

Intertextuelle Relationen in der Zeitungslandschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts: Close und Distant Reading von Ausgaben der *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung*

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ABSTRACT

In diesem Beitrag werden zwei bedeutende Zeitungen der Habsburger Monarchie – die *Wiener Zeitung* (vormals: *Wien[n]erisches Diarium*) und die *Preßburger Zeitung* – in mehrfacher Hinsicht miteinander in Beziehung gesetzt. Nach einem historischen Abriss zum Entstehungskontext dieser Periodika und unter Berücksichtigung der bereits vorliegenden Forschungsliteratur wird zunächst nach Parallelen in der formalen Gestaltung gefragt. Da beide Zeitungen seit einiger Zeit auch digital im Volltext erschlossen sind, kann nun durch Verfahren des sogenannten Distant Readings auch annäherungsweise festgestellt werden, wie frequent direkte gegenseitige Verweise auf das jeweils andere Periodikum auftreten. Durch Close Reading-Verfahren werden die korpusbasiert ermittelten Belegstellen dann ergänzend untersucht und gedeutet. Im unmittelbaren Vergleich von zeitnah erschienenen Ausgaben der *Wiener Zeitung* und der *Preßburger Zeitung* lassen sich auf diese Weise intertextuelle Bezüge herstellen, die es im Detail zu beschreiben und auszuwerten gilt. Unter Zuhilfenahme von digitalen Verfahren der Textkollationierung werden in den verglichenen Nachrichtentexten (etwa aus den Städten Pressburg und Wien) sowohl Übereinstimmungen als auch Abweichungen automatisch detektiert, wodurch redaktionell getroffene Entscheidungen sichtbar werden. Der erprobte komparative und durch digitale Methoden gestützte Ansatz ermöglicht u. a. die synoptische Betrachtung einzelner Textpassagen und bietet damit neue Einblicke in das komplexe Verhältnis von *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* im 18. Jahrhundert.

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SCHLÜSSELWÖRTER

Zeitungen, 18. Jahrhundert, historische Presseforschung, Intertextualität, Digital Humanities, Close und Distant Reading

1. EINLEITUNG: „LESEKABINETTE“ ANALOG UND DIGITAL

Als im Jänner 1776 die *Preßburger Zeitung* ihr Lesepublikum in einer „Gelehrten Anzeige“ über die (Wieder-)Eröffnung des Lesekabinetts am Stock-im-Eisen-Platz in Wien informierte, waren das *Wienerische Diarium* und die *Preßburger Zeitung* in der Auflistung verfügbarer in- und ausländischer Zeitungen ganz selbstverständlich vertreten (vgl. PZ 06.01.1776: 6–8).¹ Diese beiden wichtigen Zeitungen der Habsburger Monarchie standen dabei ebenbürtig in einer Reihe mit etablierten internationalen Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, wie etwa der *Gazette de France*, dem *Mercure de France*, dem *Journal Encyclopedique*, dem *London Cronicle*, dem *Gentleman's Magazine*, dem *Monthly Review* und der *Gazetta di Roma*. Das „Lekturkabinet“ (PZ 06.01.1776: 6), im Rahmen dessen diese Periodika zugänglich waren, galt damals als eine „der bequemsten Einrichtungen in Wien“ und als „eine Art von öffentlichem Orte, an dem Personen von Stande und Erziehung, ohne Unterschied des Geschlechtes, sich versammeln“ konnten, wie das *Gnädigst privilegierte Leipziger Intelligenz=Blatt* (02.11.1776: 425–426, zit. nach Martino 1990: 750) berichtete: Es stellte dem interessierten Publikum nicht nur eine Vielfalt von Zeitungen aus ganz Europa zur Verfügung, sodass die diversen darin vertretenen Diskurse verfolgt und vor Ort Meinungen ausgetauscht werden konnten, sondern ermöglichte auch, verschiedene Periodika im direkten Vergleich miteinander zu betrachten und sich dadurch „die Kunst, Zeitungen zu lesen, die wie andere Künste erst gelernt werden muß“, anzueignen (Schlözer 1777: 24). Dieselbe komparative Perspektive möchte auch der vorliegende Beitrag einnehmen: Die *Preßburger Zeitung* und das *Wien[n]erische Diarium*, welches ab 1780 als *Wiener Zeitung* weitergeführt wurde, sollen – wie im frühneuzeitlichen Lesekabinet – nebeneinandergelegt und synoptisch betrachtet werden.

Die Voraussetzungen hierfür haben sich in den letzten Jahren aber grundlegend geändert: Zahlreiche historische Zeitungen liegen heute – ebenso „bequem“ und an einer „Art von öffentlichem Orte“, nämlich im World Wide Web – als Digitalisate vor und stehen sowohl der Forschung als auch der Öffentlichkeit jederzeit kostenlos zur Verfügung. Diese digitale Transformation haben auch die historischen Ausgaben der *Wiener Zeitung* und der *Preßburger Zeitung* vollzogen. Während erstgenannte Zeitung aufgrund häufiger Anfragen unter den ersten Periodika gewesen ist, die im Rahmen des Großprojektes „AustriaN Newspapers Online“ (ANNO) der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek zur Gänze eingescannt worden sind, ist seit 2018 auch die *Preßburger Zeitung* über das „Digitale Forum Mittel- und Osteuropa“ (DiFMOE) online verfügbar. Beide Portale bieten unter <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=wrz> beziehungsweise <https://www.difmoe.eu/d/periodical/uuid:1ec30e40-d452-11de-8dc5-000d606f5dc6> zunächst über eine Jahres- und dann über

¹Im Folgenden werden Zitate aus der *Preßburger Zeitung* und der *Wiener Zeitung* durch die Abkürzungen PZ und WD beziehungsweise WZ mit den jeweiligen Datums- und Seitenangaben kenntlich gemacht.



eine Kalenderansicht direkten Zugriff auf die gewünschten historischen Ausgaben. Die Seiten dieser Nummern werden dann in einer Übersicht verkleinert dargestellt und können individuell angesteuert werden. In der Einzelansicht lassen sich die Ausgaben auf beiden Portalen zudem unter anderem vergrößern, drucken, downloaden oder als Link speichern und in der digitalen *Preßburger Zeitung* kann man sogar Bildausschnitte anfertigen und eigene Notizen hinzufügen. Beide Zeitungen stehen im OCR-gelesenen Volltext zur Verfügung, wobei hinlänglich bekannt ist, dass die automatische Erkennung der in beiden Periodika verwendeten Frakturdrucktype oftmals weit hinter den Erwartungen zurückbleibt und zahlreiche Fehler aufweisen kann. Demzufolge ist auch die Volltextsuche, die auf beiden Portalen möglich ist, nicht immer zuverlässig (was die Vollständigkeit der Treffer anbelangt), aber oftmals hilfreich. Für die *Wiener Zeitung* wurden daher in den letzten Jahren neue Modelle zur automatischen Texterkennung getestet (vgl. Resch–Kampkaspar 2019: 56–59). Als Ergebnis stehen seit Kurzem etwas mehr als 300 Ausgaben des Periodikums im bereits korrigierten, durchsuchbaren Volltext als DIGITARIUM zur Verfügung (vgl. <https://digitarium.acdh.oew.ac.at>, Resch–Kampkaspar 2019 sowie Resch 2018).

Bedenkt man künftige methodologische Konsequenzen einer umfangreichen Digitalisierung historischer Zeitungsbestände, so wird dabei sicherlich den Volltexten und insbesondere ihrer Qualität wesentliche Bedeutung zukommen. Wie der Medienhistoriker Bob Nicholson (2013: 67) beobachtet, ist nämlich die verlässliche Volltexterschließung Grundlage, um Informationen zu lokalisieren, den Gebrauch und die Entwicklung von Sprache nachzuvollziehen oder auch einzelne Personen, Texte und Ideen nachzuverfolgen: „Crucially, however, it is our direct access to individual words that presents the most exciting new methodological possibilities.“ Der vorliegende Beitrag versucht daher, sich die digitale Verfügbarkeit der *Preßburger Zeitung* und der *Wiener Zeitung* zunutze zu machen und damit Einblicke in qualitative und quantitative digitale Methoden zu geben.

Der vorliegende Artikel führt mit einem historischen Abriss in Kapitel 2 in das Thema ein, indem er bisherige Ergebnisse komprimiert darstellt und den aktuellen Forschungsstand zum Verhältnis der *Preßburger Zeitung* und der *Wiener Zeitung* um neue quellenbasierte Beobachtungen ergänzt. Die darauffolgenden Kapitel widmen sich der empirischen Untersuchung dieses Naheverhältnisses, das sich auf mehreren Bezugsebenen nachweisen lässt. Kapitel 3 fragt zunächst nach Parallelitäten und Unterschieden in der formalen Gestaltung. In Kapitel 4 werden beide Blätter in Bezug auf explizite Nennungen des jeweiligen anderen Mediums verglichen, wobei die Identifikation der relevanten Textstellen im Volltext mittels Distant Reading-Verfahren erfolgt, konkret durch die bereits zur Verfügung stehenden Suchoptionen im Volltext. Die Kontextualisierung der Funde basiert auf Close Reading-Verfahren. Die Lektüre ausgewählter Ausgaben in Kapitel 5 dient dazu, jene Ereignisse in zeitnah oder zeitgleich erschienenen Ausgaben zu ermitteln, über welche sowohl in der *Wiener Zeitung* als auch in der *Pressburger Zeitung* berichtet worden ist. Ob es sich dabei um wortidentische Übernahmen von Inhalten oder um eigenständige Formulierungen handelt beziehungsweise ob und worin sich diese Meldungen voneinander unterscheiden, kann unter anderem mit Unterstützung eines Textkollationierungstools automatisiert verglichen und visualisiert werden. Die im Fazit formulierten Ergebnisse basieren auf dem vielschichtigen Vergleich beider Periodika in Bezug auf ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung, auf formale Merkmale, gegenseitige Referenzierungen und sprachliche Parallelitäten in der Berichterstattung. Die dabei erprobte Verschränkung hermeneutischer und digitaler Zugänge soll letztlich dazu beitragen, unser Wissen über das



wechselseitige Verhältnis und die intertextuellen Relationen zwischen der *Wiener* und der *Preßburger Zeitung* im 18. Jahrhundert zu erweitern.

2. ENTSTEHUNGSKONTEXT DER *PREßBURGER ZEITUNG* UND VERHÄLTNIS ZUR *WIENER ZEITUNG*

Die *Preßburger Zeitung* wurde 1764 gegründet, weist aber bezüglich ihrer Besitzverhältnisse, Herausgeberschaft und Redaktion einige Unschärfen auf. Als Gründer, Eigentümer und Verleger wurde im „Avertissement“ der ersten Ausgabe der *Preßburger Zeitung* vom 14. Juli 1764 Johann Michael Landerer publik gemacht, dem – nach seinem Tod am 20. Juli 1795 – in dieser Position ein Sohn gleichen Namens folgte. Inoffiziell und anonym bleibend dürfte jedoch von Beginn bis 1773 – wie [Andrea Seidler \(vgl. 2001: 75–84\)](#) ausgearbeitet hat – Karl Gottlieb von Windisch (1725–1793) als eigentlicher Spiritus Rector der Zeitung fungiert haben. Windisch war Geschäftsmann, Gelehrter und später Senator (1768), Stadthauptmann (1774) und Bürgermeister (1793) der Stadt Pressburg. In Literatur und den Wissenschaften bewandert, stand er in regem Briefwechsel zu wichtigen Gelehrten, Schriftstellern und Zeitungsredakteuren der Monarchie, etwa dem Historiker Dániel Cornides, dem Historiker und Dichter Johann Seivert und dem Journalisten Conrad Dominik Bartsch, der 1782 die Redaktion der *Wiener Zeitung* übernahm (vgl. allgemein [Seidler 2008](#), zu Bartsch insbesondere: 82). Im Frühjahr 1773 schied Windisch aus der *Preßburger Zeitung* aus. Ihm folgten als Redakteure Johann Mathias Korabinsky und, ab 1784, Daniel Tállyay nach. In den letzten Jahrzehnten des 18. Jahrhunderts scheinen keine eigenen Redakteure mehr auf. Ab 1786 übernahmen wahrscheinlich Vater und Sohn Landerer neben dem Druck auch den redaktionellen Bereich der *Preßburger Zeitung* (vgl. *DiFMÖE*).

Nimmt man das „Avertissement“ (PZ 14.07.1764: 5) der ersten Ausgabe als Ausgangspunkt, dann basierte der Wunsch und der Entschluss zur Realisierung einer Zeitung darin, ein Periodikum zu gründen, das auch Lokalnachrichten beinhaltete. Nicht nur Berichte aus Europa, sondern auch aus Ungarn sollte die Zeitung publizieren und sich zudem

alles einverleiben, was man sonst in andern Städten, in den sogenannten Intelligenzblättern findet, als da sind: Oeffentliche Publicationen, Auctionen, Sachen die feil sind, Capitalien die gesucht werden, oder auszuleihen sind, und dergleichen; auch allzeit die Verstorbenen richtig anzeigen. (PZ 14.07.1764: 5)

Als eigenständige, regelmäßig erscheinende, ‚politische‘ Zeitung erfüllte die *Preßburger Zeitung* in Ungarn per se schon ein Desiderat (zur Zeitungslandschaft im Donauraum vgl. [Seidler–Seidler 1988](#)). Mit der Herausgabe der Zeitung gingen die Verleger auch ein gewisses Risiko ein, denn um eine breitere Öffentlichkeit publizistisch zu erreichen, musste ein Spektrum an Nachrichten angeboten werden, das über das von ausländischen Blättern hinausging, die in Pressburg im 18. Jahrhundert umfänglich erhältlich waren. Das Jahr 1764 stellte diesbezüglich einen der bestmöglichen Zeitpunkte für die Gründung einer Zeitung dar, war man im Pressburg dieses Jahres doch mit vielversprechenden Veränderungen in politischer, sozialer und kultureller Hinsicht konfrontiert. Nicht nur übersiedelten Albert von Sachsen-Teschen und Marie Christine als Statthalter nach Pressburg und machten das Pressburger Schloss zum Anziehungspunkt zahlreicher Besucher, seien es Mitglieder des Wiener Hofes oder der geistigen Eliten Europas,



sondern es wurde auch der Landtag in Pressburg einberufen (vgl. Seidler 2019). Angesichts des potenziell interessanten Nachrichtenspektrums aus dem Umfeld dieser Ereignisse war für die Herausgeber eine breite Leserschaft zumindest absehbar.

Mit Windisch schien zudem der richtige Mann für die Gründung der *Preßburger Zeitung* gefunden. Obwohl als Kaufmann ausgebildet, betrieb er philosophisch fundierte und systematisch angelegte theoretische Studien zu Sprachen, Literatur, Geschichte und Geografie, die – über Ungarn hinaus – auf breite Anerkennung stießen (vgl. Seidler 2008). Seinen Interessen entsprechend dürfte seine eigentliche Ambition aber weniger in der Publikation einer politischen Zeitung als mehr in der Herausgabe von Moralischen Wochenschriften und Gelehrten Zeitschriften gelegen haben (vgl. Seidler 2009). Jedenfalls wurden der *Preßburger Zeitung* in den Anfangsjahren zwei Moralische Wochenschriften und eine Gelehrte Zeitschrift als Beilage hinzugefügt, die auf Windisch zurückzuführen sind: *Der Freund der Tugend* (1764–1769), *Der vernünftige Zeitvertreiber* (1770) und das *Preßburgische Wochenblatt zur Ausbreitung der Wissenschaften, und Künste* (1771–1773) (vgl. Tancer 2008, insbesondere 69–148; Tancer 2009). Zuvor war Windisch zudem schon an der Wiener Moralischen Wochenschrift *Die Welt* (1762–1763) beteiligt gewesen (vgl. Seidler 2001: 76–77).

Wenngleich im programmatischen „Avertissement“ betont wurde, sich besonders ungarischen Themen und Inhalten widmen zu wollen, wurde die *Preßburger Zeitung* auf Deutsch publiziert, was nur aus heutiger Perspektive widersprüchlich erscheint. Zum einen war Deutsch im multiethnischen Pressburg die dominante Sprache des Bildungsbürgertums und zum anderen konnte man damit eine über Ungarn hinausgehende breitere Leserschaft erreichen. Zudem dürften für die Sprachwahl auch andere Motive eine Rolle gespielt haben: Jozef Tancer (2008: 17) etwa verweist darauf, dass der deutschen Sprache die Vermittlerrolle der Ideen der (mittel- und norddeutschen) Aufklärung in Ungarn zukam. Im Gegenzug wurden auch die fortschrittlichen Diskussionen von den intellektuellen Eliten Ungarns größtenteils auf Deutsch geführt. Schon 1752 war die *Pressburger Gesellschaft der Freunde der Wissenschaften* erstmals gegründet und – nach kurzer Dauer – 1758/59 wiedergegründet worden; Windisch dürfte in beiden Anläufen initiativ tätig gewesen sein (vgl. Hegedüs 2002: 58). Der erste Paragraph eines frühen Entwurfs zu den Statuten dieser Gesellschaft lautete: „Der Endzweck und die vornehmste Bemühung dießer Gesellschaft soll die Ausübung der deutschen Sprache und der schönen Wissenschaften seyn“ (Hegedüs 2002: 59).²

Die *Pressburger Gesellschaft der Freunde der Wissenschaften* fügt sich in eine Reihe ähnlich gelagerter Sozietätsprojekte innerhalb der Habsburger Monarchie ein, die sich der Pflege der (deutschen) Sprache bzw. der Schönen Wissenschaften widmeten, wobei die Gewichtungen je nach Gesellschaft variierten. In der 1761 in Wien von Joseph Stephan Anton von Riegger gegründeten *Deutschen Gesellschaft* etwa spielte die Pflege der deutschen Sprache die hauptsächliche Rolle (vgl. de Luca 1778: 153) – zumindest wenn man die Antrittsrede der Gesellschaft durch Joseph von Sonnenfels am 2. Jänner 1761 zur Grundlage nimmt (vgl. von Sonnenfels 1761). Ihr zufolge war das Ziel der *Deutschen Gesellschaft* insbesondere die Normierung der deutschen Sprache sowie die Konsolidierung des normierten Deutsch in der gesamten Monarchie. Dieser programmatische Beitrag mit dem Titel *Ankündigung einer deutschen*

²Die Schönen Wissenschaften standen in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts als Synonym für die Gesamtheit verschiedener Disziplinen, zum Beispiel Poesie, Malerei, Bildhauerei, Architektur, Tanzkunst und Rhetorik sowie Geschichte und Archäologie.



Gesellschaft in Wien wurde bei Kurzböck in Wien publiziert und prominent in Johann Christoph Gottscheds Zeitschrift *Das Neueste aus der anmuthigen Gelehrsamkeit*, dem *Journal étranger*, dem *Wienerischen Diarium* und von Friedrich Nicolai rezipiert.³

Sowohl die Pressburger *Gesellschaft der Freunde der Wissenschaften* als auch die Wiener *Deutsche Gesellschaft* dürften 1762 zu einem Ende gekommen sein. Ihre Protagonisten, Windisch auf Pressburger Seite und von Sonnenfels auf Wiener Seite, verfolgten ihre Interessen aber weiterhin – nicht zuletzt im Rahmen der *Preßburger Zeitung* bzw. des *Wienerischen Diariums*. Dem entspricht, dass genau zum Zeitpunkt der Auflösung beider Gesellschaften, im Jahr 1762, im *Wienerischen Diarium* eine wöchentliche Kolumne unter dem Titel „Inländische gelehrte Sachen“ einsetzt, deren Absicht es war, „etwas von Gelehrten Sachen, jedoch nur was die österreichische Länder angeht, und nicht über ein Jahr alt ist, in dem Anhang unsres Zeitungsblattes bekannt zu machen“ (WD 13.03.1762: 9).⁴ Als Äquivalent dazu wurde in der *Preßburger Zeitung* 1765 und 1766 regelmäßig eine einmal wöchentlich erscheinende Kolumne unter dem Titel „Gelehrte Sachen“ publiziert, was dem Interesse von Windisch entsprochen haben dürfte. Dass 1773, nach längerer Pause, noch einmal ein Anlauf genommen wurde und bis 1779 „Gelehrte Anzeigen“ veröffentlicht wurden, dürfte auf den Redakteurswechsel von Windisch zu Mathias Korabinsky zurückzuführen sein. Darauf geben auch die vermehrt geographischen Themen in dieser Rubrik, die mit Korabinskys Interessen übereinstimmen, den Hinweis.⁵

Am Beispiel der „Gelehrten Nachrichten“ lässt sich ablesen, dass die inhaltliche Gestaltung der *Preßburger Zeitung* sowohl von den allgemeinen kulturellen, sozialen und politischen Entwicklungen als auch von den für sie verantwortlichen Personen und deren individuellen Präferenzen geprägt wurde. Darüber hinaus scheint auch die *Wiener Zeitung* einen wichtigen Einflussfaktor darzustellen, indem sie vermutlich als Vorbild für das ungarische Blatt fungiert hat. Dies bestätigt auch Andrea Seidler (2001: 75), die die *Preßburger Zeitung* in ihrem ersten Jahrzehnt „[i]m Schatten des Wienerischen Diariums“ verortet.

Wie Meier (1993: 104) festhält, erlebte dieses Verhältnis über die Zeit aber durchaus Veränderung: So traten ab Mitte der 1770er Jahre in der *Preßburger Zeitung* vermehrt Nachrichten auf, die inhaltlich über das, was im *Wien[n]erischen Diarium* zu lesen war, hinausgingen und im Gegensatz zu früheren Jahren wurden nun eigene, vom *Diarium* unabhängige, manchmal auch entgegengesetzte Interessen und Meinungen vertreten. Bis zum Ende des Jahrhunderts scheint sich das Verhältnis zwischen den beiden Zeitungen demnach umgekehrt und die *Preßburger Zeitung* in gewisser Weise die Vorreiterrolle eingenommen zu haben. Basierend auf einem eigenen Netz von Korrespondenten wurden ab den späten 1780er Jahren Artikel erstveröffentlicht, auf die sich dann auch andere Zeitungen bezogen (vgl. Meier 1993: 104).

In der Literatur wurde diese Entwicklung der *Preßburger Zeitung* vielfach mit einer allgemeinen Autonomiebestrebung vor allem gegenüber dem *Wien[n]erischen Diarium* in

³*Das Neueste aus der anmuthigen Gelehrsamkeit* IV, April 1761, 262–286; *Journal étranger*, November 1761, Paris 1761, 88–102; WD Nr. 25 (27. März 1762), pag. 9; Nicolai 1763, Bd. 9/1, 75–91.

⁴Vom 5. April 1766 bis zum 29. April 1767 erschien der Anhang unter dem Titel „Gelehrte Nachrichten“, setzte nach kurzer Pause vom 13. Juni 1767 bis zum 15. August 1767 ohne namentliche Bezeichnung im „Sonnenabendanhang“ fort und wurde ab 5. September 1767 unter der Überschrift „Gelehrte Beyträge“ veröffentlicht, bis das letzte Stück am 25. Februar 1769 den endgültigen Abschluss bildete (vgl. Fischer 2020: 201–211).

⁵Erschienen von 28. März 1773 bis 6. März 1779.



Verbindung gebracht. Übersehen wird dabei vielleicht, dass auch im *Diarium*, besonders ab den 1780er Jahren in der nunmehr so genannten *Wiener Zeitung*, die stark retardierenden Züge der früheren politischen Berichterstattung zurückgenommen wurden. Erwähnt seien die detaillierten Berichte über das revolutionäre Frankreich und die deutschsprachige Erstpublikation der französischen Erklärung der Menschenrechte von 1789, was am Beginn der Revolution nicht nur von einer Aufgeschlossenheit gegenüber neuen Ideen zeugte, sondern auch in gewissem Widerspruch zur offiziellen Regierungslinie stand (WZ 09.09.1789: 2300–2302; WZ 16.09.1789: 2366–2367). Die Publikation dieser Ereignisse wird vor allem mit der Übernahme der Redaktion der *Wiener Zeitung* durch Konrad Dominik Bartsch in Zusammenhang gebracht, dessen Amtsantritt auch von Karl Gottlieb von Windisch enthusiastisch begrüßt wurde.

Eben erhalte ich Briefe von unserm Bartsch, indem er mir berichtet, daß er seit verflossenen Sonabend die Wienerzeitung zu schreiben übernommen habe. Und nun können wir uns wohl auch von dieser Zeitung die sonst außer den Neuigkeiten, wegen der Public Avertissement gehalten werden mußte, viel Gutes versprechen. (Karl Gottlieb Windisch an Daniel Cornides, Pressburg, am 26. Juli 1782, zit. nach [Seidler 2008](#): 82.)

Windisch erkannte der *Wiener Zeitung* demnach (bis zur Einstellung von Bartsch) keine weitere, über die Verbreitung von amtlichen Bekanntgaben hinausgehende Bedeutung zu und sprach damit den ambivalenten Charakter des Periodikums an: Obwohl in privatem Eigentum, erweckte das *Wien[n]erische Diarium* aufgrund seiner kontinuierlichen Wiedergabe von Hofnachrichten und des Rechts, gewisse amtliche Verlautbarungen zu drucken, den Anschein einer Hofzeitung – ein Schein, der nicht nur wesentlich zu seinem Erfolg, sondern auch zu seinem Einfluss auf andere Zeitungen in den Österreichischen Erblanden beigetragen hat. Diese Eigentümlichkeit des *Diariums*, später der *Wiener Zeitung*, als halboffizielle, „offiziöse“ ([Zenker 1903](#): 5), aber privilegierte Zeitung sollte am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in einem Vortrag der Hofkanzlei prägnant zusammengefasst werden:

Die Wiener Zeitung war bisher niemals eine Hofzeitung und ist es noch nicht, sondern eine bloss privilegierte Privatunternehmung, die aber in Absicht auf ihren Inhalt der genauen Aufsicht und Censur der Landesstellen und rücksichtlich der geheimen Hof- und Staatskanzlei unterliegt.⁶

Die *Wiener Zeitung* als bedeutendste Zeitung der Hauptstadt stand in unmittelbarem Einfluss der Wiener Zensurbehörde. Ihr politisches Gewicht und ihre Bedeutung für die anderen Zeitungen der Habsburger Monarchie wurden durch die Zensurbedingungen entscheidend mitbestimmt. Als etwa die – in Folge des Revolutionsgeschehens – durch das Zensurpatent Kaiser Josephs II. (1781) gelockerten Zensurbestimmungen für in- und ausländische Zeitungen wieder verschärft wurden, wurde in der *Vorschrift für Censoren von Zeitungen und Wochenschriften* des Kabinettschreibens vom 27. März 1792 von Kaiser Franz II. angeordnet, dass die Zensoren

in allen jenen Fällen, wo inländische Thatsachen, künftige Verordnungen und Unternehmungen in das Publikum gebracht werden, solche nicht eher zulassen [sollen], als sie überzeugt sind, daß jenes, was man vorbringt, mit der Wahrheit übereinstimme.⁷

⁶Vortrag der Hofkanzlei, ex 1799, Archiv des k. k. Ministerium des Inneren IV. D. 7 Ghelen, zit. nach [Zenker 1903](#), 18–19.

⁷Franz des Zweyten politische Gesetze und Verordnungen 1817, Gesetze, 30.



Eine „Wahrheit“, die am ehesten in der *Wiener Zeitung* zu finden wäre, „weil das hiesige Diarium gerade nur diejenigen Neuigkeiten aufnimmt, welche die Staatsverwaltung für rätlich hält und also für die übrigen Zeitungen in den Provinzen der sicherste Maßstab sein muss“.⁸ Paradox erscheint, dass – unter den verschärften Zensurbedingungen – mit der Bedeutungssteigerung der *Wiener Zeitung* als „Maßstab“ für die übrigen Zeitungen der Monarchie zugleich eine Bedeutungsreduktion einherging, was die Aktualität ihrer Berichterstattung anbelangt. So brachte Friedrich von Treck 1792 in den *Ursachen, warum wir so viel schlechte Zeitungen in Wien lesen* die missliche Situation auf den Punkt:

Unsre Wiener Zeitung kann nicht intereßieren, weil sie 8 Tage voraus in die Censur geschickt werden muß; indessen werden die Neuigkeiten alle alt, und nur wenige unsrer deutschen Reichszeitungen verdienen Aufmerksamkeit oder befriedigen den Staatsmann. (Treck 1792: 139–149)

Die Zensurbedingungen für die *Preßburger Zeitung* waren ab 1792, mit dem Regierungsantritt von Kaiser Franz II. (I.), andere als jene für die *Wiener Zeitung* – was die *Preßburger Zeitung* für sich zu nutzen wusste. Zwar lag die Kompetenz für die Zeitungszensur in der Monarchie bei der zentralen Polizeihofstelle in Wien, ungarische Zeitungen hatten aber insofern eine Sonderstellung inne, als in ihrem Fall die Ungarische Hofkanzlei in die Entscheidungen eingebunden werden musste. Bei Beschwerden konnte sich die Wiener Polizeihofstelle nicht direkt an die lokale ungarische Polizei wenden, sondern musste den Umweg über die Ungarische Staatskanzlei gehen, was bestenfalls zu Verzögerungen, manchmal zur Missachtung der Einsprüche führte (vgl. Schembor 2010: 107). Die mit der unterschiedlichen Auslegung der Zensur verbundene größere „Freiheit“ ermöglichte der *Preßburger Zeitung* einen gewissen Spielraum für „unabhängige“ Meinungen und größere Aktualität. So vermochte es die *Preßburger Zeitung* am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts – wie es Andrea Reisner und Alfred Schiemer (2016: 109) in Anlehnung an Arthur Schopenhauer schon in Bezug auf die späten 1780er Jahre der *Wiener Zeitung* beobachtet haben – „über den Schatten der Tagespublizistik zu springen und mehr zu sein als Sekundenzeiger der Geschichte“.⁹

3. FORMALER VERGLEICH VON *PRESSBURGER ZEITUNG* UND *WIENER ZEITUNG*

Was die äußere Erscheinungsform der *Preßburger Zeitung* und der *Wiener Zeitung* anbelangt, sind folgende Gemeinsamkeiten auszumachen: Beide Medien wurden im 18. Jahrhundert zunächst mittwochs und samstags¹⁰ herausgegeben, in einem relativ kleinen Quartformat, wenn auch das *Diarium* im Normalfall¹¹ ca. 23 cm hoch und 16 cm breit war und die *Preßburger*

⁸ÖStA, AVA, PHSt. 852/1796; vgl. Schembor 2010, 125–126.

⁹Das Originalzitat von Arthur Schopenhauer 1851, Bd. 2, Kap. 19, § 238, lautet: „Die Zeitungen sind der Sekundenzeiger der Geschichte. Derselbe ist meistens nicht nur von anderem Metalle als die beiden anderen, sondern geht auch selten richtig.“

¹⁰Erst ab dem 22. Mai 1792 erscheint die *Preßburger Zeitung* immer Dienstag und Freitag, daher stets einen Tag vor der *Wiener Zeitung*.

¹¹Eine Ausnahme bilden die frühen Ausgaben von 1703 und die späten ab 1794, die in Höhe und Breite etwa 10 cm größer sind.



Zeitung mit 21 mal 17 cm ein wenig niedriger und breiter ausfiel (vgl. Meier 1993: 103). Dieser minimale Unterschied in den Außenmaßen mag Leser*innen des 18. Jahrhunderts während ihrer Lektüre aber gar nicht aufgefallen sein. Was ihnen im haptischen Umgang mit der *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* hingegen nur schwerlich entgangen sein kann, ist der Unterschied der beiden Periodika in ihrem Umfang: Wurden von der *Wiener Zeitung* in ihren Anfangsjahren noch bloß achtseitige Ausgaben gedruckt, wuchs sie ab Ende der 1770er Jahre auf rund 20 Seiten pro Ausgabe an und umfasste gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts teils sogar über 40 Seiten. Die *Preßburger Zeitung* hingegen nahm über die Jahre ihres Bestehens hinweg zwar ebenfalls an Umfang zu und beinhaltete um 1800 statt der anfänglichen vier nun rund acht Seiten, verblieb aber dennoch vergleichsweise bei nur ungefähr jeweils einem Viertel oder maximal einem Drittel der Seiten des *Diariums*.¹² Demnach konnte die *Wiener Zeitung* bereits aus rein platztechnischen Gründen stets mehr Inhalte kommunizieren als die *Preßburger Zeitung*.

Weitere Gemeinsamkeiten zeigen sich dahingegen auf der Ebene der Gestaltung: In beiden untersuchten Periodika liegt eine zweiseitige Seitenteilung¹³ mit größtenteils bildlosen und eng aneinander gedrängten Nachrichtenblöcken vor, deren Frakturdruck nur vereinzelt durch Antiqua-Einsprengsel¹⁴ unterbrochen wird. Einen Eindruck hiervon gibt [Abbildung 1](#), in der die Ausgaben vom 29. Juni 1765 einander exemplarisch gegenüberstehen.

Der Titelkopf der *Preßburger Zeitung* vom 29. Juni 1765 erscheint hierin weitaus schmuckloser als jener des *Wienerischen Diariums*¹⁵ und vermisst neben einem kunstvollen Emblem auch die Verbalisierung des kaiserlich-königlichen Privilegs. Der in Kapitel 2 erwähnte Sonderstatus des *Diariums* ist 1765 demnach bereits auf der Titelseite des Mediums eingeschrieben und unterscheidet es von der zeitgleich herausgegebenen *Preßburger Zeitung*. In den darauffolgenden Jahrzehnten verringern sich derartige visuelle Unterschiede jedoch, wie [Abbildung 2](#) zeigt.

Statt des relativ schlichten Titelkopfes kommen hier über die Dekaden hinweg nun vermehrt grafische Schmuckelemente zum Einsatz. Dabei werden zunehmend auch Symbole mit staatlichem Bezug, wie das Wappen des Königreich Ungarns, in den Titelkopf der *Preßburger Zeitung* integriert und diese ab 1790 sogar „[m]it k. k. allergnädigster Freiheit“ herausgegeben, womit auch dieser visuelle Unterschied als überwunden gelten kann. Die sich verändernden Titelköpfe sind nicht nur dem Zeitgeschmack geschuldet, sondern genauso Ausdruck von einem Zuwachs an Prestige und Relevanz des Mediums gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts, wie ihn Jörg Meier (1993: 104) beobachtet:

In den ersten 15 Jahren ihres Bestehens entnahm die [Preßburger] Zeitung ihre Berichte vor allem fremden Presseorganen und folgte in Form und Stil noch bis 1774 weitgehend dem „Wienerischen Diarium“ [...]. Doch [sie] wurde zunehmend selbstständiger und brachte, begünstigt durch ihre

¹²Vgl. die folgenden drei exemplarischen Zeitungsausgaben und ihren Seitenumfang im Vergleich: 16.05.1772: 16 Seiten WD versus 4 Seiten PZ; 01.01.1780: 24 Seiten WZ versus 8 Seiten PZ; 04.02.1792: 32 Seiten WZ versus 8 Seiten PZ.

¹³Der markanteste Eingriff in das Layout des *Diariums* erfolgte mit dem Verlegerwechsel von Schönwetter zu Johann Peter van Ghelen: Ab dem 3. Jänner 1722 wurden die redaktionellen Seiten der Zeitung in zwei Spalten gesetzt. Diese Formatierung betraf davor nur Listen oder Tabellen.

¹⁴Bezüglich des Antiquagebrauchs im *Wien[n]erischen Diarium* vgl. Rastinger (2021).

¹⁵Mit den Veränderungen der Titelköpfe des *Wien[n]erischen Diariums* beschäftigen sich Mader-Kratky, Scheutz und Resch (2019: 105–110).





Abb. 2. Drei ausgewählte Titelköpfe der Pressburger Zeitung von 1767, 1773 und 1790



Variation: So stellte etwa die *Wiener Zeitung* am 16. März 1782 die Inlandsnachrichten vor die ausländische Berichterstattung, worauf die *Preßburger Zeitung* am 27. April 1782 ihre Kategorie der „Erbländischen Vorfälle“ ebenfalls vorzog und vor den Rubriken „Ausländische Nachrichten“ und „Inländische Begebenheiten“ positionierte.

Kurz darauf ist dann jedoch sehr wohl eine Distanzierung vom Wiener Vorbild beobachtbar: Am 8. Mai 1782 wurden die ausländischen Nachrichten an die Spitze der *Preßburger Zeitung* zurückverschoben. Schon mit 1. Jänner 1783 aber druckt das ungarische Periodikum die „Inländischen Begebenheiten“ und „Erbländischen Nachrichten“ schließlich wieder vor den „Ausländischen Vorfällen“ und folgt damit erneut dem von der *Wiener Zeitung* vorgegebenen Leitbild. Gesamt betrachtet findet somit – abgesehen von vereinzelt formalen Emanzipationsversuchen der *Preßburger Zeitung* – vor allem die Bestätigung, was [Andrea Seidler \(2001: 78\)](#) bereits festgehalten hat:

Der Aufbau der „Preßburger Zeitung“ ist eindeutig dem des „Wienerischen Diariums“ nachempfunden, wenngleich das zu jener Zeit bereits etablierte und seit über einem halben Jahrhundert bestehende Wiener Vorbild das Preßburger Periodikum an Umfang und inhaltlicher Vielfalt bei Weitem übertraf.

4. EXPLIZITE WECHSELSEITIGE VERWEISE ZWISCHEN WIENER UND PRESSBURGER ZEITUNG

Dass die beiden frühneuzeitlichen Periodika nicht nur formal ähnlich gestaltet waren, sondern auch die Inhalte des jeweils anderen Mediums aufmerksam verfolgten, dokumentieren die wechselseitigen Referenzen der *Wiener* und der *Preßburger Zeitung*, die mit Hilfe einer Volltextsuche ermittelt werden können. In ANNO, im DIGITARIUM und im DiFMOE finden sich insgesamt 23 Textpassagen,¹⁸ in welchen jeweils eines der beiden Blätter explizit auf das andere Bezug nimmt. Spannend an dieser digital nachzeichenbaren Verbindung ist dabei insbesondere ihre Asymmetrie: Während die *Wiener Zeitung* „nur“ fünfmal von der „Preßburger Zeitung“, „Preßburger=zeitung“ oder „Preßburger=Zeitung“ schreibt, erwähnt diese das „Wiener Diarium“ beziehungsweise die „Wiener=Zeitung“¹⁹ mit 18 gefundenen Belegen deutlich häufiger.

