.

Der Topos der Schönheit ist das wichtigste und älteste Lob an Frauen. Laut Leiner kommt er in der französischen Literatur sehr häufig vor. In der ungarischen Literaturgeschichte der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts findet sich trotz der hohen Anzahl der weiblichen Patronage nur ein einziges Beispiel dafür in der Dedikation von Mátyás Hajnals *Szíves könyvecske*:

Micsoda több jót cselekedett mindezeknél még az Istennek benned és veled munkálkodó malasztja, megmutatja ezt az kilencedik szívnek képe, kiben az mennyei Vőlegény virágokat hinteget; mely virágok nem egyebek, hanem az te jóságos cselekedetidnek sok és szép tökéletességi, melyekkel az Szentlélek felékesítette az te lelketet, tebeléd helyeztette az szeretetnek nap után forgó sárga virágját; beléd ültette az ájtatosságnak izzadó balsemumját, beléd az tisztaságnak fejér liliomját; beléd az szeméretességnek piros rózsáját, beléd az mértékletes szólásnak gyöngyvirágját, beléd az kegyességnek fodormentáját, az alázatosságnak izsópját, erősségnek szegfűjét, túrésnek rozmarinját, állhatatosságnak puszpángját, több tökéletes szépségnek gyönyörűséges virágait.<sup>48</sup>

Das Lob der Schönheit vermischt sich hier mit einem weiteren wichtigen Lobtopos ungarischer Dedikationen: mit dem Topos *pietas*. Diese stellt die Frömmigkeit, die erbauliche Lebensart sowie die Tätigkeit und den Willen des Patrons dar, die Kirche zu beschützen und zu unterstützen. In ungarischen Paratexten hat das Lob der Frömmigkeit drei Formen, die allerdings stark zusammenhängen und sich oft vermischen: in der ersten wird das Beschützen der Kirche (das oft mit der Tugendhaftigkeit zusammengeführt wird – *fortitudo et pietas*), in der zweiten die Unterstützung der Entwicklung von Religion und Kirche, und in der dritten die Liebe zu Gott und dem Glauben sowie das erbauliche Leben gelobt.

Letzteres, das Lob der Frömmigkeit und des pietistischen Lebens, wird fast ausschließlich im Zusammenhang mit Frauen erwähnt. So werden unter anderem Krisztina Nyáry von János Mihálykó,<sup>49</sup> Homonnai Mária von István Deselvics<sup>50</sup> und Márton Madarász,<sup>51</sup> Wardai Kata von János Kecskeméti C.,<sup>52</sup> Illyésházi Kata von István Bethlen,<sup>53</sup> Orsolya Echi von János Samarjai<sup>54</sup> und Zsuzsanna Lorántffy von István Geleji Katona gelobt:

Boldognak méltán mondhatom Nagyságotat, kegyelmes Asszonyom, kit Isten ilyen nagy lelkű és elméjű, méltóságos férjjel, ilyen kegyes erkölcsű fiakkal megáldott s magában is ennyi sok üdvösséges lelki ajándékokat, úgy mint a vallásban való tudósságot, a hitbéli állhatatosságot, az ő szent igéjéhez való buzgó szeretetet, a könyörgésben való forró ájtatosságot és az ő dicsőségének s igaz tiszteletnek elégyamolíttatására való szorgalmatos ügyekezetet öntött, me-

lyekben mind fiainak s mind menyeinek, mind éltében s mind holta után jó oktató és indító példájok lehet.<sup>55</sup>

Wie im Fall des Lobes der weiblichen Lesefähigkeit, hängt der häufige Gebrauch dieses Lobes mit der ungarischen Verbreitung der Erbauungsliteratur zusammen. Diese war die erste und für lange Zeit einzige Literatur, die bewusst Frauen und Mädchen als Lesepublikum angezogen hat.<sup>56</sup> Dieses Phänomen setzte mit dem Auftritt des Protestantismus und dessen Reformbewegungen – dem Pietismus in Deutschland oder dem Puritanismus in England – ein: das *Subjekt* und die *Innerlichkeit* der Gläubigen wurden betont wie auch die persönliche und innere Frömmigkeit des Einzelnen. Dem Protestantismus als sozialreligiöse Reformbewegung ging es um die mystische Idee einer inneren religiösen Bildung und Formung und um das Problem der individuellen Glaubensversicherung und -bewährung. Dabei richtete sich der Ruf nach Buße und Bekehrung nicht an Mann oder Frau, sondern an alle wahren Christen.<sup>57</sup> Diese Gattung (Erbauungsliteratur) erfüllte im 17. Jahrhundert die Rolle der schönen Literatur: die intensive und regelmäßige Lektüre religiöser Texte gehörte wesentlich zur täglichen erbaulichen Praxis der Frauen. Die hohe Anzahl der Adressatinnen, die in den Vorwörtern und Dedikationen der Erbauungsliteratur angesprochen wurden, zeugt also von einer deutlichen Präsenz der weiblichen Leserschicht in Ungarn.<sup>58</sup>

Die häufigsten und detailliertesten rhetorischen Mittel der Dedikationen stellen die Lobtopoi über die Patronage dar. Sie betreffen einerseits die Unterstützung und den Schutz des Werkes und würdigen andererseits in allgemeiner Form die Großzügigkeit und Weitherzigkeit des Patrons. Im Falle des untersuchten Korpus finden sich häufig ergänzende persönliche und religiöse Lobtopoi, die die Patronentätigkeit verstärkt rühmen.

Die Wirkung des Lobes wird weiterhin durch einen allgemeinen und sehr verbreiteten Topos verstärkt, der versichert, dass der Mäzen des Autors noch viel tugendhafter sei, die Eigenschaften allerdings aus Platzgründen nicht aufgezählt werden können.

Ungarischsprachige Dedikationen haben zwei weitere ständige rhetorische Bestandteile: die Bescheidenheitstopoi und die Exordiumtopoi. Die Bescheidenheitstopoi können, wie viele andere feste Bestandteile des Prologs und der Dedikationen, aus der antiken Literatur hergeleitet werden. Nach Quintilianus soll die Bescheidenheit die Gunst des Lesers und sein freundliches Urteil bewirken: „ite quaedam in his quoque commendatio tacita, si nos infirmos, imparatos, impares agentium contra ingeniis dixerimus, qualia sunt pleraque Messalae prooemia, est enim naturalis favor pro laborantibus [...]“.<sup>59</sup> Wie Simon betont, gewinnt die Autorenbescheidenheit im Mittelalter durch die christlichen Anschauungen vom Werte der Demut eine größere Bedeutung. Unabhängig von seiner Form, die entweder aus einer festen Konstruktion oder einer längeren Ausführung besteht, be-

inhaltet der Bescheidenheitstopos die Degradierung der Talente und Verdienste des Autors selbst. Dementsprechend bezieht er sich entweder auf den Autor oder – in Zusammenhang mit diesem – auf das Werk.

Ehrenzeller unterscheidet anhand der deutschen Literatur des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts (vor allem bei Grimmelshausen und Jean Paul) zwei Formen des Bescheidenheitstopos: die ästhetische und die moralische Rechtfertigung. Die ästhetische Rechtfertigung erläutert laut Ehrenzeller die Gattung und Sprache des Werkes und arbeitet vor allem mit kunsttheoretischen Gesichtspunkten. Die moralische Rechtfertigung hingegen beschäftigt sich vor allem mit Vorwürfen im Zusammenhang mit dem Autor sowie dem Thema und dem Inhalt des Werkes (Zeitverschwendung, Unsittlichkeit, Unwahrheit usw.).<sup>60</sup> Nach Ehrenzeller zählen beide Formen zum Vorwort, allerdings zeugen die ungarischen Dedikationen von einer anderen Praxis. Die ästhetische Rechtfertigung wird – falls vorhanden – tatsächlich im Vorwort besprochen und oft mit der Rechtfertigung über die ungarische Sprache des Werkes sowie durch den Topos des sprachlichen und kulturellen Rückstands des Landes ergänzt. Die moralische Rechtfertigung ist hingegen wegen der formalen und funktionalen Mischung der paratextuellen Gattungen in der ungarischen Literatur fast ausschließlich in Dedikationen zu finden.

Der Exordiumtopos ist mit der von Hans Ehrenzeller definierten moralischen Rechtfertigung, das heißt mit dem auf das Werk bezogenen Bescheidenheitstopos verwandt. Im Exordiumtopos reflektiert der Autor die Gründe für das Schreiben und die Herausgabe des Werkes. Diese Gründe beziehen sich in ungarischen Dedikationen auf den Patron, das Werk oder dessen Thema und können auch von außen herrühren, wie beispielsweise aus der Heimatsliebe oder der religiösen Überzeugung. Diese Gründe treten oft kombiniert auf.

### **Mäzenatentum**

Der Aufbau und die rhetorische Konstruktion der Dedikation dienen dazu, die Patronage zu illustrieren und die Beziehung des Autors zu seinem Mäzen zu stärken. Das gilt fast für jede Dedikation: unter den 279 untersuchten ungarischsprachigen Dedikationen sind nur 52 (18 Prozent) zu finden, in denen die Autoren die Patronage nicht ansprechen. Die Tendenz ist absteigend, zwischen 1601 und 1635 bleiben etwa 36 Drucke ohne Erläuterung der Patronage, und zwischen 1636 und 1655 sind nur 16 dieser Bücher zu finden. Der fehlende Hinweis auf die Patronage bedeutet allerdings nicht, dass keine Unterstützung geboten wurde, im Gegenteil – irgendeine Art von Beihilfe bestand vermutlich in den meisten Fällen.

Im gesamten Forschungskorpus befinden sich nur 22 Drucke in denen zwischen Autor und Adressat der Dedikation die traditionelle Künstler-Mäzen-Beziehung mit Sicherheit ausgeschlossen werden kann. Diese Dedikationen spre-

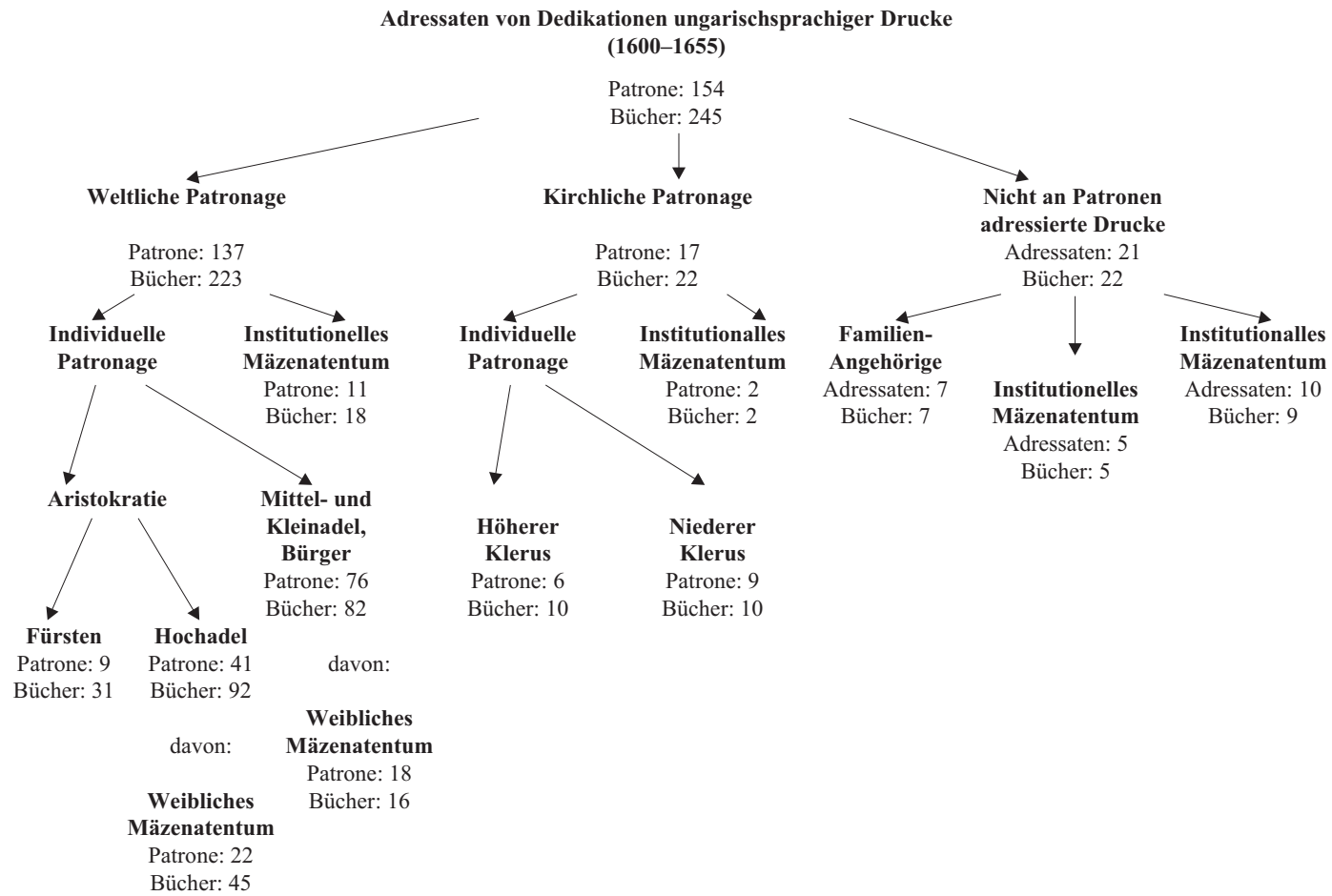
chen Familienangehörige,<sup>61</sup> allgemeine Adressaten wie das Volk der jeweiligen Kirche,<sup>62</sup> den ungarischen Adel,<sup>63</sup> übernatürliche Personen wie Gott oder Heilige<sup>64</sup> sowie in den Kampfschriften von Pázmány mitunter den Gegner oder dessen Patron an.<sup>65</sup>

Hinter der Adressierung der Dedikationen steht also meistens eine bestehende Patronage. Die Formen der literarischen Patronage im 17. Jahrhundert in Ungarn korrelieren mit den drei Kategorien des Kunstmäzenatentums im Renaissance-Italien, die von Peter Burke beschrieben wurden. Zur ersten Kategorie zählt die höfische Patronage, die gegeben ist, sofern der Dichter oder Schriftsteller im ständigen Dienst an einem Hof steht. Die zweite Kategorie ist die Patronage einzelner Werke, wobei die Unterstützung nicht die Person des Autors, sondern seinen Werk betrifft. Drittens spricht Burke von einem Mäzenatentum, das auf dem Markt basiert, wobei die Drucke entsprechend der Nachfrage des Buchmarktes in der Hoffnung auf finanziellen Erfolg publiziert werden. Die dritte Form ist in Ungarn im 17. Jahrhundert noch ziemlich selten, sie kommt fast ausschließlich bei Kalendern vor. Bei anderen Werken, die auf eigene Kosten des Autors herausgegeben werden, ist die Motivation der Autoren meist nicht der finanzielle Gewinn, sondern die eigene religiöse, erbauliche Überzeugung.

Zu der Kategorisierung der Patrone wird wiederum auf Burkes Werk zurückgegriffen: das weltliche–kirchliche Mäzenatentum wurde dementsprechend weiter verfeinert und auf einzelne und institutionelle Mäzenen aufgeteilt. Von den eruierten Patronenkreisen der ungarischen Literatur kann man von einem auffälligen Übergewicht der weltlichen Patronage ausgehen. Dabei spielt das institutionelle Mäzenatentum bei der weltlichen, ebenso wie bei der kirchlichen Patronage eine marginale Rolle. Folgende Abbildung (S. 59) zeigt die Übersicht der ungarischen Mäzene der Zeit.

Die wichtigste und größte Gruppe bilden Fürsten und Hochadelige. Das ist jene Gruppe, die in der höfischen Patronage die am Hofe arbeitenden Künstler unterstützte. Das Übergewicht der weltlichen Patronage ist verständlich, überraschend ist nur ihr Ausmaß. Im gesamten Forschungskorpus von 279 ungarischsprachigen Büchern sind nur 22 zu finden, deren Druck von einer kirchlichen Person oder Gruppe unterstützt wurde. Der niedrige, unter 10 Prozent liegende Anteil der Kirche am literarischen Mäzenatentum entspricht genau dem Verhältnis der Literaturen anderer Länder. Leiner berichtet von etwas mehr als 7 Prozent in der französischen Literatur, Schottenloher vermutet eine ähnliche Rate von weniger als 10 Prozent für Deutschland.<sup>66</sup>

Die Zahl der unterstützten Werke pro Patron (oder Patronengruppe) fällt natürlich umso größer aus, je höher die gesellschaftliche Stellung des Patrons ist. In der Gruppe der Fürsten kann man einen Durchschnitt von etwa 3,4 Drucken pro Person feststellen, im Fall der Hochadeligen 2,2 und in der Gruppe des Mittel- und Kleinadels sowie der Bürger liegt der Wert bei nur noch 1,1 Drucken pro Person.



Diese Verhältnisse sind auch für die kirchlichen Patronenkreise kennzeichnend, wobei der höhere Klerus durchschnittlich 1,5 Drucke und der niedere Klerus 1,1 Drucke förderte.

Im Patronenkreis der ungarischen Literatur zeichnet sich des Weiteren ein markantes weibliches Mäzenatentum ab. 61 Drucke, also etwa 22 Prozent der Gesamtproduktion ungarischsprachiger Werke, wurden von Frauen protegiert. In der Gruppe des Mittel- und Kleinadels liegt die Anzahl der Patroninnen bei 31 Prozent, unter den Hochadeligen ist sogar mehr als die Hälfte der Patrone eine Frau (53 Prozent). Obwohl in den meisten Fällen, besonders beim kleinen und mittleren Adel und bei Bürgerinnen davon auszugehen ist, dass die eigentliche Gönnerschaft vom jeweiligen Ehemann stammt, ist die Zahl der 40 Patroninnen überragend, was, wie bereits festgestellt wurde, auf eine starke Präsenz des weiblichen Lesepublikums hindeutet, das vor allem Erbauungsliteratur konsumierte. So ist kaum verwunderlich, dass Dedikationen, die Frauen ansprechen, meistens in erbaulichen Büchern auftauchen.

Laut der Widmungsbriefe hängen die Gründe der Autoren für die Auswahl ihrer Patrone meistens auch mit der Art der Patronage zusammen. Die Ausdrücke der Dankbarkeit für die Unterstützung sowie die Bitte um Schutz für das Werk und den Autor selbst sind in fast jedem Dedikationsbrief zu finden. Weitere Gründe, wie die Ähnlichkeit zwischen dem Patron und dem Helden des Werkes oder die geographische Nähe zwischen dem Druckort des Werkes oder dem Dienstort des Autors zum Sitz des Patrons, kommen im Vergleich mit Dankbarkeitsgründen selten vor. Der zweitwichtigste Grund zur Auswahl ist der Wille zur Verbreitung des Ruhms eines Patrons, welcher neben der Illustration der Patronage auch auf eine wichtige Motivation der Mäzene hindeutet.

Prestige als Beweggrund zur Kunstförderung betont auch Burke für das Italien der Renaissance. Dieser Verweis auf den Ruhm des Gönners widerspricht dem wichtigen Kriterium der Bescheidenheit. Trotzdem wird er von vielen Autoren betont. Die Patronage spielte demnach vermutlich eine viel wichtigere Rolle bei der Gönnerschaft als aus den Dedikationen zu schließen wäre. Als deutlich wichtigerer Beweggrund des Gönners kann die religiöse Andacht erwähnt werden. Einerseits wird dies aus dem Gattungsprofil der ungarischsprachigen Literatur klar, andererseits zeugen die häufigsten Lobtopoi der Widmungen, wie das Lob der Frömmigkeit, ebenso davon. Der dritte Motivationsgrund in Burkes Theorie, der des künstlerischen Vergnügens, wird in der ungarischsprachigen Literatur ebenfalls ausschließlich in Zusammenhang mit der Frömmigkeit erwähnt.<sup>67</sup>

Ergänzend zu Burkes These kann in der ungarischen Literatur ein vierter Grund zur Literaturpatronage festgestellt werden, und zwar die Absicht, die Zahl der ungarischsprachigen Werke zu vermehren. Der Mangel an ungarischen Büchern, der in Exordiumtopoi der Dedikationen häufig beklagt wird, inspiriert so-



mit nicht nur die Autoren dazu, ungarische Texte zu verfassen beziehungsweise fremdsprachige Literatur zu übersetzen, sondern motiviert auch Patrone dies zu unterstützen oder sogar selbst zu initiieren.

### Historischer Ausblick

Die Tradition der Widmungen an Mäzene stammt aus der Antike und beginnt etwa im 1. Jahrhundert vor Christus. Davor ist es üblich, dass die Autoren ihre Werke einem Freund oder einem anderen Schriftsteller dedizieren und ihn dazu auffordern, das Werk kritisch zu lesen. Laut der Fachliteratur der europäischen Widmungsgeschichte verliert die Dedikation bis zum Ausgang des 17. Jahrhunderts nicht an Bedeutung, allerdings wird ab Mitte des 17. Jahrhunderts der Gebrauch von Dedikationen seltener, und im Verlauf des 18. Jahrhunderts verliert die rhetorische Kunst des Dedikationsbriefes endgültig ihre Funktion. Fortan werden kurze Widmungsformeln oder einfache Namensnennungen bevorzugt, die auf eine freundschaftliche oder familiäre Beziehung hindeuten.

Für diese Entwicklung nennt die Fachliteratur drei Gründe: der wichtigste liegt in der Entstehung eines breiten Lesepublikums und seinem Anspruch auf nationalsprachige Literatur. Infolge der verstärkten Rolle des Marktes in den Künsten kann sich der Autor von seinem Patron immer weiter ablösen. Die so entstehende künstlerische Emanzipation wirkt sich auf die Dedikationen aus und lässt die Widmung an den Patron um eine finanzielle Unterstützung zurücktreten.<sup>68</sup>

Darüber hinaus spielt die starke Kritik an der antiken rhetorischen Tradition auch eine bedeutende Rolle für den Bedeutungsverlust von Dedikationen. Die Kritik der formalen Gebundenheit verursachte Monotonie, die bereits mit Platon anfängt und bis zur grundsätzlichen Ablehnung der Rhetorik von Kant ständig präsent bleibt.<sup>69</sup>

Nicht zuletzt ist der dritte Grund nach Leiner, Schramm und Richardson die zeitgenössische Aburteilung über die Dedikationspraxis als Bettelei um das Honorar.<sup>70</sup> In Italien tritt die Kritik der Gattung bereits im 16. Jahrhundert auf. Giovanni Fratta widmet im Jahr 1590 ein ganzes Werk *Della dedicatione de' Libri con la correzion dell' Abuso in questa materia introdotto*<sup>71</sup> dem Thema, worin er betont, dass die meisten Autoren die Widmungen dazu benutzen, finanzielle Unterstützung zu bekommen.<sup>72</sup>

Si come i volumi de' buoni Autori, ne' miglior tempi, apportarono gloriosa reputazione à que' personaggi, à qui erano inviati, cosi ne' presenti giorni, vengono ad essere d'incerto honore, à chiunque si dedicano, per l'obliqua disposizione de molti scrittori.<sup>73</sup>

In der deutschen Literatur wird diese Kritik sogar in der Briefstellerkunst, dem rhetorischen Handbuch des Briefes (unter anderem in Widmungsbriefen) betont, wie Stieler in seinem Werk *Teutsche Sekretariatkunst* schreibt:

Heute zu Tage sind dergleichen Geschenke gemeinlich prächtige Betteleyen, und ist deren Zweck mehrenteils auf Erschnappung eines Gegengeschenks, das noch eins oder zehnfach mehr wert sei als das Buch war gerichtet. Fürsten und Herren aber riechen diese Braten, darum weisen sie solche Bettler durch Ihrige meisterlich ab, oder beantworten ihre Dedicationsbriefe mit Stillschweigen.<sup>74</sup>

Die Kritik an der starren Rhetorik und der Dedikationspraxis erscheint in der ungarischen Literatur ebenfalls im 17. Jahrhundert. Eine der ersten kritischen Anmerkungen stammt von Pál Medgyesi, der selbst in höfischer Patronage, der engsten Patronenbeziehung stand. Medgyesi nennt die Widmung „saftige und schmu selige Rede, [...] welche die schönen und sonst so nützlichen Schriften in deren Anfängen immer ganz verdrecken“.<sup>75</sup> Medgyesi dedizierte allerdings von achtzehn seiner Schriften sechzehn seinen „großzügigen Patronen“.

Die eigentliche Kritik der Dedikationspraxis beginnt in Ungarn erst Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts. János Almási Szalai beklagt sich im Vorwort seines 1794 auf eigene Kosten herausgegebenen *Szülék kézi-könyve* folgendermaßen:

Ama jó formán kipallérozott izlésű anglus és német nemzeteknél nem igen módi már ma a könyv-ajánlás: mi nálunk is méltán tarthatik ez néhánykor vagy csapodárságnak, vagy pénzkoldulásnak.<sup>76</sup>

Szalai beschreibt genau das Phänomen, das diese Forschung bestätigt. Die finanzielle Unabhängigkeit des Künstlers, die der Dedikationspraxis ein Ende setzt, ist in Ungarn erst viel später als in vielen anderen europäischen Ländern gegeben. Grund dafür ist die verspätete Entwicklung des gesellschaftlichen Umfelds und damit die fehlende Institutionalisierung der Künste. Dies hat zur Folge, dass die barocke Form und Funktion der Widmung in Ungarn länger Bestand hat und erst am Anfang beziehungsweise um die Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts aufgehoben wird.

### Anmerkungen

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- <sup>18</sup> Genette: 1992, S. 115.
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- <sup>20</sup> „Die Summe der ganzen Büchlein, alle ihre Teile, habe ich in der Vorrede geordnet, um den christlichen Leser zum Lesen zu bewegen. Daher kann verstanden werden, worum es im Buch geht, wozu es anregt und wozu es lehrt, sodass mit umso größerer Freude und größerem Fleiß auf anständig erklärte Lektüre zugegriffen werden kann“ (eigene Übersetzung). Bellényi, Zsigmond: *Szent Hieronymus Savanarola elmékedései*. Kassa 1618, S. (4)v. OSZK, FM2 551. (RMNy II. 1155.)
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 28 „Eure durchlauchtigen, gnädigen, hochgeborenen Herren, um die Gründe aufzuzählen, warum ich dieses Büchlein nicht nur Ungarisch beibrachte, sondern auch unter Euren gnädigen und würdigen Namen herauszugeben nicht zögerte [...] wäre dieses Büchleins wegen ihrer Winzigkeit ungeeignet, da so die Vorrede unnötig in die Länge gezogen würde. Doch – über das Weitere zu schweigen – sei meine eifrige Liebe zu Eurer Gnaden und zu unserem Land Grund genug dafür.“ (eigene Übersetzung) Bökényi, Filep János: *Mennyei lámpás. Az nemes Ugocsa vármegyének tekintetes, nagyságos, nemes és nemzetes Urainak*. Utrecht 1652, S. (\*)<sup>2</sup>–(\*)<sup>3</sup>. OSZK, FM<sup>2</sup> 1314. (RMNy III. 2450.)  
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 36 Einteilung nach Bohse: 1692, S. 319ff.  
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 39 Leiner: 1965, S. 51–54.  
 40 „in seinen Adern fließt blaues Blut“ (eigene Übersetzung).  
 41 „fürstlicher Ruf des Geschlechts Ihrer Majestät“ (eigene Übersetzung).  
 42 „das Geschlecht Ihrer Majestät glänzt mit der königlichen Glorie“ (eigene Übersetzung).  
 43 „Nicht die Abstammung, sondern die Taten zeugen die Ehre“ (eigene Übersetzung). Zitiert nach Leiner: 1965, S. 51–54.  
 44 „vorzüglich in Pietas und Kampfgeschick“ (eigene Übersetzung). IV. 403. Zitiert nach: Curtius 1993, S. 189.  
 45 „Ich habe Eure christliche Frömmigkeit und Gnade sowie Eure derartige Überzeugung des wahren Glaubens gehört und verstanden, und nachdem ich Eure Majestät kennen lernte, sogar selbst sehen konnte, dass in solchen Fällen Eure Majestät sich vor nichts fürchtet, und wenn es gewünscht wäre, für Euren Glauben und Eure Religion sogar zu sterben bereit wäre.“ (eigene Übersetzung). Kecskeméti, C. János: *Az pápisták között és mi közöttünk vetélkedésre vetetett három fő articulusokról*. Ungvár 1619. *Epistola dedicatoria*, S. )o(4<sup>f</sup>. OSZK, RMK I. 519. (RMNy II. 1256.)

- <sup>46</sup> „Gott hat Dich, Gnädige Frau, mit so viel Gelehrsamkeit beschenkt, dass du die Heilige Schrift sogar selbst lesen kannst, was einem Weibe sicherlich größere Zierde ist, als eine auf ihrer Stirn funkelnde Krone oder auf ihren Fingern glitzernde Diamanten“ (eigene Übersetzung). Samarjai, János: *Magyar harmónia*. Pápa, 1628. *Epistola dedicatoria*, S. 2<sup>r-v</sup>. OSZK, FM2 571. (RMNy II. 1419.)
- <sup>47</sup> Moore, Cornelia N.: Erbauungsliteratur als Gebrauchsliteratur für Frauen im 17. Jahrhundert. Leichpredigten als Quellen weiblicher Lesegewohnheiten. In: Veit, P., Bödeker, H., Chaix, G.: *Umgang mit dem religiösen Buch. Studien zur Geschichte des religiösen Buches in Deutschland und Frankreich in der frühen Neuzeit*. Göttingen 1991, S. 291–311.
- <sup>48</sup> „Welch Gutes Gottes Gnade in Dir und mit Dir bewirkt hat, zeigt das Bild des neunten Herzens, in dem der himmlische Bräutigam Blumen verstreut, jene Blumen, welche die viele und schöne Vollkommenheit deiner Taten sind, mit denen der Heilige Geist deine Seele ausgeschmückt, und die nach der Sonne drehenden gelben Blume der Liebe, den Balsam der Frömmigkeit, die Lilie der Reinheit, die rote Rose der Tugend, das Maiglöckchen des genügsamen Redens, die Krauseminze der Frömmigkeit, den Ysop der Demut, die Nelke der Stärke, den Rosmarin der Geduld, den Buschbaum der Beharrlichkeit und weitere wunderbare Blumen der vollkommenen Schönheit in Dich gepflanzt hat“ (eigene Übersetzung). Hajnal Mátyás: *Az Jézus szívet szerető szíveknek ajtatosságára szíves képekkel kiformáltott és azokrul való elmékedésekkel és imádságokkal megmagyarázott könyvecske*. Bécs 1629. *Az nemzetes és nagyságos gróf Bedegi Nyáry Krisztina asszonynak*. In: Régi magyar költők tára. XVII/7. Budapest 1877–1930, S. 479. (RMNy II. 1422.)
- <sup>49</sup> RMNy III. 1942.
- <sup>50</sup> RMNy III. 1772.
- <sup>51</sup> RMNy III. 2012.
- <sup>52</sup> RMNy III. 1835.
- <sup>53</sup> RMNy II. 1532.
- <sup>54</sup> RMNy III. 1419.
- <sup>55</sup> „Zu Recht kann ich Sie, Gnädige Frau, als glückliche bezeichnen, die von Gott mit so einem großzügigen und weisen, gnädigen Mann und solchen frommen Söhnen gesegnet wurde, und die in sich auch so viele seelische Geschenke trägt, wie Gelehrsamkeit in der Religion, Beharrlichkeit im Glauben, heiße Liebe zu den Worten Gottes, Frömmigkeit im Gebet und fleißiges Bestreben nach der Verbreitung von Gottes Ruhm, womit Sie sowohl für Ihre Söhne, als auch für Ihre Schwiegertöchter, sowohl in Ihrem Leben, als auch nach Ihrem Tod als gutes Beispiel dienen können“ (eigene Übersetzung). Geleji Katona, István: *A váltság titkának második volumenje*. Várad 1647. *Ajánló előbeszéd a Váltság munkájának két főbb részeiről*. S. h<sup>f</sup>. OSZK, FM<sup>2</sup> 85. (RMNy III. 2197.)
- <sup>56</sup> Vgl.: Gleixner, Ulrike: *Pietismus und Bürgertum. Eine historische Anthropologie der Frömmigkeit Württemberg, 17–19. Jahrhundert*. Göttingen 2005, S. 292.
- <sup>57</sup> Vgl.: Modrow, Irena: Adelige Frauen im Pietismus. In: Weinzierl, Michael (Hrg.): *Individualisierung, Rationalisierung, Säkularisierung. Neue Wege der Religionsgeschichte*. S. 187–200. (Wiener Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neuzeit 22.)
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- <sup>59</sup> Zitiert nach Simon: 1958, S. 109.

