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The Translation History of the Gesta Hungarorum

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ABSTRACT

The Gesta Hungarorum (Deeds of the Hungarians) is an important source for the early history of the Carpathian Basin and, more broadly, of Europe. More than 300 years have passed since the discovery of the Gesta, and debates about the identity of its author and the authenticity of its narrative have continued ever since. Alongside the expansion of scholarly literature, the number of published editions of the text has also increased. Today, numerous transcriptions and translations – both in Hungarian and in other languages – are available to researchers and interested readers. In my opinion, it is among the responsibilities of Hungarian historians and historical linguists to follow the domestic and international reception of our historical sources and linguistic relics. In this paper, undertaking this task, I present the textual and translation history of the Gesta.

Keywords: Anonymus, Gesta Hungarorum, facsimiles, transcriptions, translations, maps

1. Introduction

The Gesta Hungarorum tells the story of the Hungarian conquest and settlement. By his own admission, Magister P wrote the genealogies of the kings and nobles of Hungary at the request of his friend N: "Mindful therefore of your kindness, and although hindered by the many and various affairs of this wearisome world, I have undertaken to do your bidding, following the example of diverse historians, supported by the help of God's grace; seeing this as best lest it be lost to posterity forever, I considered it best that I should write to you truthfully and plainly, so that readers can know exactly what happened" (Veszprémy–Rady 2010, 5). Indeed, his work has not been forgotten, and the text was

presumably known to Anonymus' contemporaries and to the historians who followed him (Györffy 1977, 8; Veszprémy 1999, 79) – but little reliable information is available on the early reception of the Gesta.

The real afterlife of the work began with its scientific discovery: after the first edition of 1746, it became an outstanding source of Hungarian and international history and literary studies. The old Hungarian place and personal names appearing in the text are important for Hungarian linguistic history research. Translating these old Hungarian elements is not a one-off task, as the translation process is multi-stage, not only translating between languages, translators also face the difficulties of diachronic translation.[1]

In my opinion, one of the tasks of Hungarian historians and language historians is to trace the domestic and international journey of our historical sources and language data. As a first step in this task, I present the textual and translation history of the manuscript that has come down to us in the form of a copy. This paper is part of my ongoing dissertation, in which I examine the translation possibilities of old Hungarian names (see my previously published studies: Bátori 2020, 2022).

2. The manuscript

The manuscript we know, written in 13th-century letters, is the only copy of the original work that has survived. This copy was found between 1601 and 1636 by Sebastian Tengnagel, a former official and later director of the Vienna library. The work was therefore probably in the library's possession before 1636, catalogued in 1652 by Mattheus Mauchter (Jakubovich 1927, 92; Szilágyi 1946, 5–6), and remained in the possession of the Vienna library for almost 300 years. The manuscript, together with other historical relics, was finally transferred to Hungary in 1933, on the basis of the Venice Treaty of 1932 (Csapody 1978, 14). Since then, the twenty-four-leaf card index Cod. Lat. Medii Aevi 403. is kept in the Manuscript Archives of the National Széchényi Library. The first facsimile edition was published in 1892, courtesy of Fejérpataky, then in 1975 and reprinted in 1977, together with a translation by Dezső Pais. Most recently it appeared in 1996 as an appendix to Tonciulescu's Romanian translation. The task of today's digital philology is to make an online facsimile version available to Hungarian and foreign researchers alike by modern means.

3. Afterlife of the manuscript (transcripts, translations, maps)

The manuscript's afterlife began in 1746, when it was first published in print, and continues to this day. Almost three centuries have passed

1 For a detailed discussion of diachronic translation, see Steiner 2005, 24–26.

since the first publication of Anonymus' Gesta Hungarorum. Ever since, historians, linguists, and literary scholars have been concerned about the identity of Anonymus, the authenticity of the work, its characters, the places and people mentioned in it. As the literature on the gesta has grown, so has the number of publications, including Latin transcriptions, translations into Hungarian and foreign languages, and even maps to aid in interpreting the text. The map projections of Anonymus' conquest history represent a non-typical type of translation, the intermediate translation. The maps are closely linked to the textual and translation history of the work, and the cartographic representation of the work, as well as its communication in other languages, is an important part of the manuscript's afterlife.

Transcripts, translations, and maps are interconnected in a network, a translation (or even a map) can rely on one or more transcriptions, or even other translations. This, of course, also affects the way Old Hungarian elements and Latin proper names are communicated and identified.

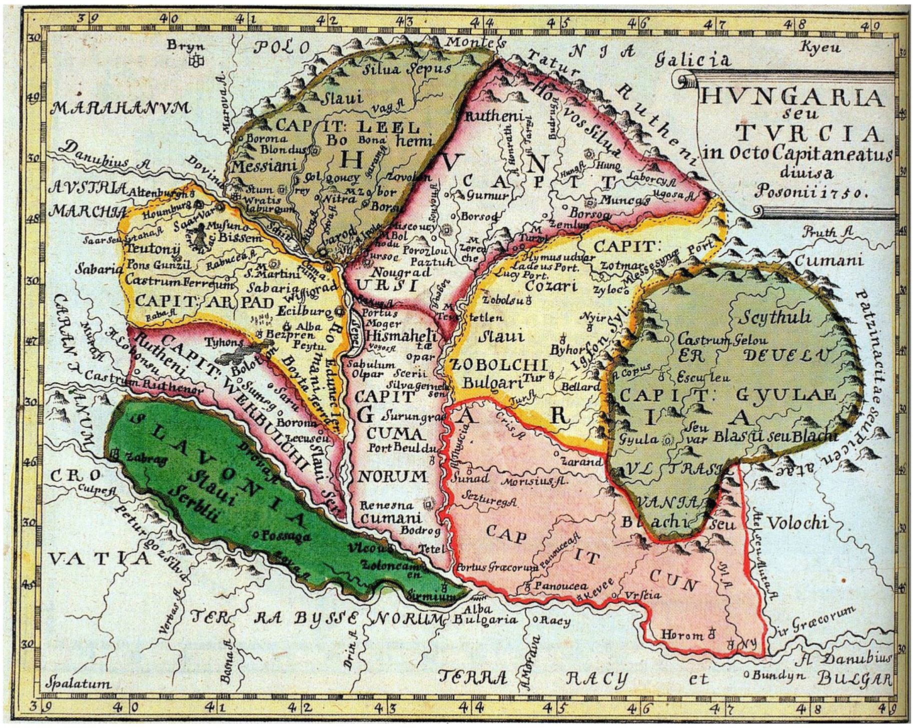
The aim of this paper is to present the transcriptions and translations in their interrelationship, and to make it easier to understand, I will divide the context of the texts into three periods. The starting dates of these periods are based on the year of publication of the editions that were in some way significant for the following period: 1. 1746–1827: in this early period, the main role is still played by the Latin editions, with a total of eight Latin transcriptions published by different publishers in addition to the three translations (two Hungarian and one French); 2. 1860–1934: Károly Szabó's translation was published in 1860, and has been the most translated of all; this period saw an increase in the demand for translations, with Slovak and Romanian translations being produced alongside the Hungarian versions; 3. 1937 to the present: this period is mainly characterised by translations, most of which are based on the 1937 transcription (SRH.).

3.1. The period 1746–1827

The afterlife of the Gesta Hungarorum begins at the dawn of the Enlightenment, in 1746. The very first transcription of the Gesta Hungarorum was published by Joannes Georgius Schwandtner in 1746 as the opening text of the large-scale collection of Hungarian historiography, *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricum*, volumes I–III. Mátyás Bél wrote a foreword to the volumes, in which he defined the publication of historical sources for the preservation of the national past as a priority task. The preface stresses the need for critical analysis and careful processing of the sources. Mátyás Bél emphasises that the transcriber of the work was anxious to provide an authentic and reliable picture of Hungarian history, and therefore took special care to copy the manuscripts accurately and correct errors. The collection contains the works of early Hungarian historians, compiled from original manuscripts and rare editions, with rich notes and commentaries to

facilitate the understanding and interpretation of historical events (Bél 1746, I–XXI). This edition was not without resonance, as evidenced by the reprints of the volume (1765: Nagyszombat,[2] 1766: Vienna) and the reprints of the text of the Gesta (1747: Kolozsvár;[3] 1747: Kassa; 1772: Kassa[4]), as well as the debates that were launched on the work (see Csapody 1978).

As a scientist in Pozsony,[5] János Tomka-Szászky was one of Mátyás Bél's students. He published the first historical atlas of Hungary in 1751 (MÉLex. *Tomka Szászky János*), in which we find the fourth historical map of Hungary (Map 1.), based on the work of Anonymus, drawn in 1750.



Map 1.

Twenty years later, in 1771, Miksa Hell produced a large-scale map of 9th-century Hungary using the chestnut, the copper engraving by Anton Schlechter of Vienna. He, like his predecessor, considered the Gesta Hungarorum to be an authentic source, and so he used the gesta as the basis for his map of old Hungary. In 1772, a new version of the map was published, the copperplate of which was also made in Vienna by Gabriel Ruderstorffer. The only difference between the two maps is the colophon: in the 1772 version, the names of the groups of leaders appear alongside the names of the leaders (Map 2.). Only later, in 1802, did the general public come across Hell's work.

2 Today: Trnava, SK.
3 Today: Cluj, Romania
4 Today: Košice, SK.
5 Today: Bratislava, SK.

Map 2.

The need for a Hungarian translation arose in the 18th century, and within a decade two were produced. In 1790, János Lethenyei was the first to translate the gesta into Hungarian, his work was published in Budapest under the title "Anonymus, the unnamed notary of King Bela, who wrote the adventures of the Seven Hungarians from Scythia under the leadership of King Almos".[6] This Hungarian translation is the first in which we find the name *Anonymus*; by not translating the common colloquial reference – *anonymi notari* – into Hungarian, Lethenyei created the proper name of the Anonymus author (cf. Csapody 1978, 18).

In 1799, István Mándy published his translation with this title: "Hungarian Sunad, or the Unnamed Notary of King Béla I".[7] The name *Sunád* in the title is Mándy's invention, identifying the P master with the character *Sunad* in the gesta. There is no connection between the two translations, as Mándy makes no reference to Lethenyei's work, a fact that was even noticed by Cornides (1802, c3). The fact that Mándy was not familiar with the work of his predecessor may have geographical reasons, since this second translation was made in Debrecen.

In addition to the two Hungarian translations, a French translation was also produced in the same decade. In 1796, Jean Potocki, a Polish-born scholar who wrote in French, translated the text into French. His work was completed up to chapter 52 of the Gesta, and

6 „Anonymus, az az Bela királynak nevetlen iródeákja Hétmagyaroknak Szittyából Almos hertzeg vezérlése- alatt lött ki-jövetelöket meg-írta" (Lethenyei 1790).

7 „Magyar Sunád, avagy I. Béla királynak nevetlen író-deákja" (Mándy 1799).

the translation was finished by Marc Swajczer during the digitisation process, preserving Potocki's footnotes to the text. The text is available on the website L'antiquité grecque et latine du moyen âge [Greek and Latin Antiquity of the Middle Ages] (http://remacle.org/bloodwolf/historiens/anonyme/bela.htm), along with the Latin transcription, which also contains several historical source texts. The website does not provide any information on the circumstances, reasons or purpose of the translation, nor on the work on which the digitisation is based.

Stephan Ladislaus Endlicher's 1827 transcription of the map, published in Vienna, is closely connected with this period, as he relied on the translations of Lethenyei and Mándy, as well as on Hell's map. In the preface, he expresses his opinion that the works of authors who have recorded the events of the Hungarian nation from the very beginning must be protected from oblivion. Therefore, he publishes the work cleaned of errors, thus contributing to the memory of the Hungarian people (Endlicher 1826: V). Not everyone thinks so, and Marczali (1880, 65) describes Endlicher's transcription as very flawed. Endlicher attached to his transcription an index of names of persons and places (1826, 224-272), in which he indicates the equivalents of the names that appeared in the previous Hungarian translations, sometimes also the variants of the names on the map of Miksa Hell (1772), e.g. *Emesu* (Emesö Leth. Emezsát Mand. filia Eunedubeliani, mater Almi ducis.); *Gelou* (Gelö Leth. Gyalu Mand.); *Sunad* (Tsanád Leth. Mand.); *Curzan castrum* (Csörsz Leth. Mand.); *Humusouer, fluvius* (Hó-mosó-ér Mand. Krasna fluv. Comit Szabolcs et Szathmar? Mappa Helli); *Tekereu fluvius* (Black Girth, Mappa Helli), *Zotmar* (Szathmar) *castrum* etc. At the end of the publication, we find Endlicher's own map on a folded sheet, the etching of which was made by Anton Woraček (Map 3).

Map 3.

3.2. The period 1860–1934

During this period, the central location of the publications changes, the role of Vienna is slowly taken over by Budapest, and the transcriptions and Hungarian translations are mostly published in Budapest. In 1860, Károly Szabó published in Budapest his translation of King Béla's anonymous notary's book on the deeds of the Hungarians, which was considered by his contemporaries to be superior to its predecessors (Marczali 1880, 65). This translation has been reprinted and revised several times (1892, 1897, 1898); reprint editions were also published after the fourth and fifth Hungarian translations (1993, 2005, 2019, 2020) – most of the translations were published in Budapest, with the exception of the Kecskemét reprint of 2005. The late popularity of this translation in the 20th and 21st centuries can perhaps be explained by the archaic reading experience provided by the preservation of Old Hungarian proper names. In this translation, the sporadic names appear with a largely preserved (*Olpar, Oundu, Ethe, Tulsuoa*, etc.) or only partially modernised orthography *(Álmus, Zerensz, áldamás*, etc.); in later Hungarian translations, we find a completely modernised orthography (*Álmos, Szerencs, áldomás* stb.)

The Gesta Hungarorum is an important work for Slovak historiography as well, in 1877, as the opening text of the second volume of Franko V. Sasinek's "Slovak chronicle for history, topography, archaeology and ethnography".[8] Sasinek considers the way in which Anonymus speaks of the ancestors of the Slovaks to be undignified, and therefore does not spare any effort to express his negative feelings against the Hungarians: "The Hungarian heroic imagination has indeed raised the triumphal prestige of Anonymus to the highest level, but surely only to fall from this greater height and with this greater glee into the dust, like the Samaritan sorcerer of old. But it is not only in the interests of historical truth that Anonymus' fallacies can be undermined, but also in the interests of our Slovak national honour and our national right in Hungary; for Anonymus casts nothing but aspersions on our forefathers and heaps the yoke of slavery on the necks of the Slovaks"[9] (1877, 2). The place of publication of the work is not specified.

In 1883 another transcription was made by Matthias Floranius. This edition was published in Leipzig and is now available on Google Books, as it has been digitised by Harvard University Library. It can be assumed that the place of publication and the activities of the Harvard library have to do with the fact that, in recent years, it has been

8 "Slovenský letopis pre historiu, topografiu, archeologiu a ethongrafiu" (Sasinek 1877).

9 "Madarská hrodonárodina fantasia povýšila sice domelý vítazný Anonyma už až na najvyšší stupeň, ale jiste len preto, aby z tým vätčej výšky a s tým väčším posmechom padol do prachu, jako nekdy čarodejník samaritanský. No nielen v zaujme historickej pravdý leži plodkopat bludy Anonyma, lež i v zaujme našej slovenskej národnej cti a nášho národnieho práva v Uhorsku; lebo Anonym len kydá hanu na otcov našich a vnuecuje otrocké jarmo na šije Slovákov."

reprinted by several publishers specialising in reprints. The colophon of these publications is incomplete, and the place of publication can only be inferred from the publisher's location: in 2010, Nabu Press, South Carolina, and in 2018 and 2024, Forgotten Books, London. According to the website descriptions, Florianus' work has also been published in Estonian: 2012 by Ulan Press; 2014 by Nabu Press, and 2022 by Legare Street Press. It can be assumed that the Estonian language is an error, as there is no trace of a possible Estonian translation in the Estonian library database.

In 1892, two transcriptions of diametrically opposed fates were made: that of Henrik Marczali, whose work was ultimately not published, and that of László Fejérpataky, whose work reached a very wide audience and formed the basis of several later translations – both made in Budapest. László Fejérpataki is the first to publish a copy of the manuscript in the publication of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the transcript of which appears as an appendix to the publication. Although Fejérpataky acknowledges the merits of Anonymus's previously published transcriptions (in the introduction he makes no reference to the first transcription [Schwandtner 1746] or to the translations), he feels that the need for a more careful edition of the text makes it necessary to publish a new transcription: the editions are adequate, the gaps in the publications are perfectly filled. The purpose of the edition is not only to give a faithful text of the only manuscript, but also to give practical instructions for reading old manuscripts (Fejérpataky 1892, 3), which is supported by the inclusion of a full facsimile of the gesta. Fejérpataky's transcription differs from its predecessors in that it dissolves the abbreviations, while at the same time it is confident that it will be of use to anyone who wishes to become acquainted with an essential part of old writing (paleographia), the solution of the word abbreviations, in a practical way. He further indicates that, the spelling is the spelling of the manuscript; it differs from it only in this respect, and then, too, for the sake of clarity and intelligibility, that proper names are used in capital letters, regardless of the fluctuations of the manuscript, and that punctuation, though roughly adhering to the original, is given according to sense. He also reproduces the errors of the manuscript, correcting here and there – of course, taking note of them in the notes – simple pen errors (Fejérpataky 1892, 3-4). The second edition of Károly Szabó's translation, supplemented by corrections by László Fejérpataky, was published as an appendix to this publication.

In Volume XII of the 1896 *Pallas Encyclopaedia*, the fourth map (Map 4.) designed by Sándor Márki, based on the work of Anonymus, is appended to the glossary article on Hungary, specifically at the end of the conquest. In this map, Anonymus' names appear in a modernised Hungarian form: *Hungvár, Tröcsön, Almás*, etc. In addition to the names in the gesta, other names also appear, as this is not specifically an Anonymus map: *Brno, Krakow, Napoca, Sarmisegetusa*, etc.

Map 4.

At the end of the 19th century, after the French and then the Slovak translations, another foreign language translation appeared, Mihai Bésán's Romanian translation, based on Fejérpataky's 1892 transcription. The translation was published in three parts in 1899 by Mihai Bésán in the journal *Transilvania*, and later that year in a small volume (Bésán 1899b). The Latin transcription is published in parallel with the Romanian text. This parallel publication adds to the value of the publication (Bésán 1899a, 14). At the end of the volume, we find the first map (Map 5.) by a Romanian translator/researcher: "Map of ancient Hungary composed by Mihail Bésán based on the data of the Anonymus Notary Chronicle of King Bela".[10] On this map, the names are mostly in old Hungarian, and where a proper name has a Romanian equivalent, it appears in Romanian.

10 "Carta Ungariei veche compusă de Michail Bésán după datele cronicei notarului Anonim al regelui Bela" (Bésán 1899b).

Map 5.

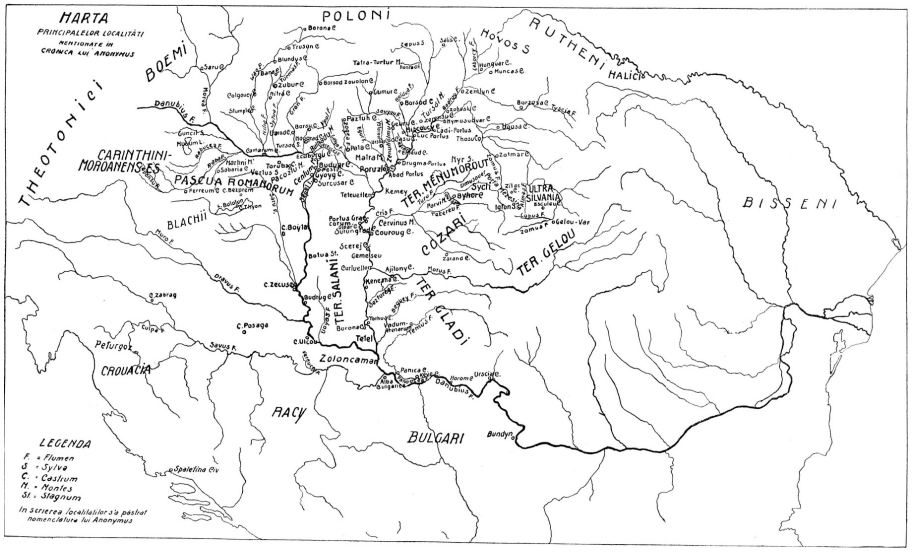
Fejérpataky was probably not aware of the text accompanying the Romanian translation of 1899. In the preface to his transcription of the collection of texts entitled *The Fountainheads of the Hungarian Conquest*, published in 1900, he lists the previous editions. Still, the 1899 reprint in the *Transilvania* journal does not appear. By his reckoning, his work is the thirteenth edition (Fejérpataky 1900, 386), and the fourteenth if the 1899 publication is taken into account. The 1900 transcription is annotated more extensively than the previous one, and Györffy (1995, 212–213) classifies the transcriptions in a bibliography of one of his studies, counting the later ones, as the best edition.

This transcription was the basis for the impressive Hungarian translation by Dezső Pais, published in Budapest in 1926. This new translation is completely opposed not only to Szabó's, but also to the methods of the early predecessors, Lethenyei and Mándy's. This method is also reflected in Pais's map supplement (Map 6.), in which, also to help the reader to find his way around, place names that do not appear in the text of the gesta are distinguished by a bracket: *Zala, Szolnok, Várad, Berettyó, Kolozsvár, Gyulafehérvár*, etc. The aim of the work is thus to make the text more reader-friendly. Linguistic accuracy is not neglected either, and the notes' explanations of proper names also provide the reader with original variants of names.

Map 6.

In 1932, László Juhász launched the *Bibliotheca Scriptorum Medii Recentisque Aevorum* series, in which he publishes critical editions of unpublished or difficult-to-access 12th-17th-century writings. Between 1930 and 1946, 36 booklets were published in the series, the third of which contains a transcription of the Gesta Hungarorum. Surprisingly, this transcription was a success in Romania: the second Romanian translation (Popa-Lisseanu 1934), which has survived four editions, is accompanied by a transcription by Juhász.

Popa-Lisseanu is also responsible for the fifteen-volume collection of texts entitled *Sources of Romanian History* (*Izvoarele Istoriei Române / Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanorum*), published in Bucharest between 1934 and 1939. The fact that the text of Anonymus occupies the first place in the collection says a lot about the importance of the Gesta in Romanian historiography; among the fifteen volumes in Romanian, we also find the *Chronicle of Kézai*, the *Pictorial Chronicle*, the *Carmen miserabile* of Canon Rogerius, and the account of *Richardus' voyage to Magna Hungaria*. In parallel with the Romanian translation of the Gesta, he published a transcription by Juhász, while also using the facsimile by Fejérpataky (1900) and notes by Dezső Pais (1926) (Popa-Lisseanu 1934, 9). Four new editions of his translation (although a third Romanian translation was published in 1996) have appeared: in 2000, 2010, 2018 and 2020. For his translation, he has also produced a map showing both the preserved and modified forms of Anonymus's proper names, with the outline of Greater Romania (Map 7.).



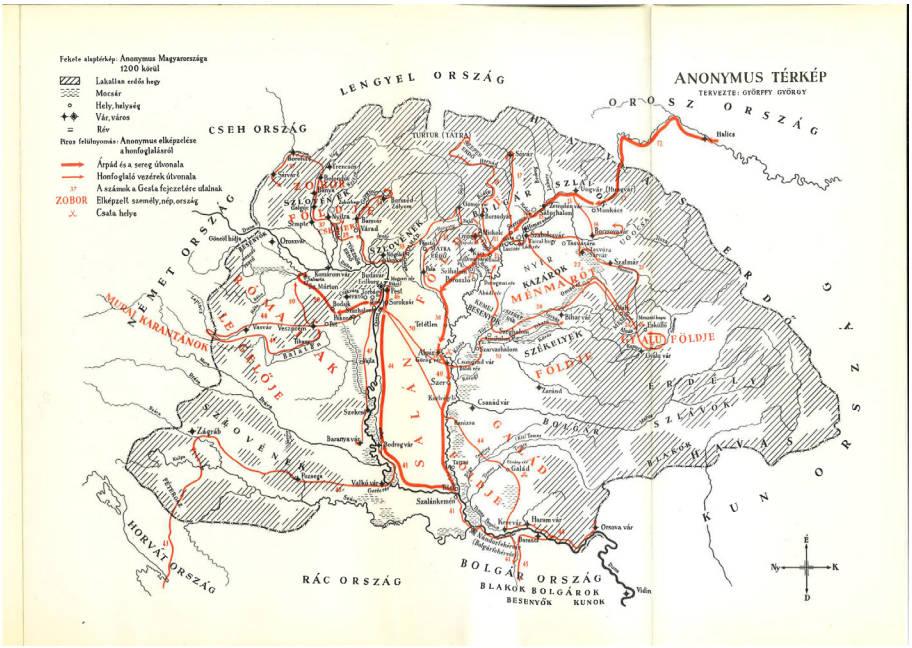
Map 7.