Eine ähnliche Ungleichheit zwischen den beiden Medien offenbart sich außerdem, wenn man die identifizierten Textstellen mithilfe von Close Reading den Kategorien „abwertende bzw. negative Nennung“, „aufwertende bzw. positive Nennung“ oder „wertfreie bzw. neutrale Nennung“ zuordnet (vgl. [Tabelle 1](#)).

Während in der *Preßburger Zeitung* mit 13 Belegen primär wertfrei auf die *Wiener Zeitung* referenziert wird und an zweiter Stelle die positiven Nennungen rangieren, überwiegen in der *Wiener Zeitung* mit drei von fünf Belegen knapp die negativen Verweise auf das zeitgleich erscheinende Blatt aus Ungarn. Wirft man – um über dieses ungleiche Verhältnis mehr zu

¹⁸Aufgrund der variablen Qualität der Volltexte (vgl. Kapitel 1) erheben die gefundenen Textstellen keinen Anspruch auf Vollständigkeit.

¹⁹Als weitere Benennungen finden sich in der *Preßburger Zeitung* darüber hinaus die Termini „Wienerisches Diarium“, „Wiener=Diarium“, „Diarium“ und „Wiener Zeitung“. Der gewählte Name steht dabei immer im Einklang mit der jeweils aktuellen Selbstbezeichnung des referierten Mediums.



Tabelle 1. Explizite Referenzen der *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* aufeinander

Wertung	<i>Preßburger Zeitung</i> über <i>Wiener Zeitung</i>	<i>Wiener Zeitung</i> über <i>Preßburger Zeitung</i>
Positiv	3	2
Neutral	13	0
Negativ	2	3

erfahren – zuerst einen Blick auf jene Textstellen, in denen die *Preßburger Zeitung* positiv von der *Wiener Zeitung* spricht, so wird augenscheinlich, dass hier sowohl die Beliebtheit des Mediums („Das beliebte Wiener Diarium“, PZ 03.08.1774: 6) als auch insbesondere dessen Authentizität in den Vordergrund gestellt wird.

Doch, so wie es nur ein blosses Gerücht zu seyn scheint, so kann es doch noch Wahrheit werden, weil in den Hofberichten, die in der 38 Beylage der **Wiener Zeitung** erschienen, ausdrücklich von dem in die Moldau anrückenden Tartar=Clan [. . .] die Anzeige gemacht wurde. (PZ 30.07.1788: 2–3; Hervorhebung hier und im Folgenden durch die Autorinnen)

Schließlich wird der Berichterstattung durch die *Wiener Zeitung* in der obigen Textstelle ein fester Wahrheitsgehalt zugesprochen, welcher sich auch bei anderen unsicheren Nachrichten als nutzbringend erweist: „Bey diesen Muthmassungen von der Fortdauer des Friedens, kommt uns am besten die letzte **Wiener=Zeitung** zu statten; die den Frieden so gut als gewiß ansieht“ (PZ 12.01.1785: 3–4). In den Belegen innerhalb der *Preßburger Zeitung* findet sich demnach eine deutliche Wertschätzung des Konkurrenzblatts als verlässliche Quelle zur Reduktion von Unklarheiten und Unwahrheiten in der eigenen Berichterstattung.²⁰

Bei den einzigen beiden Textstellen, in welchen sich die *Wiener Zeitung* positiv über die *Preßburger Zeitung* äußert, handelt es sich demgegenüber um Teile von Inseraten – daher um Zuschreibungen, welche (vielleicht sogar von Mitarbeitenden der *Preßburger Zeitung* selbst in Auftrag gegeben) ihren positiven Charakter einzig ihrem Werbezweck zu verdanken haben (vgl. WZ 22.09.1790: 15–16; WZ 19.05.1798: 18–19). Lobende Aussagen, wie jene, dass sich die *Preßburger Zeitung* „durch Lieferung vieler Original Nachrichten und unentgeltlicher Zugabe der Neuwieder Zeitung vor allen unterscheidet“ (WZ 22.09.1790: 15–16), dürfen insofern nicht als Ausdruck der Wertschätzung durch die Verantwortlichen der *Wiener Zeitung* selbst gelesen werden. Vielmehr scheint bei dieser Personengruppe nämlich eine negative Einstellung gegenüber der *Preßburger Zeitung* vorgeherrscht zu haben, wie mehrere kritische Erwähnungen des Periodikums in ANNO und im DIGITARIUM bezeugen. So wird etwa sowohl eine „Anmerkung der Preßburgerzeitung“ über die Grundlage für ein langes und gesundes Leben als

²⁰Eine weitere Textstelle, die diese Argumentation stützt, findet sich in der Ausgabe vom 14. Oktober 1786: „Noch weiß man nicht, was man aus diesem Abdi Bassa machen soll; denn nach der **Wiener=Zeitung** vom 30. Sept. ist er vielmehr zu Silistria, als Statthalter angestellt“ (PZ 14.10.1786: 1–2). Auch hier dient die *Wiener Zeitung* als Hilfsmittel dafür, den Wahrheitsgehalt eigener Nachrichten abschätzen zu können.



„grundfalsch“ bezeichnet und sogleich korrigiert,²¹ als auch ein aus dem ungarischen Blatt entlehnter Bericht als eine von mehreren „unächten Nachrichten“ eingeordnet.²² Von dem hohen Maß an Authentizität und Beliebtheit, welches die *Preßburger Zeitung* dem *Diarium* zuspricht, fehlt also umgekehrt jegliche Spur: Nicht nur nimmt die *Wiener Zeitung* weitaus weniger häufig explizit Bezug auf das ungarische Periodikum, sondern sie stellt auch in der Mehrheit ihrer Referenzen dessen Glaubwürdigkeit und Wahrheitsgehalt infrage – eine Einstellung, die möglicherweise auch die Rezipient*innen der beiden Zeitungen in ihrer Lektüre geprägt haben könnte, wie der folgende, im Jahre 1765 abgedruckte²³ Leserbrief indiziert:

Würde also auch dem Gelehrten in der **Preßburger Zeitung** des 19ten Stücks besser angestanden haben mit gründlichen Versuchen seine Meinung zu behaupten, als mit Schmähworten und Narren um sich zu werfen; worzu ihm das schöne Beyspiel in der **Wiener Zeitung** Nro. 18 die beste Gelegenheit hätte geben können, allwo mit wenig Worten, wo nicht alles, doch vieles auf eine anständige und gründliche Art gesagt worden. (WD 27.04.1765: 9–10)

In dieser Reaktion auf einen die Chemie betreffenden Beitrag unter dem Titel „Gelehrte Sachen“²⁴ spiegelt sich das hierarchische Verhältnis, in welchem *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts mehrfach stehen, besonders deutlich wider: Der *Wiener Zeitung* scheint der Status eines Leitmediums zugeschrieben zu werden, an welchem sich die Inhalte und Form der *Preßburger Zeitung* optimalerweise orientieren sollten. Gleichzeitig finden sich in der *Preßburger Zeitung* aber auch vereinzelt kritische Worte über die *Wiener Zeitung*, woran ersichtlich wird, dass sich das Verhältnis der beiden Periodika letztlich doch nicht ganz so einseitig gestaltet.

Am verflossenen Montag, den 8ten dieses, ist hier eine besondere Beylage zur **Wiener Zeitung** erschienen, in welcher aber nichts besonderes angezeigt wird, und blos die Vorrückung der vereinigten Kaiserl. Königl. Preußischen Armee (welche wir in unsern Blatte bereits angezeigt haben) enthält. (PZ 12.10.1792: 3)

²¹„Die Verschiedenheit der Himmelsgegend, der Nahrung und Bequemlichkeit, hat keinen Einfluß auf die Dauer des Lebens. Diejenigen, welche von rohem Fleische oder von Wurzeln sich ernähren, leben eben so lange, als die, welche Brod und wohlzugerichtete Speisen geniessen. * Dies ist die Anmerkung der **Preßburgerzeitung**. Sie ist aber grundfalsch. Die Dauer des Lebens kömmt meistens auf den Bau des Körpers an; die Erfahrung lehrt, daß man ihn durch unrichtige Lebensart schwächen, zerstören und umwerfen kann. Vielleicht hat unter etwelchen Tausenden in dieser Gegend nur dieser einzige den hohen Grad des Alters erlangt, obwohl die Uebringen mit ihm in der Nahrung gleich gelebet haben. Sollte man derowegen a particulari ad universale gleich einen Schluß machen dürfen?“ (WD 05.04.1766: 5)

²²„Wir müssen, um die Ehre unseres hiesigen k. k. Astronomes, Herrn Abtes Maximilian Hell, schuldigermassen zu retten, dem geneigten Publikum zur Nachricht eröffnen, daß die in der vorigen Zeitung eingeschaltete Nachlese der letzthin fürgewesten Finsterniß, nicht aus der Feder dieses gelehrten Mannes, sondern aus der **Preßburger Zeitung** entlehnt worden sey; um aber künftig unsere Leser vor dergleichen unächten Nachrichten sicher zu stellen, wird man sich hierfür angelegen seyn lassen, keine astronomische Beobachtung mehr unseren Blättern einzuverleiben, sie habe dann vorher eine Prüfung von unserem würdigen Herrn Abte Hell ausgestanden.“ (WZ 31.10.1781: 10)

²³Bereits der Abdruck dieses (möglicherweise auch fingierten) Briefes sagt viel über das Verhältnis von *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* aus.

²⁴Der Beitrag findet sich interessanterweise zuerst in der *Preßburger Zeitung* vom 6. März 1765, wo man ihn auf Anraten seines Verfassers nach „dem schönen Beyspiele der Wiener Nachrichten“ (PZ 06.03.1765: 5) publiziert, er wird aber am 9. März 1765 schließlich ebenfalls im Anhang des *Diariums* gedruckt.



Dieser Lieutenant Arming von Becsey=Husaren, ist in der **Wiener=Zeitung** Nr. 68. S. 2471. Z. 20 nach einer falschen ungarischen Aussprache und Schreibart, Armeni eingedruckt worden. (PZ 09.09.1794: 9)

Zum einen wird der *Wiener Zeitung* hier Inhaltslosigkeit und – im Vergleich zur eigenen Berichterstattung – niedrige Aktualität zugeschrieben und zum anderen bemängelt man ihre fehlende Faktentreue in Bezug auf einen Eigennamen. Obwohl alle eine Wertung beinhaltenen Referenzen der *Preßburger Zeitung* auf die *Wiener Zeitung* vor dem Jahr 1792 durchwegs positiv ausgefallen sind, findet sich hier, gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts, also ein wesentlich kritischerer Umgang mit dem in der Hauptstadt herausgegebenen Medium. Ein möglicher Grund hierfür könnte der bereits erwähnte Prestigezuwachs der *Preßburger Zeitung* sein, aufgrund dessen diese sich gegenüber der *Wiener Zeitung* nun stärker zu behaupten wagt. Ob dies wirklich der Fall war, ist retrospektiv jedoch nur schwer nachvollziehbar. Sicher ist lediglich, dass man die Zeitungslandschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts wohl nicht nur als statische Hierarchie mit der *Wiener Zeitung* in einer unbestrittenen Vorreiterposition lesen darf, sondern sich diese viel eher dynamisch und in Abhängigkeit von den jeweiligen Akteuren entwickelt.

Das Netz zwischen den beiden Periodika scheint zudem nicht nur auf einer mit Bewertungen aufgeladenen Metaebene, sondern auch auf der inhaltlichen Ebene eng gespannt zu sein. Bei 13 der gefundenen 23 Referenzen handelt es sich nämlich um wertfreie Nennungen, durch welche die Schreibenden der *Preßburger Zeitung* insbesondere die Entlehntheit der von ihr abgedruckten Nachrichten aus der *Wiener Zeitung* sprachlich kennzeichnen. So wird etwa in sieben Belegen der *Preßburger Zeitung* aus den Jahren 1784 und 1785²⁵ eine Art Kürzestform des Quellenverweises eingesetzt, welche nachstehendem Beispiel folgt: „Vereinigte Niederlande (aus der **Wiener=Zeitung**). Aus dem Haag vernimmt man, daß [...]“ (PZ 18.12.1784: 5–6). Außerdem finden sich neben derart knappen Klammersausdrücken auch längere Passagen, in denen auf die *Wiener Zeitung* als Quelle verwiesen wird. Beispielsweise leitet die folgende Phrase ein Direktzitat der Ausgabe vom 4. August 1790 ein: „Preßburg. Die in unserm letzten Blatte mitgetheilte Nachricht, daß die Friedenspreliminarien von Reichenbach bereits in Wien eingetroffen sind, wird durch die **Wiener Zeitung** folgendermaßen bestätigt: [...]“ (PZ 07.08.1790: 1).²⁶

Unabhängig von der Form der Quellenangabe lässt sich in all diesen Fällen dasselbe Phänomen beobachten, nämlich, dass die *Preßburger Zeitung* Bestandteile der *Wiener Zeitung* übernimmt und diese wortgleich abdruckt. Diese Begebenheit fällt nicht nur heute auf, sondern ist auch früheren Lesenden nicht entgangen, wie Ausschnitte aus zwei, im Inseratenteil der *Preßburger Zeitung* abgedruckten Briefen beweisen:

Die Geschichte des neulich verstorbenen gelehrten Herrn du Val, die erstlich im **Wiener Diarium**, hernach auch in der hiesigen **Preßburger Zeitung** zu lesen war (den Gelehrten war sie schon lang aus Hrn Keyzers Reisen und Hrn. Prof. Joachims Münzkabinett bekannt) und die vielleicht den wenigsten Zeitungslesern interessant genug erschienen, ist Euren Gnaden sehr auffallend gewesen. (PZ 22.11.1775: 6–7)

²⁵Konkret handelt es sich um folgende Textstellen: PZ 15.12.1784: 7–8; PZ 18.12.1784: 5–6; PZ 09.12.1784: 4–5; PZ 05.01.1785: 2–4; PZ 08.01.1785: 2.

²⁶Hier zieht die *Preßburger Zeitung* erneut Nutzen aus ihrem Konkurrenzmedium: Sie bestätigt mit seiner Hilfe die Wahrheit ihrer eigenen Nachrichten.



Schreiben eines jungen Frauenzimmers in P. an ihre gute Freundin. Liebes Lottchen, Ich danke dir für das 30ste Stück der **Presburger=Zeitung**. Die Begebenheit, welche du mir insonderheit hast mittheilen wollen, daß in London fünf junge Herren um ein Frauenzimmer gewürfelt, und daß ein Comtoirbedienter selbiges gewonnen hat, steht auch im **Wiener=Diarium**, unter dem Artikel Allerley. (PZ 19.04.1777: 6-7)

In beiden Textstellen findet die inhaltliche Übereinstimmung verschiedener Zeitungen nebenbei und – im Kontrast zu heutigen Medienansprüchen – ohne negative Wertung Erwähnung und lässt Entlehnungspraktiken als alltäglichen Bestandteil der Zeitungslandschaft und Erfahrungswelt des 18. Jahrhunderts erscheinen. Was man trotz dieser Beiläufigkeit aber nicht annehmen darf, ist, dass die im 18. Jahrhundert gängigen inhaltlichen Übernahmen das Ergebnis unreflektierter Kopierprozesse sind. Vermutlich wurden damals sehr wohl genaue(re) Überlegungen zur Sinnhaftigkeit der einzelnen Entlehnungen angestellt – wie etwa im folgenden Fall von Seiten der *Preßburger Zeitung*:

Herr von Trattner, dermaliger Besitzer desselben, hat itzo eine Nachricht davon herausgegeben, die dem **Diarium** beygelegt worden, und zu allgemein bekannt ist, als daß sie hier nochmals abgedruckt werden soll. (PZ 17.02.1779: 2-3)

Über derartige Textstellen zeichnen sich diverse, im Hintergrund der Zeitungsproduktion getroffene, ansonsten nur schwer zugängliche Entscheidungen an der Textoberfläche ab und können auf diese Weise über das historische Pressewesen Aufschluss geben. So hat sich etwa gezeigt, dass die gefundenen expliziten Referenzen auf eine Asymmetrie zwischen *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* hindeuten, indem ersteres Medium zweiteres deutlich weniger zitiert und weitaus kritischer betrachtet.

Neben den beispielhaft angeführten Passagen, in welchen explizit auf das jeweils andere Medium Bezug genommen wird, gibt es aber auch jene impliziten Verweismomente, in denen man sich zwar gegenseitig zitiert oder paraphrasiert, jedoch ohne die jeweilige Quelle namentlich zu nennen. Indem man – wie im folgenden Abschnitt – auch diese Textstellen einbezieht, kann ein noch umfassenderes Verständnis des historischen Verhältnisses von *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* erlangt werden.

5. IMPLIZITE BEZÜGE ZWISCHEN WIENER ZEITUNG UND PRESSBURGER ZEITUNG

Während explizite wechselseitige Verweise zwischen *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* mithilfe einer geringen Menge ausgewählter Suchanfragen²⁷ online auffindbar waren, gestaltete sich die digitale Suche nach impliziten Bezügen zwischen den beiden Periodika aufgrund von starker sprachlicher Variation als deutlich herausfordernder. Um dieser Problematik entgegenzuwirken, kam eine Kombination aus manuellem Close Reading und digitalem Distant Reading zur Anwendung: Zuerst wurden willkürlich drei Tage aus drei verschiedenen Dekaden – in vorliegendem Fall: 16.05.1772, 01.01.1780 und 04.02.1792 – als Ausgangspunkte für die Erhebung bestimmt und

²⁷Genauer wurde nach den Titeln der Zeitungen und möglichen orthografischen und grammatikalischen Varianten dieser – wie etwa „Diarii“ statt „Diarium“ oder „Pressburger Zeitung“ statt „Preßburger Zeitung“ – gesucht.



darauflin die an diesen Tagen erschienenen Ausgaben der *Preßburger* sowie der *Wiener Zeitung* über Close Reading exzerpiert.²⁸ Dabei war es das Ziel, eine möglichst hohe Anzahl effektiver²⁹ Suchbegriffe zu sammeln, welche in einem zweiten Schritt dann über ein Distant-Reading-Verfahren mit dem jeweils anderen Periodikum abgeglichen – das heißt, in dessen digitalen Volltexten³⁰ gesucht – wurden. Aus der *Wiener Zeitung* erhobene Inhalte dienten demnach als Grundlage für die Volltextsuche im DiFMOE, während Nachrichten aus der *Preßburger Zeitung* als Basis für Recherchen im DIGITARIUM und in ANNO herangezogen wurden.

Dieses Vorgehen erfordert zwar einen relativ hohen Zeitaufwand,³¹ birgt jedoch hohes Erkenntnispotenzial in sich, indem sowohl inhaltlich-thematische als auch sprachliche Parallelen und Unterschiede zwischen der *Preßburger* und der *Wiener Zeitung* wirksam aufgedeckt werden können. Bereits mithilfe einer vergleichsweise kleinen Stichprobe von nur sechs Zeitungsausgaben als Ausgangspunkt hat sich eine Vielzahl und Vielfalt an impliziten Bezügen zwischen den analysierten Periodika eruieren lassen. Obwohl diese Ergebnisse nur als punktuelle Tiefenbohrungen und sicherlich nicht als repräsentativ für die gesamten drei Dekaden verstanden werden dürfen, bieten sie dennoch einen weiteren spannenden Einblick in die komplexen intertextuellen Relationen innerhalb der frühneuzeitlichen Zeitungslandschaft.

So zeigt sich etwa, dass *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* etliche Male von denselben Ereignissen berichten, der Zeitpunkt ihrer Berichterstattung sowie das Ausmaß an sprachlicher Ähnlichkeit zueinander aber variieren können. Gerade in Bezug auf letzteren Punkt reicht das Spektrum dabei von vollkommen wortgleichen Meldungen bis hin zu Nachrichten, die inhaltlich zwar grob übereinstimmen, sprachlich jedoch gänzlich anders vermittelt werden. Unabhängig von dieser Variation kann aber jedenfalls festgehalten werden, dass von den Zeitungsschreibern in Wien und Pressburg vielfach ähnliche Themen als für ihr Lesepublikum erwähnenswert empfunden wurden. In den ausgewählten Zeiträumen berichten etwa beide Periodika von der Erkrankung und Genesung des Herzogs Modena (WZ 08.12.1779: 4; WZ 11.12.1779: 4; WZ 01.01.1780: 4; PZ 01.01.1780: 5), der Reiseroute eines türkischen Gesandten (WZ 28.01.1792: 239–240; PZ 04.02.1792: 101, 104), einem Feuer im Londoner Pantheon (WZ 04.02.1792: 308; PZ 11.02.1792: 127) oder der unabsichtlichen Vergiftung mehrerer Standespersonen (WD 29.12.1779: 7; PZ 01.01.1780: 4–5) – um nur einige aufgedeckte Übereinstimmungen zu nennen. Derartige inhaltliche Parallelen lassen sich für alle sechs gewählten Ausgaben beobachten.

Hervorzuheben ist dabei, dass die thematischen Überschneidungen stark mit einer sprachlichen Ähnlichkeit einhergehen: In mehr als der Hälfte aller Fälle, in denen die *Wiener* und die *Preßburger Zeitung* über dieselben Ereignisse berichten, stimmen die betreffenden Nachrichten (fast) Wort für Wort miteinander überein. Erklärbar sind derartige Entsprechungen laut [Andrea Seidler \(2001: 78\)](#) auf zwei Arten: nämlich entweder darüber, „dass die Herausgeber

²⁸Dies betrifft nur Nachrichten im eigentlichen Sinne, Inserate und Listen dahingegen sind aufgrund ihres immanenten Ortsbezuges vom Vergleich ausgeschlossen.

²⁹Gemeint ist hiermit die Tatsache, dass bestimmte Begriffe, wie „haben“ oder „und“, für einen bestimmten Text semantisch deutlich weniger distinktiv sind als beispielsweise Wörter wie „Witterung“ und „Erdbeben“ oder Eigennamen.

³⁰Um irrelevante Ergebnisse zu minimieren, wurde das durchsuchte Material hierbei mithilfe von Filtern auf jene Ausgaben begrenzt, die rund drei Monate vor bis rund drei Monate nach dem jeweiligen Ausgangszeitpunkt veröffentlicht wurden.

³¹Hieraus erklärt sich auch die vergleichsweise kleine Stichprobe von 2×3 Zeitungsausgaben.



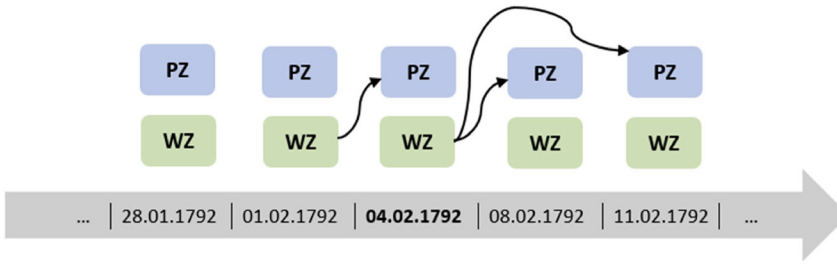


Abb. 3. Zeitlicher Verlauf der (relativ) wortgleichen Verweise, ausgehend vom 04.02.1792

beider Zeitungen voneinander abschrieben oder [darüber,] dass sie [...] ihre Berichte von denselben Korrespondenten oder Reisenden bezogen haben“. Welche dieser beiden Begründungen jeweils zutreffend ist, lässt sich aufgrund der spärlichen Quellenlage zur frühneuzeitlichen Nachrichtenbeschaffung aber nur schwer entscheiden (vgl. Seidler 2001: 78).

Wichtige Hinweise kann möglicherweise die Zeitlichkeit der gedruckten Zeitungsausgaben liefern. So zeichnet sich etwa in dem für diesen Beitrag untersuchten Textmaterial ein deutliches Muster ab, nach welchem Teile einer Ausgabe des *Wienerischen Diariums* beziehungsweise der *Wiener Zeitung* fast immer wortwörtlich mit Teilen der darauffolgenden – daher drei Tage später erscheinenden – Ausgabe der *Preßburger Zeitung* übereinstimmen. Eine beispielhafte Visualisierung dieses Phänomens bietet [Abbildung 3](#), in welcher die Ausgaben vom 4. Februar 1792 als Ausgangspunkt dienen und Fälle von wortgleichen Textstellen durch Pfeile gekennzeichnet sind.

Dieses durchwegs – nämlich für fünf der sechs Ausgaben – beobachtbare Phänomen spricht deutlich für eine Entlehnungspraxis, im Rahmen derer die Verantwortlichen der *Preßburger Zeitung* auf die *Wiener Zeitung* zurückgreifen. Diese Annahme wird möglicherweise auch dadurch gestützt, dass nicht nur die Berichte an sich nachgedruckt werden, sondern ebenso Beifügungen, die aus der Feder der Wiener Zeitungsschreiber stammen könnten.³² Exemplarisch hierfür lassen sich etwa die folgenden beiden Belege anführen, welche jeweils sowohl in der *Wiener Zeitung* als auch, wenige Tage später, in der *Preßburger Zeitung* auffindbar sind.

Endlich ist die Festung Krackau an die rußische kais. Völker übergegangen, eine Nachricht die so zuverlässig ist, daß man sogar die dießfälligen Vergleichspunkten zwischen dem rußisch kaiserl. Generalmajor Hrn Grafen Suworow, und dem dasigen Conföderirten Befehlshaber Hrn. von Choisy, wie sie den 23sten April berichtet worden, buchstäblich mittheilen kann. Sie lauten folgender Gestalten: [...] (WD 13.05.1772: 21 / PZ 16.05.1772: 2)

Die neulich mitgetheilte Nachricht, daß der hiesige portugiesische Minister bey dem Künstler Pompeus Battoni ein Gemälde, das Herz Jesu vorstellend, für seine Königin bestellt habe, wird nunmehr als ungegründet widersprochen. (WZ 01.01.1780: 4 / PZ 05.01.1780: 2)

Insbesondere das zweite Beispiel veranschaulicht dabei die Konsistenz der vermeintlichen Kopierpraxis der *Preßburger Zeitung* im 18. Jahrhundert. Bei näherer Beschäftigung lässt sich nämlich feststellen, dass die im Jänner 1780 zurückgenommene Nachricht über den

³²Dass in der *Wiener Zeitung* eigens verfasste Anmerkungen zur Aktualität und Authentizität der berichteten Nachrichten zu finden sind, kann jedenfalls als gesichert gelten – vgl. hierfür auch [Resch und Rastinger \(im Druck\)](#).



portugiesischen Minister im Dezember 1779 ebenfalls zuerst im *Diarium* (WD 25.12.1779: 3–4) und erst kurz darauf wortgleich in der *Preßburger Zeitung* (PZ 29.12.1779: 4) erschienen ist. Das in der untersuchten Stichprobe festgestellte zeitliche Muster setzt sich also auch außerhalb dieser fort. Diese und andere Beobachtungen sprechen stark für die von [Andrea Seidler \(2001: 78\)](#) aufgestellte These, dass die Herausgeber der *Preßburger Zeitung* in einigen Fällen „tatsächlich reine Kopierarbeit geleistet haben [dürften]“.

Was bedeutet dies aber für die *Preßburger Zeitung*? Jedenfalls handelt es sich bei obiger Einordnung nicht um eine Abwertung des Periodikums gegenüber der *Wiener Zeitung*, denn im Gegensatz zur heutigen Medienwelt waren unmarkierte Übernahmen fremden Materials in der frühen Neuzeit weniger Qualitätsmängel als vielmehr basaler Bestandteil damaliger Zeitungsproduktion. Der Beruf des „Zeitungsschreibers“ oder „Journalisten“ im modernen Sinne existierte etwa im Pressburg der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts schließlich noch nicht, wie [Meier \(1993: 109–110\)](#) festhält:

Vor allem Druckereibesitzer, Gelehrte, Juristen oder Geistliche waren für die Produktion der Zeitungen, die sich größtenteils in Partei- oder Privatbesitz befanden, verantwortlich, und erst in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts können, zumindest bei den größeren Zeitungen Preßburgs, Ansätze eines beginnenden Journalistenstandes beobachtet werden.

[Trenck \(1792: 141\)](#) zufolge war die Aufgabe damaliger „Zeitungsschreiber“ zudem vermutlich weniger das Schreiben als primär das Sammeln zu druckender Nachrichten: „Hauptsächlich muß der Zeitungsschreiber gute, treue, aufgeklärte Correspondenten suchen.“ Dieses Unterfangen birgt aber, gerade für „junge“ Medien wie die *Preßburger Zeitung*, sicherlich eine gewisse Herausforderung in sich, denn „[d]ergleichen Hülfe fordert [...] gute Bezahlung“ ([Trenck 1792: 141](#)). Hinzu kommen andere Schwierigkeiten frühneuzeitlicher Zeitungsproduktion, wie sie etwa [Seidler \(2001: 82\)](#) berichtet:

Die Herausgabe einer Zeitung im 18. Jahrhundert war [...] generell mit Kopierarbeit verbunden. Die Versorgung mit Nachrichten durch ein verlässliches Korrespondentennetzwerk war noch nicht lückenlos gewährleistet, der Redakteur konnte sich auf Exklusivberichte kaum verlassen, stand aber vor dem Problem, ein Periodikum herausgeben zu wollen und zu müssen, auf das die Leser warten.

Dieser Zwang, die eigenen Zeitungsseiten zeitnah füllen zu müssen, zeichnet sich auch in den für den vorliegenden Beitrag untersuchten Ausgaben ab. So übernimmt die *Preßburger Zeitung* etwa am 29. Dezember 1779 eine Nachricht aus dem *Wienerischen Diarium* vom 25. Dezember, in welcher über das Brustbild „des verstorbenen berühmten Mahlers, Ritters Raphael Mengs“ (WD 25.12.1779: 4; PZ 29.12.1779: 4) berichtet wird, schildert dieselben Geschehnisse in der ersten Jänner-Ausgabe dann aber doch noch einmal mit eigenen Worten (PZ 01.01.1780: 4–5). Das Kopieren aus anderen Zeitungen könnte insbesondere dem Wunsch nach Aktualität geschuldet sein: Man versuchte, möglichst nah am Puls der *Wiener Zeit(ung)* zu sein, weshalb ein zeitsparendes Nachdrucken Vorrang vor einer eigenständigen Berichterstattung erhielt.

Gleichsam könnte die Übernahme fremden Materials aber auch dabei geholfen haben, leere Zeitungsseiten mit Inhalten zu füllen. Schließlich druckte die *Preßburger Zeitung* beispielsweise am 11. Februar 1792 eine Auslandsmeldung ab, die ursprünglich bereits in der *Wiener Zeitung* vom 4. Februar 1792 veröffentlicht worden und für das Lesepublikum somit eigentlich nicht mehr neu war. Das ungarische Periodikum profitierte demnach auf mehrfache Weise von seinem Wiener Vorbild.





Abb. 4. Zeitlicher Verlauf der (relativ) wortgleichen Verweise, ausgehend vom 01.01.1780

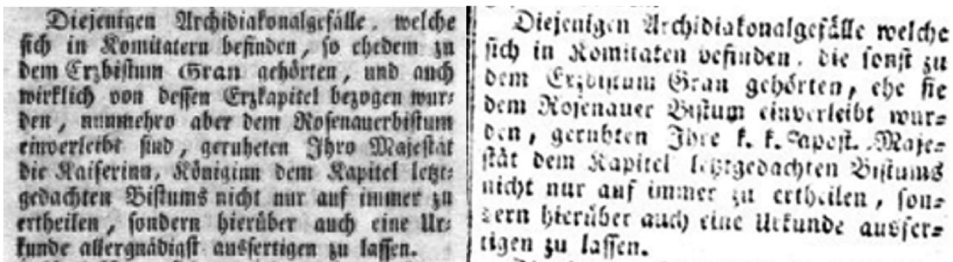


Abb. 5. Artikel aus der *Preßburger Zeitung* (links) und *Wiener Zeitung* (rechts) im Vergleich

Nicht nur die *Preßburger Zeitung* könnte jedoch Nutzen aus dem Produkt der Konkurrenz gezogen haben. Ebenso liegt – wie in [Abbildung 4](#) erkennbar – auch umgekehrt ein Fall vor, in welchem die *Wiener Zeitung* potenziell eine Ausgabe der *Preßburger Zeitung* als Quelle verwendet haben könnte.

Wie die strichlierte Linie innerhalb der Zeitleiste dabei aber bereits andeuten soll, fällt die sprachliche Übereinstimmung der jeweiligen Artikel hier wesentlich geringer aus als bei den bisher besprochenen Beispielen: Statt worttreuen Übernahmen liegen hier, wenn überhaupt, nur gekürzte und umgeschriebene Versionen von entlehnten Texten vor. Trotz dieser Umstände lassen sich die Parallelen zwischen den Texten aber nicht bestreiten, wie das exemplarische Artikelpaar vom Jänner 1780 bezeugt ([Abbildung 5](#)).

Sinn macht die Annahme einer Entlehnung der dargestellten und anderen Nachrichten außerdem aufgrund ihrer Inhalte: Während die *Preßburger Zeitung* Nachrichten jeder Art aus dem *Diarium* kopiert, handelt es sich umgekehrt rein um Inlandsnachrichten mit Pressburg- bzw. Ungarn-Bezug. Ein möglicher Grund für dieses Phänomen könnte in der inhaltlichen Ausrichtung der beiden historischen Zeitungen zu finden sein: Während das Pressburger Blatt seinen Fokus stark auf die lokale Berichterstattung legte,³³ ging die *Wiener Zeitung* auf Ereignisse aus Ungarn nur sehr selten ein, wie [Andrea Seidler](#) (2001: 76) feststellt. Sollte obigem Fall also wirklich eine Entlehnungspraxis zugrunde liegen, könnte es sich um einen Versuch der Verbesserung der „dürftigen Berichterstattung des ‚Wienerischen Diarium‘ in Bezug auf

³³„Die Bitte um fernere geneigte Einsendung inländischer Neuigkeiten wird hier um desto mehr wiederholt, als es gewiß ist, daß nur solche Mittheilungen im Stande sind, unsere schätzbarsten Leser zu befriedigen und ihren Erwartungen zu entsprechen“ (PZ 01.01.1780: 7); vgl. außerdem Kapitel 2.

ungarische und lokale Pressburger Belange“ (Seidler 2001: 76) handeln und die beiden Zeitungen würden damit – zumindest zeitweise – in einer Art symbiotischem Verhältnis zueinanderstehen, daher beidseitig durch Entlehnungen voneinander profitieren. Um diese These zu bestätigen, müssten jedoch noch eindeutige Fälle, in denen die *Wiener Zeitung* Nachrichten aus der *Preßburger Zeitung* kopiert, belegt und auf ihren Inhalt überprüft werden.

Für vorliegende Untersuchung sticht einstweilen vor allem ins Auge, dass Entlehnungen von Pressburg Richtung Wien nicht nur als weniger gesichert gelten können, sondern auch deutlich seltener auftreten als Fälle, in welchen die *Preßburger Zeitung* Textstellen aus der *Wiener Zeitung* entnimmt und (fast) wortgleich nachdruckt. Dieses asymmetrische Entlehnungsverhältnis, welches die Ergebnisse in Kapitel 4 bereits nahegelegt haben, setzt sich also auch im Rahmen der impliziten Bezüge fort. Die Option, dass die beiden Zeitungen sich deswegen inhaltlich und sprachlich so stark gleichen, weil sie dieselben Informant*innen nutzten und deren Nachrichten jeweils Wort für Wort abdrucken, erscheint dahingegen zunehmend unwahrscheinlich. Nicht nur zeigt sich in den untersuchten Ausgaben ein klares zeitliches Muster, sondern es fehlen auch jegliche Nachrichten, die wort- und zeitgleich gedruckt wurden.

Wird nämlich zeitgleich – daher am selben Tag sowohl von der *Wiener* als auch von der *Preßburger Zeitung* – über bestimmte Ereignisse berichtet, so wird dies immer mit deutlich anderer Wortwahl getan. Die dabei auftretenden Differenzen in der Berichterstattung der beiden Periodika sind aus einer komparativen Perspektive ebenfalls durchaus bemerkenswert. Während es in der *Preßburger Zeitung* vom 16. Mai 1772 beispielsweise noch heißt, „Da der Staatsrath Nachmittag versammelt gewesen, so ist zu vermuthen, daß in dieser Versammlung die königl. Resolution erfolget seyn wird“ (PZ 16.05.1772: 2), wird diese Begebenheit im *Diarium* vom selben Tag bereits als gewisse Tatsache präsentiert und an keiner Stelle des Berichts mehr hinterfragt (WZ 16.05.1772: 9). Ein Grund hierfür könnten unterschiedliche beziehungsweise unterschiedlich verlässliche Quellen sein: Indes der Bericht im *Diarium* unter „Kopenhagen, den 28. April“ (WZ 16.05.1772: 9) angeführt wird, ordnet die *Preßburger Zeitung* ihren Artikel einem zwei Tage später datierten Brief aus „Hamburg, den 30. April“ (PZ 16.05.1772: 2) zu. Genauso könnte das Wiener Periodikum aber auch dazu tendieren, seine gedruckten Nachrichten möglichst authentisch wirken zu lassen.

Weiters betreffen die Unterschiede nicht nur die vermittelte Authentizität der Nachrichten, sondern vereinzelt auch die berichteten Fakten selbst. Schließlich hält etwa die *Preßburger Zeitung* vom 1. Jänner 1780 fest, dass der französische König „künftigen Frühling 240000 Mann wirklicher Truppen auf den Beinen haben“ (PZ 01.01.1780: 5) wolle, wohingegen die zeitgleich publizierte *Wiener Zeitung* die Meinung vertritt, „der König habe den Befehl ertheilt, daß Dero Armee an der Küste auf 140,000 Mann gebracht werden soll“ (WZ 01.01.1780: 3). Welche Zahlen man hier als frühneuzeitliche*r Leser*in erhält, hängt somit stark vom konsultierten Medium ab. Dass sich *Preßburger* und *Wiener Zeitung* derart offensichtlich widersprechen, kommt – zumindest in der untersuchten Stichprobe – aber nur sehr selten vor. Meist liegen die Unterschiede in der Berichterstattung über dieselben Ereignisse, so überhaupt vorhanden, viel eher im quantitativen als im qualitativen Bereich und ein Periodikum ist in seinen Ausführungen deutlich detailreicher als das andere. So beispielsweise auch im Fall der Mitteilungen rund um den Prozess und die Hinrichtung der Grafen Struensee und Brand im Jahre 1772: Während die *Preßburger Zeitung* das Urteil der Inquisitionskommission mit nur wenigen Sätzen recht knapp bekannt gibt, widmet das *Diarium* diesen Informationen neben mehreren Seiten im Hauptteil auch den gesamten



Anhang der Ausgabe und beschreibt die Hinrichtung bis ins kleinste Detail, wie der folgende Ausschnitt bezeugt.