- <sup>60</sup> Ehrenzeller, Hans: *Studien zur Romanvorrede von Grimmelshausen bis Jean Paul*. Bern 1955, S. 34–37.
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- <sup>63</sup> Vásárhelyi, Gergely: *Világ kezdetitől fogva jószágos és gonosz cselekedetek summái*. Kassa 1623. (RMNy II. 1289.); Alvinczi, Péter: *Itinerarium catholicum*. Debrecen 1616. (RMNy II. 1104.); Zrínyi, Miklós: *Szigeti veszedelem*. Bécs 1651. Hrg.: Kovács, Sándor Iván. Budapest 2001. (RMNy III. 2360.); Bálint Balassi an die adelige Frauen: *Szép magyar komédia*. Bártfa 1589.
- <sup>64</sup> Pázmány, Péter: *A római Anyaszentegyház szokásából minden vasárnapokra és egy-nehány innepekre rendelt evangeliomokról prédikációk*. Pozsony, 1636. (RMNy II. 1659.).
- <sup>65</sup> Pázmány, Péter: *Keresztényi felelet*. Graz, 1607. (RMNy II. 961.); *Csepregi mesterség*. Bécs 1614. (RMNy II. 1061.) *Dissertatio, an unum aliquid ex omnibus Lutheranis dogmatibus*. Pozsony 1631. (RMNy III. 1512.)
- <sup>66</sup> Leiner: 1965, S. 222.
- <sup>67</sup> Burke, Peter: *The Italian Renaissance. Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge 1987. Vgl.: *Az olasz reneszánsz. Kultúra és társadalom Itáliában*. Budapest 1999, S. 105–107.
- <sup>68</sup> Haferkorn, Hans J.: Zur Entstehung der bürgerlich-literarischen Intelligenz und des Schriftstellers in Deutschland zwischen 1750 und 1800. In: Bernd, Lutz (Hrg.): *Literaturwissenschaft und Sozialwissenschaften*. 3. Stuttgart 1974, S. 206.
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- <sup>70</sup> Leiner: 1965, S. 269–283 (Die Einstellung der Autoren zur Widmungsmode); Schramm: 2003. S. 163–176 (Zur Funktion der Widmung – Kritik der Schutz); Richardson: 1999. S. 49–77 (Patronage, contracts and privileges).
- <sup>71</sup> Fratta, Giovanni: *Della dedicatione de' Libri con la correzion dell' Abuso in questa materia introdotto*. Venedig 1590.
- <sup>72</sup> Richardson: 1999, S. 56–58.
- <sup>73</sup> Leiner: 1965, S. 26.
- <sup>74</sup> Der Spathe [Stieler, Kaspar]: *Teutsche Sekretariatkunst*. Weimar 1673, S. 582.
- <sup>75</sup> „nagy kerülő cifrás és hízelkedő beszéd, mellyel sok szép és egyébként hasznos írások az ő kezdetekben meg szoktak mocsokoltatni“. Medgyesi, Pál: *Praxis pietatis*. Várad 1643. *Ajánló levél*, S. (2)<sup>f</sup>–(3)<sup>f</sup>. ELTE EK, RMK I. 145:1. (RMNy III. 2042.)
- <sup>76</sup> „Bei der englischen und deutschen Nation, mit schön veredeltem Geschmack, ist die Buchdedikation gar nicht mehr in Mode: bei uns kann es zu recht für Flatterhaftigkeit oder Bettelei gehalten werden“ (eigene Übersetzung). Zitiert nach Trócsányi, Zoltán: Az ajánlások történetéhez. *Magyar Könyvszemle* 1938, 1, S. 77–80.

## TO BE BORN INTO EXILE

### KELEMEN MIKES AND THE 19–20TH CENTURY HUNGARIAN LITERARY EXILES

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The paper deals with the roles the literary and political legacy of Kelemen Mikes (1690–1761) and his *Letters from Turkey* have come to play in Hungarian literary emigration. Unlike Mikes's 19th century cult, which interiorized exilic experience inasmuch as it provided an allegory for domestic political claims, in the 20th century the consecutive exilic waves (1944–45, 1947–48, 1956) increasingly identified Mikes with a peculiar exilic consciousness, which they felt to mirror their own in various ways. Accordingly, the figure of Mikes was designed, mainly in essay and in poetry, to represent and reinforce a wide range of diverse political and literary self-images, from nationalism to apolitical aesthetic modernism, from the experience of the Hungarian writer as a castaway to that of genuine human foreignness.

**Keywords:** Kelemen Mikes, Letters from Turkey, 19th–20th century literary exile, political literature, cultural identity

After the fall of the 1848 revolution many Hungarians sought asylum in exile. The Transylvanian novelist Baron Miklós Jósika fled to Brussels. There he lived until 1864, then moved to Dresden, where he died a year later. In the summer of 1862, still in Brussels, Jósika and his wife were changing residence, because, due to Jósika's increasing revenue from his literary works, published anonymously in Hungary, they were able to build a house of their own and leave the flat they had been renting for a decade. A letter he wrote on 1 June to his friend Miklós Fejérváry, an émigré himself, living then in Davenport, United States, Jósika starts with a curious remark:

Miként látod, még e leveletem régi sátoromban írtam, hol a török közmondás szerint még egypár kenyérem van letéve.<sup>1</sup>

[As you can see, this letter of mine has been written in my old tent, where, according to the Turkish saying, a few pieces of bread are still deposited for me.]

Jósika's letters are usually full of sarcastic hints and allusions. He often makes similar jokes, occasionally referring to his flat as a wigwam, the North American version of a tent, which is quite motivated in a letter written to a friend in North America. Nevertheless, the sentence I quoted resembles one of Mikes' most moving image of exilic fate, recurring in several letters (such as Letters 7, 16, 19, 32, 157), that God deposited certain amounts of bread at certain places for each human being, compelling him or her to go and stay there and live upon that bread as long as it lasts. Jósika never mentions Mikes' name in his correspondence, and Mikes does not appear either in his novel on Rákóczi, written in the 1850s, already in exile.<sup>2</sup> However, the image of the bread in that particular letter seems to echo Mikes in such a straightforward way that it might be reasonable to assume that Jósika – when describing a dilemma so typical of émigrés, whether to move on or stay<sup>3</sup> – deliberately alludes to the *Letters from Turkey*. What seems to affirm this conjecture is that Toldy's new edition of Mikes' magnum opus was released in the previous year, 1861,<sup>4</sup> by the publisher Gustav Heckenast who also happened to be the publisher of Jósika's novels since the 1830s. Hence, he might have managed to get a copy directly from the publisher.

Apart from the question whether Jósika deliberately employed the same image as Mikes to depict the existential condition of émigrés, this quote represents a conjunction surprisingly unique in 19th century Hungarian exilic literature. To my knowledge, the literary emigrants or expatriates of the age such as János Batsányi, József Eötvös, or Lajos Degré, never referred to Mikes in their writings.

I would argue that during the 19th century Mikes, in the strict sense, was *not* a symbol *of* and not a symbol *for* the exile. When his cult developed, from the mid-1800s onwards, his legacy was designed to interpret domestic political affairs, like the revolutionary events of 1848 or Kossuth's death at the end of the century. In the poetry of Mihály Vörösmarty, József Lévy or János Arany Mikes' exile came to symbolize the lack of liberty in the homeland, and, in terms the exilic psyche, Mikes' allegiance and devotion served as a reflection of present political conditions. Making loyalty his emblematic feature, Mikes' name became a rhetorical substitution of Prince Ferenc Rákóczi, a figure who on the other hand rhetorically stood for the nation's claim to independence. Even in Lévy's poem, which comes closest to depict an exilic state of mind, Mikes' longing for his native village in Transylvania, Zágony is ultimately a yearning for an ideal homeland identical with liberty. In Mikes' cult exile was a question of being *in* or *out* merely in a geographical sense, inasmuch as it did not represent any rupture of personal or collective consciousness. His exilic experience, that is, a displacement of perspective, was not *external*, but *interiorized* into the unity of national self-representation.

It is, then, quite a late development in Mikes' cult that he came to represent a specific exilic consciousness, and it did not come immediately even with modern-



ism. For the 1919 émigrés, mostly politicians of the Commune and left-wing writers, Mikes represented no symbolic value whatsoever. Presumably, they saw a romanticized nationalistic icon in him, to which they did not intend to relate their efforts. Only with the literary and political exiles of the 1940–50s did Mikes' legacy become a reference for emigrant self-identification.

In what follows I'm going to deal with these subsequent waves of 1944–45, 1947–48, 1956 to outline continuities and discontinuities in the ways they approached the notion of exile and the legacy of Mikes. I shall distinguish between two generations of emigrant writers, with different aesthetic and political predilections, to highlight a shift in the way they related themselves to Mikes respectively.

In an article written for *Pesti Hírlap* in September 1942, Sándor Márai describes his journey to Zágón, Mikes' birthplace, then recently re-annexed to Hungary. The text, figuring the notions of home, solitude, castaway, truth and legend, represents a moment of transition from the 19th century romantic myth to its modern decomposition. The memorial places, the alleged house of Mikes' birth, the oak-trees said to be planted by his father, are of no importance to Márai. Still, he revives the obligatory images from Lévy's poem (the symbolic force of the name "Zágón" that echoes the word "homeland", the "star" above the village that points to an unidentified secret meaning of the nation's unity) and place them in the metaphysical framework of a dubious notion of *Volksgeist*. What really counts to Márai, however, is what he considers the "gift" that Mikes gave to all subsequent generations of Hungarian writers: the Hungarian literary language itself. For what makes Márai comfortable on his trip is his impression of being the guest of a "dead fellow writer", to whom an intimate commonality relates him. As he puts it:

S a sorsa, ez a magányos írói sors, melynek a honvágy volt az egyetlen Múzsája, mennyire ismerős! A magyar író mindig egyfajta számkivetésben él: néha itthon, néha Rodostóban.<sup>5</sup>

[And his fate, this solitary literary fate, which had only one Muse, homesickness, how familiar! A Hungarian writer always lives as some sort of castaway: sometimes at home, sometimes at Rodostó.]

With this emphatic sign Márai could refer to his own exilic experiences in the 1920s, but actually says a lot more than that. He refigures the notion of castaway as the general existential condition of a writer's profession, hereby distances himself from the ideology that constitutes the political framework of his argument on the other hand.

This personal intimacy and this refiguring of the notion of exile, however, gets overshadowed by the light of a "star", Lévy's star once again, that reappears in the last passage, and promises to enlighten the way to the secret of a collective

meaning. This contradiction, the dichotomies between rupture and continuity, intimacy and collectivity, homeland and perpetual exile, pervade the whole structure of the text: mythical national collectivity emblemized by commonplace Mikes-images on the one hand, and the overwhelming feeling of being inherently a castaway as a Hungarian writer on the other.

By that time, Márai was between two emigrations: the 1920s he spent in Germany and France, after 1948 he lived in Italy and the United States. His first exilic period was characterized by the search for a synthesis of European identity and national heritage on the multicultural scenes of post-World War I Paris and Berlin, and the dilemma whether to become a writer in German. His second emigration brought forth his conviction that exile is foremost the alienation of language, which ineluctably threatens to deprive one of his mother tongue, that is, of his personal identity. The image of Mikes as a symbol of the inherently exilic conditions Márai thought a Hungarian writer necessarily lives in represents a transitional stage in this shift of perspectives.

The historical circumstances that provided the occasion for Márai's article, the re-annexation of the northern part of Transylvania to Hungary, also gave a solid political context to what the very controversial Transylvanian novelist from the political right, Albert Wass, had to say about Mikes. At the end of World War II, when Transylvania was repossessed by Romania, Wass fled to Germany, and later settled in the United States. In the early years of his exile, in 1947, he wrote a piece of poetry with Mikes-allusions, entitled *Levél* [Letter], addressed to someone he calls "father". The poem enumerates and reaffirms all the worn-out topoi of Lévyay, "the murmuring of the sea", "the stars pointing to Zágón" etc., and the speaker, who claims to dream the "dreams of a new Rodostó", refers explicitly to Mikes as his "sorrowful predecessor".

Tollamat az éjszakába mártom,  
 úgy írom ezt a levelet, apám.  
*Egy új Rodostó álmaim virrasztom  
 idegen téiben, idegen tanyán.  
 És hallgatom a tenger mormolását,  
 mint bús elődöm, Mikes Kelemen.*  
 De százszorta setétebbek az éjjek  
 ezen az embertelen tengeren.  
 Szemem romok-szakgatta horizonton  
 változó csillagok után kutat.  
 De nem változnak még az égi képek  
*s minden csillag Zágón felé mutat.*  
 És minden csillag egy-egy emlék bennem.<sup>6</sup>

[I plunge my pen into the night  
 as I write this letter, father.

I watch the dreams of a new Rodostó  
in alien winter, at an alien camp.  
And I listen to the murmuring of the sea,  
like my sorrowful predecessor, Kelemen Mikes.  
But the nights are hundred times darker  
on this cruel sea.  
My eyes chase changing stars  
on the ruined horizon.  
But the constellations do not move  
and every star point toward Zágón.  
And each is a memory inside me.]

Wass was far from being a great poet, what is new in his text though, is that its very un-Mikes-like *rage* is directed towards someone who as a matter of fact had never been dealt with in the Mikes-reception: the one who moves into the home the émigré left behind, in Wass' view, an alien looking for prey, an alien whose nationality is easily identifiable, who encroaches upon the speaker's property, even if, as it is described later in the poem, both nature and culture, the trees and the house, resist him and try to keep him out, until a final historical judgment would take place to fix things again. With the figure of the alien that forces one to leave his home ground, Wass' poem represents an unusual, politically very sensitive refiguring of Mikes as a *nationalist*. It surely can be called an enormous misinterpretation of his Mikes' legacy; still it is illustrative of the 20th century history of political ideologies.

After World War II and the communist takeover, the various waves of exile were very diverse in terms of literary or political preference and regarding the respective age at which the émigrés decided or had the chance to leave. It was a common characteristic of these waves though that they managed to establish a well-developed network of organizations. One of the most prominent, and one of the few still operating, was the Kelemen Mikes Circle of the Netherlands, which was founded in 1951 by a handful of young protestant students and clergymen. (It is not to be confused with the other Kelemes Mikes Circle which was founded in Munich in 1959, round which mostly politically committed right-wing writers rallied, extreme right, I should say, and which disintegrated soon afterwards.) The young refugees and expatriates who founded the Mikes Circle of the Netherlands chose to both inhabit and renew the exilic tradition that Mikes emblemized. What they refused to do was to form a sort of Hungarian enclave, like the mock-court around Rákóczi in Rodostó. While keeping their cultural traditions, they also insisted on being part of the Dutch, that is, the Western world. They avoided the dilemma of complete assimilation on the one hand and nostalgic longing for the homeland on the other, and adopted, in a more pragmatic way, a double identity. The Mikes Circle, though remained local in its everyday workings, at-

tracted a great number of emigrant Hungarian intellectuals, writers, and artists. Their annual assemblies were scholarly workshops of the highest standard.

Although coming from an older generation, the Mikes Circle had close connections with László Cs. Szabó, a prominent essayist, who left Hungary in 1948, settled in the United Kingdom, and was generally considered one of the spokesmen of the Hungarian exile. As a critical authority Cs. Szabó served as a father-figure to many of the youngsters in the Mikes Circle. He had his own vision of Mikes. In his 1966 essay, *Under the Crescent Moon*, Cs. Szabó rejects what he calls the “oleograph” inherited from the 19th century, which sentimentally portrays a gloomy Mikes mourning for himself by the seaside.<sup>7</sup> Following his midwar domestic intellectual tradition, that of the Nyugat-circle, he also insists on Mikes’s alleged ignorance to politics, which allegedly saved him from inner collapse. As such, Cs. Szabó might have aimed to distance himself from the emigrant political movements of his own age. However, even if his explicit aim was to detach Mikes’ legacy from any political meaning whatsoever, Cs. Szabó’s essay had its own political contexts. From the mid-1960s harsh disputes went on in the Hungarian exile whether to initiate any kind of dialogue with the officials of Hungary. Only one year after publishing his essay on Mikes, Cs. Szabó strictly opposed participation in the Mikes Circle’s annual assembly where domestic intellectuals showed up, but not those they wanted to invite, but who gained the Party’s permission to attend. Especially the appearance of the influential literary historian Miklós Szabolcsi met Cs. Szabó’s disapproval. One might argue that when he objected to what he called a “mock-dialogue” based on uneven terms, he was chasing political illusions that he so wittily swept aside when writing on Mikes.<sup>8</sup>

One can hardly read Cs. Szabó’s essay as *not* a self-portrait. His remarks about Mikes “standing head and shoulders above the domestic provinciality” of his age,<sup>9</sup> clearly, I would suggest, refer to Cs. Szabó’s conviction that exile provides a wider cultural horizon for *him* as well. Insisting that there is no need to have pity on Mikes, because he lived quite happily with his “inexhaustible mean of consolation”, his pen, could be read as Cs. Szabó’s disapproval of the way the exilic literature was treated in socialist Hungary as merely an expression of painful and nostalgic emotions. On the other hand, when Cs. Szabó suggests that the *Letters from Turkey* in its entirety should be translated into Western European languages, then this proposal refers to what became the ideological program of the Hungarian literary exile in the 1960–70s, that is, the mission of a two way cultural mediation between the motherland and the Western world.

One of the younger proponents of this program was Áron Kibédi Varga, both a scholar and a poet, and a Transylvanian by origin (just like Cs. Szabó and Wass and Jósika). Kibédi Varga fled Hungary in 1945 at the age of fifteen with his parents, and became a professor of French literature in Amsterdam. He was a co-founder of the Mikes Circle and a permanent contributor to their proceedings.

One of his essays, entitled *Mikes mítoszai* [Myths of Mikes], originally a lecture, delivered in 1971 on the 20th anniversary of the Mikes Circle, starts with the following remark:

Mikes Kelemen nevét a magyar világtól távol élő magyarok a múltban is, ma is gyakran emlegetik. Mikes jelkép, jobb, pontosabb jelkép a hazájától elszakadt magyarságnak, mint akár Rákóczi vagy Kossuth; de féltő, hogy ez a jelképszerűség többnyire még ma is a romantikus mítoszból táplálkozik.<sup>10</sup>

[Kelemen Mikes' name is and has been frequently mentioned by Hungarians living out of the Hungarian world. Mikes is a symbol, a better, more adequate symbol of the Hungarian detached from his homeland than Rákóczi or Kossuth; but it is to be feared that this symbolic force mostly subsists upon the romantic myth, even today.]

What is striking in this sentence is not that it promises to launch a severe attack on the romantic cult of Mikes. But that it states, without further ado, that Mikes is a symbol *for* and *of* the emigrants. As I have tried to argue, the main characteristic of Mikes' 19th century cult was that his exilic fate did not bring about any rupture in the way his image was employed in national self-representation. Kibédi Varga's remark clearly indicates a shift in that respect.

In addition, when Kibédi Varga rejects the *lévaysms*, the "murmuring of the sea" and the political illusions, he follows Cs. Szabó's path, but when he puts an emphasis on the fact that Mikes became a Hungarian writer *abroad*, then Kibédi Varga speaks from a different perspective, a perspective of his own generation and of the younger '56ers, who came forth in the 1960s with their literary ambitions and eagerly tried to become writers abroad themselves. As opposed to Márai, Wass, Cs. Szabó, who all had successful literary careers before their emigration, Kibédi Varga seems to claim his generation to be the real successors of Mikes. This implicit claim is reinforced when he mentions in passing that Mikes writes in a pure and tasteful manner even having become a Hungarian writer abroad and having spent decades in exile. This note had its context in the debates whether exile necessarily leads to the decay of language or the loss of stylistic skills, which was feared by many among the older emigrant literati, a fear which in its most emblematic form was expressed in Márai's 1951 poem *Funeral Sermon*.

One can also notice a profound change of perspective in Kibédi Varga's view regarding the question what *kind* of writer had Mikes become in exile. Cs. Szabó praised Mikes as opposed to his Hungarian contemporaries. Kibédi Varga goes way beyond that and finds Mikes' real context in 20th century literary modernism. As he expounds, *Letters from Turkey* is not merely a novel, but a kind of self-reflexive literature that *substitutes fiction for life* in the manner of Proust and

NAGY PÁL

## ZÁGONI MIKES KELEMENNEK

*ha le fekszem      úgy tettzik      mint ha feredném**mert a tenger habja      egészen bé csapván a házam alá      sokszor*  
talám még. egy más királynak sem sokan követik példáját. aki*azt gondolom      hogy az ágyamban locsog a víz [27]*  
szeretvén. az aszszonyokat, azon is igyekezett, hogy a tiz parancsola-*a magzatvizben töltött időre gondolok      az anyaölből töltött*  
tot meg tartsa, atobbi közöt egy aszszonyt szeretvén. hogy mind*rövid időre      [« mindössze huszonegy évet élt »...]      az*  
a parancsolatot meg tarthassa, mind a szeretetnek kedvezhessen. va-*országban      mindössze huszonegyet □ □ □*  
lamikor egy aszszonnyal akart fekünni, az urát is az ágyban hálatta.,*jeniköbe      kacsi lovakon      egy huszonbét*  
enevettséges példa, noha azt tarttyák. hogy a szeretetben. egy harma-*éves ifjú érkezik      « nyelvén a szó himes szálai » ■ ■ ■*  
dik, mindenkor alkalmatlan. látod-e nénem, ha apásztor őt nem lett*mikes a kas      lisztes a molnár      egyepetye mókus*  
volna, a farkas meg ette volna abarányt, azt elmondhatni, hogy a sze-*kergeti kerekét      kerge főnevek*  
retet nem rosz. csak arra avégre igyekezék. amelyre az Isten rendelte,*életlen határozók      a húsába vág      több mint negyven évig*  
azért hogy a részegesek. meny országban nem mennek. a szőlő fokot.*több mint tizennégyezer napot      több mint háromszázötvenezer órát*  
ki nem kel asni. minden jó édes nénem. mind az aszszony. a férfiu.*gyakorta füstölvéen öreg loyait [2]      élete végeig*  
bor. ezüst, arány. tsak ara a végre élyunk ezekkel. a melyre terem-*□ □ □ más a rubáját      keresztet viseli a bászugi méltóságot*  
tettek., az Isten semmi roszat nem teremtett. de mi viszá élven az ő*mint kassák lajos a kalapját      magányát úgy viseli*  
teremtésével. roszra fordittyuk, és roszunkra válik., a bőr betegesek-*« egyedül hallgatom tenger mormolását » (ezt értsd szó szerint!)*  
nek, abórt kellé okozni., vagy a szőlő munkást. egyikét sem, hanem*« a szó szakadó kuszá szálai » □ □ □      végül*  
csak magokat. ihon édes nénem. vége vagyon már a predikációnak.*elnyerte azt a jutalmot ■■■*  
fekügyünk, és kívánok joéttzakát. és a mellé kevés bolhát, édes*a gyertyám mingyárt el aluszik      én is alszom [13]*  
kedves álom látást, és holnapra fel viradást. amen. [12 jan. 1728]*szaporodnak a tölgyfa levelei**zágoni mikes kelemennek**nagy pál [12 jan. 1976]*

Borges. And to show that in this substitution *fiction* is victorious, Kibédi Varga quotes Letter 75, where Mikes insists that his own letters should be burned because they are way surpassed in literary quality by his aunts (non-existing) replies. For Kibédi Varga this modernist inversion of fact and fiction constitutes Mikes' real myth.

Precisely this literary modernity concerned the avant-garde poet Pál Nagy too, one of those young '56ers wanting to become a writer abroad. Nagy's poem dedicated to Mikes appeared in the Mikes Circle's 25th anniversary memorial volume in 1976. Nagy aims, with a peculiar visual gesture, to transcribe two historically distinct exilic literary traditions, Mikes' Baroque prose and his own avant-garde poetics in a palimpsest-like texture.<sup>11</sup> The lines are in close proximity, one almost covering the other, as if two or more voices were speaking and resonating to one another. Among the fragmentary though recognizable quotations from Mikes' *Letters*, one can notice the name of the arch-avant-garde Hungarian poet, Lajos Kassák, an emigrant himself in Vienna during the 1920s. The line "*mint kassák lajos a kalapját magányát úgy viseli*" [like lajos kassák his hat he wears his solitude] refigures Mikes' obligatory loneliness with a somewhat surprising reference in literary history. Another, so to say, metafictional gesture is that when Nagy's poem quotes the most emblematic line of the most emblematic 19th century Mikes-poem, "egyedül hallgatom tenger mormolását", an ironic comment is added in brackets: "[ezt értsd szó szerint!]" (read this in the literal sense!). The call to read this worn out image in its literal meaning encourages the reader to get rid of the romantic clichés, to read Mikes' legacy against its inherited symbolic meanings. In a similar fashion, when calculating the years, the days, and the hours of Mikes' stay in Rodosto ("*több mint negyven évig több mint tizennégyezer napot több mint háromszázötvenezer órát*", more than forty years, more than fourteen thousand days, more than three hundred and fifty thousand hours) the quantitative measuring downgrades the myth into trivial data. Nevertheless, by attempting to get rid of symbolism, Nagy ends up creating a new myth or symbol, that of the *avant-garde Mikes*.

Finally, I'd like to deal with three poems by Elemér Horváth, one of the best poets among the young '56ers. The first one appeared in 1984 in the domestic periodical *Kortárs*. In this case the place of publication is of specific importance, for up to the mid '80s emigrant writers had been excluded from domestic periodicals. This one must have been one of the first poems Horváth was able to publish in Hungary. Therefore the title, *Kegyelmi kérvény Mária Teréziához* [A Plea for Clemency to Maria Theresa], sounds pretty much self-explanative and offers an easily decipherable allegory of the present political situation.

Az ifjú dolgát kérem Át-nem-gondolt  
hatalmi érdek fogalmazta a

legelső jelszavát *pro patria*  
et *libertate* ahogy az utolsót

és ugyanazt úgy szeretem Rodostót  
Életében először igaza  
most van amikor be kell vallania  
a tényeket ami csak történt sors volt

Folyamodván tehát idegen porból  
őfelsége türelmes udvara  
engedné-e hogy juthasson haza  
a hátralévő esztendőkre? Gondot  
azontúl lelkére fordítana  
Bizalommal hogy lesz foganata  
*Mikes Kelemen*

[The case of this young man I beg your pardon  
Ill-advised power politics  
formulated his first slogan *pro patria*  
*et libertate* as well as the last one  
and the same I like Rodostó so much  
For the first time in his life he is right  
now when he has to confess  
the facts all that happened was destiny  
Appealing from alien dust  
if her majesty's patient court  
allowed him to get home  
for the years to come?  
His only concern  
would be his own soul  
In the hope that it shall have its effects  
*Kelemen Mikes]*

Like Nagy's poem, this one also gives the impression of being constructed out of quotations from Mikes.<sup>12</sup> A role play, signed and authorized as if written by Mikes himself, the poem refers to Mikes' alleged application for amnesty, which is probably a myth itself.<sup>13</sup> And as such, the text reflects the irony of Horváth's position of being published in Hungary, of having come home via his writings. It implies that what the plea aims at has already taken place by the very act of writing as pleading. However, the fact that the literary homecoming takes place as a plea for mercy suggests that homecoming cannot be complete; it can merely be a constant attempt.