3.3. From 1937 to the present

The last critical transcription was published in 1937, in the *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum* (SRH.) series edited by Szentpétery, Jakubovich and Pais. In the words of Fehértói (1993, 321), the work of Anonymus "met with a fate of destiny".[11] Emil Jakubovich, the historian and director of the Széchényi Library, who had undertaken the publication, died in 1935, and the critical editing of the text was completed by Dezső Pais. Subsequent translations into Hungarian and foreign languages are based on a version of this transcript; where the Latin work is published, this transcript, or possibly a supplemented version of this transcript, appears in their work. This, and the Hungarian-related publications, are usually published in Budapest; during this period, there is a strong geographical expansion, as the work is read in an increasing number of European languages.

A revised version of Dezső Pais's early translation was published in 1975, accompanied by an impressive, high-quality facsimile edition, and in 1977. The introductory essay and notes were written by György Györffy; the fold-out map (Map 8.) is also by György Györffy. Only Anonymus's place names and generic names are shown on this map. This translation was later replaced in Madas' collection of texts (1992). Two reprints without facsimiles were published in the 2000s (2003; 2023). Since 2004, this translation has been easily accessible to all in the Hungarian Electronic Library; however, the valuable notes and the map are missing from this digitised version.

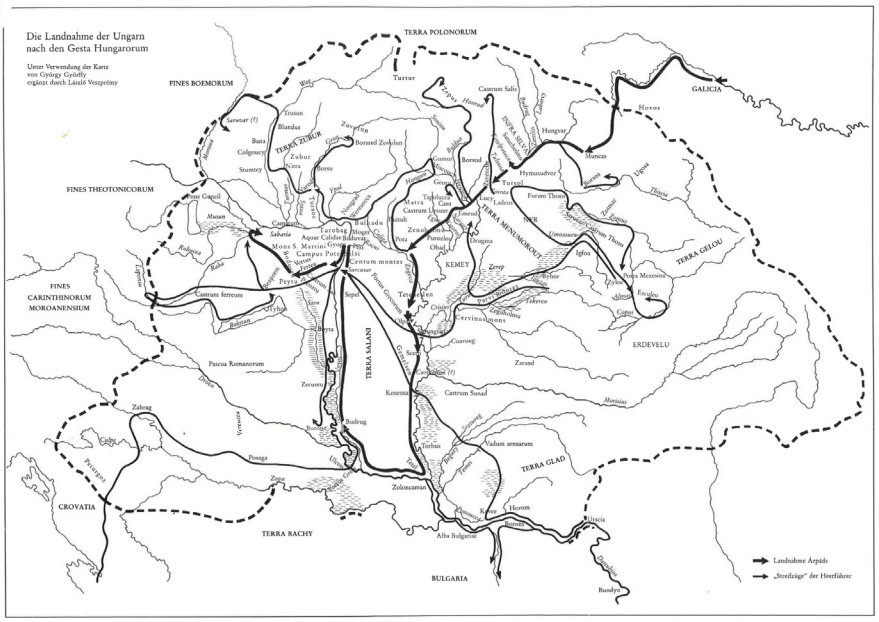
11 "Sajnos, (…) Anonymus kiadása mostoha sorsra jutott, mert a kiadásra vállalkozó kiváló történész, Jakubovich Emil, a Széchényi Könyvtár igazgatója 1935-ben meghalt" (Fehértói 1993, 321).



Map 8.

In 1988, Richard Pražak, an eminent hungarologist of the former Czechoslovakia (Csanda 1982: 27), edited the anthology *Legendy a kroniky Koruny uherské* (*Legends and Chronicles of the Hungarian Crown*), published in Prague, in which he publishes, together with other medieval texts, Anonymus' Gesta Hungarorum, in a Czech translation by Dagmar Bartoňková. The anthology is based on the SRH. (1937), with accompanying studies of the works by Pražak, the most extensive of which is the introductory essay to the Gesta. He has researched the Hungarian literature and describes the Czech and Slovak literature on gesta. He is familiar with the Slovak translation of Sasinek (1877) and agrees with him in classifying the gesta as a novel (Niederhauser 1991, 163).

Since the 1990s, the Gesta has been read in more and more foreign languages. In 1991, Veszprémy and Silagi published their first German translation in Sigmaringen, with the aim of making this unique text available to scholars and the interested general public (1991, VIII). In addition to the German text, a parallel publication is the 1937 transcription by Jakubovich, with the page numbers of the SRH. on the page edges for clarity. The Old Hungarian collocations are in modernized Hungarian forms in the text. An important appendix to the book is the map showing the place names in their original form (Map 9.). The map also shows the direction of the occupation. In the notes to this edition, the family relationships of the various characters are illustrated in a unique, albeit incomplete, way (1991, 146-147). A future edition should not only map the locations but also depict the relationships of the characters.



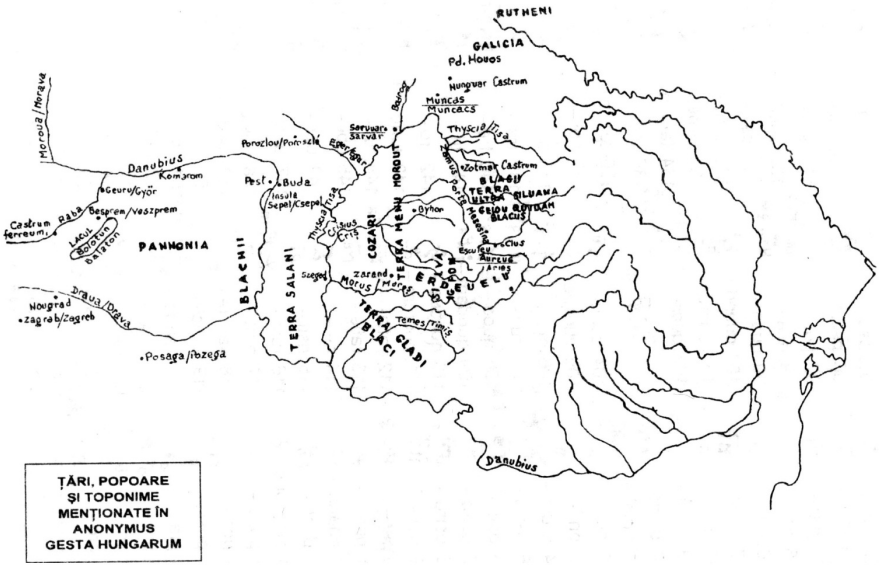
Map 9.

The latest Hungarian translation was made by the historian László Veszprémy, the first version of which was published in 1995 in Szeged, in the volume entitled *The Written Sources of the Age of the Conquest*, edited by Gyula Kristó. A corrected version of the book, published in Budapest, has been in circulation since 1999, and a reprint was produced in 2004. The reason for this new translation is not explicitly stated, nor is there any reference to an evaluation of earlier translations into Hungarian. The copious notes, the short studies accompanying the text, and the bibliographical guide are clearly a valuable addition. In this edition, following the usage of the *Early Hungarian Historical Lexicon* (KMTLex.), proper names are presented in their modern Hungarian form. Accordingly, for the first time in the history of Hungarian translations, place-names which are not in the territory of present-day Hungary are identified in notes with their present-day official linguistic equivalents (see e.g. Veszprémy 1999, 62): "Zólyom, today a forest panchayat, then a county, organised around Zvolen (Slovakia)"[12] (KMTLex. *Zólyom*).

In 1996, the Romanian Paul Lazar Tonciulescu's translation is published in Bucharest. Tonciulescu saw the need for a new translation (i.e. the third Romanian) because, in his opinion, the translators of the previous Romanian editions, Mihail Bésán and Gheorghe Popa-Lisseanu, had based their translations on Hungarian rather than Latin; he also considers it a mistake that the notes of the previous Romanian translations were based on Hungarian literature (1966, 5). Tonciulescu does not specify which edition of the facsimile he based his translation on (presumably Fejérpataky 1892 or Pais 1975/1977), but he claims to

12 „Zólyom, ma Zvolen (Szlovákia) körül szerveződött erdőispánság, majd vármegye" (KMTLex. Zólyom).

be the only one in Romania to have this document, which he hereby makes available to the Romanian reading public. He has also prepared a map for his work entitled "Countries, peoples and place names mentioned in Anonymus Gesta Hungarorum". [13] The map is far from faithful to the title, with several places missing, some of them with incorrect localisation (e.g. *Poroszló*), and places not mentioned in the gesta: *Szeged, Cluj, Arieș*. The water network shown on map R3, as on map R2, reminds the reader of Greater Romania (Map 10).



Map 10.

In the first decade of the twenties, six new foreign language translations appeared. In 2000, Vincent Múcska's work was published. This Slovak publication is not available in Hungarian libraries, but there are two Hungarian-language reviews of the work: Veszprémy (2001) and Tóth (2008, 173–176). The Slovak text is accompanied by a Latin transcription, which can be traced back to the 1937 SRH., via the transcription of the German translation volume (Veszprémy–Silagi 1991). The inside cover is impressively decorated with a map by Hell (Map 2.). This is the second time in the history of the translation of the Gesta that a translator has not known his predecessor's work (i.e. Mándy did not know Lethenyei's translation); the book's publisher, Pavel Dvořak, says: "I do not understand how it is possible that this book has not yet been published in Slovak. I don't believe that there is anyone who is not interested in the history of their own nation"[14] (quoted in Tóth 2008, 173). As Tóth explains, the spelling of place

13 "Țări, popoare și toponime menționate în Anonymus Gesta Hungarorum" (Tonciulescu 1996).

14 „Nem értem, hogyan lehetséges, hogy ez a könyv még nem jelent meg szlovákul. Nem hiszem, hogy lennének olyan könnyelmű emberek, akiket nem érdekelne saját nemzetük történelme" (quoted in Tóth 2008, 173).

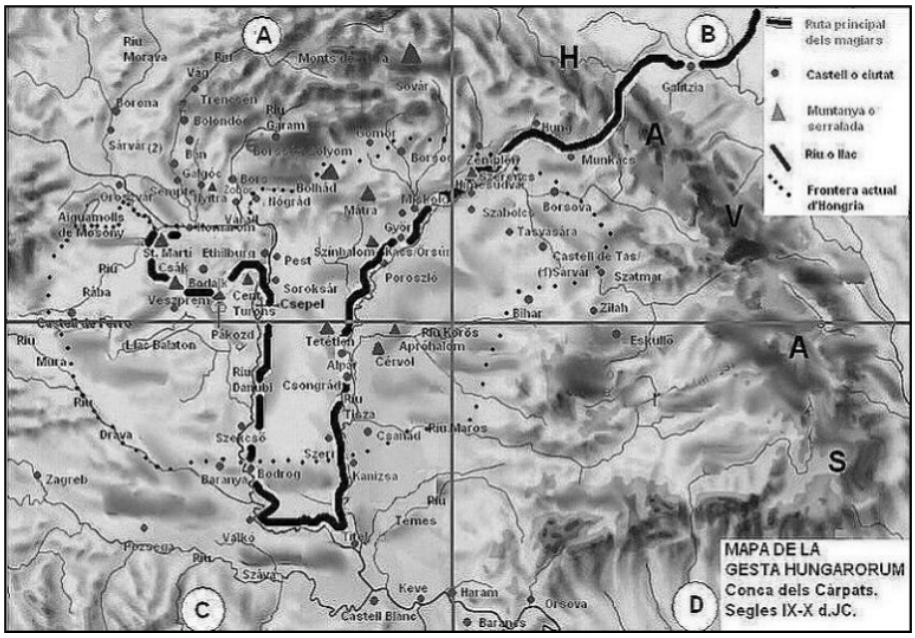
names in Slovak translations is based on the following principle: where possible, foreign names are transcribed into Slovak, and for other names the Latin-based spelling is taken into account (Tóth 2008: 173). Tóth points out the uncertainty of Slovak historiography in the context of the Gesta translation: Is the history of Hungary their own or foreign? (Tóth 2008, 173). It is also telling that, contrary to the principle set out, the communication of Slovak name variation is not fully fulfilled, as the guiding principle of the name translator seems to be how well known the name of the settlement is among the target audience, rather than sticking to the historical names. In this way, the Slovak reader does not need to bother himself with identifying the old Slovak name, he will have the present official form, possibly the Slovak pronunciation, ready (Tóth 2008, 174–175). This is how it can happen that some settlement names, although they have Slovak equivalents, are given in Hungarian form, so that, for example, the Slovak forms *Pastúchov, Jáger,* and *Budínsky hrad*, which are otherwise used by the Slovak-speaking population in Hungary, are replaced by the Hungarian versions *Pásztó, Eger,* and *Budavár*. We must agree with Tóth that a name index could solve the problems of translation, but the question of the ideal form of place names in the text remains open. Veszprémy (2001, 267) considers the translation of names to be a real difficulty, but his opinion is that the translator managed to find an acceptable middle way between the present-day Slovak, the Slovak-sounding Hungarian, and the Hungarian forms left in their original spelling (Veszprémy 2001, 268). Unfortunately, Veszprémy does not support his position with examples, so the question is what should be understood by an acceptable middle way. It is obvious that there is a scalarity between Slovak and Hungarian place-name variants. Nevertheless, the distinction between these "Slovak", "Slovak-sounding Hungarian" and "Hungarian" names is by no means an easy task, and as already alluded to in Tóth (2008), it is not only the presence or absence of the Slovak variant that influences the translation of the name, but also the presumed knowledge of the target readership that is a decisive factor. A careful study of Slovak translations of the gesta is at least as important as that of Romanian publications. An analysis of the ways in which proper nouns are translated would not only be useful for the translation of names in general, but would also shed light on Slovak historical thinking and historiography. According to Veszprémy (2008), this source text will serve as a stimulus for Slovak source research, as Múcska is well-informed and makes critical use of source material available on the international scene. While the translator is familiar with Madgearu's (2001) *Românii în opera notarului anonim*, with an English introduction (also available in English since 2005: *The Romanians in the Anonymus's Gesta Hungarorum*), the Hungarian historical bibliography does not appear in the publication. The simple explanation is that Hungarian literature is not present on the international scene. Since then, progress

has been made with the translation by Veszprémy and Rady (2010) and the introductory study, although the real task of producing and internationally presenting a monograph on Anonymus is still to be done.

2005 is a significant date in the history of the text, as it is the year in which the Latin version of the text became available on Wikipedia. The site does not make it clear which version of the text is the digital one, nor are there any notes accompanying the text. The transcription of the gesta was uploaded by a user named Bogdan, whose Romanian nationality is indicated by the fact that the other text he uploaded is Dimitrie Cantemir's *Descriptio Moldaviae*.

Since 2006, the Master's work has been available in Polish, translated by Ryszard Grzesik, who completed his postgraduate studies at CEU. In his review of this work, Veszprémy (2009) notes that the translator has written an introduction to the translation based on up-to-date literature and is familiar with both Hungarian and German literature.

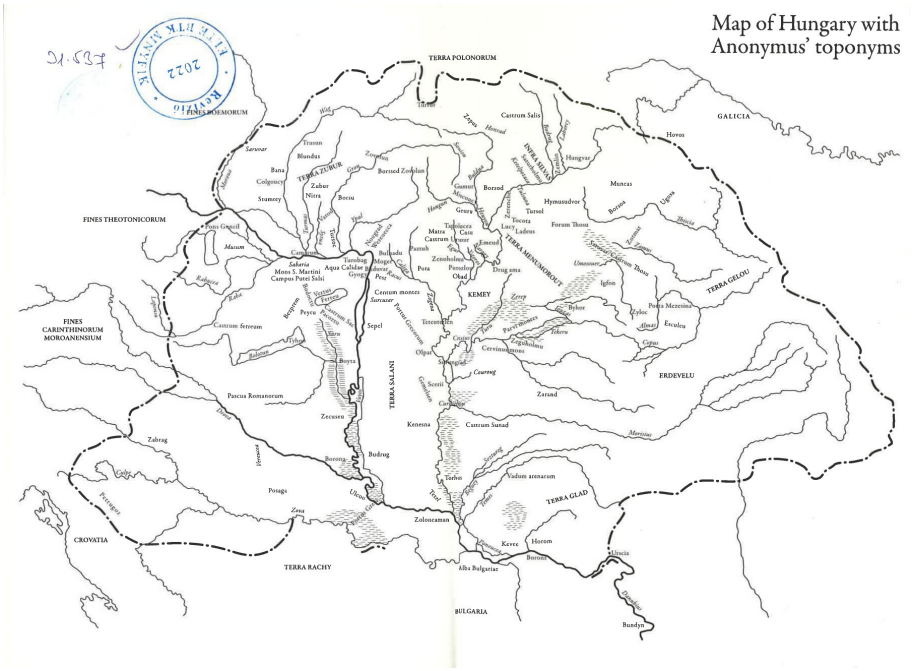
The Catalan translation of Fernàndez-Komlósi plays a special role in the history of the translation of the gesta, as there is no objective reason for the work, which was probably done out of pleasure. The previous translations into foreign languages were typically done to place the work in the scientific context of the country concerned, or perhaps because of some historical relevance. Although the introductory text of this work mentions that the adventurous Hungarians also reached Catalonia (Fernàndez-Komlósi 2008, 5), there is no indication that this might have been the reason for the translation. The translation is available online in the Hungarian Electronic Library of the Hungarian National Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (https://mek.oszk.hu/05800/05885/05885.pdf). As an annex to this translation, we can see a new map of Anonymus (Map 11.), on which the localities are indicated in a non-exhaustive manner. The place names appear in their modernised Hungarian form (*Tisza, Mátra, Apróhalom*, etc.) and the name complements in Catalan (e.g. *Riu Maros, Castello de Tas).*



Map 11.

It seems that we should also look eastwards when trying to map the international route of the gesta. Indeed, a Russian translation of the gesta is being produced. The first 18 chapters of the gesta have been translated by Юрасов (2007, 2013) and published in *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* with extensive annotations, but the sequel is still awaited.

The 2000s slowly brought the moment when the Gesta Hungarorum was introduced in the lingua franca of today's scientific life, i.e. in English. Two English translations were produced in quick succession: the first in 2009 by Rady, and the second in 2010 by Rady and Veszprémy. The first English translation, like the Russian one, was published in a journal, the *London Slavonic East European Review*. The introduction (Rady 2009, 681-685) refers to the Romanian and German translations published so far, highlights the role of the work in Romanian historiography, and gives a brief general overview of the gesta. In 2010, Rady, in collaboration with Veszprémy, republished his English translation in the *CEU Central European Medieval Texts* series (Budapest–New York), accompanied by a transcription of SRH. (1937), revised by Veszprémy. This second English translation is accompanied by a more extensive and up-to-date introduction and notes, an index of names is appended to the text, and the twelfth map of our country (Map 12.) appears on the inside cover. In this publication, the English text is accompanied by a transcription of SRH. (1937), as revised by Veszprémy.



Map 12.

The most recent is Alexander Bálly's publication in German from Norderstedt (2022). The names are given in a variety of ways, with both old and modernised Hungarian forms appearing in the text. Bálly also has his own website. He is of half-Hungarian origin, and turns out to be a passionate book enthusiast, writing science fiction and fantasy books. His translation of the Gesta Hungarorum does not fit in with the interests described on the website, and there is no indication of any historian's qualifications. It was this particular context that prompted me to contact the translator and ask him about his motivation. His ready reply reveals that he was fascinated by the story of Anonymus, that he translated the work as a hobby, and that it should be seen as a literary translation rather than a scholarly work. The translators's stated objective in composing this work is to ensure the preservation of the Magister's oeuvre for the twenty-first century, and to provide Germans of Hungarian descent with an informed appreciation of this masterpiece. When he was working on the translation, it soon became clear to him that he would need to annotate the work, and he used only internet sources. This is the reason why the earlier German translation (Veszprémy–Silaghi 1991) escaped his attention. This is therefore the third time in the history of the translation of the Gesta that a translator has been unaware of the work of his predecessor (i.e., Mándy did not know the translation of Lethenyei; Múcska did not know the translation of Sasinek). This work, despite its specific characteristics, fits organically into the history of the translation of the Gesta.

To summarise these chapters, let's look at the afterlife of the Gesta in numbers. A copy of our gesta has been published a total of four times by three researchers (Fejérpataky 1892; Pais 1975, 1977; Tonciulescu 1996).

Seven transcriptions of the text have been made, resulting in a total of 28 publications (Schwandtner 1746, 1747a, 1747b, 1765, 1766, 1772; Endlicher 1827, 1849; Florianus 1883, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022, 2024; Fejérpataky 1892, 1899, 1900, 2000; Marczali 1892 [not in circulation]; Juhász 1932, 1934, 2001, 2010, 2018, 2020, 2022; Jakubovich 1937, 1991, 2010). Lethenyei 1790; Mándy 1790; Szabó 1860, 1892, 1897, 1898, 1993, 2005, 2019, 2020; Pais 1926, 1975, 1977, 2003, 2023; Veszprémy 1995, 1999, 2005; one French (Potocki-Swajczer 1796/n.d.); two Slovak (Sasinek 1877, Múcska 2000); three Romanian (Bésán 1899; Popa–Lisseanu 1934, 2001, 2010, 2018, 2020; Tonciulescu 1996); one Czech (Bartonková 1988); two German (Silaghi 1991; Bálly 2022); one Polish (Grzesik 2006); one semi-finished Russian (Юрасов 2007–2013); one Catalan (Fernandez-Komlósi 2008); and finally two English (Rady 2009; Veszprémy-Rady 2010). These translations have appeared in a total of 36 different publications. In total, 11 maps were produced independently of, or as part of, the Gestalt-covered text editions.

Together with the facsimile editions, transcriptions, translations, maps and literary adaptations of the Gesta Hungarorum, there are 80 publications published in different cities of Europe: Vienna (1746, 1766; 1771, 1772; 1827); Košice (1747, 1772); Cluj (1765); Bratislava (1750); Budapest (1790; 1860, 1892, 1897, 1898, 1993, 2005, 2019, 200; 1892; 1896; 1900; 1926; 1932; 1937; 1975, 1977, 2003, 2023; 1999, 2004); Debrecen (1799); Kecskemét (2005); Leipzig (1883); Cracow (2006); Sibiu (1899a; 1899b); Bucharest (1934, 2001, 2010, 2018, 2020; 1996) Budmerice (2000); Prague (1988); Sigmaringen (1991); Szeged (1995); St. Petersburg (2007–2013); London (2009; 2018, 2024); Norderstedt (2022). I have also included a map to illustrate the European presence of the Gesta Hungarorum family of publications.[15] The places of publication of the French (Potocki-Shwajczer 1796), Slovak (Sasinek 1877), and Catalan (Fernandez–Komlósi 2008) translations have not yet been identified, so I will assume the respective capitals to be Paris, Bratislava, and Barcelona.

4. The future of the Gesta Hungarorum

The wide-ranging textual and translation history of the Gesta clearly demonstrates that there is a need for newer and newer texts and translations to meet the needs of readers and researchers, and we can be sure that the German translation of the Gesta by Bálly (2022) will not be the end of the post-evolutionary life of the Gesta. As long as there is a need for historical knowledge, newer and newer texts will appear. It is important to see, however, that we must be open to change and that the contemporary communication of texts implies the advancement of scholarship. Given the international dimension of the gesta, there is no

15 An enlargeable version of the map is available at https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1exC70h9WH6f5ob-P3eZheC5LLUmDks8&usp=sharing.

question that future work on it must be carried out on a platform that can serve as a basis for national and international research, using the tools of digital humanities: "Digital humanities can be a contemporary embodiment of scholarly activity aimed at collecting, organizing and communicating world knowledge, and can be a search for a balance between qualitative and quantitative inquiry"[16] (Maróty 2020). The time has come for the history of language to make use of the alternative offered by digital humanities, the first step of which is the digital editing of our language data; the second step is the assignment of revised, updated, systematised knowledge about it as meta-text.