Er warf den Pelz, den er zuoberst anhatte, herunter, gab seinen mit einer goldenen Tresse besetzten Huth ab, zog sich auch sein Kleid, das grün und mit goldenen Tressen besetzt war, selbst aus, lösete seine Halsbinde auf, zog sich nicht minder selbst das Hemd herunter, kniete, und legte zuletzt sowohl den Kopf, als erst die Hand auf den einen und andern Block, auf welchen er sich dieselben solchergestalt gleichsam mit kaltem Blute abschlagen ließ, welches durch zwey verschiedene Beile geschah. (WD 16.05.1772: 10–11)

Ob dieses Phänomen Symptom einer grundsätzlich extensiveren Berichterstattung des *Diariums* im Vergleich zur *Preßburger Zeitung* ist und das Blatt stets meist mehr Einzelheiten in seine Nachrichtentexte miteinbezieht als sein ungarischer Konkurrent, kann allein anhand der analysierten Ausgaben nicht mit Sicherheit gesagt werden. Vor dem deutlich höheren Seitenumfang der *Wiener Zeitung* erscheint dies aber durchaus plausibel.

Genauere Einblicke in die sprachlichen Eigenheiten der untersuchten Zeitungen geben dafür jene bereits besprochenen Nachrichten, die vermutlich entlehnt wurden. In diesen kristallisieren sich mögliche Formulierungstraditionen nämlich besonders deutlich heraus: Machte man sich anstelle eines zeichngetreuen und damit zeiteffizienten Nachdrucks die Mühe, einzelne Aspekte des entlehnten Materials abzuändern, können diese Änderungen schließlich wichtige Auskünfte über die sprachlichen Normen einer Zeitung geben. Um diese teils äußerst minimalen Unterschiede zwischen den verschiedenen Zeitungsartikeln sichtbar zu machen, wurde die für Textvergleich und -kollationierung konzipierte Open-Source-Software „juxta“ verwendet. Über dieses digitale Tool wurden die manuell nachkorrigierten Volltexte der einzelnen sich sprachlich stark ähnelnden Nachrichten miteinander verglichen und ihre Unterschiede in folgender Form visualisiert (*Abbildung 6*).

An dieser ersten beispielhaften Gegenüberstellung erkennt man bereits, dass die grünen Markierungen, welche Unterschiede zwischen den verglichenen Nachrichten kennzeichnen, in Bezug auf die von der *Preßburger Zeitung* getätigten Entlehnungen relativ spärlich sind und meist auf Wort- oder Zeichenebene auftreten. Ganze Phrasen, Sätze oder Absätze werden im ungarischen Blatt nur in Ausnahmefällen hinzugefügt oder weggelassen. Ein einzelnes seltenes Beispiel hierfür bietet *Abbildung 7*, in welcher das Pressburger Periodikum Eigenwerbung betreibt, indem es eine nachgedruckte Nachricht um den Verweis auf eine eigene, bereits erschienene Ausgabe ergänzt.

Im Gegensatz zu diesem Einzelfall folgen viele Änderungen der *Preßburger Zeitung* aber wiederkehrenden Mustern: Die Überschriften im *Diarium* etwa stützen sich stets auf das Schema „ORT, den TAG MONAT“, bei welchem die *Preßburger Zeitung* üblicherweise das „den“ durch ein „vom“ ersetzt, mehr Variation in der Interpunktion zulässt und den Monatsnamen vollständig ausschreibt, anstatt ihn abzukürzen. Vor allem Letzteres scheint dabei Teil einer weitreichenderen Praxis zu sein, da das ungarische Periodikum die in der *Wiener Zeitung* verwendeten Akronyme etliche Male für seine Leser*innen auflöst. Beispielhaft hierfür sind etwa die in *Abbildung 6* und *7* zu sehenden Änderungen von „Wintermon.“ auf „Wintermonat“ und „wirklich.“ auf „wirklicher“.

Die *Wiener Zeitung* dahingegen scheint die vermeintlich entlehnten Texte eher zu kürzen als zu verlängern, etwa wenn es folgende, in der *Preßburger Zeitung* zuerst abgedruckte Nachricht in ihrer Länge halbiert.



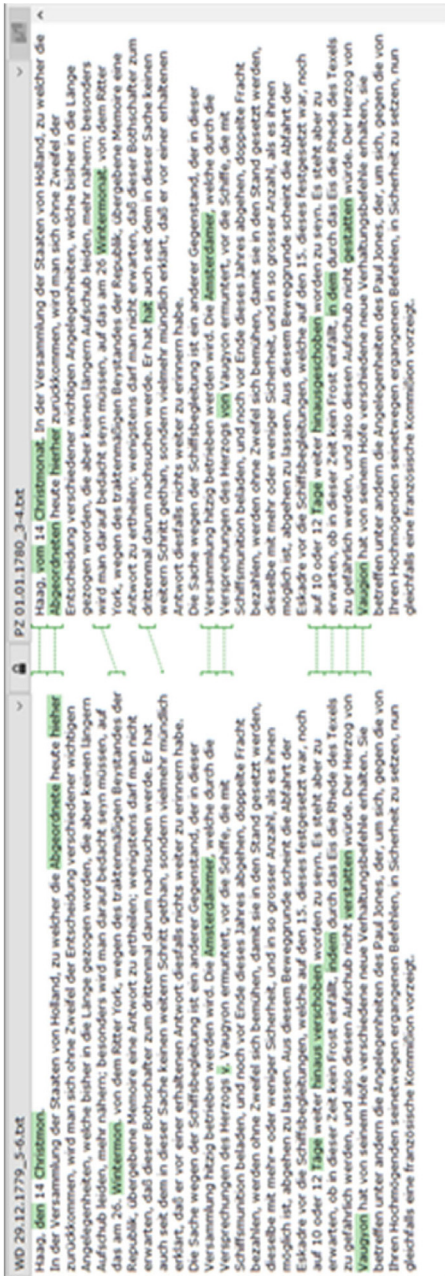


Abb. 6. Visualisierung der Unterschiede einer Nachricht aus dem Wienerischen Diarium vom 29.12.1779 und der Preßburger Zeitung vom 01.01.1780 in juxta



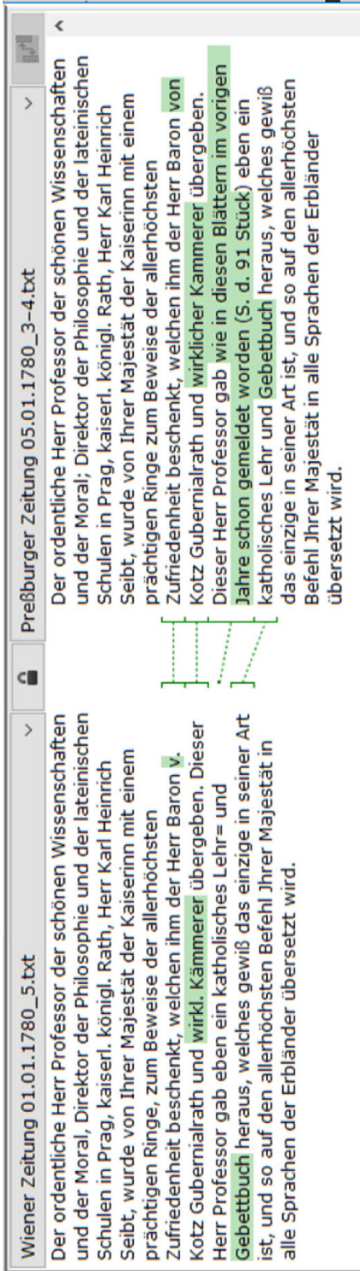


Abb. 7. Visualisierung der Unterschiede einer Nachricht aus der Wiener Zeitung vom 01.01.1780 und der Preßburger Zeitung vom 05.01.1780 in juxta



Zudem erfährt auch der offenbar übernommene Text eine stärkere Veränderung, indem beispielsweise ein Verb seine Zeitform wechselt (vgl. [Abbildung 8](#)) oder an die Stelle der Nominalphrase „ein geräumiger Hörsaal“ der Ausdruck „ein geraumer Hörsaal“ tritt (PZ 01.01.1780: 6; WZ 05.01.1780: 7). Die *Wiener Zeitung* scheint demzufolge intensiver auf die sprachliche Einzigartigkeit seiner Inhalte bedacht zu sein als die *Preßburger Zeitung*, in welcher Inhalte vielfach wörtlich übernommen werden und ein Teil der von juxta erkannten Differenzen möglicherweise durch Fehler und Fehlerkorrekturen zustande kommt – wie dann, wenn aus dem „brittische[n] Schiff [namens] Experiment“ (vgl. WD 29.12.1779: 4) „das brittische Schiffexperiment“ (PZ 01.01.1780: 3) wird. Der Vergleich von *Wiener* und *Preßburger Zeitung* liefert damit letztlich nicht nur auf der inhaltlichen, sondern auch auf der sprachlichen Ebene aufschlussreiche Einblicke in die Zeitungslandschaft des 18. Jahrhunderts.

6. FAZIT

Der vorliegende Beitrag hat gezeigt, dass die *Wiener Zeitung* und die *Preßburger Zeitung* in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts im Hinblick auf eine Reihe von Aspekten miteinander vergleichbar sind. Verfolgt man mithilfe digitaler Ressourcen und Methoden mehrere dieser Punkte – wie Textgestaltung und -gliederung, wechselseitige explizite Verweise und implizite Bezüge – in Kombination, ermöglicht dies wertvolle Erkenntnisse über die Relationen zwischen den beiden Periodika: Nicht nur scheint die *Wiener Zeitung* der *Preßburger Zeitung* gegenüber weitaus kritischer gestimmt als umgekehrt, sondern sie fungiert auch vielfach als Leitmedium für Form und Inhalte des ungarischen Blatts. Damit zeichnet sich im ausgewerteten Textmaterial primär ein asymmetrisches und hierarchisches Verhältnis zwischen den beiden Medien ab, welches die *Wiener Zeitung* in einer prestige- und einflussreicheren Position sieht.

Ebenfalls bildet das untersuchte Material aber auch Momente ab, in denen die *Preßburger Zeitung* – der Forschungsliteratur zufolge vor allem durch ihr eigenes zunehmendes Prestige motiviert – von ihrem Wiener Vorbild abweicht. So erlaubt sich das ungarische Blatt etwa vereinzelt Kritik an der *Wiener Zeitung* zu üben oder Abänderungen an entlehnten Nachrichten vorzunehmen. Die *Preßburger Zeitung* tritt demnach, gerade gegen Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts, mehrfach aus dem „Schatten des Wienerischen Diariums“ ([Seidler 2001: 75](#)) heraus und präsentiert sich als autonomes und konkurrenzfähiges Medium, dessen Close und Distant Reading wichtige Erkenntnisse über das 18. Jahrhundert und insbesondere das damalige Pressewesen bietet. Andrea Seidlers Feststellung, dass es sich um „wertvolles Quellenmaterial, das bisher weitgehend ungenutzt geblieben ist“ ([Seidler 2001: 82](#)), handelt, kann folglich nur zugestimmt werden.

Um diese Forschungslücke aber zu schließen und die *Preßburger* und die *Wiener Zeitung* noch weiter in Bezug auf ihre intertextuellen Bezüge auswerten zu können, bedarf es, wie der vorliegende Beitrag aufzuzeigen versucht hat, vor allem Qualitätsstandards in Bezug auf die Texterfassung historischer Zeitungen. Je verlässlicher die automatisch eingelesenen Frakturtexte sind, umso eher werden Forschende das Informationspotenzial frühneuzeitlicher Presseprodukte ausschöpfen und das eingangs erwähnte „Lesekabinett des 18. Jahrhunderts“, welches ebenfalls eine bereits mehrere Zeitungen vergleichende Lektüre erlaubt hat, auf eine neue, dem digitalen Zeitalter endgültig entsprechende Stufe heben können.



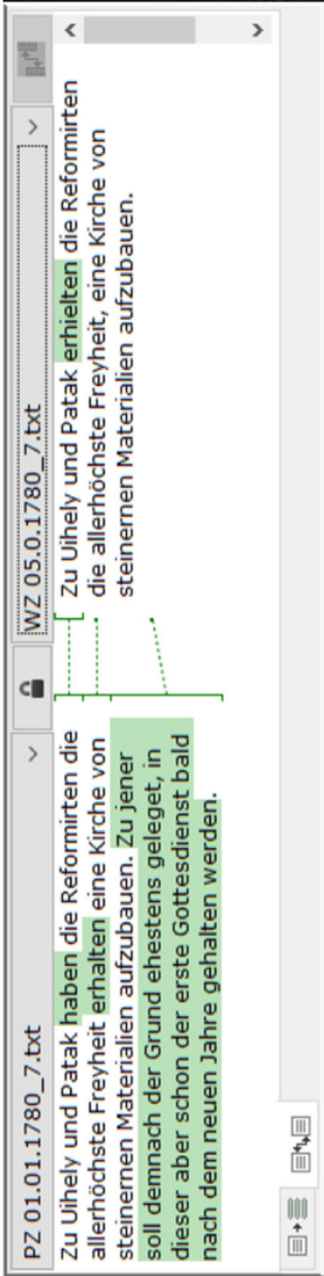


Abb. 8. Visualisierung der Unterschiede einer Nachricht aus der *Preßburger Zeitung* vom 01.01.1780 und der *Wiener Zeitung* vom 05.01.1780 in juxta



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ABSTRACT

In this article, two important newspapers of the Habsburg monarchy – the *Wiener Zeitung* (previously: *Wien[n]erisches Diarium*) and the *Preßburger Zeitung* – are related to each other in several aspects. After a historical overview of the context in which these periodicals were created and taking into account the research literature already available, the first step was to look for parallels in their formal design. Since both newspapers have also been digitally made accessible in full text recently, it was also possible to determine approximately how frequent direct mutual references to the other periodical occur by means of so-called distant reading procedures. Close reading methods were then used to examine and interpret the corpus-based references. This comparative approach with digital methods allows the synoptic examination of individual text passages and thus offers new insights into the complex relationship between the *Wiener Zeitung* and the *Preßburger Zeitung* in the 18th century.

KEYWORDS

newspapers, 18th century, historical press research, intertextuality, digital humanities, close and distant reading



The case of an operetta being banned in Hungary in 1928, viewed in the mirror of contemporary press sources

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ABSTRACT

In May 1928, the Andrassy Street Theatre in Budapest planned to re-stage a one-act operetta play titled *The First Kiss is Mine*. Its libretto was written by Jenő Heltai, and the music was composed by Albert Szirmai. The new performance started out as a resounding success. But, referring to current laws on public morality, Ministry of Interior department in charge of controlling public and cultural programmes banned the play without delay, on 18 May, and Minister of the Interior, Béla Scitovszky ordered an investigation into the matter.

People referred to the event as a scandal, and the press spoke of it as an absurdity, as the theatre enterprise was endangered by the resulting loss in income. After the ban, the actors were only allowed to perform the play for a commission sent from the Ministry of Interior, and finally, on 22 May, Scitovszky permitted the program after all, with some minor changes. In my study, I reconstruct and present the events of these few days with the help of contemporary journalistic sources (reports, interviews, etc.) – *Budapesti Hírlap, Esti Kurir, Magyar Hírlap, Magyarország, Pesti Hírlap, Pesti Napló, Újság, 8 Órai Újság* –, the circumstances of the prohibition, the protest and opinion of the playwrights, the position of the commission, the performance for the commission, and the background of the permission for the new performance.

KEYWORDS

Andrássy street theatre, protection of morals, Jenő Heltai, operetta, Albert Szirmai, journalistic sources

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“In the history of Hungarian acting, it was a common phenomenon that the authorities would ban plays that they did not like – for whatever reason.”¹ In May 1928, this fate finally reached the one-act operetta play² titled *Enyém az első csók* [*The First Kiss is Mine*]. Finally, we say, since it had already played³ twenty-one years earlier in 1907 as *Jus primae noctis* [*Lord's Right*] with huge success. The libretto had been written by Jenő Heltai (1871–1957),⁴ the music had been composed by Albert Szirmai (1880–1967),⁵ both internationally acknowledged playwrights (Szirmai is often mentioned as Sirmay or Szirmay in non-Hungarian sources).

Before describing reviews written after the ban in 1928, I would like to highlight that after the premiere in 1907 we read the following in the magazine *Az Újság* [*The Newspaper*], authored by one *h.a.*, “[...] The program of the opening evening was quite diverse. [...] I really liked Jenő Heltai's operetta, *Jus primae noctis* [...] The music of the operetta and the couplets is absolutely insignificant, I shouldn't even mention it. [...]”⁶ As a preliminary point, I would add that a few decades later, critiques praise the work of both of them.

Such a temporary ban on the performance by the Andrassy Street Theatre⁷ was possible because of a Circular Decree of the Ministry of the Interior in force at the time (see below). Besides provoking a broad-ranging outcry, the incident also caused serious financial loss to the theatre. Hungarian playwrights expressed their concerns regarding the procedure and the way in

¹Banned plays. In: *Encyclopaedia of Hungarian Theatre Arts Volume 1* Ed. Aladár Schöpflin. Budapest: National Actors Association and Pension Institute 1929, 189.

²It is not among the aims of this story to elaborate on operetta playing after the break-up of the Monarchy. On this topic in general see, among others, András Batta: Magyar operett a Monarchia széthullása után. *Magyarország a XX. században III. kötet. Kultúra, művészet, sport és szórakozás* [Hungarian Operetta after the Break-up of the Monarchy. In *Hungary in the XX. Century, vol. III. Culture, Art, Sport and Entertainment*] Ed. István Kollega- Tarsoly. Szekszárd: Babits. 1998, 515–517.

³“The Hungarian Cabaret Theatre opens on Friday, the 11th of this month [...] three one-act operettas are to be performed: a witty operetta by Heltai-Szirmai, *Jus primae noctis*; a satire by István Szomaházy titled *A trónörökös* [*The Heir*], and a funny cabaret piece by Ferenc Molnár *Drágaság* [*Precious*]. [...]” The Opening of the Modern Theatre. *Pesti Hírlap*, vol. XXIX, issue 240. (9 October 1907), 7. See for example The Opening of a Modern Theatre. . . *Pesti Napló*. vol. LVIII, issue 240. (9 October 1907), 16. About the History of the Cabaret in Pest see Tibor Bános, A pesti kabaré [Cabaret in Pest]. In: *Magyar Színháztörténet 1873–1920* [Hungarian Theatre History 1873–1920]. Ed. Tamás Gajdó. Budapest, Magyar Könyvklub – OSZMI 2011, 656–676.

⁴Jenő Heltai. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon*. Ed. György Székely. Budapest: Akadémiai Publisher 1994, 297. For more on his work, see Zsolt Györei: *Heltai Jenő drámái életműve* [*The Dramatic Works of Jenő Heltai*]. Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2005. (He defended his PhD thesis of the same title in 2002. This volume is an edited version of that thesis.

⁵Albert Szirmai. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon*, op. cit., 767.

⁶A Modern Színház megnyitása [The Opening of the Modern Theatre]. *Az Újság* vol. V., issue 242. (12 October 1907) 12.

⁷“First, it ran as the Modern Theatre Cabaret between 1907 and 1908, with the direction of Sándor Faludi. Between 1908 and 1913 it the cabaret was run by Endre Nagy under the name Modern Theatre, between 1913 and 1925, it was Vilma Medgyaszay's cabaret, between 1916 and 1916 it was called Modern Cabaret Stage with the direction of Artur Bárdos; it was closed until the end of 1927, then it was reconstructed following to the plans of Rezső Herquet, and was re-opened with the name Andrassy Street Theatre with the last huge success of the Downtown Theatre by Artur Bárdos, and was to remain the only cabaret until 1933. In 1920, it was taken over by Unio Rt, with Tamás Emőd as director; in 1925, the director was Elemér Wertheimer, the dramaturg was Lóránd Barnabár, and the music director was Dezső Losonczy; in the year of 1924/25 and after 1937, it was the chamber theatre of the National Theatre.” Andrassy Street Theatre. In *A fővárosi kisháziak műsora. A Tháliától a felszabadulásig 1904–1944 (Adattár)*. [The Program of the Small Theatres in the Capital. From Thalia until the liberation 1904–1944] Ed. Ágnes Alpár. Budapest: Institute of Hungarian Theatre, 1974, 22.; See Andrassy Street Theatre. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon*, op. cit., 26–27.



which it was executed. After the premiere on 16 May,⁸ the decision came into force on 18 May. It was finally withdrawn by the Minister of Interior Béla Scitovszky⁹ on 22 May.

In this study, I undertake to reconstruct and present the history of the ban by contextualizing contemporary articles.¹⁰ I have selected 21 articles as primer source for my study, which were published between 17 May 1928 and 23 May 1928 in the columns of papers and magazines such as the *Budapesti Hírlap*, *Esti Kurir*, *Magyar Hírlap*, *Magyarország*, *Pesti Hírlap*, *Pesti Napló*, *Újság*, and *8 Órai Újság*; as well as Circular Decree no. 151,000 of 1927 of the Minister of the Interior on the protection of public morality.¹¹ Further press materials – which were published in May and June in the same year – I used as a secondary source. An additional aim is to discover more sources connected to the case, since texts in this study were chosen from dozens of written sources and articles.¹²

First we shall focus on the articles about the news of the re-staging, then we shift our attention to the circular decree about the protection of public morality. Next, I selected some articles from the press sources from 19 May, then I shall present the role and actions of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights in the case in a separate part. In the following section I unravel the details of the permission, including the circumstances of the performance for the committee of the Ministry of Interiors, then we examine another case strongly connected to this topic, moving on to discussing the terms of the renewed permission, and finally discuss the press sources which present the problem of theatre censure connected to *Enyém az első csók*.

REPORT ON THE PERFORMANCE

Hungarian literary historian Zsolt Győrei wrote about the plays of Heltai. In the chapter *Középkor és reneszánsz [The Middle Ages and the Renaissance]* he elaborated on the operetta titled *Jus Primae Noctis*:

We stopped on this short, humorous work almost exclusively for the sake of completion. Its topic relates it to Heltai's never-fading interest in medieval times without telling anything more about this interest. The Middle Ages merely serve as the obligatory background to the basic idea, which is imaged on the stage with flashy ornaments. The selection of poems and prose do not serve to confront two value systems, but, thanks to the music of Albert Szirmai, they color it with songs like in an operetta [...]¹³

⁸Ibid., 37.

⁹Béla Scitovszky (1878–1959) Minister of Interior in the Bethlen government from 15 October 1926 to 24 August 1931. For more on this, see: Béla Scitovszky. In *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 2. [Hungarian Encyclopaedia of Biographies vol 2]* Budapest: Akadémiai Publisher, 1982, 608.

¹⁰In the original Hungarian I cite the articles using contemporary spelling. However, wherever I found it warranted, I left the original highlights in bold or italic print.

¹¹Circular Decree no. 151,000 of 1927 of the Minister of the Interior on the protection of public morality. *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára [Archive of Hungarian Decrees]*, 1923, vol 52. Hungarian Ministry of Interior 1924, 185–187.

¹²The study was written as a part of the research project which deals with the composer Albert Szirmai and his colleagues through press sources. (Supported by the National Cultural Fund of Hungary.)

¹³Győrei, *cit.*, 122.



The complication was caused by the plot of the play, more precisely its libretto. Consequently, we cannot omit to offer a detailed description of the operetta. For this I used various articles as a basis. News of the oncoming premiere was reported, among others, in *Esti Kurir*¹⁴ and *8 Órai Újság*.¹⁵ This time I picked from articles published on 17 May.

The question is how did *Enyém az első csók* get from Jenő Heltai to Jenő Heltai? This sentence is no typo – the history of the creation of this one-act play is also of interest. “There were so many great burlesques, comedies and scenes performed at that time from which no single line has been left for posterity”¹⁶ – indeed, the libretto of this play, performed in 1907, has also not survived. It is said that Heltai dictated the libretto to the dramaturgy director in an hour by heart, and the music was written in a night with an unknown co-author.

The small Andrásy Street Theatre – as we reported – give a reprise program and tonight it performs Heltai-Szirmai’s operetta *Enyém az első csók*, which was performed twenty years ago on the same stage at the time of the theatre’s opening with Sándor Faludy as director, Albert Szirmai as music director Ferenc Molnár and Jenő Heltai in charge of dramaturgy.

At that time, it was common practice among composers and playwrights that they did not write down their plays, but invited a bunch of actors for a rehearsal, talked together and formed the play as a joint effort. Many great burlesques, comedies, and scenes were performed from which not a single line has been left for posterity.

This is also how *Enyém az első csók* was written, which bore the title *Jus primae noctis* at the time [...] ¹⁷

[...] Twenty years have passed since then and Elemér Wertheimer, director of the Andrásy Street Theatre thought that he would a reprise program, and collect all those treasures which had been thrown away over the previous twenty years. During the related discussions it occurred to Lóránd Barabás, dramaturge of the theatre, that *Jus primae noctis* should also be among the plays revived and performed, so he went to Jenő Heltai to ask for the manuscript of the play.

Heltai scratched the bank of his head and said:

‘We have a huge problem, my friend,’ he said, ‘because although the play was showing for several months but we never had a libretto.’

‘Maybe somehow? . . .’ – begged the dramaturge.

‘We can try’, said Heltai and he dictated the whole play by heart in an hour.

¹⁴How did *Enyém az első csók* get from Jenő Heltai to Jenő Heltai. *Esti Kurir*. vol VI issue 112 (17 May 1928) 11.

¹⁵Premiere in Andrásy Street Theatre. *8 Órai Újság*. vol XIV issue 112 (17 May 1928) 9.

¹⁶How did. . ., *cit.*, 11.

¹⁷I have already mentioned above that we can read about the 1907 premiere in works about the history of the cabaret in Pest, since it was performed at the opening evening of the Modern Cabaret Theatre: ”[...] Sándor Faludi, younger son of Gábor Faludy opened an »opponent cabaret« on 11 October 1907 at Andrásy street 69 under the name of Modern Cabaret Theatre on the ground floor of the Fine Art Council’s palace built in 1871, with the help of his father. [...] He left the music direction to the twenty-two-year-old Albert Szirmai, who was a student of János Koessler at the Music Academy, then for a short time he worked as a tutor at the Folk Theatre Comedy Opera. Szirmai’s lyrical and grotesque melodies attracted attention already in the first programs of the *Bonbonniere*. What Molnár, Heltai and Szirmai provided was just a little bit less than the audience could see in Endre Nagy’s cabaret. In *Bonbonniere*, they talked and sang about the topics that were interesting for the everyday men. [...]” Bános, *cit.*, 662.



Now they had the play, but they did not have the music. So one night the two composers, Heltai and Albert Szirmai sat down and composed the music [...].

So after an hour and a night of work, *Enyém az első csók* was written again, in which the main character, once portrayed by unforgettable Antal Nyárai,¹⁸ was now played¹⁹ by Márton Rátkai.²⁰

Applause, success, popularity. The next report also begins with reviving reception of the performance from twenty years before. But we can learn more details about the cast, and it praises the leaders of the theatre company:

[...] It was a great idea to bring this appealing and joyful operetta by Jenő Heltai and Albert Szirmai, which has the telling title *Enyém az első csók* back to the stage. With three great roles, it gives a great opportunity to three great actors to entertain the audience for 45 minutes by singing, dancing and joyful playing. These three roles are played by Márton Rátkai (the lord), Böske Tóth²¹ (the lady), and Irén Biller²² (the bride waiting for the first kiss). All three acting performances are first-class: funny, witty, fine, and thoughtful operetta playing. [...] Ödön Faragó²³ is a first-class director and actor; and directors Elemér Wertheimer and Lóránd Barnabás, as representatives of good taste, provide a decent and yet funny tone to the cabaret.²⁴

ABOUT THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC MORALITY

Hungarian Minister of Interior Béla Scitovszky issued a circular decree to protect public morality, which lays down the tasks connected to plays and other performances. The protection of morals and taste is the duty of the police authorities.

In order to stop the demoralizing effects of this harmful process and to protect the morality of Hungarian society – in addition to the previous regulations – I order the followings:

1st §. Police authorities are obliged to supervise every public stage and other performance, attraction and form of entertainment with a view to the presence of vice to a heightened extent. Furthermore, with actions provided by law according to 7th § of article XXI of 1881, point d) and 90.089/1919. B. M. [Ministry of Interior] (Archive of Hungarian Decrees vol 1919. 1092. o.), article 64.573/1901. B. M. (Archive of Hungarian Decrees volt 1901. p. 489) and article 229.230/1925. B. M. (Archive of Hungarian Decrees vol 1925 p. 267) and other regulations, they are obliged to stop any event that is against good morals due to its topic or the behaviour of the performers, and all public dances which

¹⁸In the article it is Nyáray. Antal Nyárai (1868–1920). See Antal Nyárai. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon vol III*. Ed. Aladár Schöpflin. Budapest, National Actors' Association and Pension Institute 1930, 382–283.

¹⁹How did... , *cit.*, 11.

²⁰Márton Rátkai (1881–1951) About his career, see Márton Rátkai. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon., cit.*, 641–642.; Zsigmond Móricz (1929): Márton Rátkai. *Nyugat*. vol XXII issue 1.; Péter Molnár Gál (2006): Márton Rátkai. *Mozgó Világ [Moving World]* vol XXXII issue 9. 121–125.

²¹Böske Tóth (1896–1979); for more details about her roles and life see Böske Tóth. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon., cit.*, 807.

²²Irén Biller (1876–1958) about her career in more detail see Irén Biller. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon., cit.*, 95.

²³Ödön Faragó (1876–1958) actor, director, theatre director. Ödön Faragó. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon., cit.*, 201.

²⁴Premiere... , *cit.*, 9.



are offend public morality or good taste. Companies with permission and directors of each performance are obliged to provide the chance for the representatives of the highest police authorities in charge to supervise performances, etc. The Minister of Interior as the highest anti-vice authority is allowed to practice supervision anytime through his representatives in lieu of the police authorities.²⁵

[...] Acts listed in the 1st point of the 3rd § are considered to be transgressions even if they are not addressed to anyone or are not committed with offensive intent. Procedures following these transgressions pertain to administrative authorities as the police criminal court, while in the area of the Hungarian royal court, these pertain to the Hungarian royal state police.²⁶

According to the circular decree, the fate of each performance depended on the police, and this regulation about the protection of public morality is definitely strict, it does not leave very much space for the practitioners of the performing arts. Hungarian playwrights and theatre managers raised their voice many times against the restrictions.

NEW DAY NEW BAN – 19 MAY 1928

The press reported the ban immediately on 19 May. They were baffled by the case, but the reporters tried to give detailed information. By way of illustration, I chose articles from the *Újság* (*Tilos az Enyém az első csók előadása*) [*The First Kiss is Mine is Banned*]²⁷ the *Pesti Hírlap* (*Húsz év előtt száz előadás ma – betiltás*) [*A Hundred Performances Twenty Years Ago – Today, a Ban*],²⁸ and *Pesti Napló* (*A rendőrség betiltotta az Andrássy úti Színház Heltai-Szirmai operettjét. Bezzegh-Huszágh főkapitány nyilatkozik – Tiltakoznak az írók*) [*Police Bans Heltai-Szirmai Operetta in Andrassy Street Theatre. Commissioner Bezzegh-Huszágh Makes Statement – Playwrights Protest*].²⁹

The article published in the *Újság* calls attention primarily to the absurdity of the decree, but it also details the stages of the case: 1. performance on Wednesday, 16 May – success; 2. report – violation of public morality; 3. decision – play banned with immediate effect; 4. on Friday, 18 May the play cannot be performed; 5. appeal of the theatre management; 6. meanwhile, the theatre management is looking for an alternative – perform another play.

[...] The Ministry of Interior's department responsible for morality proved again that it does not allow any transgression of good morals. It pounced with enormous rigor in order to stop debauchery which could cause unpredictable damages – in the eyes of the Ministry of Interior.

The rigor of the Ministry of Interior regarding actions offensive to good morals has reached the Andrassy Street Theatre. This theatre, which selects its program following artistic and literary criteria

²⁵Circular Decree no. 151.000. . . , *cit.*, 185–186.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 186–187.

²⁷*Tilos az Enyém az első csók előadása* [Performance of *Enyém az első csók* is banned]. *Újság*. vol IV issue 113 (19 May 1928) 11.

²⁸*Húsz év előtt száz előadás, ma – betiltás*. [A Hundred Performances Twenty Years Ago, Today a Ban] *Pesti Hírlap*. vol L issue 113 (19 May 1928) 10.

²⁹*A rendőrség betiltotta az Andrássy úti Színház Heltai-Szirmai operettjét. Bezzegh-Huszágh főkapitány nyilatkozik – Tiltakoznak az írók* [Police Bans Heltai-Szirmai Operetta in Andrassy Street Theatre. Commissioner Bezzegh-Huszágh Makes Statement – Playwrights Protest]. *Pesti Napló*. vol LXXIX issue 113 (19 May 1928) 11.



for the whole season and represents the best qualities of Hungarian cabaret, has decided now, at the end of the season, that it would produce a reprise of the successful plays and individual scenes performed ever since its foundation. [...]

At that time, *Jus primae noctis* was not seen as a criminal attempt against good morals, today it is said to be unbearably disgusting by the event supervisory department of the Ministry of Interior which surely knows what it is doing, as it has to evaluate Bakerian nudity in the world of artistically undressed dancing Greeks in its own special way. [...]

The reprise of the play was performed on Wednesday with huge success. No one was shocked by it. At the same time, the Ministry of Interior deems to have detected a criminal attempt against good morals and has begun to produce case files.

On Friday at 12 pm the files arrived in their final form to the director of the Andrassy Street Theatre, Elemér Wertheimer. In the decision, chief advisor Páll says that based on the report of the even supervisory department of the Ministry of Interior, vice-commissioner Károly Andréka bans the performance of the operetta titled *Enyém az első csók* with immediate effect. At the same time, he tells him that he can appeal against the decision only outside the property.

[...] The director has claimed that the Heltai-Szirmai operetta could be performed without any concerns twenty years ago because it has an absolute artistic and literary value and it cannot be an object of complaint today either, when plays with artistic nudity and erotic effects are in the programs of orpheums, music halls, and even theatres. [...] Since then, *Enyém az első csók* will be removed from the theatre's program, and it will be replaced by the one-act *Szövetségeselek [Allies]* starring Pufi Huszár.³⁰

Besides writing the same panels and information, *Pesti Hírlap*³¹ focused on the “measures” taken by director Elemér Wertheimer. The article described that it had never occurred to the directors for a moment that the performance would face these kinds of obstacles:

[...] the topic, which the operetta dealt with without any obscenity, was considered to be against public morality by today's police, because on Friday at noon, police advisor Páll told the director of the Andrassy Street Theatre that based on the report of the event supervisory department of the Ministry of Interior, vice-commissioner Andréka ordered the play to be removed from the program.

Director Wertheimer, who did not expect that a play that had seen a hundred performances twenty years previously would be “against public morality”, went to the headquarters and told them that he saw the ban as a violation of the freedom of art and literature. They acknowledged the director's appeal, but he was told that the play could not be performed during the period of the appeal either, so the Andrassy Street Theatre did not perform the operetta of Jenő Heltai and Albert Szirmai, but put another play in the program instead until the end of the case. [...] ³²

Unlike in the last two articles, on the columns of *Pesti Napló*³³ we can read a remarkably detailed report. It is a valuable source material in several aspects: it shares important partial

³⁰Tilos az *Enyém az első csók*. . . cit., 10.

³¹Húsz év előtt száz előadás. . . cit., 15.

³²Ibid., 15.

³³A rendőrség betiltotta az Andrassy úti színház. . . cit., 11.



information – repetitions were removed from the text –, it elaborated at length on the intervention of director Wertheimer, police advisors dr Páll and dr Sándor Dóra took part in the trial.

But besides achieving some beneficial results, the theatre management also had to provide a new program as soon as possible.

[...] After receiving the notification, Elemér Wertheimer, director of the Andrassy Street Theatre went to the headquarters, where he met police advisor Páll, who said that **the operetta was offensive to public morality, and because of that the performance had to be banned.** This ban is the result of the report of chief advisor Puskás, and since the order has been signed by vice-commissioner Andréka, the Andrassy Street Theatre has the right only to appeal against the ban, but only outside the property, so **Friday night's performance of *Enyém az első csók* cannot be given, either.**

[...] In response to pleas, chief advisor Dóra replied that he could not grant even the least postponement. However, he also revealed that **he had read the manuscript of the play and did not find anything wrong with it, but the topic of the play and especially its tendency could not be presented to the public in view of the existing strict regulations about the protection of public morality.**

Director Wertheimer also argued that some private theatres were performing plays by foreign playwrights with far more serious topics and tendencies all the time without any ban from the police. He therefore urged that the literary work of one of the most outstanding Hungarian writers, Jenő Heltai be seen in the same way as the plays of a foreigner playwright. Director Wertheimer received a negative reply again, and with this, *Enyém az első csók* was removed from the program of Andrassy Street Theatre, at least for a while. [...] ³⁴

ASSOCIATION OF HUNGARIAN PLAYWRIGHTS – EMERGENCY MEETING, PETITION

It is important to mention that at the time of the ban the internationally known and acknowledged writer was the Chair of the association of Hungarian playwrights – a society which also included writers, translators and composers. His first administration at the head of the Association ³⁵ lasted from 18 April 1917 to 6 March 1919. ³⁶ He was Chair for a second time from 12 March 1922 to 16 June 1930. ³⁷ The Association ³⁸ provided legal representation in many cases, and from time to time it intervened with decision-making or executive authorities. This case was no different. The Association discussed the ban at an *emergency meeting* and it formed and sent a *petition* to the Minister of Interior. Many of its members expressed their indignation over the case, which can also be seen in the articles.

³⁴Ibid., 11.

³⁵Magyar Színeped Szervezők Egyesülete [Association of Hungarian Playwrights]. In *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon*, cit., 477–478.