Decades later, when exile was over and Horváth had already gained a literary reputation even in his homeland, he returns to the subject in two new poems. Both appeared in 2004 and seem to mutually interpret one another. The first, entitled *lárpúrlár* seems to be a sarcastic mocking:



kérdés mi a fenének írt mikes?  
 s kérdés mi a fenének magyarul?  
 kérdés továbbá hogy a levelek  
 csak mellékesen irodalmiak  
 (ez az ember nem is fontoskodik)  
 címzettjük nő és kitalált alak  
 akitől választ nem is várt soha  
 terápia volt-e a viszonyuk?  
 afféle fiktív maszturbáció?  
 a nárciszista végső várfoka?  
 montaigne legalább tudta mit csinál  
 miért kinek és minek ő csak írt  
 pillanatnyilag s átmenetileg  
 egy török kisvárosban senkinek<sup>14</sup>

[question why on earth did mikes write?/ and why on earth in hungarian?/ also a question that the letters/ are only incidentally literary/ (this man doesn't even make a fuss)/ their addressee is female and fictional/ was their relation a therapy?/ some kinda fictitious masturbation?/ the ultimate rampart of narcissism?/ montaigne at least knew what he was doing/ why to whom and for what he just kept writing/ for the time being provisionally/ in a small turkish town to no one]

What is striking here is that some of these scorning questions reappear as gloomy statements in the other poem, called *Házi feladat* [Homework], retrospectively making irony out of its sarcasm:

úgy írni mint mikes  
 szépen semmiért senkinek  
 száműzetésbe születni  
 s ugyanott halni meg<sup>15</sup>

[to write like mikes/ nicely for nothing to no-one/ to be born in(to) exile/ and to die there too]

The educational sense of the phrase that gives the title, the notion of the task that students have to cope with when they get home, here is exaggerated as the task of one's whole life. In this extension, the poem profoundly redefines the concept of exile. Here one does not *go* into emigration; rather we are born *into* it. The notion of being born *into* exile can be traced back to a lecture that Győző Határ, the recently deceased excellent novelist, delivered at the 1976 assembly of the Mikes Circle, which started with the harshly provocative statements: "I was born in 13 November 1914 – in exile. [...] At the end of 1956 I left Hungary and came home. I've been living at home ever since. At home in England [...]"<sup>16</sup> The hint that the homeland is a place of exile also appears in Márai's text, attributing this genuine homelessness particularly to Hungarian writers, but while Határ reverses the di-

chotomy of being-at-home and being-in-exile, Márai does not suggest that he would feel at home living abroad either. As opposed to both, Horváth's poem dissolves the whole structure of oppositions, suggesting that it is probably not a question of being a writer at all. That exile is *there* not only when one becomes a writer, but at the very moment he or she is born. If Horváth's poem suggests that the human condition can never transcend the state of being foreign, then it marks a significant stage in Mikes's cult: it moves beyond the transition from the notion of literature of exile to that of literature as exile, and opens up the horizon on life as an inherently exilic experience.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Miklós Jósika to Miklós Fejérváry, Brussels 1 June 1862, in Károly Kokas and Mihály Szajbély (eds) (1988) *"Idegen de szabad hazában"* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi). 357.
- <sup>2</sup> Miklós Jósika (1861) *Második Rákóczi Ferenc*. 6 vols. (Pest: Hartleben).
- <sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of Mikes's similar dilemmas, see Sándor Bene (2007) 'Eljutni Zágónba', *Holmi*, 551–70.
- <sup>4</sup> Ferenc Toldy (ed.) (1861) *Zágoni Mikes Kelemen törökországi levelei* (Pest: Heckenast).
- <sup>5</sup> Sándor Márai [1942] 'Csillag' in Sándor Márai (1994) *Vasárnapi krónika* (Budapest: Gondolat) 224.
- <sup>6</sup> Albert Wass [1948] 'Levél' in Albert Wass (1998) *A bujdosó imája: Összegyűjtött versek* (Budapest: Püski) 94–8. (Italics are mine.)
- <sup>7</sup> László Cs. Szabó 'A félhold jegyében: Zrínyi Miklós, a költő és Mikes Kelemen' [1967] in László Cs. Szabó (1982) *Alkalom. Esszék irodalomról, művészetről* (Budapest: Gondolat). 242–80.
- <sup>8</sup> Quoted in Enikő Gaál (2001) 'A Hollandiai Mikes Kelemen Kör mint a nyugat-európai magyar emigráció kulturális fellekvára' in Melinda Kónya, Áron Kibédi Varga and Zoltán Piri (eds) *Számadás. Hollandiai Mikes Kelemen Kör (1951–2001)* (Pozsony: Kalligram), 228 (186–236).
- <sup>9</sup> Cs. Szabó, *Alkalom*, 280.
- <sup>10</sup> Áron Kibédi Varga 'Mikes mítoszai' (1976) in M. Tóth (ed.) *Az embernek próbája: Emlékkönyv ... a Hollandiai Mikes Kelemen Kör fennállásának huszonötödik évfordulójára* (Amsterdam: Hollandiai Mikes Kelemen Kör), 31 (31–35).
- <sup>11</sup> Pál Nagy (1976) 'Zágoni Mikes Kelemennek (1976. jan. 12.)' in Miklós Tóth (ed.) *Az embernek próbája, op. cit.*, 30.
- <sup>12</sup> Elemér Horváth (1984) 'Kegyelmi kérvény Mária Teréziához' *Kortárs*, Vol. 7, 1061.
- <sup>13</sup> See Sándor Bene 'Eljutni Zágónba', 555.
- <sup>14</sup> Elemér Horváth (2004) 'lárpuhlár', *Forrás*, Vol. 10, 15.
- <sup>15</sup> Elemér Horváth (2004) 'Házi feladat', *Holmi*, 925.
- <sup>16</sup> '1914. november 13-án, emigrációban születtem. Azóta itthon élek – Itthon Angliában.' Győző Határ 'Istenhöz, emigráció!' [1976] in Béla Pomogáts (ed.) (1991) *Párbeszéd Magyarországgal. Nyugat-európai és tengerentúli magyar tanulmányírók* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi), 370 (370–87).

## CLASSICISM AND NEOCLASSICISM IN THE POETRY OF MIHÁLY BABITS

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Classicism or Modernity? It was not difficult to give an answer to this question for Mihály Babits, one of the most outstanding and, after a good while, most highly esteemed poets of 20th century Hungarian literature. He voted for both. Having a thorough knowledge of the Greek–Latin tradition, for him Modernity meant complete coexistence with it: “Such a respectful attitude to the past, such a loving preservation of the tradition, such conservatism is the greatest modernity. He only can be called modern who has experienced all, who carries in his mind the totality of the past, who is the pinnacle of his own times, because he unifies all ages in himself.” The stress always depended on the political situation. Neoclassicism or New Classicism was his reply to the new political and cultural phenomena of the 1920s–30s.

**Keywords:** Hungarian literature, Classicism, Modernism, Avant-garde, Neoclassicism, Mihály Babits

Hungarian poet Mihály Babits hardly needs an introduction. However, it may be useful to give a brief overview of the defining influence and constructive role the classical heritage, the Greek and Latin language and literature played in his entire oeuvre. This influence extends to thematic and structural concerns, as well as to prosody and versification. I apply the term “classicist” to a kind of literature the formal principles of which, implicitly or explicitly, derive from Graeco-Roman antiquity, basing its materials and mythical apparatus on that tradition as an exemplary precedent to be followed, imitated, or expanded, more or less freely, as the case may be. This formulation may be appropriate also in defining ‘Neoclassicism’, although I believe it to apply more correctly to the second phase of Babits’s Classicism.

Babits often stated that he was not to be bracketed as a believer in predestination, yet in a way he had been “predestined” to take the classical tradition further, while at the same time being in tune with modernist trends in the arts. So it is possible to say that on the one hand he showed an enduring respect for the classical authors as models to be emulated, while on the other, he did not reject innovation,

but in fact grafted new shoots to old roots, to use the composer Béla Bartók's metaphor of his own attitude to tradition and renewal. This remarkable duality was an underlying factor in his character, his way of life, his ethical and existential *Weltanschauung*, even his approach to poetic form. Being both classicist and modernist was for him not a contradiction; instead, these categories dialectically completed and complemented each other. This special trait has been noticed by a number of scholars, most recently by Gergely Angyalosi, who wrote that in Babits's dualism

[...] phenomena are grasped *together* with their contradictions, attempting to formulate his own synthesizing viewpoint *without* dissolving all dichotomies. The human mind is always entertaining various alternatives; it is by 'convention' that we decide what becomes primary.<sup>1</sup>

A good example of this is to be found in the arguments between Socrates and Phaedrus in Babits's dialogue *The Philosophy of Play*, where in the dispute between monism and pluralism he seemingly decides to opt for the latter, while laying out the alternatives between the ascetic and hedonistic way of life. When the philosopher has almost succeeded in convincing his disciple that the value of one position can only be ascertained in juxtaposition to the other, he tells him that he "could have also formulated the whole thing the other way around [...] In the final analysis, choosing between the two world-views is a matter of convention."<sup>2</sup>

Valéria Dienes, a philosopher, theorist of dance, translator, and a disciple of Bergson who was a privy to the poet's thinking in his childhood and his student days at the university of Budapest, also observed this peculiar trait.

It is as if he were on guard to be one thing or another. It is as if he then could not feel free to become whatever he wanted to be. [...] He radiates contradictions. Restlessness is his very nature. It is my impression that as soon as he takes a firm position, he puts on a mask. [...] I heard it more than once that after defending a thesis to the point that he convinced his opponent, he added with a smile, 'But the antithesis could also be true.'<sup>3</sup>

Such a dual way of thinking is further confirmed by the fact that in spite of a life-long Catholicism, in his poetry and correspondence he at times professed to be a polytheist. "I am a polytheist and polyst, and pagan!" he wrote to his friend and fellow university student, Dezső Kosztolányi, the other major writer of the period, in August 1904.<sup>4</sup> In his poem *Credo*, he provides an alternate version of the fundamental tenet of the Catholic faith:

I believe not in the one God, but in a thousand gods;  
in him who has given us light, in him who has given us song;

in him who sweetens all suffering,  
 in him who sanctifies sin  
 Agéd Chronos, and youthful Bacchus.<sup>5</sup>

One could continue citing all the various dichotomies, the concurrent use of both induction and deduction in argumentation, the relationship between appearance and reality in his poetry, and further note the importance of the repeated emphasis in each of his works on the Nietzschean poles of Apollonian harmony and Dionysian frenzy as set forth in *The Birth of Tragedy*. (It may be noted in passing that not only was Babits knowledgeable about Nietzsche, but like all his great Continental and Anglo-American modernist contemporaries, he was an heir to the Romantics, and his ability to hold contrary standpoints simultaneously without privileging either would seem to echo Keats' famous *negative capability* principle: the state "when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason".)<sup>6</sup>

We may recall Babits's answer to the question as to his favorite *Hungarian* poem. "Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*," he had quipped, "in Árpád Tóth's translation". Tóth was Babits's contemporary, a gifted translator and fine poet in his own right.

It was Classicism, however, that became most deeply rooted in Babits's sensibility. He began his university career majoring in Hungarian and French, later switching to Hungarian and Latin. From an early autobiographical sketch written while at the university we learn that from the start he had been involved in a systematic and serious study of the classics. One after the other he read the Roman authors, devoting the most time to Sallust, but also writing a critical piece on Horace and a psycho-philological essay on Virgil's figurative language in *The Georgics*. Although he lost his interest in Socrates, he nonetheless translated some Plato, all the while professing a longing for Aeschylus, whom he read with great enthusiasm in Hungarian translation. From his report cards we can get a fairly clear idea about the structure and themes of the historical, rhetorical and stylistic courses he took on the ancient Greek and Roman authors.

It would seem that Babits's road to classical philology had been paved, as it were, by his family surroundings and early schooling. His father was a free-thinking jurist who took an interest in shaping the mind of his bright son, often dropping a Latin word here and there, so that by the age of ten young Mihály would scan with pleasure the "crackle and pop" of Greek hexameters, and peruse with interest picture books on Greek history and mythology. They would read to him, or he himself would read, something by Horace or Tacitus; he always had at his elbow a late edition of the earliest Latin-Hungarian dictionary.<sup>7</sup> His first experiences in the visual arts that stirred his imagination and awakened his interest also had something to do with classical Antiquity. He was much affected by a painting,

*Nero Setting Fire to Rome*, in the museum in Budapest; an album on Greek mythology he received as a Christmas present remained a life-long memory. It was a book, he wrote later,

[...] that contained images of naked men and women. Gods, mostly, but also goddesses. It was a tremendous experience. I could look at the pictures for hours on end, although I had not realized the sexual nature of the whole thing, only that I was thrilled by it in an extraordinary way. I became aware of this aspect when I had been looking at myself, in the swimming pool. While toweling off, I discovered that I, too, resembled the Greek gods. Without resorting to anything sexual.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, there was his birthplace, Szekszárd (*Aliscum* its Latin toponym). The “Latinate cultural tradition” of the *genius loci*, its gentle landscape quite similar to the Tuscan hills, and the Roman relics excavated in the region, had all been instrumental in reinforcing this particular civilization in his formative years.

The next stage in his development came in secondary school, where, in addition to his studies of Greek and Latin, there were the extracurricular study groups in various disciplines. The study groups held yearly competitions, and the young Babits threw himself with relish into nearly all the essay and poetry contests. In one particular year he won, with the exception of – *nota bene* – poetry, first prize in every field that he entered. From this period the translations of three epigrams by Martial have recently come to light.<sup>9</sup> He added annotations to the translations, citing also his sources. The translations contain no misreadings; in fact, they are exemplary in their skillful and precise rendering of the poet’s meaning and colloquial language. And this in spite of the fact that Martial was not one of Babits’s favorite classical poets.

It is thus safe to say that by the time he entered university, Babits had attained a fairly sound foundation in the classics. During his studies of Greek and Latin, in the course of a special seminar in stylistics, under the guidance of a famous professor, László Négyesy, Babits got to meet Dezső Kosztolányi and Gyula Juhász, who alongside him became two of the defining poets of the period. All three poets, each of whom came from a school in the provinces, became life-long admirers, translators, and propagators of the classical authors. By this time, however, Mihály Babits and his poet friends had acquired, through their wide readings in philosophy and literature, an ability to view the classics from the vantage point of a broader horizon. The poets’ wide-ranging interests and readings had made them capable of navigating with ease in the tumultuous contemporary scene in Hungary and elsewhere in Europe, becoming aware of all the new movements in literature and the other arts. Their reading-list is impressive: in addition to the philosophers of the 17th century, we find: Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bergson,

Emerson, Goethe, Heine, Swinburne, Leconte de Lisle, Byron, Oscar Wilde, Zola, Ibsen, Edgar Poe, Baudelaire and his circle, Carducci. At the same time they had realized that neither an exclusive adherence to the ancient models, nor the aping of the moderns, nor ascribing to the school they called “the decadents” would be sufficient in themselves. They were, in fact, quite dubious about the artistic merits of the latter. As Babits wrote to Kosztolányi in 1904,

Just this week I've been reading quite a bit of the decadents, almost the entire Verlaine, then Mallarmé, Maeterlinck, Jean Moréas (the last is perhaps the brightest of the lot), also Rimbaud and Paul Fort, who was not really that decadent. These gentlemen have a common shortcoming: all of them are poets of a rather small caliber. In comparison, Baudelaire is a genius and a classic.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to note that Babits had given a special meaning to the term ‘decadent’. According to him, decadence is the inherent characteristic of all the arts:

[...] all art, precisely because it *is* art, is decadent. [...] All great poets are decadent. [...] But the decadent poets of our age have been sick. Their sickness was that of the age, which we can perhaps call ‘pessimism’. And this includes everything that was part of the poets’ pessimism: painful secrets, romantic *ennui*, loves gone astray. And, after Byron, in Swinburne’s age, the most decadent, the most rebellious, and perhaps the poet of poets – as well as the sickest was – Baudelaire.<sup>11</sup>

This critique can also be applied to the ancients: “Is not Horace’s diction decadent?” he asks, and further, he goes back all the way to the Greeks: “Translated into modern languages, every piece in the *Greek Anthology* is a decadent poem.”<sup>12</sup> This does not mean that the various -isms (Expressionism, Dadaism, Activism, etc.) have the means to bring about a truly great modern contemporary poetry. In Babits’s own art, a commingling of classic and modern, the two continuously strengthen each other, as noted and praised by his friend and fellow poet, Dezső Kosztolányi, already in 1906! “Modern? Much more classical. Classical? Much more powerful, colorful, new! Indeed, Sir, you embody a new direction, a novel and heretofore unseen tone and unheard music – unique.”<sup>13</sup> Kosztolányi further underlines the fact that Babits has achieved all this in Hungarian, creating an individual poetic variant of the language, which becomes in his hands not merely a tool, but creation in itself.

In a later interview Babits embraced such goals as his own poetic program, formulated in characteristically dual terms:

True poetry does not return to the past in order to reawaken the dead; such poetry flies back to the past so that in its flight it relives the spiri-

tual reality of all the ages, to descend to the roots of human feelings emanating from the most archaic worlds, in order to show in what shape and form the human spirit has since developed, so that it would simultaneously experience the richness of the spirit from primordial times to the present. *Such a respectful attitude to the past, such a loving preservation of the tradition, such conservatism is the greatest modernity. He only can be called modern who has experienced all, who carries in his mind the totality of the past, who is the pinnacle of his own times, because he unifies all ages in himself.*<sup>14</sup> (My emphasis.)

The three poets eventually went their separate ways, but it was at this time, in 1908, when Babits received an appointment as a teacher of Latin in Fogaras, now in Romania, but at the time one of the remotest corners of Hungary, in the snow-capped mountains of south-east Transylvania, that the golden period of Babits's Classicism had begun. He felt himself to be in exile in the small town inhabited by Hungarian gentry, German burgers, and Romanian shepherds, characteristically baptizing it "Tomi", after Ovid. He immersed himself in teaching and holding public lectures; in his free time he devoted himself to a more thoroughgoing study of the Greek language and literature. In one fragment he wrote without any exaggeration: "In Fogaras, with no one's help / I learnt Greek all by myself." He provides information about his readings there:

I learnt Greek in Fogaras. For a year I read practically nothing but Greek. Homer, Plato (*Symposion, Phaidros, Politeia*), Aeschylus, the lyric poets made the greatest impression on me.<sup>15</sup>

But he confessed: he had reached Greek literature via English poetry.

While in Fogaras, he received an invitation to submit poems to the *Holnap* [Tomorrow] anthology, edited in Nagyvárad (now Oradea, Romania). The poets assembled there, who included even Endre Ady, generally got bad reviews. Babits was no exception: his abstract, intellectual themes and the tone of objective lyrics were not met with enthusiasm. But Ernő Osvát, the editor of the then leading review, *Nyugat* [Occident], had appended a footnote to the critique that appeared in his own literary magazine, singling out Babits as the most promising. He immediately asked the "exile" to submit his new manuscripts, and so began Babits's literary career, and with it, his national renown. Several collections of his poetry were published: *Leaves from the Wreath of Iris* in 1909, followed by *Prince, Winter Can't Be Far Behind*, in 1911, and his verse drama *Laodameia* the same year. This was Babits's "Greek period", at the beginning of which we find the poems resulting from his Italian journey in the summer of 1908 (*Zrínyi in Venice, Italia, Recanati, San Giorgio Maggiore*). In the background of the latter one sees the past



looming, together with historical reminiscences. Hungary is also present, either as parallel or antipode.

The majority of the poems written in Fogaras were included in the second book with the evocative title, *Prince, Winter Can't Be Far Behind*. Babits's main objective had been to correct the image with which he was erroneously branded by the reviewers of the *Holnap* anthology, namely that of a revolutionary subversive, an obscure poet, in order to be seen in a more balanced light. "My aim is to publish my best poems", he wrote, "so that I would win over those who were repelled by the brutality of the poems in *Holnap*."<sup>16</sup> Even certain parts of Kosztolányi's generally positive words he found to be misguided. He was shaken to the core, finding the "public clamor" something alien to his ears. He thought that by "hellenizing" his poetry he could reclaim the image of the respectful upholder of tradition, while hoping for a renewal in the material and spiritual reality of antiquity.<sup>17</sup> Babits originally had intended to call the book *Classical Dreams*, but he was dissuaded from doing so, so he used this as the title of a poetic cycle. However, the cycle speaks for itself: the masques or personae emanating from the poet's inner world are imbued with tragedy. Reality had become, instead of a Dionysiac joyfulness and gaiety, something demonic, and the poems were transformed into epilogues of tragic conflicts and fall. As the title indicates, the poems were conceived as Apollonian dream (*Héphaisztosz, Homérosz, Protesilaos, Két nővér, A sorshoz, Bakhánslárma, Thamyris, Danaidák, Új leoninusok, A Campagna éneke*). According to G. F. Cushing, a professor of Hungarian Studies in London, one can discover in these poems the influence of the Anglo-Grecian poetic tradition on Babits's work, particularly that of Tennyson and Swinburne:

The *Bakhánslárma* is a presentation of the demoniac, the *Klasszikus álmok* gives us the mystic, *Thamirys* the unrepentant classicist. In *Új leoninusok* just as in *Danaidák*, along with *Mozgófénykép* classical verse form is applied to modern times. *Óda a szépségről* especially shows Swinburne's influence.<sup>18</sup>

*Protesilaos* and *Danaidák* constitute a sort of preamble to the major work for Babits's Greek period, *Laodameia*. This "dramatic poem", according to the poet's own generic classification, is a "lyric situation" "bearing the formal elements of tragedy," inspired by Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*. Babits's own text is inlaid with intertextual borrowings from a number of Greek and Roman authors, such as Sappho, Horace, Catullus, Homer, and Aeschylus. The theme is reinforced by powerful melodic versification, a kind of "orgy of rhythm". According to György Tverdota, "This tragic poem is the poet's most faithfully Nietzschean and most Hellenic creation."<sup>19</sup>

Given Babits' inherent dual sensibility, it is no surprise that in this period of excessive Classicism and cult of beauty, coupled with verse turning into music, we

find him rebelling against his own poetic platform. Already at the end of 1910, when writing *Laodameia*, he had completed a text entitled *Epilogue to a Book of Poems*, whose original, and quite revealing, title was *Disgust*, somewhat later *Naive Disgust*. He submitted it, together with *Divina machina*, and *Pro mortuis ignotis*, to the editorial office of *Nyugat* in Budapest. However, when he received the galley proofs in Fogaras, he decided not to send them back to the editors. “I get into a nervous state when I reread these poems,” he confessed, “I simply cannot convince myself to see them published in *Nyugat*.<sup>20</sup>

His new voice, his avant-garde experiment was so peculiarly astonishing, even for the author himself, that he withdrew his proofs. His poetic rebellion came too early for him, he could not bear the consequences of the rapid and radical change in his poetic expression. For the poem, indeed, contains a number of unusually candid revelations:

Phooley, I am disgusted with myself  
myself and my poems,  
I got sea-sick  
from all the rolling rhythms...  
Phooley, I am disgusted with everything classical  
what's classical and beautiful  
I have to spit at all that beauty  
because all beauty is a lie.  
Phooley, I have a lot of lies on my conscience  
a lot of lies and beauty,  
creation of beauty  
virtues worse than sins.

From now on I will sing just like this, without rhythm  
without rhythm and rhyme,  
and I will sing of the horse on the street.  
I will sing of everything that's ugly  
of old hags and of mud,  
of melting snow and drunken notary publics.

From now on I will sing like this  
without rhythm and rhyme  
using the most prosaic expressions  
the more prosaic the better:  
that's my poetic resolve.  
If others heap insults on beauty  
they are rank barbarians  
who do not know whereof they speak  
but if I heap insults on beauty, on poetic form  
that is the holiest of blasphemies.

(Because blasphemy is holy  
 a sacred sensation and grand feeling  
 every deeply felt, unexpected sacrilege is holy,  
 holier than all the boring sacraments.)

... You there, behind me, you'll get a kick out of this  
 because you came later than I did  
 because I am far ahead of you  
 beyond all measure, immeasurable.<sup>21</sup>

When Babits wrote these lines, Endre Ady had already published his *New Poems* and the notorious volume of *Blood and Gold*; Lajos Kassák, the great iconoclast and innovator of Hungarian verse, had also published his first works, but Babits, using this shocking new style, had preceded them both. *Disgust* can be seen as a rare poetic outburst, since Babits later repudiated this sort of extreme avant-garde approach, or at least did not allow such texts to be published. And while in his next books of poems he did experiment with loosening both diction and prosody, even with *vers libre*, in all his later work and in general he shied away from any radical breaking down of poetic form.

In the same year he likewise refused to show solidarity with Marinetti and his movement, although the Futurist had laid siege to the common enemies of "Paralysis and Podagra":

We have already surpassed what the Italians are now attempting to do in their infantile enthusiasm; to us it is not modernity but a parody of modernity. Here in Hungary only third-rate imitators of Ady are clinging to intellectuality; only small-town writers aim to find pleasure in perversions, like the high school student dreaming of forbidden fruits. The automobile, too, has become an obsolete poetic requisite, at least since many of us had put in it death as chauffeur; and we Hungarians have grown disgusted with politics and with cursing Austria. Nor is imitating Nietzsche an attractive proposition since Nietzsche's ideas have become so fashionable. For many years the journal *Nyugat* has amply demonstrated that poetry is modern when it is poetry, and not when it is modern.<sup>22</sup>

He also takes to task some Hungarian Avant-garde poets regarding the publication of their journal (*Tett*) [Action] in 1915–1916. Lajos Kassák and his colleagues had believed that they, following the German Activists and Russian Futurists, had embarked on the uncharted waters of the Hungarian Avant-garde. In his rebuke of those who proposed to throw all tradition and all form overboard, Babits issues a warning:

This sounds great, but the important question is: is it at all possible, and if so, will the result be *art*? Holding onto tradition is indispens-

able in the arts, since the essence of the arts relies on traditional precedents. In a certain sense art is a kind of expression, and in its effects not dissimilar to those of language. To be effective, language must operate by conventions and by making use of its inherited treasure-hoard.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, he draws attention to the fact that the prose poem and verse libre are not exactly revolutionary inventions in literature. Form cannot simply be discarded, since with the act of discarding new forms arise, and their newness is far from certain, as can be seen in the case of the prose poem.

The traumas affecting Hungary in the aftermath of World War I, the Hungarian Soviet Dictatorship of 1919, and the Treaty of Trianon (1920–1923) inevitably left their mark on Babits's poetic thinking and practice. While not reverting to his flirtation with the Avant-garde in 1910, he did admit that he could not continue his former commitment to a classical arrangement of form and content. As he said in an interview in 1923:

The classical dreams, the tranquil search for beauty have come to an end. The tensions and contradictions of life in Hungary have opened up for me in increasingly frightening magnitude. [...] During the first phase of *Nyugat* I had felt an overriding concern for the Great Poem, the need for a poem that was hard, triumphant, dazzling as a diamond so as to harden Hungarian poetry in contrast to the grey and sloppy thing it had almost become. [...] The present time calls for other lessons: today content is more important than form; that is why I have turned increasingly to writing free, unrhymed, even sloppy poems, and have written more and more in prose.<sup>24</sup>

He announces the same program at the publication of his volume *The Island and the Sea*, in 1925:

"Sappho's days faded long ago" – this is what I write in the first poem of the book, and indeed, we have come far from the times of beautiful poems, of rhymes and melodies, when the private dejections, loves, and sorrows of the poet moved the heart of the gentle reader. [...] We live in such times when all of our life is hanging by a thread. [...] In my new book the emphasis lies on the above-mentioned content, while in its form it is quite plain, not wanting to dazzle either with virtuosity or by taking liberties. We have had quite enough shouting; what we need now, I believe, is speaking in a quiet, serious manner. I see a great deal of barbaric turbulence swirling all around, while for many the credibility in a cultivation of the spirit has been shaken, as the world has been caught up in sport and dance. [...] The poet still dreams of other sports, of other dances, which are filled with spirit as in the time of the ancient Greeks, and woe to the poem that wants to be only physical, only legs and fits.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the poet signals the constant and variable features of his art; the Hellenic ideal, which he first set aside for personal reasons in the early 1910s, and later for political considerations, is now once again ready to rise to the surface.

In a formidable essay written in 1925 Babits announces the need for a *new Classicism*:

Now that we have discovered the dark side of the world, we need to rediscover the *whole world*, in its totality, together with its neglected spirituality, with its nearly forgotten luminous side. What else could this be named than a road to a *new Classicism*? It does not mean the negation of naturalism: on the contrary, the aim is to make use of it and bring it to fulfillment by returning to the natural, continuously diminishing and increasing totality of Eternal Art. But content now again plays a role, not to be lost in empty artifice. Invention and plain talk happening simultaneously, carrying a new and modern message, *of the present, to the present*. New, because it is a revelation, and modern, *for the first time*, because it is a revelation of the spirit.<sup>26</sup>

In a 1931 interview on contemporary literature he once again deploys the formula of the new Classicism against a new cultural phenomenon:

In my view the time is ripe for a *new Classicism*, an eruption of a new intensity. [...] I am once again emphasizing the importance of form. In the contemporary literary scene we are faced with a dangerous and ominous threat: a literary school where literature and mere reportage are confused.<sup>27</sup>

The last ten years of Mihály Babits's life were spent under the aegis of this new Classicism and also in great physical suffering. By this time he had finished the translation of *La Divina Commedia*, which he had begun in Fogaras. By early 1927 he had completed his major prose work, the novel *Halálfiái*, [which means, "those who are about to die", but could also be translated as "The Walking Dead"], some of which is based on autobiographical details. His translations, including Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris*, were published in 1931, and he also completed a translation of Sophocles' *Oedipus, the King*. The following year sees the publication of a translation of medieval hymns with the title *Amor Sanctus*. In 1934 he conceived plans to write a "modern" play based on the tragedies of Euripides, even though earlier he had felt a certain distance from the dramatist because of his perceived "unbridled enthusiasm".

In February 1938 he underwent surgery to remove a tumor from his trachea, and he lost his ability to speak. During the summer of the same year he wrote his great poem about the Hebrew prophet's confrontations with God in *The Book of Jonah*. In this work the poet also confronts himself, affirming his view that some-

one singled out to be a prophet cannot refuse his vocation. As György Tverdota has observed, Babits in his anguish has been “refined” – a term, incidentally, that Dante applied to Arnaut Daniel in the *Purgatorio* – to pass from his earlier pagan polytheism to being a champion intent on preserving cultural tradition.<sup>28</sup> Even in his constant pain and discomfort Babits nonetheless continued to cling to the classics. From 1940 onwards, while being subjected to antispasmodic medication, enemas, and catheterization, he persevered in translating Sophocles and prepared his inaugural lecture for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Even amidst the horrific humiliations besetting mind and body he continued to hold on. In his conversation books, *Beszélgetőfüzetek*, used as his sole communicative device, he gave Latin lessons to his daughter Ildikó.

Babits’s life came full circle on August 4, 1941. On the night table by his death-bed there lay the corrected proofs of Sophocles’ *Oedipus in Colonus*, ready for the printer. The last drama of the Greek tragedian is also the last translation and work of the Hungarian poet. The figures of the blind king and the voiceless poet seem to overlap: Mihály Babits had inscribed traces of himself into the character of his protagonist. These details have come to light in György Poszler’s close study of the conversation books, and Poszler also gives an apt summary of the essence of Babits’s Classicism and Neoclassicism:

The [Oedipus] translation is the consummation of his creative life, leading back to the very roots, to the ideals inspired by Graeco-Roman, that is to say, Mediterranean, Classicism. Which is at the same time an affirmation of the Humanistic ideal, which is indestructible, without the need to qualify or restrict its meaning. He is, of course, a modern classical ideal. Not purely Apollonian, nor wholly Dionysian, but a gently modified fusion of the two.<sup>29</sup>

*The shortened version of the paper was read in Rome, September 2009, at a conference organized by Foundation CINI, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the Hungarian Chair of the University La Sapienza with the title: L’eredità classica nella cultura italiana e ungherese nell’Ottocento dal Neoclassicismo alle Avanguardie.*

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Gergely Angyalosi (2008) ‘Szárnyaska számár az őszi kertben – József Attila Babits-képéről’ *Literatura*, Vol. 2, 199.
- <sup>2</sup> Mihály Babits (1978) *Esszék, tanulmányok*, ed. György Belia (Budapest: Szépirodalmi), Vol. 1, 311.
- <sup>3</sup> Ágnes Kelevéz (2008) »Kit új korokba küldtek régi évek« – Babits útján az antikvitástól napjainkig (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum), 122.