Knowing the history of our texts and translations, it is clear that there is still work to be done in the field of digitisation and the organisation of the text and translation versions available in the digital space. Most of texts available on the Internet are in pdf format; only Pais (1975) is available in HTML format – the potential of the format remains unused, with hyperlinks appearing only in the chapter headings of the content and only allowing to jump to the individual chapter titles. However, the Library does have a digital humanities research group, which is working on the digital representation of literary texts, one of their major projects is the critical transcription of the correspondence of the writer József Kiss, which is available to anyone on their website (W1.). On the right side of the interface is a photograph of the letter, on the left side the transcript; by placing the cursor on a line of the facsimile, the line of the transcript becomes the highlighted line; to each word or text fragment, so-called tags can be assigned, which can be used to mark different properties, and of course meta texts can be added.

This type of transcription of our gesta would certainly open up new directions and new possibilities in research, serving the advancement of science. The platform could, of course, also make the entire family of texts of the Gesta available and searchable.

In addition to presenting the text, it will also be necessary to summarise the relevant knowledge. As a meta-text, article-like explanations can be added to each vocabulary or proper noun. In connection with proper names, Valéria Tóth raises the idea of creating an encyclopaedia of Anonymus. The dictionaries she presents would be divided into three sections: 1. philological information; 2. knowledge that can be gleaned from the text of the gesta; 3. proper noun system links, linguistic-historical explanations (Tóth 2023, 266-267). In my opinion, the publication of an encyclopaedia of this type in the usual way would also be an important scholarly achievement; at the same time, the combination of encyclopaedic content with interactive textual communication would certainly represent a powerful step forward in the history of research on the Gesta.

16 „A digitalis bölcsészet lehet a világtudás összegyűjtésére, rendezésére és közreadására irányuló tudós tevékenység kortárs testet öltése, és lehet egyensúlykeresés a kvalitatív és a kvantitatív vizsgálódások között" (Maróty 2020).

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Hungarian Rhythm, Humanist Poetry

Encounter of Ancient Ode Poetry and Antitrinitarian Biblical Criticism in the Psalm Translation of Miklós Bogáti Fazakas

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ABSTRACT

Psalterium Davidis by Miklós Bogáti Fazakas is the first complete rhymed Hungarian translation of the Book of Psalms. It has been studied mainly from the aspect of congregational singing and antitrinitarian theology. Although its melodies and metres are also related to the popular register of vernacular poetry, the metrical variety makes it akin to humanist psalm translations. The paper demonstrates this humanist layer through the translation of Psalm 66 that paraphrases George Buchanan's humanist Latin translation. Buchanan shaped the sacred text using the metres and language of secular ode poetry. Comparative and metrical analysis shows that Bogáti kept the humanist allusions (in a very subtle form) adopting the metre, thus the humanist and popular layers of the text enter into dialogue. Bogáti turned the secularised poetic imagery back into religious context, and used it for a historical interpretation of the psalm, reinforcing the antitrinitarian position of his own Hungarian-speaking audience.

Keywords: Miklós Bogáti Fazakas (1548–1592?), George Buchanan (1506–1582), Book of Psalms, humanism, 16th-century Hungarian literature, Transylvanian antitrinitarianism

The encounter with the Word became a focal point of Reformation theology. The proclamation of the Word and its discerning reception gave rise to various literary genres, making verse translations of the psalms one of the most influential text types of the 16th century. By the end of the century, numerous Latin and vernacular verse translations of the Psalms had appeared in Europe. The Latin translations offered a synthesis of psalm poetry and the humanist ode. The texts of the Book of Psalms had been translated into Latin in the higher stylistic idioms and with the greatest possible metrical variety. Such an encyclopaedic

use of verse forms resulted in the natural manifestation of the humanist ideal of *varietas*. Thus, the psalms were incorporated into the humanist corpus of texts, and could now engage in rivalry with the works of the ancient poetic canon in terms of both formal variety and poetic sophistication (Posta 2022, 39–75).

Texts written in the vernacular were included in congregational hymn-books and other publications with a popular devotional purpose (the best known 16th-century examples in Hungarian being the Psalm paraphrases of Gergely Szegedi, Mihály Sztárai, and Máté Skarica). Singing the Psalms became a part of daily life and thus had a great influence on the development of national literatures. And while the primary concern in translations for a liturgical use was that they are dogmatically accurate and easy to sing, even vernacular translations were shaped by other factors as well. For most authors, a Protestant and a humanist literary agenda reinforced each other (Imre 2005, 253; Ács–Louthan 2015, 405–406).

In Hungary, the combination of these two agendas has been primarily demonstrated in the psalm translations of Bálint Balassi and Albert Szenci Molnár. In 1607, Albert Szenci Molnár published his *Psalterium Ungaricum*, a complete translation of the Psalter in Hungarian verse, in Hernborn. Like most of his contemporaries, Szenci Molnár was unaware that in the 16th century Miklós Bogáti Fazakas had already completed a translation of the entire Psalter into Hungarian verse, so he considered his own work to be the first of its kind (Szenci Molnár 2017, fol.):(11r). The *Psalterium Ungaricum* was based on the Genevan Psalter and its tunes, but Szenci Molnár's direct source was Ambrosius Lobwasser's German translation of the Genevan Psalter (P. Vásárhelyi 2017, 27–28).

By the end of the 16th century the various editions and translations of the Genevan Psalter (or Huguenot Psalter) had spread throughout the regions of Europe committed to the Helvetic type of Reformation, and it became the foundation of congregational singing. The Genevan editions starting to appear in 1539 were initially dominated by the psalm translations of Clément Marot, a representative of the modern and sophisticated French Renaissance style, the style which served as the basis of Marot's metrical psalms. In the preface to the 1543 publication Jean Calvin argued for the use of the French type of metrical verse. As he wrote: "to carry weight and majesty suitable to the subject, and even fit to be sung in church as has been said." (MacMeeken 1872, 100) This sentence invoked the rhetorical argument that a sublime and excellent object required a high style (*genus grande*) and an extensive use of *elocution*, and psalms to or about God obviously fell into this category. On the other hand, Calvin believed that this kind of poetry was a good way to involve the congregation in the singing of the psalms. The French translation of the Psalms was continued by Théodore de Bèze, who had previously published Latin humanist poems, and later also produced Latin paraphrases of the Psalms, a printed selection of

which he dedicated to the Hungarian humanist bishop and diplomat András (Andreas) Dudith (Csomasz Tóth 1967, 51). Besides its obvious liturgical significance, this already shows the affinity between the Genevan Psalter and humanism.

Albert Szenci Molnár joined the same tradition when he composed his Hungarian texts according to the verse forms and tunes of the French psalms, which first felt unfamiliar in the context of Hungarian congregational singing, but by the end of the 17th century they had become generally used (H. Hubert 2004, 61). The first edition of Szenci Molnár's *Psalterium Ungaricum* imitated the Latin edition of the Genevan Psalter by Andreas Spethe in that the translation was dedicated to Frederick IV, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, and Maurice, Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel (P. Vásárhelyi 2017, 26–27).[1] In other words, with his translation, Szenci Molnár wanted both to give a singable psalm translation to the Hungarian Calvinist congregations and to join the international humanist community of the *res publica litteraria* (Republic of Letters).

Bálint Balassi is associated with six psalm paraphrases. His sources include Latin texts by Bèze and, in one case, a Latin paraphrase by the Scottish humanist George Buchanan. It has been previously shown that Balassi may have used the 1581 Genevan edition in which the texts of Bèze and Buchanan appeared together (Balázs 2022, 565–566; Ács–Louthan 2015, 404–405). The present study does not aim to present a comprehensive survey of the vast literature of early modern vernacular and humanist psalm translations, and the above overview was only meant to provide a taste of the most important connections that have had a significant impact in Hungary.[2]

*

In what follows, I focus on the humanist connections of the first Hungarian verse psalter, Miklós Bogáti Fazakas's *Psalterium Davidis*. Bogáti began translating the psalms around 1580 and worked on them until the end of his life (he probably died in 1592). (Bogáti Fazakas 2018, 452) *Psalterium Davidis* has been previously studied primarily from the perspective of congregational singing and antitrinitarian theology (Dán 1973; Szabó 1982; Etlinger–Szatmári 2022). It has been pointed out that Bogáti primarily relied on popular tunes and verse forms known from congregational hymn-books or historical songs, so his work was more influenced by Hungarian popular song culture than the poetry of Szenci Molnár and Balassi. Even so, *Psalterium Davidis* was never printed and was thus not a part of the public sphere, which is usually explained by critics with reasons of ecclesiastical policy. Bogáti was an antitrinitarian closely associated with the nonadorantism, a movement of unparalleled intellectual achievement (Balázs 1996), and

1 The *Dedicatio*: Szenci Molnár 2017, fol.)(1v–8r.

2 Two recent paper on the topic: Hajdu 2023; Posta 2023.

remained committed to it even after the imprisonment and death of its spiritual leader, Ferenc Dávid (Dán 1973, 151–153).[3] Thus, along with other antitrinitarian works, the *Psalterium Davidis* could not be printed either during Bogáti's lifetime or later, and his psalms survive in 17th-century manuscript copies (Szatmári 2018, 52–56; Etlinger–Szatmári 2022, 135–138). Therefore, at first glance, Bogáti's translation seems to have little in common with the programme of humanist literature. The translation's use of sources shows a scholarly claim to biblical criticism. Bogáti made use of multilingual psalter editions and biblical commentaries (for example, Agostino Giustiniani's five-language psalter edition and Sebastian Münster's Hebrew-Latin Bible: Dán 1973, 159–160; Dán 1979, 249–252; Bogáti Fazakas 2018, 452–453). He also incorporated commentaries from these sources into his interpretation.[4] In this respect, the influence of humanist criticism can be detected in his work. However, an analysis of his verse forms, tunes and language use reveals that he was indeed closer to the canon of congregational hymns, and a significant distance separates him from the higher registers of poetry.

In his historical-poetic analysis of 16th-century Hungarian poetry, Iván Horváth often spoke of *metrumszociológia* (metrosociology, or sociology of metre), referring to the phenomenon that the separation of the medial and social use of writing, and the division of genres, registers, modes of expression and strategies of writing manifested themselves in the metre of poems (Horváth 2000). According to Horváth, the world of 16th-century Hungarian metre can be divided into two, medially and socially distinct canons. The natural medium of the aristocratic register was manuscript, and the poetry that could be classified as such (the love poetry associated primarily with Bálint Balassi) followed quite different metrical conventions from the popular-official register that appeared in print, and there was hardly any contact between the two. The characteristic verse form of Balassi's poetry is a more complex, hierarchical stanzaic and lyrical composition that moves towards closure. To quote Iván Horváth, "how little of the poetry that appeared in print, not only popular but also official […] had a metrical influence on Balassi […]. The negative selection, the rejection, was mutual: among the poets of the 16th century who were verse-rich, that is, who were not only occasionally engaged in poetry, Balassi was the

3 The biography of Bogáti by Géza Szentmártoni Szabó: Bogáti Fazakas 2018, 433–470.

4 Two Hungarian prose translations of the entire Psalter had already been published before Bogáti. István Bencédi Székely's work was printed in 1548, and Gáspár Heltai's in 1560, but the influence of these prose translations had not yet been discussed in the literature. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to compare Bogáti's translation with Bencédi Székely's, as the latter also used Münster's edition.

only one whose poems were not published in his century."[5] (Horváth 2000, 14)

The antitrinitarian Miklós Bogáti Fazakas was the other "poets of the 16th-century who were verse-rich and not only occasionally engaged in poetry," but most of his poems were not published. His poetry, however, is bound precisely to the formal-popular register: his poetic oeuvre consists of paraphrases of psalms and historical songs. These genres are representative of 16th century printed poetry. Bogáti's metrical canon lacks the stanza types typical of Bálint Balassi's love poetry. His psalm translation, the *Psalterium Davidis* follows the metrical convention of the printed-popular register, a metrical ideal dominated by identical rhymes, isometric stanzas, narrative, or "non-lyrique" formulas (Szigeti 2005, 83).

This distinction was already felt by contemporaries. The preface to Albert Szenci Molnár's *Psalterium Ungaricum* contains a short poetic commentary on 16th-century Hungarian poetry. Here Szenci Molnár distinguishes three modes, to which he associates examples in different verse forms. For him, the three modes refer specifically to the rhyming of the poem, but the whole discussion is also related to the triple division of rhetorical styles (*stylus humilis*, *mediocris* and *sublimis*), on one side of which are the rustic (simple, unadorned) poems, on the other the eloquent ones (which employ *elocutio* extensively). The different ways of rhyming correspond to this classification. The most sophisticated example is Bálint Balassi's poem beginning *Bocsásd meg, Úristen…* [Bless me with forgiveness, Lord…]. On the other end of the spectrum, there is the "common mode": the stanzaic form of lines of the same length, ending in identical rhymes (Szenci Molnár 2017, fol.):(11v), as frequently used by Miklós Bogáti Fazakas.

Verse technique, and rhyming in particular, was not only important for Albert Szenci Molnár. He clearly regarded the modern French versification of Marot and Bèze as the model to follow. There was no precedent for this type of versification in Hungary, even the quoted Balassi stanza was the product of a simpler verse type. The importance of verse form was also brought to Szenci Molnár's attention by Latin translations of the psalms—for example, the works of George Buchanan and Andreas Spethe—which were published with metrical indexes. These were later added to the school curricula, becoming a part of musical and literary education (Csomasz Tóth 1967, 44).

Admittedly, Bogáti's translation of the Psalms is characterized by the kind of versification Szenci Molnár finds too simple. His stanzas are usually constructed of lines making use of the same number of syllables and the same rhyme scheme. At the same time, he sought the

5 "[…] a nyomtatásban is megjelent, nemcsak népszerű, hanem hivatalosnak is mondható versanyagból […] mily kevés volt metrikai hatással Balassira […] a kontraszelekció, az elutasítás kölcsönös volt: a sokversű, tehát a költészettel nemcsak alkalmilag foglalkozó 16. századi költők közül Balassi volt az egyetlen, akinek nem jelent meg verse századában."

greatest variety within these metrical relations: he used ninety different verse forms and almost one hundred and fifty different tunes (Bogáti Fazakas 1979, 262; Szatmári 2022, 141–142; Szatmári 2023, 209). In other words, in the choice of verse forms, the kind of *varietas* that is characteristic of humanist psalm translations was still achieved, if not at the level of the individual poems, then at the level of the collection as a whole. Bogáti did want to provide a collection or repository of metrics, just like the publications of Bèze, Spethe or Buchanan, but instead of humanist metrical forms he aimed for a survey of the metres used in popular poetry.

Even the *Psalterium Davidis* draws attention to the ideal of *varietas*. The front page of Bogáti's translation contains the following title:

Psalterium *Davidis*,
azaz *Magyar Zsoltár*, kit az időkbeli históriák értelme szerint, *különb-különb magyar ékes nótákra* […] *fordított*
Bogáti Fazakas Miklós[6]

The wording is similar to the title page of Szenci Molnár's translation from a few decades later:

Psalterium Ungaricum
Szent *Dávid* királynak és prófétának százötven zsoltári az *franciai nótáknak* és verseknek módjukra most újonnan *magyar* versekre *fordíttattak* és rendeltettek,
az Szenci Molnár Albert által[7]

Also similar to his preface: "*ékesb* verseket", "*különb* formán", "az zsoltárok százharminc *különböző nótákra* vadnak"[8] (Szenci Molnár 2017, fol.):(11r–v).[9] Both paratexts emphasize the diversity of the tunes ("sundry"). However, while Szenci Molnár emphasized the adoption, the foreign pattern, Bogáti emphasized the Hungarian tradition. The word "eloquent" in Bogáti's title seems to indicate the presence of a literary programme that emphasises the use of *elocutio* in vernacular congregational composition. After all, the programme of Bogáti's translation is not that far from Szenci Molnár's *Psalterium Ungaricum* inspired by humanist models, although there is little overlap between these two strains of poetry in terms of the metrical canon, the utilised verse forms, and the literary patterns.

Let us assume that Bogáti's choice of the metrical-poetic register was following a program. On the one hand, the title itself hints at the theological background to Bogáti's psalm translation: "according to the

6 *David*'s Psalter, i.e. *Hungarian Psalter*, which, according to the sense of the histories of the time, was *translated* into *sundry Hungarian eloquent tunes* […] by Miklós Bogáti Fazakas. (*Szenterzsébeti Bogáthi-kódex*, fol. 35v; *Péchi Simon-énekeskönyv*, p. 13; Stoll 2002, no. 22, no. 33.)

7 *Hungarian Psalter*, King Saint *David*'s 150 psalms, which have now been newly *translated* and assigned to *Hungarian* verses in the manner of *French tunes* and verses by Albert Molnár of Szenc

8 "*more eloquent* verses", "in *sundry* forms", "the psalms are in a hundred and thirty *sundry tunes*"

9 Matching terms are marked by italics. Emphasis added.

sense of the histories" means that Bogáti intends to explore the *sensus historicus* in his interpretation of the biblical text. *Psalterium Davidis* explores the historical relevance of the Old Testament. He places even those psalms in an epic narrative where the Bible does not suggest this, and the psalms are often supplemented by descriptions of historical events. The historical context gains prominence throughout the volume, rendering the discussion of *sensus allegoricus* or *sensus anagogicus* impossible. This may be the reason why Bogáti wrote so many of his psalms (one third of the entire Psalter) to the tune of popular historical songs (Szatmári 2022, 152–153). As if he wanted the psalms to be sung as a history. On the other hand, the antitrinitarian theologian-poet probably saw the application of the popular register and popular metres as a means to make his translation (which reflected a scholarly attitude and a claim for biblical criticism) suitable for liturgical or other devotional functions, and, by reaching a wider readership, possibly even to make his translation *the* "Hungarian Psalter".

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The translation of Psalm 66 may serve to illustrate how the need for liturgical-popular poetry engages in dialogue with the ideals of humanist poetry in Miklós Bogáti Fazakas's *Psalterium Davidis*, and it also shows the metrical consequences of this dialogue. The tune reference of the psalm consists of two parts: "Trochaicum. Úristen néz most mireánk" [Lord God is looking at us now]. The second half refers to a now unknown religious hymn, but the first word is easy to decode. The metrical pattern of the poem is some kind of trochaic tunes or text. There are poems in 16th-century Hungarian literature that are based on humanist metrical tunes. Their sources were collections for school use. Johannes Honterus's *Odae cum Harmoniis* [Odes with Harmonies], a publication of metrical tunes, contains an item called "Trochaicum Dicolon." (Csomasz Tóth 1979, 231, no. 19) At first glance, the fifteen syllables of Psalm 66 seem to correspond to this, which means that Honterus's publication could have been Bogáti's source.

Of course, 16th-century Hungarian poems written to humanistic metrical tunes do not usually retain the measure of the original quantitative metre, but are transformed into syllable-counting, rhyming poems. Thus the Asclepiad became a line of twelve syllables with a caesura dividing the line into two six-syllable hemistichs (similar to alexandrine). The Sapphic line was transformed into a line of eleven syllables with a division of 5+6 syllables, while the various iambic and trochaic formulas were also turned into some syllable-counting line form that was divided in a regular, pedantic manner. All this was mostly complemented by isorhyming. In other words, they were similar to the verse style widespread then in Hungarian literature, which borrowed its models from Middle Latin ecclesiastical song poetry and Goliard poetry. Bogáti also made use of humanist metrical tunes, and he also

always turned them into stanzaic poems without measure that counted syllables and used rhymes.

Psalm 66 is an exception in this respect, because it happens to be a poem with true quantitative metre used in ancient Greek and Latin poetry, not a syllable-counting reinterpretation of it. There are not many examples of this kind in 16th-century Hungarian poetry. Its stanza consists of three lines with the metre of trochaic tetrameter catalectic, or trochaic septenarius:

— ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | ∪
— ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | ∪
— ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | ∪

But there is more to the metrical analysis of Bogáti's poem. Catalectic tetrameter creates lines of fifteen syllables, which can be interpreted as a syllable-counting poem. This is confirmed by the rhymes used by Bogáti. In addition, both trochaic septenarius and syllable-counting lines of a Goliard nature tend to appear with a caesura. In Psalm 66, the eighth syllable of each verse is always followed by a caesura, and they sometimes rhyme as well. This means that the fifteen-syllable long lines are divided into eight- and seven-syllable shorter lines. In the language of quantitative metre, this can be expressed by the alternation of two kinds of colon in the poem: an acatalectic (complete) and a catalectic (incomplete) trochaic dimeter. The stanzas consisting of six short lines mostly alternate between *a* and *b* rhymes, which is also unparalleled in Bogáti's oeuvre. Thus, the translation of Psalm 66, while fully conforming to the textbook formula of trochaic metre, with the added rhymes appears to be a syllable-counting, rhyming, stanzaic Hungarian poem. The figure below shows two different interpretations of the metre of the poem. On the left is the quantitative interpretation with the alternating two colons, on the right the syllable-counting, rhyming stanzaic structure consisting of alternating eight- and seven-syllable lines.

— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪	8a
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪	7b
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪	8a
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪	7b
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪	8a
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪	7b

From one vantage point, it appears as a poem using quantitative metre, from another it seems to be a syllable-counting, rhyming poem using accents. The essence of the metre is its dual nature, reinforced by the double tune reference. "Trochaicum" refers to the humanist metric tune, and "Úristen néz most mireánk" is probably the opening line of a contemporary congregational hymn. Bogáti wrote a poem

with quantitative metre but left the possibility for the contemporary Hungarian reader to read it according to the metrical ideal of the popular-official register, the isometric and strophic poem, i.e. the "common mode."

This meter allows Bogáti to translate the psalm using significantly more words than are found in the Bible. Psalm 66 consists of 20 verses, which Bogáti translated into 18 stanzas. In other words, each verse corresponds to one stanza. However, the stanzas consisting of three pairs of lines almost tripled the length of the text. This expansion and verbosity (*amplificatio*) is typical feature of Protestant psalm translations (both Latin and vernacular, see Hajdu 2023; Oláh 2000, 209–214). But here Bogáti has much more space to work with. The alternation of long and short lines (as well as the *a* and *b* rhymes) also structures the stanza in depth (which will be discussed later).

Characteristically, the copyists of Bogáti's psalms were deaf to such a sophisticated metre. Most copyists accustomed to identical rhymes and identical lines have written the first stanza with metrical errors. They also failed to recognise the *a-b* rhyme opening, which is alien to the world of the *Psalterium Davidis*, so they took the most obvious approach by trying to compile lines running out to the same rhyme. Only one manuscript contains a version that is correct in terms of both metre and sense (*Mátéfi János kódexe*, fol. 145r):[10]

Szentek ez földön ha vagytok,
napkeletre, nagy mezőn,
vagy napesti földre laktok,
innen és túl a' vízen,
valahol országba[n] laktok,
Úrnak hálát adjatok![11]

The first stanza also significantly expands on the text of the Bible, which only reads: "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands" (KJV, Ps 66:1).[12] It must be added that the image in Bogáti is not his own poetic invention, but that of George Buchanan. Buchanan's highly successful Latin metrical paraphrases with an antique tone were also known in Hungary (Berg 1944; P. Vásárhelyi 2000, 415–416), and everything points to the idea that Miklós Bogáti Fazakas's metred translation of the Psalm 66 is a Buchanan paraphrase at the same time. For the translation of the psalm, he borrows several phrases from Buchanan's paraphrase of Psalm 66. In what follows, this will be illustrated with a few examples.

10 On this manuscript: Stoll 2002, no. 39; Varga 2014.

11 "Saints, who are on this land / in the east, in a great field, / or who live in the west / on this side of the water, and beyond it, / wherever you live in the country, / give thanks to the Lord!"

12 Vulgata: „iubilate Deo omnis terra" (Ps 65:1). The different translations of the Bible are quoted from here: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, https://www.die-bibel.de/en.