³⁶Ibid., 478.

³⁷Ibid., 478.

³⁸First period: 1904–1919; Second period: 1920–1949.



The emergency meeting was described in detail in the article published on 19 May 1928 in *Magyar Hírlap*.³⁹ The discussion of the new order from the Ministry of Interior – an adjective which hints at the fact that a new order was being planned – and the focus on the case at hand caused problems for the Association in many ways, because the members had to agree on their reaction to the ban and the above-mentioned order. The Association unanimously urged the immediate withdrawal of the police measures – despite the numerous points of incomprehension and the unanswered questions.

The management board of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights held an emergency meeting chaired by Jenő Heltai concerning the case of the order about the protection of copyrights issued by the Ministry of Interior, and the unexpected decision of the police to ban Jenő Heltai's operetta *Enyém az első csók* with immediate effect with reference to the protection of public morality.

The management of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights dealt with the new order of the Minister of Interior first. They agreed that they would wait until the order is published before they took any further measures, because the order does not deal with the collection of royalties and Hungarian playwrights find it natural to leave it to their association.

After that, they discussed the ban of the operetta in the Andrassy Street Theatre. The Association found the police measures incomprehensible and it turned to the Minister of Interior with confidence, asking for an immediate reversal of the police measures.

On Thursday night, police advisor Puskás saw the performance of the operetta *Enyém az első csók* in the Andrassy Street Theatre. On Friday, the theatre suddenly got an order from the police which informed the management that the play was banned with immediate effect. The measure surprised the management to an uncommon extent because this operetta by Jenő Heltai ran to a hundred performances twenty years ago, and at that time they did not find anything wrong with it.

The plot of the play is about the old rights of the lords and the right to the first kiss. This tale is told in manner which is witty and pleasing, using the finest artistic devices in Heltai's cosy operetta-satire, so that we really cannot find anything wrong with it. And yet, now it is banned with reference to morality considerations. [. . .]⁴⁰

The first part of the article published in *Pesti Napló*⁴¹ featured in the previous section; in the following passage we can read about the somewhat impetuous, near-enough rough statements by the people connected to the Association of Hungarian Playwrights (in order: Jenő Rákosi⁴², Zsolt Harsányi,⁴³ Menyhért Lengyel - vice chairman,⁴⁴ Lajos Zilahy⁴⁵), and by its commissioner

³⁹ A Színeped Szerzők rendkívüli közgyűlésen foglalkoztak a belügyminiszter új rendeletével és a Heltai-operett betiltásával [Playwrights Association Discusses New Ruling by Minister of Interior and Ban of Heltai Operetta at Emergency Meeting]. *Magyar Hírlap*. vol XXXVIII issue 113 (19 May 1928) 4.

⁴⁰Ibid., 4.

⁴¹A rendőrség betiltotta az Andrassy úti Színház. . . , *cit.*, 11.

⁴²Jenő Rákosi (1842–1929) writer, journalist, theatre director. Jenő Rákosi. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon.*, *cit.*, 638.

⁴³Zsolt Harsányi (1887–1943) writer, journalist, translator, theatre director. Zsolt Harsányi. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon.*, *cit.*, 289.

⁴⁴Menyhért Lengyel (1880–1974) see his biography for example Menyhért Lengyel. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon.*, *cit.*, 456.

⁴⁵Lajos Zilahy (1891–1974) more about his career see Lajos Zilahy. *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon.*, *cit.*, 638.



(Miklós Bezzegh-Huszár). These lines tell a lot about contemporary censure in general and about the public morale of the age.

As a reaction to the ban, the Association of Hungarian Playwrights with Jenő Heltai as its chairman called for an emergency meeting on Friday, at which they made a decision after a passionate discussion that **they would turn to the Minister of Interior with an urgent petition and ask him on Saturday to take measures in this ominous case, which – as the Association of Hungarian Playwright says with all trust – can only be solved through the Minister of Interior.**

The petition of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights, which was signed by Kálmán Csathó in lieu of Jenő Heltai, will be handed to the Minister of Interior by the Association's lawyer, dr Menyhért Palágyi⁴⁶

About the case of the ban, the journalist of the *Pesti Napló* received the following statement:

Commissioner Miklós Bezzegh-Huszár: – I do not know about any ban against the play, nor do I know which police medium banned it. I have to add that nobody has from the theatre has turned to me with a complaint about such a ban, although the management would have had the right to appeal and come to me after the ban from police representative.⁴⁷

Jenő Rákosi: – The faith of our actors and our entire theatre is now in the hands not of God, but of the police. It is sad that so little seems to have been left of the former's omnipotence.

Zsolt Harsányi: - I was not really surprised by the case of the Heltai play. You start to get used to it. Before a charity event where I spoke for free, the police officer insisted that I show him, in advance, the text of the speech I am about to deliver, because it may contain communist elements. Or, the other day, I got informed that in a countryside community, local morality forums **prevented a performance of the famous play *A Nosztyfiú*... [*The Noszty's boy*] because in the last scene there is a woman who is expecting a baby, and that is considered obscene.** So now I am beginning to think that I am forced to consider even my existence in the world obscene, because, to tell the truth, I was not brought here by a stork. What's more, my case is badly aggravated by the fact that even my son was not brought to us by a stork. Every literary work, including even the most shallow ones, has two forums: the aesthetic forum, i.e. the critics, and the judicial forum – the court. To order a third judging and evaluating forum over the literature of a country besides these two is a derogatory and savage act.

- Those doubtlessly gracious and excellent man, who have a word in this issue should see that this whole case is a gruesome piece of nonsense. On this same basis, the police officer could just as well visit the lecture of a professor of obstetrics at the medical university, because he may tell an obscene joke during his lecture, or he should witness a meeting of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences where there is a sociological debate and one of the academicians starts singing a communist tune. Naturally none of these can happen. But for me, it can happen. I resent that.

⁴⁶It is probably a typo. Róbert Palágyi any Menyhért Palágyi can be seen in turns. Róbert Palágyi is the lawyer of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights indeed, proved by sources – see the reference above.

⁴⁷This statement from the commissioner shows that the question of the banned play was finally decided on a much higher level.



Menyhért Lengyel: – It is incredibly unbelievable to stigmatize Jenő Heltai as immoral. He rose above his peers with the brilliant work of his whole life, and his name means true and great value not only in Hungary but abroad, as well. And the fact that this stigma was put on Heltai's little masterpiece by a police officer goes beyond all limits. Is it possible? Where does it go? That is unprecedented. We are amazed by this disgraceful decision, and our last hope is that this police measure that ridicules everything would be undone by a stroke of a pen from the highest forum.

Lajos Zilahy: – I find this decision absolutely absurd. This state has to be terminated immediately. [...] ⁴⁸

In the article published in *Est*⁴⁹ on 20 May in addition to the details of the appeal from the Association, new information appeared about the ways in which Kálmán Csathó,⁵⁰ Róbert Palágyi,⁵¹ and Sándor Sztranyavszky⁵² were involved in the case:

[...] By the way, the Andrassy Street Theatre appealed against the order. Besides that, the Association of Hungarian Playwrights turned to the Minister of Interior with a petition in which it asks him to take action against the order. The petition was signed by Kálmán Csathó in the name of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights and it was handed to state secretary Sztranyavszky by dr Róbert Palágyi, the lawyer of the Association. [...] ⁵³

“THE FORMALITIES OF THE MORALITY INVESTIGATION WERE INCREDIBLY IMPOSING AND SHOCKINGLY EXCITING.”⁵⁴ – LITERARY COURT – REVIEWS

On 20 May, the press in Pest reported that there was hope, the ministry of interior may yet permit the performance. To elaborate on this stage of the process, I reviewed articles from

⁴⁸A rendőrség betiltotta az Andrassy úti Színház. . . , *cit.*, 11.

⁴⁹A színpadi szerzők kérvénye a belügyminiszter a Heltai-Szirmai-operett betiltása miatt [Petition by Playwrights to the Minister of Interior Against the Ban of the Heltai-Szirmai Operetta]. *Az Est*. vol XIX issue 114 (20 May 1928) 4.; The beginning of the article focuses on general incomprehension. A színpadi szerzők kérvénye a belügyminiszter. . . , *cit.*, 4.

⁵⁰Kálmán Csathó (1881–1964) writer, director. Kálmán Csathó In *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon.*, *cit.*, 133–134.

⁵¹Lawyer Róbert Palágyi: “[...] In the literature, he deals with issues related to copyrights, publishing rights and unfair competition. Lawyer of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights, National Association of Hungarian Motion Picture Producers and chief secretary of the Hungarian group of International Literary and Art Association.” In *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon.*, vol III., *cit.*, 430.

⁵²Sándor Sztranyavszky. In *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 1000-1990*. Chief ed. Ágnes Kenyeres <https://mek.oszk.hu/00300/00355/html/ABC14240/15314.htm>.

⁵³A színpadi szerzők kérvénye. . . , *op. cit.*, 4.

⁵⁴Erkölcsbírák a nézőtérén. Két órán át vizsgáztatták az *Enyém az első csókot*, de nem határoztak [Morality Judges in the Audience. *Enyém az első csók* Examined for Two Hours but no Decision Made]. *Újság*. vol IV issue 115 (22 May 1928) 11.



Budapesti Hírlap,⁵⁵ *Magyar Hírlap*,⁵⁶ *Magyarország*,⁵⁷ *Magyarság*,⁵⁸ and *8 Órai Újság*,⁵⁹ and as primer source I used writings from the first two newspapers and the article published in *8 Órai Újság*.

Collegiate councillor dr Kálmán Tomcsányi was also involved in the case, minister of interior Scitovszky trusted him with the investigation, his intercession and personality got a positive evaluation in the press.

Against the ban of the operetta titled *Enyém az első csók* by Heltai and Szirmai, the Association of Hungarian Playwrights turned to the Minister of Interior. Following the proposal of Dr Kálmán Tomcsányi, Minister of Interior Béla Scitovszky immediately ordered the collegiate councillor himself to go and see a performance of the play incriminated by the police in the Andrassy Street Theatre, and he made the decision dependent on his opinion. This quick and emphatic decision was welcomed by both the Association of Hungarian Playwrights and the management of the Andrassy Street Theatre because they knew Kálmán Tomcsányi's impartial and wise way of thinking, which undoubtedly could only have a positive effect on the fate of the play, and so everyone was reassured even in advance.⁶⁰

The writing published in *Magyar Hírlap* shows that the case points beyond itself – indeed, it was discussed not only in literary but also in political circles. The Ministry of Interior set the date of the performance's examination for Monday. They also gave a report about the planned interpellation of writer and member of parliament József Pakots⁶¹:

[...] The management of the Andrassy Street Theatre has appealed against the police decision and this appeal was forwarded to the Minister of Interior. Minister Béla Scitovszky decided that **on Monday afternoon a committee from the Ministry of Interior was to appear in the auditorium of the Andrassy Street Theatre, the actors would perform the play for the committee** and the Minister of Interior was to make a decision based on the report of the committee.

Of course, the banning decision of the police attracted attention, and it was discussed not only in literary but also in political circles, since Jenő Heltai and Albert Szirmai were two great and internationally acknowledged personalities in Hungarian literature and composition, so it would have been strange to label them as immoral. In literary circles, there had already been protests against the police ruling, and today MP **József Pakots gave an interpellation concerning the case of *Enyém az első csók***. The interpellation will be read at the Wednesday meeting of the House of Representatives even if the Minister of Interior does eventually change the police ruling. József

⁵⁵Az *Enyém az első csók* betiltása [Ban on *Enyém az első csók*]. *Budapesti Hírlap*. vol XLVIII issue 114 (20 May 1928) 18.

⁵⁶Pakots József interpellál a Heltai–Szirmai-operett betiltása ügyében [József Pakots Interpellates in the Case of The Heltai-Szirmai Operetta's Ban]. *Magyar Hírlap*. vol XXXVIII issue 114 (20 May 1928) 4.

⁵⁷A belügyminiszter elrendelte az *Enyém az első csók* revízióját. [Minister of Interior Orders Revision of *Enyém az első csók*] *Magyarország*. vol XXXV issue 114 (20 May 1928) 16.

⁵⁸Revideálják a Heltai-operett betiltásának ügyét [Ban on Heltai Operetta Revised]. *Magyarság*. vol IX issue 114 (20 May 1928) 22.

⁵⁹A betiltott *Enyém az első csók*. Remény van arra, hogy a belügyminiszter engedélyezni fogja a darab további előadásait [*Enyém az első csók* Banned. There is Hope, that Minister of Interior May Allow Further Performances]. *8 Órai Újság*. vol XIV issue 114 (20 May 1928) 9.

⁶⁰(Az *Enyém az első csók* betiltása), *cit.*, 18.

⁶¹József Pakots. *Magyar Életrajzi Lexikon 1000–1990*. Chief ed. Ágnes Kenyeres.



Pakots told our colleagues that since we are talking about a considerable establishment, it should not be allowed for the police to act as the highest literary forum and to stigmatize writers and their jobs as immoral with a single stroke of a pen. It is especially hurtful when it is about such great men as those affected in the present case. [...] ⁶²

8 *Órai Újság* succeeded in eliciting an interview from the play's other director, Lóránd Barabás, ⁶³ who said the following:

[...] We asked Lóránd Barabás, dramaturge director of Andrassy Street Theatre about the case, who said the following to our colleague: - Until the midday hours there has been no decision about the withdrawal of the play, but there is hope – the Ministry of Interior may change its position in the case and it may allow the performance of *Enyém az első csók* again. When we can hope to schedule a new performance of the play of course depends on the time we get notified about the decision. Perhaps we can already perform the play today, or we may need to wait a day or two before we can stage it once more. [...] ⁶⁴

We can safely say that the press gave the most detailed report on the performance given for the benefit of the committee, since reporters could follow the events on Monday afternoon from outside the theatre, even if not from the inside; furthermore, they could also managed to interview some of the people concerned. In this case, I selected articles from *Magyar Hírlap*, ⁶⁵ *Pesti Napló* ⁶⁶ and *Újság*. ⁶⁷

The company first met in the director's office in the Andrassy Street Theatre – of the creators of the play only Albert Szirmai appeared in person, while author Jenő Heltai was represented by Menyhért Lengyel. The committee consisted of vice-commissioner Károly Andréka, advisor to the Ministry of Culture Ödön Mariay, Zoltán Farkas, Kálmán Tomcsányi and chief advisor György Puskás – who was to write the report about the play – sat in the front row. Only a few people could get into the hall or hide behind the curtains, firstly because such censorship performances were private, and secondly because the detectives who were sent to the theatre took care to keep away journalists and uninvited visitors.

First, let us see the report given by *Magyar Hírlap*. The newspaper interviewed József Pakots, who could only repeat his earlier, angry words:

[...] A few minutes after four o'clock the members of the committee arrived. Vice-commissioner Károly Andréka, advisor to the Ministry of Interior Kálmán Tomcsányi, police advisor György

⁶²Pakots József interpellál a Heltai-Szirmai-operett. . . , *cit.*, 4.

⁶³In some press sources of this study, names "Lóránd" and "Lóránt" were corrected, because in various encyclopaedias the form "Lóránd" was used, so I followed these.; Lóránd Barabás (1884–1941) writer, dramaturge, theatre director. In *Magyar Színházművészeti Lexikon.*, *cit.*, 59.

⁶⁴A betiltott *Enyém az első csók*. . . , *cit.*, 9.

⁶⁵Lejátszották belügyminisztériumi bizottság előtt a betiltott Heltai-operettet. A bizottság döntését kedden hirdetik ki [Banned Heltai Operetta Performed for the Committee of Ministry of Interior. Decision To Be Announced on Tuesday]. *Magyar Hírlap*. vol XXXVIII issue 115 (22 May 1928) 8.

⁶⁶Irodalmi törvényszék az Andrassy úti Színházban. Döntés: kedden délelőtt. [Literary Court in Andrassy Street Theatre. Decision On Tuesday]. *Pesti Napló*. vol LXXIX issue 115 (22 May 1928) 12–13.

⁶⁷Erkölcsbírák a nézőtéren. Két órán át vizsgáztatták az *Enyém az első csókot*, de nem határoztak [Morality Judges in the Audience. *Enyém az első csók* Examined for Two Hours but no Ruling Made]. *Újság*. vol IV issue 115 (22 May 1928) 11.



Puskás, advisor to the Ministry of Culture Ödön Mariay, theatre critic of *Budapesti Hírlap* Zoltán Farkas, former managing editor of recently abolished periodical *Szózat* and is now theatre critic for *Új Nemzedék*.

The censorship performance of the *Enyém az első csók* is about to start. József Pakots is on the stage behind the curtains. Members of the committee are seated in the front rows.

A gong, the curtain goes up, Rátkai is seen on the stage in the spectacular costume of a medieval lord. He is sitting on the throne with Böske Tóth next to him, and on the right sings the joyful choir of the little operetta: *Today is different, / From other days, / Today it ends, / Today it ends / The Middle Ages end.*

Then the story of the play begins. Rátkai plays with noticeable indisposition. No wonder: the audience does not react to his jokes.⁶⁸

The performance ends at a quarter to five, the committee members go to art director Lóránd Barabás's office to discuss whether or not they should authorize the performances of the play.

[...] – I have the most honest impression – said József Pakots –, that Jenő Heltai's play is an uncommonly fine and great piece of theatre. The tune of the little operetta, its satire and its humor are not hurtful or frivolous, but truly refreshing. This performance can only justify the success of the play twenty years ago.

Then the question arises, why the decision about the revival of a play so successful twenty years previously is not made by an impartial artistic committee.

Director Elemér Wertheimer, director of this little theatre, says that he will have to close down the theatre if *Enyém az első csók* is not allowed to stage, because their current season was founded on this operetta.

After a forty-five minute discussion the committee members left the theatre and director Wertheimer asked ministry advisor Tomcsányi about the committee's decision. But Tomcsányi only said that he would report to Minister of Interior Scitovszky on Tuesday morning, who was to bring the final ruling in the case.

Regardless of the committee's decision, József Pakots was to speak out about the case of the ban in Parliament so as to prevent further instances where a theatre performance is banned based on a report from a police officer, depriving hundreds of people of their livelihood.

'This case is special', said Pakots, 'because the author of the banned play is Jenő Heltai. I will ask the Ministry of Interior to ask the Hungarian embassy in Paris to give information about Jenő Heltai. In the French Foreign Office they know him well. Here, in Hungary, they obviously don't.'⁶⁹

The report in *Pesti Napló* projected the atmosphere of the statements made by József Pakots and Menyhért Lengyel over the entire text. It also described a discussion between director Wertheimer and Tomcsányi. They referred to the case as a medieval trial, using of course the rhetorical opportunities given by the medieval story (for example: "Jenő Heltai made a mistake when he wrote that »*The Middle Ages have ended.*«⁷⁰). For the eventuality of a

⁶⁸In another, later article we can read that the audience – especially Tomcsányi – smiled or laughed many times.

⁶⁹Lejátszották belügyminisztériumi bizottság... cit., 8.

⁷⁰Irodalmi törvénytörés... cit., 12.



final ban, Heltai envisages renouncing his position as a chairman of the Association of Hungarian Playwrights.

[...] The committee, which includes vice-commissioner Andréka as member, consists of nine people, three of them right-wing literary critics. [...]

When the meeting of the committee started, MP József Pakots, who saw the performance from behind the curtains, appeared in the audience. József Pakots said the following:

- *Enyém az első csók* is a fine, cozy, high-end operetta. It is ridiculous even to think about banning it. The noble-sounding name of Heltai and this high-end, literary libretto, and this great music from Szirmai: these can only give us reason to celebrate Heltai and Szirmai. Banning them! To hurt them by charging them with immorality? This is a sin indeed. The little operetta starts with a song, and its last line says that the Middle Ages had ended. When I look at the events around this operetta, when I see this terribly somber literary court with members who have had nothing to do with literature before, and when I remember that this gratuitous decision of the police can be sanctioned by the court, I have to say that Heltai was in fact mistaken when he wrote that "*The Middle Ages had ended*"

- About this whole case, I will speak out in the House on Tuesday. The entire predicament is thoroughly incredible and hideous. A police officer judging about a Heltai operetta. A single word from a police officer is enough to stigmatize this little masterpiece by Heltai as immoral and obscene, and to ban it once and for all. It is also incredible that it should be not a representative of the Ministry of Culture, but someone from the Ministry of Interior – who may be a great administration expert, but certainly not a judge in a literary case – who passes judgment at second instance as to what kind of playwright Heltai is and whether his brilliant play is unworthy of being performed in front of the audience in Pest.

Now **Menyhért Lengyel** takes over. He angrily proclaims,

'Hungarian writers, let us put down our pens! Everything is in vain here. Does it depend on the mood of police officers if Heltai can write, and whether, when he writes something, it can be performed in a theatre? With this method, it is not only the Hungarian writers who can be made miserable, but a theatre can also be destroyed in twenty-four hours. And this is happening now, when Hungarian acting is in the greatest crisis, and theatres are in the hands of God more than ever. I do not know what could be done against all of this. We are standing here feeling helpless.

Meanwhile, in the director's room, the meeting goes on. Nobody outside can know anything for certain. A detective is standing by the door of the meeting room. But after a forty-five minute meeting, the door of the meeting room opens, an advisor representative of the ministry comes out and calls in vice-commissioner Andréka and police advisor Puskás from the street. The meeting continues. Finally, at half past five the committee members appear at the door. Director Elemér Wertheimer rushes to Kálmán Tomcsányi, who says the following: - The committee did not bring a final ruling, it will be done tomorrow. [...]

*

That is all. Is that not exactly like a medieval story?...⁷¹

From the paper *Újság* I found it important to highlight the following details, and it is also worth paying attention to the highly ironic style of the report:

⁷¹Irodalmi törvényszék. ..., cit., 12–13.



[...] The gentlemen entered the theatre hall and took their seats scattered in the rows. They clearly wished to examine the obscene play from every angle. [...]

The head of the committee was ministry advisor Kálmán Tomcsányi, whose name is mostly known to the public in connection with bans. [...]

The formalities of the morality investigation are highly impressive and shockingly exciting.

Two detectives were standing at each door of the hall, dressed in black. Nobody could go in or out.

[...] On the stage, among others, we could see MP József Pakots, who definitely did not want anyone to know that he had seen *Enyém az első csók* – an instance as disgraceful for Members of Parliament as it is for young girls.

After the performance the committee went into the director's office. When the curtains finally descended upon this blight of the dramatic arts, the detectives left. In the hallway, we surprised representative Imre Györki, who had probably been trying to lurk around the keyhole, but felt afraid of the detectives.

The committee retired to the office. The young man looked out of the door several times before he went to completed the numbers of the committee. He invited a few gentlemen of the police inside, attending merely as private citizens. The supplementary committee was locked up again and continued the meeting.

Actors and other employees of the theatre, for whom the ban was an existential question, walked nervously up and down the corridors. Besides journalists this included other intrigued individuals such as Menyhért Lengyel.⁷²

Finally the door opened. Ministry advisor Tomcsányi appeared in coat and hat. He words he spoke to theatre director Elemér Wertheimer were the following, **'We have not made a decision in the case. We shall report to his excellency the Minister of Interior. Please come and see me later.'** Then they left. [...]⁷³

On 23 May, a report was published in *Esti kurír*⁷⁴ from which the reader of the time could learn about the events accurately to the hour and even to the minute, and it also shed light on the reaction of the judging audience:

[...] 4.15 p.m.: The doors of the theatre hall open. The detectives check everyone. They literally stop people for identification without saying a word. No one else is allowed to enter except the members of the committee. **Albert Szirmai, the composer of the operetta wants to go in. They allow him,** but finally he is forced to sneak in the hall in the dark. Menyhért Lengyel also goes in as the representative of Jenő Heltai who is in Berlin at the time.

The committee in charge of protecting public morality seat themselves in the first two rows. [...]

'What you sang is right', says Rátkai, referring to the libretto which proclaims that today the Middle Ages end.

⁷²Menyhért Lengyel represented Heltai, he was not only a "curious person" on the event.

⁷³Erkölcsbírák a nézőtéren. . . , *cit.*, 11.

⁷⁴Módosításokkal engedélyezték a betiltott Heltai-operett előadását, de a belügyminiszter továbbra is helyesli a rendőrség eljárását [Performance of Banned Heltai Operetta is Allowed with Some Modifications, but Minister of Interior Still Thinks that Police Measures Were Right]. *Esti Kurir*. vol VI issue 116 (23 May 1928) 7.



Everyone is looking at Tomcsányi. Tomcsányi laughs, Andréka laughs, the two literary potentates smile.

4.12 p.m.: The document about the termination of the Middle Ages is handed to Márton Rátkai, who, as befits an illiterate knight, looks at it upside down.

'It is upside down', the courier warns him.

'No problem', says Rátkai, 'a true knight can read upside down'.

Tomcsányi nods and laughs.

Tomcsányi laughs, Rátkai worries because the Middle Ages are to end.

4.22 p.m.: So, at 12 o'clock the Middle Ages are to end. Naturally, Márton Rátkai is eager to know what time it is.

He takes his hourglass from the pocket of his vest, takes a look at it and says, 'It is only ten o'clock.'

Tomcsányi laughs.

4.40 p.m.: The village girls arrive to give the first kiss before their marriage to the squire, true to the custom. Song: *Blessing and peace / Blessing and peace / We are the brides / From the village.*

Tomcsányi laughs.

4.45 p.m.: The old lord is scared, as the Middle Ages are to end within two hours and he still has three hundred girls to kiss on the lips.

'I am three hundred behind', says Rátkai and his face registers scare.

Tomcsányi laughs.

4.45 p.m.: The grooms arrive. Song: *Blessing and peace / Blessing and peace / We are the sad grooms / From the village.*

Tomcsányi laughs.

The landlord seems to be enjoying the goings-on, but the attraction is over.

4.46 p.m.: Irén Biller dances onto the stage. Now comes her duet with Rátkai. [...]

Tomcsányi laughs. Andréka laughs and the literary potentates laugh.

4.48 p.m.: The old lord now almost likes the idea of the first kiss. But the clock strikes twelve, which means that the Middle Ages have come to an end, the medieval customs must die.

'The Middle Ages are over,' he says. 'I no longer have the right to anything.'

4.50 p.m.: The play ends. Advisor to the Ministry of Interior Kálmán Tomcsányi laughed eight times in thirty-five minutes at Jenő Heltai's obscene operetta. The rest of the story is known: the police officers stood by the door and Tomcsányi retired into the director's office with his literary advisors where they had a long discussion about what to do about this frightful play. [...]⁷⁵

⁷⁵Ibid., 7.



AN OUTLOOK: MORALITY PROTECTION TO THE BITTER END – 20 MAY 1928

One of the benefits we may hope to gain from this case is if the Ministry of Interior were to reconsider the application of the law about the morality protection to theatre (or other artistic) performances or use a totally different method to supervise them if necessary. The playwrights also hoped for such an outcome, but police have also taken action with regard to the operetta *Yes*. The two cases are connected in articles reporting on the fate of *Yes*. We can assume that in this case the common outrage about the ban of the Heltai-Szirmai operetta has caused those involved to think the matter over. On 20 May *Pesti Napló* published the following article concerning the significance of the case of *Enyém az első csók* in connection with *Yes*, and playwrights in general, *A Yes szövegkönyvét vasárnap délelőtt felülvizsgálja a rendőrség. Erkölcsvédelem a végkimerülésig [Libretto of Yes to be Reviewed by Police on Sunday Morning. Morality Protection to the Bitter End]*⁷⁶:

One day has passed since the performance of Heltai and Szirmai's operetta in the Andrassy Street Theatre was banned. This gratuitous act was followed by loud protest on behalf of the entire community of writers and actors. In the columns of *Pesti Napló*, the greatest Hungarian playwrights expressed their views on the case and emphasized that such a case of police censure will have the most serious consequences unless it is revoked without delay, and that all it can avail is to cause serious and irreparable damage to our theatres already struggling with huge problems, and to drive Hungarian writers into utter apathy. [...]

For a while after the measures of the Ministry of Interior things seemed to calm down a little and, it was believed that, at least for the present, police would stop pestering theatres in Pest. That was not the case. Yvain's new operetta, *Yes*, premiered in the Hungarian Theatre on Friday evening. The press wrote about the play in positive tones and even the strictest critic could find no fault with the libretto of this delightful and successful little operetta. It seems that that the police's opinion is again different from that of the audiences of Budapest and the critical appraisal given by the people that city. This is proved by the fact that **the management of the Hungarian Theatre received summons from the headquarters in which they request the head of the theatre to report at the Permissions Department on Sunday morning and present the entire libretto of *Yes*.**

Naturally, for the present it is unknown what might be the final goal of the police with this request, but has undeniably brought uncertainty upon stage plays which are of acknowledged value on every stage around the world, and whose destiny is now to be discussed or judged at the »department of permissions« after performances have been discontinued.⁷⁷

⁷⁶A *Yes* szövegkönyvét vasárnap délelőtt felülvizsgálja a rendőrség. Erkölcsvédelem a végkimerülésig. *Pesti Napló*. vol LXXIX issue 114 (20 May 1928) 19.

⁷⁷A *Yes* szövegkönyvét vasárnap... cit., 18.



“SO IT WAS ABOUT OF TWO CLAUSES”⁷⁸ – 22 MAY 1928

The permission which finally authorized the theatre to include the operetta in its season’s program was received by the management on 22 May. The press, as was to be expected, reported the fact, and a few days later a “sample text advertisement”⁷⁹ appeared on the pages of every newspaper:

Now that the Heltai-Szirmai operetta *Enyém az első csók* – which was first banned and then re-permitted – is once again being performed as part of the series *Kacagó Esték [Laughing Evenings]*, audiences are giving the play a standing ovation night after night. This flawless little play is a huge success due to its brilliant wit, beautiful music and the acting of Márton Rátkai, Böske Tóth, and Pál Fekete. In fact the entire program is a huge success, with ticket prices ranging up to 6 Pengő.⁸⁰

This case is especially absurd because the “morality judges”, in other words the the committee from the Ministry of Interior, withdrew the ban, partly yielding to pressure. But the way in which this “withdrawal” took place is almost comical in itself, since the Ministry of Interior deleted the total of two sub-clauses from the script. There was no censorship here, asserted the Minister of Interior when asked about the events by *8 Órai Újság*. Scitovszky talked about the monitoring of the plays in general, and he said that such “inconveniences” could be easily avoided if theatre companies submitted their scripts in advance.

[...] – I altered the ruling of the headquarters and **authorized the performance of the play with the appropriate modifications.**

The police had made the right decision when they vetoed the play because of its libretto and its manner of performance. When the case reached me I examined the relevant points and altered the police ruling after considering several aspects. **I ordered the theatre management to introduce moderation to those parts of the play which had justified the police ruling.**

Usually, I am no friend of censorship, either, and do not wish to exercise it, because I find it personally difficult. The professionals involved need to know their won boundaries and whenever they go beyond these, they render it necessary for the police to intervene. I do not only consider moral aspects, but also take into account the fact that for a theatre which performs a play, the measures I might introduce in cases like this can easily cause difficulties. I strive not to cause any

⁷⁸Két mellékmondatot kellett kihúzni Heltai Jenő librettójából. Engedélyezték a további előadásokat [Two Sub-clauses had to be Deleted from Jenő Heltai’s Libretto. Further Performances Permitted]. *Pesti Napló*. vol LXXIX issue 116 (23 May 1928) 11.

⁷⁹See the text published in *8 Órai Újság* with only a few modifications, among others: Heltai-Szirmai *Enyém az első csók* operettének tüntető sikere az Andrassy úti Színházban [Demonstrative Success of Heltai-Szirmai Operetta *Enyém az első csók* in Andrassy Street Theatre]. *Pesti Napló*. vol LXXIX issue 119 (26 May 1928) 13.; Heltai-Szirmai *Enyém az első csók* operettének tüntető sikere az Andrassy úti Színházban. *8 Órai Újság*. vol XIV issue 120 (27 May 1928) 10.; Az újra engedélyezett *Enyém az első csók* [*Enyém az első csók* Re-Authorized]. *Esti Kurír*. vol VI issue 125 (3 June 1928) 10.; Az újra engedélyezett *Enyém az első csók*. . . *Pesti Napló*. vol LXXIX issue 124 (2 June 1928) 15.; Further articles which give a shorter report about the re-authorized performance are, e.g.: Az újra engedélyezett *Enyém az első csók*. . . *Magyarország*. vol XXXV issue 120 (27 May 1928) 12.

⁸⁰Az újra engedélyezett *Enyém az első csók*. Biller Irén – Rátkai az Andrassy úti Színházban – A legdrágább jegy 6 pengő [*Enyém az első csók* Re-Authorized. Irén Biller with Rátkai in Andrassy Street Theatre –Most Expensive Tickets at 6 Pengő]. *8 Órai Újság*, vol XIV issue 121 (30 May 1928) 11.



damage to anyone. However, moral requirements must naturally enjoy priority and obligation of the police authorities when they make measures which are necessary considering public morals.

– When I look at the showcases, I am happy to see that the issues that might have been experienced in the past in terms of public morality have disappeared. **If there are any concerns about the play, these should be clarified before the performance.**

When it comes to concerns like that, it is not a matter of censorship so much as a friendly opinion, and such points can be modified in order to avoid any unnecessary expenditure, as this aspect of things cannot be taken into consideration when it the protection of public morality is at stake. [...] ⁸¹

The summary ⁸² given by *Pesti Napló* on 23 May focused on the financial aspect which – since we are talking about private theatre companies and businesses – was indeed a serious problem endangering the very survival of the theatres in question.

[...] Vice-commissioner Andr ka told the director of Andr ssy Street Theatre which were those sensitive parts that had to be deleted from the play. It soon turned out that they were talking about a mere two sub-clauses. These two sub-clauses were immediately deleted from the libretto of the operetta.

So it had all been about two sub-clauses. **The Andr ssy Street Theatre was empty for four weeks because of two sub-clauses, Jen  Heltai, this great Hungarian writer known all around Europe was convicted of a crime against morals and decency committed by his enchanting little masterpiece because of two sub-clauses.** Two sub-clauses needed to be deleted from the script of the operetta after the mobilization of Hungarian writers, Hungarian public opinion, and the relevant department of the Ministry of Interior, so these two sub-clauses must be remembered now. [...] ⁸³

CENSORSHIP IN THEATRES AS A COMMON PROBLEM – ACTION AGAINST POLICE ASSAULTS

The case and the measures we have described were far from unique, even if the episode of the Heltai-Szirmai operetta received the most attention in the press. On 24 May 1928 *Pesti H rlap* also published the interpellation of the writer and Member of Parliament J zsef Pakots, in which he brought up a new argument against the application of the decree of morality protection on literary works:

[...] he criticized the measures of the police, namely that they censored certain plays and banned several of literary value. The decree on morality protection did not do much good for us abroad. The writer of the banned operetta, Jen  Heltai had only just reviewed the French Medal of Honor as a

⁸¹Scitovszky bel gyminiszter enged lyezte a betiltott Heltai-darab el ad s t [Minister of Interior Scitovszky Permits Performance of Heltai Play]. *8 Orai  js g*, vol XIV issue 116 (23 May 1928) 12.

⁸²K t mell kmondatot kellett kih zni Heltai Jen  librettój b l. Enged lyezt k a tov bbi el ad sokat [Two Sub-Clauses Had to be Deleted from Jen  Heltai's Libretto. Further Performances Permitted]. *Pesti Napl *, vol LXXIX issue 116 (23 May 1928) 11.

⁸³K t mell kmondatot kellett kih zni. ..., *cit.*, 11.



token of appreciation for his literary work. It is typical of police censorship that after deleting one or two harmless sentences – by the order of the minister of interior – they authorised the play once more.⁸⁴

Scitovszky confirmed the official position of the Ministry of Interior in his answer – as he did in his previous statements⁸⁵ – which stated that the ban and the supervising of the play were indeed necessary.

[...] The police supervise performances with regard to their impact on public morality. It is the state's interest to prohibit the debauchery of morals. The performance in question, and some parts of the play itself, go beyond the boundaries of good taste and morals. It is possible to have fun, be entertained and mock things within the confines of good morality. In the future, theatres will have to present the script of each play in advance, that way the problem can be solved without causing financial difficulty, while revising performances with a view to their moral aspects. (The House acknowledged the answer.) [...] ⁸⁶

“We can say that the case would have had far more serious consequences than they had thought.”⁸⁷ – wrote the journalist of *Magyarország* in an article about the incident published on 24 May. As we know, even a few days' ban caused a huge drop in income for the Andrassy Street Theatre, but the playwrights urged a common action against censorship and police assaults in theatres.

Yesterday evening the banned operetta by Jenő Heltai and Albert Szirmai was re-included in the program of the Andrassy Street Theatre following minor alterations. [...] Now that the files of this inconvenient case are closed and the little operetta has again been performed to huge applause from the audience, we can safely say that the case could have had far more serious consequences than they had thought. The head of the Andrassy Street Theatre decided that if the Minister of Interior does not change the police ruling, the theatre was to close its doors without delay, one month before its regular summer break.

The director of another theatre was threatened with a fine if unless he delete incriminating parts in a play. This prestigious director from Budapest has been at the head of a noted Hungarian theatre for a quarter of a century. He told our colleague that he would not pay the fine, but would exercise his right to serve his sentence instead. This is the way in which he would wish to protest against police measures.

We have learnt that the Association of Theatre Directors, the Association of Playwrights and the Theatres Association were launching a joint law suit against the assaults of the censorship, after having declared their protest at their subsequent meeting.⁸⁸

⁸⁴Interpellációk [Interpellations], *Pesti Hírlap*, vol L issue 117 (24 May 1928) 8.

⁸⁵See for example the previously mentioned article Minister of Interior Scitovszky Permits Performance of Heltai Play. 8 *Órai Újság*, vol XIV issue 116 (23 May 1928) 12.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁷A rendőrség betiltó rendelkezése miatt be akarta zárni kapuit az Andrassy úti Színház. Együttes akció készül az illetéktelen cenzúra ellen [Andrassy Street Theatre Wanting to Close Doors Due to Police Ban. Common Action planned Against Unwarrantable Censorship]. *Magyarország*, vol XXXV issue 117 (24 May 1928) 9.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 9.