- <sup>4</sup> *Babits Mihály levelezése (1890–1906)*, ed. Sándor Zsoldos (Budapest: Historia Litteraria Alapítvány–Korona Kiadó) 1998, 97. (Series: Babits Mihály Műveinek Kritikai Kiadása, Levelezés, ed. by Lajos Sipos)
- <sup>5</sup> *Babits Mihály Összegyűjtött Versei* ed. Ágnes Kelevéz (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó), 1993, 152. – All the quotations here are translated by dr. László Géfin.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Letters of John Keats*. Ed. Maurice Buxton Forman. 3rd edition with revisions and additional letters (London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press), s. d. 72.
- <sup>7</sup> *Dictionarium Latinoungaricum, item vice versa Dictionarium Ungaricolatinum, per Albertum Molnár Szenciensén Ungarum*. Nürnberg, Hutterus, 1604.
- <sup>8</sup> Mihály Babits (1993) “*Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje*” – Interjúk, nyilatkozatok, vallo-mások, ed. János Téglás (Budapest: Pátria Nyomda), 45.
- <sup>9</sup> Attila Buda (2007) *Teremtő utánzás – Babits-tanulmányok* (Budapest: Ráció Kiadó), 139–64.
- <sup>10</sup> *Babits Mihály levelezése (1890–1906)*, *op. cit.*, 111.
- <sup>11</sup> ‘Swinburne’, *Esszék, tanulmányok, op. cit.*, Vol. 1, 35–6.
- <sup>12</sup> György Tverdota (1997) ‘Klasszikus álmok. Dekadencia és antikvitás Babits első korszakának költészetében’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 569.
- <sup>13</sup> *Babits Mihály levelezése (1890–1906)* *op. cit.*, 236.
- <sup>14</sup> ‘Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje’ *op. cit.*, 137–8.
- <sup>15</sup> ‘Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje’, *op. cit.*, 20; Ágnes Kelevéz, *op. cit.*, 120.
- <sup>16</sup> In one of his letters to Gyula Juhász.
- <sup>17</sup> György Rába (1981) *Babits Mihály költészete 1903–1920* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi), 287.
- <sup>18</sup> G. F. Cushing (1948) ‘Babits és az angol klasszika-filológia’ *Irodalomtörténet*, 604–05.
- <sup>19</sup> György Tverdota, *op. cit.*, 571.
- <sup>20</sup> Ágnes Kelevéz (1998) *A keletkező szöveg esztétikája*. Genetikai közelítés Babits költészetéhez (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó), 87.
- <sup>21</sup> *Babits Mihály Összegyűjtött Versei*, *op. cit.*, 538–41.
- <sup>22</sup> *Babits Mihály világa* (1983). Centenáriumi emlékülés Kaposváron. Ed. András Laczkó (Kaposvár: Somogy Megyei Nyomda), 13.
- <sup>23</sup> Mihály Babits ‘Ma, holnap és irodalom. Ars poetica forradalmár költők használatára’, *Esszék, tanulmányok, op. cit.*, 440.
- <sup>24</sup> ‘Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje’, *op. cit.*, 73–74.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.
- <sup>26</sup> ‘Új klasszicizmus felé’, *Esszék, tanulmányok, op. cit.*, Vol. 2, 157.
- <sup>27</sup> ‘Itt a halk és komoly beszéd ideje’ *op. cit.*, 172.
- <sup>28</sup> György Tverdota, *op. cit.*, 568.
- <sup>29</sup> György Poszler (1984) ‘Babits beszélgetőfüzetei’, *Irodalomtörténet*, 550.

## “INBURSTS OF MAGGYER”: JOYCE, THE FALL, AND THE MAGYAR LANGUAGE

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The essay traces how, possibly in partial response to the national characterologies of Arthur Griffith and Otto Weininger, James Joyce made symbolic use of the Hungarian language in his mature fictional books *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Taking its clues from the Biblical narratives of the fall of man and the fall of the tower of Babel, the study argues that this Finno-Ugric language, radically different from most European idioms and possessing a seemingly impenetrable vocabulary, grammar and orthography, became a useful device in Joyce’s hands to reinforce his major themes of (postlapsarian) carnality and linguistic confusion in his later fiction.

**Keywords:** James Joyce, language, Hungarian, fall of man, Babel, carnality, obscurity, confusion, Finno-Ugric, Arthur Griffith, Otto Weininger, *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake*, Virag, lapsus linguae, sound, sense, referent, grammar, orthography

Samuel Beckett is alleged to have said of Joyce that “For him, there was no difference between the fall of a bomb and the fall of a leaf” (qtd. in Cioran 33). Certainly, a fascination with the very idea of the “fall” appears to be suggested by the fact that Joyce’s writings seem to contain falls and resurrections in a great variety of forms. This is a well-known feature of, for instance, *Finnegans Wake*, but one can also trace back the presence of a similar, if less conspicuous, reliance on such motifs to the writer’s earlier works. What this essay attempts to propose, however, is the perhaps less obvious claim that Joyce appears to have found important – although admittedly somewhat elusive – contributions to his development of the themes of “fall” and “resurrection” in various aspects of the Hungarian language.

Allusions to the Fall of Man are already present, more or less covertly, in the short stories of *Dubliners*. Thus, in “Grace” they lurk behind Mr Kernan’s drunken tumble down the stairs of the bar and his blatant need for redemptive grace. They are also discernible (as John Wyse Jackson and Bernard McGinley also observe in their annotated edition, *D* 21) at the beginning of “Araby” in the form of the “central apple-tree” of the “wild garden”, as well as at the end of the



story, in the self-image of the boy who recognises himself in the darkness as an evidently fallen “creature driven and derided by vanity”.

The presence of falls and resurrections becomes more palpable in Joyce’s first published novel. Not only does the Stephen Dedalus of *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man* carry the memory of a mythic fall in his name, but he also famously wants to emulate the “non serviam” that preceded the fall of Lucifer with his own “I will not serve” (*P* 239). Accordingly, Stephen makes the fall into experience and the hopefully ensuing triumphant creative resurrection the base of his artistic creed when he resolves to “live, to err, to fall, to triumph, to recreate life out of life” (172).

Adam’s Fall appears to be on Stephen’s mind in *Ulysses* as well, in forms that range from a comment on St Thomas’s would-be reaction to a carnal love-song (“Unfallen Adam rode and not rutted”, *U* 3.386), to ponderings about how original sin is passed down symbolically through navel cords (3.37ff and 14.294ff). Moreover, when Stephen himself “totters, collapses, falls” (15.4748) in the street at the end of a night spent with drinking and prostitutes, he appears merely to illustrate an earlier statement of his, according to which “the original sin [...] darkened his understanding, weakened his will and left in him a strong inclination to evil” (9.1006–7).

Not entirely surprisingly, these words are an almost verbatim recapitulation of what the “Maynooth Catechism” had to say on the continuing effects of Adam’s first Fall (13). According to the Christian tradition which this catechism reflects, the fallen human mind, forced to rely exclusively on the sensations of the fallen senses, and expelled from the full “face to face” vision and direct knowledge granted to Adam in the Garden of Eden, is barred from the divine sapientia available in Paradise. This is what Saint Paul’s famous words are often seen to refer to, pitting the present fallen human existence against the blessed future state of re-captured plenitude: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (I Corinthians 13:12). However, as Stephen reminds us, the Fall resulted in further unfortunate effects. Thus the corruption of human nature that Adam’s Fall brought upon human kind involves not only the death and corruption of the body, but also the subjection of the will to bodily “concupiscence”. As this concupiscence (or inclination to evil) was often seen to centre in sensuous pleasures involving food, drinks and sexuality, it also became the inevitable source of the much-reviled cardinal sins of gluttony and lust.

In *Ulysses* it is Stephen’s quoted words that serve to spell out the effects that Christian thinking traditionally attributes to the Fall. Still, one can also argue that symbolic traits of human fallenness appear to be associated at least as powerfully with the figures of Leopold Bloom and his Hungarian grandfather and potential alter ego, Lipoti Virag. As Bloom shares an elusive but emphatic Jewish and Hun-

garian background with Virag of Szombathely, the postlapsarian nature of both figures appears implicitly linked not only to Irish and Jewish, but to Hungarian motifs as well.

Bloom, like Stephen before him, had to go through a physical “fall” and “rise” (*U* 17.90, 17.100) in order to get into his house at the end of the day, but his mind and body had already been touched previously by various cases of fallen carnal concupiscence. Thus, only a couple of hours earlier, Bloom ruminated over eunuchs who “fall[...] into flesh” precisely to compensate for lack of love (5.410–11), and he was also much taken by the rise and fall of certain “phallopotechnology” “Roman candles” in “Nausicaa” (15.1495, 13.737).

It is perhaps not obvious that many aspects of such Bloomian falls and rises can be seen as reflections of his Hungarian origins. One of these, probably the best known association of falls and resurrections with Bloom and Hungarianness, is mockingly established in the “Cyclops” episode. Here the Hungarian-Jewish Dubliner is rumoured to have given “the ideas for Sinn Fein” to Arthur Griffith (*U* 12.1574), whose highly influential historical exposition of Hungarian and Irish revival from national death was entitled, significantly, *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland* (1904). As an avid reader of Griffith’s *United Irishman* (cf. *SL* 95, 102, 121, 127), Joyce would have known this pamphlet already when it appeared as a series of articles between January and July 1904. Such articles were all the more likely to catch Joyce’s attention as they relied heavily on the Christian symbolism of sacrificial death and resurrection, and were also concerned with the characterisation of various nations. In addition to discussing the English, the Irish and Austrians, Griffith introduced his readers to the various character traits that Hungarians as such were supposed to possess. Thus Griffith delights in describing the chosen people of his political parable as “splendid Magyars,” “brave”, “heroic”, “gallant” and “chivalrous Hungarians” (3–7), while he pours his sarcasm on British and Austrian accounts that describe any specimen of “one of the most gallant, courteous, and gifted people in the world” as “a drunkard, a lazy ne’er-do-well” (79). Griffith also derisively quotes British traveller Charles Boner, who felt both sorry for and critical of Magyars because, as he asserted, they get continually “borne away by imagination and [their] hot passions”, and this “utterly blinds and deprives them of the capacity to form a reasonable judgement” (83–4). One could in fact easily see Boner’s insistence on uncurbed Hungarian passions as an echo of some moralizing imperial view which sees the backward “other” as a victim of pitiable deprivation, and thus, arguably, as a virtual symbol of fallen humanity. To counter such views, Griffith also refers to the somewhat exotic, oriental common origin of the Hungarian and Irish peoples, and interprets this “Scythian blood” as a factor that “nourish[es] generosity, humanity, love of art, and religious tolerance in their breasts” (4). By emphasising the “Scythian” connection, Griffith here may be making rather defiant use of an ori-

gin myth which, as Joep Leerssen has shown (72–3), traditionally carried a charge of essential barbarity in certain British (quasi)historical discourses.

Links to the fallen human condition are in fact already encoded in Bloom's family history through his Hungarian ancestral name Virag. This is because the Hungarian word *virág* would be normally translated into English as flower, and rendering it with bloom carries the obvious suggestion of the palimpsest of the German name Blum. (In fact, the pre-existence of this "even more original" German form is so clear in a Hungarian cultural context that when the western Hungarian city of Szombathely recently – in 1997 – decided to pay homage to Joyce's novel by "finding" and duly marking the home of Bloom's ancestry, they chose a house once owned by a local family called Blum as a matter of course.) Thus, the German Blum underlying Bloom's surname invites a postlapsarian glimpse, "through a glass, darkly", into the successive Germanizing and Magyarizing stages of 18th and 19th century Jewish assimilation in Hungary. The fact that Bloom's father was born Virag, and one of his great-grandfathers would in all probability have been born Blum suggests, in this context, less of a legitimacy crisis within the family than the late reverberations of another "fall", the collapse of the Tower of Babel, and of the ensuing confusion of tongues and national–linguistic identities.

It can hardly surprise us, then, that in "Circe" much of grandfather Virag's linguistic performance, with its uncurbed post-Edenic desire for all kinds of knowledge, and its post-Babelic confusion, appears to be a parody of the effects of the two falls of mankind into disobedience. Thus, old Virag's post-Edenic speech is as much characterised by an excess of apparent learnedness, which displays itself in Latinate coinages like "exhibitionisticity" (U 15.2385) or "viragitis" (15.2440), as it is by a similarly postlapsarian excitability, which gets expression in his passionate linguistic outbursts. Moreover, Virag's rather innovative use of interjections can be seen to enact the Babelic confusion of tongues as well, and in at least two ways. On the one hand, his exclamations sketch a miniature history of human languages as they take us from more or less corrupted Greek words and quasi-words (like "hippogriff" 15.2325, "polysyllabax" 15.2335) through primeval onomatopoeia (like "Piffpaff! Popo!" 15.2556) and inarticulate noises ("Pchp! ... Prrrrht!" 15.2556) to Yiddish ("Verfluchte Goim!" ["Cursed gentiles!"] 15.2571–2, "Dreck!" ["Trash!"/"Shit!"] 15.2626). On the other hand, by turning otherwise innocent expressions like "parallax" (15.2334) or "pomegranate" (15.2401) into abrupt and dubious interjections, Virag's language parodies the rift between sound and sense, which can be seen as one of the main consequences of the Babelic confusion of tongues. (I shall discuss this confusion in more detail at a later point.)

Phillip F. Herring's edition of the *Ulysses* notesheets in the British Museum contains a note connected with Bloom, which appears to list some potential names

for Bloom's ancestors as "Family: ?Stoer, Kubler, Virag(o)" (Herring 82). This would seem to suggest that Joyce was very much mindful of the formal similarity between the Hungarian word *virág* ("flower, bloom") and the otherwise unrelated Latinate word *virago* ("man-like, heroic or violent woman"). Indeed, he may have preferred the Hungarian Virag to the other (non-Hungarian) names that he apparently also considered for Bloom's family precisely because of the formal connection with *virago*. Moreover, the word *virago* directly links Bloom's family to the Fall, since it evokes the famous passage from the *Vulgate* where Adam uses precisely this word in calling Eve a "Woman" just before the Fall. As the biblical text etymologises, Eve is called a *virago* here because "she was taken out of Man" (or *vir*): "Haec vocabitur *virago*, quoniam de *viro* sumpta est" (Genesis 2:23, my emphases).

True to the Hungarian surname that appears to carry the memory of the first Fall in itself, old Virag and his grandson produce a whole cascade of references to this event and its grievous consequences in the "Circe" episode. Thus, the grandfather's discussion of aphrodisiacs which can cure the condition of "viragitis" is followed up by Bloom's consideration of female sexual parts, from which he slips into a brief musing over Eve's Fall: "Ocularly woman's bivalve case is worse. The cloven sex. Why they fear vermin, creeping things. Yet Eve and the serpent contradicts." (*U* 15.2444–6). As though in reaction to this, somewhat later old Virag comes up with a corresponding verdict of "Fall of man" (15.2545) when he has heard Zoe's story of the lapsed Catholic priest whose vital spirits failed to rise to the bidding of a (fallen) woman.

The Hungarian surname provides an opportunity for Joyce to explore the gender ambiguity of the word *virago*, which was already implicit in the biblical etymology and is still retained in modern usage. The same ambiguity was also memorably explored by Otto Weininger's one-time best seller *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Sex and Character, 1903). As shown by, for instance, Robert Byrnes's article on the Weiningerian "Jewish" sexual types behind Molly and Leopold Bloom, *Sex and Character* was a book that Joyce seems not only to have known, but also to have drawn on in shaping the main "Jewish" protagonists of *Ulysses*. Hardly less importantly, however, Weininger's bulky book also convinces the reader that the Viennese writer was a "connoisseur" of the idea of the Fall as well. As others had done before him, Weininger contrived to link the Fall at the same time to femininity and to sexuality. Considering the latter as "swinish" and belonging to the "realm of sows" (385n, 318), Weininger regards any kind of intercourse of the abstract ideal "man" with the abstract ideal "woman" as the loss of the purity of the (Platonic/Aristotelian) "form" through meddling with impure (and sexual) "matter" – and thus as a fall into sin (or Sündenfall, 401). Moreover, since "woman" is identified with mere sexuality, she can be succinctly summed up as "the expression of man's fall into sin" (583n). It also follows from

Weininger's complicated and somewhat obscure argumentation that, insofar as they partake of this femalehood, *viragos* are also tainted with this fallen sexuality and swinishness. (To differing degrees, this is also true of all other manifestations of femininity from the most exclusively feminine "virgo" though "womanly man" to the least feminine and most manly "masculinum"; 55–6). The gravity of a virago's situation is only slightly alleviated by the fact that the condition of female masculinity, which Weininger calls *Viraginität* (or "viraginity", 85), at least has the saving grace of containing some small measure of the typically "male" attribute of spirituality as well.

It can hardly be an accident, then, that in Joyce's *Ulysses* the "Circe" episode not only displays all these Weiningerian motifs, but also associates the Fall, swinish sexuality and feminine masculinity with Bloom's and Virag's figures. The most obvious link is old Virag's reference to "viragitis" (*U* 15.2440, cf. the Weiningerian *Viraginität*/"viraginity"), which apparently merges the syndrome of mustachioed women like Bella Cohen with the perhaps equally unpleasant condition of being a Virag. Luckily, the grandfather has a ready cure, in the shape of aphrodisiac truffles, for this gender trouble (which the Virag family may well have inherited from the very first vir and virago). Still, Virag's recommendation of this fragrant delicacy only serves to give the last push to his grandson's gradual sexual fall into a both Circean and Weiningerian swinehood: Bloom is degraded from the pure (although already ambiguous) status of "*virgo intacta*" (15.1785–6), through the stage of a (Weiningerian) "womanly man" (15.1799) into the both effeminate and porcine creature who falls to the feet of Bella/Bello – and starts snuffling for truffles (15.2847ff).

In addition to Bloom's and Virag's Circean variations on the theme of the Fall, their comic alter-egos seem to be put into obscure carnal Hungarian contexts more than once in the "Cyclops" episode. When, for instance, metamorphosed into his Hungarian self, or perhaps into his own grandfather, Bloom is addressed at the end of the chapter in somewhat grand quasi-Hungarian as "*Nagyaságos uram Lipóti Virag*", he is supposed to be departing for a place whose name turns out to be an obscure scatological joke. Although in the text the phrase is translated, with a measure of the Babelic confusion of tongues, as "Meadow of Murmuring Waters" (*U* 12.1819), "*Százharminczbrojúgulyás-Dugulás*" is in fact probably best rendered as "constipation caused by one hundred and thirty portions of veal goulash" (see Takács 162). Also, Bloom's transformation in the procession of the "Friends of the Emerald Isle" into "*Countess Marha Virága Kisászony Putrápesthi*" (*U* 12.560–1) clearly contains references to kissing asses ("*Kisászony*") and putrid pests ("*Putrápesthi*", cf. also *Budapesti* "of/from Budapest"), while it could also be interpreted as a prefiguration of Bloom's inglorious descent into femalehood in "Circe," *kisászony* being Hungarian for "miss." Indeed, a belated, but equally sexual-scatological and equally Hungarian sister of

“Countess Marha Virága” can be found in the Wake in the ample shape of “the most serene magyansty az archdiochesse” (FW 171.25–6). As her primary claim to fame is that she generously supplies Shem from her own “noble white fat ... winevat” (171.24–5) with a “*feherbour*” (171.27) that appears to be the juice of both her lower parts and her country (Hungarian *fehér bor* meaning “white wine”), this Magyar majesty of *Finnegans Wake* also appears to continue the Bloomian-Viragian tradition of carnal Hungarianness.

Through the motifs of fallen carnality and obscurity, as in many other respects, *Ulysses* (and especially the “Circe” episode) appears to be a comic precursor of the cosmic comedy of falls and resurrections in *Finnegans Wake*. The latter, as is well known, involves not only the figure of HCE (the father), but also his various particular manifestations, from the Tim Finnegan of the eponymous street ballad and the Finn MacCool of Irish mythology through Charles Stewart Parnell and Humpty Dumpty down to God the Father himself. Even more importantly, through the motifs of the Fall of Adam and the collapse of the Tower of Babel, the Wake involves a self-reflexive thematisation of the ways in which languages fell into post-Adamic obscurity and post-Babelic confusion, while the language of the book itself reflects and performs the ways in which the obscured and confused tongues can resurrect themselves by making joyous literary uses of their own materiality and multiplicity. Before we can properly explore Wakean language, however, let us attempt a brief reconstruction of all that the Bible has failed to narrate about the two “falls of language” which, arguably, followed the two major falls of mankind into disobedience.

The main symbolic linguistic consequence of the Fall of Man can be seen in the breaking up of the unity of sense and referent. Most crucially, after the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the referent of the word God ceased to be accessible “face to face” through the senses, and thus the concept “god” became thinkable without positing the existence of an actual God. Appropriately enough, grandfather Virag is on precisely this postlapsarian theological basis when, with “a diabolic rictus of black luminosity contracting his visage,” he passionately denies the possibility of God having taken sensible form in Christ (*U* 15.2570ff). The distances that the Expulsion gave rise to also necessitated, in the case of the Mosaic stone tablets as in the case of old Virag’s obscure medical parchmentroll (cf. *U* 15.2392ff, 2435ff), the falling back upon such a fault-ridden means of contact as writing. Moreover, by introducing human mortality and thus enforcing a sense of time (“for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”, *Gen.* 3:19), Adam’s Fall can also be seen to have brought about the necessity of grammatical tenses like the past or the future. Likewise, the Expulsion and the ensuing need for work (“Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken”, *Gen.* 3:23) arguably necessitated the marking of the various spatial and functional relationships

between things through the use of cases like the locative or the accusative as well. A characteristically comic Bloomian version of this fallen grammar appears in “Circe” when cases are used to charge Bloom with an obscure postlapsarian act of “unlawfully watching and besetting” (*U* 15.733) outside a brothel. As Gifford and Seidman note (461), the two watchmen lay their accusing hand on Bloom’s shoulder precisely when they reach the accusative case of his name in their declension: “Bloom. Of Bloom. For Bloom. Bloom” (*U* 15.677).

The other linguistic Fall, the confusion of tongues at the collapse of the Tower of Babel (*Gen.* 11:1–9), can be seen to have resulted in the depriving of the link between the sound (roughly, the Saussurean signifier) and the sense (the Saussurean signified) of its natural motivation. God having confused the tongues of men, a different sound string became attached to the same sense in each language. As a result, the sounds of the word adam can no longer refer unambiguously to the concept “man”, nor does the name Virag signify “flower” equally clearly for all post-Babelic speakers. Even more strikingly, when the Old Testament explains the word for “woman” by asserting that “she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (*Gen.* 2:23), the justification for the confidently causal “because” often gets lost in the translation. Thus, instead of providing a reassuring explanation, passages like this become signs of the post-Babelic rift between sound and sense for many readers of the Bible. Appropriately enough, this includes all Hungarian readers of the standard Catholic Bible translation of 1975, who in vain try to find traces of the word denoting “man” (i. e. *férfi*) in the Hungarian word for “woman” (i. e. *asszony*). The confusion of tongues did not, however, only send related senses (like “man” and “woman”) into dissimilar sound shapes (like *férfi* and *asszony*), but it also brought unrelated meanings (like “flower” and “heroic/masculine woman”) into similar forms (like Hungarian *virág* and English *virago*). Thus, linguistic confusion was born – but so was the possibility of wordplay as well.

By upsetting the unity of the eternal linguistic presence and directness of Eden, and by disturbing the links between sound, sense and referent, then, the post(col)lapsarian word not only lost its original perfection, but it also became one of the sources of the kind of linguistic pleasure that Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* offer in abundance. Moreover, if in *Ulysses* certain motifs that were connected to Bloom and his grandfather created a link between things Hungarian and a both fallen and resurrectional bodiliness, it is only appropriate that the ubiquitous linguistic falls and resurrections of *Finnegans Wake* would be strengthened by Hungarian elements as well (as they are by many others).

In *Ulysses*, the darkened postlapsarian human understanding which can only see “through a glass darkly” is turned into theosophical comedy as Paddy Dignam posthumously reveals that (as a heavy drinker) “previously he had seen as in a glass darkly but that those who had passed over had summit possibilities of atomic

development opened up to them" (*U* 12.348–51). Darkness is also associated with languages by both Bloom and Stephen, who think of the "dark language" (4.95) and "dark speech" (14.435) of eastern people. Fallen carnality is added to obscurity in Bloom's oriental fantasy in "Circe", when, displaying "odalisk lips lusciously smeared with salve of swinefat and rosewater" (15.1332–4), Zoe speaks a language, Hebrew, that appears to compete with her lips in obscure oriental sensuousness. As "Ithaca" makes it clear, however, Irish also shares similar origins and a similar bodiliness with Hebrew. This bodiliness manifests itself in the presence of "guttural sounds and diacritic aspirations" in both languages (17.747), while the impenetrable shapes of Irish and Hebrew written characters and the confusing abundance of "epenthetic and servile letters" (17.747–8) in both Irish and Hebrew spelling provide further examples of the postlapsarian opacity of human linguistic systems.

In an appropriately difficult line, *Finnegans Wake* provides an even more explicit link between darkened language and the darkened vision of St Paul's quoted phrase: "And if he sung dumb in his glass darkly speech lit face to face on allaround" (*FW* 355.8–9). By calling them "dunsker brogue" and "dunsky tunga" (185.10–11), the *Wake* stresses the dusky darkness of human languages, and also often links it to fallen carnality. Thus, the following evidently self-reflexive protestation, part of a discussion about HCE's obscure lapse in the park, unites motives of the Fall as the originator of the sins of the world with ideas of the nocturnal obscurity of human language and the postlapsarian carnality of food and sex: "In the Nichtian glossery which purveys aprioric roots for aposteriorious tongues this is nat language at any sinse of the world" (83.10–12). In the nightly glossary of *Finnegans Wake*, the groceries include edible roots, Shem's "manroot of all evil" (169.18–19) and his primal "root language" (424.17) alike.

The elements of fall and carnality are also combined with the idea of the imperfection of language in a recurrent motif of *Finnegans Wake*, the slip of the tongue or lapsus linguae. Thus, the "slip" of "Ah fatal slip" (*FW* 563.10) can as easily be a slip of the tongue, Freudian or other, as Adam's fatal but fortunate fault, and Latin lapsus can as easily refer to Adam's lapse into sin as to a lapsus linguae. Arguably, the whole of *Finnegans Wake* can be seen as a symbol of the obscurity of the languages of men, an aspect of the darkening of human understanding, which, as Stephen Dedalus reminded us in *Ulysses*, is supposed to be a direct result of the original sin – together, of course, with a propensity for carnal concupiscence.

As I briefly discussed in another essay (354–55), the Hungarian motifs, which in *Ulysses* are connected to Bloom's and his grandfather's fallen carnality, are in *Finnegans Wake* also strongly linked to the idea of fallen tongues. Hungarian or *Magyar*, a language of Finno-Ugric rather than Indo-European fundamentals, differs (literally) radically from most European languages. As the polyglot Joyce could observe in Austro-Hungarian Pola and Trieste, its vocabulary, grammar and



orthography render Hungarian largely impenetrable for speakers of most other languages, making it a convenient example of the fallen obscurity of human idioms. This seems to be the case, for instance, in the following passage referring to the fall of main character HCE: “Will whatever will be written in *lappish language* with inbursts of *Maggyer* always seem semposed, black looking white and white guarding black, in that siamixed twoatalk used twist stern swift and jolly roger?” (FW 66.18–21, emphases added). Here we seem to be called upon to make a link between a passionately and perhaps dangerously implosive Magyar tongue and another Finno-Ugric relative. Like Hungarian, Lapp(ish) is clearly a multiply fallen idiom: it recalls both the fall (*lapsus*) of Adam (or HCE) and a slip of the tongue (*lapsus linguae*), as well as, possibly, the savage postlapsarian behaviour of *lapping* and the “darkened understanding” involved in the German word *läppisch* (“stupid”). Almost predictably, Magyar, Lapp and their inevitable ambiguities lead to what looks like a mix of unclear interpretations and jolly concupiscent at the end of the passage.

A similar lapsedness and passion seems to be attributed to Hungarian in a later passage where Shem, the writer-figure of the *Wake*, rather arrogantly claims that (in spite and because of) “being a lapsis linquo with a ruvidubb shortartempa ... he would wipe alley english spooker, multaphoniaksically spuking, off the face of the erse” (FW 178.1–2, 6–7). Shem here speaks a lapsed language (“lapis linquo”) that is apparently not only Irish (“erse”), but also Hungarian (*rövidebb* being the Hungarian word for “shorter”), which may help explain why he displays the passionate short temper that has often been seen as a traditional Hungarian as well as Irish national characteristic.

Indeed, Hungarian elements appear to do quite steady service throughout the book in strengthening the Wakean stress on instincts and bodiliness. Given the random post-Babelic phonetic similarity between *Hungary* and *hungry*, several Hungarian references have to do with food and wine, like “hungulash” (FW 287.F4) and “majar bore” (88.20, *magyar bor* means “Hungarian wine”), “czitround”, “czitr” (171.08, 171.11, cf. Hungarian *citrom/citrom*, “lemon”), “feherbour” (cf. *fehér bor*, “white wine” 171.27), “tokay” (172.24), “kavehazs” (177.20, cf. *kávéház*, “café”), “somekat on toyast” (184.31, cf. *sonkát, tojást*, “ham, eggs” [both in the accusative case]). It seems also significant that the last several quasi-Hungarian “foodstuffs” (171.26) all mark the eating habits of the Wakean writer figure Shem the Penman, whose lapsed nature is as apparent from the lowness of his tastes as it is from his “manroot of all evil”, the location of his lost Edenic “garden nursery” in “Phig Street” (169.23/35), his habit of challenging divine commandments by being “covetous of his neighbour’s word” (172.30) or from the fact that he shares a name with the Biblical character Shem, whose genealogy memorably contains the narrative of the collapse of the tower and confusion of tongues at Babel.

Although they often get “portmanteaud” into almost intelligible English phrases, much of the exoticism of Hungarian words surely has to do with their curious spelling. This is still palpable in some phrases of the *Wake*, like the apparently Hungarianised version of the Irish form of the oath Jesus Christ!, “Szásas Kraicz!” (*FW* 172.23, *száz krajczár* or *szásas* being a hundred old Hungarian pence), but it is in *Ulysses* that the obscurity of Hungarian spelling appears to be made the most of. Thus, the Hungarian diacritic vowel letters (like í, é, á, ó, ú, ö, ü and even the perverse-looking ő and ű) and seemingly unpronounceable consonant combinations (like sz, cz, zs, cs, gy, ly, ny and even ssz, zzs or ccs) appear to provide not a little of the exotic and comic effect of phrases like the already cited “Nagyaságos uram Lipóti Virag” (cf. the correct Hungarian *Virág Lipót nagyaságos uram*), “Százharminczbrojúgulyás–Dugulás”, or “Countess Marha Virága Kisászony Putrápesthi”. Further examples of the scattered token Hungarian of *Ulysses* could also be mentioned with equal justification: “Rakóczy’s March” (*U* 12.1828, cf. the orthographically correct Rákóczy’s March), “Visszontlátásra, kedvés barátom! Visszontlátásra” (12.1841, cf. *Visszontlátásra, kedves barátom!*, “See you again, my dear friend”), or place-names like the notorious “Szombathely” (15:2312, 17.1870, etc.) or “Szesfehervar” (17.1877, cf. the actual Hungarian *Székesfehérvár*).

Indeed, the almost Babelic confusion of *Ulysses* editors and annotators who are simultaneously confronted with Joyce’s orthographic creativity and the intricacies of Hungarian spelling is finely reflected in various printed versions of the above, often already garbled, Hungarian phrases. Thus, Bloom’s ancestral name appears as both accented Virág (in the “Marha Virága” character of “Cyclops”) and unaccented Virag (in “Circe” and “Ithaca”), the accented Lipóti of “Cyclops” returns as unaccented Lipoti in “Circe,” while the normally unaccented “Szombathely” also appears with a curious accent as “Szombathély” (*U* 17.535) within Gabler’s edition. Other editors try other variants of the Hungarian phrases of “Cyclops,” for instance “Rakoczy’s March” and “kedvés barátom!” (*U*[1960] 445, 446, *U*[1937] 327).

Gifford and Seidman’s *Ulysses Annotated*, which gets the spelling of the Hungarian city of Székesfehérvár laudably right (597), still talks about “Százharminczdrojúgulyás–Dugulás” (which it somewhat obscurely renders as “130-calf-shepherd [or soup] – Stopping up [Sticking into]”, 379), and turns the normally acute Hungarian accents into perhaps Cycloptically grave ones in the (still emendable) emendations “Visszontlátásra kedevs baràton visszontlátásra” and “Nagyaságos” (379–80, original italics inverted to indicate differences from standard Hungarian spelling).