In Bogáti's translation, God tries the Jews like gold (line 67), whereas the biblical text uses silver in this place (Ps 66:10). The parallel passage in Buchanan's Psalm 66, on the other hand, is also about gold. A line later, Buchanan's verse uses the word "periclis" to describe God's test, the obvious translation of which is "veszély" ['peril, danger'], the equivalent of which is missing from the biblical text.

igne, ut *aurum*, examinasti
nos *periclis*; illigasti
    hostium nos cassibus. (Buchanan 66,43–45)[13]

Próbatűz mint *sáraranyat*,
    sok *veszélybe* minket úgy,
próbakőre tőd zsidókat,
    vasba koptatád nyakunk, (Bogáti 66,67–70)[14]

Stanza 15 of Bogáti contains the word "incense," also found in Buchanan:

bos et hircus sanguine aras
imbuent, nec *tura* derunt
    de Sabaeo stipite. (Buchanan 66,58–60)[15]

The biblical text only lists the sacrificial animals. It is known from the laws that incense had to be added to the meal offering (Lev 2:1), which might be the source of Buchanan's addition, adopted by Bogáti in the same place. As far as one can tell, these terms are Buchanan's invention, and no equivalents have been found elsewhere. And if this is so, then Bogáti might have also made use of Buchanan's rendition of Psalm 66 while translating the same psalm, explaining the similarity between the two versions.

But not only the demonstrated instances of textual borrowing, but the choice of metre also confirms the intention of imitating Buchanan. Like Bogáti's, Buchanan's Psalm 66 is also composed of trochaic dimeters, and both authors employ two types of colons. The only difference is that Buchanan combines two complete (acatalectic) dimeters with a catalectic dimeter, so that his units of three lines are joined (on the left).

13 "You have tested us through *dangers*, as if assaying *gold* by fire; you have bound us in the enemy's nets." The critical edition (Buchanan 2011) is henceforth referred to by the number of the psalm and the quoted lines. Bogáti's translation is also referred by the number of the psalm and its lines. The quoted text is based on the referred manuscripts. In the poetic texts, the highlights in italics are always mine.

14 "As testing fire (assaying) *gold*, / in much *dangers* (you have put) us, / you have put the Jews on touchstone, / you have worn our necks in iron."

15 "an ox, a goat will stain your altars with their blood; nor will *incense* from trees of Sheba be forgotten"

— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪

— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪
— ∪ — ∪ — ∪ ∪

In line with this, the critical edition of Buchanan's paraphrase emphasises how this metre particularly "encourages a riot of word-play, assonance, rhyme and other kinds of jingle." (Buchanan 2011, 570) The verse form, otherwise not characterised by rhymes, creates many harmonies, even if only by using grammatical parallels. This might have inspired Bogáti, who uses a poetic system where rhymes are the essential building blocks of the cohesion of the lines. In his poem, too, we see internal rhymes and assonances, which give his poem a similar ring to Buchanan's.

However, there are significant differences between the two verse forms. In Buchanan, two equally long lines are always followed by a shorter one, while in Bogáti there is a regular alternation of long and short lines. Therefore, while in Buchanan the rhymes and consonants are usually found in consecutive lines, in Bogáti there is more distance between them. In the fifth stanza, Bogáti adopts not only Buchanan's vocabulary, but also the grammatical parallel and the resulting rhyme and anaphora (the latter I have highlighted in bold).

te *parentem* laeta hon**oret**,
te *potentem* prona ad**oret**
tota rerum machina. (Buchanan 66,13–15)[16]

mint kegyes *atyját* tiszte**ljen**,
mert szabad s nemes néped,
mint *hatalmast*, úgy böcsü**ljen**,
mert nagyot tött szent kezed! (Bogáti 66,27–30)[17]

The terms set in italics have no counterparts in the biblical text (Ps 66:4), they are Buchanan's interpretive additions. Bogáti adopts Buchanan's lines almost word for word, and also retains the grammatical link between them ("mint…, mint…" ['as…, as…']). But since his rhyming lines of equal length do not follow each other, he adds his own lines (28 and 30) to those borrowed from Buchanan. These create another grammatical parallel, which seems to be a response to Buchanan's text ("mert…, mert…" ['because…, because…']). The slight difference between the two types of metre provides more opportunity

16 "Let the whole fabric of the world joyfully **honour you** as its *parent*, let it reverently **adore you** as its *master*."

17 "**as** its gracious *father*, let it **adore** you, / because your people are free and noble, / **as** a *potent*, let it **honour** you / because your holy hand has done a great thing"

for Bogáti. It allows him to imitate Buchanan's paraphrase, but also to add his own inventions to the translation (Csörsz 2004, 19; Szatmári 2022, 213).

The first stanza contains a similar inlaid expansion. According to the biblical text, the speaker is calling the whole earth ("omnis terra" 'all land') to praise. Buchanan makes this more tangible with the cardinal points:

Incolae terrarum, ab ortu
solis ultimum ad cubile,
eia domino psallite. (Buchanan 66,1–3)[18]

Buchanan adapts here a Horatian textual strategy (Buchanan 2011, 570). The original passage in Horace reads:

porrecta maiestas ad ortus
solis ab Hesperio cubili. (Horace, *Carm*. IV.15.15–16)[19]

Such antique vocabulary appears in several places in Buchanan's psalms,[20] usually as an expansion of the biblical terms "omnes gentes," "omnes populi," "omnis terra". But there are even more direct borrowings of the Horatian lines:

patravit in terris ab ortu
solis ad Hesperium cubile. (Buchanan 46,31–32)[21]
vocabit in ius orbem ab ortu
solis ad Hesperium cubile. (Buchanan 50,3–4)[22]

The paraphrase of Psalm 46 even uses the same verse form as the quoted ode of Horace, both written in the Alcaic stanza. Remarkably, in Psalm 50 the *Vulgate* uses a similar phrase: "et vocavit terram ab ortu solis usque ad occasum eius." (Ps [Hebr.] 49:1)[23] Thus, the phrase "ab ortu solis" might even bear some biblical connotation, but the Horatian allusion is still clear, especially with the use of the term *Hesperius*.

18 "Inhabitants of the earth, from the rising of the sun to its most distant bed, O praise the Lord."

19 "To where the sun illumes the east / From where he seeks his western bed." John Conington's translation (Horace 1882) is quoted from here: *Perseus Digital Library*, https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/.

20 "a sole Eoo ad Hesperum" ("From dawn to dusk," Buchanan 59,21); "Orbis omnes incolae, / a sole Eoo ad Hesperum," („all inhabitants of the world, from the rising to the setting sun," Buchanan 100,1–2)

21 "[…which God has] performed on earth, from the rising of the sun to its Hesperian bed."

22 "The judge [who with just laws reins in the proud necks of threatening kings] will arraign the world from the rising of the sun to its Hesperian bed."

23 Iuxta LXX: "et vocavit terram a solis ortu usque ad occasum"; KJV (50:1): "And called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof."

Buchanan is not just using an established topos when he describes the whole earth with an arc from east to west. He uses a passaged borrowed specifically from Horace. Of course, many other examples could be given of the antique expressions that appear in Buchanan's psalms, since such a translation/transformation is the fundamental linguistic strategy of Buchanan's humanist translation (Buchanan 2011, 60–66).

But what is more interesting for the present purposes is how Bogáti makes use of this strategy of using antique sources. Buchanan only introduces an East-West opposition, as mentioned, in a place where the biblical text does not contain it textually. However, Bogáti complemented this version with his characteristic verbosity that was, however, also demanded by the Hungarian poetic form.

Szentek ez földön ha vagytok,
napkeletre, nagy **mezőn**,
vagy *napesti* földre laktok,
innen és túl a' **vízen**,
valahol országba[n] laktok,
Úrnak hálát adjatok![24]

The East-West opposition (marked by italics) is complemented by a geographical contrast between the field and the water in lines 2 and 4 (marked by bold). Furthermore, this solution makes the landscape imaginable in cartographic terms as well: the vast field is in the east and the water in the west. This does not necessarily mean that Bogáti's text would describe the actual geography of Old Testament Israel, although there are vast plains to the east of Israel and the Mediterranean (and the Red Sea) to the west. Bogáti is no stranger to this kind of realism, he is inclined to make the psalms historically and geographically concrete. This is what he performs in this psalm, too. At the end of seventh stanza, the opposites from the first stanza return with the same words ("field", "water"), but now—due to the miracle of God—in relation to the same being (water = field):

mint *mezőn*, úgy vivé népét,
elfogá tenger *vizét*. (Bogáti 66,41–42)[25]

This is a clear reference to one of the most important episodes of the *Exodus*, the crossing of the sea (Ex 14:21), which is repeated in the *Book of Joshua* (Josh 3:14–17). The original biblical text also refers to this, but again, it only speaks of the sea in general terms, not making any more specific references: "He turned the sea into dry land: / They went through the flood on foot: There did we rejoice in him" (KJV: Ps 66,6).

24 "Saints, who are on this land / in the *east*, in a great **field**, / or who live in the *west* / on this side of the **water**, and beyond it, / wherever you live in the country, / give thanks to the Lord!"

25 "as in the *field*, so he led his people / captured the *waters* of the sea"

Bogáti, however, provides the location of both crossings in the eighth stanza:

Rajta népét általvivé,
az Veres-tengert veré,
félfelé Jordánt felűzé,
minket úgy költöztete, (Bogáti 66,43–46)[26]

The mention of the Red Sea and the Jordan lends a historical meaning to Bogáti's version of the psalm. Taking this into account, it seems more likely that the insertion in the first stanza already foreshadows this dichotomy. Admittedly, the historical significance of the geographic counterpart only becomes apparent later.

It is also striking how Bogáti exploits the difference in verse form in the first stanza. Buchanan turns a simple expression from the Bible text into a pair of opposites, using Horace's ode. The pair of opposites is placed in two lines of equal length, closed by the conclusion of the third, shorter line ("eia domino psallite"). Bogáti makes use of the Horatian image offered by Buchanan's paraphrase, but also weaves in his own Old Testament landscape. The dynamism of the Hungarian text derives from the combination of geographical and logical movement. The stanza starts on a general level ("on this land"), then moves on to a specific, pictorial description of the landscape. Bogáti's poem reveals not only linguistic but also topographic subtlety (east = field || west = water). Bogáti's additions (the field and the water) are once again placed in the shorter lines (2 and 4). Then in the fifth line we come back to the general ("wherever in the country"), followed by the same conclusion as Buchanan's ("give thanks to the Lord"). Bogáti's psalm may not reach the level of Albert Szenci Molnár and Bálint Balassi in its rhyme technique, but it is certainly quite finely crafted from a poetic perspective.

The above examples reveal the true poetic purpose of Bogáti's choice of metre. Bogáti chose a form that consists of the same trochaic colons as Buchanan's. He often takes whole lines, or even pairs of lines, from Buchanan's poem. He can do this while also retaining the metre of the Latin lines, and also the potential grammatical parallels, that is, he makes the borrowing marked. His slightly different proprietary system, however, demands the insertion of shorter lines between the adopted uniform lines. In most cases he uses this expansion to add his own, explicitly historicising interpretation of the psalm, emphasizing its biblical context. The metrical system offers a poetic opportunity for Bogáti's historicising translation to engage in a dialogue with Buchanan's antique-like text. The Hungarian rendition of the sophisticated antique-sounding paraphrase becomes the pretext for an antitrinitarian interpretation of the Bible. Thus, it is not only the choice

26 "Carried his people through it, / beat the Red Sea, / chased Jordan upwards, / so as to help us move."

of metre that seems conscious, but also the deviation from the metre. In the sophisticated, humanist form of imitation, the borrowing merely alludes to the poet's predecessor, leaving some room for individual invention as well.

This is, however, only one aspect of the metre of Psalm 66. Bogáti chose a form that could be interpreted in the context of congregational singing, as a syllabic and strophic poem with rhymes. The Hungarian paraphrase thus remained open towards both metrical and poetic worlds. Even so, it has pushed the limits, as shown by the clumsiness of the copyists. When Miklós Bogáti Fazakas was adventuring in the humanist milieu, which might have been noticed by Albert Szenci Molnár, the later readers of the Psalter (the *populus*) would have found the text and the verse form difficult to understand.

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The segment of the poetry of Miklós Bogáti Fazakas that has been explored so far has already suggested the image of a highly educated poet who knew and read many languages. The already completed volume of the critical edition revealed his readings in Greek and Latin, as well as his inspirations from theology and biblical criticism (Bogáti Fazakas 2018, 471–478). It was already clear that he set in motion a very broad canon of the melodic and formal canon of 16th-century Hungarian poetry, and usually based his translations on several sources. Research on the psalms has so far been less concerned with the possible connections with humanist culture. The above analysis of Psalm 66 was an attempt at such an inquiry. Perhaps it is not entirely indifferent from the perspective of the present-day image of the Hungarian literary canon that another early modern Hungarian poem using classical quantitative metre has been identified, which not only relies on Buchanan, but to a limited extent on Horace as well.

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The Theory and Practice of Imitation in the (Polyphonic?) Dido-tragedy by Nicodemus Frischlin1

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ABSTRACT

In my study I will be focusing on the text transformation technique in the tragedy *Dido* by Nicodemus Frischlin (1547–1590) German Neo-Latin poet, this author's first imitational drama was published in 1581 in Tübingen. In the first half of my work, I summarize Frischlin's basic rhetorical principles, including his most significant ideas around imitation based on his 1587 oration in Wittenberg. Instead of precepts and definitions, the poet's rhetorical concept operates with concrete examples, written passages, authoral texts by which he aims to educate the reader. In the second portion of my study, I aim to answer the question of how polyphonic imitation works in the play, and how this creative method makes it more difficult to identify the imitative techniques in the text, such as paraphrase, cento and parody. As I delve into my topic, I wish to point to examples of the switch of rhetorical theory, that is, a divergence from the tradition of Melanchton's rhetoric textbooks, the connections between the different varieties of imitation techniques, genre transformation, the reinterpretation of the Virgilian epic into a tragedy.

Keywords: Nicodemus Frischlin, Neo Latin poetry, drama, Dido, imitation, rhetoric, polyphony

1. Introduction

Nicodemus Frischlin (1547–1590) was one of the most significant Neo-Latin poets and playwrights in 16th century Germany, however, posterity, from the very beginning has placed much greater emphasis

1 The present study was prepared with the support of the Debrecen University Faculty of Arts Scientific Fund.

on his exciting, multifaceted biography than his poetic oeuvre.[2] The volume containing the written version of the lectures from the memorial conference held in Tübingen commemorating the 400th anniversary of the death of the author also reflect this tendency to have greater interest in his biography (Holtz–Mertens 1998–1999). The writers focus on the more interesting details of the poet's life and his social network when it comes to their analysis, the first two presented studies for instance deal with Friedrich Ludwig, Hereditary Prince of Württemberg's (1568–1593) court and rule. The prince first played the role of a patron in Frischlin's life, then in a twist of fate, later he would be the one to sentence the poet to incarceration in the Hohenurach Fortress. Volker Schäfer discusses the city of Tübingen in Frishclin's era as well as its university, while Hubert Cancik speaks of the contentious relationship between Martin Crusius and Frischlin. Frischlin taught Latin poetry and history in Tübingen from 1568 to 1582, and during this period he attracted the attention of almost the entire university faculty due to his professional (grammatical-rhetorical) and personal disputes with his colleagues, especially with Crusius, professor of Greek. He also had minor clashes with the local nobility. His speech *Oratio de vita rustica*, published in 1580, in which he denounced the nobility as corrupt, brought him even more under fire. Wilhelm Kühlmann analyzes precisely the oration which sealed Frischlin's fate, while Siegfried Wollgast compares the controversial poet to the agitator Thomas Müntzer. Among the authors who have concentrated on the biographical aspects of the subject is Casimir Bumiller, who deals with the fraternal relationship between Nicodemus and Jakob Frischlin.[3]

More recent international literature focuses on Frischlin's astronomical works, especially his carmen praising the astronomical clock in Strasbourg Cathedral and its makers (Kühlmann 2019, 49–81; Frick–Grütter 2021, 532-560.), his occasional poems, especially his panegyrics to the Habsburg emperors (Seidel 2018, 25–48),[4] and his dramatic works (Leonhardt 2008, 155–164; Kaminski 2008, 165–181; Niefanger 2008, 417–434; Kaminski 2011, 43–55; Hadley 2015). The Hungarian literature focuses on the Hungarian aspects of his entire oeuvre, such as the impact of Frischlin's private course in Wittenberg (1587–1588) on the Hungarian youths who studied there and on Hungarian literary thought. The poet's concept of rhetoric,

2 David Price lists the most important biographical summaries in the foreword to his monograph on Frischlin's work as a playwright. He begins with Carl Heinrich Lange's 1727 work in Latin, and concludes with Gustav Bebermeyer's glossary of the biographical encyclopaedia *Neue deutsche Biographie*, published in the mid-20th century. For more on Frischlin's biographical data and related literature, see Price 1990, 1–8; Wilhelmi–Seck 2004; Niefanger 2018; Hanstein 2018, 560–583.

3 Around a quarter of the twenty studies in the volume are about Frischlin's literary work, most of the authors approaching the subject from the biographical point of view, as well as from the perspective of cultural, social and religious history.

4 The Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II appointed Frischlin a poet laureate in 1576, and in 1577 he ennobled him for his glorifying poems.

which he described in detail in his speech at the launch of his course at Wittenberg, was based on teaching with exempla, i.e. concrete examples, readings, and texts by classical authors, rather than precepts and definitions (Kecskeméti 2004, 166–197; Kecskeméti 2007, 252–277; on Frischlin's fame and acquaintances in Hungary: Kecskeméti 2005, 93–110). Another interesting period from a domestic point of view is May-June 1584, when Frischlin was in the service of the Batthyány family in Németújvár. It was then that he published his *De ratione instituendi puerorum*..., a work primarily on educational methodology, but also important from the point of view of rhetorical theory, which was then reprinted twice in the 17th century (1621, 1645) by Albert Molnár Szenci in the appendix to his *Dictionarium* (Imre 2009, 164–179).

Frischlin's dramas can be grouped into the following, sometimes overlapping categories: historical-political plays (*Frau Wendelgard*, 1579, *Hildegardis Magna*, 1579, *Julius Caesar Redivivus*, 1585), pedagogical dramas (*Priscianus Vapulans*, 1578), religious dramas (*Phasma*, 1580), biblical dramas (*Rebecca*, 1575, *Susanna*, 1577), and the so-called imitational dramas (*Dido*, 1581, *Venus*, 1584, *Helvetiogermani*, 1589) (categorization by Price 1990, 5). The last group draws attention to the fact that Frischlin's dramas should be approached not only from a thematic, ideological or functional point of view, but also from the point of view of humanistic creative techniques and formality. In a broader sense, almost all the plays can be included in the category of imitative drama, since humanist poetic practice tends to follow primarily ancient examples, specifically Aristophanes, Plautus and Terentius, in its own dramatic practice. At the same time, however, only in three of this plays he ventures to establish a close link with ancient texts and to use imitative textual techniques.

In this paper, I will deal in more detail with the first of these imitative dramas in the narrower sense, his five-act tragedy *Dido*, published in Tübingen in 1581, focusing strictly on the stylistic methods. In the first half of the paper, I will summarize Frischlin's rhetorical principles, including his most important ideas on exercitatio, imitation, based on his opening speech in Wittenberg, already mentioned. In the second portion of my paper, I will be discussing the foreword to *Dido* written by the author, the literature related to the play as well as juxtaposing excerpts from the main text with one another in search of the different characteristics of imitation techniques in this tragedy inspired by an epic poem and whether the methodological solution applied in the text is related to the concept of polyphonic imitation as used by Nicola Kaminski (1995, 79–135).[5]

5 Many thanks to Tünde Móré for sharing her copy of the study with me.

2. Frischlin's theory of rhetoric

Nicodemus Frischlin discussed imitation as an integral part of contemporary literary practice in several works on rhetoric and poetics (e.g. *Rhetorica, seu Institutionum oratorium libri duo...*, *Oratio de imitatione...*, *Methodus declamandi in laudatione...*, *Oratio de praestantia et dignitate Virgilii Aeneidos...*), but the most complete summary of the subject is undoubtedly given in the introductory oration to his private course in Wittenberg (Price 1990, 27).[6] At the beginning of the relevant train of thought in the opening speech of 1587, which is nearly sixty pages long, Frischlin states that he no longer wishes to discuss the study of eloquent speech (*ars oratoria*), because no one can give a more thorough and complete summary of this discipline than Melanchthon, and so the oration will be devoted to the exercise of rhetoric (*exercitatio*).[7]

By the rhetorical and poetic exercise (*exercitatio oratoria*, *exercitatio poetica*) Frischlin means the imitation of good authors, i.e. the emulation of the classics of ancient Greco-Roman literature. At the same time, he stresses that the essence of imitation is to create works similar to those of others, and that complete conformity with the model must be avoided at all costs, since this no longer means imitation but plagiarism, i.e. theft.[8] Frischlin believes that what Manilius says about astronomy is also true of imitation: "It cannot be described with eloquence, it can only be taught".[9] In keeping with this, he refrains from using ornamental rhetorical devices in his exposition of the subject, and formulates his message in a strictly didactic style, his primary aim being to show young students interested in the discipline of oration the way forward.[10] The first and most important rule to which Frischlin draws the attention of

6 The edition I use is: Frischlin 1596, 320-377. The Latin quotations in this study are given in my own literal or free translation of the content in prose translation, and any instances of deviation are indicated in the footnotes.

7 "Nam quod ad artem attinet, ea a Philippo Melanthone duobus libris ita comprehensa est, ut nihil in hoc genere... extet perfectius, nihil absolutius." (Frischlin 1596, 326). Erasmus and Melanchthon laid down important principles concerning imitation, but they did not discuss the subject comprehensively either from the point of view of theory or practice; Frischlin made up for this, developing the guidelines into a rhetorical system in his rhetorical theory (Price 1990, 28).

8 "Est enim exercitatio omnis, tam oratoria, quam poetica, fere nihil aliud, quam quaedam bonorum auctorum imitatio, et similium operum cum aliis effectio. Is enim optime censetur imitari aliquem auctorem, qui illi est in componenda oratione simillimus, non tamen idem. Nam eundem esse cum alio, non est imitari, sed furari, et omnino plagium comittere." (Frischlin 1596, 327). The modern idea that imitation genres should be excluded from the canon of acceptable genres on the grounds of copyright has occasionally emerged in the early modern era, for more on this see Saint-Amour 2003.

9 "Ornari res ista nequit, contenta doceri." (Frischlin 1596, 328–329).

10 "Nam in hoc argumenti genere tractando, magis scholastico, quam oratorio dicendi genere mihi utendum est [...] Non enim hic causam agemus coram iudice, sed modum iuventuti ostendemus, et viam, qua studiosi oratoriae incedentes, possint eum finem invenire, quem quaerimus." (Frischlin 1596, 328).

his audience is that it is very important to be gradual in the learning process, that theory should be gradually put into practice, and that the simpler exercises, the so-called preparatory or preliminary exercises (*praeexercitamentum, praeludium, progymnasmata*), which are the subject of this oration, should precede the more complex poetic and rhetorical procedures (*declamatio*).[11]

In the section on phrases, Frischlin advises prospective orators not to follow Erasmus' example and try to blend verse and prose, or the formal and the informal speech, in imitation, because poetic expressions do not always lend itself well to oration.[12] As for a good vocabulary, it can be acquired by turning to the established authors, but many of the students do not read, so if they are forced to speak or write in Latin, they may feel like mice stuck in pitch for want of the right words.[13] They can also learn adequate vocabulary from the recognized authors, from what they read, rather than from the theoretical works of grammarians, who often arrive at certain conclusions by analogy rather than by reason. Frischlin gives the example of the word 'homo', which in theory, according to grammatical rules, can only be masculine, but in practice is understood to mean both male and female, so that in this case the grammatical category is not fully in line with the general meaning of the word in use.[14]

One of the basic tenets of Frischlin's concept is that it is unnecessary to spend too much time on rules (*praeceptum*), since in the teaching-learning process, textual examples (*exemplum*) prove to be much more useful than theoretical guidelines. The sometimes too rigid precepts are best illuminated by the more practical exemplars, so that rules can and should be learned from the readings, not from the textbooks.[15] This principle is also reflected in the dictionary (*Nomenclator trilingvis*)

11 " […] singillatim proponantur quaedam transferenda in usum, donec oratoriae studiosus, recte doctus, tractare partes orationis Rhetoricae, tandem etiam possit orationem tractare integram." (Frischlin 1596, 328). Frischlin's posthumous oration, *Methodus declamandi* (1606), can be seen as a continuation of Wittenberg's oration on the preliminary exercises (Kecskeméti 2007, 274).