After this, the decree on morality protection and the issue of censoring theatres remained on the agenda, and playwrights and artists – as well as other associations, groups and communities, etc. – urged the revision of the decree, as we could see in the above-mentioned sources. They also found it absurd that the police subordinated to the Ministry of Interior should take measures concerning issues that would normally belong to the Ministry of Culture. This is proved by the fact that the first Congress of Fine Arts and Literature – which gave occasion for a meeting of a range of relevant departments – also made it one of its goals to discuss and later to resolve this problem.

The Congress of Fine Arts and Literature will demand the termination of censorship in theatres and the abolition of related police fees and taxes on entertainment. The first Congress of Fine Arts and Literature will be opened on 4 June in the Research Hall of the Houses of Parliament.

Participants have agreed to submit numerous proposals to Congress, including the demand for the termination of theatre censorship and of the application of public morality regulations to theatres. The explanatory section of the proposal quotes a range of related laws all the way from the 1848 decree abolishing censorship, demonstrating that the decree on the protection of public morality lacks legal foundations. [...] ⁸⁹

SUMMARY

By selecting from contemporary press sources and putting them into context, the goal of this study has been to present the absurd incidents of banned theatre performances in Hungary and to provide an insight into the application of contemporary decrees for the protection of public morality. We have also explored the operation of the Andrassy Street Theatre – the performance of the play on the opening night, the danger of breakdown etc. – and attempted to enhance our knowledge, in a chronological sequence, about the way in which the Association of Hungarian Playwrights was connected to the case. As we could see, this incident was not unique, several plays were banned temporarily or permanently by the Ministry of Interior, and this was one of the reasons why Hungarian playwrights urged to organize an association for protecting their interests, and urged to reform the decrees in question.

As a final thought I would like to highlight a few sentences from an article published in *Pesti Hírlap* on 23 May:

[...] We must all remember what happened to a theatre, a theatre's audience and, above all, to the very best writers of the country within four days in May 1928 in Budapest, just because after a delay of four days, the police needed to delete two sub-clauses from a one hour play simply in order to put a patch on the "literary mistake" of a police advisor.⁹⁰

⁸⁹"Congress of Fine Arts and Literature to Demand Termination of Censorship in Theatres and Decrease of Police Fees and Entertainment Taxes." *Az Est* vol XIX issue 120 (27 May 1928) 12.; Further summaries about the events include, for example, *Az első magyar irodalmi és művészeti kongresszus* [First Congress of Fine Arts and Literature]. *Magyar Művészet* vol IV issue 3 (1928) 273–274.

⁹⁰Két mellékmondatot kellett kihúzni. . ., *cit.*, 11.



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László Krasznahorkai's *War and war* as an apocalyptic metahistorical novel

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at a novel by László Krasznahorkai in the context of the narrative turn in history, which also stimulated a reevaluation of the fictional historical narrative. *War and War* was one of a series of Hungarian historical novels, or mixed novel formations with a historical theme, published at the turn of the millennium, whose primary aim was not to recount a self-assured historical tale but rather to highlight, via the story, the models/schemas/shifts/blank spaces in our present-day comprehension of the past. This paper interprets the novel with reference to historic-philosophical conceptions (Löwith, Koselleck), tracks its references to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, and argues that it transforms the teleological idea of the historical process into an apocalyptic model of history.

KEYWORDS

contemporary Hungarian literature, László Krasznahorkai, fictional historical narrative, historiographical metafiction, apocalyptic model of history

The narrative turn in history, which occurred in the last quarter of the 20th century and unsettled the frameworks of our historical thinking, caused attention to be focused on the linguistic and narrative aspects of historical episodes. Stress was laid, for example, on the fact that the structural givens (linguistic and textual) of historical discourse determine its ideological or imaginary character *a priori*, since they establish the frameworks of meaning for historical facts (Barthes 1989). Further analysis was done on the implications of time structures (Koselleck 1979) and of the rhetorical positioning of historiographical texts (e.g. Ricoeur 1994, Gossman

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1990). Narration began to be seen as the fundamental thought-operation of historical awareness, which additionally determines the “order” of the past (Ankersmit 1983, 1989); and research on the narrative characteristics of historical texts ran in parallel with this. Hayden White, a theorist of narrative historiography, understands narrative as the universal *metacode* for the transformation of human experience into a form convenient for existing structures of meaning (White 1980). Furthermore, he regards narrative as a form of historical representation where, via the *emplotment*, facts are coded as elements of plot structures (of defined types). According to White, this coding represents one of the means which are offered by culture to the individual or the collective for the interpretation of the past (White 1978).

A paradigmatic change in understanding what the historical is, and the possibilities of transmitting it, was brought about by inter-discursive research work. Here the entire range of problems was covered, taking account of the philosophical, literary-theoretical, historiographical and socio-psychological aspects.¹ Historiographical and literary texts also offered thoughts on the theoretical problems posed. For historical fiction fresh areas of interest appeared: the ideological employment of history and the socio-psychological functions of historical narrative; the question of (national) historical *grand narrative* and alternative historical stories; the standpoint of remembrance and individual/collective historical memory. The new ways of looking at history had the unanticipated effect of revitalizing the historical novel.

In Hungarian literature this genre has been experiencing a renaissance since the turn of the millennium. One must note, however, that there is rarely any question of a “pure” generic form: rather, there are mixed formations of the novel with a historical theme, and their primary aim is not to recount some self-assured historical tale but rather to highlight, via the story, models/schemas/shifts/blank spaces in today’s perception of the past. The accent is thus shifted to metahistorical questions, as Linda Hutcheon, drawing on world-ranking literary works, has elaborated theoretically (*historiographic metafiction* Hutcheon 1995) from a postmodern standpoint. A series of interesting texts has appeared in Hungarian literature, problematizing the relationship of fiction and history from the most varied viewpoints. We may leave aside for the moment László Krasznahorkai’s novel *War and War*, which this paper will address in detail. Among the others, the following approaches appear to be most characteristic: deconstruction of historical memory and historical narration (e.g. Péter Esterházy: *Harmonia caelestis – Celestial Harmonies*); putting in question causal relationships and historical “fidelity”, via the magic realist mode of narration (e.g. László Márton: *Testvériség – Fraternity*, Zsolt Láng: *Bestiárium Transylvaniae*, the historical novels of László Darvasi); bringing to bear aspects of microhistory or the viewpoints of marginalized – ethnic, social or gender – groups (e.g. Zsuzsa Rakovszky: *A kígyó árnyéka – The Shadow of the Snake*, Éva Bánki: *Esőváros – Rain City*, the historical novels of Judit Kováts, Gergely Péterfy: *Kitömött barbár – The Stuffed Barbarian*); thematization of the relationship between corporality and history (e.g. Péter Nádas: *Párhuzamos történetek – Parallel stories*); confrontation of visual and linguistic narratives about the past (e.g. Pál Závada: *Természetes fény – Natural Light*, László Márton: *Árnyas főutca – Shady Main Street*); and the relationship of personal remembrance and history.²

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²This phenomenon, as manifested in Hungarian literature, has been studied in several books: cf. e.g. Hites 2004, Bokányi 2007, Szegedy-Maszák 2016, J. Görözdí 2019.



WAR AND WAR AS AN ARTISTIC PROJECT AND A NOVEL STORY

For László Krasznahorkai's writing project *War and War* (*Háború és háború*, 1999), to dissolve the received modes of linguistic-literary comprehension of history, or the ideological/socio-psychological operations used in historical remembrance, is not the principal aim. Rather, Krasznahorkai's approach depends on presenting some sort of model of history's functioning and posing final questions about our historical being, if any.

War and War is the fruit of thoroughgoing preparation and many years' travelling by the author around the locations of the action (peripheral regions of Europe). However, as a work of art it goes beyond the actual novel text. On the one hand, prior to the novel's publication, in various Hungarian journals the author published so-called "messages" (Krasznahorkai's expression), texts of lesser format under the unifying title *One Sentence – A Slice from a Book* (*Egy mondat – Metszet egy könyvből*, 1996–1997). Via poetic philosophical thoughts about the state of the world, history and human existence, these sentences reported on the thinking-positions of Korin, the main character in the book. A year before the novel appeared, Krasznahorkai published the story *Isaiah Has Come – Overture to a Novel* (*Megjött Ézsaiás – Előjáték egy regényhez*, 1998), which thematized the episode of how the disillusioned Korin turned into the busy herald of *War and War*. In later editions of the novel the story became part of the book (though not of the novel text); in most cases it has also been included in foreign language editions. On the other hand, the novel's plot outgrew the fictional world, via performance: the last will of the novel's character was complied with in reality, when a memorial plaque was fixed on the wall of a museum in Schaffhausen (Krasznahorkai 2016, 253). The project as a whole is accessible on CD-ROM and also on the internet (Krasznahorkai 1999). This grandiose work, which covers enormous distances of time and space, has been classed with the major works of Fuentes, Pynchon and Rushdie, while stressing also the genre characteristic of contemporary fictional achievements: "the monumentality of the 'new' major novels consists precisely in a non-integral comprehension of the world, a specific epic formation that emerges in the absence of connections, hierarchies and binary oppositions" (Bényei 1999, 1305).

Its philosophical dimension and its grasp of history lend this novel a unique grace. The basic plot is simple. We are told of a somewhat eccentric archivist from rural Hungary, György Korin, who is torn from his everyday monotony by a loss of fixed coordinates: that is, all of a sudden he becomes aware that the world as a whole with a unified, "forever-and-ever structure" does not exist and that humanity suffers from a total deficiency of *nobility*. He is freed from his existential hopelessness by reception of a prophetic message, a task of "sharing" a found manuscript. Korin travels to New York, regarded as the center of the world, and puts the document on the web, because in the virtual space of the internet he finds a guarantee of the eternal life of the manuscript and unceasing, geographically unrestricted access to it: "The Internet, which must be a purely intellectual matrix and therefore immortal, being maintained solely by computers in a virtual realm. . ." (Krasznahorkai 2016, 84).³ This manuscript is at the centre of the novel, but in fact the novel does not include it. We make acquaintance with it indirectly, through Korin's work reports.

³Quotations from the novel are from: Krasznahorkai, László: *War and War*. Translated by Georg Szirtes. London: Tuscar Rock Press, 2016.



The text is based on multiple mirroring, which is manifested, among other things, in the storytelling: the narrative relates to a version of the manuscript such as Korin perceives it, while also containing thoughts about its linguistic beauty, composition and copies. But it is never quoted. Korin's narrative of the manuscript is mirrored, however, in the hearers to whom he declaims his monologues, differently in each according to his or her nature, but always they are in some way touched. (Sometimes they are moved emotionally, as witness the air hostess, the Hungarian artist in New York, or the staff team of the Schaffhausen museum; elsewhere his listeners reject him and mock him as a lunatic, as in the instances of the Pest children and the interpreter). Though the narrator is an omniscient reporter, an equally important role in the narrative is played by the mutually mirroring stories of the characters. In turn, the working out of the story gives a mirror-image of the novel's basic philosophy:

“. . . having been granted a glimpse of the terrible complexity ahead, (Korin) saw that while the world appeared not to exist, the totality of that-which-had-been-thought-about-it did in fact exist, and furthermore, that it was only this, in its countless thousands of varieties, that did exist as such, that what existed was his identity as the sum of the countless thousand imaginings of the human spirit that were engaged in writing the world, in writing his identity, he said, in terms of pure word, the doing word, the Verb that brooded over the waters. . .” (12)

This philosophy does not believe in a central principle that grasps the ordering of the world (in other parts of the text, indeed, the absence of any such principle is bewailed): “. . . there was no common denominator, no interdependence between them, the only order and relationship existing within the discrete worlds of above and below, and indeed of anywhere. . .” (7). At the same time, the conviction that language precedes reality is expressed via metaphysical connections: an allusion to the Old Testament Book of Genesis, which is combined with the New Testament affirmation of the incarnation of the Logos.⁴ The Judaeo-Christian tradition, one of the most important sources of European culture, is present in the novel's background as the point of departure. It affects the idea of the world in the text, the image of history, the formation of characters, structure, genre, and so on. Whatever László Krasznahorkai's text may say, then, is pronounced with this tradition in view. In his earlier works also this attitude is familiar, inhering as it does in a distinctive metaphysics, as described by Gergely Angyalosi in an article highlighting this theme: “a privileged relationship with the absolute, with final reality, »with being as an elemental and non-derivable act«, which is depicted in the form of an eternal and unrealisable pursuit” (Angyalosi 1999, 39).

The mirroring procedure is also used in the composition of the novel. The manuscript contains six partial stories which are played out in different historical periods, but without following a chronological order. Four men with metaphysical attributes appear there, referred to as “angelic men” (202), who admire the fruits of human art/work/reason/creativity, originating in a striving after nobility. In a Crete that recalls the lost Atlantis they observe, half a millennium before our era, the “radiant beauty” of the unity of man and Nature: “. . . a kind of marvelous correspondence by the light of which man could understand everything. . .” (106); in Cologne in the 19th century, watching the building of the cathedral, they have an insight into holiness: “. . .

⁴“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” [Genesis 1,2; King James version]; “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” [John 1,1. King James version].



this was the truly startling, truly extraordinary thing, they said, this all-consuming idea that weak and feeble man was capable of creating a universe that far exceeded him. . .” (135); in 15th century Venice they appreciate the defensive dispositions which repulse war, “never before. . . had beauty and intelligence been so aptly conjoined as in Venice. . .” (154); in Britain, in the works on Hadrian’s Wall in the 2nd century, they praise the admission that civilization has its limits:

“. . .the loveliest aspect of it being the ability to construct fastidious answers to insoluble problems, to propose the monumental in the face of the miscellaneous, to offer security in the face of defencelessness, [. . .] in other words to produce things of high order as opposed to those of a lower order, though you might put it as effectively [. . .] to credit him with the creation of peace instead of war – instead of war the peace, in Korin’s words – for peace was the greatest, the highest, the supreme achievement of man. . .” (175)

In late 15th century Gibraltar, when Columbus is launching his expedition, they admire the courage to test the limits of the affirmable world against the unknown; and finally, the chapter on the fall of Rome in the 5th century melts into Korin’s own story. Mirroring here becomes evident as the compositional procedure. The manuscript stories illuminate one another by repeating the identical plot structure, independently of historical place, time, experience: the “angelic men” make their appearance at a peaceful juncture in European history, as observers and admirers of authentic harmony. But shortly after their arrival the evil genius Mastemann appears; ruin and war follow, and the “angelic men” flee to another place in history which promises peace. And hence – even though they had intended to be “here for eternity” (96) – their journeying through human history becomes an unbroken and hopeless flight, since indeed human history is nothing but a series of wars: as against Tolstoy’s conception evoked in the novel’s title, for Krasznahorkai history is exclusively war and war.

The essential skeleton of the plot from the manuscript’s partial stories is further mirrored in the story of Korin, because *noble* values and people defenceless in their love of peace are defeated by evil, “the streetfighter” driven by the desire to crush and to rule. Korin’s world, however, is the well-known world of our everyday life. In this terrain there is no spectacular stage of history, rather there are the pettinesses of common practice. Evil itself does not take the form of a diabolical monster; it is simply our rotten value system (for example, in the character of the arrogant male interpreter or the criminal children of Pest, but also in the perverse thinking of the interpreter’s lover, who admires false values). The pre-text of the novel, the story *Isaiah Has Come*, summarises Korin’s philosophy, which he drunkenly expounds to an Angel, a “notary of heaven and earth” (258–9), late at night: “They have ruined the world. [. . .] seizing and, in seizing, ruining, seizing and thereby ruining, sometimes surreptitiously, sometimes brazenly: now subtly, now crudely, that’s the way they carried on, the only way they could carry on over centuries. . .” (260) – says Korin, and these thoughts do not merely sustain his awareness of his mission, they also connect with the historical philosophy of the novel. Attila Bombitz, writing about this book, addresses the motif of war in several of Krasznahorkai’s novels. War never appears as an external threat, according to Bombitz, but rather as the outcome of a warlike spirit present in man: “The novel does not speak of a ‘twilight of the West’; it looks upon immemorial human existence as a deplorable process of development towards the cancer of all mankind” (Bombitz 2000, 86).



Krasznahorkai's text outlines the course of history as a dynamic of fundamental categories, a struggle between *good* (construction, peace, harmony) and *evil* (dissolution, war, chaos). On the positive side, the meaning of history is formulated by the "angelic men", who see it in the culture-forming, noble force of the work of mankind, in "their infinite capacity, their temperament and love of life, their skill and courage. . ." (114). The pro-war arguments of the negative side are summarised in Mastemann's letter: ". . .for here the driver started a reiteration in praise of war, about the glory of war, saying that men were ennobled by great deeds [. . .] that might be attempted, planned and carried out only under circumstances of great personal danger, [. . .], only under the conditions of war" (159) – and these arguments culminate in the conclusion (familiar also from politico-historiographical writings) that "victory is truth". Behind this dual historico-philosophical dilemma, however, stands that same ultimate question, which asks about the meaning of history and the rightness of the trend of development.

THE ULTIMATE MEANING OF HISTORY AND APOCALYPTIC ASSOCIATIONS

The philosopher Karl Löwith, in his fundamental work on the philosophy of history (1949), explored the thought-frameworks for the interpretation of history and identified variations on two principles: the cyclical model of history from antiquity, and the goal-driven, causal model of history of the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Löwith says that all interpretations of history which create a relationship between historical events and consequences with the aim of finding some ultimate meaning, originate from the same source. They are derived from the history of salvation, i.e. the theological interpretation of history. This remains the true source even when later thinkers (Voltaire, the French Enlightenment authors, and the German idealists) replace the principle of Divine Providence with a principle of "human foresight" (Löwith 1949, 94), or alternatively with a principle of rational progress (whose manifestations include the 18th and 19th century idea of the universal state, Kant's prognostication of perpetual peace, and the theory of Marx and Engels which predicts a universal classless society). Löwith also emphasises the fact that in this schema the significance of historical events overshoots itself: it becomes visible in the context of some kind of *telos*, which always represents some future eschatological (in the broad sense of the world) fulfilment. Another analyst of the history of philosophy and historiography, Reinhart Koselleck, goes so far as to say that the treatment of the past always naturally appertains to some *horizon of expectation* (*Erwartungshorizont*), which adapts the historical narrative according to a certain anticipation of the future (Koselleck 2004). Löwith's thinking again highlights the fact that our idea of history has its source in Judaeo-Christian historical understanding, where the past is seen as the preparation of a future with an ultimate meaning ("the interpretation of the past becomes a prophecy in reverse", Löwith 1949, 6). It is beyond doubt that László Krasznahorkai, as he comprehends history in his novel, employs the frameworks (and even some concepts and motifs) of this eschatological goal-determined causality, even if his text does not contain the actual *telos* of the Judaeo-Christian tradition; to be precise, in numerous parts of the novel it is made unambiguously clear that there is no such assumption of a divine principle guiding things ("their talk kept straying to the deep metaphysical aspect of this unsurpassable masterpiece of the human imagination, to heaven and earth and the underworld. . .", 139). The conceptual frameworks which comprise the central values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition are presented only in human contexts ("love and



goodness, which [...] may be regarded as the two most significant European inventions”, 135–136), presumably under the auspices of humanist values. In a similar manner the text evokes the Last Judgment: in structure and motifs the original is drawn upon, but its validity is transformed.

Evident also are the apocalyptic associations of the text. Apocalyptic literature is a distinct genre, whose characteristic elements were taking shape from the time of its emergence in the 4th-3rd century BCE. We may find them in Krasznahorkai's novel also. Attila Mizser has studied the survival of the apocalyptic tradition in Hungarian literature of the second half of the 20th century, in this context analysing Krasznahorkai's short story collection *Relations of Grace* (*Kegyelmi viszonyok*, 1986). Mizser employs a broad understanding of apocalypse: as he conceives it,

“in contemporary literature the apocalyptic tradition may be detected on the one hand as the presence of a network of motifs. Alternatively, it appears as a peculiarity [...] of textual structure, which may be derived from the fragmentary nature of postmodern prose, its ambivalent relation to grand narratives, and a frequently contrapuntal functioning of rhetoric and grammar and of the metaphorical and phenomenological levels” (Mizser 2013, 26–27).

While this postmodern, motivic/linguistic/structural delimitation of the apocalypse as an ultimate state corresponds well to *War and War*, the novel also utilises the narrower generic tradition. One must, however, distinguish two (mutually permeating) layers of the text: firstly, the manuscript that shows affinity with apocalyptic literature (we are denied any direct access to this, learning of it only by report from Korin)⁵; secondly, the narrative about Korin, who, among other things, provides information about the manuscript's influence and also his interpretation of it as an archivist. Korin's relation to the manuscript determines the position and credibility of the text, giving a source of significance to its revelation (*apokalyptein*) of a prophetic message about the (sad) consummation of history.

It would seem useful to examine how the novel's text reflects on the generic codes of apocalyptic literature. (In this I rely on Pavel Filipi's summary.) The subject of apocalyptic writings is the entire history of the world and its ultimate outcome, which it attains in two phases (*aión*), an historical and a post-historical phase. These texts situate their addressees in history's final act and initiate them in the pre-ordained ultimate events, which take place beyond the bounds of history. Krasznahorkai's *War and War* is likewise about the final epoch, when things have gone definitively wrong (“... this is what God's absence leads to, to the production of a miraculous, brilliant and utterly captivating kind of human being who is incapable and always will be incapable of just one thing, that is, of controlling that which he has created. . .”, 220), but the story of history is not portrayed as linear (what does have a linear quality is the unstoppable expansion of evil, but this follows the sequentiality of reading, not the time sequence of events). After catastrophe comes another and still another catastrophe, which (contrary to the promise of salvation in biblical apocalyptic texts) no divine intervention or Last

⁵On the writing problem that lies behind this solution, László Krasznahorkai has said in an interview: “I had long held the opinion that the story of this flight could be written; I wrote over 200 pages about it, but I didn't like it any more, [...] so I physically destroyed it, because it was leading off in another direction. It betrayed an ambition which was not mine at all; deep down it contained some kind of certainty that one could know something certain about these European historical times which no one had known hitherto” (Keresztury 2000, 85).



Judgment will halt. The recurrent plot dynamic of the manuscript proliferates even into the story of Korin and Korin's own time period. The latter is also shown to be the final epoch, as the protagonist in *Isaiah Has Come* tells the Angel: "when it comes down to it you have to know that, once again, it's over. . . . That here [. . .] . . . once again, it's over." (257) Furthermore, the novel adheres to the specification of time structure in apocalyptic writings, according to which episodes are arranged not consequentially or consecutively but spirally; in particular curves of the spiral there is a recurrence of scenes already engaged with, appearing always in a different light (Filipi 2006, 139–141). This feature, as I mentioned above regarding the mutual mirroring of stories in the novel, is characteristic both of the manuscript and of Korin's story. What Krasznahorkai's text does not employ, from the *instrumentarium* of apocalyptic writings, is their over-abundance of imagery. For them the profusion of symbols and allegories serves to veil the significance, because interpretation belongs to the competence of the person entrusted with prophecy, and the meaning may be uncovered only in the last times. But if the apocalyptic texts are obscured by this exaggerated use of imagery, likewise in the novel there are difficulties with the interpretation of the manuscript. The meaning of the text on the "angelic men" remains, according to Korin after several readings, undiscoverable. And yet he forms the conviction that "the mystery obscured by the unknowable and inexplicable was more important than anything else could possibly be" (104).

In the Christian eschatological understanding of history, and in apocalyptic literature generally, the central text is the *Revelation to John*. Reference is made to it in Krasznahorkai's novel, which comprehends things with a similarly polarised dualism (Zs. Görözdi 2019, 97). For example, the mirrored recurrence of stories about the collapse of the world recalls the recurring structure of the Last Judgment in the *Revelation to John*, as it smites the earth; again, the New York - Babylon parallel evokes the comparison of the "great whore", symbolising the corrupt cities of Rome and Babylon; the afflictions at the end of particular stories in the manuscript (darkening, smoke) advert to the calamities in *Revelation*; the reference to paradise in the chapter on Crete summons up the motif of the promised new creation and paradisiacal bliss, and its fulfilment; in the Venetian chapter the genius of Genoa, namely the global power of money trading, suggests the merchant in *Revelation* riding a dark horse, who causes ruin by his manipulation of prices; and Korin's solidarity with the unfortunate and the powerless echoes the passages on how those who are coming from suffering will be satisfied and exalted.

TRANSFORMATION OF ELEMENTS OF JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

In a study of the inter-, intra- and trans-textual associations in *War and War*, András Kányádi demonstrated that other biblical passages/motifs besides *Revelations* had been used in many parts of the novel. They were transformed satirically, however, in Krasznahorkai's text, so as to represent the vulgarity of human affairs. Such a biblical travesty may be seen in the pair of old beggars in *Isaiah Has Come* (a subversion of the original human couple), or in the prophetic mission entrusted to the drunken Korin by the buffet angel toying with a glowing cigarette – in Isaiah 6, 4–7 a seraph cleanses guilt from the mouth of the future prophet with a burning coal (Kányádi 2017, 166–167). Kányádi makes the important observation that Krasznahorkai's hyper-textual allusions are subjected to procedures which modify their meaning; furthermore, that in reading they may be combined with a variety of signifying codes (175). The title of the pre-



text story indicates a parallel with the prophet Isaiah, and when we seek further connections between the prophetic *Book of Isaiah* and the novel, we may notice that *Isaiah*, too, contains apocalyptic writing (chapters 24–27); that certain critical interpreters question the authorship of Isaiah's prophecies of future bliss and regard this prophet as a herald of some kind of total downfall; that one of the principal themes of the Deutero-Isaiah book is the leading of the Hebrews away from their Babylonian captivity (40–42; at the end of the novel Korin takes on the task of leading the “angelic men” out of the “Babylonian” world); and that this Old Testament book is also concerned with the question of proxy suffering (53,12; in the story Korin makes an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, the manner of which evokes the sacrifice of Christ) (Tóth 1993, 440–443).

Keeping to the central question of my essay, however, the primary connection is this: the prophetic *Book of Isaiah* is one of the early manifestations of western historical consciousness based on religious foundations. According to Karl Löwith, a first characteristic peculiarity of this consciousness is the idea of historical time, in which the ultimate goal (*telos*), as an expression of the future, forms the course of history, and offers a schema for interpreting events as developments of the order and meaning which is subordinated to this *telos*. A second distinctive feature is universalism, i.e. the conviction that with the Christian god “the historical world becomes, in principle, perfect. . . All history moves up to this point, and then on from this point” (Löwith 1996, 56–57). Reinhart Koselleck addresses the question of how this historical thought pattern had made its way from transcendent content to politico-historical utilisation. Koselleck emphasises the fact that “the end of the world is only an integrating factor as long as its politico-historical meaning remains indeterminate” (Koselleck 2004, 13). He links the suppression of apocalyptic and astrological interpretations of the future to the birth of the absolute state. This repression aims at achieving “a monopoly of the control of the future” (16), using the means of “rational prognosis and the philosophy of historical process” (18). Reinhart Koselleck was interested above all in the time structure of modern historical ideas, and therefore his analysis is concentrated on the component elements of the teleological idea of history. He discovers that the rational outlook on the future (though having got rid of the divine/transcendent with its remote vistas, instead of which the future comes with open possibilities) maintains a principle of the alternative of good and evil for thinking about the course of human history (30–31). Furthermore, maintaining the promise of “the attainment of an ultimate paradise”, it implants in historical reality a commitment to fictitious ideas (for example, in Koselleck's view, the vision of a classless society), via which the historical process is concealed from its participants (23). In that regard, we may observe in agreement with Löwith, the *horizon of expectation* in this idea of history is not separated from the horizon of the history of salvation.

László Krasznahorkai's conception of history in *War and War*, in my opinion, explores/elaborates/questions a variety of aspects (including those outlined above) of Judaeo-Christian historical consciousness, using literary means. Unquestionably, what is in the background is Christian eschatological philosophy, although without the promise of salvation or indeed of any divine order, including God himself. What remains is an apocalyptic model of history, i.e. a development tending to catastrophe and the ruins of war. But if this is a depiction of a judgment, it is not understood as final: in the novel it is constantly, unstoppably repeated, which is to say, the evil of the human world generates its own punishment (a further allusion to the *Apocalypse of John*, 16, 5–6). From Judaeo-Christian eschatology there still remains, as the sole



representative of a heavenly world, the angel, meaning a messenger of God.⁶ Korin's story acquires legitimacy and meaning from the angel: in the pre-text story he is conferred by him with a "prophetic" mission, while in the novel it is Korin's work as an archivist that directs his attention (the angel appears only in two places in the novel, but his occasionally revealed presence stresses the fact that he functions as a pivotal point of the entire narrative). But we never discover who this angel is and why he is a silent observer of Korin and his story. In his interesting essay András Kányádi teases out various possible positions and functions of the angel, based on the text and the pre-text story; he points to the interpretive consequences this may imply for the narrative (Kányádi 2017).

At the close of my analysis of László Krasznahorkai's apocalyptic metahistorical novel, I will nonetheless mention another angel from a philosophical tradition bound up with angels, because it expresses a very similar attitude to the meaning of history and the historical state of the world. I have in mind the angel of history by Walter Benjamin, which was inspired by Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*. The figure appears in *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, which Benjamin wrote during fascism and where he engages in polemic with historical materialism:

A painting by Klee named *Angelus Novus* shows an angel looking as though he was about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise [. . .] The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin 2007, 257)

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⁶The author addresses angelological questions in his essay *On the Angel's Counsel (Az angyali rendről)* (Krasznahorkai 2001).



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Theodore Brentano – The first American minister for Hungary, 1922–1927

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ABSTRACT

The history of American-Hungarian relations has enjoyed renewed interest in the past thirty years. Despite this fact, there are still many uncovered or poorly documented episodes and persons concerning this academic territory. This article wishes to shed some light on one such character and period. It was in 1922 that the United States and Hungary established official diplomatic relations for the first time. Consequently the two countries exchanged ministers; thus, a long line of American ministers began to come and reside in Hungary. The very first of them was Theodore Brentano, who served five years in Budapest, between 1922 and 1927, but who seems to have disappeared from historical memory in both countries. Since 2022 marks the centenary of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries, this article will introduce Theodore Brentano, the first American minister for Hungary and his work there. Brentano's years coincided with momentous events in Hungary in the post-Trianon era and were a time of relatively active relations between Washington and Budapest. Using primary and secondary sources alike, this article will hopefully illustrate a sorely missed part of the history of American-Hungarian history and rekindle interest in what took place a century ago.

KEYWORDS

Theodore Brentano, American-Hungarian relations, League of Nations, 1920s

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INTRODUCTION

American-Hungarian relations have a long history. Ever since the birth of the United States, the two nations have had informal and indirect connections, most of which were manifest in Hungarian immigrants, some of whom became quite well known in the New World. It is calculated that until the outbreak of World War I, between one and half to two million people had immigrated from Hungary to the United States, many of whom were not Hungarians but ethnic minorities such as Slovaks or Romanians.¹ Hungarians in general looked with fascination at the overseas country and their information most typically came from travelogues written by Hungarians visiting America.² Between the Compromise of 1867 and the end of the First World War Hungary was the junior partner of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and as such it still could not have independent bilateral relations with the United States. When in late 1918 Hungary finally became a truly sovereign country, among the turmoil of domestic revolutions and Romanian military occupation, the post-war peace conference and the concluding peace treaties—and partly on account of them—, Hungary sought to establish official diplomatic relations with Washington. One of the main reasons was the Treaty of Trianon Hungary had to sign in 1920. Budapest hoped that the economic power, the enormous prestige and the impartial position of the United States might provide both possible protection against antagonistic countries within Europe—mainly the newly formed Little Entente of Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes—and economic-financial help to climb out of the terrible situation Hungary found itself in.

The adverse circumstances were only somewhat alleviated by the Herbert Hoover-led American Relief Administration, which provided highly sought-after relief to Hungary in the post-war period, although in meager amount compared to other European countries, such as Austria.³ America also undertook to finance the main part of the repatriation cost of 13,000 Hungarian prisoners of war from the Soviet Union.⁴

When in April 1921 István Bethlen assumed the post of Prime Minister of Hungary (a position he held for the following ten years)—with support from Admiral Miklós Horthy, the governor of the Kingdom of Hungary—the political consolidation of Hungary began and with it the economic and financial rehabilitation of the country started to seem ever more pressing and possible. To this end the United States and its much awaited support or outright help was of

¹For more detail, see, Tibor Frank, “From Austria-Hungary to the United States: National Minorities and Emigration, 1880–1914,” in: Tibor Frank, *Ethnicity, Propaganda, Myth-Making. Studies on Hungarian Connections to Britain and America, 1848–1945*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó), 1999, 73–91.

²Tibor Glant, *Amerika, a csodák és csalódások földje: Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok képe a hosszú XIX. századi magyar utazási irodalomban* [America, the Land of Wonders and Disappointments: The Image of the United States in Hungarian Travelogues in the Long Nineteenth Century], Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2013.

³For more detail about the ARA’s work in Hungary, see Tibor Glant, “Herbert Hoover and Hungary, 1918–1923,” *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2002), 95–109. On the general Central and Eastern European relief work, which in the greatest part was provided by American sources, see Herbert Clark Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover*. vol. 1–3, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951–1952), vol. 1, 282–430.

⁴Ulysses Grant-Smith to Charles Hughes, December 10, 1921, 864.00/482, Roll 6, M. 708, National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter cited as NARA). Washington, D. C., USA.



crucial importance to Budapest. Consequently the Hungarian side urged the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the two countries as soon as possible.

Since the two countries had fought on opposite sides in World War I, relations had to be normalized first in order to pave the way for diplomatic recognition. Ulysses Grant-Smith was appointed to take care of the delicate task of conducting this process. Since the United States was no party either to the League of Nations or to the Treaty of Trianon, it had to conclude separate peace treaties with the countries of the Central Powers. As the two countries at this point still had no official relations, Grant-Smith was not accredited as a diplomatic representative. His main task was to try to ensure that political order in Hungary was stable and that the peace treaty between the two countries would follow American wishes. As a sign that Hungary was not the most important country in Europe to American interests, the United States made it clear through Grant-Smith that it was willing to negotiate with Hungary only if the text of the planned peace treaty was based on the similar treaty with Germany.⁵ Hungary was basically blackmailed, sugar-coated in fine diplomatic terms, that acceptance of the terms agreed to by Germany was the condition necessary for reestablishing diplomatic relations.⁶ Hungary had no real choice but to accept the treaty on offer without reservations. The Hungarian Parliament passed the resolution on August 12, 1921, the treaty was dated August 29, 1921, while the US Congress ratified the treaty on October 18, 1921 and ratifications were exchanged on December 17, 1921, when the treaty came into force.⁷ Although Grant-Smith aspired to become the first American minister for Hungary when diplomatic relations were resumed early next year, it was not to be. Despite having done what he was entrusted with and having considerable local experience, his conduct was not always deemed as distinguished or acceptable and the incoming Republican establishment wanted to send its own man.⁸ As a result, instead Theodore Brentano was named the first ever American Minister for Hungary. For a short interim period from February 1922, Charge d'Affaires Eugene C. Shoecraft took over the conducting of bilateral affairs in Budapest until the minister arrived in May. The first Hungarian minister for the United States, Count László Széchenyi, presented his credentials in January 1922 and remained at his post for the next eleven years.

BRENTANO'S LIFE

Theodore Brentano was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1854. After grade school he visited Europe and studied at high schools in Switzerland and Germany. After returning to the United States, he enrolled at the National University Law School in Washington, D. C. and became a successful lawyer in Chicago. In 1890 he was nominated for the bench and later he became the first superior court judge of Cook County, Illinois, then Chief Justice, which position he held

⁵Charles Hughes to Ulysses Grant-Smith, July 9, 1921, 711.64119/1, Roll 1, M. 709, NARA.

⁶Charles Hughes to Ulysses Grant-Smith, July 23, and July 28, 1921, 711.64119/1 and /2, Ibid.

⁷Ulysses Grant-Smith to Charles Hughes, August 12, and December 14, 1921, 711.64119/8 and /36, Ibid.; Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter cited as FRUS): 1921, vol. 2, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1936), 258–59. The text of the treaty is in FRUS: 1921, vol. 2, 255–58.

⁸See Tibor Glant, "Ninety Years of United States-Hungarian Relations," *Eger Journal of American Studies*. Volume 13, (2012), 166–168. Grant-Smith was soon appointed minister for Albania, then Uruguay.



until 1921.⁹ As superior judge he did a lot for Chicago and Illinois to take property on the shore of Lake Michigan for public purposes which helped the development of the lake front at the Windy City.¹⁰ He took part in the famous trial of the assassin of Chicago mayor Carter H. Harrison in 1893.¹¹ He must have been somewhat controversial in his work, or perhaps too closely related to the Republican political machine in Chicago, because an assassination attempt was made on him and his family, but it was not clear who was behind the would-be crime and what the motive may have been.¹² A muckraker who wrote a short book about prostitution also cited a case that involved Brentano—in an unfavorable light. He, as Supreme Court Judge of Cook County, Illinois, secretly married Fred A. Busse, mayor of Chicago between 1907 and 1911, to a black woman. Later the Republican forces, of which Brentano was a prominent member in Illinois, did everything in their considerable power to hush the incident—quite successfully.¹³ Between 1899 and 1921 Brentano was also treasurer of the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, a German-language Republican paper whose editor earlier had been his father during the Civil War.¹⁴ He was thus a reliable member of the Republican political machine in the Windy City, therefore he was seen as a trusted man usable for smaller missions in and out of the field of law. Consequently, after retiring from the bench, he was chosen to be the first minister for Hungary by the Harding administration. His knowledge of German must also have played a role, since this was the foreign language the Hungarian political elite spoke. After the five years he spent in Hungary, he remained a faithful Republican but led a retired life. Theodore Brentano died in Chicago in 1940.

Hungary was not an important diplomatic post by any means in the United States. Naturally, the successive American governments had a stake in the political and diplomatic landscape of post-war Europe, but Central Europe—aside from Germany, of course—was not deemed as crucial to American interests. Geopolitical or financial interests did not motivate the White House to pay close attention to the region. That, however, does not mean that the State Department did not follow closely what was going on in the area in general, as well as in individual countries such as Hungary. As the priority for Washington was to see stability in the region, Hungarian political and economic-financial questions sometimes did reach the threshold of curiosity and more serious consideration and, with the 1920s unfolding, certain American financial circles did see possibilities in post-war European financial and economic rehabilitation—Hungary included. But in general, it must be stated that Hungary was a white dot for the overwhelming majority of Americans.