In the *Wake*, Magyar spelling variants as well as valiant Griffithian Magyars appear to be lurking behind the “(probably local or personal) variant magggers for the more generally accepted majesty” (*FW* 120:16–18, emphases added), which

also seems to be responsible for the curious aristocratic appellation of “the most serene magyansty az archdiochesse” (*FW* 171.25-26, emphasis added). In the context of the “lipsus” (120.35) or fall of language, this name can be seen as an embodiment of the obscurities of the fallible spelling of both ALP’s famous letter and of the Hungarian language.

The diacritics that we have seen to be largely responsible for the obscurity of Hungarian orthography in *Ulysses* are exploited in the *Wake* for their universal carnal potential as well. This, and indeed the carnality of all punctuation marks, appears to be quite strongly suggested in *Finnegans Wake* by the following passage – which is, ostensibly, part of the description of ALP’s letter:

These paper wounds, four in type, were gradually and correctly understood to mean stop, please stop, do please stop, and O do please stop respectively, and following up their one true clue, ... – Yard inquiries pointed out ? that ther ad bîn “provoked” ay ? fork, of à grave Brofèsor; àth é’s Brèk – fast – table; ; acùtely profèššionally piquéd, to=introduèe a notion of time [ùpon à plane (?) sù ’ ’ fâç’e’] by pùnc! ingh oles (sic) in iSpace?! (*FW* 124.1–12)

Arguably, the obscurity and carnality of letters, diacritics, and other written signs appear in the *Wake* to be the sign of the intrinsic fallenness of all “scriptsigns” whatsoever, exposing the “vaulting feminine libido of those interbranching ogham sex upandinsweeps sternly controlled and easily repersuaded by the uniform matteroffactness of a meandering male fist” (*FW* 123.7–10).

Another aspect of the fallenness of languages is, as we have seen, the necessity of using accidence, that is, the breaking up of the unified generality of the verb through particular tenses, and that of the noun through cases. Coming from Latin casus or “fall”, the word case in fact already symbolically encodes its connection with the Fall, and *Finnegans Wake* appears to exploit this connection even more than *Ulysses* did by having Bloom accused of indecency through the use of the accusative case. “Cases” and “lapses” are directly linked in a passage of the *Wake* that may be read as a replay of the Fall of Man (or even of Bloom), discussing as it does “the vocative lapse [i. e. case, fall] from which it begins and the accusative hole in which it ends itself” (*FW* 122.3–4). Another passage refers to “Accusative ahnsire! Damadam to infinities!” (19.30) and thus appears to peep into the court case that could have ensued from such a fall, Adam being damned infinitely through his offspring. As is the case with accidence, grammar in general is also regularly associated with carnality. Thus, the “putting together” of syn-tax can be transformed into “sintalks”, which appears to be as much about sex as about grammar (in 269.3), while the use of accidence can be combined with the lawful plea-

tures of a conjugal and “lubricitous conjugation of the last with the first” (121.30–1).

Through their agglutinative morphology, Magyar and some of its Uralic relatives can add long strings of non-Indo-European case markers and other suffixes to their unfamiliar roots, which helps making these languages convenient symbols of the obscurity of fallen human languages as such. In the “Burrus and Caseous” section (I. 6), the discussion of the “Persic-Uraliens hostery” (*FW* 162.12, cf. Permic-Uralian history and Persse O’Reilly’s hostelry) is quite confused by doubly fallen – both case-marked and corrupted – Hungarian nouns. Suffixed to Hungarian roots, we here encounter largely fictitious cases that combine a post-Edenic array of linguistic relationships (inessive, locative, vocative, and possibly possessive, passive and interrogative) with an equally postlapsarian concupiscence and combativity, as the “inessive and impossible”, “interlocative” and “conprovocative” (162.19–21) cases help shape the quasi-Magyar words “kezom” (162.19, cf. Hungarian *kezem/kezöm*, “my hand”, possessive) and “hazbane” (162.21, cf. Hungarian *házban*, “in the house”, inessive and locative). In fact, Hungarian seems to be very helpful in making grammar (of all things) sound sexy in the *Wake*: agglutination is linked to jolly carnality in a passage (“Enjombyourselves thurily! ... Embrace her bashfully by almeans at my frank incensive and tell her in your semiological agglutinative yez, how Idos be asking after her”, 465.10–14) that contains a reference to Hungary (as well as its long “fraternal” strife with Austria: “the corks again brothers, hungry and angry” 465.17).

The extent to which Arthur Griffith’s *The Resurrection of Hungary* may have influenced Joyce’s thinking about either Hungarians or the universal symbolism of fall and resurrection cannot be assessed with much accuracy now. It does, however, seem to be the case that as the writer began to grant a more and more significant role to this symbolism, he not only made use, as is well known, of numerous Irish and Jewish motifs. Rather, Joyce also appears to have consciously employed exotic, obscure and carnal “inbursts of Maggyer” to reinforce the opacity and bodiliness which seem to accompany the lapses and resurrections of various Joycean *Virags*, *viragos* and their strange languages.

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- D* *James Joyce's Dubliners: An Annotated Edition* (1993) Introduction, notes and afterwords by John Wyse Jackson and Bernard McGinley (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, ).
- FW* *Finnegans Wake* (1992) (London: Paladin-Harper-Collins. (References by page and line number. Most editions follow the same page and line arrangement.)
- PA* *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: Text, Criticism, and Notes* (1968) Ed. Chester G. Anderson (New York: The Viking Press).
- SL* *Selected Letters of James Joyce* (1975) Ed. Richard Ellmann (London: Faber and Faber).
- U* *Ulysses*. Ed. Hans Walter Gabler with Wolfhard Steppe and Claus Melchior. London: Bodley Head, 1986. (References by episode and line number.)
- Ulysses* (1937) (London: Bodley Head).
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## STRANGE INTERFERENCES: MODERNISM AND CONSERVATISM VS. AVANT-GARDE, HUNGARY, 1910s

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It is a highly peculiar phenomenon in Hungarian – and perhaps in East and Central European – literature of the early 20th century that Avant-Garde tendencies started to gain some (weak) position parallel with the first wave of Modernism, and when they received – understandably – a rather hostile reaction on the part of Conservative (nationalistic, traditional, anti-Western) literary circles, their reception on the part of the evolving Modernist literature was not much more friendly either. Strangely enough, besides some signals of solidarity and sympathy, the criticisms of Modernism turned against Avant-Garde were in harmony with those formulated by the Conservative circles. However, as the Latin saying goes, “duo cum faciunt idem, non est idem” (that is, when two do the same thing, it is not the same thing) – despite the apparent interference of Modernist and Conservative criticisms aimed against Avant-Garde tendencies, the position of the actors in question was radically different. In what follows, I give a short account of the Avant-Gardists’ debate with their Modernist contemporaries and an even shorter account of their debate with their Conservative adversaries.

**Keywords:** avant-garde, modernism, futurism, conservatism, Hungary, Hungarian literature, Lajos Kassák, Mihály Babits

### The *Nyugat* and Kassák

It is Lajos Kassák, poet and prose writer, whose name still represents the Avant-Garde in Hungarian literature; he is the only one of the pioneers of the movement who made it to get into the present day Hungarian official canon, he has some international recognition for his (typo)graphical work, and perhaps it is only him, at least outside professional circles, who comes to mind whenever Hungarian Avant-Garde is mentioned. He was a great organizer and editor of literary magazines, and he held highly consequent (even stubborn) ideas about the nature and mission of literature and arts. By the time he launched his first bi-weekly literary journal in 1915, *A Tett* (“The Deed” or “The Activity”), there had been a very influential (and, later, legendary) magazine since 1908, the *Nyugat* (“West”), the

first really powerful forum for the Modern literature of the age. The *Nyugat*'s Modernism is a very special blend: it was based largely on the generation principle as well as on this generation's confrontation with nationalistic-Conservative literature (and with right-wing political ideas); it was followed the French Symbolism, the English Post-Victorian and early Modern tendencies and was informed by German Expressionism as well.

Kassák wished to represent another approach: a far more overtly political, Socialist oriented worldview, with strong links to what was regarded as the most progressive tendencies abroad (Futurism, Expressionism etc.), a surprising, even astonishing and raw voice, a new poetics which breaks with possibly all conventions of the past. *A Tett* was designed to herald this new trend, not primarily against the *Nyugat*, but claiming independence in every respect.

Thus, the context of the initial steps of the Avant-Garde proper in the Hungarian literature was defined primarily by the *Nyugat*. Whether this context was sympathetic or offensive is hard to judge: Kassák and the leading figure of the *Nyugat*, Ernő Osvát, editor, were on pretty good terms, and some of the writers of both groups published in one or another period of their careers in the journal of "the other side" (as Kassák himself did). Moreover, since the *Nyugat* fostered the idea of generational nature of the new literature, attracting the young artists and writers of the Avant-Garde was one of its aspirations. However, for Kassák's circle it was one of the main ambitions to show its independence and difference which lead to a resistance to *Nyugat*.

The *Nyugat* was, so to speak, much more eclectic, more "liberal", more permissive – in the sense that it was its policy to give forum to several different schools, trends, figures and ideas; whereas Kassák's journals (first *A Tett* and later, as of 1916, *MA* ["Today"]) represented a more or less homogeneous group.

### **Futurism: For and Against**

The authors of the *Nyugat* were well educated, erudite intellectuals who had a wide awareness of what was going on in the sphere of Western literary circles; thus, one of their ambitions was to draw their readers' attention to the most important progressive movements abroad and publish surveys of their contemporaries' works. As early as in 1910, Futurism was thematized in an article by Mihály Babits (an excellent poet and an editor of the *Nyugat*), with a remarkable ambiguity. In the name of the *Nyugat*, he refuses any "intellectual kinship" with the Italian Futurism, adding that all that the Futurists were just experimenting with had long been transcended in Hungarian poetry – in the Hungarian context, it appeared only as a sort of parody. However, he hastens to add that "we are also Futurists", and the fog will soon disappear as the sun begins to shine; moreover, he

repeats in the closure of his survey article that “we are Futurists” – suggesting that the *Nyugat* will always hail the new tendencies. Whereas Babits was, so to speak, rather cautious in 1910, his reservations later overcame his optimistic expectations: a comment of his in 1918 suggests that in giving account of the scene of poetry one should ignore “the voluntaristic Futurisms” (thus expelling Futurism from the realm of poetry altogether).

The most important poet of the age, who served as a hallmark for the *Nyugat* as well as for the entirety of modern Hungarian poetry, Endre Ady, formulated a very negative opinion on Futurism (in 1911). The reason why Ady condemns Futurism is just the same as why Béla Balázs praises it – the presence of a conscious and deliberate program which he regards as an ideology surmounting to art. “So I hate Futurists”, he claims, and he alludes to the business-like nature of this literary fashion.

The anxiety of Babits was much more serious than that of Frigyes Karinthy (outstanding prose writer, famous of his humorous works and his parodies) and Ernő Bresztovszky (an influential representative of the Socialist oriented but poetically Conservative trend) who both underlined Futurists’ attraction to the technological novelties and the modern life (both writings appeared in *Nyugat* in 1909). Both feel something ridiculous about the language of the Futurists’ manifestos as well as their highly ambitious aspirations, they underline, however, that the modern world must be incorporated into the literature of the present day and feel it justified that a group of young artists wishes to make a radical turn in the entrenched course of literary tradition. There is, in both Karinthy’s and Bresztovszky’s stance, a sort of ambiguity, but – in contrast to Babits’s opinion – they more definitely vote for Futurism.

Since the *Nyugat* wished to offer a forum not only for what it regarded as Modernism but as a literary journal designed for a whole generation, being “eclectic” (or, to put it more mildly, more open, more receptive in nature, more liberal in its taste), it had the ambition to encourage the new poetry in general, independent of any trend or movement, no wonder that another leading figure of the magazine, Ignotus (an excellent critic and great organizer of the *Nyugat*), in 1911, refers to the “revolutionary transformation” of the literature (without any classification or closer definition), of the “Hungarian lyrical poetry, even of the theory of Hungarian versification”, and he is happy to salute the emergence of trends themselves as well as their forming movements, with their own prophets, credos and beliefs. He confronts, then, this transformation to what one of the proponents of the Conservative academicians has to say, viz. the protestation against the “excesses” of the new poetry in the name of originality; and it is evident that Ignotus defends the new literature as a whole against this argument of traditionalism (which has ethical overtones as well).



Among the authors of rather understanding, sympathetic reactions, Béla Balázs (György Lukács's friend, whose *Bluebeard's Castle* served as a basis for Bartók's opera, later a widely known film theoretician) should also be mentioned (1912). Balázs takes the movement very seriously, and the main argument in his reflections is the strange role of novelty which may blur one's aesthetic judgment. Futurists, he adds (very much similarly to Ady's argument), know very well what they are doing, it is far more than a nonsensical humbug of insane or mentally ill people; what they in fact produce may not be art, but its disquieting nature deserves attention because this way "the sensitivity of our nerves will grow and we will start feeling the corresponding life of forms". Thus, Balázs expects that the new movements will not remain a weird specificity but may shed light to their age and give an impetus for the Modern literature as a whole.

There was but one figure among the authors of the *Nyugat* who manifested an wholehearted enthusiasm for the movement of the Futurism: it was Dezső Szabó, whose ties with the *Nyugat* hardly survived World War I, a writer and essayist under the apparent influence of Expressionism, who later became an exponent of the Nationalist (and anti-Semitic) right wing movements. Szabó was a devoted proponent of Futurism and he proposed (in 1912 and 1913) that not only Walt Whitman's "Futurism, creating a new era" but all tiny trends and older schools offering novelty in literature should be subsumed under this label. As the bases of the new art which Szabó regards as Futurism (including all the trends he classifies here), he underlines three tasks: 1. the past must be broken with, it should be discarded, as well as 2. the cult of the feminine, since "the woman is just a sexual sport for the man of the future", the new art will belong only to the male, and 3. action must be preferred above science and all kinds of reflection. No wonder, then, that it was Szabó who wrote the introductory essay for the first issue of *A Tett* (remember: it means "The Action", or "The Deed", in harmony with Szabó's 3rd thesis above), Kassák's first Avant-Garde magazine, in 1915 – he hoped that the new generation will realize what he believed were the ideas of Futurism.

### **An Example of the Conservative Reactions**

To quote yet another criticism aimed against the Avant-Garde, it is high time to turn to the voices outside *Nyugat*, to an author who may represent the general sentiment of those with an inclination to traditional conventions of poetry, an idea of literature soon to be surpassed and forgotten. Béla Zolnai (who later became an influential and respected professor of stylistics, a major proponent of *Geistesgeschichte* in Hungary) was one of the very few who took the pains to analyze, whatever shortly, the appearance of the Hungarian Avant-Garde.

In his study in the same year, 1917, Babits characterizes the judgment of the dominant Conservative canon declared on the literature of the *Nyugat* as follows: “today, forty years old writers who were trained on serious studies, honestly admiring all the noble traditions and having a completed knowledge of techniques are considered by the official critics as immature revolutionaries...” Thus, the Avant-Garde arrived when the nationalistic-conservative critical scene (including all its participants, from schools to publishing) was preoccupied with the reception, integration or refusal of the classical modern *Nyugat*. No wonder, then, that Conservative critics turned their attention much more to the poets and authors of the *Nyugat* (and primarily to Ady, of course) than to the Avant-Garde trends. Zolnai was the only one to publish a thorough and analytical study on the poetry of Kassák’s first magazine, only two years after the publication of its first issue.

Zolnai, in his essay, starts with the launching and the program of *A Tett* and *MA*, and with a sober and discursive manner he relates the problems of war to the ambitions of literary innovation. He regrets that the authors of *A Tett* are not consequent in their argumentation inasmuch as whereas individualism is preached, they are not individualists in the old sense, since their social commitment cannot be reconciled with their program aiming at “an active, social literature affecting the great community”. If the program of the new magazine were to make aristocratism (exotic and subtle beauties) democratic, similar to the ambitions of Petőfi in the 19th century, if in the center of this new poetry there is activity (and not contemplation or reflection), it is against art for art’s sake, it is (as Kassák put it) an “aggressive artistic movement”. Thus, Zolnai claims, this program “is similar to that of the Futurists”, and it is a “logical reaction to the death poetry of the Decadence”, but he doubts both whether this reaction would need a “revolution” and also if the older lyrical poetry of impressions and human feelings would have passed away forever.

After these introductory remarks, Zolnai presents his serious objections. The first point is the demolition of all aesthetic barriers, the programmatic dissonance, the denial of the artistic, the relativization of the beauty and the ugly. Quoting Babits, he takes the floor against anarchy, and objects the unrestricted widening the scope of possible poetic themes. “One cannot, after all, make an exclusive ‘salon des refusées’”, he notes indignantly. (One should recall that this is exactly what Avant-Garde was up to: to shun the position of being recognized and accepted, to occupy, instead, the place of the marginal, the refused, the outsider.) Zolnai’s second point is internationalism, as an offspring of modernity: he even hails the confiscating of the last issue of *A Tett*, since, for him, pacifism and internationalism is a “life program which is dangerous for the community”. His third point concerns the claim for “infinity” – and, along with this, the visionary mode of representation where, instead of a concrete description, the reader is presented a text where “the outlines of the reality are blurred”, the images are exaggerated,

and the words are no more than surrogates – all these lead to a stance which belongs to an extreme form of Expressionism which, for Zolnai, amounts to Futurism (a conceptual confusion somewhat similar to that of the authors of the *Nyugat*). From this point on, Zolnai starts to pour his evaluations and qualifications – all in all, he condemns everything he hitherto tried to analyze in a reserved way as unintelligible hodgepodge, as a senseless confusion, a comic turbulence; and all this is nothing else but a sheer mannerism, just like free verse, a form degrading verse to prose.

The closing sentences of Zolnai – besides an obligatory gesture of acknowledging the good faith on the part of the Avant-Gardists – contain still another interesting point. The success of the *Nyugat*, for Zolnai, is not due to the audience's need of a new literature, so *Nyugat* is not for satisfying the needs of the large reading public but, instead, the *Nyugat* “has had the material instruments to gather some talented people into its own camp, and it could, from the outset, rely politically on a wide stratum of the reading public.” What should that mean? First, it implies the sober insight that a literary magazine needs money for its survival, and this money was acquired by the *Nyugat*; second, the statement has the less friendly implication that the *Nyugat* would not, for that matter, interest anybody; third, the acknowledgement that it is the talented people of the generation who joined the camp of the *Nyugat*; and fourth, it suggests that without the political wind of bourgeois radicalism or liberalism after it, the *Nyugat* could not possibly sail safely (and that *A Tett* or the *MA* have even more suspicious political background, if any).

Zolnai's study is not, however, a typical one; the reserved tone imposed on himself, the scholarly attitude, the argumentation, the consideration of the principles, views of the other party is rather an exceptional case. There are very few texts to illustrate the contemporary reception of the Avant-Garde since most of them are just scornful, incomprehensive or offensive pieces of journalistic writing. The arguments of the conservative camp can, rather, be inferred to, and are not rationally exposed.

### **Futurism and Avant-Garde**

It seems that by the time of World War I the *Nyugat*'s authors' interest in Futurism slowly faded away or, rather, slightly modified. Before the war, the term “Futurism” was used pretty much as a *pars pro toto* expression for all sorts of Avant-Gardisms (and partly, of course, for Futurism proper). But when in 1915 Dezső Kosztolányi (one of the best novelists and poets of the century) reviews Kassák's first volume of his poems, he draws a distinction between this poetry and Futurism (“it has no connection whatsoever with the war poetry living in the European

common knowledge, old and new, to the poetry of the Futurists”), and connects it, rather, to Expressionism. Since Futurism became rather suspicious, Kosztolányi is forced to find another label, Expressionism, for the poetry he prefers. (This is the first time, by the way, that this term appears in literary context in the *Nyugat*.)

This gesture of naming (or, rather, re-naming) is highly significant. Giving name to the movement can be the first step towards canonization (or at least domestication). If we know of something what it in fact is (or at least we may attach a name to it, in order to identify it or classify it within a group of other texts), then we may offer it a comfortable place in the row of well known and favorite texts (i.e., the canon), and attach to it a direction of reading, a strategy of interpretation. What Kosztolányi is doing here is not only giving a name but also making a distinction – a differentiation of that name from all the possible others, formulating an opposition between this name and the name of, say, Futurism (or even Impressionism or anything older, more traditional, more established). – It is, however, another issue how Kassák reacts to these gestures of classification, appropriation, and acceptance.

There is, however, yet another reason why Kosztolányi wished to create a distance between Kassák and Futurism.

As it is well known, Italian Futurists did not oppose the war, to say the least: they regarded it as a manifestation of Modernism and technology in their purest form, a climax of a progression, a trial of manly virtues. In the circle of the *Nyugat* (and in general, among the Hungarian progressive intellectuals), however, the dominant position was pacifism; even if, for instance, Béla Balázs had a short period when he believed that war might be a site for a common suffering where, though descending to the depths of human misery, one should yield the experiences of the essential despair of mankind, the general conviction of his generation was that war is useless, absurd, cruel and dangerous for the society in general. Ady and Babits, notably, were devoted Pacifists. It would be very far-fetched to say that the *Nyugat* belonged to the political Left of its age, but it is certain that the orientation of the magazine was liberal, as against the ruling conservative, nationalistic and pro-war tendency. It even offered a forum for those attracted by with Socialism.

This ideological constellation, then, may serve as one of the explanations why when the World War I broke out the *Nyugat* started to be very critical against Futurism. The artistic program of the (Italian) Futurism was very closely interwoven with a political engagement or attraction (to the war). For the time of the war, Babits formulates his opinion in a much more sharp and vigorous way, and he implicitly suggests that the militarism of the Futurists cannot be regarded as independent of the preparations for the war outside the realm of arts, or of the bloodshed which is very much inartistic. Quoting (in 1915) a manifesto of the Futurists (“...Nous, Futuristes, [...] glorifions l’amour du danger et de la violence...”), he

comments: “the Futurist is happy with the war, he is happy with the suffering, death of his brethren: only because it offers him a spectacle, excitement.” Kosztolányi, however, would rather confront Kassák with the Futurism, and ridicules Marinetti – as opposed to Kassák – as somebody who had no idea of the war whatsoever, it is only an object of enthusiasm and exhilarating impressions. For him, Kassák represents much more, just because he is beyond Futurism.

### The Babits–Kassák Debate, 1916: Babits

In 1916, there was a very important debate between Babits and Kassák – a sharp criticism against the new Avant-Garde movement by Babits, and a desperate and bitter reaction on Kassák’s part.

Babits’s article appeared in the *Nyugat* in 1916 (No. 17), under the title *Ma, holnap, és irodalom* (“Today, Tomorrow, and Literature”), dedicated to one of the founding editors of the paper, Aladár Schöpflin. As an introduction, he declares that his aim is to give an account of a generation, and not of one single group, let alone the individual poets themselves. Thus, his approach is quite similar to the generational principle of the *Nyugat* itself.

The younger generation, says Babits, can be characterized by its fight against traditions. The reason for this behavior, for Babits, is a sociological one – the young was born to a world where the system of literary life is highly hierarchical, where the old rule, and where the young see no future ahead. To turn their attention to the young generation, then, is an obligation the *Nyugat* must take, since when the *Nyugat* started it was first received by a similar silence, antipathy and incomprehension. “*Nyugat* would turn against its own traditions if it did not heed their call.” But *A Tett* (meaning “deed” or “action”), the title of the journal, means for this youth not the creation of something new but rather the destruction of the old, the program of “refusing the traditions”.

Not to keep on creating according to the forms already given, neither to build new forms, but to break the old ones, to get rid of and to deny all that is law and form – this is all what the propaganda of *A Tett* means, it is a real literary anarchy and, let us not delude ourselves, anarchy must be sympathetic for the youth today.

This is not, claims Babits, identical with Futurism, for, as opposed to the latter’s militarist character, the generation of *A Tett* “action” does not mean war activity, and the movement is not individualistic but rather of a collective kind or at least has the aspiration to comprehend the Whole, the cosmos, the diversity, “it wishes to extend itself to the simultaneous sentiments of the whole humanity”.

The list of Babits’s objection starts with his doubts concerning the program itself – a program for a new movement is, in itself, an obstacle, since “as soon as freedom is transformed into a program, it is not freedom any more but a tie and a

strait-jacket". A recipe means that "poses" and "strait-jacket" is prescribed to all who subsume themselves to the principles of the movement. It cannot be in harmony with the individualism of Babits that the Avant-Garde, living under the spell of the collectivity and communal nature of creating art, formulates principles, instructions and aims for the individual artists. The next – and more serious – objection concerns not the authors' behavior but rather the text formation: i.e., that the younger generation reckons with the traditions, "the program orders, as an obligation, to reject the traditions and forms completely." However, Babits rightly claims, this is foredoomed to failure: traditions, conventions, forms are like language; no (artistic or intelligible) utterance is possible without them. A poetry which aims at giving up all what preceded it is doomed to unintelligibility and in-artistic quality.

The next argument is far more doubtful. It goes well beyond theoretical lessons inasmuch as it states that there is no "leap" in art history, there is no revolution, only slow building, the reverence to and cautious modification of older epochs, artists and conventions, and, moreover, every new development has its predecessor – all these, to be sure, are rather observations instead of general truths, and rather ideological ones, or at least relying on a number of presuppositions. One could argue, for instance, against Babits that if this were the case then no surprises or scandals could happen in the history of literature and all sorts of acceptance and reception would be very simple; but what is important here is not the historical arguments and counter-arguments but the vision of undisturbed historical continuity embodied in Babits's line of argumentation. If one sees the history of literature along these lines, under the aegis of respecting the traditions, erudition and perfection in conventions, will have an interest in avoiding obtrusive novelty, and will be averse to the overt breaking the rules.

The new trend has the ambition to look for something new, still, it is embedded in the traditions, it is necessarily tied to the past, it must, however reluctantly, respect the conventions – Babits seeks to discover and justify this status of being preceded in that the new poets themselves refer back to their predecessors; although what they canonize are not their ancestors in Hungarian literary history but rather those in world literature. Babits regards this choice of canonized literature with an apparent resentment, as well as the whole canon created by the Avant-Gardists, and especially objects the way this canon is formed. He questions the lack or defected nature of informedness, understanding, historical knowledge and poetics, which in turn moves bad, valueless and unknown authors and works right into the center of this canon, and which celebrates a number of texts as modern or brand new developments – but these texts are in fact old, traditional and there is nothing novel in them.

This interpretation of the Avant-Garde, embedding all that strives to be new, surprising, discontinuous into the continuity, belongs, clearly, to a conservative

interpretive community. It is here with us and informs the critical and lay thinking ever since the beginning of the Avant-Garde, it is present together with the double mill accusation that the Avant-Garde breaks with all traditions – but whenever it happens to adopt a tradition (or can be said to assume it), then it is judged to bring no novelty whatsoever. It is a strange situation for Babits who is the leading figure of a movement to renew the Hungarian literature, viz. the *Nyugat*; he himself is aware of this delicate position, still, it is difficult to differentiate his arguments from those on the side of conservative literary criticism.

Thus, after Babits declares that “their real kin is Walt Whitman, who has a really cosmic and simultaneist vision and sentiment”, he withdraws this declaration some lines later: “The authors of *A Tett* found Walt Whitman as their relative only because of some mere formalities, just as they tend to find a relative in whoever wrote poetry without regular verse forms”. Moreover, “poetry in prose as a modern genre is itself an old and accepted form”, but – another turn, again – even if it belongs to the tradition, it is not a fruitful part of the repertoire of the poetic creation, since it is monotonous, trivial. To refuse forms amounts to just another restriction which will, again, imprison all free creativity.

Ten years later, Dezső Kosztolányi will have similar arguments in a letter to a very conservative literary critic and literary historian, a revered figure of the old fashioned academy, to make him understand the form of free verse; he writes

But to destruct the closed form was, for me and for several of us, was a need of our hearts. We have no cause to make a parade of wanting something “new” with this step. Since this [free verse] is just as old as the bound forms. The Bible is written in free verse, Goethe wrote some free verses as well as Walt Whitman did.

Though it may be a question whether it was really Kosztolányi’s conviction or just a “political” move on his part to use these arguments, it is clear that he repeats what Babits had to say about modern free verse. Babits expands his argument in his paper to the issues of style and composition, too: to refuse something, he suggests, is always to accept something else, so that just as language (or traditions, or genres) cannot be rejected, put aside or be avoided, the same is true for style and composition. As to style, Babits here makes a serious gesture of concession for the new trends – this time, he admits the legitimacy and forwarding power of the scandalous, offensive and discontinuous changes. “All conventions change”, he says, and “the lack of taste” is often the liberation of new areas of phantasy and poetry – as is the case of Shakespeare, V. Hugo and Petőfi. But on this point all that Babits can say is just an expression of his misgivings concerning the Avant-Gardist taste as a too brave deviation from the old one, thus having a ridiculous touch. He also refers to the erotic element (which he finds unsuccessful), and to the unwillingness to speak in a straightforward, simple way (choosing, instead, a complicated

and obscure formulation). As a closure, Babits advocates the thesis that “a criticism of a new school of literature is primarily the criticism of its formal instruments” – because, he states, whatever would be new in its content is not too interesting, “to state ideas or to give reports on feelings is not difficult; what is a great thing is to transplant them, to suggest them, and this is possible only with the instruments of the artistic form”.

### The Babits–Kassák Debate, 1916: Kassák

Kassák replied to Babits in the next (No. 18) issue of the *Nyugat: To Mihály Babits, from under the ‘terrible big ash’* (“A ‘rettenetes nagy hamu’ alól Babits Mihályhoz”), which is dedicated (as a challenge to Babits’s dedication) “to youngest poets”. After a short thank, the reply is a strong refusal of all that Babits stated. First, Kassák denies that the program of *A Tett* would be a recipe, and by his short summary of the program he wants to refute Babits’s arguments concerning the problems of form – the program, he suggests, does not give any instructions relating to forms, only to artistic behavior. Babits, in turn – Kassák declares – does have a very definite program, his recipe is erudition, a careful appropriation and practicing of the past. Whereas the new movement opens the space for the youth, Babits erects a terribly monstrous staircase for them which has to be mounted by experience, erudition and practice.

As to the issue of sophisticated forms, Kassák confronts “primitive” art to the elaborate, technically perfect “artistic” tricks, clearly favoring the former one. Here he opposes Babits’s conception of the free verse stating that this is, in fact, the most complicated form due to its inner structure. Moreover, their free verses are the most strictly composed wholes, even in contrast with Whitman.

As far as the predecessors and the cultural (poetic, stylistic, etc.) tradition is concerned, Kassák does not have much more than this to say. He adds, however, that even if Babits has a “thirst for culture”, his movement is not up to force a “lunatic illiteracy” to the world, that is, the Avant-Garde is familiar with the knowledge of the traditions, the acquirement of the past.