12 "Non igitur nihil imitandum est oratori in poëta [...] Erasmus certe Roterodamus, qualibet orator copiosus et elegans, hoc tamen discrimen in selectu verborum non ubique servavit. Itaque saepe poeticas phrases solutae orationi admiscuit." (Frischlin 1596, 332–333).

13 "Nam multi sunt, qui expetunt [...] verborum proprietatem [...] interim tamen neque ipsi legunt probatos auctores, ut hanc sibi verborum proprietatem inde comparent [...] Tum quando aliquid latine vel dicere, vel scribere coguntur, destituti propriis verbis, haerent tanquam mures in pice." (Frischlin 1596, 333–334).

14 "Nam in usu loquendi ad probatos auctores respiciendum est, non ad grammaticos, saepe aliquid sine ratione ex analogia proferentes [...] Homo [...] etsi ex communi sexu intelligitur, tamen masculino genere semper dicitur: Nemo enim malam hominem dixit." (Frischlin 1596, 338).

15 "Nam quid opus est diu immorari in praeceptis? Regulae enim non regulis, sed exemplis, quorum in vita summus est usus, declarari possunt, ac debent." (Frischlin 1596, 344).

published in Frankfurt in 1586, in which Frischlin compiled a substantial Greek-Latin-German vocabulary of 30,000 items from the works of the most eminent Greek and Roman authors.[16] He planned to add further volumes to the first edition of nouns, as the instructions for using the collection indicate: students should first read aloud, memorize and conjugate the nouns in the first volume, then the verbs in the second, and when they have acquired the necessary depth of knowledge, they can move on to the more complex linguistic elements of the dialogues in the third volume, the phrases and sentences necessary for independent composition.[17]

The first of the imitative preexercises (*praeexercitamentum*) Frischlin discusses is the simplest, the heterosis/metaphrase, which consists in changing the genre, text type or metre of the model work (e.g. from ode to elegy, from letter to dialogue, from hexameter to distich), while at the same time preserving the linguistic and content fidelity to the source.[18] Frischlin also illustrates what is meant by this concept by means of concrete examples, including the hexameter version of Horace's IV. 4. carmen (Frischlin 1596, 355), and then encourages the audience to try out the simpler transcriptions on their own, for example, as a first step, transcribing a shorter *Aeneid*-passage into distich, using the quotation from canto 6 (6,126–130) transposed into distich as a model (Frischlin 1596, 356).

The other such preliminary exercise is parody, for which Frischlin refers to the definition of Scaliger: according to this, parody writers strive to create a linguistically similar but substantively different textual version of the model, sometimes with a humorous tone and style. Frischlin also includes cento, a genre related to parody, since both

16 "Nam ex optimis quibusque Graecis et Latinis scriptoribus ingentem affero vocabulorum acervum, qui terdena millia vocabulorum Graecorum et Latinorum et Germanicorum continet. Huic libro, qui ante annum Francofurti excusus est, et magno labore, magnisque impensis meis confectus, iam debebat alter respondere, quem tribui verbis [...] Tertius [...] constabit [...] centum et septuaginta brevibus dialogis [...]" (Frischlin 1596, 344-345). Frischlin's collection of selected orations published in 1588 (*Selectae orationes e Q. Curtio, T. Livio, C. Salustio, C. Caesare, M. Cicerone...*) is also a product of the concept of exemplum in preference to praeceptum.

17 "Nam puero in scholis sic proponi potest: ut ante meridiem addiscat aliquot nomina, quae recitando simul inflectat, post meridiem e libro secundo aliquot verba nominibus respondentia, quae recitando itidem inflectat. Sic enim altius omnia inhaerebunt memoriae et suas ibi agent radices. Ad postremum sequenti in ordine Dialogos ediscat, et e simplicibus nominibus ac verbis consuescat phrasin constituere, et hoc modo usum sermonis, qui est in bonis auctoribus, sibi a teneris unguiculis familiarem facere." (Frischlin 1596, 345–346).

18 "Et quoniam in hoc primo genere scripta poëtica permutantur numero, oratoria vero habitu orationis novo, et quia neutrum horum fieri potest sine heterosi, nos primum hoc praeexercitamentum dicemus heterosin vel metaphrasin [...] Verum enimvero etiam in poëtica imitatione, saepenumero eadem prorsus retinetur sententia, eademque verba, tantum mutato numero." (Frischlin 1596, 352–353).

parody and cento poets work from the linguistic material of the source works and create a poem with a different message.[19]

In the words of St Jerome, Frischlin advises his pious audience to reclaim the illustrious sayings usurped by profane rhetors and poets by means of parody exercises, and then to take them to their churches and use them to glorify the Lord.[20] For example, he even prepares a Christianized parody of a maxim by Ennius and Horace. "Unus homo nobis cunctando restituit rem."[21] (Ennius: *Annales*, XII. 360), we obtain, by changing only one word, a sentence referring to Christ: "Unus homo nobis moriendo restituit rem."[22] (Frischlin 1596, 366). Frischlin does the same for the Horace citation, thus we have "Nil desperandum Teucro duce et auspice Phoebo."[23] (Horatius: Carmen I. 7,27) to "Nil desperandum Christo duce, et auspice Christo."[24] (Frischlin 1596, 366).

The third type of preliminary exercises is paraphrase, which is closely related to the imitated model in terms of content, but has far fewer linguistic constraints: Frischlin, following the definition of Quintilian, understands the term as a more explicit and explanatory, but also more varied and ornate linguistic form of the source texts.[25] Frischlin cites as examples, among other things, the newly published paraphrases in the form of prose which he wrote for the six satires of Persius and the first two books of the epistles of Horace.[26] Frischlin's aim in producing these commentary-like paraphrases was to illuminate the sometimes obscure

19 "Propero igitur ad alterum genus progymnasmatum, quod est similium fere verborum, sed dissimiliarum sententiarum, id quod sit per parodiam. Est enim parodia sententia inversa, mutatis vocibus, ad ridicula sensum retrahens, ut Scaliger finit [...] Ac tales sunt etiam Homerici centones et Virgiliani, quorum auctrix dicitur esse Proba Falconia, insignis poëtria." (Frischlin 1596, 357–358).

20 "Divus certe Hieronymus [...] nos decere ait, ut profanorum rhetorum et poëtarum insignes sententias ab iniquis possessoribus auferamus, et in ecclesiam Dei, atque ad laudem et decus Domini conferamus." (Frischlin 1596, 365–366).

21 "Through procrastination a man saved our state."

22 "By his death, one man saved our world."

23 "Teucer's leadership and Phoebus's prophecy give us hope."

24 "Christ's guidance and leadership give us hope."

25 "Restat tertium progymnasmatum genus, nempe similium sententiarum, ubi dissimilia sunt verba, et dissimilis compositio, ut cum ex poëticis sententiis fiunt sententiae oratoriae, aut ex oratoriis poëticae, mutatis verbis et phrasi... discitur item ratio, aliquam nudam poëtae sententiam amplificandi et induendi ornatu oratorio. De hoc Quintilianus I. lib. 9. cap. Versus primo solvere, mox mutatis verbis interpretari, tum paraphrasi audacius vertere, quin et breviare quaedam, et exornare, salvo modo poëtae sensu, permittitur." (Frischlin 1596, 368–369).

26 In the edition I used, the Wittenberg oration follows immediately after the Persius and Horace paraphrases.

ideas of the poets and to express them in a way that was comprehensible to the youth studying them.[27]

The oratio concludes with an outline synopsis in which Frischlin attempts to consider all the poetic and prosaic genres (*omnis oratio, sive sit numerosa, sive prose*) in a unified form, summarized in a rhetorical system. He classifies the odes, elegies, epigrams and satires, and a narrower thematic group of these, the genres of occasional poetry, the *epithalamium, epicedium, epitaphium, propempticon* and *panegyric*, into the category of *oratio demonstrativa* (*ad praesentes*), or oratory for the audience present. The other type, aimed at contemporary audiences, is the sermo, i.e. the dialogic genres, the dialogues, the eclogues, the comedies and the tragedies, in which the characters converse directly with each other in person (*inter praesentes*), and the epistola, in which the parties interact indirectly (*inter absentes*).

Homer's and Virgil's epics are examples of fictional narrative (*narratio ficta*), or fables, written for a future audience (*ad posteros*), while the historiographical works of Herodotus, Livy, Caesar and Sallustius are examples of *narratio vera*, or histories for posterity. The last major group is made up of *institutios*, i.e. didactic genres, which are of interest to both present and future audiences (*ad utrosque*). Within this, Plato's *Republic* is addressed to the entire community (publica), to society, the second category, exemplified by the agricultural textbooks of Hesiod and Virgil, is aimed at the narrower family community (*domestica*), while the third block includes works of a scientific nature (e.g. grammatical, dialectical, rhetorical, theological, arithmetical, astronomical, medical, legal, musical) which aim to aid individual (*privata*) growth.

27 "Eisdem quoque temporibus et praecedenti anno meas in Persium, poëtam valde obscurum, paraphrases edidi, quibus mentem poëtae, ni fallor, sic explanavi, ut pueri iam possunt intelligere Persium [...] Sed et mea in omnes Epistolas Horatii exstat paraphrasis, quae hoc anno demum prodiit." (Frischlin 1596, 371). Frischlin also made similar paraphrases of Virgil's eclogues, the *Georgics* and the first two books of the *Aeneid*, among others: Price 1990, 28.

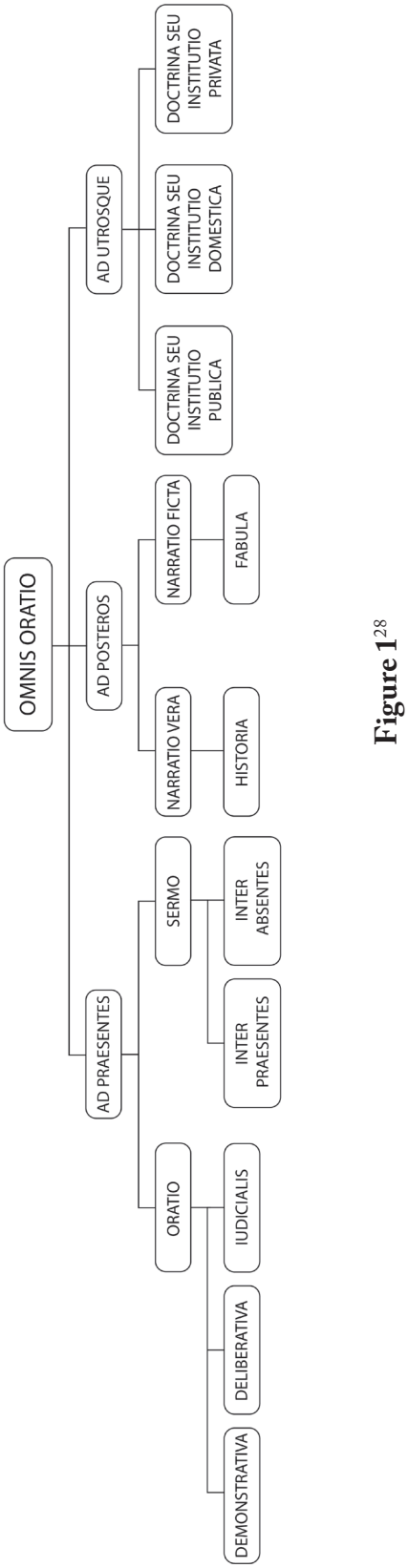

Figure 1[28]

28 The figure shows a simplified version of Frischlin's outline (Frischlin 1596, 378; Kecskeméti 2007, 274–275). The original table was republished: Price 1990, 49.

The closing figure is the visual representation of the basic concept on which Frischlin based his own rhetorical theory: according to this, there is a strong correlation between rhetoric and poetry, thus the different rhetorical procedures, speech modes and types of text (*oratio, sermo, narratio, institutio*) can be best mastered via *exercitatio*, that is, through *exemplae*, prosaic and lyrical genres, specifically by studying and imitating the works of classical antiquity.[29]

3. Imitation techniques in *Dido*

Frischlin begins his prologue dedicated to the Danish Otto Rosencrantz by justifying the choice of topic, according to which, his reason for re-imagining the *Aeneid* as a tragedy was the observation that nearly all volumes of the epic poem feature death, we read of the passing of significant characters (e.g. Anchises, Dido, Palinurus, Nisus, Euryalus, Mezentius, Camilla, Turnus), which makes the books tragic in nature.[30] The metaphrase was an obvious option for the poet in this case, since the natural link between the two genres is well known from Aristotle's *Poetics*: "the iambic lampooners became writers of comedy, and the epic poets were succeeded by tragedians." (Aristotle 1922, chapter IV., chapter XVIII).

Aristotle admonishes poets not to try to turn epic works into tragedies as a whole, but only in parts, so that the plot remains sufficiently simple and eventful (Aristotle 1922, chapter XVIII.). Frischlin did the same when he attempted to transform the fourth book of the Virgilian epic into a tragedy, following ancient models and examples (e.g. Euripides, Sophocles, Caecilius, Actius, Ennius, Seneca), which he said was his first attempt of this kind, but he intended to do the same with the other books. Frischlin defines his own work as a paraphrase, adding that he

29 *Oratio de imitatione* reflects a similarly synthetic vision, in this speech Frischlin also aims to prove the connection between rhetoric and poetry, as well as the kinship between all the different types of texts and speech: Price 1990, 48.

30 "Omnes Virgilianae Aeneidis libros esse tragicos, aut certe instar tragoediarum, nemo ignorat, qui in hoc auctore paulo diligentius est versatus [...] Nam etsi primus liber comoediae videtur similor, quam tragoediae (si ad laetam catastrophen respicias), tamen in aliis omnibus tristes sunt magnarum personarum exitus." The edition I use in this paper: Frischlin 1585, A2r. The character of Dido, who is driven to her doom by her excessive sentimentality, may remind the reader of Euripides' *Medea*, a similarity that inspired several early modern humanists who produced various dramatizations of the Dido episode in the 16th and 17th centuries, both in vernacular and Latin, for more on this see Heesakkers 1984, 145–197.

is aiming for a much freer imitation of the model text than his ancient predecessors, but he does not specify what he means by this.[31]

Frischlin's aim with *Dido* is the poetic-rhetorical training of pupils, and he intends to use the play in his own school of poetics,[32] from which the students will first learn the classical phrases, the rules of metrics and the rules of eloquent, poetic oration style, and then, during the theatrical presentation of the tragedy, they will also learn the appropriate gesticulation and pronunciation techniques.[33] The latter is intended to inspire young people with an enthusiasm for oratory, so that, as adult men, they will be more willing to speak in public.[34] In the figure that concludes the Wittenberg oration, tragedy was included among the *sermo*s, suggesting that the genre is a suitable vehicle for both interpersonal communication and the practice of rhetorical situations in public. In this context, the preface to *Dido* can be interpreted as a cross-section of the Wittenberg oration and as a "textbook" example of its concept.

If we look at the literature on the play, we find contradictions in the definitions of genre or creative technique. David Price describes *Dido*, which falls into the category of imitative drama, as a verbatim paraphrase. This is misleading, since the specificity of paraphrase is that it is quite different linguistically from the source text, and so cannot be "literal" unless the author is referring to fidelity of content with this term (Price 1990, 5).

Chris L. Heesakkers discusses the early modern tragedies' interpretation of the Dido episode in his study, including Frischlin's version. While he does not explicitly attempt to define the genre or identify the textual technique, he does make indirect references to it.

31 "Nam eodem modo Euripidem et Sophoclem suas ex Homero confecisse tragoedias animadverto, quo Caecilius, Actius, Ennius, et alii sua composuerunt apud latinos dramata. Nec dubito, quin hisce initiis cothurnatus Seneca ad latinam tragoediam scribendam nunc olim prodierit. Quorum ego exemplum imitari constituo, et quidem multo, quam illi fecerunt, liberius [...] Primam vero nunc edo e quarto libro tragoediam, in quo explicando, et paraphrasi reddendo, nunc versor [...] idem praestabo in caeteris omnibus, quod in hoc quarto libro praestiti." (Frischlin 1585, A2v–A3r).

32 Frischlin was teaching poetry at the University of Tübingen in 1581, and one of the key elements of his 'lectiones poetices' was precisely the practice of paraphrasing (Price 1990, 30).

33 In the 1580s and 90s, Strasbourg, where Frischlin's *Dido* was being published at the time, had a thriving theatrical tradition, with Michael Hospeinius's Dido tragedy being staged in the city in 1591. It is therefore possible that, in addition to the school performance of the play in Tübingen, to which Frischlin refers in the preface, there were other performances, for example in Strassburg, but I cannot provide any concrete data to support this (Heesakkers 1984, 149).

34 "Volo enim iuventutem exercere in mea schola poetica, ut primo ediscant Virgilii phrasin, et genus illud dicendi grandiloquum, ac numeris vinctum. Deinde volo illos haec eadem, quae edidicerunt, in scena recitare, ut non solum memoria illorum crebro usu acuatur, sed etiam decori gestus, et apta pronunciatio condoceatur. Volo denique animum accendi et excitari in tenera aetate, ut aliquando viri facti promtius et cordatius coram aliis, praesertim in coetibus et conventibus publicis, loquantur." (Frischlin 1585, A2v–A3r).

He analyzes Petrus Cunaeus' 17th-century manuscript version of *Dido* by contrasting it with Frischlin's, citing the close adherence to the source material as one of the similarities between the two versions, which may be a characteristic of cento or parody. Considering Heesakkers' other 17th century autograph parallel by an unknown author, cento is likely. The work in question was given the title *Cento Virgilianus* by one of its former owners, as the text of the tragedy is extremely closely related to its source, with only 150 of the 1003 lines of verse considered independent of the model in whole or in part (Heesakkers 1984). Heesakkers' argument is strengthened by the fact that George Hugo Tucker, in his major survey of cento, mentions Frischlin among the centonists working in the circle of Emperor Rudolf II, and calls his two plays, *Dido* and *Venus*, cento-plays (Tucker 2013, 3–67, 59).

Thus, the preface to *Dido* and the related literary works define the genre of the play or the creative technique at work in the text as a mixture of paraphrase and *cento*, but parody can be equally relevant given the readings in the Wittenberg speech, which served as a conceptual basis for Frischlin's poetic practice. Moving forward, I will illustrate the functioning of these imitative techniques through the first scene of the first act of *Dido*.

In the opening scene of the play, Queen Dido, in desperation, asks her sister Anna for advice on what to do about her tormented love for Aeneas, which leaves her no peace. Anna encourages her sister to take the heroic Trojan as her husband, because with such a man, the Queen and her people could live in peace and happiness. Frischlin transforms the third person singular prologue from the fourth canto of *the Aeneid*, which introduces Dido's speech, into a monologue in the first person singular person of the protagonist, following the same pattern in content, but using more selective and explanatory language, i.e. paraphrasing the source text.

Aeneid, Book 4, Lines 1–10.[35]	*Dido*, Act 1, scene 1, lines 1–13.[36]
„But anxious cares already seiz'd the queen: She fed within her veins a flame unseen; The hero's valor, acts, and birth inspire Her soul with love, and fan the secret fire. His words, his looks, imprinted in her heart, Improve the passion, and increase the smart. Now, when the purple morn had chas'd away The dewy shadows, and restor'd the day, Her sister first with early care she sought, And thus in mournful accents eas'd her thought:"	„Juno, queen of the heavens, regent of the sky! What pain do I hold close to my soul? What sort of tortuous love wounds my heart? What fire burns me from within? What sort of passion of the soul overcomes me? Not even the rest of night, deep sleep can free me from my troubles. Whether the golden Sun walks the fields with Apollo's torches, whether night wraps its dark mist round the sky, whether the dawn should break through the moist blanket of dew with its celestial chariots, the virtue of that man, the authority of his tribe ever returns to memory, and his face, his visage is always before me, carved into my mind, his words I can never forget. But behold, here is my sister, should I remain silent or open my mouth to speak?"

Table 1.

The following text in which Dido presents her troubles to Anna is almost taken word for word from the source material. The bold text in the table above shows the passages that were used in Frischlin's work unaltered, and the examples in which the poet alters the part of speech (e.g. *violo – violem*) or the verb conjugation (e.g. *animos – animum, potui – potuerim*) or uses a synonim (e.g. *Anna – soror, caede – nece, tellus – terra, pater omnipotens – Iuppiter, sepulcro – tumulo*) have been indicated in italics.

35 Translated by John Dryden. Available online: https://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.4.iv.html (last viewed: 2025. 03. 03.).

36 "Regina coeli, Iuno, dominatrix poli! / Quod vulnus alo? Quo saevo amore saucior? / Quo carpor igni? Quo feror animi impetu? / Non me quies nocturna, non altus sopor / solvere curis. Nam mihi, seu lampade / terras Apollinea aureum Solis iubar / lustrat, nigrave nox polum caligine / involuit, humentemve amictum roscidis / Aurora bigis coelitus dimoverit, / semper animo virtus viri, semperque honos / gentis recursat, semper infixi obviant / vultus et ora, nec animo verba excidunt. / Sed en, adest soror, tacebon an eloquar." Frischlin 1585, A4v.

Vergilius: *Aeneid*[37]		Frischlin: *Dido* (1585, A4v-A5r.)	
9.	**'Anna soror**, quae **me** suspensam **insomnia** *terrent*!	O **Anna soror**, **insomnia** ut **me** *territant*?	**14.**
10.	**Quis novus hic** nostris **successit sedibus hospes**,	**Quis hic novus successit hospes sedibus**?	**15.**
11.	**quem** *sese ore* **ferens**, **quam forti pectore et armis**!	**Quem** *se* **ferens** *vultu* virum? **Quam pectore**	**16.**
12.	credo equidem, nec vana fides, genus esse deorum.	**forti**, **et** alacribus **armis**. Venere natum Deae	**17.**
13.	*degeneres animos* **timor arguit**. heu, **quibus ille**	haud dubito. *Degenerem animum* **arguit timor**.	**18.**
14.	**iactatus** *fatis*! **quae bella** exhausta **canebat**!	Sed o **quibus iactatus ille** est *casibus*?	**19.**
15.	**si mihi non animo fixum immotum**que sederet	**Quae bella**, quas clades **canebat**? **Si mihi**	**20.**
16.	**ne cui** me **vinclo** *vellem sociare* **iugali**,	**non** ita **animo fixum** hoc, et **immotum** foret,	**21.**
17.	**postquam primus amor** deceptam **morte fefellit**;	**ne cui** *velim annecti* **iugali vinculo**,	**22.**
18.	**si non pertaesum** *thalami* **taedaeque** *fuisset*,	**postquam Sichaei morte primus** me viri	**23.**
19.	**huic uni forsan** *potui* **succumbere culpae**.	**amor fefellit**, **si** *maritalis tori*	**24.**
20.	*Anna* (**fatebor enim**) miseri **post** *fata* **Sychaei**	**non** antehac **taedaeque pertaesum** *foret*,	**25.**
21.	**coniugis** et **sparsos** *fraterna caede penatis*	**huic forsan uni** *potuerim* **succumbere**	**26.**
22.	**solus hic inflexit** *sensus* **animum**que labantem	**culpae**, o *soror* (**fatebor** hoc **enim**) **post coniugis**	**27.**

37 Source of Latin text: The Latin Library, available online: https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/vergil/aen4.shtml (last accessed 03/03/2025). In English: "My dearest Anna, what new dreams affright / My lab'ring soul! what visions of the night / Disturb my quiet, and distract my breast / With strange ideas of our Trojan guest! / His worth, his actions, and majestic air, / A man descended from the gods declare. / Fear ever argues a degenerate kind; / His birth is well asserted by his mind. / Then, what he suffer'd, when by Fate betray'd! / What brave / attempts for falling Troy he made! / Such were his looks, so gracefully he spoke, / That, were I not resolv'd against the yoke / Of hapless marriage, never to be curst / With second love, so fatal was my first, / To this one error I might yield again; / For, since Sichaeus was untimely slain, / This only man is able to subvert / The fix'd foundations of my stubborn heart. / And, to confess my frailty, to my shame, / Somewhat I find within, if not the same, / Too like the sparkles of my former flame. / But first let yawning earth a passage rend, / And let me thro' the dark abyss descend; / First let avenging Jove, with flames from high, / Drive down this body to the nether sky, / Condemn'd with ghosts in endless night to lie, / Before I break the plighted faith I gave! / No! he who had my vows shall ever have; / For, whom I lov'd on earth, I worship in the grave." / She said: the tears ran gushing from her eyes, / And stopp'd her speech." Translated by John Dryden. Available online: https://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.4.iv.html (last viewed: 2025. 03. 03.).