⁹For Brentano's biography, see, *Sketches: Judiciary Candidates*, (Chicago: The Hehrt O. Shepard Co., Printers, 1903), 6; *New York Times*, July 3, 1940.

¹⁰*New York Times*, July 3, 1940.

¹¹See, Richard Allen Morton, "A Victorian tragedy: The Strange Deaths of Mayor Carter H. Harrison and Patrick Eugene Prendergast," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), 6–36.

¹²*New York Times*, September 30, 1894.

¹³H. G. Creel, *Prostitution for Profit. A Police Reporter's View of the White Slave Traffic*, (St. Louis, Missouri: The National Rip-Saw Publishing Co., 1911), 19–22.

¹⁴*Fourth Estate: A Weekly Newspaper for Publishers, Advertisers, Advertising Agents and Allied Interests*, Issue 281, July 13, 1899; *The Chicago Tribune*, April 24, 1876.



Brentano's nomination came before the Rogers Act of 1924 which piece of legislation tried to reform the diplomatic service of the United States. The Act unified the diplomatic and consular services, created a tier system for officials with fixed salaries and also a system where the various diplomats were to rotate after three years' work in one place and set up a retirement age of 65. Thus, the way for a merit system was open in the reformed diplomatic service and also thanks to the launch of the Foreign Service School the following year, professional career diplomats got to the forefront.¹⁵ However, as any reforms, the Rogers Act suffered from flaws and political nominees have remained a regular feature of the American diplomatic service. It must also be noted that sometimes political appointees served just as well if not better than career diplomats. At any rate, Theodore Brentano represented the classic political appointee in 1922 being a lifelong Republican and having built an illustrious legal career. He was seen as well qualified to a post that apparently did not demand either a lot of work nor would it offer any complications beyond easy solutions. According to a certain source, it was Brentano's old friend, the Spanish Consul-General, Singer Berthold, who recommended the ex-judge to President Warren G. Harding for the post in Budapest.¹⁶ The first Hungarian minister for the United States, László Széchenyi was informed upon arrival that Brentano was 'a very good friend of the Hungarians' and supposedly 'Hungarian-Americans living here are very much delighted to note that Judge Brentano will be our next Minister in Budapest.'¹⁷ This information might have trickled down to the Hungarian press as well, since on his arrival one of the Budapest dailies wrote that partially owing to his many Hungarian friends in the United States, Brentano was arriving with sympathy to Hungary.¹⁸

BRENTANO'S WORK IN HUNGARY

Before his departure to Budapest, Brentano was the guest of honor at the American Hungarian Chamber of Commerce, where he spoke careful words about his upcoming diplomatic service. Caution was demanded since before him speakers mentioned Hungary's past suffering and its bright future that alluded to the hope for altered circumstances, that is, territorial revision. In his speech, Brentano emphasized America's neutrality, desire for peace, and friendly relations with Hungary, which had 'lasted ever since our own independence was achieved.'¹⁹ He also touched upon what Hungarians interpreted as a hopeful sign for possible revision: "The whole world

¹⁵On the Rogers Act, see, Waldo H. Heinrichs, *American Ambassador: Joseph C. Grew and the Development of the United States Diplomatic Tradition*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 95–106, 115–117; Robert D. Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind: The Training, Outlook and Style of United States Foreign Service Officers, 1908–1931*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975); Richard Hume Werking, *The Master Architects Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890–1931*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1977); Lawrence E. Gelfand, "Towards a Merit System for the American Diplomatic Service 1900–1930," *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1988), 49–63.

¹⁶*Egyenlőség*, April 1, 1922.

¹⁷Unknown person to László Széchenyi, March 2, 1922, Folder 1, Bundle 5, K 106, Papers of the Washington Legation, Hungarian National Archives (hereafter mentioned as HNA).

¹⁸*Pesti Napló*, vol. 73, no. 103, May 7, 1922.

¹⁹*New York Times*, April 14, 1922.



turns to us as arbitrator and our ideal will ever be to serve as the preserver of world peace. Arbitration, indeed, is an American doctrine.²⁰ Ever since the armistice, Hungarians had considered America as a possible savior. This was a trend that was characteristic of most states in the region, but because of its defeated status and its heavily decreased territory and population, Hungary perhaps more fervently than others looked to the United States as *arbiter mundi* and a beneficial judge, despite the fact that Washington made no steps or allusions, official or other, to the revision of the relevant details of the peace treaties. However, since the United States did not sign the Treaty of Trianon, many in Hungary had the misguided conviction that America would help rectify what was seen in Hungary as an unjust peace dictate.

Naturally, Brentano's arrival as the first official American minister for Hungary was a watershed event. This meant for most Hungarians that the United States deemed the country important and had an interest in its future. The minister's main job was to represent his country's interest, part of which was to monitor and check possible immigrants from Hungary to the United States. This was crucial especially after the first Quota Act was passed in 1921 by the US Congress, which drastically curtailed the number of immigrants admitted from Eastern, Southern and Central European countries. The Act limited the number of possible immigrants from countries to equal 3% of their numbers according to the 1910 census. In the case of Hungary, for example, this meant a 96% decrease compared to 1914, the last year of free immigration. Three years later the second Quota Act further limited immigration especially from Southern, Central and Eastern Europe again. In order to ensure that immigrants would primarily be Western and Northern Europeans, the quota was pushed down to 2% of the 1890 census, when far fewer people arrived from the Eastern and Southern areas of Europe.

Brentano happily mingled with the upper echelons of the Hungarian elite and other diplomats but at the same time carefully chose to avoid politics, because he understood what dangers lurked there. Hungary was a totally unknown place to the retired Chicago judge. According to the assistant of Grant-Smith in Budapest, prior to his departure Brentano was not even sure that Charles IV was a member of the Habsburg family.²¹ This goes to show that Brentano, like most political appointees, was not very clear about the local circumstances of his future station.

When Brentano arrived in May 1922, the most outstanding issues concerning Hungary were the domestic political landscape; the economic and financial situation of the country; and the foreign relations, especially with the neighboring countries. They were all necessarily intertwined. Following the conclusion of the war, revolutions and then governments replaced one another in quick succession, therefore political stability was the most acute goal to achieve. It was also the evolving American foreign policy view with regard to other countries in the world to prioritise stability, so there would be little chance of political upheaval. Once political change took off in a country, the outcome was never a given and was hard to predict, and therefore might be detrimental to American interests. The US clearly remembered revolutions in Russia, China, or Mexico, let alone the French revolution in the late eighteenth century, with their initial hope and later disappointment. Experience dictated that in a stable environment it was much

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Memorandum of the Secretary of the Western European Division, April 22, 1922, 864.00/630, Roll 7, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.



easier to predict short and long-term goals without having to fear sudden exigencies. Closely related was the fact that a country could only be politically stable if its finances and economy were healthy to the degree that it kept its society sufficiently satisfied. If a certain standard of living was guaranteed, there was only a reduced possibility of social turmoil, while the outcome of potential hostilities was never a given and did not bode well for a quiet and productive home base. Beyond domestic tranquility, good and productive international relations were also a must, both in the field of diplomacy and trade. And since Hungary came out of political confusion, financially and economically it was a shambles, and it was surrounded with inimical countries in the shape of the Little Entente, all three aforementioned aspects were on the American radar, although it must be stressed one more time that American interests in Hungary were meager at best. It was, however, clear to everyone that the entirety of the post-war Central European region was volatile, and only peace could ensure and provide a harmonious environment conducive to trade and stability—the overall American goals.

After Hungary successfully became a member of the League of Nations in September 1922, the country's international situation solidified. Belonging to the new international organization automatically meant that it was somewhat protected against the Little Entente's possible bullying and the Hungarian government could also keep on the agenda the problems of the three million Hungarians living in the successor states.²² This did not mean tangible protection but made the neighboring countries at least more conscious of the possible international consequences of neglecting minority rights within their borders. One such issue, for instance, was the Optants question. The Romanian government promulgated a law in 1921 in which they basically confiscated the land of those ethnic Hungarians who had opted for Hungarian citizenship following the peace treaty. Hungary claimed that this Romanian law was violating certain aspects of the Treaty of Trianon, to which Romania was a party, however, the Romanians argued that their state's sovereignty came first and stood above the protection of any treaty. In 1923 Hungary turned to the League for help in establishing which party was right. That was the beginning of a long and arduous legal process that was ultimately fruitless but which refused to go away for seven years and ended with mixed results.²³

One of the most crucial aspects of post-war Hungary, however, was its economic and financial situation. The country seemed incapable of finding its way out of its calamities and in the end approached the League of Nations to help put its financial house in order. Since the

²²On the relationship between Hungary and the organization, see, Zoltán Peterecz, "Hungary and the League of Nations: A Forced Marriage". In Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley, eds., *Remaking Central Europe. The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020, 145–165.

²³On the Optants question, see, Francis Deák, *The Hungarian-Rumanian Land Dispute*, (Columbia University Press, 1928); Ferenc Matheovics, *A Magyar-román birtokper* [The Hungarian-Romanian Optants Case], (Grill Károly, 1929); Elek Nagy, *Magyarország és a Népszövetség* [Hungary and the League of Nations]. (Franklin Társulat, 1930), 57–82; Gábor Aradi, "A San Remo-i tárgyalások magyarországi előkészülete," [The Hungarian Preparations for the San Remo Talks] *Levéltári Szemle*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2002), 24–38; Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during the Second World War*, (Stanford University Press, 2009), 27–30; Antal Berkes, "The League of Nations and the Optants' Dispute of the Hungarian Borderlands: Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia," In *Remaking Central Europe. The League of Nations and the Former Habsburg Lands*, edited by Peter Becker and Natasha Wheatley, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020), 283–314.



topic has been dealt with in detail elsewhere, a short summary will suffice.²⁴ Following the example of Austria, Hungary asked the organization to orchestrate an international loan for Hungary of 250 million gold crowns (\$50 million), most of which came principally from Great Britain, but the United States also contributed. For the time of reconstruction lasting two and a half years, an American, Jeremiah Smith, Jr. became the Commissioner-General to supervise the execution of the League plan. The success of Hungarian reconstruction became a paragon of League-sponsored financial rehabilitation for a string of countries in the 1920s and 1930s. Brentano regularly informed the State Department about the financial reconstruction program but since only private American banks took part in the endeavor, Washington was satisfied with being informed along general lines, especially that the whole program was a success story and there was nothing to worry about.

Brentano kept a low profile in Hungary. He mixed with other diplomats and took part in social gatherings, but other than that he was almost invisible, which suited him well. When after two years of stay in Budapest a Hungarian daily managed to have an interview granted, the journalist had the strong impression that the American minister was withdrawn and restrained. Aside from his personal character, however, Brentano did not mind mentioning the continuous improvement in the general conditions of Hungary and his attraction to Hungarian fine arts, especially embroidery.²⁵ He also spoke fondly of the theater as his favorite pastime in the Hungarian capitol. Since he did not speak Hungarian though, nor did he make any effort to master the basics of the language, these visits were usually restricted to the Opera.²⁶ This projected image is somewhat colored by the remark of an American serving in Hungary during these years. Royall Tyler, who was on the League of Nations' payroll, commented upon the minister's leaving Hungary in 1927 that Hungarians would 'miss the kind old Brentanos and their Sunday cocktail parties.'²⁷

When he could not avoid speaking publicly, he reverberated the usual mantra. For example, at the annual Fourth of July celebration in the City Park of Budapest, where George Washington's statue was situated, the incumbent American minister was always invited. In 1926, at the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and a few days after the successful conclusion of the League-orchestrated financial reconstruction, it was almost obligatory for Brentano to be present at the memorial service. On the occasion, he spoke of the traditional good relationship between the two countries and the help provided by the United States to Hungary in bringing home prisoners of war or giving direct financial aid.²⁸ On this occasion, naturally, recognition of the famous act took place at the highest level. While Admiral Horthy wrote to President Coolidge and thanked the United States for its 'philanthropic work' in

²⁴On the history of the financial reconstruction of Hungary, see, League of Nations, *The Financial Reconstruction of Hungary. General Survey and Principal Documents*, (Geneva, 1926); György Péteri, *Global Monetary Regime and National Central Banking. The Case of Hungary, 1921–1929*, Boulder, (Colorado: Social Science Monographs, 2002); Zoltán Peterecz, *Jeremiah Smith, Jr. and Hungary, 1924–1926: the United States, the League of Nations, and the Financial Reconstruction of Hungary*, (London: Versita, 2013), 80–204.

²⁵*Az Est*, vol. 15, no. 150, July 25, 1924.

²⁶*Színházi Élet*, vol. 16, no. 29, July 19–25, 1926, 20.

²⁷Royall Tyler to Mildred Barnes Bliss, February 21, 1927, Budapest, "Bliss-Tyler Correspondence," <https://www.doaks.org/resources/bliss-tyler-correspondence/letters/21feb1927>, accessed December 9, 2015.

²⁸*Nemzeti Újság*, vol. 8, no. 148, July 4, 1926.



Hungary after the war, Prime Minister Bethlen expressed his gratitude for the ‘charitable work of your Red Cross and the many Americans interested in our fate-stricken people, as well as the most valuable cooperation of an American working towards our financial reconstruction.’²⁹ Brentano, through Bethlen, officially thanked the kind message sent on the same occasion by the Hungarian National Assembly.³⁰ These were formal acts with little meaning, but in Hungary they were always magnified and interpreted as somewhat significant events.

During his tenure in Budapest, Brentano was the target of a partisan attack back in the United States on one occasion, news of which reached Hungary, as well. Former progressive Republican Robert M. La Follette entered the 1924 presidential elections as a third-party candidate. A few days prior to Election Day, he had two paragraphs appear in the *New York Times*, suggesting that Alanson B. Houghton, the American ambassador to Germany and Brentano had acted unethically in the campaign and therefore they should be subpoenaed.³¹ The accusation was that both were brought home to give speeches at political rallies in favor of the sitting president. Although the affair eventually came to nothing, two days after an easy Coolidge victory, a Hungarian daily also mentioned the incident. The paper inquired about the accusation at the American Legation. The official response was that this was a customary practice in the case of political appointees, but Brentano first and foremost had traveled home to take care of some of his business interests and would not be back in Hungary before December.³² Also in line with the prevailing customs for political appointees, Brentano supposedly handed in his resignation after a new president had been sworn in.³³ The circumstances were, however, extraordinary in the case of Coolidge since he had been president since August 1923, when he succeeded Harding, who died in office. Still, tradition dictated to offer to resign and let the new president decide if changes were required at various posts. The *New York Times* might have been onto something, since they reported that Joshua Butler Wright was mentioned as the most likely successor, who was indeed to become the next American minister for Hungary, but not until 1927.

The ministerial reports sent from Budapest diligently and in quite a detailed fashion informed Washington about the most momentous events concerning Hungary. The monthly reports gave a cross-section of every possible angle of Hungarian domestic issues and foreign affairs that could be of interest to the State Department. Regarding Hungary’s domestic political arena, the elections, the composition of government, the various voices coming out of the different major political parties and newspaper reports ruled this section of the reports. Another such regularly occurring subchapter was the question of the king. This was a very curious point for Americans. Always seeing kingdoms both as a harmful relic of history and also as a romantic European feature, this question was extremely important and sometimes entertaining for

²⁹Miklós Horthy to Calvin Coolidge, July 3, 1926, and István Bethlen to Calvin Coolidge, July 3, 1926, Box 15, 1926–1941 USA, Papers of the Protocol Department, 1918–1944, K 62, Foreign Ministry Archives, HNA. This became a typical practice on the part of the Hungarian leadership especially Horthy, while the Americans always sent their good wishes on August 20, the main Hungarian national holiday.

³⁰Theodore Brentano to István Bethlen, July 24, 1926, Bundle 3, 1921–1928 B/2, Files Relating to Foreign Policy, Bethlen Papers, K 468, HNA.

³¹*New York Times*, October 23, 1924.

³²*Az Est*, vol. XV. no. 235, November 6, 1924.

³³*New York Times*, March 31, 1925.



American ministers and observers. Hungary was officially a kingdom without a king. After Charles IV, the last king of Hungary, failed to retake the throne twice over the course of 1921, then soon died, the question became more of an academic one, but legitimist powers in Hungary were never tired of campaigning for young Otto, the legitimate heir to the throne, to take his rightful place. Brentano regularly reflected on the ‘monarchical tendencies of the Hungarian people.’³⁴ As on the question of the king, Brentano wrote in 1925 that ‘the Legitimist movement is strong and awaiting a favorable moment to effect the return of ‘King’ Otto,’ but there was no possibility in the foreseeable future of his ascending to the throne although the American minister believed that ‘fully half of the population of Hungary is Legitimist in its feelings and desires.’³⁵ Washington must have been relieved when Brentano reported that ‘the Bethlen Government appears today to be in a firmer position than ever.’³⁶ Since the American government always favored stability in the volatile region of Central Europe they appreciated that the Hungarian regent and prime minister could provide solid leadership. They trusted that Bethlen would play a constructive or moderating part in these three most important areas, the financial situation of Hungary, the possible revision of the Treaty of Trianon, as well as the question of the king.

There was, however, also ample room for criticism. For example, Brentano complained of unsatisfactory relations between the American Legation and the government. He identified two causes. He blamed the incompetence of the Hungarian officials since answers to inquiries were almost always slow in coming, and he also accused the Hungarian government of trying to avoid living up to various points of either the Treaty of Trianon or the separate American-Hungarian Treaty of 1921.³⁷ On another occasion, when the franchise bill was passed in 1925, which did not operate along democratic lines, excluded many people from voting and also restricted the secret ballot to the capital city and a few larger cities, Brentano wrote of ‘a disappointing exhibition of the functioning of the legislative branch of the Hungarian Government,’ and the lack ‘of constructive statesmanship.’³⁸ In addition, the reports coming out of the American legation often spoke of anti-Semitism in Hungary.

Brentano closely watched the process of financial reconstruction that unfolded during his tenure in Hungary. During the latter phase of the reconstruction process an awkward episode disturbed the seemingly calm waters of diplomacy surrounding the League-orchestrated effort, which is remembered as the forgery scandal. On December 14, 1925, a Hungarian officer by the name of Aristid Jankovich was arrested in the Netherlands when trying to pay with a forged French 1,000 franc note. In the ensuing political and criminal drama, beginning with the end of January, Bethlen too was compromised, but Horthy and Apponyi, as well as Great Britain and Italy were backing him.³⁹ First, some officials in the French foreign policy establishment wanted

³⁴Theodore Brentano to Charles Evans Hughes, March 4, 1924, 864.00/573, Roll 6, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

³⁵Theodore Brentano to Charles Evans Hughes, February 17, 1925, 864.00/615, Roll 7, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

³⁶Theodore Brentano to Frank B. Kellogg, June 4, 1925, 864.00/652, Roll 7, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

³⁷Theodore Brentano to Charles Evans Hughes, July 15, 1924, 864.021/1, Roll 16, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

³⁸Theodore Brentano to Frank B. Kellogg, July 15, 1925, 864.0131/8, Roll 16, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

³⁹For more about the scandal in detail, see Ignác Romsics, “Franciaország, Bethlen és a frankhamisítás,” [France, Bethlen, and the Franc Forgery] *Történelmi Szemle*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1983), 67–86, Balázs Ablonczy, „A frankhamisítás. Hálók, személyek, döntések”, *Múltunk*, Vol. 53, no. 1 (2008), 29–56.



to make use of the scandal and cause a government crisis or change in Hungary, but nothing came of it and during the League session in March the forgery scandal was not dealt with on an official level. When the reconstruction came to its conclusion in the early summer of 1926, the French and the Little Entente wanted to use the forgery scandal again as a reason to postpone the termination of financial control in Hungary. Thanks largely to British opposition to such a scheme the League of Nations accepted that the Hungarian financial reconstruction be deemed as finished.⁴⁰ Finally the alleged perpetrators received their sentences, which were not too heavy, that summer. Concerning the forgery scandal, of which he always sent detailed accounts, Brentano took issue with the weak performance of the press bureau of the government and also emphasized ‘the pride and self-sufficiency of the Hungarian character’, an observation that his successors also shared.⁴¹

Hungary’s foreign relations naturally took an important place in Brentano’s reports, as well. Predictably, there was the popular and never ceasing clamor for revision in Hungary. Having spent less than a year in Hungary the American minister judged the situation in a positive light at least with regards to the revision of the treaty. Although he agreed that every Hungarian wanted and believed in revision, for the time being the country had to concentrate on finding its own salvation in a peaceful way.⁴² In the domain of foreign affairs Hungary gave no real reason for worry. In this field perhaps the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Consular Rights with Hungary, which was concluded in 1925 between Hungary and the United States deserves mention. This treaty was needed because the peace treaty between the two countries did not rule every aspect of the bilateral relations satisfactorily. The most-favored-nation principle prevailed, while the Hungarian consulates could now carry out their efforts based on a treaty and were therefore able to better represent the rights of Hungarians in the United States.⁴³ Right after the signing of the treaty, however, Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg signaled that the Senate would add certain reservations concerning Hungarian immigration to the United States and how long the treaty would remain in force. Hungary accepted such reservations.⁴⁴ In a similar fashion to the separate peace treaty with the United States in 1921, Washington once again unilaterally reserved the right for possible reservations because the US Congress often came up with various points that the State Department had to take into consideration. After the exchange of notes and Hungarian ratification, the US Senate did indeed add some reservations concerning immigration. Bethlen proved to be pragmatic as always and the possible roar of the Hungarian

⁴⁰On the British viewpoint concerning the franc forgery and French intentions, see, Robert Crewe-Milnes to Austen Chamberlain, June 2, 1926, C6443/433/21 and Otto Niemeyer to Miles Lampson, June 4, 1926, C6392/443/21, 11370, FO371, The National Archives, London, UK. For the League’s Financial Commission take on the forgery scandal, see Report of the Financial Committee to the Council, June 6, 1926, Financial Reconstruction of Hungary, Deliberations at the 40th Session of the Council, June 1926. Doc. No. 52083, Registry Files, R. 302, League of Nations Archives, Geneva, Switzerland.

⁴¹Theodore Brentano to Frank B. Kellogg, March 31, 1926, 864.00/671, Roll 7, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

⁴²Theodore Brentano to Charles Evans Hughes, February 6, 1923, 864.20/34, Roll 19, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

⁴³For the text of the treaty, see FRUS, 1925, vol. 2, (United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1940), 341–54.

⁴⁴Frank B. Kellogg to László Széchenyi and László Széchenyi to Frank B. Kellogg, June 24, 1925, and Theodore Brentano to Lajos Walkó and Lajos Walkó to Walkó Brentano, September 4, 1926, *Ibid.*, 354–57.



opposition was smoothed.⁴⁵ The final exchange of ratification eventually took place on September 4, 1926, more than fourteen months after signing said treaty.⁴⁶

Early in Brentano's tenure, the State Department commended him on various occasions for his reports concerning the Hungarian political situation and affairs in general.⁴⁷ This is an interesting fact especially in light of what the chief of the division of Western European affairs, William R. Castle wrote at the end of 1923 regarding the reports emanating from Budapest. He complained about the haphazard manner of the reports, but he did not blame Brentano 'because he is a fairly old man thrown into a totally unfamiliar job.'⁴⁸ Instead he found the root of this trouble in the first secretary, Eugene Shoecraft and also in the lack of cooperation between the Legation and the Consulate in the Hungarian capital. In the wake of the Rogers Act, this latter fault was largely corrected. While Brentano was on leave in the United States, George A. Gordon usually sent reports to Washington.

Brentano confined his monthly and other reports to the State Department strictly to the facts as they came to him from various sources. He and his colleagues had to rely on English-speaking Hungarians for this, otherwise the Hungarian language would have proven too big an obstacle. The sending of factual reports is commendable on the one hand, since his main job was to report what was happening in Hungary without necessarily interpreting events or characters. On the other hand, his predecessor, Grant Smith, or his successors, for example Joshua Butler Wright or Nicholas Roosevelt, peppered their reports with various personal insights as to the Hungarian events and characters, which allows one a more in-depth perception, understanding and their personal opinion of Hungary and its people. Brentano seldom expressed his thoughts, however, there are a few examples of the contrary.

When he did express such opinions, however, he opened a window onto his thoughts regarding his host country. A few months after his arrival, for instance, he described the Hungarian political landscape in harsh terms. He was of the opinion that in a country which finds itself under almost devastating economic circumstances, 'mutual tolerance and political broadmindedness is of vital importance. This primary necessity however seems completely absent at the present critical period.'⁴⁹ He also thought that the Hungarian big landowners were 'autocratic, self-sufficient and intensely egotistical', but from an economic point of view they were indispensable to the country, so even if democratic principles were circumscribed, this class had to be helped by the government.⁵⁰ Despite these examples, all in all Brentano very rarely expressed his true feelings about Hungary and the Hungarians.

⁴⁵Theodore Brentano to Frank B. Kellogg, August 11, 1926, 711.642/24, Roll 1, Microcopy No. 709, NARA.

⁴⁶Theodore Brentano to Frank B. Kellogg, September 4, 1926, 711.642/25, Roll 1, Microcopy No. 709, NARA.

⁴⁷William Phillips to Brentano, (no date on letter, but it was early 1923), 864.00/536; Leland Harrison (for the Secretary of State) to Brentano, September 15, 1924, 864.00/586, Roll 6, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

⁴⁸William R. Castle, Jr. to Charles B. Curtis, December 6, 1923, William R. Castle, Jr., Papers, Countries Correspondence: Box 8: Hungary (1923–1926), Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, West Branch, IA (hereafter cited as William R. Castle, Jr., Papers).

⁴⁹Memorandum, September 17, 1922, in Theodore Brentano to Charles Evans Hughes, September 20, 1922, 864.00/511, Roll 6, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.

⁵⁰Memorandum, in Theodore Brentano to Charles Evans Hughes, October 1, 1922, 864.00/517, Roll 6, Microcopy No. 708, NARA.



Brentano also commented in a private letter on cheap alcohol and its abundance in Hungary, where people could not get over the American ban on alcohol.⁵¹ Although rumors reached Washington that Brentano was often inebriated and supposedly had an affair with a dancer of the Budapest Opera, Charles B. Curtis, who had served almost a year and a half at Budapest Legation, denied the substance of them.⁵² At the same time, it was an open secret that Brentano wished to resign from the post and the State Department would have been happy to accept it and replace him with a career diplomat, but in the end he stayed on.⁵³ When Brentano spent considerable time in the United States in the fall of 1925, Castle had a long talk with him. The conversation convinced the chief of division that although the minister was ‘not a bad old fellow’, he was ‘an awful ass’ and that the brunt of the work was done by George A. Gordon, secretary of the Legation at Budapest.⁵⁴ In conclusion, Castle admitted that ‘I am afraid we do not very much need Mr. Brentano.’⁵⁵ It was already known at this point in time that after the midterm elections in November, Coolidge wanted to do a shake-up at the less satisfactory missions, such as Budapest.⁵⁶

The aforementioned George A. Gordon, in sharp contrast to his boss, expressed an analytical summary of Hungarian affairs in a report at the time of his departure from Hungary following two years of service. Since he was a career diplomat, his views are perhaps important and show more clearly what the State Department was interested in regarding Hungarian affairs. He pointed out three major areas he saw as crucial for Washington. The first was the financial policy and situation of Hungary, the second the efforts to achieve the revision of the Treaty of Trianon and finally the question of the King. This reinforces the three previously identified points that the United States were interested in concerning Hungarian affairs. Gordon also expressed his belief that as long as the present government remained in power, order and moderation would govern the Horthy-Bethlen regime concerning these issues. He had one cautionary point to make, however. Hungary was still a risk for American capital of which a considerable amount had arrived in recent years. In the case of a Legitimist takeover, however unlikely that may be, —perhaps in the person of Otto—, Washington should disapprove of any further loans to Hungary. The reason being—in Gordon’s view—that despite some notable exceptions, ‘on the whole they are not only Orientals at bottom, but also still thoroughly mediaeval and feudalistic; as corollary to this I do not hesitate to register my opinion that the Magnate class here—which of course, generally speaking, is synonymous with Legitimism—is arrogant, egotistical, narrow and subjective minded to a high degree.’⁵⁷ This kind of opinion was rather typical among American observers in the discussed period.⁵⁸

⁵¹Theodore Brentano to Dorothy Brentano, April 16, 1923, Folder 11, Dorothy (Dodie) Brentano, 12 Aug 1921–24 May 1925, n.d., Box 2, Brentano Family Papers, Chicago History Museum Research Center, Chicago, USA.

⁵²William R. Castle, Jr. to Charles B. Curtis, May 6, 1925, and June 9, 1925, William R. Castle, Jr., Papers.

⁵³Ibid. and William R. Castle, Jr. to George A. Gordon, January 14, 1926, *ibid.*

⁵⁴William R. Castle, Jr. to George A. Gordon, November 11, 1925, *ibid.*

⁵⁵William R. Castle, Jr. to George A. Gordon, August 8, 1926, *ibid.*

⁵⁶William R. Castle, Jr. to George A. Gordon, August 23, 1926, *ibid.*

⁵⁷George A. Gordon to Frank B. Kellogg, June 3, 1927, 864.00/702, Roll 8, Microcopy No. 708, NARA. On Gordon’s career until 1930, see, Bernard V. Burke, *Ambassador Frederic Sackett and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic, 1930–1933*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 71.

⁵⁸In more detail, see, Zoltán Peterecz, “Reflection of and about Hungary in the English-speaking World in the Interwar Years”, *Hungarian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2, (2017), 237–249.



CONCLUSION

Theodore Brentano's five years in Hungary as the United States' first ever minister was by all means a defining moment in the diplomatic history of the two countries. What is more, these years brought almost only success to Hungary both in the domestic and the foreign arena. Its finances were put in order and strengthened, the economy started to climb out of its post-war calamity, relations with neighboring countries were also largely normalized and Hungary seemingly became a trustworthy member of the post-Versailles political system in Europe. Although territorial revision and the question of the king were always on the menu, Bethlen kept these forces in check. Therefore, Brentano had few challenges during his tenure and had all the reason to be satisfied when he left Hungary in May 1927. Upon arrival in his home country, he told the *New York Times* that during his five years in Budapest he had witnessed the phenomenal recovery of Hungary from a defeated country to the most prosperous of the Balkan States.⁵⁹ He also believed Hungary would assume a more important role in European affairs. Relations between the United States and Hungary, he said, were most cordial and he had always found the greatest appreciation of America by Hungarians, officially and otherwise.⁶⁰ His two immediate successors had to work in a different country: there were diplomatic incidents and, especially following the end of 1929, the effects of the Great Depression were felt ever more acutely. Brentano's tenure, however, despite himself, was a success and a successful first stint of the official diplomatic relations between Hungary and the United States.


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⁵⁹Hungary was often mentioned as one of the Balkan States by the State Department officials.

⁶⁰*New York Times*, May 10, 1927.



Perception of the reasons for living in poverty in Hungary

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ABSTRACT

The question of what are considered the causes of poverty is often neglected in the literature of this area of research. This paper analyzes the attributes of poverty in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary, which is one of the most disadvantaged areas of the country. Research was carried out in 2011 and 2019 using the method of systematic data collection, making possible the comparison of the changing perceptions of poverty over time. The research objective is to discover whether, as is common in Eastern European countries, support for explanations which blame structural conditions is dominant in the public perception of poverty. This research has made it clear, that the poor are often considered by the public to be responsible for their own vulnerable situation. With regard to the area where the research took place there is a discrepancy between reality and the public perception of poverty and the functioning of the welfare system which is thought to be generous and which is considered to offer multiple types of public aid for a wide range of recipients.

KEYWORDS

perception of poverty, cause of poverty, systematic data collection, Hungary, cultural competence, consensus theory

INTRODUCTION

A number of studies in this field of research (such as Coughlin 1980; Taylor-Gooby 1985; Tylor-Gooby and Svallfors 1999) have examined attitudes towards the welfare system, the role of

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government in the alleviation of poverty, the legitimacy of the welfare state, tax progression, and income redistribution. In the field of social policy, however, less attention has been paid to public perceptions of poverty, notwithstanding that over a hundred years ago [Simmel \(1908\)](#) argued that popular beliefs about poverty may have an important impact on welfare regimes. Beyond its relevance to social policy, attributions of poverty play an important role in sociology and in economics, as well. The redistribution of income must be justified in order for it to gain social acceptance, which in turn is necessary to ensure the sustainable functioning of the welfare system. It is not enough to simply launch a concept of the welfare system; this concept must also be morally and ethically justified. The legitimacy and viability of welfare programs are significantly influenced by public perceptions of poverty ([Lepianka et al. 2009](#); [van Oorschot and Halman 2000](#)). Support for structural attributions of poverty may encourage public acceptance of the social welfare programs ([Habibov 2011](#); [Verwiebe and Wegener 2000](#)). Moreover, lay explanations of poverty reveal important aspects of the existing welfare culture, as well as the moral economy of society by providing information about the status of a given social group ([Mau 2003](#); [Pfau-Effinger 2005](#)). In addition, perceptions of poverty influence interactions between poor and non-poor communities on a daily basis ([Bullock 1999](#); [Niemela 2008](#); [Siposné Nándori 2021](#)).

This paper examines the perception of the underlying reasons for living in poverty in Hungary. It focuses on Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, which has been one of the poorest areas in Hungary for decades. The reason for selecting this county was, that a relatively large proportion of its population lives in poverty or experiences poverty in their immediate surroundings. The latter is important too, as the perception of those living physically close to poverty are of particular interest. Attributions of poverty were examined in 2011 and 2019 using the methods of systematic data collection, making possible the comparison of the results over time.

The paper differs from the existing literature in several aspects. Besides focusing on a county in Hungary, another unique trait of the current research lies in its methodology. As mentioned earlier, the research which this paper is based on relies on the method of systematic data collection to obtain information about subjective poverty. This use of systematic data collection can improve the quality of data while significantly reducing the required sample size. Moreover, and most importantly, these methods do not use predefined attributions of poverty scaling like many other previous studies in the field have done,¹ but participants are first asked to elicit items they have in their minds about poverty and these same items are then used for the subsequent steps of the research.

The first step towards understanding the problem is to describe the theories regarding the attributions of poverty, with special regard for lay explanations of poverty in Eastern Europe. A review of the socioeconomic conditions of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary, is then presented. After stating the research objectives, the study briefly describes its methodology. The main findings of primary data collection, and the results of analysis are described in the Results section.

ATTRIBUTIONS OF POVERTY

The first research work on the public opinions and beliefs about the causes of poverty was published more than half a century ago. [Free and Cantril \(1967\)](#) recognized that individualistic

¹Like [Kluegel and Smith \(1981\)](#), [Kluegel and Smith \(1986\)](#) or [Feather \(1974\)](#).



traits like hard work or willpower were thought to predominate “success” more than “circumstantial” factors in the United States. Feagin (1975) revealed that three categories of causes can be distinguished in the United States:

- individualists (when poverty is related to the attitude of the individual);
- structuralists (the causes of poverty are related to the society);
- fatalists (when individuals get into poverty randomly or due to fate) (Harper 1996).

Besides these factors, attributions of poverty have been associated with financial circumstance (Williamson 1974) and ethnicity (Hunt 1996). Feagin (1975) concluded that most Americans believed that the individual was responsible for being poor, which is in line with the individualistic theory. Other research (Kluegel and Smith 1981, 1986) used the same set of items as Feagin and revealed that individualistic beliefs continued to predominate the public perception of poverty in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s (Wilson 1996; Hunt and Bullock 2016). Smith and Stone (1989) also confirmed that the main perceived causes of poverty in America are either individualistic or structural. Zucker and Weiner (1993) used the theory of attribution to examine the causal explanations of poverty and categorized the causes into the same three types as Feagin.

It was Furnham (1982) who recognized that previous studies regarding the attributions of poverty included an individualistic type of blame (such as low willingness to work or lack of proper money management by the poor), as well as a social type of blame (like the lack of real social safety nets), and an individual type of fate (like bad luck), but not a social type of fate. He identified this type of explanation for poverty and included factors like worldwide recession or uncontrollable global development. Van Oorschot and Halman (2000) suggested a two-dimensional and four-type poverty explanation model (Fig. 1). Lepianka et al. (2009) and Kainu and Niemelä (2014) confirmed the four-tiered structure of poverty attributions.

Lepianka et al. (2009) provided a critical view of the two most common approaches of analyzing attributions of poverty: the factor analytical approach and the forced-choice-question approach. Eurobarometer, among others, has used the latter method. They concluded that neither of these approaches were faultless from a methodological point of view, thus necessitating the development of better tools for measuring the attributions of poverty. The use of a longer list of items was suggested, as well as reference to some sort of additional information from the interviewees about their images of the poor in order to elucidate the interpretation of the survey items, or using alternative approaches to study causal interpretations.

Besides Simmel (1908), Kluegel et al. (1995) and Jordan (1996) argued that the perceived generosity of the welfare system was directly dependent on the degree to which the poor were seen by the public as being personally responsible for their vulnerable situation. Since the early 1970s the development of universal welfare states in continental Europe have been associated with structural explanations for poverty which support the need for a welfare state and for other initiatives aimed at reducing poverty (Kluegel et al. 1995). In line with this finding, there is wide consensus to support structural explanations of poverty (such as social injustice or problems regarding the labor market) in Finland (Niemelä 2008). In Angol-Saxon tradition, however, development of the residual welfare state has been associated with the increasing importance of individualistic and fatalistic attributions of poverty (Hartz 1995; Habibov et al. 2017). Individualistic explanations undermine collective actions to fight against poverty and inequalities (Kreidl 1998, 2000; Habibov 2011).



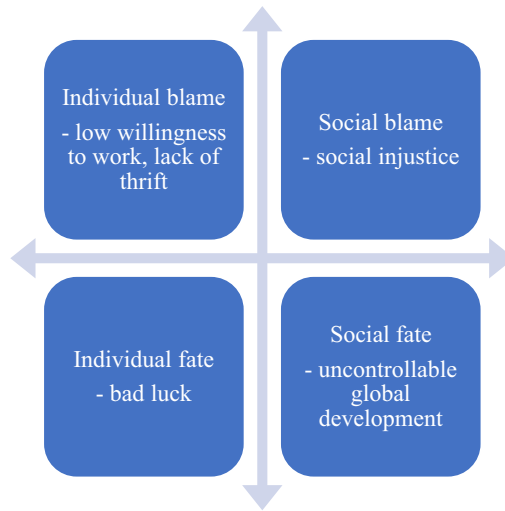


Fig. 1. Two dimensions and four types of poverty explanations

Source: own compilation based on Van Oorschot and Halman (2000, p. 7)

Beyond the characteristics of the welfare system, short-term economic growth, social expenditures, demographic factors, and political affiliation are among the determinants of attributions of poverty in Europe, creating differences in the explanations of poverty across European countries (Kallio and Niemelä 2014).