The voice used in Kassák’s reply is not too friendly, and it turns into sharp irony when the author replies to the accusations of “disharmony”, “chaoticalness” and “anarchy”. It is just the poetry characterized this way what can reflect the experiences of today’s youth, and just this is why it may have such a great influence; life is in fact chaotic, there is no harmony in it, the happiness of family hearth is only an illusion – and the poetry must react to this situation accordingly. Hence the need to introduce new topics, to represent subjects hitherto regarded as trivial, ordinary, everyday ones. (It is a strange moment in Kassák’s theoretical thinking



when that topic – the world represented – gets a central position in a quite non-Avant-Gardist way.)

Almost at the end of his reply, that is, in a very emphatic point of the text, Kassák adds a seemingly minor correction. We are, he says,

neither simultanists nor any ‘-ists’ of any sort, and we do not want to form any new literary school; all we want is to be good poets, in a reevaluated sense of the word ‘good’, that is, we want to give good poetry to the newest generation of readers.

Before the interpretation of this part of the text, some words about Babits’s reply to Kassák’s reaction (Reply – Felelet, *Nyugat* 1917, No. 18). Babits discusses some of the theses of Kassák in ten short points, apparently sourly, sometimes with an overtly *ad hominem* argumentation (e.g., that an editor is not entitled to judge the writings published in his magazine, that even if for Kassák free verse is a natural form of expression, it should not be forced to the young poets, etc.).

There is even an explicitly unfriendly ironic point (that *A Tett* does not succeed in compelling criticism to give account of it at all), but the tenth point (with full of doubts, sourly and parodistically) still formulates some expectant appreciation.

### **Resistance, Staying Outside, Autonomy**

Going back to the closure of Kassák’s reply – when the editor of *A Tett*, the pioneer and animating personality of the Hungarian Avant-Garde firmly refuses to be classified under any sort of “-ism” label, and even the assumption that he wanted to create a new literary school, he stands up against what Kosztolányi wanted to do, i.e., trying to categorize what he regarded as a new movement. It was the aim of Kosztolányi, among others, to make the Avant-Garde more familiar, more domesticated, as it were, to qualify it as more acceptable and easier to receive for the medium which he himself was familiar with (i.e., for the readers and writers around the *Nyugat*). This gesture, or, better to say, more than a sheer gesture: an operation of institutionalization, which is to offer legitimacy for the alien popping up in the field, is unacceptable for Kassák, so much so that he even refuses the naming of “new school”. This refusal, this courageous, prideful and provocative reaction demonstrates the definitive characteristics of the Avant-Garde in general.

This is a mode of operation, pattern of behavior which characterizes Avant-Garde arts from the beginning until the coming of the Post-Modern. The most dangerous enemy of novelty, scandal or surprise is acceptance, classification, finding place and domestication – this art has a subversive power only until it is not *appropriated*. And, to be sure, understanding itself is an appropriation,

either in the sense of empathy or as a cognitive processing. It is the ambition of the Avant-Garde to be simultaneously part of the institutionalized literature (because it badly needs audience, distribution, places for readings and performances, the infrastructure of producing books and magazines), and it also fights against all this, it wants to change the whole scene, to subvert it – and, generally speaking, to get out of the depressing, suppressing, exploiting (or even supporting) influence of money, power and all established institutions of society.

Avant-Garde wishes to stay “unintelligible”, something which cannot be classified, which is incomprehensible, something which the frozen institutions cannot handle. There appeared several new forms to circumvent the system of institutions in the last centuries; one of the extremes may be conceptual art (where the “object” or “art object” is not the work itself, it is only a document of the work, since there is no work whatsoever – thus, it is pretty difficult to make goods of it, it is not easy to sell or buy it, and it is a question whether one can make a document of the document, and so on), performance (where the creation of the work of art is not fixed beforehand, neither during its creation, and it cannot be recorded in its entirety posteriorly either; documentation, if any, is necessarily incomplete), or actionism using the body of the artist herself, where it is almost ridiculous to mention work of art, value, material. These forms intentionally draw back the work of art from the world of market (and any other artistic-literary institution), wishing to eliminate the borderline between the artist and anybody else so that even the actors of the field should not be the same as those in the established, traditional field of arts. Multiplication, coquetting with business, reckoning with the individual and unique work of art (from the “objects found” of Beuys to the works of Andy Warhol) amount to this sort of shirking. Postmodernism can perhaps be characterized, among others, by its conciliation with the impossible or ephemeral nature of the scandal, accepts what is given, and its novelty lies in this very ironic subservience.

Kassák’s claim for the status of being unclassified, for the refusal of all qualifications, can be interpreted as a manifestation of the Avant-Gardist behavior which, of course, entails both theoretical and practical literary orientation. One can perhaps give another explanation, not excluding but additional to this one, from another, rather psychological point of view, viz. that this defiant outsider gesture is due to the personality of Kassák, to a deviant, rebellious character, choosing the marginal position for himself in order to remain autonomous. This may be true for the whole Avant-Garde movement: insisting on the right of differing, staying marginal, remaining an outsider not (or not only) as far as the personal life of the artist is concerned but in the activity on the field of literature. Autonomy presented as a value above all other values refers both to the contemporary context (a synchronic aspect) and to the past and the future (a diachronic aspect): acknowledging the relatives, ancestors and followers is always a delicate point.

One must add, however, that there is a counter-tendency of the refusal of classification (or denial of domestication, understanding and acceptance), viz. the era of the Avant-Garde can also be characterized by a proliferation of programs, movements and schools popularizing themselves. That is, it was the very Avant-Garde which assigned a major importance to manifest and advertise its own (artistic and literary) identity, there is an abounding quantity of self-definitions and self-classifications. And this is also a natural phenomenon: showing the demarcation lines, the main differences, the otherness goes hand in hand with a production and demonstration of the unique, individual, incomparable traits, and the act of giving a name to the movement itself. When Kassák claims that his movement is neither Simultanist nor Futurist, this gesture against classifications does not contradict to the fact that somewhat later he names his movement as Activist – if it is him to give a name to his movement, it is a credible and legitimate step. If somebody else does, it must be a mistake.

All that is said above can be formulated from another aspect, that of the canons. Avant-Garde movements do not – against all their declarations – “eliminate” the canon, it would be possible anyway. They themselves form a continuously changing canon of vague contours which, taken as a list of works, partly overlaps with the ruling canon(s), but taken as a prescription for interpretation, as a set of interpretive conventions is highly different from them. This is exactly what can be tangible in the Whitman case: Babits wishes to set Whitman in the process of literary history, in order to find his proper historical place (that is, as if he *knew* what place should be found for Whitman), thus, he reads this poetry as part of a process already closed, something uncontinuable, something “readable”, without any challenge for new and new interpretations. In the Avant-Gardist canon, however, this poetry becomes the central part of the newly created traditions, because it is strange, because there is something primitively simple, and, thus, can be put into the series defined by ancient art and breaking with the forms. Interpreting Whitman as being in the same series Saint Francis and his *Hymn to the Sun* must be unacceptable for the Avant-Garde, since that would suggest an interpretation of the free verse as a form being continuously present, independent of history, it would suggest that this form is in close relation to transcendence, it is an ecstatic emanation which strips off, as it were, the form itself. Although some of the Avant-Gardists tend to have an attraction to some form of mysticism, Kassák himself has sometimes an ecstatic voice, Avant-Gardism, however, cannot settle for such an interpretation. Rather, they prefer to regard free verse as an ancient, lost and spontaneous form corresponding to the newly discovered and revived simplicity and directness.

For the Avant-Garde, starting the appropriation is the point where Babits interprets Apollinaire, and what he sees in the French poet is “the simultaneous vision of concurrent colors and events”, that is, not too much more than, and not too dif-

ferent from the poetry of Impressionism, and this appropriation follows when the counter-canon starts to gain the status of an official canon. Preserving and delimitating the canon, a jealous safe-keeping of the proper conventions of interpretation is just as exclusive in nature as the surveillance of any ossified Conservative school.

### Conclusions

To sum up, there is an apparent coincidence of two, otherwise independent, lines of argument against the early Avant-Garde movement in Hungary. One is coming from the Conservative side, a refusal of the anti-traditional, “formless” and “unintelligible” literatures; the other belongs to the Modernist side, itself fighting to be accepted and understood, and having its own war with the (ruling) Conservative medium. These criticisms are centered around the issue of the canon: both for Conservatives and Modernists, changing the canon may be dangerous, and the new forms either not really new, or represent a deviation which goes beyond the limits of intelligibility. The question of individualism vs. collectivism is also raised – both parties feel something controversial in this respect. Political orientation is also a question, although only in the background: while Conservatism is clearly against the anti-war (and even leftist, international) trend of the new movement, Modernists have some suspicion because Futurism (which they more or less identify with the Avant-Garde as a whole) has been notoriously a pro-war, militarist movement, with its celebration of power, fight, war, masculine virtues.

Both in the contemporary context and in the posteriority of the literary history, the canon and the canonized interpretation formed by the *Nyugat* (i.e., Modernism) turned out to be more powerful; i.e., those of a Modernism which emphasized its ties to the traditions and which had a very cautious relation with the Avant-Garde movements. Throughout the 20th century, the Hungarian Avant-Garde had a rather marginal place; both as far as the works and authors themselves, and the strategies of interpretations are concerned. That is, despite of some (again, marginalized) attempts at rewriting literary history shifting the focus on the Avant-Garde movements, the center has always been monopolized by the *Nyugat*'s Modernism. The standard of the age was the classics of this movement, including some outsiders, prominents of the late Realist trends (e.g., the “Popular” or “Völkisch” literature, a school representing the socially engaged, “rural” world view turning against the urban, “l’art pour l’art”, aesthetically committed literature) but excluding Avant-Garde tendencies, even understating these trends in great Modernist authors.

Canonically speaking, this approach informed the core of the interpretation of the contemporaries – that is, the canonical status was open only for new works

which relied on the Modernist (and not the Avant-Garde) traditions, which lend itself to be interpreted along these lines. So for the literary history in the 20th century, there has not been too much place provided for the Avant-Garde in the ruling tradition. The main lesson of the debate treated above, the initial confrontation of the Avant-Garde trends with both Modernism and Conservatism (the strange alliance with the strange interference of arguments) is that still today, the reception (interpretation) of the Avant-Garde poetry (let alone Neo-Avant-Garde) remained basically on the same track which had been laid long before. The debate itself, of course, is only a good and exceptionally clear illustration, not the cause itself; it shows the origins of a long lasting set of arguments, a tradition which has its roots in both Conservative and (a special) Modernist approach.

The *Nyugat* created for itself a tradition which was wide enough to confine, for instance, the revolutionary work of Bartók (or Ady); and one can argue for an alternative literary history stating that in the tradition (and canon) formed by Modernism there must be a place for the Avant-Garde as a subversive, yet impulsive force. Or, from another point of view which regards Postmodernism as the *telos* of the whole literary historical process, the central category could be the position of the subject, in which case the revision of this history should start from Romanticism, and reevaluate Modernism from this aspect – it would then blur the (traditional) differences between Modernism and Avant-Garde, thus emancipating the latter. This approach would also be opposed to the ideological character of the earlier (Modernism based) conventions of interpretation which emphasize continuity, “progressive” traditions etc.

The debate, then, is something which remained, even today, strikingly vivid. Unfortunately enough. Suffice it to look at the school textbooks or the repertoire of the concert halls to see how Classical Modernism dominates present Hungarian culture, and how difficult it is to make it understood that Avant-Gardism (and whatever came after it) is not something unintelligible, obscure and negligible but a forceful trend which has formed (and did not cease to form) what we now regard as the literature of the 20th century.

## THE LITERARY CANON OF FERENC LISZT

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Perhaps best known as a peerless virtuoso in his day and a composer the significance of whose contributions to the Western tradition was only appreciated in the latter half of the 20th century, Ferenc Liszt was also among the most ambitious composers of the 19th century in his exposure to works of literature and his interest in the interactions of literature and music. The following article examines the interrelationships between his music and the works of literature he chose as inspirations and in some cases as texts to be put to music.

**Keywords:** Liszt, synesthesia, interarts, Weltliteratur, tonal innovation, canon

“die Musik kann nie und in keiner Verbindung, die sie eingeht,  
aufhören die höchste, die erlösende Kunst zu sein” (Wagner 1888, 191)

At the outset I would like to make two reservations. I am a lover of music, but not a musician. A literary scholar is not qualified to comment on music, so I will restrict my observations to the texts used by the composer. My other preliminary remark is more personal. In full agreement with Alan Walker’s statement that “the case concerning Wagner’s ‘ingratitude’ may have been overstated by the Lisztians” (Walker, 1997, 353), I do not wish to make any comparison between Liszt and Wagner. The harmonic experimentation of Liszt is well-known, although some experts caution against exaggerations. The author of a recent study on the late piano works, for instance, makes the following statement about the 4. *Mephisto-Walzer (Bagatelle ohne Tonart)* (Mephisto Waltz No. 4 [‘Bagatelle sans tonalité’]: “Whether the piece succeeds in escaping the force of gravitation to a tonal centre as its subtitle indicates is doubtful” (Baker, 2005a, 117). Wagner may have drawn inspiration from Liszt’s harmonic invention, but this influence cannot be analysed without considering other structural aspects of the mature works of the younger composer (“son extraordinaire capacité à construire”, the role of “le contrepoint qui oriente et polarise l’harmonie”, or the function of in-

strumentation, the division of timbre in his stage works, for instance), and as such, cannot be discussed here. As Boulez reminds us, “toute influence n’est bonne que lorsqu’elle est transcendée” (Boulez, 2005, 186, 185, 586). Liszt himself was convinced that Wagner transcended his influence, as the following inscription to his piano piece *Am Grabe Richard Wagners* suggests:

Wagner erinnerte mich einst an die Ähnlichkeit seiner Parsifal-motivs mit einem früher geschriebenen – ‘Excelsior’ (Einleitung zu den Glocken von Straßburg). Möge diese Erinnerung hiermit verbleiben. Er hat der Große und Hehre in der Kunst der Jetztzeit vollbracht.

From the perspective of this essay it suffices to remark that the younger composer was also a poet, so it goes without saying that his approach to literature was different from that of his father-in-law. This is a fact of considerable significance even if it is true that in the case of Wagner there is a “*décalage entre un goût littéraire passablement statique et une réflexion musicale sans cesse en marche*” (Boulez, 2005, 185–6, 170).

How can a literary historian qualify the choice of poems made by Liszt? Two contradictory hypotheses merit some consideration. On the one hand, this composer accepted Goethe’s idea of a *Weltliteratur* and sought to rely on the masterpieces of an international canon; on the other hand, it cannot be denied that some of the texts he set to music were written for minds and ears conditioned unlike ours.

In a review of a French adaptation of his Tasso in 1827, Goethe expressed his conviction that “es bilde sich eine allgemeine Weltliteratur” (Goethe, 1902–12, 38: 97). On January 31 of the same year Eckermann recorded a statement by Goethe. It clearly indicated that the poet regarded the future as a period of world literature: “National-Literatur will jetzt nicht viel sagen, die Epoche der Welt-Literatur ist an der Zeit und jeder muß jetzt dazu wirken, diese Epoche zu beschleunigen” (Eckermann, 1986, 207). In view of the fact that Liszt composed three works for male chorus (*Studentenlied aus Faust* 1841, *Über allen Gipfeln*, first version 1842, and *Soldatenlied aus Faust* 1845), a mixed chorus (*Chor der Engel aus Faust* 1849), and six songs based on texts by Goethe (*Mignons Lied aus Wilhelm Meister* in three versions, 1842, 1856, 1860; *Es war ein König in Thule aus Faust*, two versions, 1842, 1856; *Der du von dem Himmel bist*, four versions, 1842, c. 1856, c. 1860, and in the last days; *Freudvoll und Leidvoll aus Egmont*, first setting c. 1844, revised c. 1860, second setting 1848; *Wer nie sein Brot mit Tränen ass aus Wilhelm Meister*, two settings, c. 1845, c. 1860, *Über allen Gipfeln*, two versions, c. 1848, c. 1859), and ended *Eine Faust Symphonie* with eight lines from the second part of the poet’s most celebrated tragedy, it may seem somewhat exaggerated to argue that “he did not like Goethe” (Hamburger, 2010, 190). While

Liszt may have found the cult of the poet in Weimar embarrassing, he considered himself to be the legitimate heir to the legacy of die Weimarer Klassik, as Detlef Altenburg has convincingly argued (Altenburg, 1997, 9–32). Among his works for four hands there is a *Festmarsch zur Goethejubiläumsfeier*, and several pronouncements by him indicate that he viewed the authority of Goethe as almost unquestionable. When Bülow was depressed because of the unfavourable reception of the symphonic poem *Die Ideale*, inspired by Schiller's work, in 1859, Liszt ended his letter to his son-in-law with words attributed to the author of *Faust*: "Dass die Hunde bellen, beweist nur, dass wir reiten" (Liszt, 1989, 213). In 1847 he asked Karl Hugo Bernstein to find a poem by Goethe which he remembered in French translation and failed to find in the edition he owned (Liszt, 1966, 61). His correspondence is filled with quotes from the works of this German poet (Liszt, 1989, 189, 232). "Dante's *Commedia* and Goethe's *Faust* lead us to the same celestial height", he told August Stradal (Szabolcsi, 1956, 10). In 1837 Marie d'Agoult and Liszt "read Dante together", and later, "on alternate days, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe and Tasso" (Walker, 1970, 5). The German poet's advocacy of Weltliteratur may have inspired Liszt to draw upon poetry in different languages. At the same time, his experience with poetic texts may have convinced him that music was more international than literature. It is even possible that Goethe's passion for the visual arts set an example for him. In this context it should not be forgotten that sometimes he turned to images accompanied with texts. Holbein's series of woodcuts, *Der Totentanz*, for instance, is combined with quatrains.

Of course, it could be argued that the Romantics drew interart parallels less cautiously than we may be inclined to do. "Le sentiment et la réflexion me pénétraient chaque jour davantage de la relation cachée qui unit les oeuvres de génie. [...] Dante a trouvé son expression pittoresque dans Orcagna et Michel-Ange; il trouvera peut-être un jour son expression musicale dans le Beethoven de l'avenir." This declaration made in a letter addressed to Berlioz and published in the *La Gazette musicale* on 24 October 1839 suggests that the composer ascribed great significance to the "correspondances entre ses oeuvres et celles qui les ont inspirées" (Le Diagon-Jacquín, 2009, 27, 29).

It has long been known that first-rate music is often inspired by bad literature and vice versa. As a literary scholar I cannot accept the assumption according to which "the settings of worthless poems [are] on the whole worthless and the settings of the fine poems [are] fine music" (Cooper, 1938, 173). The literary value of Elim Metscheresky's *Bist du!* is negligible, but the second setting of this poem by Liszt is of considerable interest on account of its use of an augmented triad (Arnold, 2002, 409). Similar contradictions can be found in works by other composers. The texts of *Winterreise* are undoubtedly inferior to the music and the opera by Thomas is hardly comparable to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. There were few com-



posers whose literary taste could be called outstanding. Kodály was a fine reader of Hungarian verse, most of Elliott Carter's and Britten's texts are all first-rate works of art, and Boulez is a highly sophisticated interpreter of such poets of great originality as Mallarmé, Henri Michaux, and René Char. One should be under no illusions as to the difficulty of an interdisciplinary approach to arts as different as music and literature or music and the visual arts. Just as mediocre verse was often transformed into great music and vice versa, in a similar way, second-rate paintings frequently inspired wonderful music. Today the St. Francis of Paola of Eduard Jakob Steinle (1810–86) is remembered chiefly because it inspired the second legend, *Saint François de Paule marchant sur les flots*. The same may apply to Kaulbach's *Hunnenschlacht*, exemplifying the sort of history painting condemned by Senancour, one of Liszt's favourite authors. Very few major composers could appreciate works by their best contemporaries in the sister arts. Nowadays we might be inclined to avoid the word *extraartistic*, but that does not mean we should exclude the possibility that the composer cherished Steinle's painting because St. Francis of Paola was his patron saint. Similarly subjective causes might have urged him to set certain poems to music. One of the recitations with piano, *A holt költő szerelme* (The Dead Poet's Love) was ridiculed a few days after its first performance on 16 March 1874 (Somssich, 1925, 372). The author of the text was Mór Jókai, an important novelist but a negligible verse writer. Liszt must have composed this work for the simple reason that he was on friendly terms with Jókai.

The literary canon of Liszt is uneven from the perspective of the present day. Let me emphasize the importance of the second half of this sentence. Rückert was seen as a worthy poet even by Mahler and the young Alban Berg. Some of the poems Liszt set to music have lost their expressive power. We should not forget that literary canons are as changeable as musical repertoires. It is quite possible that the composer could distinguish second-rate works from masterpieces, just as he regarded a sculpture by Canova as “*détestablement médiocre*” and the “*tombeau de pape à Saint-Pierre*” by Thorwaldsen as “*froid et bien guindé*”, in comparison with works by Michelangelo (Le Diagon-Jacquin, 2009, 80). As an American scholar remarked in a recent collection of essays, “Liszt draws at times on the greatest of German poets, such as Goethe and Schiller, to lesser-known writers, such as Georg Herwegh (1817–75), and even pedestrian authors of third-rate verses” (Wendland, 2002, 370). Not all musicologists may realize that unlike such *versifiers* as Ludwig Rellstab (1799–1860), Josef Müller (1802–72), or Charlotte von Hagn (1809–91), most of Liszt's contemporaries whose texts he set to music, for example August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798–1874), Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810–76), Friedrich Martin Bodenstedt (1813–92), Emanuel Geibel (1815–84), or Oskar von Redwitz (1823–91), are still regarded by literary historians as minor poets of some significance. Poems not only by

Hebbel but also by these authors are included in the ten-volume *Epochen der deutschen Lyrik*, a widely respected collection published in the second half of the 20th century (Wuthenow, 1970). One of the texts by Herwegh was used by the composer for a work for men's voices. *Der Gang um Mitternacht*, probably composed around 1845, is a document of political radicalism rather than a literary work of art. More important is the poem starting with the words *Ich möchte hingehn*. It has been suggested that Liszt inserted a short citation from *Tristan* in the second version of his song, following the words "Du wirst nicht stille wie der Stern versinken" (Rehding, 2000). Be as it may, I would call the use of this poem justifiable from a literary perspective. Although Herwegh's political verse is dated, his interest in Schopenhauer and Hölderlin is palpable in some of his poems.

The verse of Bürger, Uhland, Rückert, or Béranger was heard differently in the 19th century. The same might be said even of Lamartine. The editor of his *OEuvres poétiques*, published in 1963, started his preface with the admission: "peu le lisent et personne ne l'aime plus". "Ne cherchons pas ailleurs la [...] raison du prodigieux succès des *Méditations* : les lecteurs ouvraient un livre dont l'auteur ne bouleversait aucune de leurs habitudes de langage ou de rhétorique" (Lamartine 1963, ix, xv). If we accept that the symphonic poem known as *Les préludes* was "ostensibly modeled in its instrumental form on a poem by Lamartine" (Saffle, 2002, 247), we have to remember that *Les préludes* was published with a program drafted by Bülow, a prose paraphrase of the sixteenth piece of *Nouvelles Méditations*, first published in 1823. Lamartine's poem *Les préludes* is a loose conglomeration of segments of varyig length and form. It contains numerous references to music, starting with the following words in the first segment:

[...] O lyre! Ô mon génie!  
Musique intérieure, ineffable harmonie,  
Harpes, que j'entendais résonner dans les airs  
Comme un écho lointain des célestes concerts.

The program statement by Bülow is incomparably shorter than the French poem. In contrast to Lamartine's text, it has a clear-cut structure. One can go even further and see a contradiction between the French poem and Bülow's text. As Richard Taruskin remarks, "the program's all-important motivating Question nowhere occurs in Lamartine's poem" (Taruskin, 2005, 3: 425). In any case, Liszt may not have realized that Lamartine's diction, his rhetorical syntax and use of dead metaphors represented the legacy of the 18th century, a period not known for the excellence of lyrics in French.

Without much exaggeration, it could be added that even Hugo's reputation declined in the 20th century. "Hugo est un intense et grouillant moment de la culture en éventail du XIXe siècle, non une marche effective de la connaissance poétique

de ce siècle”, one of the major poets of the 20th century observed in 1952. René Char’s cruel assessment of Hugo’s rhetoric is far from being idiosyncratic; it reflects a widespread distrust of moralizing inspired by an unqualified confidence in social progress. “À notre époque, voici le poète le moins indispensable qui soit [...]. Il a des thèmes pour tous les âges et pour tous les idéaux, mais nul de ces thèmes n’est satisfaisant pour aucun” (Brunel, 2007, 112).

The main strength of Liszt’s approach to literature is an internationalism that is almost unparalleled in the history of music. As is well-known, he succeeded in assimilating components of Italian, French, German, and Hungarian music. “Liszt, en effet, n’a jamais possédé de domicile permanent, [...] il est demeuré toujours celui que Berlioz avait surnommé ‘l’infatigable vagabond’”, as one of his biographers remarked (Bory, 1936, 12). There seems to be a consensus among musicologists that his best language was French. On 29 December 1839 and on 9 January of the next year, at receptions held in the National Casino of Pest, he addressed the Hungarians in French (Somssich, 1925, 129, 137, 140), and he used the same language in the speech he made in the Hungarian Theatre of Pest on January 4th (Walker, 1983, 325–6). Wagner in his autobiography refers to Liszt as speaking French when they met for the first time in 1840:

Unfähig, an der französischen Konversation, welche sich um die Erlebnisse Liszts während seiner letzten Kunstreise in Ungarn bewegte, teilzunehmen, hörte ich eine Zeitlang aufrichtig gelangweilt zu, bis ich endlich von Liszt freundlich gefragt wurde, womit er mir dienen könne (Wagner, 1976, 251).

In his youth he became familiar with numerous French Romantics, for which Marie d’Agoult may take much of the credit. The couple met Senancour, Sainte-Beuve, Lamartine, Vigny, Hugo, and Lamennais, among others. In light of this, it is somewhat surprising that Liszt wrote in German to Barabás, who painted his portrait in 1846, although he must have known that the Hungarian artist preferred to communicate in French, the native language of his wife.

At any rate, it is safe to assume that Liszt read mainly in French and German. Among his songs some 168 are based on German poems (not including five melodramas or recitations) and only 12 on French texts. Mistakes in the setting of language prove that he had a more limited command of other languages. In the first version of Petrarca’s sonnet “*I vidi in terra angelici costumi*”, the word “*soglia*” “is set as three syllables”, and in the Hungarian song *Isten veled* (composed in 1846–47) the stress is placed on the second syllable of the word “*szerelmed*” (Walker, 1970, 226).

Vocal music must conform to the natural rhythm of the language. In purely instrumental music it may be much more difficult to find objective criteria for an analysis of the impact of a text. In great works of art sources of inspiration are hard

to detect; they seem to disappear during the creative process. “Le compositeur, par sa démarche vers l’accomplissement de l’oeuvre, détruit lui-même ses sources. Elles restent son secret. On peut défricher les alentours de ce secret, on ne peut jamais le découvrir” (Boulez, 2005, 254). Because of my professional bias, I am scared of the literary interpretations of instrumental music. I am not sure I could prove that in the first piece of the cycle entitled *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* a certain “passage de transition met en musique les vers 4–7 du poème de Lamartine ‘Invocation’” (Grabócz, 1986, 103). To what extent does it matter that *Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke* (composed in 1877 and known as the First *Mephisto Waltz*) was inspired by Lenau and not by Goethe? In what sense does it further an understanding of *Prométhée* (as it appears on the title page of the edition of *Symphonische Dichtungen für grosses Orchester* published by Breitkopf und Härtel) to know that it was originally composed as an overture to Herder’s *Der entfesselte Prometheus* and not to some other work about the mythological figure? The programs published as frontispieces to the scores of Liszt’s symphonic poems were written after the music was composed, and “there is evidence that Princess Carolyne had a hand in their formulation”, so Alan Walker’s conclusion is worth remembering: “Posterity may have overestimated the importance of extra-musical thought in Liszt’s symphonic poems” (Walker, 1989, 307). Let me refer to Mahler, who decided to drop the program he had drafted for his Third symphony. I am almost tempted to believe that sources of inspiration and programs may be more relevant for the analysis of the creative process than for the interpretation of the finished work of art. It is quite possible that the “Entfaltungsform” of some of Liszt’s piano pieces evolved “sous l’influence de la littérature contemporaine” (Grabócz, 2009, 232) but such sources may not be of great significance for the interpretation of these works.

What attracted Liszt to Obermann, or rather what role can be ascribed to it in any interpretation of piece 4 of the series originally called *Album d’un voyageur*, composed in 1835–36? Senancour’s confessional work is so loose and fragmentary that it would be hard to seek any structural comparison with Liszt’s piano piece. The epistolary framework is almost a mere formality, since the addressed “mon ami” has no specific characteristics. As Obermann himself admits, his letters “ressemblent beaucoup trop à traités” (Senancour, 1999, 278). “Là, l’homme retrouve sa forme altérable, mais indestructible; il respire l’air sauvage loin des émanations sociales; son être est à lui comme à l’univers: il vit d’une vie réelle dans l’unité sublime” (Senancour, 1999, 95). Although the characterizations of the sense of being associated by Obermann with living in the high Alps may have inspired the composer, the title of the piano piece refers to a place seen in dreams. First the valley seems to have a beauty that cannot exist in ordinary experience, but in a second dream it is transformed into a demonic vision:

Il y a plusieurs semaines que j'ai vu une vallée délicieuse, si parfaitement disposée selon mes goûts, que je doute qu'il en existe de semblables. La nuit dernière je l'ai vue encore, et j'y ai trouvé de plus un vieillard, tout seul, qui mangeait de mauvais pain à la porte d'une petite cabale fort misérable (Senancour, 1999, 431).

As the dream continues, Obermann finds himself in a boat that sinks.

On a more abstract level, Senancour's belief that vision can be transformed into music, the Romantic ideal of the interrelations of the arts, probably related to the concepts of program music and *Gesamtkunstwerk*, may have appealed to Liszt. Obermann contains meditations on the possibility of intermedial translation. His hypotheses on landscape transformed into music could not have escaped the attention of the composer. Senancour, who in 1811 published an article in the *Mercur de France* entitled "Du style dans les descriptions", rephrased the ideas of the "querelle des anciens et des modernes". Relying on certain passages in the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, taking a description of dawn in Book 3 of *Émile* as a model, he opposed "les peintres d'histoire" to "la peinture des objects inanimés" (Senancour, 1999, 505, 503).

To avoid any simplification, it needs to be admitted that Senancour regarded the text as part of vocal music, but only as "un moyen secondaire de l'expression". It is more than likely that Liszt remembered that in the thirty-fifth letter the author of *Obermann* insists that music is independent of text. Taking the words "J'ai perdu mon Eurydice" as an example, he argues in the following manner:

Quand vous substituez le mot trouvé au mot perdu, vous mettez la joie à la place de la douleur, vous conservez les mêmes notes; mais vous changez absolument les moyens secondaires de l'expression. Il est incontestable [...] que la note est arbitraire (Senancour, 1999, 158).