Vergilius: *Aeneid*[37]		Frischlin: *Dido* (1585, A4v-A5r.)	
23.	**impulit**. **agnosco veteris vestigia flammae**.	*fatum* **Sichaei**, et triste *parricidium*,	**28.**
24.	**sed mihi vel** *tellus* optem **prius** *ima* **dehiscat**	**sparsosque coniugis** *nece patrios lares*,	**29.**
25.	**vel** *pater omnipotens* **adigat me fulmine ad umbras**,	**hic solus inflexit animum**, ac *sensum* **impulit**,	**30.**
26.	pallentis **umbras** *Erebo noctem*que ***profundam***,	**agnosco veteris flammae** aliqua **vestigia**.	**31.**
27.	ante, **pudor**, **quam te** *violo* aut tua iura resolvo.	**Sed mihi prius vel** *terra* **dehiscat** *infima*,	**32.**
28.	ille **meos**, **primus qui** me **sibi** iunxit, **amores**	**vel** *Iuppiter* **adigat me ad umbras fulmine**,	**33.**
29.	**abstulit**; ille **habeat** secum **servetque** *sepulcro*.'	**umbras** nigras *Erebi*, ***profundum*** in *Tartarum*,	**34.**
30.	sic effata sinum lacrimis implevit obortis.	**Quam te pudor** laedam, aut modum *violem* tuum.	**35.**
		Qui primus abstulit amores meos, **habeat sibi**,	**36.**
		servetque *tumulo*.	**37.**

Table 2.

Frischlin continues this parody- or cento-like passage with a long section of dialogue. In the *Aeneid*, there is a conversation consisting of a single exchange, Anna responding to her sister's complaint in a long soliloquy,[38] which Frischlin expands into a dialogue with multiple

38 Canto 4, lines 31-59: "O dearer than the vital air I breathe, / Will you to grief your blooming years bequeath, Condemn'd to waste in woes your lonely life, / Without the joys of mother or of wife? / Think you these tears, this pompous train of woe, / Are known or valued by the ghosts below? / I grant that, while your sorrows yet were green, / It well became a woman, and a queen, / The vows of Tyrian princes to neglect, / To scorn Hyarbas, and his love reject, / With all the Libyan lords of mighty name; / But will you fight against a pleasing flame! / This little spot of land, which Heav'n bestows, / On ev'ry side is hemm'd with warlike foes; / Gaetulian cities here are spread around, / And fierce Numidians there your frontiers bound; / Here lies a barren waste of thirsty land, / And there the Syrtes raise the moving sand; / Barcaean troops besiege the narrow shore, / And from the sea Pygmalion threatens more. / Propitious Heav'n, and gracious Juno, lead / This wand'ring navy to your needful aid: / How will your empire spread, your city rise, / From such a union, and with such allies? / Implore the favor of the pow'rs above, / And leave the conduct of the rest to love. / Continue still your hospitable way, And still invent occasions of their stay, / Till storms and winter winds shall cease to threat, / And planks and oars repair their shatter'd fleet." / These words, which from a friend and sister came, / With ease resolv'd the scruples of her fame, / And added fury to the kindled flame. / Inspir'd with hope, the project they pursue; / On ev'ry altar sacrifice renew: / A chosen ewe of two years old they pay / To Ceres, Bacchus, and the God of Day; / Preferring Juno's pow'r, for Juno ties / The nuptial knot and makes the marriage joys." Translated by John Dryden. Available online: https://classics.mit.edu/Virgil/aeneid.4.iv.html (last viewed: 2025. 03. 03.).

exchanges by interpolating Dido's continuous feedback in his own paraphrased version. Here, the poet introduces syncretism by subtly weaving Christian ideas into the words spoken by the pagan heroine of the play. Thus, he confirms what he anticipated in the *Praefatio*, that the ancient Greco-Roman authors could provide their audience with models for living a pious life, not only with models of rhetorical speech.[39] Dido, in the conversation with her sister below, exhibits virtues such as selflessness, innocence, honesty, certainty in faith and hope.[40]

Dialogue between Anna and Dido from Act 1, Scene 1 (lines 37–79.)

Anna: What pleasure do you take in mourning the dead forever? Why do you torment your soul with bitterness, sister? What will thou choose? Will you sacrifice your life to departed spirits, or marry again? Or have you other plans? Which is it? Hast thou henceforth to spend thy youth in eternal loneliness and sorrow, ignorant of Venus' gifts and of the blessing of children? Hitherto, no suitor in Tyre or Africa has been able to banish thy grief, nor Iarbas of Numidia, whom thou hast despised, nor any other prince who makes glory of Carthaginian triumphs for yourself. But this love, which is happiness for you, you no longer deny, sister, don't you?

Dido: But I came to this decision.

Anna: Have you forgotten on whose land you have settled, who surrounds you? On one side is the wild Numidia, and shallow waters hostile with reefs; on the other side is the coast desolate with drought; on this side are the cruel Getuls, and on that the raging Mazags our neighbours.

Dido: The innocent is protected by his honour, the surest bulwark against the weapons of the enemy.

Anna: Surely it is often the case that honour is trampled in the mud by violence, and that cruel human hatred mar pious faith. But even if there were no outrages against you in this land, do you not think of the war that is brewing in Tyre, of the terrible threats of your brother Pygmalion? I do believe, indeed, that it was by

39 "Nam meos ego auditores et amo et diligo, ut qui non modo illorum linguas eleganti oratione ex Caesaris et Virgilii libris, sed etiam vitam et mores eorundem propositis exemplis virtutum ex iisdem informare studeo." (Frischlin 1585, A3r).

40 For example, the passage in which Dido speaks of the innocent not needing armed protection because their honour protects them from the enemy can be paralleled with the corresponding line in Psalm 25: "Let innocence and honour protect me, for I am waiting for you". And Dido's last words in the first scene remind us, among other things, of Romans chapter 8, which speaks of the certainty of Christian hope.

> the gods, by the pious Juno, that the Trojan ships were brought here. Thou shalt see how thy city is renewed, and how its houses thrive on such a marriage. And how great will be your glory when your Punic cities are protected by Trojan arms!
> Dido: Admit that only what Jupiter says is right, and Juno, who takes heed of the marriage bond, and Liber and Ceres! Let them graciously approve this marriage!
> Anna: Well, do at once what you must, ask permission of the gods, and make sacrifices to them, and please your guests, and give them excuses why they should stay longer: There is still a cruel storm at sea... Orion threatens rain, and the sky is gloomy over the water... The broken Trojan ships cannot yet be put to work on the high seas...
> Dido: You give me good advice, and feed my doubting soul with the greatest assurance of the fulfilment of my hopes.
> Anna: Let us go quickly to the shrines and ask the gods for help![41]

4. Conclusion – Is *Dido* a polyphonic tragedy?

From the first scene of the first act of *Dido*, we can also see examples of how Frischlin uses the techniques of imitation, paraphrase, cento,

41 "[…] AN. Quid iuvat te perpetim / lacrymare mortuum? Quid animum questibus / gravas tuum soror? An sepultos iudicas / curare manes, sine nubas, an secus? / Quid? Solane deinceps perennem lugubri / vultu iuventam transiges, nec praemia / Veneris, nec ullos noris ex te liberos? / Esto, procorum nullus ante flectere / aegram potuerit, non Tyro, non Africae / despectus ille Numidae Iarbas, non duces / alii, triumphi quos honorant Punici, / etiamne placito amori huic obstes soror? / DI. Sententia est. AN. Annon tibi in mentem venit, / quorum solo consederis, qui limites, / hinc Numidia infraenis, et inhospita Syrtium / vada, hinc siti deserta regio, hinc aspera / Getulia, hinc late furentes Mazages. / DI. Pudor innocentem proteget, tutissimum / adversus hostium arma propugnaculum. / AN. Saepe pudor armis vincitur saepe improbus / mortalium furor probam laedit fidem. / Et ut hostium neminem habeas in his locis, / non bella cogitas Tyro surgentia, / fratrisque Pygmalionis atroces minas? / Equidem Deis reor auspicibus, et propitiae / Iunone, cursum habuisse Phrygias huc rates. / Quam tu dehinc urbem novam? Quae surgere / connubio tali videbis moenia? / Quantis tuum se rebus attollet decus, / si Punicas urbes Phrygum arma protegant. / DI. Videre quod verum est loqui, modo Iupiter / et Iuno, cui iugale curae est vinculum, / et Liber et Ceres, benigne hic annuant. / AN. Nunc ergo, quod facto est opus, veniam Deos / posce, et sacrum lita, et hospitibus indulgeas, / caussamque nectas hic morandi longius, / dum saeva hyems pelago fremit, dum nubilus / minatur Orion, et intractabile / coelum mari imminet et Phrygum quassae rates / pelagi laborem perpeti non sustinent. / DI. Recte mones, dubiamque mentem spe foves / certissima. AN. Quin ergo adimus ocyus / delubra, pacemque ibi Deorum exquirimus." (Frischlin 1585, A5r–v).

parody and dialogue to divide the different dramatic parts (S. Horváth 2006, 541–564, 546). Dido's first utterance is the narrative proemium that introduces the fourth canto of the *Aeneid*, and in the Anna-Dido dialogue it is also the protagonist's responses that will be of interest from this point of view. In the details of Dido's individual utterances, which fit into the Christian paradigm and seem alien to the hero's cultural orientation, that we will discover the secondary voice, the authorial language, so to speak. Moving on to the second scene of the first act of *Dido*, we find another precedent for the following narrative locus of the *Aeneid* as spoken by one of the characters, namely the goddess Venus (Frischlin 1585, A5v–A6v. cf. *Aeneid*, canto 4, lines 65–89, Lakatos–Szabó 1967).

In addition to the mixing of narrative and character voices, the alternation of textual techniques (paraphrase – cento/parody – paraphrase – cento/parody...), which the reassessment/rereading of the first act proved to be continuous and regular, is also noticeable in this play. But it is also striking that Frischlin does not want to conform to the normative rules and prescriptions of poetics. In *Dido*, the paraphrased passages bear the marks of both cento and parody, just as the reverse is also true, and even in the case of cento or parody passages, it is impossible to decide clearly which is which. Frischlin's play can therefore be considered a paraphrase, a cento or a parody, since the characteristics of the three imitative techniques are present (and sometimes mixed) in the text,[42] as far as the analysis of the first scene of Act I shows, and this may explain the conceptual confusion in the accompanying text and in the relevant literature.[43]

To sum up, we can say that *Dido* corresponds to the polyphonic concept of imitation that Nicola Kaminski outlines in connection with the two Frischlin comedies *Hildegardis Magna* and *Helvetiogermani*, although not without some restrictions. Kaminski sees the difference between these comedies and the two imitative plays, *Dido* and *Venus*, considered a counterpart to *Dido*, precisely in the monotony of the latter's speeches, yet she gives a contradictory example from the tragedy *Venus*, when Frischlin presents the pleading words of Aeneas from the

42 It is possible that the term 'free imitation' in the preface refers to this formal-technical-linguistic diversity, to the simultaneous use of different imitative procedures, i.e. within a single work of art. The versification is also varied, with long and short lines in a wide range of combinations of regular and irregular metrics. Cf. „Polyphony [...] extends to word, thought, manifestation, language and genre." (S. Horváth 2006, 545). For more on Bakhtin's concept of polyphony, see Bakhtin 1984, 5–46. The connection between imitative text-forming techniques and polyphony is also shown by the term carmen harmoniacum used for cento: Alsted 1630, 554.

43 Andor Tarnai writes about the general experience of parody that it is often from the individual works, which are called paraphrase, cento or parody in a given period, that the actual rules for a given technique or genre must be deduced. The rules sanctioned by theory are therefore not as sure a guide as one might at first think (Tarnai 1990, 444-469).

first canto of the Vergilian epic (lines 91–101), in a derisive tone spoken by Iuno (Kaminski 1995, 129–130). There is no example of such a re-styling in the opening scene of *Dido* that I have examined, but it is certain that this promising opening already bears signs of formal, technical, linguistic and content polyphony, for instance the emotional charge that Dido's first speech brings to the objective prologue introducing the fourth canto of *the Aeneid*. Even though I did not undertake a complete analysis in my present study, I hope my observations contained herein will serve as a basis for further more detailed research toward supporting the hypothesis above.

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Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius ullium: Ferenc Hunyadi's 1583 epic poem about Stephen Báthory

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ABSTRACT

Ferenc Hunyadi (1550?–1600), often referred to as the "Hun Virgil," published a significant work in 1583 in Venice, celebrating the hero Stephen Báthory, King of Poland. Likely commissioned by the Polish Royal Chancellery, this volume serves as an example of Báthory's deliberate political self-representation. This paper examines Hunyadi's epic work as a piece of propaganda, particularly in relation to Báthory's siege of Danzig (Gdańsk) and the Livonian War. Although Hunyadi's epyllion does not appear to be a consistent or coherent composition, several compositional arcs can be identified within his work. This paper provides a concise summary of the epic poem, aiming to identify the motifs and larger compositional elements that function as deliberate propaganda tools.

Keywords: Neolatin literature, epic, propaganda, historiography, fame

1. Introduction

Ferenc Hunyadi (Franciscus Hunniadinus), the "Hun Virgil", published a voluminous work in a collection praising Stephen Báthory in Venice in 1583. The Polish Royal Chancellery probably commissioned the volume and is a good example of Báthory's conscious, political self-representation (Gömöri 1999, 90; Bitskey 2013, 245, 251). This paper examines Hunyadi's epyllion as an ideological work reflecting Báthory's political self-representation.[1] Tibor Csorba (1944, 51–60, 70–107) summarized the propaganda related to Danzig's (Gdańsk) conflict with Báthory and the Livonian War. Although Csorba also mentions Hunyadi in the

1 I am particularly indebted to Gábor Petneházi for his help in interpreting the poem.

wreath of poets around Stephen Báthory, he forgets to include him among the authors of the propaganda literature on the conflict of Danzig, even though – as we shall see – this conflict is one of the main pillars of his epic poem. Danzig's propagandistic writings – mainly in German – have most recently been analyzed by Maciej Ptaszyński. His study also includes Polish scholarly literature on the propaganda of the Danzig conflict. Szymon Brzeziński deals with another segment of the Polish propaganda literature around Báthory, which the execution of Samuel Zborowski generated. Éva Gyulai analyses the propaganda policy of the Báthory-impresas, which continued even after the king's death. Ildikó Horn examines the carefully composed image of the ruler Báthory's personality in the light of the idealist Erasmus' mirror of prince.

Figure 1. Cartari 1581, 264.

Although Hunyadi's epyllion is not a consistent and coherent composition, we can discover several compositional arcs in his work. This paper concisely summarizes the epic poem and demonstrates that these structural and thematic elements were deliberately employed to serve the political aims of Stephen Báthory's reign. By analysing the poem's recurring motifs and compositional strategies, the paper argues that Hunyadi's epic functioned as a conscious instrument of royal self-representation in the context of the siege of Danzig (Gdańsk) and the Livonian War.

2. The first part of the poem: invocation (lines 1–66)

Hunyadi structured his epic poem into four chapters of progressively increasing length. The first introductory part, containing 66 hexameters, is the shortest (Hunyadi 2022, 99–100). Its epic function resembles an invocation, or rather a reverse invocation, in which, instead of the poet calling upon the Muses for assistance, the personified figure of Fame, Fama (Φήμη) appeals to Hunyadi for aid. Although no specific personified figure of Propaganda or Report, they can be assigned all of Fama's attributes. Virgil (*Aen.* IV. 174–190) depicted the monstrous figure of Fama as follows (translated by John Dryden, see Fig. 2):

> Fame, the great ill, from small beginnings grows:
> Swift from the first; and ev'ry moment brings
> New vigor to her flights, new pinions to her wings.
> Soon grows the pigmy to gigantic size;
> Her feet on earth, her forehead in the skies.
> Inrag'd against the gods, revengeful Earth
> Produc'd her last of the Titanian birth.
> Swift is her walk, more swift her winged haste:
> A monstrous phantom, horrible and vast.
> As many plumes as raise her lofty flight,
> So many piercing eyes inlarge her sight;
> Millions of opening mouths to Fame belong,
> And ev'ry mouth is furnish'd with a tongue,
> And round with list'ning ears the flying plague is hung.
> She fills the peaceful universe with cries;
> No slumbers ever close her wakeful eyes;
> By day, from lofty tow'rs her head she shews,
> And spreads thro' trembling crowds disastrous news;
> With court informers haunts, and royal spies;
> Things done relates, not done she feigns, and mingles truth with lies.
> Talk is her business, and her chief delight
> To tell of prodigies and cause affright.

Figure 2. Vergilius 1502, CCXV^{v}.

While Vincenzo Cartari only refers to Virgil's lines in his book (Cartari 1556, 77^{v}–79^{r}; Cartari 1996, 440–1), a few decades later Cesare Ripa (1593, 74) has already quoted them in his Italian translation (*Aen.* IV. 174, 176–7, 181–8). Independently of Virgil, neither author emphasizes the figure of the monster but rather that of the woman. Ripa (2012, 176) describes the figure as "Donna vestita d'un velo sottile, succinto, a traverso, raccolto a mezza gamba, che mostri correre leggiermente; averà due grand'ali, sarà tutta pennata, e per tutto vi saranno tant'occhi quante penne, e tra questi vi saranno molte bocche et orecchie, nella destra mano terrà una tromba [...]."[2] In addition, Ripa (2012, 177) also gives the attributes of Good Fame (*Fama buona*) and Bad Fame (*Fama cattiva*), which could be combined to shape the figure of Propaganda. The Good Fame has pure white wings but has no eyes, mouths, or ears. Additional attributes include the trumpet in her right hand, the olive branch in her left hand, and the gold necklace with a heart around her neck. The female figure of the Bad Fame glides on black wings with dark, mournful, gloomy (*nero*) images painted on her dress. She also has a trumpet in her hand.

2 "A woman dressed in a thin, succinct veil, gathered across her waist at mid-calf, appearing to run lightly; she will have two large wings, she will be covered in feathers, and everywhere there will be as many eyes as feathers, and among these there will be many mouths and ears, in her right hand she will hold a trumpet [...]."

Figure 3. Fama (Marcolino, 1540, XI)

Figure 4. id. Hans Weigel (~1520–1577), Fama

Hunyadi's Fama is not a monster but a muse-like female figure (see Fig. 3 and 4) who arrives at the poet's Paduan idyll surrounded by bloody vapours, weary from haste, with weakened wings, and exhausted, bringing news of the ferocious Livonian War in the north. With her chiding, she arouses Hunyadi, who has wasted his poetic talents on trifling verses, epigrams, and bucolic idylls, while the character and deeds of Stephen Báthory demand an epic subject: "Aude aliquid, noluisse sat est, teque exime vulgo!".[3] This scene (mostly lines 16–31) shows a striking similarity to the beginning of Janus Pannonius' Marcellus-panegyric, when Pallas Athena, and not Fama, is the one who encourages Janus to write more significant works.[4]

Thus, Fama, who may also be interpreted as the personified figure of Propaganda, swiftly convinces Hunyadi to serve as the voice of the king's greatness and extraordinary deeds: "Te nunc ignavia deses occupat Euganeae iuvenis pars una coronae."[5] Fama urges the poet to compose and recite an epic about the northern war. As illustrated in Cartari's work (see Fig. 1), one of Fama's most significant attributes is her presence alongside the chariot of Mars, as she is responsible for

3 "Dare to do something, enough of not wanting to, set yourself apart from the crowd!"

4 "[…] iterumne Guarini / Ludere vis ludum? vel te pastoria forsan / Has inter potius delectant sibila silvas? / Lascivive placent Elegi, aut iurgator Iambus? / An tardus Scazon? veterisve undena Phalaeci / Syllaba, dulce iocis spargens epigramma facetis?" See Jankovits 2022, 45.

5 "Now, let your laziness cease, the young man of Euganea occupies one part of the crown."

disseminating news of military events. The reliability of the news she proclaims, however, remains inconsequential.

Cartari (1996, 440) paraphrased the Virgilian description as "la Fama apportatrice non meno del falso che del vero."[6] The news, by its very nature, is neither true nor false. News is news because it spreads everywhere on nimble wings, whether true or false. Fama kept on a leash and controlled can become a carefully managed propaganda. Whoever controls the news can choose which eyes and ears on Fama's body to keep open and which to close according to their preference.

Johannes Sambucus' emblem (1569, 281) entitled *Vel levia multitudine clarent* [Through multitude even light/insignificant things can become famous] points out another important aspect of the image of Fama/Propaganda. The message of the emblem dedicated to Johannes Oporinus, a printer from Basel, is clear. The printer is seen during the process of printing in his workshop, with the winged female figure of Fama above his head (see Fig. 5).

All of this aligns with Báthory's deliberate propaganda strategy: the broader the dissemination of the message, the greater the likelihood of reaching its intended audience. One of the most prominent examples of Báthory's propaganda efforts is the Paduan volume, whose most substantial component – both in content and length – is Hunyadi's epic poem. Notably, Báthory recognized the power of news and rumours in shaping public perception to such an extent that, when military operations in Livonia commenced, he not only imposed censorship but also established a mobile printing press that travelled with his army, ensuring that his version of events was disseminated as swiftly as possible (Horn 2008, 381–2).

Furthermore, the Fama scene presents a practical reinterpretation of the epic invocation. If the Polish Royal Chancellery commissioned the edition of *Viridarium*, then it is not the poet who calls upon the muse, but rather the chancellery – embodied by Fama – that summons the poet. By definition: news disseminated for a specific purpose is propaganda. This explains why Hunyadi does not appear in the company of the muses at the beginning of the epic. In this context, the anachronistic notion of an "independent artist" who invokes the celestial beings contrasts with that of the "court artist," who is instead invoked by them. The former voluntarily seeks the company of the muses, while the latter is forcibly removed from their grove and placed upon a "watchful throne high on the housetops or lofty towers" by the celestial Fama, who, as Virgil describes, "can cling to the vile invention and malignant wrong, or mingle with her word some tidings true."[7] This transformation thus reflects the image of a poet pulled from the ivory tower into the service of the court.

In Hunyadi's description, Fama is not associated with a trumpet. Instead, the *Viridarium* volume itself serves as the instrument through which Fama proclaims the glory of Stephen Báthory. At the conclusion

6 "Fame brings no less falsehood than truth."

7 Translated by Theodore C. Williams.

of the reverse invocation—where the earthly office summons the poet through the celestial Fama—Hunyadi laments that his prolonged engagement with bucolic poetry has left him unfit to compose a suitably grand account of Báthory's heroic deeds. He confesses that he has grown so idle in the fragrant valleys of Italy that he can only sing of its forests and groves, rather than noble poetry worthy of his subject: "tam timida vibrare lyra temerarius error excludit veniam, laus est siluisse modeste."[8]

However, in the final lines of the first part, Hunyadi remarks that perhaps the time will come (*forsan erit tempus*) when he will extol the king's glorious deeds in a more refined song, stirring the whole Helicon. Until then, however, he can offer only this humble, rustic piece.

Figure 5. Sambucus 1569, 281.