Hughes and Touch (2000), Hunt (1996), Kluegel and Smith (1986), Lee et al. (1990), and Merolla et al. (2011) showed that individualistic and structural explanations for poverty are not mutually exclusive, but are instead overlapping constructs. Disadvantaged strata like the working class, homeless people, or racial minority groups are likely to combine individualistic and structural beliefs in their thinking (Cheal 1979; Kluegel et al. 1995; Kluegel and Smith 1986; Parkin 1971). Merolla et al. (2011), using data from the United States, found that 'concentrated disadvantage' at community level was associated with support for both individualistic and structural attributions of poverty resulting in a 'dual consciousness' pattern.

Kluegel and Smith (1986) argued that structural beliefs might temporarily become dominant during times of unusual social and/or economic strain. Marquis (2020) confirmed that following the 2008 economic crisis, support for explanations which blame structural conditions had increased in Europe.

LAY EXPLANATIONS OF POVERTY IN POST-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY IN HUNGARY

Empirical findings on the attributions of poverty found that there were some differences between Western Europe and post-socialist Europe (Kainu and Niemelä 2014). While social explanations for poverty are more popular in Western Europe, Eastern Europeans emphasize more



individualistic reasons of blame for poverty (Kallio and Niemelä 2014; Kreidl 2000; Lepianka et al. 2009; van Oorschot and Halman 2000). Lepianka et al. (2009) concluded, however, that large variations could be found across post-socialist European countries. Individualistic types of blame for explaining poverty are more popular in the Czech Republic, while the social type of blame for the attributions of poverty are endorsed in Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Croatia (Lepianka et al. 2009). Kainu and Niemelä (2014) concluded that in post-socialist countries, social types of blame for explaining poverty are the most popular, followed by individualistic types of blame, social fate, and individual fate. Another finding of their research showed that social types of blame for explaining poverty are the most popular in Ukraine, Lithuania, Slovenia, Hungary, Russia, and Latvia.

Few studies regarding lay explanations of poverty have focused specifically on Hungary. Kreidl (2000) revealed that there was no dominant ideology for poverty in Hungary in the 1990s. In 1991 and 1996, 75% of his respondents chose the failing economic system and 71% chose poor morals as explanations for poverty in Hungary. Habibov et al. (2017), concluded, by examining 24 post-communist countries using a total sample of 37,307 respondents, that structural attributions of poverty were supported by more than half of the respondents in Hungary between 2006 and 2010, and support for structural explanations for poverty had increased over time from 54.8% in 2006 to 59.8% (the third highest rate out of the eight Eastern European countries examined) in 2010.

SOCIOECONOMIC POSITION OF BORSOD-ABAUJ-ZEMPLÉN COUNTY, HUNGARY

Similarly to other post-socialist countries, the transition period of 1989–1990 was characterized by a rapid increase in the regionalization of wealth and deprivation. The increase of regional disparities was associated with the increasing dominance of Budapest, the capital city, as well as the widening gap between urban and rural areas, and the declining economic performance of the old industrial regions (Blazek and Netrdová 2011; Keller et al. 2016) such as Northern Hungary. Due to deindustrialization, which began in the early 1990s, industrial activities in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, situated in Northern Hungary, significantly decreased and the number of jobs fell significantly. The two main metallurgic companies went bankrupt and closed, resulting in a regional crisis. In this area the 1990s were characterized by a distorted economic structure, underdeveloped infrastructure, failed privatization, several thousands of unemployed people, and large-scale emigration (Bakos 2006). It was only after the turn of the century that industry in Northern Hungary began to develop and catch up to the more developed Central and Western parts of the country. Re-industrialization started only after 2003 and it led to economic structural changes. Investments have lately been concentrated in the industrial and energy sectors (Barta et al. 2008).

To this day, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County is characterized by unemployment and poverty (Keller et al. 2016) as well as a low ability to retain its population. This is due to the lack of viable economic prospects and the adverse income position of the inhabitants (G Fekete et al. 2013). Emigration per capita was the highest of all seven NUTS2 level regions of the country in Northern Hungary. Seven out of one thousand inhabitants left the country in 2010. Most people leaving Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County move to Central Hungary (Grábics 2012).



The unfavorable socioeconomic situation of the county is reflected by the high percentage of ethnic Roma people with a low level of education, a low rate of participation in the labor market, and a high level of experience of social discrimination (Hegyi-Kéri and Horváth 2017). Roma people form the largest and most disadvantaged ethnic minority in Hungary. Identifying who belongs to the Roma minority is not easy because the definition of Roma is a contentious subject. According to the latest, 2011 census, where self-declaration of belonging to any ethnic minority was possible, the Roma minority comprised 3.18% of the total population, while various sociological studies estimate this number to be as high as 8–10% of a total population of 9.8 million (Kimmelman 2008). Their territorial distribution is uneven, with highest concentration in the north-eastern and in the south-western parts of the country. One of the highest concentrations of Roma people can be found in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County where close to 10% of the total population called themselves Romani in the 2011 census.

Roma people experience multiple disadvantages. Besides living in relatively poor regions, they experience low levels of education and employment, as well as poor living conditions. It is often difficult to measure their socio-economic characteristics because data is usually not selected and gathered based on ethnicity. In addition to their unfavorable socioeconomic position, their life expectancy is approximately ten years lower than that of the non-Roma population. They often experience poor levels of hygiene and sanitation and have relatively high rates of infectious disease (Masseria et al. 2010). Moreover, they face environmental problems like the lack of sewage and mains gas, garbage dumps, waterlogged soil, and lack of running water (Kósa et al. 2009).

Besides being disadvantaged for multiple reasons, Roma people have experienced problems regarding integration. They have been subject to discrimination by much of society, probably due to their traditionally nomadic lifestyle, tightly knit communities, and distinct culture (Kósa et al. 2009). A further characteristic of their issues surrounding integration is that after completing primary education, only one in five Romani children go on to secondary education. The drop-out rate among Romani children is almost twice as high as among non-Romani. A further problem is the segregation of Romani children to separate schools or classes due to non-Romani families choosing to send their children to distant schools when there are many Romani students in the local schools (this phenomenon is often called “white flight”) (Open Society Institute 2007). Beyond the above, the difficulty of their integration into society is exacerbated by the negative attitudes towards them as a result of racist stereotypes including the idea that they are disproportionately dependent on the welfare system, they lack work discipline, they are the primary perpetrators of various types of crimes, and do not respect legal and social norms (Csepeli and Simon 2004; Babourkova 2016).

To make existing conditions worse, several violent events occurred between the non-Roma and Romani people which highlighted and aggravated the issues surrounding their integration. One such example is an incident dating back to 2006 when a Roma mob lynched an ethnic Hungarian teacher in front of his two daughters in the village of Olaszliszka, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. The incident was then followed by many racially motivated attacks against Roma people (Index 2006).

HYPOTHESES AND METHODOLOGY

This study aims to discover lay explanations of poverty in a disadvantaged area of Hungary. Considering the research results of Kainu and Niemelä (2014), and Habibov et al. (2017), for



other Eastern European countries, support for explanations which blame structural conditions can be dominant in the public perception of poverty.

Figure 2 highlights the main steps of the research process upon which this study is based. Primary data collection was carried out following a review of the relevant literature and the formulation of hypotheses. Subjective interpretations of poverty, and the items related to it were identified using qualitative research methods. Interviews were conducted first, to elicit a list of items related to poverty using the method of free listing. Besides these related items, the main causes and consequences of poverty were also identified. The method of free listing is an appropriate way to ensure that the domain and the items are culturally relevant (Weller and Romney 1988; Siposné Nándori 2021).

In a subsequent session of interviews, participants were asked to rank the items related to poverty, as well as the causes of poverty, and consequences of poverty according to how strongly they are linked to poverty. It is important to use the same items which were first identified in the process of free listing. Responses to the questions of the free listing cannot be corrected, recoded or transformed (Weller 2007) to facilitate the interpretation of the survey items (Lepianka et al. 2009) in the second part of the interviews.

During the second phase of research, participants were asked to describe the exact meaning of the previously identified items. As ranking a large number of items could be difficult and could take considerable time, the method of systematic data collection was used to simplify the task, thereby eliminating time-on-task cognitive fatigue. Another reason for applying this method was that it made possible the comparison of results of two time periods, provided that

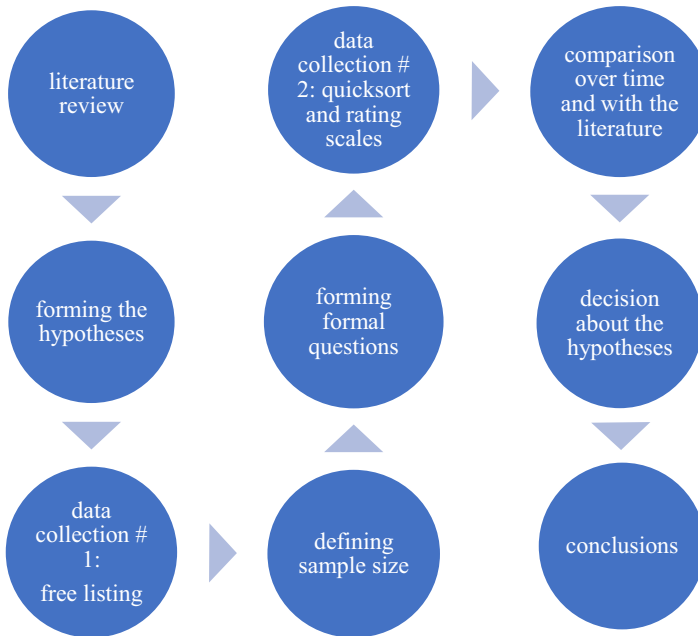


Fig. 2. Flow chart of the research

Source: own compilation



the causal interpretations of poverty were examined using the same methodology in both 2011 and 2019 (for details refer to Siposné Nándori 2016).

The methodology of systematic data collection was developed in the 1980s in the United States by anthropologist Susan C. Weller and mathematician A. Kimball Romney. This method helps researchers in the field of social sciences collect more useful data through interviews and questionnaires. Increased understanding of experimental and observational data requires systematic observation, classification, analysis, and evaluation. Systematic and structured methods of carrying out interviews help reach this goal (Weller and Romney 1988).

Methods of systematic data collection which, for example, include asking the same set of questions of each participant, decrease the sample size required when researching subjects related to social science in a revolutionary way, while ensuring the results remain highly reliable. This is made possible by taking into consideration the cultural competence of members of society when defining the sample size. The number of interviewees required to get reliable answers can be determined using consensus theory, which can be applied to research questions when researchers do not have *a priori* knowledge of the answers to the questions which are to be asked. Through evaluation of the cultural competence of the participants, researchers can, in cases like this, discover the 'culturally correct' answers to the questions they formulated. Cultural competence of the participants is the probability that they know the answer to a given question, making the reconstruction of the 'culturally relevant' answers to a specific question possible (Romney et al. 1986). It is assumed that the similarities between the answers of any two participants are a sign of the extent to which each is correlated with the truth, and the extent to which they are the culturally correct answers in this case (Nunally 1978). Consensus theory could be applied in both years in which the research was carried out, as all three required assumptions were achieved:

- The average level of competence of the participants based on free listing was high enough (<0.7),
- the participants were asked separately, and
- each question dealt with the same set of items (Siposné Nándori 2021).

Primary data collection aimed to find out what the individuals believed to be the main causes of poverty. To find the answer to this question, after creating an emic list of reasons for poverty in the initial interviews, the method of quicksort was used in the second phase of research. This is a rank-order method. Names of causes were written on cards which were randomized. A card was then selected to serve as an anchoring standard. All cards were then compared to the standard and were divided into two groups: the cards containing items which are among the causes of poverty *more often* than the standard card, and those which were the causes of poverty *less often* than the standard. This process was repeated for each pile until all items were ranked. This method shortens the task of ranking and is appropriate for ranking items according to the frequency with which they are considered to be the causes of poverty (Weller and Romney 1988; Siposné Nándori 2021).

Interviews were conducted during the spring of 2011, in March and April to be exact, and between July and December of 2019. Table 1 summarizes the main facts about the two collections of data. Participants were selected using multi-stage sampling with stratification wherein the sample size from each type of location is in line with the rate of the population in total. Of the towns and cities which were involved (refer to Table 2), Miskolc and Sárospatak are



**Table 1.** Sample decomposition based on the distribution of the population of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary

	2011			2019		
	Population	Sample size for free listing	Sample size for formal interviews	Population (2018)	Sample size for free listing	Sample size for formal interviews
Town with county rank	167,754	7	5	155,650	10	4
Other towns	234,049	10	6	224,770	14	7
Communities	284,463	13	8	267,796	17	8
Total	686,266	30	19	648,216	41	19
Number of items elicited by free listing	52			45		
Average level of competence	0.7			0.7		
Number of items included for formal interviews	17			21		
Number of potential causes of poverty for formal interviews	12			9		
Number of potential consequences of poverty for formal interviews	11			10		

Source: own compilation based on HCSO data.

Table 2. Sample decomposition and the rate of Roma

Settlement	Sample size	Rate of the Roma in 2011	Step of data collection
Miskolc	10	3.24	Free listing
Ózd	14	11.00	
Felsőzsolca		11.81	
Tiszalúc	17	8.80	
Ároktő		26.43	
Bükkaranyos		3.59	
Miskolc	4	3.24	Formal interviews
Sárospatak	7	2.95	
Bogács	8	19.16	
Alacska		0.00	
Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County	-	9.74	-

Source: own compilation based on HCSO data.

considered relatively developed within the county not only in economic terms, but also in terms of the potential for social innovation (Nagy and Tóth 2019). Regions including Ózd, Ároktő and Bogács, however, are underdeveloped and lack the potential for social innovation. Selecting participants from both relatively developed and underdeveloped areas ensures that wealthier and poorer interviewees are included in this collection of data.

Due to racism directed at the Roma in Hungary, as described above, inclusion of Romani people was also an objective. Because of the lack of consensus regarding who is in fact Roma and who is not, I had no information about the ethnic minority identity of the participants. Some of the selected towns and villages (such as Ózd, Felsőzsolca, Ároktő, and Alacska), however, have higher rates of Roma inhabitants than the county average (Table 2), which effectively ensures that Romani people can also be found among the interviewees.

Following the phase of data collection, results were compared to those described by the relevant literature. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to highlight significant relationships among the causes of poverty, the items related to poverty and the consequences of poverty.

RESULTS

In 2011, twelve main reasons for poverty were mentioned by the interviewees, while in 2019 only nine causes of poverty were identified. Six items were mentioned in both years. The two primary reasons were 'unemployment' and a 'low willingness to work', and these remained unchanged in both years. They both refer to disadvantages in the labor market. 'A low level of education' and 'low level of income' were ranked between 3rd and 5th during both years. 'Poor health' and 'political/economic causes', also listed in both years, but gained more importance during the



most recently examined period of time. ‘Poor health’ rose from 11th place to 6th place, while unfavorable circumstances (such as economic and political problems) rose from 10th place to 7th. Some items, such as ‘addiction’ and ‘personal tragedy’ (referring to divorce or the death of a relative or friend), ‘debt’, ‘large family’, ‘inflation’, and ‘disadvantaged family’ were mentioned only in 2011. Others like ‘hopelessness’, ‘isolation’, or ‘through their own fault’ were mentioned only in 2019 (see Fig. 3).

In 2011, ‘having a large family’ was mentioned as a reason for poverty, but it was not identified as such in 2019. The disappearance of this reason for poverty by 2019 is probably due to the fact that the Hungarian government re-defined its family policy in 2019 and introduced many kinds of child-care benefits (family allowances, family tax allowances, housing subsidies) (Sági et al. 2018), many of which are aimed at parents with three or more children.

Certain causes of poverty mentioned by the participants can be grouped as structural, individual, or fatal causes. Structural causes of poverty are economic and political problems, as well as inflation, while researchers who emphasize individual factors point to factors like alcoholism, substance abuse or the lack of an adequate work ethic (Timmer et al. 1994; Magnet 1993; Main 1998). In the case of other poverty related items such as ‘a low level of income’, ‘hopelessness’, ‘low level of education’, ‘unemployment’, ‘debt’, or ‘isolation’, there can be ambiguities as to whether they are structural, individual, or fatal, therefore they are excluded from this part of the analysis.

In 2011, two reasons mentioned by the interviewees could be considered as structural. ‘Inflation’ can be an economic cause, but it was mentioned separately, therefore it is listed separately. Additionally, informants mentioned two individual and two fatal causes of poverty. The average scores of the items highlight the fact that individual causes have the lowest score (5.7, while the comparable score is 11 for structural, and 10 for fatal causes); therefore they are the most common subjective reasons of poverty. In 2019, participants identified one structural, one fatal and two individual causes of poverty (refer to Table 3).

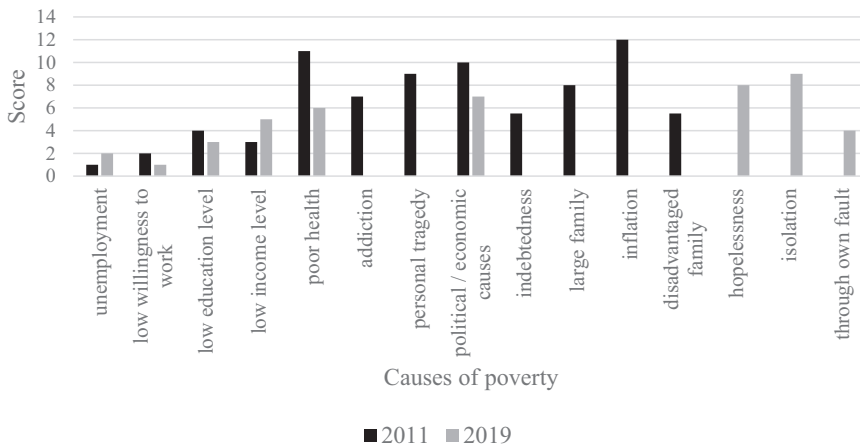


Fig. 3. Subjective reasons for poverty in 2011 and 2019. Score: 1 indicates items most often reasons for poverty

Source: own compilation



Table 3. Main groups of the causes of poverty

Causes of poverty	2011	Average score based on free listing	2019	Average score based on free listing
Structural	political/economic causes inflation	11	political/ economic causes	5
Individual	low willingness to work addiction large family	5.7	low willingness to work through own fault	2.5
Fatal	poor health personal tragedy	10	poor health	6

Source: own compilation.

Table 4. Comparison of structural and individual attributions for poverty based on quicksort results

Year	F (sig)	t (sig)	Mean	
			structural	individual
2011	0.788 (0.377)	4.302 (0.000)	8.84	5.88
2019	0.014 (0.906)	3.529 (0.001)	6.26	3.74

Source: own compilation.

The comparison of average scores of structural and individual causes with a test implies that the average scores of individualistic attributions of poverty are significantly different to the structural explanations for poverty in both surveys. The average scores highlight that individual attributions of poverty are perceived to be more important than structural ones (Table 4).

Categories like ‘addiction’, ‘low willingness to work’, ‘through own fault’, or ‘having a large family’ are the projections of the notion of the so-called ‘undeserving poor’ which describes people who are their own worst enemies. Szalai (2006) differentiates between two main cases of this undeserving nature of people in poverty: ‘having a large family’ and ‘a low willingness to work’. Szalai goes on to argue that even though having many children, a good planning of the household budget can contribute sufficient resources for the family to live on. As for ‘a low willingness to work’, a vast body of literature argues that if an individual really wants to work, he or she can always find some kind of a job.

SUMMARY

The hypothesis according to which the main subjective causes of poverty in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Hungary, are structural was rejected. Support for explanations which blame the individual (such as a low willingness to work, addiction, crime or having a large family) are



stronger than support for explanations which blame structural conditions. The poor are often seen by the public as being themselves responsible for their vulnerable situation.

It is clear that in Hungary there is a discrepancy between the public perception of poverty and the idea of a welfare system which is considered to be generous, and which includes various types of public aid for a wide range of recipients. This finding is in line with the findings of [van Oorschot and Halman \(2000\)](#) who concluded that there was no direct relation between how the members of society perceive poverty and the ways in which welfare policies are designed in Europe. They argue that the lack of a relationship between attributions of poverty and the welfare state may have several reasons. The formation of welfare programs can be affected by other cultural beliefs such as attitudes regarding income inequality, work ethic, or religious feelings. Besides, political or economic factors may have a more significant influence on the welfare system than cultural values. It is also possible that cultural values used to have a significant effect on welfare policies, however, they have lost their importance by now as a result of welfare policies becoming too complex and abstract to reflect public perceptions of poverty.

High support for the individualistic explanations of poverty in the Hungarian county in the focus of this study can also be affected by anti-Roma stereotypes including the idea that Roma people have a low willingness to work, have more children than the majority to ensure a source of income from the government (called 'strategic children') ([Durst 2001](#)), are dependent on the welfare system, often commit crimes and do not respect legal and social norms ([Csepeli and Simon 2004](#); [Babourkova 2016](#)). These stereotypes coincide with individualistic attributions for poverty (such as addiction, a low willingness to work, or having a large family). Only further research can answer the question as to whether Romani people living in poverty are judged to be responsible for their situation as a result of anti-Roma stereotypes. Beside asking questions about perceptions of poverty, further research should focus on the ethnicity of the participants and on their attitudes towards Roma people. Anti-Roma stereotypes could be deconstructed by sensitization of the majority population. Increased knowledge of Roma history and culture would be needed both amongst the general public and political decision-makers to help them realize that the Roma group is not homogenous, and to stop stereotyping them. This can, in the long run, modify the attributions of poverty as well.

The fact that the public often identifies individualistic explanations of poverty has remarkable implications for the welfare system. Policies aimed to reduce poverty should focus more on the individualistic circumstances of poverty when pursuing the most effective measures of reducing and alleviating poverty. The category of the 'undeserving poor' draws attention to the necessity of considering the degree of the faults of the applicants when applying for welfare programs. Welfare policies should make sure only the faultless poor (like seniors with low pensions who keep their homes tidy, or single mothers with low earnings whose children are neat and regularly attend school) can count on unconditional support from the state and from local municipalities ([Szalai 2006](#)).

An obvious limitation of this study is that it is restricted to just one county of Hungary, raising the question as to what extent its findings can be generalized to the country as a whole. Extension of the scope of research to more counties of Hungary would enable spatial comparison revealing regional differences.

The recent COVID-19 pandemic may have affected public perceptions of poverty. [Kluegel and Smith \(1986\)](#) argued that structural beliefs might temporarily become dominant during times of unusual social and/or economic strain. Due to the remarkable social and economic



effects of the recent pandemic, structural beliefs may have gained strength since the data collection was carried out in 2019. Further research should reveal whether the current pandemic changes related values of the adult population and therefore the subjective interpretations of poverty.

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Hungarian cultural and linguistic borrowings in the folk tradition of Burgenland Croats in Hungary and Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

The work which forms the bulk of the present study was carried out on the basis of numerous pieces of field material collected by means of an ethnolinguistic questionnaire in villages inhabited by Burgenland Croats in Western Hungary and Southern Slovakia (where part of the Hungarian territory was annexed after World War II). The field data contain a number of latent and obvious borrowings from Hungarian folk culture. By latent borrowings we mean cultural phenomena that were initially feebly expressed in a particular tradition (and tended to be lost), but during long coexistence with a neighboring heterogeneous tradition they were eventually maintained due to the developed state of the similar phenomena in the neighboring population. We also include here cultural phenomena that are typical of both traditions and have deep roots in the universal model of the naive world view. Analyzing the popular culture and dialects of enclave villages of Burgenland Croats in Hungary and Slovakia, we show that traditional folk culture with the corresponding vocabulary nevertheless acts as an important marker of identity for the population living in a foreign language environment.

KEYWORDS

ethnolinguistics, traditional folk culture, vocabulary, lexical borrowings, calques, Croatin, Hungarian

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The present piece of research was carried out taking into account the scientific achievements of the Moscow Ethnolinguistic School, founded by N. I. Tolstoy in the 80's of the last century, which entails the study of the vocabulary of traditional folk culture in inseparable connection with the corresponding extralinguistic context. Moscow ethnolinguistics as a special branch of scholarship within the wider framework of linguistics is based on Slavic dialect data, both linguistic and ethno-cultural. Its sources are numerous dictionaries of various types (explanatory, dialect, mythological encyclopedic), ethnographic descriptions from various Slavic regions (of a general nature, including information about beliefs, family and calendar rites, as well as specific descriptions on different fragments of the traditional folk culture). An important part within the sources of empirical data is field material collected by using special questionnaires during expeditions to the villages.

In the period from 2017 to 2019, three ethnolinguistic expeditions took place to study Burgenland Croats¹ of Hungary and Slovakia: the first in what is called Middle Burgenland (villages to the south of Sopron: Und (Unda, 335 inhabitants, 54.5% Hungarian, 61.3% Croat), Peresznye (Prisika, 826 inhabitants, 88.4% Hungarian, 35.8% Croat), Horváthzsidány (Hrvatski Zhidan, 808 inhabitants, 91.7%-a Hungarian, 55.3% Croat), Olmód (Plajgor, 107 inhabitants, 87.4%-a Hungarian, 50.5% Croat) – 2017, the second - in Northern Burgenland, which includes not only villages in Austria, but also Slovakia (villages within the administrative district of Bratislava: Jarovce (Yarovce, 1438 inhabitants, 79.3% Slovak, 15.3% Croat), Čunovo (Chunovo, 1248 inhabitants 74.5% Slovak, 11.1% Croat) – 2018, and the third in Southern Burgenland (villages near Szombathely: Narda (Nard, 468 inhabitants, 88.7%-a Hungarian, 62% Croat), Felsőcsatár (Horní Četar, 509 inhabitants, 79.3% Hungarian, 43.4% Croat), Horvátlovő (Hrvatske Šice, 190 inhabitants, 77.9% Hungarian, 57.9% Croat), Szentpéterfa (Petrovo Selo, 987 inhabitants, 89.3%-a Hungarian, 80.2% Croat). In the paper, we do focus very much on the actual language situation, but on the influence of the current socio-linguistic situation on the sphere of traditional folk spiritual culture.²

A considerable amount of field material has been collected by means of the ethnolinguistic questionnaire³ in villages of Burgenland Croats in Western Hungary and Southern Slovakia (where part of Hungarian territory was annexed after World War II). Differences in the traditional folk culture of the three parts of Burgenland on the Austro-Hungarian border led to a

¹Gradishche (Gradišće) is the Croatian name for Burgenland, a federal state within Austria or, in a broad sense, a historical region in Eastern Austria and Western Hungary. The toponym (Burgenland – “Land of castles”) is constructed from the German names of administrative-territorial units (comitates) of historical Hungary, containing the word “castle” (Burg): Sopron (Ödeburg), Vash (Eisenburg), Moshon (Wieselburg). Croats emigrated here in the 16th century, because their villages were destroyed by the Turks.

²Hungarian and Slovak data is given according to the 2011 population census.

³Plotnikova A.A. *Materialy dlja etnolingvisticheskogo izuzhenia balkanoslavjanskogo areala* [Materials for the ethnolinguistic study of the Balkan Slavic area.] (Moscow 2009). Semantic type of questionnaire – “from meaning to a word” – are compiled in cases where it is necessary to cover ethno-cultural areas with genetically different languages. Although initially orientated mostly toward the Balkans, the questionnaire has been successfully used in the Central European regions, particularly in Hungarian and Slovakian territories, which became possible due to a certain number of generic questions in the questionnaire’s sections relating to childbirth, wedding and funeral customs. For example, the topic «Birth» contains the following questions: «childless, infertile woman»; «pregnant woman»; «woman in labor»; «midwife»; «chemise (amniotic bubble), in which some children are born, and which is considered to be lucky, or endowed with demonic abilities)», etc.



detailed analysis of their regional ethnolinguistic features. Separately, each part of Burgenland is considered which is either part of Hungary at the present time, or was part of the borders of the Hungarian state before the Second World War (the region south of Bratislava). In the latter case, the Hungarian influence can also be traced; it is also reinforced by local Slovak layers in the case of a coincidence of vocabulary and corresponding extralinguistic contexts with Hungarian. Thus, according to field data, the following are distinguished: Sopron's "bush" villages, Szombathely "bush" and Croatian villages south of Bratislava.

Today, the situation regarding speaking the three languages in question among the Croats of Burgenland in Hungary and Slovakia is as follows.

In all the surveyed regions where Burgenland's Croatian language functions in family communication and in communication within the village, while the older and middle generations speak it actively, young people merely know it passively (or at least we witness the desire of young people to learn the Croatian literary language rather than the dialectal form common in Hungary/Slovakia).

The Hungarian language is in a special situation. In the Middle and Southern villages, it is used actively by the middle, and especially the younger generation; representatives of the older generation often switch to Hungarian when communicating with their young relatives. The situation in Northern Burgenland is somewhat different, since the Croatian villages of Jarovce, Čunovo and Rusovce located in their midst (originally with a predominant German and Hungarian population) were annexed to Slovakia only in 1946; before that they were part of Hungary, with Hungarian as the official language. Therefore, here Hungarian serves as a kind of "secret language": the older generation of informants still attended Hungarian schools and remembers Hungarian from the time of their school years; the middle generation learned Hungarian from their parents. In addition, representatives of the Hungarian ethnic group live in compact communities in these villages, and Burgenland Croats often try to communicate with them in Hungarian, partly to keep up their language competence, which is in this case, for obvious reasons, quite limited.

A few words should be said about the use of the German language. In middle and Southern Burgenland, German villages are present on the Hungarian side, while the Croats are actively in contact with their inhabitants; in Northern Burgenland, Germans live in Croatian villages; there are cases of mixed marriages – in any case, the German language is more or less within the linguistic competence of informants of all generations.

The migration of Croats from the territory of their primary residence to the northern parts of Europe took place more than 500 years ago, so the features of the linguistic and cultural dialects that they preserve were in some cases influenced by the surrounding traditions (Austrian, Hungarian, Slovakian). Nevertheless, even today it is possible to distinguish a number of authentic characteristics of the Croatian cultural dialect with features inherent in certain parts of Burgenland and separate Croatian villages. Several archaic rituals and beliefs have revealed their exclusive ties to the Hungarian villages of Burgenland, for example games with mummers in straw on Shrovetide, unknown to the Burgenland Croats in neighboring Austria.⁴ Next, we will

⁴See: Sučić R. *Narodni običaji* [Folk rituals] In: *Povijest i kultura gradišćanskih Hrvata* (Zagreb, 1995) P. 315–333.; Plotnikova A.A. *Slavjanskije ostrovnyje arealy: arhaika i innovacii* [Slavic Island Areas: Archaism and Innovation] (Moscow 2016.) P. 114–168.



present the Hungarian borrowings in the language and traditional folk culture of the rural population of the Burgenland Croats in the territory of Hungary and Slovakia.

Hungarian cultural and linguistic borrowings in Burgenland's folk traditions include:

1. Direct borrowings from different spheres of traditional folk culture, which are reflected in individual fragments of the rural world view, and accordingly in the folk terminology which reflects it. Direct Hungarian influence is especially noticeable in the sphere of folk mythology; it is also evident in various components of calendar and family rituals. In ethnolinguistic studies it is known that in folk mythology there is a tendency to call undesirable or harmful demonic characters by names borrowed from neighboring languages, as well as to identify their images with «foreigners» - usually with representatives of the ethno-cultural tradition they are in contact with.

In some cases, borrowings can be not so much Hungarian loanwords as “Carpathisms”.⁵ In such precedents Hungarian acts as a donor language (in fact, an intermediary language, since in Hungarian itself these terms were early loanwords from Slavic and non-Slavic languages), while the spread of the lexical units in the Carpathian area may be a supporting factor here.

- 1.1. In the family rites of Burgenland Croats, the most significant impact of the Hungarian tradition is found in villages which are most remote from the main array of Croatian villages in Hungary. Thus, in South Burgenland there is a village called Petrovo Selo which is actually separated from the villages Narda, Gorni Četar and Croatian Schice by two Austrian borders and has a direct connection with the district center – the city of Szombathely (see map below). This is the village whose name is recognizable in the names of wedding bun-rolls distributed at the invitation to the wedding and during the celebration (in the ritual invitation these sweet pretzels were impaled on a staff along with other treats for the guests), called by the names *pirjaci* or *perjaci* from the Hungarian *perec* ‘wedding bread in the form of a pretzel’. (In Hungarian, the corresponding lexeme is considered to be a borrowing from the upper German *preze*, *bretze*). It is important to emphasize that the native speakers themselves are aware of this word being a borrowing: «Pirjaci to su ti koláči, koje stavu na batiku. . . , to iz Madjarske, Madjarska – perjac, to je tako zašlo u naš reč. Perjaci mi kažemo» [Pir’atci are those <wedding> pretzels, which you put on a stick. . . it’s from Hungary, in Hungarian, “per’ak” is so entrenched in our speech, “per’atci” we say] (Petrovo Selo).
- 1.2. When designating ritual participants, actions and realities in funeral and memorial rites, Hungarian loanwords are also revealed, although it is this sphere of folk tradition that, as a rule, is the least permeable to foreign-language influence. So, along with the Croatian *dvoriti* proper, the lexeme denoting keeping awake with a dead person is widely used in Southern Burgenland, which is represented in both Hungarian and German versions, and in two villages located to the North (villages Narda, Gorni Četar) it is represented by the Hungarian loanword *verestovati*. In Hungarian, the lexeme *virrasztani* ‘to be awake’ is most

⁵Russian scholars with a long-standing involvement with the “General Carpathian Dialect Atlas”, S. B. Bernshtein and G. P. Klepikova explain the term “Carpathisms” as all the specific elements characteristic of the languages and traditions of the Carpathian area, regardless of their origin or direct source of borrowing.



often used in this meaning, literally in the form ‘zorevat’ from *virradat* (dawn),⁶ in which one can see a certain semantic parallel with Croatian *bdjenje*. To the south, the Germanism *boktati/bohtati* (Hrvatske Šice)/*boftati* (Petrovo Selo) is used. In Austrian Burgenland, the main lexeme is *vawochtn* ‘to guard’; while the term *boktati/bohtati/boftati*, which occurs in the territory of Hungary in the villages Hrvatske Šice and Petrovo Selo,⁷ is in all probability a borrowing and goes back to *vawochtn*.

Thus, on the one hand, there is semantic parallelism between the Hungarian and Croatian original lexemes, absent in Burgenland’ Croatian, while borrowing Hungarian lexemes (*virrasztani* – *verestovati*). At the same time, there is a penetration of the German lexeme, which in its internal form makes a semantic parallel with *dvoriti*. At the same time, *boktati* is also common in Austrian Burgenland Croatian, and *verestovati* is common only in Hungarian ones.

In Southern Burgenland, Hungarian terms were also used to refer to some calendar holidays:

- 1.3. *Sureti* (*u nas sureti deržu* [we hold «sureti»]) ‘grape harvest festival’ - from the Hungarian lexeme *szüreti* (*felvonulás*) literally ‘related to the grape must’, which, in turn, goes back to the verb *szür* ‘to reap, to crush’.⁸ This holiday in South Burgenland was first mentioned in the villages of Gorni Četar, Hrvatske Šice and Petrovo Selo. The holiday itself was a solemn procession through the village of a group of people on tractors in the direction of the vineyard or in the vineyard, followed by food and dancing. The holiday itself is typical of the wine regions of the Carpathians, but in the region where the surveyed villages are located, it is rather a late innovation⁹ and for both Croatian and Hungarian villages it is a kind of artificial construct: in this case it is not so much a contact phenomenon as an influence from above, from the state.
- 1.4. In the village of Petrovo Selo, the term *buča/bučura* ‘feast of the church’ emerged from Hungarian *bucsú*, a word of Turkish origin.¹⁰ In another part of the surveyed villages of Hungary, Slovakia and Austria, the holiday has the traditional Burgenland Croatian name *kiritoľ* (German Kirtag ‘holiday of the church’).
- 1.5. In the sphere of folk mythology, the name of the witch *bosorka* (a Hungarian loanword, used along with Croatian dialect *viška*) is regularly recorded among the Burgenland Croats of Slovakia (Chunovo, Yarovce).¹¹ This phenomenon is connected, firstly, with the specifics of these villages that were part of Hungary until the end of WWII and still retain an active possession of the Hungarian language along with Croatian, and secondly with the use of

⁶Benkő L. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen* [Etymological Dictionary of Hungarian]. (Budapest 1993.)

⁷This was also recorded in *Gradišćanskohrvatsko-hrvatsko-nimški rječnik*. [Burgenlandcroatian-Croatian-German dictionary] Zagreb – Eizenshtadt, 1991. P. 63.

⁸Benkő L. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen* [Etymological Dictionary of Hungarian]. (Budapest 1993.) P.1465.

⁹Illés P. “A szüreti felvonulások és az egyesületi élet kapcsolatai a 2. világháborúig Vas megyében” [Connections between harvest parades and association life until World War II in Vas County] In: *Vasi Honismereti és Helytörténeti Közlemények* 2005(33)/3. P. 51–65.

¹⁰Benkő L. *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Ungarischen*. Budapest. 1993. P. 142.

¹¹For more information about the borrowing *bosorka* in the villages Chunovo and Yarovce, see the detailed report on the field work in these villages in 2018 conducted by A. A. Plotnikova and D. Yu. Vashchenko in the publication: Plotnikova A. A. “‘Water Croats’ and the specifics of their tradition: A review of an ethnolinguistic expedition” In: *Slavic Almanach*, 3–4, 2018. P. 350–352.



the term in the surrounding Slovak villages. In contrast to this situation, there is a clear dichotomy in the villages of the Burgenland Croats of Hungary – Croatian *viška*, but Hungarian *boszorkány* – that is caused by the processes of ethno-cultural self-identification in a foreign language environment.