Like Senancour, Liszt looked at nature under the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his letter addressed to George Sand, published on 12 February 1836, he spoke about forms created by "l'imagination du promeneur solitaire" (Le Diagon-Jacquin, 2009, 54). Arguing that "la contemplation de la nature a quelque chose de sévère", Senancour focused on the materiality of description. His chef-d'oeuvre is not a novel or even a romance because it dispenses with story telling. "Ces lettres ne sont pas un *roman*" (Senancour, 1999, 52). These words in the introductory "Observations" warn the reader that s/he should not expect a narrative. Letter LX explicitly states that a story of adventures and the introduction of characters have not place in Obermann's confessions: "Un solitaire ne vous parlera point des hommes que vous fréquentez plus que lui. Il n'aura pas d'aventures, il ne vous fera pas le roman de sa vie" (Senancour, 1999, 306).

By insisting on the specificity of the medium, Senancour warned against the temptation of discovering a common deep structure in the different arts, against the belief that “tout motif est susceptible de se retrouver aussi bien sous la forme verbale que non verbale, qu’il reste indépendant du signifiant utilisé, de type linguistique comme non linguistique, peu importe”, to quote from Daniel Russo’s preface to a recent study on Liszt (Le Diagon-Jacquin, 2009, 24). In *Obermann* materiality also implies “la couleur locale”, which in Senancour’s view is the distinguishing feature of the “romantic”. As he argues, “le rossignol chante sur les rives de Tanais [...] sur un ton différent” (Senancour, 1999, 506), and such specificities are highlighted in *Obermann*.

One may also try to seek a more “philosophical” explanation for the title *Vallée d’Obermann*. The writing self of Senancour’s letters is filled with high ambitions. “Je sais que plusieurs trouvent assez de permanence dans un bien du moment, et que d’autres savent se borner à une manière d’être sans ordre et sans goût.” Senancour’s chef-d’oeuvre is marked by a dissatisfaction with the attitude towards life professed by his contemporaries, with what he calls “une existence ridicule” (Senancour, 1999, 125). *Obermann* looks down upon the life of the “petits bourgeois de certaines villes”, who are imprisoned in their local habits, “tout enveloppés de leurs habitudes” (Senancour 1999, 373). The contempt Senancour, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Robert Schumann, Richard Wagner, and other Romantics felt for *Spießbürgerlichkeit* was not foreign to Liszt. According to the composer of *Tannhäuser*, after a rehearsal of that work, in 1849, Liszt became so angry with the petty and narrow-minded members of Weimar society that he had to recover from an attack of nerves (“*Nervenfall*”) (Wagner, 1976, 426). On 2 May 1855, he complained to Wagner that the philistinism of the English public was just as bad as that of the Germans (Liszt, 1989, 176). What may have attracted him to *Obermann* was Senancour’s vision of the sublime, which the French author defined, possibly under the influence of Burke and Kant, as the most sophisticated of three kinds of aesthetic value: “Le joli amuse la pensée, le beau soutient l’âme, le sublime l’étonne ou l’exalte”. *Vallée d’Obermann* may be regarded as an attempt to express what Senancour described as qualities “peu connues, jamais expliquées, mystérieuses et ineffables”. The emphasis is on the last adjective. In the next paragraph it is suggested that the sublime needs to be interpreted in terms of “harmonies” rather than in verbal form (Senancour, 1999, 133).

Just as writers often tend to talk around music, composers or musicologists sometimes refer to a source of inspiration without obvious justification. A case in point is *Les préludes*. As is well-known, this symphonic poem had several antecedents. One of them was a choral work entitled *Les quatre éléments*, to words by *Joseph Autran*. The hypothesis that Liszt decided to replace the name of this poet with that of the far better-known Lamartine for publicity reasons is probably not without foundation. A somewhat different case is that of the piano study

*Mazeppa*, which in its first version, composed in 1838, bore no title. Later the ending was altered to fit the story of the Polish nobleman as related by Voltaire in *Charles XII*. In short, it is not incorrect to assume that “the music came first and it was later altered to fit the story” (Walker, 1970, 293).

Of course, regarding the contention according to which the symphonic poem *Hamlet* is “a character sketch (Walker, 1970, 298) or a dual character portrait of the melancholy prince and his doomed lover” (Saffle, 2002, 258), it should not be forgotten that in the 19th century most people, and especially those who read the text or saw a performance of the play in a language other than English, were interested in the psyche of the Prince of Denmark rather than in the play as a whole. In an age dominated by novels written by character-mongers such as Balzac, Dickens, or Trollope, textuality was out of fashion. The title of *Eine Faust-Symphonie in drei Charakterbildern* (nach Goethe) may remind us that the textual approach to literary works characterizing such 20th-century trends as Russian Formalism, Anglo-American New Criticism, or French Structuralism was a far cry from the character-oriented method predominant in the 19th century. In 1838 a long article entitled “The Recital of Ferenc Liszt in Milan” appeared in the Hungarian journal *Társalkodó*. Thalberg was compared to Goethe, whereas Liszt to the author of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*. A reader familiar with textual poetics would be reluctant to speak of such similarities.

On 2 October 2011 Nike Wagner gave a “Vortrag” in the main hall of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She presented Liszt as a European “voyageur” who was “kein Dogmatiker und kein Purist”, and highlighted “seine musikalische Assimilationsfähigkeit”. It should not be forgotten that in instrumental music it might be easier to think in terms of a *Weltliteratur*. Vocal music represents a somewhat different case. In songs or choral works the composer cannot ignore the text. He/she has to come to terms with it on some level. In 1861 Bülow asked Liszt to make changes in the Chorus *Mysticus* of *Eine Faust Symphonie* to make it conform to the natural rhythm of the German language. I would take the contention according to which “his ideal was and continued to be Byron” (Hamburger, 2010, 190) with some caution. Byron is certainly less difficult to read than Shakespeare, whose works Liszt may have read in French, as his letter of 28 June 1835 suggests (Liszt, 1989, 39). It is best to bear in mind that uneven as his command of German may have been, he could read Goethe in the original, whereas his English was probably not good enough to read Byron in the same way. He mentions in his letter to Marie d’Agoult, written on January 25–26, 1842 that Adolf Böttger had sent him Lord Byron’s *Sämtliche Werke* (Leipzig, 1839) (Liszt, 1989, 71–2), so he may have known the works of this poet in translation. He set only one English text to music, late in his career, in 1879. Alan Walker calls the song based on Tennyson’s *Go not happy day* (section XVII of the monodrama *Maud*) “rather disappointing” (Walker, 1970, 239). Although Liszt mentions not only Goethe’s play

but also Byron's *The Lament of Tasso*, and the opening Lento of the symphonic poem is a Lamento, it is probably safe to assume that he had a better understanding of the German text. Far be it from me to deny that the international cult of Byron appealed to him – three of the pieces in the first volume of *Années de Pèlerinage* (Au lac de Wallenstadt, Orage, and Églogue) were published with mottos from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* – but I would caution against placing too much emphasis on the influence of Byron's verse. It is probably no exaggeration to say that at least in one case Liszt approached Byron's work indirectly. Hugo's poem *Mazeppa*, written in 1828, has an inscription from Byron's tale that is a mere repetition of one word ("Away! – Away! –"). The piano piece Liszt composed in 1840 is dedicated to Hugo, so it seems likely that he approached Byron's narrative through *Les Orientales*.

Some could argue that the choice of verse was sometimes made by others for the composer, but I cannot imagine any reader who would be entirely independent of the influence of others. Alan Walker reminds us that it was "Carolyne's suggestion that Liszt should consider setting some of Longfellow's verse. At Liszt's request, she provided him with a German translation of the famous poem *The Golden Legend*" (Walker, 1997, 168). Part one of the cantata *Die Glocken des Straßburger Münsters* is based on the poem *Excelsior*. This text "used to be required reading for every American schoolchild", wrote Alan Walker. "But that was in yesterday's more literate world", he added (Walker, 1997, 281). With all my respect for an outstanding musicologist, I cannot help remarking that in the 20th century the reputation of Longfellow was questioned by the American New Critics. *Excelsior* was dismissed by Louis Untermeyer (1885–1977), the Jewish American poet who in 1933 published a representative anthology of English and American verse for The Albatross Verlag, by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, two major New Critics, whose *Understanding Poetry*, first published in 1938, became one of the most influential textbooks of the 20th century, by the illustrious American scholar F. O. Matthiessen, whose very generous selection *The Oxford Book of American Verse*, first published in 1950, was reprinted numerous times, and by the poet Oscar Williams, the editor of *The New Pocket Anthology of American Verse*, a book first published in 1955 that went into several editions in the second half of the century. "His reputation, so high in his own day, suffered a severe reverse, from which it has never recovered", as an encyclopedia of poetics says (Spender – Hall, 1963, 191). The lustre of Longfellow's verse seems diminished today. Few of his works are remembered and *The Golden Legend* is certainly not one of them. The translation is amateurish. That does not detract from the value of the twenty-minute cantata, composed in 1874. It can happen that poems of similar quality by the same author inspire the same composer to create relatively conventional and highly experimental works. The popular song *Die drei Zigeuner*, with ornamentation and rhythmical patterns reminiscent of the earlier



rhapsodies, and the melodrama *Der traurige Mönch*, with accompaniment marked by the use of the whole-tone scale and the augmented triad, can be cited as examples. His letter to the excellent singer Emilie Genast, dating from 1860, indicates that in the melodrama the composer deliberately resorted to what he called “atonal dissonances” (Liszt, 1989, 232).

Sometimes Liszt is called a polyglot. His cosmopolitanism had one disadvantage; he had no native language in the strict sense of the word. In a letter written to Eduard Liszt on 17 December 1837, the composer praised the youngest son of his grandfather for his decision to learn French, arguing that all should do so unless “they wish to be buried for good in their village” (Liszt, 1989, 48). He may have been influenced by the linguistic universalism of the Enlightenment that started with Descartes and culminated in the debates of the revolutionary Convention during which Bertrand Barère (1755–1841) associated multilingualism with feudalism and superstition and Henri Grégoire (1750–1831) drafted a *Rapport sur les nécessités et les moyens d’anéantir les patois et d’universaliser l’usage de la langue française* (Ost, 2009, 303–9). In the same letter he confessed that he was afraid of losing his German. It is quite possible that French gave him that little fillup which we get from using a language whose edges have been smoothed by daily use. At any rate, it seems that at certain stages of his life, particularly before the Weimar years, his command of French may have been superior to his German. Alan Walker goes even further by insisting that “Many of the essays that appeared over Liszt’s signature in the 1850s (on Wagner, Schumann, Chopin, and others) were translated by [Peter] Cornelius from French into German” (Walker, 1989, 194). Still French was not his mother tongue. “You may find a lot of shortcomings in my French”, he wrote to Marie d’Agoult on 6 January 1840, and a letter of 30 October 1842 suggests that she reproached him for not respecting French grammar (Liszt, 1989, 63, 79). It is possible that the *Lettres d’un bachelier*, a series insisting on the fusion of the arts, is “the work of d’Agoult, rather than Liszt” (Ellis, 2005, 3). Whether it is true that “most of his prose works seem to have been ghost-written by, or at least dictated to, whoever was his girlfriend at the time” (Rehding, 2005, 16), it is undeniable that in some cases he expected his mistress to be his co-author. On 22 February 1837, for instance, he asked her to prepare an article which he meant to publish under his name. Although he gave detailed instructions to her, he expected her to elaborate on the topics he suggested (Liszt, 1989, 43–4). As is well-known, in the Weimar years Liszt dictated much of his writing to Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein. Alan Walker regards the composer’s authorship of the numerous articles written in this period as beyond dispute by arguing that “Churchill, Napoleon, Kossuth, Marco Polo, and Henry James all liked to dictate their prose [...]. No one, to our knowledge, has disputed the authorship of their prose” (Walker, 1989, 376). At least one of these comparisons may seem less than convincing if one remembers that James engaged a stenographer only in

his late phase, after “his wrist condition became chronic” during the winter of 1896–97 (Edel, 1977, 2: 230).

In 1824 in his letter to Pierre Erard Liszt used English words (Bory, 1936, 53), he communicated with Miklós Wesselényi and Richard Wagner partly in French and partly in German, and occasionally started a sentence in English and continued in French even when addressing Marie d’Agoult (Liszt, 1989, 40). In general, he frequently mixed French and German, sometimes even within one sentence. He was not the product of French civilization and may have felt somewhat ill at ease for all his magnificent urbanity in Parisian culture, despite the fact that he was admired as “l’un des lions authentiques de la société” in the French capital, “beau comme un dieu et traînant tous les coeurs après soi”, to quote Alfred Cortot (Bory, 1936, 19). While the popularity of the young Liszt was unquestionably high among women, “le rêve d’une femme serait d’avoir Chopin pour mari, Hiller pour ami et Liszt pour amant”, said one of them, it would be somewhat misleading to believe that he was at home in French society as a whole. “Une grande confusion semble régner dans la mentalité de ce jeune homme.” That declaration by the historian François Mignet (1776–1884) may exemplify the ambiguity in the attitude of the intellectuals of Paris towards the young Liszt (Bory, 1936, 23). From a national perspective a supranationalist may seem to belong to some other community. Chopin’s words about Liszt the composer: “his works will be buried forever in souvenir albums, together with volumes and volumes of German poetry” (Walker, 1970, 80) suggest that in Paris some regarded Liszt as German. In his later years he himself may have distanced himself from French culture. In 1870, after a concert of his music in Leipzig, when Olga Janina tried to speak French, the composer interrupted her by saying “We do not speak French here!” (Walker, 1996, 210).

In conclusion, speaking about the relationship between text and music, four types could be distinguished. The difference between vocal and instrumental music allegedly inspired by literary works is clear-cut. A third type is constituted by scores headed by a text. A literary scholar may be tempted to investigate the relationships between the verbal utterance and the music in such cases as *Au bord d’une source*, which is headed by words by Schiller, or *Il Penseroso*, which bears a motto by Michelangelo. The earliest of the symphonic poems, *Ce qu’on entend sur la montagne*, is prefaced by the poem from Victor Hugo’s *Feuillets d’automne*. In the first edition Liszt even added a short foreword in which he gave his interpretation of the text, emphasizing that the lyric self listens to two conflicting voices, one of them praising, the other cursing the Lord. In other words, the music is preceded by a verbal interpretation that serves two purposes: it is meant to be a key to both a poetic and a musical composition. The reader-listener should not necessarily accept the composer’s interpretation. It seems obvious that Liszt may have failed to realize that the end of the poem questions teleology:

Et je me demandai pourquoi l'on est ici,  
 Quel peut être après tout le but de tout ceci,

Passages from Schiller's *Die Ideale* are quoted at various places in the score of the symphonic poem by that title. A superficial approach would suggest that in this case the textual fragments play the role of a running commentary on the musical process. Such an interpretation, however, is somewhat misleading, for the extracts do not follow in the original order. Having selected certain passages, the composer rearranged them, subordinating text to music.

The third piece in the series *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, prefaced by lines by Lamartine, might be a special case provided one accepts the interpretation based on the idea that the opening melody in the left hand has been "moulded to fit the words of Lamartine's poem" (Walker, 1970, 129). If this is so, *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude* anticipates the technique used in *Eine Symphonie zu Dantes Divina Commedia*. In the Inferno movement textual fragments are turned into musical themes. The Italian text is written above the notes in the *Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa*, suggesting an arrangement of the marching song by the Italian painter. This structural device marks a transition to the three Petrarca sonnets of the *Années de Pèlerinage*, which represent a fourth type that could be called instrumental transcription of vocal music.

It is a misconception to believe that any work can be transcribed "faithfully" from one medium to another, not deviating from the so-called original. In the same way as a literary translation involves an imaginative re-thinking, re-casting, or re-creation of the source text into a target text, vocal music cannot be transformed into instrumental music without fundamental changes, additions and losses. It has been pointed out that the basic element of the piano piece *Sonnet No. 47* ("Benedetto sia'l giorno") is "syncopation", "not to be found in the song" (Walker, 1970, 123). The fourth, fifth, and sixth pieces of the *Deuxième Année* are works radically different from the three Petrarca songs.

The works of Carl Dahlhaus prove that musicologists can profit from literary hermeneutics. Literary scholars seem to be more reluctant to learn from interart studies. The reason for this is not only specialization but also the huge quantity of primary and secondary texts a literary historian is expected to read. From the perspective of literary studies it is misleading to assume that vocal music should do justice to the text.

When a composer puts a poem to music, he annihilates the poem and makes a song. [...] A poem that has perfect form, in which everything is said and nothing merely adumbrated, a work completely developed and closed, does not readily lend itself to composition. It will not give up its literary form. This is true of most of Goethe's poems (Langer, 1953, 153–4).

If this argument, made by an American philosopher well-versed in close reading, holds, the objection that Liszt modified the text of *Der du von dem Himmel bist* “arbitrarily” (Hamburger, 2010, 452) is not entirely relevant. Bartók also made alterations in Ady’s poems when he composed his opus 16. Numerous other cases could be cited. Being a literary historian, I can probably afford to insist that the text is rarely a useful starting point for the musical analysis of instrumental works. Moreover, the temptation to regard a song as a kind of “addition” to the text or even a “heightening” of its tension may lead to the underrating of the autonomy of musical composition. In recent decades translation and media studies developed as separate disciplines. Source-oriented approaches have been replaced by target-oriented analyses. Setting texts to music is intermedial translation. The medium is the message. The text has to be deconstructed by the composer. That is why I would not point out elements that are “alien to the text” or “incompatible with the poem”. The experience of Pierre Boulez may give some authority to his statement that “the poème possède et garde son autonomie: il existe avec la musique, mais il demeure indépendant du son auquel le compositeur l’a lié” (Boulez, 2005, 710–11). The function of vocal music is not literary interpretation. A composer’s task is not to respect the integrity of the literary work of art, or identify himself with what the poem says. If we speak of the abuse of the text, we ignore the mode of existence of the musical composition.

The message of the poem is never given, it has to be decoded by a reader. The interpretation of a piece of music, vocal or instrumental, is a different activity. We can do justice to the art of Liszt only if we accept this fundamental principle. As Susan K. Langer warned almost sixty years ago:

What all good composers do with language is neither to ignore its character nor to obey poetic laws, but to transform the entire verbal material – sound, meaning, and all – into musical elements. When words enter into music they are no longer prose or poetry, they are elements of the music (Langer, 1953, 150).

In a lecture entitled “Dire, jouer, chanter”, given in Basel in 1962, Boulez gave a similar, although somewhat more nuanced characterization of the status of text in vocal music:

le poème est *centre* de la musique, mais il est devenu *absent* de la musique, telle la forme d’un objet restituée par la lave, alors que l’objet lui-même a disparu – telle encore, la pétrification d’un objet à la fois REconnaisable et MÉconnaisable (Boulez, 2005, 87).

The textual canon of most, if not all composers is questionable from the point of view of the literary scholar, but such a perspective may be almost irrelevant for the simple reason that the poetic value of a text disappears in the moment a com-

poser decides to use that text for his/her own purposes. Inspiration cannot be ignored, but the aesthetic quality of music does not depend on the artistic merits of the poem used by the composer. Literary critics may learn an important lesson from the works of Liszt. Alan Walker's warning that those who believe that his compositions progress towards a "final" form "misunderstand Liszt's art" (Walker, 1983, 306) is legitimate. As is well-known, even his paraphrase of Isolde's "Liebestod" has three versions. In some cases it is not easy to decide whether what we have are two versions or two individual works. *La Notte* (1866) starts as a second version of the much shorter *Il Penseroso* (1838–39), but continues with a passage containing "Hungarian" characteristics that are absent from the earlier piece. Many of Liszt's compositions suggest that the ideal of the finished work of art is a questionable concept. One critic goes even as far as suggesting that "in many cases throughout his career it seems as if Liszt's compositional concepts were not wedded to a particular medium" (Baker, 2005b, 120). At any rate, it is not always easy to prefer one version to the other. In the second versions of *Benedetto sia 'l giorno* and *Pace non trovo* Liszt employs whole-tone chords, but "he reduces the melodic variety, waters down the previously brilliant pianism, and removes much of the torrid passion that made the first versions so wonderful", as one critic admits (Arnold, 2002, 416). I would agree with those who believe that the *Eroica* étude is a work "where there is an arguable case for preferring the 1837 study above that of 1851" (Hamilton, 2005, 74).

Recently the argument was put forward that the decline in the esteem for Liszt as composer had been caused by the "aesthetic of form", whereas from the late 20th century his reputation was restored "under the aspects of postmodern culture" (Le Diagon-Jacquin, 2009, 15). I have only one reservation about this argument. The expression "aesthetic of form" reminds me of the duality of content and form, a distinction rejected as early as 1931 by Roman Ingarden, in his seminal work *Das literarische Kunstwerk*. Instead of relying on a dated distinction, let me quote Bartók: "neither in earlier periods nor in his age did any other major composer expose himself to so radically different, even incompatible influences" (Bartók, 1936, 4). "Liszt created an art form which our time necessarily regards as a mistake, while a later time will perhaps again see exclusively the genius' insight on which it is based." This prophecy made by Schönberg in 1911 (Schoenberg, 1984, 443) has come true. Our age is tolerant of contradictions in style, a characteristic feature of the works of Liszt, a composer whose activity represents a wide range of solutions to the old problem: how can music integrate literary works. He wished to "reform music through an intimate alliance with poetry", as he himself said in 1860 (Liszt, 1989, 234). In his best works he may have achieved this goal.

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## A CONVERSATION BETWEEN ZOLTÁN KOCSIS AND MIHÁLY SZEGEDY-MASZÁK ON THE OEUVRE OF FERENC LISZT

In a conversation held on the occasion of the Liszt year in Hungary, pianist, conductor, and composer Zoltán Kocsis and literary and cultural historian Mihály Szegedy-Maszák speak about the work of Liszt, the wide variety of influences in his admittedly uneven oeuvre, and the broad range of influences he had on later composers, such as Gustav Mahler or Richard Strauss. They also converse about the importance of creativity and even improvisation in performances of canonized compositions, and discuss the limits of the musical score as a means of conveying the intentions of a composer. The conversation touches on the performances of Liszt's pupils, including for instance conductor Felix Weingartner and pianist Emil von Sauer, who offered a dazzling rendition of Liszt's *Ricordanza Etude* at the age of 79. Sauer's performances of Liszt's piano concerti (conducted by Weingartner) offer clear instances of the ways in which the performer can vary the tempo of a composition, even when there are no such indications of tempo changes in the score. Kocsis comments on the contributions of pianists György Cziffra and Alfred Brendel as two of the most significant interpreters of Liszt's work. Kocsis and Szegedy-Maszák pose challenging questions regarding the notion of the completed composition and the completed work of art, as well as the authenticity of manuscript scores and the creative responsibilities of contemporary performers in the recreation and reanimation of a composer's work.

**Keywords:** Ferenc Liszt, Zoltán Kocsis, canon, authenticity, improvisation, Wagner, music history

- M. Sz-M. – In my view there is a significant difference between the young and the old Liszt, which of course is a sort of bias on my part, as I am unable to play the *Mazeppa* etude, while I can play *Nuage gris*. Is there continuity between the two, and if so, how is this palpable?
- Z. K. – The first thing that comes to my mind is that the estrangement of the Schumann-Mendelssohn School from Liszt is often explained by the latter's autotelic virtuosity. Well now, I can't condemn autotelic virtuosity *en bloc*, because there is something worthy of respect in it – how can I phrase this so



that it's precise – it is the ultimate development and perfection of an act. I can imagine that the young Liszt was so taken by Paganini – and not necessarily his perfection, because perfection was undoubtedly not his primary characteristic, but for example the runs, phrases, scales on the violin, which until then had been thought of as impossible (as to what technique he used, what tunings, etc., that's a different question) – that in his own way he transformed this on the piano – as the piano of course offers more possibilities than the violin – and the results were much more spectacular, or rather more bewildering, incredible, than in the case of Paganini. And yes, I can imagine that he did this in a somewhat autotelic manner. People noted that while doing technical exercises he studied languages and read works of fiction from the music-case – as of course when doing technical exercises one doesn't necessarily have to look. However, I think he could have played even the most vapid bravura piece as a poet. In my view the most fantastic thing about Liszt was that he could dish up even bad music as something enjoyable. And I think that possibly this was the main reason for his success. Of course it is also a fact that for this reason for a very long time he did not come forward with music of his own that could be labeled as significant or epoch-making, focusing instead on transcriptions. But there were other reasons for this. Chopin was always nearby, a man who was such a par excellence composer for the piano, who could be imitated and interpreted in many ways, but never simply bypassed. Without a doubt it took some time for Liszt to swallow Chopin. I contend that Berlioz, with his own roughness or ugliness – but I don't want to insult Berlioz either, because I am very fond of his music, contrary to Chopin, who did not care for...

M. Sz-M. – Berlioz couldn't play the piano.

Z. K. – No he couldn't. But I think he had a much greater effect in the creative sense on Liszt than Chopin ever did, at the same time Chopin's perfection, let's be honest, is frightening. In and of itself the fact that...

M. Sz-M. – Although he could not orchestrate, the orchestral parts of his piano concertos...

Z. K. – No, he couldn't, but he didn't want to anyway, he wanted to compose for the piano. So the fact in itself that for example Liszt wrote his first mazurka in 1853, when Chopin had been dead for four years, and that he started writing polonaises around this time as well could be an expression not simply of his respect for Chopin, but also fear of his judgement. He may have felt liberated from some kind of pressure when Chopin died. In a manner somewhat similar to Haydn, who suddenly started composing masterpieces after Mozart's death in 1791.

M. Sz-M. – Well, he wrote some earlier than that as well.

Z. K. – True, but what occurred after 1791 in Haydn’s art – I’m thinking primarily of the incorporation of the Mozartian tone – was abrupt. Similarly, after Chopin died, Liszt began composing numerous pieces containing ideas of his own. So what you mentioned at the beginning of our conversation basically represents in reality the beginning and the end point. There is always a huge difference between the two. If we examine the artistic development of any composer in a chronological manner, however, these differences are never that glaring. This happens to be my hobby-horse: Bartók’s *Mandarin*, for example, would be captivating for a broad audience if we began with an introduction of piano pieces from his youth, then continued with the *First Violin Concerto*, slowly arriving at *Bluebeard’s Castle*, and then *The Wooden Prince* and the suite composed for the piano, finally works in which he consciously tackles and decidedly attempts to process the influence of Schönberg and the New Vienna School, and then we are at the *Etudes* written for the piano and *Mandarin*. And if we move through these pieces the world of *Mandarin* will no longer appear as foreign as it does when it seems to have just come crashing down on us without preliminary study.

M. Sz-M. – We will touch on Bartók later.

Z. K. – In the case of Liszt I think that were I to word it in a very vulgar manner I would say that he began as a French composer and later switched to being more German....

M. Sz-M. – Essentially in Weimar.

Z. K. – Yes, he turned into a German composer, and then he slowly became Hungarian, cosmopolitan, and Futurist.

M. Sz-M. – Clearly an artist is judged on the basis of his best works.

Z. K. – Of course, of course.

M. Sz-M. – But he nevertheless has low points.

Z. K. – Indeed, there are embarrassing low points.

M. Sz-M. – You yourself alluded to them. There is the *Festvorspiel* I think from 1856, and the *Dante Symphony*, also from 1856. The difference is great.

Z. K. – Maybe Liszt made the mistake – of course I will readily assert in advance that I don’t know if this was a mistake, because one has to experiment a great deal in order to produce something good, think of the potter who molds and models the form only to destroy the entire thing and begin making something entirely new – that he did not destroy his immature pieces, his experimental attempts.

M. Sz-M. – He composed a fearful quantity of music.

Z. K. – And he was not only open to any and every musical impulse, but also immediately expanded on them. As a result he wandered into dead ends where he never would have ended up had he worked according to a concept, in a cer-

tain direction. For example, based on *The Legend of Saint Elisabeth* and *Christ I* contend that he could have created the German national opera, like Wagner, but it so happened that Wagner was much better suited to the task. Because Liszt's world was much broader and more heterogeneous. Wagner essentially came to a standstill at a certain style, a certain...

M. Sz-M. – Well, but *Parsifal* is not bad.

Z. K. – That's not the point, and from a certain perspective Wagner is a Futurist as well, but he never went as far as Liszt. For example, with the exception of the dragon scene, *Siegfried's* dragon scene, I never felt that Wagner wanted to write something truly grotesque, while in the case of Liszt, this tendency is very much there, and this anticipates Bartók, because the opposites, which Liszt uses so brilliantly, will become models in the case of Bartók, at least in the early works. Liszt was able to write two types of music on the basis of the same material, later only Bartók could do the same with such genius. I think that had Liszt done what others did, such as Brahms for example, who destroyed a large amount of material – including the majority of his correspondence with Clara Schumann, which apparently he burned on the banks of a creek – then Liszt would be placed on a much higher pedestal in general opinion. True, his oeuvre would be much less interesting, because I admit, it is specifically these attempts that are the most interesting to me, and not necessarily the compositions that he later presented as finished works of art. For example there is a very early version of the *Rhapsody No. 6*, it wasn't even published as a Hungarian rhapsody, but as a Hungarian song, and for me it is incomparably more interesting than the final version. In fact, I would venture to argue that in the case of Liszt there is no such thing as an early or final version, only variants.

M. Sz-M. – Indeed I will ask you about this later. You mentioned Wagner. Unfortunately one can hardly avoid drawing a comparison, as little as I may like it myself. Even Alan Walker admits in the last part of his three-volume biography on Liszt that Liszt enthusiasts occasionally exaggerate the injustices Wagner allegedly committed against him. I will admit, as I am not a musician, this question does not concern me too much, but I would like to ask you: to what extent does a performer need to take into consideration the personality of a composer? When Cosima read her parents' letters, she came to the conclusion that she had neither a mother nor a father. It is hard to deny that there was a time when Liszt barely saw his children.

Z. K. – It's a fact that a woman like Countess d'Agoult, at least from the perspective of the image of motherhood at the time, could not be regarded as a mother, not to mention that the relationship was not legalized. And one cannot expect an artist on tour to be a father.

- M. Sz-M. – True, true, I withdraw the question. It is common knowledge that with respect to harmony Liszt was very innovative, but is it not possible that in certain of his works Wagner has more polyphony?
- Z. K. – Yes, Bartók also emphasizes that polyphony was one of Liszt's serious weaknesses. It is very interesting that the early Bartók pieces, such as the opus 1 *Rhapsody*, which is acknowledged to be an afterthought of Liszt's rhapsodies, contain so many more polyphonic elements than the works of Liszt. It is also true that in certain pieces a striving for polyphony is distinctly perceptible, and not necessarily in the latest compositions. In the case of *Christ* or *The Legend of Saint Elisabeth* I sense that he is doing polyphonic exercises.
- M. Sz-M. – Yes, undoubtedly. Let's return to the question of variations. Nowadays it has become almost an obsession of mine that there are no completed works of art. In the case of Liszt, there are innumerable variations.
- Z. K. – I heard this phrase from Kurtág for the first time: nothing is ever completed. And if I reflect on this, it comes to signify for me that for example Schubert's *Trout Quintet* is not just the written score or the music I recall with my inner ear, but all the performances that have taken place since the inception of the work, including practices and rehearsals. Everything that occurs during the afterlife of the work transforms the work.
- M. Sz-M. – In some of the later editions of Liszt's works only the variants believed to be completed are published. Is that right?
- Z. K. – In the supplementary volumes – with which the youngest generation of music scholars has come forward and which reflect the most up-to-date research – a great deal of emphasis is placed on publishing the various versions, and not just as an appendix, but in the main part of the publication. I would have suggested at the outset – but how long ago was that – that it should be done like the publication of the complete works of Schönberg, in other words there should be a main part and an appendix. If necessary in a given case, the length of the appendix can be ten times that of the main part. However, I became unsure of this approach precisely because in the case of Liszt it is very rare that we have a version with the author's seal, something suggesting that he felt he had completed it and did not plan to continue work on it. But this is not unusual in the case of other composers either. Up to the end of his life Beethoven worked on his pieces, retouching his symphonies, adding metronomic notes. In some cases he altered phrases or the introductions of themes, if not the entire themes themselves. This is even true in the case of a composer like Bach, who is so universal and who composed mostly in his head. So I can only reiterate that in the case of such a musically malleable phenomenon as Liszt, we can only speak of variations, not to mention the by no means negli-

gible fact that his performances must have varied greatly. There must have been so many improvisational elements, solutions conceived in the moment, conscious alterations dictated by the circumstances in these performances, all this seriously throws into question the validity of scores. But not just in the case of Liszt. If we examine compositions of which we have recordings of performances by the composer, only very rarely is it the case that merely the written score is brought to life, on the contrary there are numerous variations. By the way, publications of the complete works of a composer today devote considerable attention to these performances by the composer, and for the most part include them in the main part of the publication as possible alternatives. The complete works of Debussy adopts this approach, and the complete works of Bartók, which is projected to consist of 48 volumes, will also be done along similar lines.