3. The second part of the poem: Stephen's birthday celebration (lines 67–300)

The chapter entitled *Stephanu genethlia* also suggests that Hunyadi composed the epic poem from various parts. This relatively short chapter (234 hexameters) appears to be an occasional poem in the genre

8 "To vibrate the lyre so timidly, a rash error excludes pardon, it is praiseworthy to have remained modestly silent."

of *genethliacum* or *natalitium* and may have originally been intended as a birthday tribute to Báthory, which the poet later integrated into his *epyllion*. From an ideological perspective, this chapter reveals a deliberate and significant element of Báthory's self-representation, emphasizing the divine ordination of his reign and his heavenly vocation. Ildikó Horn (2008, 368-372) has identified this motif as well as its connection to the Erasmian ideal, which became a cornerstone of Báthory's self-representation (Erasmus 2003, 26-27). Another example of this ideological motif appears in the preface to *Viridarium*, where the publisher Zucconelli states (Hunyadi 1583, A2v): *a Daciae Principatu ad excelsam Poloniae Coronam divinitus evocatum*. At the beginning of the second chapter of Hunyadi's poem, Báthory must have particularly appreciated the passage in which he is portrayed as the Erasmian *pater patriae* ('father of the country'). Here, Hunyadi describes the long-foretold birth of the *magnus pater patriae* ('great father of the country'), who, safeguarding ancestral power, will ensure the observance of ancient laws. Under his rule, Hungary's golden age will be reborn, and long-awaited peace and justice will flourish. This divine calling is further legitimized by miraculous signs appearing across the world and by ancient Chaldean, Persian, Etruscan, Egyptian, and Sibylline prophecies. While the peoples of the South and the East await these events in fear, those of the West and the North already celebrate the coming golden age.

This anticipated era of peace will reverse the natural order: steel will soften into gold, swords will be reshaped into scythes, trees will exude balm, and rivers with gold swirling in their beds will flow with milk and honey instead of water. Even the waters of the "warlike Danube" will transform, carrying nectar and ambrosia.

The gods want to see the miracle with their own eyes, thus gather at the cradle of the new-born Stephen. However, the Parcae, the weavers of human destiny, are absent. At Jupiter's command, a messenger is dispatched to summon the three sisters. Upon their arrival, Atropos is the first to address the infant Stephen. As she spins the thread of his fate, she repeatedly chants a hexametric incantation to determine Báthory's destiny: "Currite felices felicia licia fusi!"[9] Atropos foresees a future in which, following the bloody wars against the Turks, Buda and Belgrade will be liberated, and the once-ravaged southern countryside along the Drava River will flourish in peace. The prophecy extends beyond Hungary, envisioning Stephen as the liberator of the Polish people from Moscow's domination and the one who will recapture the lost city of Połock (now Polack in Belarus). Ultimately, the mother of the goddesses, Nature, affirms these prophecies with her murmured approval. From that moment on, Báthory's destiny is bound to the immutable laws of nature.

9 "Run, happy ones, happy ones, spinning yarn!"

In this scene, Hunyadi's depiction goes beyond the conventional rhetoric of divine ordination. The authority of the Parcae and the natural order supersede even the will of the gods. Consequently, Stephen's reign is not merely divinely sanctioned but dictated by the very laws of nature. In this framework, his accession to the throne becomes as inevitable and universal as the principles governing thermodynamics or gravity, an unalterable force of nature. The approval of Atropos' words by Nature has the same impact as the legendary apple falling on Newton's head. Recognizing the power of natural law is akin to apples knocking on the heads of the gods present.

4. Third part of the poem: Stephen's childhood (lines 301–1315)

The chapter *Stephanu paedia* focuses on Báthory's childhood and youth. At the beginning, Hunyadi evokes Báthory's father, the Transylvanian voivode Stephen Báthory the Elder, and envisions a rebuilt church in reconquered Buda, along with a triumphal arch erected for King Báthory. This arch is guarded by lifelike marble statues of Attila, the "god of war," and King Matthias. In front of them, the corpses of fallen Turks lie piled up in heaps.

The first approximately three hundred lines of the chapter function as a mirror for princes, in which Stephen Báthory the Elder – through historical, biblical, and mythological examples – instructs his young son on the proper way to rule. At the same time, he emphasizes the importance of learning. The infant Báthory, eager to throw himself into battle, must be calmed by his father. Later, the adolescent Stephen finds himself at the Herculean crossroads, where the personified figures of Virtus and Voluptas engage in a contest (*certamen*) for his allegiance. This topos in Hunyadi's poem consists of 350 lines (Molnár 34–5). Hunyadi's depiction of "Virtus & Voluptas" aligns with the widespread topos of "Hercules at the Crossroads", a key element of ruler self-representation that proliferated from the 15th century onward.

With this, Stephen Báthory joined the ranks such as Charles VIII of France (1470–1498), Henry IV of England (1553–1610), the Duke of Milan Maximilian Sforza (1493–1530), the young Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1500–1558), Philip II of Spain (1527–1598), the Duke of Parma Alexander Farnese (1545–1592), the Elector of Bavaria Maximilian I (1573–1651), and anticipated such rulers as Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria (1609-1641), or the kings of France Louis XIV (1638–1715) and Louis XV (1710–1774).[10]

If we consider this in light of the ideological objectives of the Polish Chancellery, the mere inclusion of this list of rulers enhances the significance of Hunyadi's crossroads scene. However, the propaganda

10 For the most detailed summary of the topos, see Panofsky (1930). See also Dickerman and Walker (1996); Polleroß (1998).

value of the motif is noteworthy from another perspective as well: it contrasts with the notion of divine predestination presented in the previous chapter. As a Catholic ruler, Báthory freely chooses Virtus over Voluptas: not under the force of immutable predestination, but as a reflection of his noble character. While his rule derives from divine decree and is affirmed by Mother Nature, the quality of his governance stems from his own choices, as he is granted the freedom to wield power virtuously or sinfully.

The original source of this topos is Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (II.1.21–34), where he recounts Prodicus' story of Hercules' choice between Ἀρετή/Ἐυδαιμονία and Κακία. Cicero briefly references this passage in *De officiis* (I.118), an important moment, as his Latin interpretation popularized the contrast between Voluptas and Virtus. The most influential later adaptation, however, is found in Silius Italicus' *Punica* (XV.18–128), where the two figures appear in Scipio's dream.

By the 16th century, the topos had evolved beyond Silius Italicus' version, and Virtus had undergone a radical transformation: losing her femininity and physical beauty in favor of internalized virtues. The humanist reinterpretation of the topos thus emphasizes the difficulty of the choice between the two figures. Another innovation introduced by Silius Italicus is the inclusion of allegorical attendants around Virtus and Voluptas, though in *Punica*, their number is far smaller than in Hunyadi's adaptation.

In Hunyadi's poem, Virtus delivers her monologue following the same rhetorical structure as in *Punica*, but with a significant difference: rather than presenting Roman and ancient historical exempla, she invokes figures from Hungarian history. Virtus traces an arc from the Hungarian conquest of the Carpathian Basin in the late 9th century to King Matthias' capture of Vienna in 1485. At the end of the scene, Virtus embraces and kisses the young Báthory before vanishing into thin air (Hunyadi 2022, 127). (Notably, the kiss of Virtue is a recurring motif in Hunyadi's oeuvre, the final instance occurs at Báthory's death in the volume of *Piis manibus,* Hunyadi 2022, 250–251).

From a propaganda perspective, Hunyadi's depiction of Hercules' *studium sapientiae* along the path of Virtus is a crucial element, which he associates with the philosophical, poetic, and scholarly pursuits of the future prince (see, for example, Tietze-Conrat 1951, 308-309, fig. 52). By the late 16th century, within the framework of the Hercules topos, choosing the path of Virtus had also come to signify the pursuit of erudition and the *vita contemplativa*.

Báthory's education is remarkable even by humanist standards. Beyond his knowledge of natural philosophy and astronomy, he is well-versed in various philosophical traditions. In addition to Plato and Aristotle, he is familiar with Democritus, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Cato the Younger, the Cynics, and the Stoic Cleanthes, as well as the Chaldean Oracles and the Corpus Hermeticum. His rhetorical skills are refined to the extent that he speaks like Pericles, having trained his

eloquence with Isocrates and Demosthenes, and he blends the historical depth of Livy, Pliny, Terence, and Cicero with the light wit of Plautus (see also Veress 1933, 21-24; Horn 2008, 365–367, 376).

Hunyadi concludes the third chapter on Báthory's youth with his return from Germany and his prophetic nightmare of a grief-stricken, suffering Hungary (*Ungaria*). Accompanied by the river gods of the Danube, Tisza, Sava, Szamos, Maros, and Drava, as well as the personified figures of Illyria, Moesia, and Bohemia, *Ungaria* laments her fate. In a brief speech, she declares that she no longer wishes to live, desiring only a dignified death. The only glimmer of hope, she suggests, lies with the Báthory family. Turning to *Dacia* (i.e., Transylvania), she pleads for help in preserving the Hungarian name. Báthory awakens in horror as the figure of *Ungaria* vanishes into thin air.

5. The fourth part of the poem: Stephen's reign (lines 1316–2793)

The final and most extensive chapter, *Stephanu basilia*, focuses on Stephen's reign as Prince of Transylvania, his kingship of Poland, and his celebrated historical deeds in Danzig and Livonia. This section may have originally formed the core of the epyllion, which Hunyadi later expanded by incorporating Báthory's birth and childhood. It is in this chapter that Fama's earlier visit to the poet finds its purpose, as if this section were an independent epic, a notion reinforced by the renewed use of the epic device of invocation.

If we consider the epyllion as a coherent work, it suggests that Hunyadi, having begun with Fama's call, has only now reached the moment where he invokes the Muses in accordance with epic tradition. He calls upon none other than Clio, the muse of history. Perhaps not coincidentally, Fama, whether conveying truth or falsehood, complements and contrasts with history. The most illustrious contemporary representation appears in Hendrik Goltzius' engraving, where Fama soars through the air with her trumpet while Historia remains grounded, absorbed in reading a thick historical book.[11] The winged hourglass floating between them symbolizes the temporality of both figures: History is anchored in the past, while Fame belongs to the present.

Hunyadi, therefore, "writes history" in this section. At the outset of the epic poem, Fama visits Hunyadi, urging him to sing of the events of the Livonian War. This chapter focuses on three of Báthory's "epic-scale" military exploits: the Battle of Kerelőszentpál[12] (today: Sânpaul, Romania) on 19 July 1575, the siege of the rebellious city of Danzig at

11 Washington DC, National Gallery of Art: https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.153980.html (12.03. 2025.)

12 This battle ensured the political autonomy of the Principality of Transylvania and marked the starting point of Stephen Báthory's independent reign and his path to the Polish throne.

the end of 1577, and his three campaigns of the Livonian War between 1579 and 1581. However, despite Fama's request, Hunyadi dedicates the least attention to the Livonian War of the three.

The figure of *Ungaria*, who had appeared in Báthory's dream at the end of the previous chapter, now emerges from her tomb and enters the narrative reality as *Pannonis*. The Parcae have finally woven away the thread of Hungary's sins, and in its place, they weave a new and more fortunate destiny in which Stephen Báthory's reign is heralded as a form of redemption. Just as in the prefigurative dream sequence, the saviour of Hungary is once again Dacia (i.e., Transylvania), who, overwhelmed by the unbearable suffering inflicted upon her and her mother Pannonis, implores the gods for a merciful death rather than continued affliction. At this moment, Virtus herself appears before Pannonis and Dacia to offer consolation. In contrast to the nightmare vision, where Ungaria merely lamented her fate, Virtus now actively entrusts Dacia with rescuing Pannonis, who is drowning like a shipwrecked soul. Simultaneously, Virtus rebukes Pannonis, who – having failed to learn from the examples of Hellas and Rome – has allowed weak and flabby kings to ascend her throne, reducing her status from queen to slave.

As only Báthory can provide salvation, Dacia convenes the Senate of Gyulafehérvár[13] to elect Stephen as the Prince of Transylvania. Báthory is sitting in a vineyard, contemplating the fate of Pannonia, when a jubilant crowd suddenly appears, bearing the insignia of power and celebrating his name. Despite their acclamations, Stephen initially declines the princely throne with humility. However, after being visited once more by the exiled Pannonia, alongside Pietas and Virtus themselves, the sight of the weeping mass of people moves his heart, and he ultimately accepts the honor. This moment marks the realization of the new golden age foretold at the beginning of Hunyadi's work.

However, fearing her defeat, the furious Austria plots to usurp the Transylvanian throne from Báthory. In a furious monologue, she vows to relentlessly pursue Pannonia, whom she likens to the Hydra, perpetually growing new heads. Meanwhile, Mars and his companions – Fear (*Pavor*), Wrath (*Ira*), and Death (*Mors*) – are amid a quarrel with the gods when Fama, now reduced to the role of a mere messenger, intervenes at Jupiter's command (see also: Cartari 1996, 440–441).

Upon her arrival, the quarrelling gods fell silent. The confused gods are stunned. She commands Mars not to delay, but to come to the aid of the Hungarians at once ("Absiste morari, prorue et Ungaricis fer opem, expectate minis [...]"[14]). So they are ready to engage in the Battle of Kerelőszentpál. The angry Fama rebukes the god of war: "Mars, what are you waiting for? Perhaps you are flirting with goddesses again, or arranging a celestial spectacle with the betrayed Vulcanus once more? Do not delay, hurry, and bring help to the Hungarians!" After this,

13 Today: Alba Iulia, Romania.

14 "Stop delaying, rush forward and bring aid to the Hungarians, wait for threats [...]"

Mars, breathing heavily, begins his monologue. He explains that he cannot join them, as he must depart for Persia, and entrusts leadership to Virtus. The god of war shares his detailed battle plan with Virtus.

Virtus then rides one of Mars' horses through the Balkans, arriving just in time for the Battle of Kerelőszentpál. She spots the majestic figure of Báthory from afar, runs up and embraces him, and breathes divine power into the prince with her kiss. The scene is particularly striking, because Virtus kisses the prince on the lips, which means that Báthory's youthful choice ends in modest sensuality of Virtue during the heat of battle.[15]

After an hour-long battle, most of the fleeing 'German' soldiers are slaughtered; an act Hunyadi interprets as the fulfillment of just retribution of their crimes. He attributes blame to the Germans for a series of past Hungarian military failures, including the unsuccessful siege of Pest and Buda in 1542, the siege of Gyulafehérvár in 1551 ordered by George Martinuzzi, the fall of Temesvár[16] in 1552, and the killing of Captain István Losonci. Although the pious Báthory (*rex pius*) attempts to protect the surviving enemy soldiers with his shield, many are nonetheless slain. [17]

Meanwhile, Sarmatis (Poland), left without a king, hears of a southern land called Dacia (i.e., Transylvania), inhabited by the fierce Huns. Sarmatis seeks a ruler who will embody the qualities of Pallas Athena in arms, Mercury in eloquence, Jupiter in helping the nation, and Mars in confronting its enemies. Since Báthory possesses all these virtues, Sarmatis invites him to assume the Polish crown. The good news is heralded to the world through miraculous signs and wonders: the Szamos River flows with milk instead of water, and John Hunyadi joyfully laughs in his tomb in Gyulafehérvár. As an exceptional diplomat and legislator, Báthory surpasses expectations, resolving centuries-old conflicts. However, Hunyadi primarily praises two significant military achievements of the Mars-like Báthory in Poland. The first is his conquest of the city of Danzig, which had pledged allegiance to the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian II (see Lepszy 1935), and the second is his successful military actions in the Livonian War against Ivan the Terrible. The fact that Hunyadi dedicates a disproportionately long section to the events in Danzig (800 lines, or half of the chapter), while the campaign against the Russians is summarized in only 100 lines, suggests that for Hunyadi, the anti-Habsburg dimension of the Danzig events held greater ideological significance.

On the eve of the upcoming events at Danzig, Báthory – like a brooding bird perched on its egg, anxious about its unhatched chick and waking at every noise – lies restlessly, tossing and turning in sleeplessness. Then Virtus, leaning on the king's bed, appears once

15 Not to mention, that Virtus had already been portrayed with masculine qualities in Hunyadi's earlier descriptions.

16 Today: Timișoara, Romania.

17 On the contested nature of Báthory's piety, see Szádeczky 1887, 55–9.

more. Similar to how Fama urged Hunyadi at the beginning of the work to write, Virtus now encourages the king to undertake something great (an action that Hunyadi can later celebrate in a song).

After this, the captain of the renowned "blue drabants", Mihály Vadas gives a 100-line speech exhorting the army. In the end, he invokes Mars, who is not in Persia now and is available to help them. However, before that, the god of war also gives a speech. Then Mars and his escorts – Fear, Wrath and Death – throw themselves into the battle and make a great massacre. Wrath (Ira) is commanded to assist Virtus and Constantia, who are engaged in the thick of the battle. In Hunyadi's poem, Danzig finally capitulated. The poet promises fame to fifty fallen Hungarian heroes whose names will live on forever in his poem. He says they deserve more fame than fabled heroes such as Aeneas, Achilles, or Heracles. If Virgil and Homer could see this, they would now laugh at their works scrawled with childish deeds, and would rather fill their pages with Báthory's feats.

Mars then directs the king against the Russians in pursuit of further glory. It is curious that Hunyadi covers the three military events of the Livonian campaign in just a hundred lines: the sieges of Połock (Polack, Belarus) in 1579, Velikiye Luki (today Russia) in 1580, and Pskov (today Russia) in 1581 (see Laskowski; Natanson-Leski 1935).

Danzig was undoubtedly one of the largest northern ports and was crucial in controlling the Baltic Sea. In Hunyadi's work, the events of the Livonian War pale in comparison to this. However, the significance of the latter is well demonstrated by the fact that the Russians were expelled from approximately a hundred towns and eighty fortresses. The most notable of these are Riga; Jeziaryszcza, in the territory of present-day Belarus; and Wieliż (Velizh), Uswiaty (Usvyaty), along with the fortresses of Zawołocze, Porchow (Porkhov) and Starodub in the territory of present-day Russia (Csorba 1944, 81–2). Because of this military campaign, even the Turks feared the name of the king. However, even with the help of Clio, Hunyadi cannot properly tell the coming glorious times promised in the prophecies and the fall of the Ottoman Empire before the power of Stephen Báthory. The poet concludes the epic by urging Hungarians to fill their own libraries with books celebrating their own glorious deeds, just as other nations do abroad. If Báthory gives him the opportunity, he will write his immortal epic on Báthory's illustrious feats, which he promised earlier in the invocation. Perhaps this promise was never fulfilled solely due to the king's death.

6. Conclusions

To summarize, this study has briefly outlined an epic-scale work that served Báthory's ideological self-representation and has not been previously examined. Ferenc Hunyadi's work not only complements

the propaganda literature of Danzig and Livonia but also highlights the conscious topoi Báthory used to shape his royal self-representation. In Hunyadi's work, the most significant and detailed topos, besides the obligatory praise of military events, is the popular "Hercules at the Crossroads," which emphasizes not only the spiritual but also the intellectual qualities of the king. Additionally, the topoi of the *pater patriae*, the *rex pius*, the "always vigilant and watchful ruler," and his "divine mission" also appear. These closing observations suggest that Hunyadi's epyllion not only served as an ideological instrument of Báthory's royal self-representation, but also exemplifies the broader relationship between politics and literature in the late sixteenth century. In fact, it is an epic work that belongs to the genre later described as "political poetry", proclaming not only the earthly but also the divine legitimacy of Báthory's rule. Although the program of legitimizing political power through literary means may seem commonplace, Hunyadi's epyllion provides a perfect example of early modern power representation addressed to the narrower audience of the high "courtly register." Through classical topoi and inherited traditions, Hunyadi's work participates in shaping the collective memory that sustains royal power in the eyes of the contemporary intellectual elite.

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Author's profile

Dávid Molnár defended his PhD thesis in 2015 on the influence of Marsilio Ficino in Hungary. He subsequently worked as a Research Fellow at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where he contributed to the compilation of a comprehensive companion to Hungarian humanism. Later, as Lead Researcher, he prepared a critical edition of the complete works of Johannes Filiczki and authored a monograph on him. More recently, he has written and edited three books on late humanist authors — one on Franciscus Hunyadi, another on Valerian Mader, and a third on the Paduan physician Antonio Gazio. He is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Tokaj (Sárospatak, Hungary).

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Prayers Reused[1]

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ABSTRACT

The Research Group on Baroque Literature and Spirituality, which has been active since 2012, among other researches aims to study the history of prayers in Hungary before 1800. This includes the systematisation and database recording of individual prayers found in prayer books and other types of printed matter and manuscripts. This paper presents this work, outlines the difficulties arising from the methodology, and gives examples of possible uses of the database, for example to demonstrate the phenomenon that we typically have no verifiable data on the authorship of prayers in prayer books, but that the database can be used to show that editors of newly published prayer books prefer to use texts from earlier publications – in the era of religious controversies – regardless of denomination.

Keywords: baroque literature, baroque spirituality, hungarian prayer books, transmission of prayers, database of prayers

When speaking about prayer books, we usually refer to them by the name found on the title page or, if there is no title page, from the dedication, or if there is no name, then by the title. This habit inevitably makes us mention these persons as we usually mention authors, namely that the prayer book was written by the person whose name appears somewhere on the first folio. Doubts only arise when we come across several prayer books which bear different names, but contain the same prayers. If we look closely at the texts in these books, we often find that the given text has already appeared in other sources, whether Hungarian, Latin, or some other language, or perhaps in some medieval codex, or in a prayer book published abroad.

The difficulties about the problem of authorship first and foremost arised when we started to build the database of prayers at the Baroque Literature and Spirituality Research Group of the Hungarian Academy

1 The author is a senior research fellow at the Department of Hungarian Language and Literature at the NKE NITK.

of Sciences and the Pázmány Péter Catholic University.[2] The starting point of the database was László Szelestei Nagy's claim that prayers can be recorded by their incipit. This means that the texts of the prayers are inherited, in many cases the same prayer lives on almost unchanged in publications that have different names listed as "authors". Accordingly, the basic unit of the database has become the prayer. If we record the first lines of the prayers in the database, then we have a good chance to identify the publications where the same text also appears with the help of the search interface. (Exceptions may occur, of course, but these do not influence decisively the incipit-based research of how prayers were borrowed.)

About six thousand first lines (incipits) of prayers have been recorded recently in the database, and although this is only a fragment of the pre-1800 prayers the recording of which is the purpose of the database, this quantity can still serve as a basis for partial research and may lead to some results. Before I move on to present these, I would like to briefly describe the database.

The database contains different so-called columns, whose aim is to offer as much information as possible about any single prayer.

The first column is the incipit. Incipit is understood here in a broad sense, which has proved very helpful in the process, although we hadn't anticipated its importance at the beginning. It can record around 300 characters, which means that the first few lines of a prayer can be included into it, assisting the establishment of identical parts following typical incipient formulas like: "Örök mindenható Isten" ('Eternal almighty God').

After the incipit follows the column of basic information about the prayer. It contains data like the title, author, length, language, manuscript or printed medium, and confession of the prayer.

The database also contains data on the work in which the prayer was inserted: title, author, time and place of publication, and the page number of the prayer within the work. The database also contains a column for the source of the prayer and its parameters regarding when, about what, to whom, why and how the prayer was written. This column is also the basis of the thematic search: one can find for example only morning or only evening prayers, or only prayers that should be said at the mass, or only prayers to certain saints. It is also possible to signal critical editions or facsimile editions.

The recording of the prayers has two steps: the first, when the person responsible enters the data, and the second and last, when the reviewer approves it. The use of the database requires registration. The guest users can only see the reviewed entries, while the members of the research team who work on the database can see all the entries. Our aim is, besides a growing number of data introduced, for our guest users to see

2 https://ima.btk.ppke.hu/

all the entries as well, and increase the number of users and the utility of the database.

I would like to present through some examples how it is possible to prove the repeated recycling of prayers with the help of identical incipits, as it shows that certain prayers appear in different prayer books, when, how and in what context they were reused. The research has also revealed previously unknown relationships and added important details to the problem of authorship, for example by further evidence to the fact that the author cannot be determined.

I will present three examples, the first is the preliminaries of a prayer in use even today, the second is the comparison of the prayers from one single prayer book, and the third is an interesting finding of incipit research, namely how one can find source texts as a result of proving the existence of borrowings.

1. The prayer

First let us see a prayer said before meals, a table blessing. I have chosen this because, although it is not one of the well-known prayers, it is still part of the oral, living tradition of the Catholic church even in the 21st century, and with the help of the database it is possible to follow the spreading of this prayer throughout the centuries.