- 1.6. Everywhere among the Burgenland Croats of Hungary, the general Carpathian word *šarkanj* ‘dragon’ from the Hungarian *sárkány* (of Iranian origin) is used, this name is also common in the Slovak ethno-cultural tradition.
- 1.7. It should be noted that the Hungarian cultural borrowings among the Burgenland Croats along the Austrian-Hungarian border may be a kind of reinterpretation of motifs of the folk mythology of the surrounding ethnic groups. So, Carpathian stories about people with supernatural abilities, saddling a dragon and sending hail and bad weather¹² left a certain trace on the beliefs of the Burgenland Croats living in the border areas with Austria. In a typical Hungarian narrative about «garabontciash» from the village of Sacon’ near Croatian villages in the middle of Western Hungary (Croatian Zhidan, Prisika) storytelling is focused on the child, originally predestined to be «garabontciash» (*garabonciás diák* ‘magician’s apprentice) who is growing rapidly and in 14–16 years goes on to seek the dragon (*sárkánykigyó* – dragon-snake). The story describes how he saddles a dragon after which they both set off, causing huge storms, rain and hail. *Garabonciás* brings destruction to the people and hears only curses. The story ends with the statement that «it was not a man, but a creature of the devil, *garabonciás*». ¹³ In all Burgenland Croatian villages in Hungary, the personage «garabontciash» (*garaboncijaš*) is immediately recognized as an element of the surrounding Hungarian culture, but sometimes the lexeme can be used as a characteristic of a real person, for example: *garaboncijaš* ‘strong man’ (Narda). ¹⁴ However, on the other side of the border, in the nearby Croatian village Filezh in Austria we recorded a belief about a man with supernatural abilities called *grebencijaš* and having the power to influence the weather, cause rain, snow and bad weather (*on je krivac kad je nevrime* – «he is guilty when it is bad weather»). ¹⁵ This phenomenon fits well into the structure of separate Slavic areas: where cultural and linguistic identity is important (in Hungary itself), a fragment of folk culture is not borrowed, whereas in neighboring villages surrounded by other cultural specifics (in Austria), it can be easily perceived.
2. Latent borrowings. Latent borrowings are understood as cultural phenomena that were initially weakly expressed in a particular tradition (and tended to be lost), but during long coexistence with a neighboring heterogeneous tradition were maintained due to the developed state of the similar phenomena in the surrounding cultural environment.
- 2.1. For the study of cultural dialects within the enclave area of Burgenland it is important to note some significant differences which may be traced back to diverse streams of settlement of the northern lands by Croats who came from different parts of their territory of primary

¹²Cf. similar Romanian stories about warlocks flying on a dragon and sending bad weather.

¹³A *Répcse mente meséi és mondái*. [Tales and legends along the Répceseed] (Szombathely 1996.) P. 29.

¹⁴Cf. the use of other Hungarian loanwords from the sphere of folk demonology in the function of swearing or negative characterization of a person: *To je pravi šarkanj, ta žena!* [A real dragon, this woman!] (village of Petrovo Selo).

¹⁵See Plotnikova A.A. *Slavjanskije ostrovnyje arealy: arhaika i innovacii* [Slavic Island Areas: Archaism and Innovation] (Moscow 2016.) P. 158-159.



residence. So, in the villages of Burgenland Croats in Western Hungary's Croatian villages Zhidan and Prisika the rituals of farewell to winter on Shrove Tuesday have been preserved. Saying goodbye to the cold season, they burned or buried the symbolically represented winter time, most frequently a straw doll. This ritual was described as follows: *A nekad tako načinjju na slamu, ter je požgu, a to je da zima projde, protuliće dojde* [And before that, they will make a man out of straw and burn him, and this is so that winter will pass, spring will come] (Croatian Zhidan); *zakápaju zimsko vrime* [bury the winter time] (Prisika); *da se zima zakapa; strašidu zimu da projde* [to bury the winter; scared the winter to pass] (Croatian Zhidan). For the same purpose, the masqueraders on Shrovetide made as much noise as possible in order «to scare and drive away the winter» (Croatian Zhidan). In the same villages, it is still practiced to dress up in straw a «gaffer» (*djed*) and a «woman» (*baba*), «gaffer» and «zhuzha» (*žuža*), who imitate a wedding and frighten oncoming girls. Despite the deeply archaic nature of such Slavic excesses and amusements, in this case there are also borrowings from the surrounding Hungarian cultural environment. The name of the personage *žuža* is borrowed from the Hungarian roundabout rites of the winter-spring cycle. The play about Zsuzsa was written by the Bardejov rector Lenart Steckel in the 16th century, and was performed in the Hungarian and German Protestant milieu, most often on St. Susanna day, on February 18, including in the form of rounds: among the participants of the ritual of house-to-house were Zsuzsanna, her husband and two old men (MN, MNL).

For the Shrovetide rituals in the villages of Playgor and Unda, people also made a dummy of the «straw grandfather», often along with a similar «straw woman» (*baba*). In the village of Unda, this «hugging» couple was spun on a wooden wheel while being dragged around the village, in both villages (Playgor, Unda) straw effigies were burned at the end of the holiday, marking the «departure of winter» (own records from informants in 2017).¹⁶ This twisting of figures on a wheel or on a round wooden platform seems to be associated with the Hungarian influence on rural Croatian culture, for example, it is known that Hungarian men from a neighboring village would come to the village of Prisika and carried a spinning wheel through the whole village, with hugging dolls «dancing» on top.¹⁷

2.2. Among the Burgenland Croats of Hungary, we never observed the rite of «kolodka», known to the Austrian Croats as a Shrovetide rite (dragging trees or objects made of wood, for example troughs, by young people who did not get married on Shrovetide).¹⁸ According to our records, the public censure of young people who did not marry in the past year is

¹⁶Jordanić M. *Narodni običaji Gradišćanskih Hrvatov. Das Brauchtum der Burgenlandkroaten* [The customs of the Burgenland Croats]. (Filež – Nikitsch 2009.) P. 35.

¹⁷Horváth I. «A naptári ünnepekhez fűződő szokások és hiedelmek a nyugatmagyarországi horvátoknál» [Customs and beliefs related to calendar holidays among Croats in Western Hungary] In: *Folklór archívum*. 1978. 10., 57; Sági F. «Változó, átalakuló szokások a Répce-vidéken és Alpokalján» [Changing, transforming customs in the Répce region and in Alpokalja] In: *Vasi honismereti és helytörténeti közlemények*. 2010/1, P. 45–51., P. 47.

¹⁸According to Hungarian ethnographers, the custom existed in Middle Burgenland as early as the late 1970's: in Unda, the drawing of a wooden block was recorded, and in Croatian Zhidan, the dragging of a trough. Horváth I. «A naptári ünnepekhez fűződő szokások és hiedelmek a nyugatmagyarországi horvátoknál» [Customs and beliefs related to calendar holidays among Croats in Western Hungary] In: *Folklór archívum*. 1978. 10. P. 57].



associated with the «straw» characters of Shrovetide processions. Those who have stayed without marriage are called *slamnji djed i baba* (*na toga su mogli reć da je slamnji ostal* [about such a person they said that he remained «straw»] Croatian Zhidan), cf. similar motifs of the «straw man» in other Slavic and European zones.¹⁹ Among the Burgenland Croats this is probably a borrowing from Hungarian (*szalmaözvegy* ‘straw widow’), where in turn it is interpreted as a calque from German. Let us add that in the Southern part of Burgenland’s Croats in Hungary (as well as among the Slovak Croats), none of these early spring archaic rites are known, but they have parallels in different Slavic zones.

- 2.3. In the village of Unda (Middle Burgenland) on St. Lucia’s Day, there are processions that are not found in the other Burgenland villages we surveyed. A group of ten-year-old boys walk through the village, each holding an armful of straw. The procession stops at each house, the boys ask if they can enter, then put an armful of straw on the threshold of the house, kneel on the straw and say good wishes.²⁰ Similar rounds are also characteristic of the Hungarian village Zsira, examined in 2017 and of the entire region of Hungary (while they are not mentioned in the extensive description of the authentic rituals and superstitions on St. Lucia’s Day in Unda in the relevant volume by M. Jordanić,²¹ therefore we can assume that the rounds in Unda represent the contact phenomenon.
- 2.4. In the same village Unda, there has been a change in the procession carried out on the day of Trinity, and the new version coincides with the one that is common in neighboring Hungarian villages. So, until the 1910’s “there was a group consisting of three girls: two older and one younger. They were called “Duhi”. A young (younger) girl was covered with a colored headscarf. A wreath woven from blue cornflowers (*plavijenke*) was placed on the headscarf on the girl’s head. First they went to the rectory, then to the church, and so on. Near each house they said good wishes and sang the song “Hódi k nam Düh Sfijeti. . .”.²² The recording of this song, complete with the score, is given in the book about the folk customs of the Burgenland Croats by M. Jordanić, and the version of the Trinity procession is interpreted by him as the most archaic form, “ki potiče iz stare domovine” (which comes from the old homeland).²³ Later, the procession changed: it consisted of five girls, four older and one younger, who was also in the center; the older girls held a youthful headscarf like a canopy over their heads.²⁴ Similar rounds are presented in the neighboring Hungarian

¹⁹Berezovich Y. L. *Russkaja leksika na obščeslavjanskom fone: semantiko-motivatsionnaja rekonstrukcija* [Russian vocabulary against a common Slavic background: semantic and motivational reconstruction]. (Moscow 2014).

²⁰This is also mentioned in Horváth I. “A naptári ünnepekhez fűződő szokások és hiedelmek a nyugatmagyarországi horvátoknál” [Customs and beliefs related to calendar holidays among Croats in Western Hungary] In: *Folklór archívum*. 1978. 10. P. 69, where the author writes that during the rounds on St. Lucia’s Day boys placed straw on the doorsteps of the houses and said good wishes which were designed to bring the owners of the house fertility of their poultry and small livestock.

²¹Jordanić M. *Narodni obiçaji Gradišćanskih Hrvatov. Das Brauchtum der Burgenlandkroaten* [The customs of the Burgenland Croats]. (Filež – Nikitsch 2009.) P. 137.

²²Horváth I. “A naptári ünnepekhez fűződő szokások és hiedelmek a nyugatmagyarországi horvátoknál” [Customs and beliefs related to calendar holidays among Croats in Western Hungary] In: *Folklór archívum*. 1978. 10. P. 69.

²³Jordanić M. *Narodni obiçaji Gradišćanskih Hrvatov. Das Brauchtum der Burgenlandkroaten* [The customs of the Burgenland Croats]. (Filež – Nikitsch 2009.) 74–75.

²⁴The authors’ field data from 2017.



villages of Zsira and Gyaloka. For example, in Gyaloka: “four girls held a shawl like a “tent” over the head of the fifth. They went from house to house to congratulate. During this, they sang and scattered petals”.²⁵

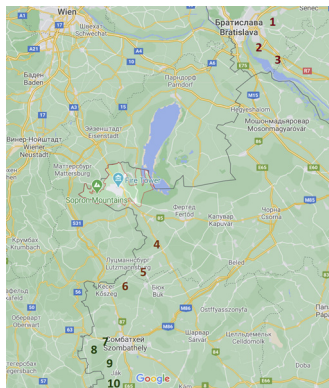
3. Ethno-cultural inclusions – we are talking about cases when in the speech of individual informants who tell about autochthonous customs, rituals and beliefs, the Croatian ethno-cultural vocabulary is replaced by Hungarian, and the speaker realizes that he cannot remember the Croatian name. These words are not borrowings in their pure form, since the corresponding term is present in the minds of another part of the region’s informants and, in addition, the word, as a rule, appears in an unadapted form and is accompanied by a metalinguistic comment.
 - 3.1. Both in Middle and Southern Burgenland, the best man at the wedding could be designated by the Hungarian lexeme *vőfény*, see examples, one of which is a duplication of the nomination: *vertanj je nosil statilo vőfény* [wedding bread was carried by the best man].
 - 3.2. Only in Southern Burgenland, dances at a wedding could also have a Hungarian name – the Hungarian designations *menyasszonytánc* ‘bride’s dance’, *vánkostánc* ‘pillow dance’ were used to denote the bride’s dance. Here, in all likelihood, we are not talking about borrowing as such, but about regular code switching. In the interview, the relevant passages are followed by a pause, when the informant, apparently, does not find the right word, talking in his dialect about wedding customs.
 - 3.3. In connection with the current system of health care, where children are born in a hospital, the interlocutors from the Southern Town (for example, in the village of Hrvatske Sice) could forget the Croatian vocabulary for a woman in labor (also other folk terms related to the birth rites): *jako se to velilo gyerekágyas?* [what was it called *gyerekágyas?*].
 - 3.4. Only in Middle Burgenland the term *álarc* literally ‘fake, artificial face’ was used to denote a mask in the Maslenitsa procession, this term could denote all mummers as such: *A ja kad sam bila Krampus imala sam na licu-čo je to álarc-mask* [And when I was Krampus, I had on my face - what is an *álarc*-mask].
4. Finally, it is possible to distinguish lexemes that are part of the common cultural vocabulary of Hungarians and Croats (more broadly, southern Slavs). So, if in Northern and Middle Burgenland the main wedding bread was called *vrtanj*, in Southern Burgenland this ritual term is not used, and the wedding loaf is designated by the term *kolač*, (see also SerboCroatian. *kolač* ‘muffin, festive bread’). This phenomenon among Croats in a foreign-speaking environment may also be motivated by the supportive influence of the Hungarian language, where wedding bread is most often referred to by the term *kalács*, a Slavism by origin.

Conclusions. Analyzing popular culture and dialects of enclave villages of Burgenland Croats in Hungary and Slovakia, it should be noted that traditional folk culture with corresponding vocabulary becomes an important marker of identity of the population living in foreign language environments. It is in this sphere of life that borrowings, both lexical and extralinguistic, are least expressed, because of the preservation of the original features that show the cultural identity of the minority under consideration. The gradual penetration of Hungarian loanwords occurs, first

²⁵Brummer K. Gyalókai krónika [Chronicle of Gyalóka]. (Gyalóka 2007.)



of all, in the most remote Croatian communities from the main enclave (in our case, it is Unda in the north of Middle Burgenland and Petrovo Selo in the very south of Southern Burgenland), while the influence concerns both the actual language elements and separate rituals, customs and beliefs.



- 1 – Chorvátsky Grob
- 2 – Jarovce - Jandorf
- 3 – Čunovo
- 4 – Und - Unda
- 5 – Peresznye - Prisika
- 6 – Horvátszidány – Hrvatski Zidan
- 7 – Narda – Narda
- 8 – Felsőcsatár – Gornji Četar
- 9 – Horvátlövő – Hrvatske Šice
- 10 – Szentpéterfa – Petrovo Selo

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Levels of transculturalism and bilingualism in the Hungarian literature of Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of transculturalism is capable of activating and generating meaning within various spaces, levels and layers of literature. The study discusses different levels of transculturalism through certain authors and texts in Slovakian Hungarian literature, along with transcultural authorial identity, the transcultural meaning-making machinery of texts, transcultural practices of the social context, and transcultural directions and gaps in reception. The purpose of the paper is to classify some of the transcultural phenomena we encounter and to unravel the relevant conceptual and interpretative levels.

KEYWORDS

transculturalism, bilingualism, Hungarian literature in Slovakia, authorial identity

INTRODUCTION

The appearance and use of the concept of transculturalism in the international and Hungarian literature of the subject have resulted in the articulation of new points of view, which placed the relationships between cultures and, more specifically, the discussion of literary phenomena, into a new framework (Welsch, 1999; Dagnino, 2015; Jablonczay, 2015; Thomka, 2018; Németh and Roguska, 2018a, b). While multiculturalism and interculturalism were based on the notion of

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homogenous cultures existing side by side and engaging in dialogue with each other, in the age of globalisation and digitalisation, transculturalism has questioned the possibility of the homogeneity of any culture. According to Wolfgang Welsch, by the end of the 20th century, a situation has been created that transcends the borders of national cultures and all cultures can only be interpreted from the point of view of mixing, permeation, hybridity and networking (Welsch, 1999).

In the following, I endeavour to outline a concept for the interpretation of transcultural phenomena through a minority or ethnic literature, namely, Hungarian literature in Slovakia. On one hand, the present paper is a sketch of a kind, but on the other hand, it contains elements ready to be formalised and continued, which in general make it possible to map and typify the transcultural relations of literature. Naturally, even this method does not promise the illusion of objectivity, but rather offers guidelines for the application of a model which can be further detailed in the case of other transcultural literatures. However, it is also possible that the transcultural positions and levels discussed here do not exist at, all but are zero places or untapped, zero opportunities in the context of another literature of a different language.

INTERPRETATIVE MODELS BEFORE TRANSCULTURALISM

From an unreflected point of view, every minority or ethnic literature is placed in a multicultural/intercultural/transcultural position by its very existence. The Hungarian literature of Slovakia has always reflected upon its status as an ethnic minority literature and thereby created concepts such as a bridge role, a *vox humana* or the minority genius, going back as far the period between the two world wars. This self-reflection has placed the Hungarian literature in Slovakia, sometimes also called the literature of Slovensko, half way between the Slovakian and the Hungarian cultures and literatures. From another point of view, this position may be regarded as a limitation (Csehy, 2011, 127–166; Csehy, 2012, 249–288).

A completely different approach, however, has considered the Hungarian literatures that exist outside the present-day borders of Hungary as parts of a unified Hungarian literature, drawing attention to their shared traditions and common language. In the case of the Hungarian literature of Slovakia, the representatives of this standpoint often refer to the fact that the majority of published literary works do not deal with the issues of Hungarian identity in Slovakia, do not discuss the phenomena of Slovak-Hungarian cohabitation, nor do they reflect upon the unique traits of minority existence (Németh, 2005, 24–34).

These two standpoints, incompatible at first sight, raise the following introductory hypotheses, paradoxes and questions:

1. The concept of Hungarian literature in Slovakia generally presupposes multicultural/intercultural/transcultural relations.
2. A group of Hungarian literary historians in Slovakia (Alabán, 2017) thus concluded the following: Hungarian literature in Slovakia = Hungarian literature + Slovakian literature. This idea can more precisely be described by the theory of sets; the Hungarian literature in Slovakia is the section of Hungarian and Slovakian literatures: $C = A \cap B$.
3. However, reading the texts comprising the Hungarian literature of Slovakia convinces the reader that the majority of them do not deal with Hungarian-Slovak relations, nor with the issues of Hungarian identity; they do not use Slovakisms, nor do they build intertextual



relationships with Slovak literature, neither do they use the colloquial Hungarian of Slovakian, but the literary Hungarian language (Németh, 2005, 24–34).

These two, apparently incompatible standpoints raise the following questions:

1. Does an ethnic/minority literature *a priori* presuppose multicultural/intercultural/transcultural relations?
2. How and why have theories of minority literature come about which do not harmonise with the phenomena experienced during the reception of such literature?
3. Why do Slovakian Hungarian authors not integrate the Slovakian context into their texts?
4. How can the contradictions of the previous three points be resolved?
5. How can transculturalism and transnational literary criticism contribute to the discussion of the above phenomena?

On the basis of a theory from the time before transculturalism, the above questions can be answered in a way that does not resolve the problems but mobilises a new, different kind of dichotomy (Németh, 2013, 16–24). According to this, the works of Hungarian literature in Slovakia reflect two different kinds of strategy:

1. In certain texts, intercultural communication is not only present, but works as an important meaning-making poetics. These texts present the features of Slovakian and Slovakian-Hungarian reality: some of them use words, phrases or sentences in the Slovak language; others use Slovakisms taken from Slovakian Hungarian language use; some other texts represent the issues of Slovakian Hungarian identity; furthermore, a dialogue with Slovak literature can be detected and a Slovak literary influence felt. These works include novels such as Lajos Grendel's *New Hont-trilogy – Tömegsír* [*Mass Grave*] (1999); *Nálunk, New Hontban* [*Our Place New Hont*] (2001); *Mátyás király New Hontban* [*King Mathias in New Hont*] (2005), Péter Hunčík's *Határeset* [*Borderline Case*] (2008), György Norbert's *Klára* [*Claire*] (2004), as well as poems by Árpád Tözsér *Szülőföldtől szülőföldig* [*From Homeland to Homeland*] and *A kódváltás pragmatikája* [*The Pragmatics of Code Switching*].
2. In other texts, the phenomena listed above are not present either on the level of references or poetics. The works of Slovakian Hungarian literature are in conversation with the textual universes of Hungarian and world literature, and only the names of the authors tell of their Slovakian Hungarian origin. This group includes the following works: short stories by József Gazdag *Kilátás az ezüsthenyőkre* [*View of the Silver Pines*] (2004), volumes of poetry by Zoltán Csehy *Hecatelegium* (2006), Zoltán Hizsnyai *Bárka és ladik* [*Ark and Boat*] (2001), Attila Mizser *Szakmai gyakorlat külföldön* [*Internship Abroad*] (2003), Anikó Polgár *Régészőnő körömcipőben* [*Lady Archaeologist in High Heels*] (2009), Gergely Vida *Horror klasszikusok* [*Horror Classics*] (2010) and Árpád Tözsér's poems *Parsifal, Iuvenalis I., Euphorbos monológia* [*Euphorbos' Monologue*].

THE LEVELS AND RELATIONSHIPS OF TRANSCULTURALISM

Interpreting the works of Constance theoreticians (H. R. Jauss, W. Iser), Lucien Dällenbach draws “a general topography, in which these studies must be read. It is enough to assume that the literary fact operates in four interacting stages.” (Dällenbach, 1980, 130) He later added to



this statement that “ideally, a consistent reception theory should aim at aligning all the relations in question, as well as analysing all the issues that these relations raise as a whole or one by one” (Dällenbach, 1980, 131). He identifies four stages:

1. the subject and process of the production
2. the text
3. the subject and process of the reception
4. historical context and the subconscious

Taking into consideration the transcultural conditions, the operation of Dällenbach’s stages opens up opportunities for the interpreter that make it possible to view the levels of transculturalism and the positions of the author, the text and the reader in a much more sophisticated way. Thus, the position and operation of minority literatures are provided with a new framework of interpretation. Dällenbach’s theory also helps resolve the above-mentioned contradictions and paradoxes and answer the questions as it offers a far more reflected approach than previous standpoints.

The transcultural position of the author

Approaches in literary theory which concentrated on the author were largely dominant in the 19th century. Positivism especially focused on the author’s biography in as many “positive” details as possible, whereas historicism was looking for the “spirit of the age” embodied in the genius of the artist.

The transcultural literary interpretation also places great emphasis on author-centred ideas, as it is through events in the biography, such as nomadism, changing one’s country or language, etc. that an author is regarded as or transformed into transcultural (from Agota Kristof to Melinda Nadj Abonji). On the other hand, though, in the case of ethnic minority literatures, further possibilities and definitions come into play:

1. From a biographical point of view, every Slovakian Hungarian author is transcultural, as they live on the boundary between two languages and cultures. Slovak-Hungarian contact phenomena play a decisive role in everything from everyday life through educational institutions to the linguistic scene (visual language use).
2. In Slovakia, a different level of transculturalism is present in the case of authors who had not received a Hungarian-language education, but attended Slovak-speaking schools. Different levels of education may result in an author becoming bilingual, for example Peter Macsovszky.
3. Besides Slovak-Hungarian identities, certain added identities such as Jewish or Roma may also result in different levels of transculturalism, as in the case of Piroska Szenes, László Pálovics and Alfonz Talamon.
4. The term ‘inner migration’ is used in the case of authors who leave the area inhabited by Hungarians and move to other parts of Slovakia where the Slovak language is dominant. The best examples are authors such as Gyula Duba, Árpád Tózsér, Gábor Farnbauer and Zoltán Szalay, who all live in Bratislava.
5. Authors moving to Hungary or living in Hungary for an extended period include László Tóth, Imre Varga, Attila Mizser, Tímea Péntes and Tamás Plonicky. One of the most extreme examples of this kind of identity is Gábor Kálmán, who was born in Nové Zámky



(Érsekújvár), spent his childhood in an area inhabited by Slovaks and entered the literary world as a Budapest writer. According to his own narrative and self-determination, the Hungarian literature of Slovakia does not acknowledge him as a part of that scene.

6. Authors of migrant or cosmo-nomadic identity, some of whom have lived abroad for years, share the experience of global mobility by receiving scholarships and attending international conferences. Slovakian-born József Czákó lives in Germany; Mária Mórocz in Australia; Péter Macsovszky has lived in the Netherlands, Brazil and Australia; József R. Juhász has spent months as a performer in China, India and Mexico; Zoltán Csehy has spent extended periods in Italy, Germany and Switzerland as a literary scholarship holder and a speaker at conferences; Pál Száz has lived in Sarajevo, Paris and Prague, etc. Ilma Rakusa, who was born in Rimavská Sobota (Rimaszombat), also belongs to this group, as her mother tongue is Hungarian, but she does not write in this language.

The question why general theories of minority literature have come about which do not correspond to the phenomena experienced during reception can be answered through the survival of approaches to literature concentrating on the authors' biography. In other words, a great many texts of Hungarian literature in Slovakia cannot be interpreted through Hungarian-Slovak realia. The answer is the following. Those literary historians who regard Hungarian literature in Slovakia as the section of the two sets, Slovak and Hungarian literatures, actually approached literature from a positivist basis, that is to say, using so-called positive facts such as political and social data, as well as the authors' biographies. Viewed from this angle, indeed, all Slovakian Hungarian authors, or rather the whole of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, appears multicultural/intercultural/transcultural. The question, however, how the above-mentioned relations appear on the level of the text, remains unanswered by this concept.

The transcultural position of the text

Approaches in literary theory that are usually language-centred and focus on the text not only exclude the author from the interpretation, but may go as far as erasing the author's position and claiming the "author's death". These trends, including Russian formalism, structuralism and deconstruction, mainly characteristic of the 20th century, usually regarded the interpretation of literature as the application of rhetorical operations.

The transcultural features of the text often cannot be fully related to the author's biography. The experience of migration does not necessarily appear in the texts of the migrant author and vice versa: a non-migrant author may also elaborate a migration related story. The situation is similar with Hungarian literature in Slovakia: not every Slovakian Hungarian author recounts the experiences of the Slovakian Hungarian world and a non-Slovakian author may also portray Slovakian Hungarian realia, as we see in Éva Bánki's novel.

The possible positions of transculturalism in Slovakian Hungarian texts are the following:

1. The text reflects on transcultural relations or even uses them as an original form of poetics, but it is not Slovak-Hungarian transculturalism that is integrated into the texts. For example, in Anikó Polgár's collection of poems *Lady Archaeologist in High Heels*, ancient Greek mythology is copied onto the stages of a present-day story of a birth; Zoltán Csehy's volume *Hecatelegium* builds on the possibilities of Latin poetry and several poems by Árpád Tőzsér (e.g. *Euphorbos's monologue*) build transcultural relations with classical literature.



2. The background to the reflected transcultural relations is constituted by Slovak-Hungarian cohabitation, as well as the Slovakian Hungarian experience and identity. Examples of this are novels by Lajos Grendel *Négy hét az élet* [*Life is but four weeks*] (2011), Péter Hunčík *Borderline case* (2008) and György Norbert *Claire* (2004).
3. Operating bilingualism or the Slovakian Hungarian language use as poetics. Possibilities for doing so are the following:
 - a. Building Slovakian language texts into the literary work of art.
 - b. Texts working with phrases typical of Slovakian Hungarian language use.

These two phenomena are often inseparable and follow from each other, as in György Norbert's novel *Claire* or Árpád Tózsér's poem *The Pragmatics of Code Switching*.

Rokkó Juhász uses the widest transcultural opportunities offered by the vehicle of languages in his volume of poetry *Cumi-cumi* (2016), which contains no actual poems but only lists of Hungarian words that are also meaningful in other languages. Thus, poems in Hungarian as well as in a hybrid language were born at the same time, and authors not speaking Hungarian became able to write poetry in Hungarian, while meaning itself escaped authorial competence.

4. The effect of the foreign-language environment on the creative process and the text:
 - a. Keeping silent or the complete lack or zero position of a text: the texts "did not follow" the authors into their migration when they found themselves in a transcultural situation. Texts which were not written abroad belong here. Some Slovakian Hungarian authors, such as József Czakó and Mária Mórocz, who left their homeland, stopped writing in the foreign-language environment. The loss of language and loss of writing can also constitute a transcultural experience.
 - b. Suspending writing in Hungarian or changing languages. An example of this is Gábor Farnbauer who, as a writer in Bratislava (Pozsony), gradually gave up writing in Hungarian and switched to Slovak.
5. Language change, bilingualism, multilingualism. The possibilities of transculturalism can be as manifold on the level of the text as on that of biography. We can mention Ilma Rakusa, whose mother tongue is Hungarian, but who has several identities (Hungarian, Slovenian, Swiss), writes in German and is not acknowledged by historians of Hungarian literature in Slovakia. Another representative of this category is Mila Haugová, whose mother tongue is also Hungarian, but who writes in Slovak with the exception of one volume of poetry (*Őzgerinc* [*Venison*] (2000)) in Hungarian, but is not mentioned by the *Lexicon of Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia*. Further down the same line is multilingual Péter Macsovszky who, with his seventeen Slovak-language volumes of poetry and nine volumes of prose, belongs to the forefront of contemporary Slovak literature, where he occupies a much more canonised position than in Hungarian literature or in the Hungarian literature of Slovakia with his five Hungarian-language volumes of poetry. Last, but not least, let us mention Gábor Farnbauer, who has published Slovak texts after his Hungarian-language volumes.
6. Total language change in the case of authors with (some) Hungarian ancestors. Authors belonging to this group are only listed by contemporary Slovak literature, even though they come from a Hungarian or a mixed family, like Veronika Šikulová, Agda Bavi Pain (Jozef Gaál), Derek Rebro, Uršula Kovalyk. Some of them speak fluent Hungarian, some a broken version and some not at all.



On the level of the text, Hungarian literature in Slovakia cannot generally be regarded as transcultural because a large part of it is constituted by texts that were created on the basis of the Hungarian literary tradition and did not build transcultural relations with Slovak literature. The whole of Hungarian literature in Slovakia cannot be reduced to the representation of the Slovakian Hungarian identity or any one topic such as the depiction of Slovak-Hungarian literary and linguistic relations. The text of the Slovakian Hungarian author is placed in the terrain of literariness in the widest sense in the same way as the text of any other author, whether they be French, German, English, Indian or Chinese. The author is free to build a tradition and create an original poetics from a wide variety of genres, modes of writing and elements of style. Thus it is truly transcultural in the global sense and cannot be restricted to the slavish following of Slovak-Hungarian relations.

The transcultural position of the reader

The discovery of literary theoretical approaches emphasizing the central role of the reader originates from the fact that the text in itself, without a reader, is dead. Furthermore, every text only exists in readings – it does not have an “original” meaning. Along the lines of these discoveries, 20th century hermeneutics and reception aesthetics found it essential to study the historicity of a text, as well as follow the changing trends of reception and the stages of canonisation and marginalisation.

While reading texts from the Hungarian literature of Slovakia, some paradoxes may arise from not recognising the position of the reader. Thus, we can refer to the approach of those literary histories that consider Hungarian literature in Slovakia to be in the section of Slovak and Hungarian literatures. In their interpretation, the texts are actually read on the basis of homogeneous Hungarian literary traditions. Multicultural/intercultural/transcultural readings can only be validated on a theoretical basis not displayed by many of the texts of Hungarian literary criticism in Slovakia.

The possible levels of transculturalism in the Slovakian Hungarian reception of these writings are the following:

1. Transculturalism as a blindspot in the reception of transcultural-bilingual authors – when the critic does not know that the text in question was created by a bilingual author. Thus, the author and the text are automatically placed into a homogeneous national paradigm.
2. The opposite of this practice is the conscious use of transcultural readings. A fine example of this is the poet Emília Viktória Labay, born in Budapest, writing her first works in Czechoslovakia under the name of Mila Srnková and continuing to write in Slovak, Hungarian, English and German under the name Mila Haugová (Petres Csizmadia, 2018a, 165). Gabriella Petres Csizmadia provides an exemplary transcultural reading of the works of Pál Száz, who turned the language variety used atNA Pered into the language of literature (Petres Csizmadia, 2018b, 85–94). Anikó N. Tóth successfully uses the opportunities of transculturalism in connection with the books of Gábor Kálmán and György Norbert (N. Tóth, 2017, 33–44; N. Tóth, 2018, 73–84). In a large-scale study, Zoltán Csehy interprets the texts of Péter Hunčík, István Bettes and others in a similar manner (Csehy, 2016, 166–190).
3. Reflection on and study of the phenomenon when the texts of language-switching authors written in different languages interpret each other through their works. Furthermore, it is also worth reflecting on the way in which the Hungarian texts of bilingual authors preserve



the imprint of Slovak literature and their Slovak texts rely on the Hungarian literary tradition. Mila Haugová, for example, writes in her diary that her own poetry had been inspired by Hungarian poetry. Péter Macsovszky's texts have a very strong Hungarian layer, of which we now only mention his exceptional use of pseudonyms. It was certainly inspired by the name-games of Sándor Weöres (Psyché), Péter Esterházy (Csokonai Lili), Zoltán Hízsnyai (Tsúszó Sándor), Lajos Parti Nagy (Sárbogárdi Jolán), András Ferenc Kovács (Jack Cole). (Actually, Macsovszky also writes Slovak poems under a Hungarian pen-name).

4. The study and criticism of the approach which deems to detect the transcultural condition in the whole of Hungarian literature in Slovakia. This approach regards Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a specific literature, as a homogenous corpus connecting Slovak and Hungarian literatures, thus rendering readings based on linguistic facts impossible.

All this does not mean that transculturalism as a theoretical basis could be treated as a homogenous quality which resolves the theoretical issues of Hungarian literature in Slovakia once and for all. On the contrary, we must be aware that several opposing views appear within transculturalism and that the concept of transculturalism is itself historical, which means that our attempts at interpretation by no means promise any objective and final meaning-making. The position of the reader raises awareness to the logic of temporality; it actually entails a reflection upon the historical aspect, namely, the acknowledgement of the fact that the concept of Hungarian literature in Slovakia has changed over time. It has meant different things in different historical periods and it also provides contradictory and opposing concepts in the present day. By this, we are already foreshadowing the next level of transculturalism of Hungarian literature in Slovakia.

The transcultural position of the context

In the second half of the 20th century, trends of literary theory appeared that mainly focused on contextual phenomena in their interpretation of literary works. They convincingly demonstrated that texts are never read by a "sterile" reader. The reader is always personal, with a specific identity, shaped by a specific historical context. The context of the work is thus always provided by actual cultural, historical and identity issues, and the reader always reads the text along well-defined interests and contexts. The reading will depend to a considerable extent on whether the reader is a man or a woman, heterosexual or homosexual, middle class or not, what his/her religion and skin colour are, etc. The contextualisation of different identity possibilities has called forth the achievements of post-modern feminist literary criticism, ecological criticism, new historicism, ethical criticism, post-modern cultural anthropology and transnational literary criticism.

The possible levels of transculturalism in the context of Hungarian literature in Slovakia are the following:

1. The historical contexts of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, starting with the concepts of Slovensko literature between the two world wars, followed by the official expectations of the communist era, also considering the viewpoints of Slovak literary criticism, followed by concepts after 1989. The explicit or latent debates of the different approaches are also part of the diachronic and synchronic studies.



2. Hungarian literature in Slovakia, placed in transnational literary criticism: re-reading the texts of Hungarian literature in Slovakia through the ideas, vocabulary and viewpoints of transnational literary criticism and transculturalism.
3. The study of the context of the so-called unified Hungarian literature in Slovakian Hungarian and Hungarian works of literary history.
4. The context of the so-called “over-the-border” Hungarian literatures: the comparative study of Transylvanian (Romania), Vojvodina (Serbia), Trans-Carpathian (Ukraine), western, etc. Hungarian literary approaches through the eyes of the Hungarian literature of Slovakia.
5. The study of the issues of minority narratives such as womanhood, homosexuality, otherness, strangeness, etc. in the context of transculturalism.
6. The interpretation of names as transcultural signifiers. The Slovak spelling of Slovakian Hungarian authors as a visual or graphic effect immediately represents some form of foreignness within the text, for example Péter Hunčík, Klaudia Gužák, Mila Haugová. Using two different name varieties is a specific case: Péter Macsovszky publishes his Slovak texts by the name of Peter Macsovszky and his Hungarian texts as Macsovszky Péter, whereas the Hungarian spelling of his surname gives a feeling of foreignness to the Slovak reader.
7. The study of those literary phenomena and modes of writing when a Slovakian Hungarian author writes about similar topics as an author of world literature – in other words: transculturalism, migration and globalisation appear as Slovakian Hungarian experiences, as for example in Nóra Fábrián’s *A nagyváros meséi [Tales of the Big City]* (2002).
8. The study of the internal transcultural relations of the Hungarian literature in Slovakia, inasmuch as the Slovakian Hungarian experience is not homogenous. A different mentality and language use characterise, for example, the Slovakian Hungarians of Csallóköz, Mátyusföld, Gömör or Bodrogköz [different regions of Southern Slovakia]. The study of the so-called Ipolyság-novel could provide an excellent opportunity for such an interpretation, as this small border town [Šahy], the former seat of Hont County plays a cardinal role in some works of both Slovak literature and Hungarian literature in Slovakia, for example in Ladislav Ballek’s *Palánk-novels (A segéd. Könyv Palánkról, [The assistant. Book about Palánk]* 1977), *Akácok. Második könyv Palánkról [Acacias. The second book about Palánk]* (1981), Lajos Grendel’s *New Hont-trilogy*, Péter Hunčík’s *Borderline Case*. A high-level description of internal transcultural relations characterise Pál Száz’s collection of phyto-legends *Fűje sarjad mezőknek [Grass Sprouts in the Fields]* (2017).

The consistent use of the principle of context results in the benevolent “writing apart” of the concept of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, which leads to the multiplication of its potential meanings and the concept itself may gain new, unexpected dimensions, which could not appear heretofore. Activating different theoretical bases and including this concept in individual stories of identity are two important strategies of transculturalism, as it builds on the possibilities of dynamism, constant movement, transgression and the crossing of boundaries.

CONCLUSION

For contemporary literary scholarship, it seems an appropriate procedure to copy different theoretical frameworks onto each other or incorporate one within the other and look for connection points between them. This practice might yield unexpected results, serving as



inspiration for further research. Each of the points outlined above could be elaborated as a separate study, along a strategy that examines the Hungarian literature of Slovakia on the basis of the recommendations of transculturalism for vocabulary and interpretation, looking for connections between the author, the text, the reader and the context. Firstly, the study of minority literature could profit from this and secondly, it could become the starting point of studies for which it is predestined by the unique features of its authors, languages, readers and contexts.

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