M. Sz-M. – I was very glad to see that both versions of the final movement of *Violin Concerto No. 2* can be found on the newest CD of the New Bartók Series.

Z. K. – Well, that goes without saying. Moreover the orchestral conclusion is the original. Zoltán Székely convinced Bartók to change the ending. Generally it is this latter version that the violinists play, but the composer nevertheless believed it to be important that the orchestral version be there in the published score. I think that Bartók was also correct when he said that Liszt's orchestral achievements were not met – from a professional point of view – with serious, constructive criticism at the time. Albeit, if from no one else, he would undoubtedly have accepted suggestions from Wagner, on the one hand formal...

M. Sz-M. – He did accept suggestions from him, as he did not write a *Paradiso* for his *Dante Symphony*.

Z. K. – Yes, but I mean from a formal point of view. True, that too is a formal point of view. But for example I'm convinced that the symphonic poems would be on a much higher level, at least the majority of them...

M. Sz-M. – I wanted to ask you about them.

Z. K. – ... if Wagner had been willing at all to share his opinion. But the problem also must have been that it seems that the friendship between Liszt and Wagner was not that profound, or that a lot of things were withheld, for Wagner often told Cosima or wrote in his own journal, *The Brown Book*, that he didn't like something, yet he didn't reveal his views to Liszt.

M. Sz-M. – On many occasions he spoke of them to the public in a very beautiful manner.

Z. K. – That's different. But that he could not accept the *Via crucis* or the *Weihnachtsbaum* cycle, that opinion he could have shared with his father-in-law.

- M. Sz-M. – I asked about the Liszt publication because the older volume that I own includes only the so-called final version of the *Eroica* etude, and to be honest I prefer an earlier version. But then here is the *Second Legend*. In the recording by Friedheim – who was Liszt’s student – the ending is different than in the tenth volume of the complete works, which was published in 1980. This year I looked at the copy exhibited in Bayreuth in the local Liszt Museum, in which Liszt’s handwritten ending can be seen, the version played by Friedheim. One should perhaps take cases like this into consideration.
- Z. K. – Undoubtedly we should take them into consideration, nowadays even in the case of Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations* the Ries manuscript is considered a primary source.
- M. Sz-M. – Let’s turn to Liszt’s influence. We have talked about Bartók.
- Z. K. – I believe that Liszt’s influence – how shall I say – is much wider than is generally believed.
- M. Sz-M. – Not just Debussy, Ravel, but others, for example Richard Strauss, Busoni or Rachmaninoff?
- Z. K. – Yes, that’s natural, but I think we should begin with Wagner. Namely it was Wagner who in a brilliant manner took from Liszt what he required and in his case presented it in a more perfect manner.
- M. Sz-M. – That is why his oeuvre is more unified.
- Z. K. – Exactly. It is a fact that the kind of operatic style that one comes across in the second act of *The Legend of Saint Elisabeth* reached its full potential in Wagner. But it is also true that *The Valkyrie*’s storm could not have existed without the storms in *Saint Elisabeth* or in *Christ*. If we began with Wagner, we can safely continue with Richard Strauss, because it was he who – in his own manner – perfected the style of the symphonic poems to the extent that in a given case (*Don Juan*) he wasn’t reluctant to say even to Cosima that in his view the “old man” had wanted to write something along the lines of this work. But a direct influence can also be demonstrated in the tonal system, in harmonies. Then, so that we don’t make too great a jump in time, there is Mahler. Nowadays no one speaks of the Mahler–Liszt relationship. Maybe it’s unseemly? I think it is important to mention it because lately Mahler’s music has enjoyed such popularity that it basically eclipses the roots from which Mahler drew nourishment, in which his conducting operas played a large role, as well as the influence that Liszt had on him. If we observe the fantastic similarities between *Ce qu’on entend sur la montagne* and Mahler’s *Symphony VIII* – the echoes of Liszt’s symphonic poem are most audible here – then we understand that in this case a less successful work of Liszt had an enormous impact on the formation of Mahler’s style.
- M. Sz-M. – If I recall it correctly, you conducted the work at the opening concert of the Liszt Year.

- Z. K. – Yes. Now, if we make a bigger jump, we arrive at Saint-Saëns, who in addition was a student of Liszt and who openly expanded on Liszt's piano technique, compositional manner, harmonics, and forms. Not to mention that Saint-Saëns must have been at least as much of a virtuoso pianist as Liszt. Not just Welte-Mignon rolls, but actual sound recordings exist. They reveal a virtuosity that is astonishing. For example the cadenza of the piano concerto entitled *Africa* lifts a little bit of the veil that surrounds Liszt. One can get a sense of what was behind it, who this person named Liszt was, this person whose pianistry led Wagner to say of one of Liszt's Beethoven performances that it wasn't piano playing anymore, but conjuring the dead.
- M. Sz-M. – Possibly the early Schönberg? *Verklärte Nacht*, *First String Quartet*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*?
- Z. K. – I was just about to say. The direct descendant of the Mahler-Richard Strauss line would be Schönberg, and not necessarily *Verklärte Nacht*, although I see some influence of Liszt in that as well. But if we consider for example Schönberg's scholarly works, it becomes clear from them that Liszt was important and essential as a composer.
- M. Sz-M. – He has an interesting essay on Liszt dated 1911 which is not positive in every respect.
- Z. K. – Yes, but Bartók also criticized Liszt.
- M. Sz-M. – At roughly the same time.
- Z. K. – Later as well, but actually, Liszt can take these criticisms. In other words, they do not diminish his value. But I must mention that I sense the influence of Liszt in the *Gurre-Lieder* as well. In fact it is interesting that the operetta-type sound that is present in more than one song of the *Gurre-Lieder*, that too can be derived from Liszt. But to take another great leap, there is the Russian school. I don't necessarily want to bring up Balakirev and the others right now, who are naturally heirs of Liszt, but there is Rachmaninoff, who did not know him personally, even though Siloti connects them.
- M. Sz-M. – He studied with Liszt, correct?
- Z. K. – Siloti studied with Liszt, yes, and he was Rachmaninoff's uncle. For example, in Rachmaninoff I sense that he adopted a certain Lisztian style and developed it in a much more sensitive manner than he did with Chopin. I would label Scriabin much more the heir of Chopin's music. That too of course is a dead end, because it cannot be continued, but Rachmaninoff followed much more the school of Liszt. If we look at Liszt's *F sharp major Impromptu*, for example, and compare it with any Rachmaninoff composition of the same genre, then the similarity is beyond question...
- M. Sz-M. – That is entirely convincing.

Z. K. – ...in fact the thread of harmonies, the formal solutions, the placement of cadenzas at certain points of culmination, all typical of both composers, this is striking. And, like it or not, the great Tchaikovsky also shows signs of the influence of Liszt, whatever nonsense he may have said about him. Fragments of *Onegin*, the beginning of the *Piano Concerto in B flat minor* definitely suggest this conclusion. But one should also consider the French composers who profited from Liszt. We've talked about Saint-Saëns...

M. Sz-M. – He met with Debussy.

Z. K. – Debussy, whom he met in Rome, he remembered the encounter for life. The most important part isn't even that he heard Liszt play the piano – and whether deliberately or not this was incorporated into his piano playing and the style of his later piano pieces – but if we compare certain fragments, for example if we compare the scene in which they ascend from the castle cellar in the third act of *Pelléas* with *Saint Francis of Assisi Preaching to the Birds*...

M. Sz-M. – You mean when Pelléas and Golaud come up.

Z. K. – ... the gradation before that part, the similarities are striking. In fact: it is really almost immaterial whether this afterthought was deliberate or not.

M. Sz-M. – And this is almost more important than the proverbial *Reflets dans l'eau – Fountain of Villa d'Este* parallel.

Z. K. – Exactly. But there are still many composers we have not touched upon. First I would like to mention Smetana, who openly imitated the style of Liszt's symphonic poems. But through Smetana we should also mention Dvořák, who, although he remained a friend of Brahms until Brahms' death, subsequently turned to the style of Liszt's symphonic poems, attested by his later symphonic poems, such as *The Wild Dove*, *The Noon Witch*, *The Golden Spinning Wheel*, and *The Water Goblin*.

M. Sz-M. – These compositions could be performed more often in Hungary!

Z. K. – Well, I think that I might have done *The Wild Dove* and *The Water Goblin*...

M. Sz-M. – I even hear a bit of Liszt in the *Concord Sonata* of Ives, but that might be bias on my part.

Z. K. – It's possible.

M. Sz-M. – But it is not performed in Hungary. Ives in general is rarely performed, though the *Concord Sonata* is a significant piece of work.

Z. K. – The National Philharmonic played two important works of his in the past few years, but I will concede, more of his work should be performed. But returning to Liszt, traces of his influence can be heard in works by composers who were active much later as well, for instance, I can detect it in Edgard



Varèse. But let's continue. As a matter of fact, other composers also could not ignore this symphonic poem style, this kind of descriptive music. I'm thinking of composers of a lesser stature.

M. Sz-M. – Such as?

Z. K. – Cornelius...

M. Sz-M. – Whom Liszt knew personally.

Z. K. – ...or Humperdinck, etc. They all composed in the style of Liszt, not to mention the host of students, who were all – their caliber is beside the point – composers themselves. The influence of his style is felt later, much later: we have mentioned Bartók, but in certain ways in Enescu, in Kodály, in Dohnányi. Therefore we are right to think that the influence of Liszt was wide, both in terms of time and in terms of space. Music would undoubtedly be different had it not for him.

M. Sz-M. – As a pianist he strove to achieve an orchestral sound. Can one speak a bit more on this subject?

Z. K. – Well of course, and this can be considered from several perspectives, although it belongs somewhat to the area of musicology. It's a fact that I was in similar shoes very early on as a small child. When one attempts to achieve an orchestral effect on the piano, when one tries to imitate the effect of an orchestra, one lays one's finger on the keys in an entirely different manner. Not only the keys, but the use of the pedals is also different, in fact the entire physiology of the playing changes in a certain respect. In other words I think that when Liszt wrote down his transcriptions, which by many were regarded as impossible to play or as impossible to bring to life, he only wrote down what could be written down.

M. Sz-M. – How should the compositions of Liszt be played anyway? A student was playing one of his rhapsodies. Why don't you play it like this – asked Liszt, then sat down and proceeded to play on a second piano the fragment in question in a much freer manner. – That's not how it is in my copy – the youth said defiantly. – Oh, it shouldn't be understood strictly – answered Liszt.

Z. K. – It absolutely needn't be understood literally. And I believe nothing should.

M. Sz-M. – Well, the opera fantasies should certainly not be taken literally. In 1886 Liszt commented that he always played these pieces freely, not the way they appeared in print.

Z. K. – But there are simpler examples. The same text, we are given the same text. You will undoubtedly read it aloud differently than I. But not because our voices differ, but because of our individual interpretations, the manner of binding sentences together, for one of us one word will be important, and another for the other person. I believe that even if we automatize the majority of the main aspects, there remains plenty of room for improvisation in the case

of a truly talented person. As for someone who is not talented, he or she should probably not be engaged with performing art on a professional level. I say this only in parentheses.

M. Sz-M. – This is entirely so.

Z. K. – In any case I think that it was again Bartók who hit the nail on the head, and perhaps exactly with regards to Liszt, when he claimed that our method of musical notation is inadequate. It does not record precisely the intention of the composer. Indeed this is the case. How can a Bartók agogica be written down precisely? Or how could one reproduce the manner in which Gershwin played his own pieces on the piano? How could this be done using the current musical notation? It can't! Or how can we write down how a folk singer sings? The best manner of notation is possibly that of László Lajtha. Perhaps it was he who was able to do this best. But even that does not render the manner in which a folk singer sings a 100%.

M. Sz-M. – You mentioned markings with respect to the use of pedal.

Z. K. – Yes.

M. Sz-M. – In some places there are many, in other places there are hardly any.

Z. K. – Yes.

M. Sz-M. – One could take the ninth piece in the series entitled *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*. There are altogether two marks concerning pedal use. Does this mean that one can only use the pedal in these two places?

Z. K. – No, of course not. It is a different matter that I would not insist on the use of pedals in the first half of the piece. No doubt you remember how Sviatoslav Richter played it at the Vigadó (the piece in question is the *Andante lagrimoso*). He did not force it, but at the same time there are surprising things. *The Dance in the Village Inn*, which we of course know as the *First Mephisto Waltz*, begins with pedal. No one plays it with pedal, because no one takes the effort to listen to the orchestral version, maybe because otherwise it would become immediately apparent what Liszt really intended. And here, in connection with the pedal, we return to what you mentioned earlier, namely where piano playing ends and the orchestral illusion begins. With regards to this I believe that the piano doesn't end and the orchestral illusion doesn't begin, but rather the two are one and the same. There are numerous works for piano – and in the case of Liszt in particular many of these pieces emerged from the studio – which could easily have been symphonic poems. I am thinking about *Vallée d'Obermann*, for example, but we could add to this list *Bénédiction* or even the *Dante Sonata*. I think that because he was always relying on his inner hearing, he created compositions for the piano that someone who was “only a pianist” would undoubtedly not have been capable of creating. It is another matter that this was also a disadvantage for him, be-

cause when he had to orchestrate a piece, he set out from his achievements at the piano, assuming that in the future similarly brilliant musicians would revive his orchestral works. Unfortunately this was not so, and that's the reason why for example when passages for the piano appear in his orchestral pieces and the orchestra does not play them with sufficient force, they fail to make a great impression, or at least one is left with a sense of something lacking. Well, it is this sense of something lacking that Wagner filled brilliantly in his own compositions, of which one really cannot say that they are piano-like. Why? Because he thought primarily in an orchestral setting. It is a wholly different matter that later Liszt himself learned to orchestrate well.

M. Sz-M. – He wasn't very good at it, but only at the beginning.

Z. K. – In his case it was also a problem that in many cases lackeys finished the work instead of him.

M. Sz-M. – Raff for example.

Z. K. – And the Doppler brothers, not to mention the anonymous heroes.

M. Sz-M. – Returning to a previous question, I wanted to ask how much rubato was necessary when performing a composition for the piano by Liszt? To what extent should the spirit of 19th century music playing be taken into consideration? Let me mention an example: during the performance of the *Second Rhapsody* Alfred Cortot uses significantly more rubato than...

Z. K. – Let's just agree that Cortot used significantly more rubato than others.

M. Sz-M. – Yes, but for me, even though I must candidly say that the *Second Rhapsody* is not my favorite, I enjoy the way he plays it.

Z. K. – Yes, it's interesting how the performances of those whose personalities come across are the closest to us, or we remember them best. Recently I listened to a recording of György Cziffra with a very well-known pianist. All of a sudden he began criticizing it, saying that Cziffra was not sticking to the score. To this I replied – as a true music philologist would – that the whole performance was good as it was. He should not stick to the score, if it doesn't suit him, because that would make the performance worse, or at least less authentic. I think that Liszt was very right in what he said to that girl, namely that he encoded in these compositions the possibilities of various performances, or that in many cases he did not write down more than the frame of a piece. One could say these are individual versions that are unfinished in this phase, or rather they are some kind of solution that he was forced to adopt. I am thinking of the *Mazurka in A major*, for example, which we have also previously mentioned, here in a separate ossia line the possibility of eventual orchestral instrumentation is included!

- M. Sz-M. – Can we draw any conclusions regarding Liszt’s piano playing on the basis of what we hear in recordings of his students? I’m thinking of recordings of Sauer or Lamond.
- Z. K. – Earlier you mentioned Fiedheim, whose pianistry, according to ear-witnesses, was most akin to that of Liszt. And then there is Sauer, as you say.
- M. Sz-M. – He played the *Ricordanza* etude at the age of 79. In my opinion superbly.
- Z. K. – You know how much that recording is worth? It was 350 pounds twenty years ago.
- M. Sz-M. – He has two piano concerto recordings. Weingartner is conducting, who also studied with Liszt.
- Z. K. – It is very interesting that in those two piano concerto recordings Sauer permits himself so much freedom, such a wide range of variations in tempo, that one is truly unable to decide whether these originate with Liszt, that they were affirmed by Liszt, or not. Because in the case of artists of such stature one could not say that they slowed down because the material is difficult. Take the *A major piano concerto*. I remember the end, the way Sauer plays it: he slows down at a point and then again accelerates, none of which appears in the score. And as far as I’m concerned, if he can do this in an authentic manner, he should. This music can survive it. Indeed I am convinced that every style, the music of every composer has its own system of agogics. Let me give an example. If you grind out the first movement of Brahms’ *fourth symphony* in one tempo, then either the beginning will be incomprehensible or the end will be tedious. Well, if you look at the tempo, at the stretta with which one ends the first movement compared with how one begins, the difference is more than double. Yet there is not even a hint regarding this from the author, nevertheless this difference in tempo is characteristic of most performances. And this music not only withstands this, but demands this system of agogics. I think that if this is so in the case of Brahms – which is of course strict German music – then why would it not be even freer in the case of Liszt, allowing more liberty for the performer?
- M. Sz-M. – Liszt pupils also published scores. For a long time – undoubtedly the fault is mine – I didn’t understand why Horowitz played the octaves at the beginning of the *Sonata in B minor* staccato. There are of course two recordings, and in both he begins the sonata staccato. Then someone showed me a score edited by d’Albert in which it reads: “wie pizzicato.” Sauer’s edition is different in many respects.
- Z. K. – However Horowitz may play it, the first two octaves are marked *staccatissimo*.

The image shows a printed musical score for the beginning of the *Les Préludes*. The first section is marked *Lento assai* and begins with the instruction *p sotto voce*. It features a series of repeated notes in both the treble and bass staves. The second section, starting at measure 7, is marked *Allegro energico* and shows a more rhythmic and dynamic passage.

Incidentally the *Les Préludes* also begins with those two, repeated notes. I imagine you prefer that also to be played dry, rather than as a resonated pizzicato.

M. Sz-M. – Yes. That’s right.

Z. K. – Well, the beginning of the *Sonata in B minor* is the same, except that there the first note is G. In fact, it appears again before the fugato that anticipates the recapitulation, there too I feel it to be a short sound, which – and this should not be neglected – is reinforced by the manuscript.

This image shows a handwritten manuscript of the same musical score. The word *Anfang* is written in cursive at the top. The tempo markings *Lento assai* and *Allegro energico* are also present. The notation is more fluid and includes some performance markings like staccatissimo marks.

So at the beginning of the work and then before the fugato, where in the first measure the staccatissimo marks can clearly be discerned:

This is a close-up view of the handwritten manuscript, focusing on the first measure of the *Lento assai* section. It clearly shows the staccatissimo marks (two short horizontal lines) above the notes, indicating the desired articulation.

But since the sonata in B minor has come up, let's examine how this piece ends.

The clash of B and C, which doesn't avoid the B tritone (the F major of bar 755). Why is this so terribly important? Because Richard Strauss in 1896 wrote this in the opposite order, a confrontation of B and C, with a C tritone (trombones) – in the *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the following manner:

noch langsamer

1.2. Kl. Fl.  
1.2. gr. Fl.  
1.2.3. Ob.  
1.2.3. Pos.  
1. Hfe.  
1 Solo Al.  
1.2.3.4. V.  
5.6.7. Pult.  
Vcl. alle  
Kb.

One even could say that there are more similarities than differences, as in both cases the key of elevation is B major, while earth-boundness is symbolized by C. The major difference is the basic tonality of the pieces. This page of the Strauss score could – in my opinion – in no way have been written without former knowledge of the *Sonata in B minor*.

M. Sz-M. – This seems very convincing.

Z. K. – These effects are much more important than the showy formal similarities or similarities in motifs or themes. And in some wholly mystical manner these permeate the style of any composer who makes use of them.

M. Sz-M. – Is the parting of composer and performer in our time not unfortunate? Thankfully this is not true in your case.

Z. K. – Well, yes, yes, it is indeed unfortunate.

M. Sz-M. – Busoni, Rachmaninov, Dohnányi, Bartók are counterexamples. Maybe even Boulez. I would timidly mention Furtwängler. However significant or insignificant a composer may have been, he nevertheless approached their work from a composer's point of view.

Z. K. – Oh indeed! Klemperer as well. But this can be said about most significant performers of the past. Because on some level they all understood composing, they studied it. Not to mention the performers who were miniaturists, but as such were magnificent. I think of artists such as Kreisler, Hofmann, Rosenthal or even Grieg. What you mention, we could do something to ad-

dress that. On the college level I would make composition an obligatory subject of study. As for composers, I would require them to know an instrument well enough to give several concert performances a year.

M. Sz-M. – What instruments should they have to play?

Z. K. – Well, they should definitely be able to play the piano. I know a violinist who plays the piano masterfully.

M. Sz-M. – Grumiaux was one.

Z. K. – Yes Grumiaux was one, but also Julia Fischer, for example.

M. Sz-M. – Yes, indeed.

Z. K. – She plays the piano and the violin. But there is also Barnabás Kelemen, who was perfectly able to play Bartók's *Ostinato*.

M. Sz-M. – What sort of instrument should a pianist use when playing Liszt? Some pianists prefer Erards.

Z. K. – I don't believe in any of this. I don't even share this Pleyel madness with regards to Chopin. All in all I believe in historicism to the point that these original instruments truly shed light on certain essential segments of the music. For example I can imagine that the viola gamba is much better able to shed light on the essence of some compositions than the cello, but I agree with Miklós Perényi, who says that yes, cellists must learn how to play as if they were playing the viola de gamba. Well, I could insist on only playing Mozart and Haydn on fortepiano from now on. But first, the fortepiano is a different instrument today, and second, I can create the sounds on a contemporary piano. This is perfectly possible, whatever people may say, though of course one needs to apply special effort in order to achieve that sound.

M. Sz-M. – Yes, that's clear.

Z. K. – Thus I wouldn't necessarily insist on playing Liszt on an Erard. Liszt was delighted when he came across a serious instrument. There are two Bechsteins in the house in Weimar.

M. Sz-M. – In later years he even had access to Steinways.

Z. K. – In Weimar he used Bechsteins, then yes, he played on Steinways, but he also is depicted next to Bösendorfers in photographs and illustrations. In other words I believe that Liszt in this regard was very open, and he composed in such a manner, structured passages for the piano so that they speak for themselves.

M. Sz-M. – Who played Liszt beautifully in your view? Candidly speaking, sometimes I was bored by Brendel's interpretation, for example his Beethoven sonatas. But I recall a very beautiful *Bénédiction*, indeed he also played the *Two Legends* in Pest.

Z. K. – Yes. He played the *Bénédiction* following a fairly boring Schubert sonata, and that was a cathartic experience. Incidentally – of course this has no bearing on the subject at hand – I took him out to dinner afterwards, up to the Cita-



del, the only place where there was no music, because he detested music in restaurants, and imagine, we sit down, order our meals and then a jazz band consisting of 15 members appeared and began playing. Poor Alfred, you can imagine. But returning to our conversation, the *Bénédiction* was truly marvellous, but I could not agree with the contention, attributed to him, according to which a single composition by Liszt is worth more than all of Chopin. But it is certain that with his intellect he came very close to the essence of Liszt's music. I don't know if you are aware of it, but he has a recording by Vox of *Weihnachtsbaum* from 1951.

M. Sz-M. – It is first-rate.

Z. K. – Well that for example is very good. So, there's Brendel among the, let's say intellectual types. But in other respects it is nevertheless György Cziffra's name that comes to my mind.

M. Sz-M. – Your youth is your disadvantage. I was able to hear him perform the *Mazeppa Etude* in Pest. It was astonishing.

Z. K. – I believe it.

M. Sz-M. – There are many composers whose works I wouldn't care to listen to in his interpretation, but not Liszt.

Z. K. – Even in his later years how he performed the second *Hungarian Rhapsody!* That was tempestuous. Or how he plays the sixth on film. So I think that in certain respects he cannot be surpassed, and in other respects Richter.

M. Sz-M. – Although I have a recording from Kiev of the *Sonata in B minor*, it wasn't exactly a success.

Z. K. – Yes, the *Sonata in B minor* was not his piece.

M. Sz-M. – Of course he played certain pieces magnificently.

Z. K. – The *Piano Concerto in A major*, the manner in which he approached the eight transcendental etudes – those he played, because he leaves four out of the series – is wholly bewildering. And that desire to discover, the craving with which he surveyed late and early work of Liszt. For example at the concert at the Vigadó mentioned earlier he not only played the *Andante lagrimoso*, but also the *Ave Maria* and the *Pensées des morts* written for the Lebert und Stark piano school, and those were highly moving performances

M. Sz-M. – He did recordings of these in 1984.

Z. K. – But I could name earlier recordings of his. It was essentially through him that I discovered the *Scherzo and March*. If I want to listen to *Feux follet*, Richter's name is among the first that comes to mind.

M. Sz-M. – Cziffra also performed it.

Z. K. – Yes, but with respect to *Feux follets* I somehow regard Richter as more virtuosic than Cziffra. He takes more risks, one could say he is less calculated. One also cannot disregard the fact that enormous strength is required in the performance of Liszt. And I would not like to say anything about women,

because there are fantastic female performers, but the majority of female performers are closed out of the Liszt repertoire because of this.

M. Sz-M. – You have played and conducted numerous pieces by Liszt.

Z. K. – Yes.

M. Sz-M. – Do you have any plans in the future to do this? This was some time ago, and I undoubtedly missed out on a lot, because I taught most of the time in the United States, but if I recall correctly you once played Haydn and Liszt at the Music Academy.

Z. K. – I don't remember that anymore, but essentially what was important for me in Liszt, pieces in his oeuvre that I believed had been overlooked, I would take them out from time to time.

M. Sz-M. – The first symphonic poem would be an example?

Z. K. – Yes, *Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*, but also the choral work entitled *Die Glocken des Strassburger Munsters*, and I would also include here the *Psalm 13*. Although I think the former is much more modern. It resembles a fragment of a Wagner opera. *Psalm 13* is much more sacred.

M. Sz-M. – One doesn't hear them performed often.

Z. K. – Unfortunately no. These pieces are very important for me, but other things are important as well. The *Grosses Konzert-Solo* as a preface to the *Sonata in B minor*, its early formulation, but of course it is brilliant on its own as well. The pieces in the third volume of the *Années de pèlerinage* were revelations for me, I played all of them as well.

M. Sz-M. – That recording was reissued many times.

Z. K. – Or among the paraphrases and transcriptions there is *Norma*.

M. Sz-M. – I think he learned a lot from Bellini in his youth.

Z. K. – Oh yes, but not just him.

M. Sz-M. – Wagner as well.

Z. K. – And Chopin. Chopin positively adored Bellini, indeed they were on good terms.

M. Sz-M. – If we look back at the Liszt Year, because of course one cannot avoid mention of this, are you satisfied with the results?

Z. K. – To be honest I expected considerably more scholarly publications, publications that would have shed light on and broadened the established understanding of Liszt. For example, I think that a truly professional photo iconography of Liszt is much needed, just as there should be a complete publication of his correspondence. Because that would also be of literary value.

M. Sz-M. – It would not be easy to gather the letters. Even I have one in my possession. He wrote it to Miklós Barabás, my great-great grandfather.

Z. K. – A very small portion of his letters has been published, and even those only sporadically. In 1911, on the occasion of the Liszt Centenary, a publication was done by Vilmos Csapó. It was a publication of letters without any

changes and accompanied by minimal notes. Furthermore, they were published in their original languages, in other words they didn't even bother with translations. And then János Hankiss has a two-volume collection.

M. Sz-M. – That too is fearfully old.

Z. K. – Old and also not complete. From the following period, the collection published based on László Eőszé's research in Rome; and Mária P. Eckhardt's selection deserves mention, but a great deal is still missing. The same way in which Debussy's letters have been published or János Demény edited Bartók's correspondence, letters of Liszt should have been collected. Not to mention that I assume there are far fewer letters still extant than in the case of Bartók.

M. Sz-M. – Well, I too find this regrettable. And also that there is of course this CD prize and the strange privilege befell me, I suppose due to my impartiality, to be included, in fact made head of the committee. I confess it took us more time than I might have expected to make our selection. Finally the award was given to one of Haselböck's recordings, a CD on which they are playing on 19th century instruments at least.

Z. K. – Organ?

M. Sz-M. – No, symphonic poems.

Z. K. – Haselböck is first and foremost an organist.

M. Sz-M. – Yes. Previously he had recorded all of the organ works. Now he leads an ensemble that performs the symphonic poems on 19th century instruments. I have heard three of their recordings.

Z. K. – I haven't heard any.

M. Sz-M. – Your CD came out too late to be taken into consideration, because in 2011 recordings from 2010 were judged. Hopefully there will be even better recordings that we can select from in 2012. The piano recordings were less engaging than I might have hoped in 2011.

Z. K. – Well, that's interesting. There's a pianist, Leslie Howard...

M. Sz-M. – Who recorded all of the piano works. 95 disks?

Z. K. – I don't know how many disks, but recently I listened to one of the recordings and it was well, dull. In other words it was like a ...

M. Sz-M. – ... a recording of the complete works?

Z. K. – Yes, a recording of the complete works, in which there are works that are momentous for the performer and then there are the leftovers. Well, I had hoped to avoid this mistake in my recording of the complete works of Bartók, and it ended up taking ten years. And if someone really sets out to record all of Liszt and it's 95 disks, it should take 100 years. Well, I don't know. Incidentally, I think Imre Mező might have said that a recording series of the complete works of Liszt will be finished by 2080.

- M. Sz-M. – One of the problems is that in the case of his lieder, the different variations should all be included. As there are singers, or were – as far as I know Brigitte Fassbaender is still alive, just not performing – who often did not sing the last version, but rather an earlier one, but offered a thorough explanation as to why.
- Z. K. – Well, there are lots of similar cases in the music world. Boulez for example will only conduct the first variation of Petruska. Or I myself only play the 1913 version of Rachmaninoff's *Sonata in B flat minor*, because I regard the second version as simply inferior. So there are cases like this. With Liszt as well. There are some who prefer the *Album d'un Voyageur* to the *Années de Pèlerinage*. I can understand them.
- M. Sz-M. – Thank you very much for your time.

(Translated by Zsuzsanna Szegedy-Maszák)