The incipit:

Mindeneknek szemei, tebenned bízunk Úristen, te adsz nekünk eledelt alkalmas időben, felnyitod szent kezed [...].[3]

This prayer originated from a psalm and became very popular, and the database also gives information about which psalm that was. The incipit also showed which prayer books contained the prayer, as follows (the confession within brackets):

Huszár Dávid (Calvinistic): Mindeneknek szemei, tebenned reménylenek Úr Isten, és te adsz őnékik eledelt alkalmatos üdőben [...].[4]

Károlyi András (Calvinistic): Mindenek szemei, benned bíznak Uram Isten, és te adsz őnékik eledelt az időnek legkelletiben [...].[5]

Szenci Molnár Albert (Calvinistic): Mindeneknek szemei, tereád néznek, Úristen, és te adsz azoknak eledelt alkalmatos időben [...].[6]

3 "Everybody's eyes in you God we trust, you give us food in due time, open your sacred hand [...]"

4 "Everybody's eyes in You God they hope, and you give them food in due time [...]" (Huszár1577, [Liij4v]). The title of the prayer: *Étel előtt való imádkozás a 145. zsoltárból* [Praying before meal from Psalm 145].

5 "Everybody's eyes, in You God they trust, You give them food at the most needed time [...]" (Károlyi 1580, [F2v]). The title of the prayer: *Étel előtt való könyörgés* [Supplication before meal].

6 "Everybody's eyes look at you God, and you give them food in due time [...]" (Szenci Molnár 1621, 66.) The title of the prayer: *Foganatos szép imádság étel előtt* [Efficient beautiful praying before meal].

Tarnóczy István (Catholic): Mindeneknek szemei, tebenned bíznak, Uram, és te adsz eledelt azoknak alkalmatos időben [...].[7]

Imádságos könyvecske (Unitarian): Mindeneknek szemei, csak tereád néznek, Úristen, És te adsz azoknak eledelt alkalmatos időben[...].[8]

Pongrácz Eszter (Catholic): Mindeneknek szemei, tebenned bíznak Úristen, és te adsz eledelt nekik alkalmas időben[...].[9]

Dávid Huszár's prayer book clearly proves that the source of the table blessing was Psalm 145. Therefore it is worth also comparing it with 16th century psalm translations. Here are four different translations of the psalm:

Heltai, 1560, psalm translation, Psalm 145. (Unitarian): Mindeneknek szemei, tebenned bíznak Uram, és te adsz őnékik eledelt alkalmas időben. Megnyitod a te kezedet, és megelégítesz minden élő állatot a te kegyes akaratod szerént [...].[10]

Károli, 1590, Psalm 145. (Calvinistic): Mindenki szemei te reád vigyáznak, és te idejében megadod eledelüket. Megnyitod a te kezedet, és megelégítesz minden élőt ingyen [...].[11]

Szenci Molnár, 1607, Psalm 145. (Calvinistic): Uram, mindenek szemei rád néznek, és idein eledelt adsz nékiek. Midőn fölnyitod áldott kezeidet, bőven megelégítesz mindeneket [...].[12]

Káldi, 1626, Psalm 144. (Catholic): Mindeneknek szemei tebenned bíznak Uram, és te adsz eledelt azoknak alkalmatos időben. Felnyitod a kezedet, és betöltesz minden élő állatot áldomással [...].[13]

Based on this comparison, it can be stated that none of the psalm translations lived on in the same form, not even Szenci Molnár's translation is the same as the prayer in his prayer book, although these two are the closest to each other. There is no direct connection between the two texts. The question of authorship is not even asked, it is only certain that every confession used it, the Catholics somewhat later, from the late 17th century. By the 21st century the general third person plural is replaced by a more direct first person plural, which changes the meaning of the prayer to a certain degree, making it more personal.

7 "Everybody's eyes in you God they trust, you give them food in due time [...]" (Tarnóczy1676, 9). The title of the prayer: *Mi kenyerünket, mindennapiát, adjad nekünk ma* [Give us this day our daily bread].

8 "Everybody's eyes look at only you God, and you give them food in due time [...]" (Imádságos könyvecske 1700, 19. The prayer has no title.

9 "Everybody's eyes, in You God they trust, and you give them food in due time [...]" (Pongrácz 1753, 43). The title of the prayer: *Asztali áldás* [Table Blessing].

10 "Everybody's eyes, they trust you God, and you give them food in due time. You open your hand and feed every living creature according to your merciful will [...]" (Heltai, 1560, 291v–292r).

11 "Everybody's eyes look at you, and you give them food in time. You open your hand and feed every creature for free [...]" (Károli 1590, 599v).

12 "My Lord, everybody's eyes look at you and you feed them in time. When you open your blessed hands, you feed everybody abundantly [...]" (Szenci Molnár 1607, 404).

13 "Everybody's eyes trust you God, and you feed them in due time. You open your hand and fill every living being with blessing [...]" (Káldi 1626, 561).

The catholic prayer book of Eszter Pongrácz was repeatedly proved to have had an important role in providing the prayers used in popular piety, as folklorists have already signalled it. The prayer book was very popular, published in many editions, almost every family had one of its copies in centuries (Frauhammer 2015, 109–123). The database can give an answer also to Zsuzsanna Erdélyi's observation (1999, 13–60), as it illustrates the path of text transmission, demonstrating how the Baroque (or medieval) text reaches the prayers of less educated 20th century women. This is not the sole example, but it shows how an Old Testament psalm appears over and over again in publications of different confession, just to become an organic part with its relatively stable text of the living religious tradition in the 21st century.

2. The prayer book

I chose a publication which mostly contains Bible citations and other prayers. This volume is entitled *Fons Vitae*, *the Well of Life*, published in Debrecen in 1589. It is listed in the RMNy as a Protestant prayer book (RMNy Nr. 623 (Borsa 1983); Fons vitae 1589), and although it was very popular in Hungary in the 16th century, it was no longer published in the 17th, apart from a supposed 1601 edition.

The title of the chapter which contains the prayers is: *Egynéhány hasznos imádságok, melyeket az ájtatos keresztyén ember mondhat könyörögvén az mindenható Úr Istennek, a mi idvözítő Jézus Krisztusunknak általa*.[14] This chapter contains twenty prayers, each with its own title. I chose in all cases two words from the incipit, using these to search for any correspondence with other prayers already contained in the database. It should be emphasized that the incipit correspondences are only orientative, the texts must always be fully compared to establish complete matches.

In case of the *Fons Vitae*, the results were as follows: in eight cases out of twenty, the database found no match, but the search was not inconclusive in these cases either, as it revealed matches between other related prayer books.

Let us see some examples.

The prayer entitled Étel után való hálaadás az Úristennek [Thanksgiving for God after meal] begins this way: Minek utána, mindenható, kegyelmes Atya Úristen, minket a te szent ajándékiddal megelégítettél, adjad, hogy ennek utána is [...].[15] The search engine of the database found two prayer books, one is Imre Kiss's book, entitled *Három szép imádságos könyvecske* 'Three nice prayer books', the incipit

14 "Some useful prayers to be said by the pious Christian to the almighty Lord God, by our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Fons vitae 1589, K7[r]).

15 "After you, merciful Lord God, have nourished us with your sacred gifts, let us be fed now as well [...]" (Fons vitae 1589, L11[r]).

reads: Oh én édes Uram Jézusom, hálákat adok tenéked, minekutána te szent felségedet összevetvén a gyilkos Barabással [...].[16]

The incipit of the prayer book *Lelki fegyverház* [Spiritual Armoury]: *Ó én édes Uram Jézusom, hálát adok teneked, minek utána te Szent Felségedet összevetvén a gyilkos Barabással, sokkal gonoszabbnak ítéltettél* [...].[17]

We can see thus that these two incipits, although not related to the *Fons vitae*, are definitely related to each other, just as, most probably, the prayer texts as well, so it is worth going on with the search. The database contains the location of the texts, the page of the match, the link to the digital version online, so it makes them easily accessible in printed form.

The two manuscripts are indeed connected at one point, so the mapping of further connection points is justified and may bring new results.

The following is a case when the database again provides new information instead of a match of incipits.

An incipit from the *Fons vitae*: *Úristen, a te kegyelmességed és hited mireánk szálljon, és mibennünk mindörökké megmaradjon, hogy* [...].[18]

There is no match with other publications, but writing Psalm 118 in the title field reveals that the *Fons vitae* contains four instances of texts from Psalm 118.

We also try to complement the database by processing manuscripts. This aim is justified by cases such as the following, when the search also yields results from manuscripts, not only printed editions.

Incipit from the *Fons vitae*: Mennybéli hatalmas Úristen, irgalmasságnak kútfeje, melynek soha vége nincsen, ki szenvedő, kegyelmes és hű vagy, embereknek vétkeit az te kegyelmességedből megbocsátod [...].[19]

Results:

Mihálykó, 1642 (Lutheran): Mennybéli hatalmas Úr Isten, irgalmasságnak kútfeje, melynek soha vége nincsen, ki szenvedő,

16 "Oh my sweet Lord Jesus, I give you thanks after your Holy Highness was compared to Barabba [...]" (Kiss 1680, 93). The title of the prayer: *Huszonkilencedik imádság. Miképpen Barabás elbocsáttatott* [Twenty-ninth prayer. How Barabbas was dismissed].

17 "Oh my sweet Lord Jesus, I give you thanks after Your Holy Highness being compared to the murderer Barabba and found much more evil [...]" (Lelki fegyverház 1716, 85). The title of the prayer: *Harmincegyedik imádság. Barabás elbocsáttatik, az ártatlan Jézus szentenciáztatik* [Thirty-first prayer. Barabbas is dismissed, the innocent Jesus is sententified].

18 "Lord God, may your mercy and faith fall onto us and may it live in us forever, so that" (Fons vitae 1589, [L12r]). The title of the prayer: *Isteni áldás, 118. zsoltár* [Divine blessing, Psalm 118].

19 "Almighty God of Heavens, fountain of endless mercy, who are suffering, merciful and faithful, you forgive the sins of men out of your mercy" (Fons vitae 1589, [K11v]). The title of the prayer: *Az hatalmas Úristennek negyedik könyörgés* [The fourth Supplication to the mighty Lord].

kegyelmes és hív vagy, embereknek vétkeit a te kegyelmességedből megbocsátod. Vallom azt, hogy én sok gonoszt [...].[20]

Rimay codex (Lutheran): Mennybéli Hatalmas Úr Isten, irgalmasságnak Kútfeje, melynek soha vége nincsen, ki szenvedő, kegyelmes és hív vagy, embereknek vétkeit a Te kegyelmességedből megbocsátod. Vallom azt, hogy én sok gonoszt műveltem, és Tégedet haragra indítottalak. [...].[21]

In this case it is two Lutheran prayer books which contain the text of the prayer book are defined as Protestant. One is a print, the other is the *Rimay codex*, a manuscript which contains a prayer book probably not written by János Rimay, although it was found in Rimay's legacy.[22] This codex contains other instances taken over from the *Fons vitae* as well. This method is worth being applied also to the codex, starting the search from the incipits of the codex, since it may easily lead to other editions which could have been the sources of the Rimay codex.

Let us continue the search of the incipits. The next result draws the attention upon a subtle difference. Incipit from the *Fons vitae*: Dicsőség mennyországban Istennek, és e földön békösség és jó akarat embereknek. Dicsérünk téged, áldunk téged, imádunk téged, hálákat adunk tenéked [...].[23]

Results:

Mihálykó János, 1642 (Lutheran): Dicsőség magasságban Istennek, és ez földön békesség és jó akarat az embereknek [...].[24]

Útitárs, 1678 (Catholic): Dicsőség Istennek a magasságokban, és békesség a földön a jóakaratú embereknek. Dicsirünk téged, imádunk téged és dicsőítünk téged [...].[25]

20 "Almighty God of Heavens, fountain of endless mercy, who are suffering, merciful and faithful, you forgive the sins of men out of your mercy. I confess that I ... great evil [...]" (Mihálykó1642, 254). The title of the prayer: *Hálaadás mindenféle nyavalyából és nyomorúságból való megszabadulásért* [Thanksgiving for deliverance from all sorts of troubles and miseries].

21 "Almighty God of Heavens, fountain of endless mercy, who are suffering, merciful and faithful, you forgive the sins of men out of your mercy. I confess that I did great evil and drew your anger upon me [...]" (Rimay codex, 80). The title of the prayer: *Mindennemű nyavalyáinkban hasznos könyörgés* [A useful prayer in all our troubles].

22 Printed edition of the Rimay codex (Bajáki 2015, 9–48).

23 "Glory to God in Heaven and peace on this earth to men of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we give you thanks [...]" (Fons vitae 1589, [L7r]).

24 "Glory to God in Heaven and peace on this earth to men of good will [...]" (Mihalykó 1642, 72). The title of the prayer: *Más. [Az Krisztusnak születéséről való könyörgések]* [Other. Prayers for the birth of Christ].

25 "Glory to God in Heaven and peace on this earth to men of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we worship you, we glorify you [...]" (Útitárs1678, 29). The title of the prayer: *A Gloria vagy Angyali ének mondásakor* [When saying the Gloria or Angelic Canticle].

Pázmány, 1606 (Catholic): Dücsőség Istennek magasságban, békesség e földön a jó akaratú embereknek. Örvendetes hír, vigasságos újsága az emberi nemzetnek [...].[26]

Sigray, 1734 (Catholic): Dicsőség Istennek a magasságban, békesség e földön a jó akaratú embereknek. O örvendetes hír, vigasságos újság az emberi nemzetnek [...].[27]

Pongrácz, 1753 (Catholic): Dicsőség Istennek magasságban, békesség e földön jóakaratú embereknek. Örvendetes hír, vigasságos újság az emberi nemzetnek [...].[28]

These examples illustrate some important things. Most importantly, that a long incipit is a must. If the incipit is not long enough, like in the case of the Mihálykó print, nothing certain can be said just on the basis of a short match. What would still indicate that it is probably a match indeed is the word *jóakarat* ('good will'), since this is the only instance when it appears as a noun, just like in the incipit of the *Fons vitae*, and not as an adjective beside the noun "man", as in the rest of the cases. The incipit of the right length, as we have seen here, proves it quite probably that the texts of Pázmány, Sigray and Eszter Pongrácz are interconnected. The connection of these texts can be proved in other instances as well with the use of the database, as well as by the search after the incipits of the *Fons vitae*.

Instead of further examples, I would like to summarize the conclusions of this research. The *Fons vitae* was definitely used by the compilor of the Rimay codex, as well as by the editor of the 1642 edition of Mihálykó's prayer book. The latter also has the highest number of matches. It should also be emphasized that, although the *Fons vitae* is defined as a Protestant prayer book, it was mostly used later on by Lutherans, as the database suggests. It should also be noted that we have found no textual matches either to Pázmány's prayer book or other Catholic books, but the incipits revealed the connection of these books with other prayer books. Consequently this analysis based on a small sample of a very early period of prayer literature justifies that such an investigation is worthwhile and may yield rich results.

26 "Glory to God in heavens and peace on this earth to men of good will. Joyful news, joyous novelty for the human race" (Pázmány1606, 52[r]). The title of the prayer: *Az Angyali ének és a több imádságok idején, így könyörögjünk* [During the time of the Angelic Canticle and the several prayers, let us pray like this].

27 "Glory to God in Heaven and peace on this earth to men of good will. Oh joyful news, joyous novelty for the human race [...]" (Sigray1734, 450). The title of the prayer: *Az angyali ének és a több imádságok idején* [During the time of the Angelic Canticle and the several prayers].

28 "Glory to God in Heaven and peace on this earth to men of good will. Joyful news, joyous novelty for the human race [...]" (Pongrácz 1753, 73). The title of the prayer: *A Glória avagy az Angyali Ének idején* [In the time of the Gloria or the Angelic Canticle].

3. The line

Finally, I would like to present one concrete place, a small finding. The incipit searches also yielded (perhaps) unexpected results. The text in question is the prayer of the church-going man, first printed in Hungarian in the prayer book of Gáspár Heltai.

The incipit at Heltai: Örök mindenható Úr Isten, mi mennyei szent Atyánk, a te felségednek jóvoltából és nagy kegyelmességéből ím bemegyek az egyházba, a keresztényi gyülekezetnek helyére, mely [...].[29]

Results:

Károlyi, 1580 (Calvinistic): *Örök mindenható kegyelmes Atyánk, ím bemegyek az szent gyülekezetbe, az imádságnak házába, hogy én is az több keresztyénekkel tégedet dicsérjelek* [...].[30]

Szalaszegi, 1593 (Lutheran): *Ó én Uram, Istenöm, a te nagy kegyelmességöddel* részeltetvén magamat, ím bemegyek a te szentegyházadba, és nagy félelemmel tégedet imádlak [...].[31]

Pázmány, 1606 (Catholic): *Én mennyei szent Atyám, a te irgalmasságodnak mértéktelen jó voltából bemegyek a te házadba, és a te templomodban félelemmel imádlak téged* [...].[32]

Pázmány, 1631 (Catholic): *Örök mindenható Úr Isten, kinek a mi üdvösségünkre való gondviselésből úgy tetszett kellemetesnek, hogy a Templomban, mint tiszteletedre rendelt házban, irgalmasságodat bőségesen mutatnád* [...].[33]

Mihalykó, 1640 (Lutheran): *Ó én Uram Istenem, a te nagy kegyelmességeddel részeltetvén magamat, ím bemegyek a te Szentegyházadba, és nagy félelemmel téged imádlak* [...].[34]

29 "Eternal and almighty Lord God, our holy heavenly Father, of your good will and great mercy behold, I go into the church, the place of the Christian congregation, which [...]" (Heltai 1570-71, [A2v]). The title of the prayer: *Mint kelljen imádkozni a keresztyén embernek, midőn az egyházba mégyen* [How a Christian man ought to pray when he goes into the church].

30 "Our eternal almighty Father, behold I go into the holy congregation, the house of prayer, to praise you together with other Christians [...]" (Károlyi 1580, [D11r]). The title of the prayer: *Mikor bemegy az Templomba, mint kell könyörögni* [When you go into the Church, how to beg].

31 "Oh my Lord God, taking part in your great mercy, behold I go into your church, and worship you with great fear [...]" (Szalaszegi, 1593, [1r]). The title of the prayer: *Templomba menve így kell Istennek könyörögni* [Going to church, this is how to pray to God].

32 "My heavenly holy Father, for the immeasurable kindness of your mercy I go into your house and I worship you with fear [...]" (Pázmány 1606), 47[r]). The title of the prayer: *Mikor a templomba bemegyünk, így könyörögjünk* [Going to church is the way to pray to God].

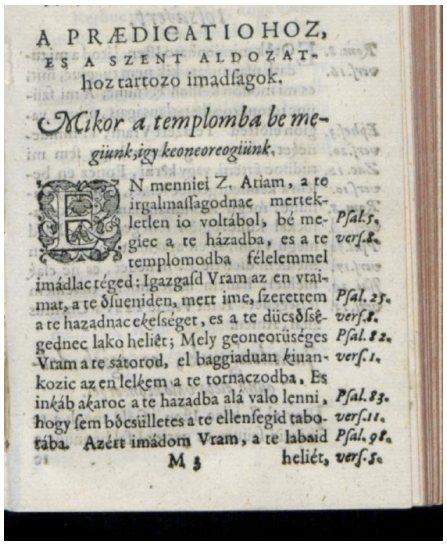
33 "Eternal almighty Lord God, whose great care for our salvation saw it kind to show your immense mercifulness in the Church, the house of your adoration […]" (Pázmány1631, 143). The title of the prayer: *Mikor ünnepnap a templomba megyünk* [When we go to church on a holiday].

34 "Oh my Lord God, taking part in your great mercy, behold I go into your church and worship you with great fear [...]" (Mihálykó 1640, 1). The title of the prayer: *Egyházban menő ember azt mondja* [Going to Church, a man says].

Looking at these incipits, the first thing that comes to mind is that the line in the 1631 edition of Pázmány's prayer book is quite different from the others, including the incipit of the first, 1606 edition. The other thing that comes to mind is that János Mihálykó's 1640 incipit fully matches the incipit of György Szalaszegi. The rest could also be analysed at length, the textual match is the closest between Heltai and Károlyi, but for this concrete line I would like to present Pázmány's case.

We can see that the 1606 first edition and the 1631 fourth edition are different, and most surprisingly the first edition is similar to the other Lutheran prayer books. The notes of the Pázmány critical edition, containing the notes to the 1631 edition, mention the source of this text as a prayer with the title *Cum ad Ecclesiam venisti* from the 1567 prayer book entitled *Serta honoris et exultationis* of Petrus Michaelis Brillmacher, a Jesuit from Cologne (Bajáki Sz., Bogár 2013, 307). The comparison of the Latin and Hungarian text proves, apart from some differences in the order of the lines, that it is indeed its translation, but there is no match at all with Pázmány's 1606 text.

It was proved due to the incipit searches of the database that the incipit of Pázmány's 1606 prayer matches several Protestant incipits whose source was Johann Habermann's prayer book (Avenarius1576, [)(7v]–[)(8r]). Comparing now Pázmány's line with Habermann's text, the match is undoubtable.



A PRÆDICATIO HOZ,
ES A SZENT ALDOZAT-
hoz tartozo imadſagok.

Mikor a templomba be me-
giünk, igy keoneoreogiünk.

EN menniei Z. Atiam, a te irgalmaſſagodnac mertekletlen io voltából, bé megiec a te házadba, es a te templomodba félelemmel imádlac téged: Igazgaſd Vram az en vtaimat, a te ódueniden, mert ime, ſzerettem a te hazadnac ékeſſéget, es a te dücsőſſégednec lako heliét; Mely geoneorüséges Vram a te ſátorod, el baggiaduan kiuankozic az en lelkem a te tornaczodba. Es inkáb akaroc a te hazadba alá valo lenni, hogy ſem bőcsülletes a te ellenſegid taborába. Azért imádom Vram, a te labaid

Pſal. 5. verſ. 8.
Pſal. 25. verſ. 8.
Pſal. 82. verſ. 1.
Pſal. 83. verſ. 11.
Pſal. 98. verſ. 5.

INGRESSV-
rus templum dicat.

Pſal. 5. DOmine in multitudine miſericordiæ tuæ introibo in domum tuam, adorabo ad templum ſanctum tuum in timore tuo. Deduc me Deus in iuſticia tua, dirige in conſpectu tuo viam meam, deduc me in via mandatorum tuorum, quia tu es Deus ſalutis meæ. Dilexi habitaculum domus tuæ, & locum domicilij gloriæ tuæ. Quàm dilecta ſunt tabernacula tua Domine virtutum, concupiſcit & deficit (præ deſiderio) anima mea ad atrium tuum. Confitebor tibi in Eccleſia magna, in populo multo laudabo te. Venite adoremus & procidamus ac genua flectamus ante Dominum, qui fecit nos, quia ipſe

Pſal. 119. *Pſal. 26.* *Pſal. 84.* *Pſal. 35.* *Pſal. 95.*

What makes it even more interesting is that the relationship of the two German prayer books was a matter of debate in German literary historiography; most recently, Habermann's monographer, Traugott Koch (2001, 395–412), who compared the two books line by line, could not establish any direct transmission, but claimed that the matches between the two books were due to a common tradition. I may only add for the sake of fairness that the second, 1610 edition of Pázmány's prayer book contains this prayer based on the Jesuit's texts.

As we have seen, the research of how prayers were reused may be highly beneficial, yielding many results. The enlargement of the database is one of the primary aims of the Research Group on Baroque Literature and Spirituality.

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Author's profile

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Providence and Contingency in the Autobiography of Miklós Bethlen

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ABSTRACT

The distinction between the necessary and the accidental, between events that serve a purpose and those that are meaningless, can be found in the semantics developed by a wide variety of cultures to interpret the world. In the religiously dominated culture of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, the question of contingency was thematized primarily in relation to the concept of providence, and its most typical manifestation was the ancient-rooted notion of fortuna. However, the fortune concept lost its explanatory power during the 17th century, in connection with scientific, economic and social changes. There are many signs that, at the same time, ideas about divine providence were transformed. Although there are signs of this already in the 16th century (such as in the popular *Fortunatus*), especially from the end of the 17th century onwards there is a noticeable erosion of the traditional metaphysics based on the centrality of the providential God. Literary studies can also contribute to the study of changing ideas about providence, since it is often in genres that provide a more flexible framework than theological or philosophical discourse that the first signs of change appear. Miklós Bethlen's autobiography, written in the early 18th century is a good example of this. The overall framework of the self-interpretation of the autobiography is a belief in providence, yet there are also elements that are in tension with it. These have so far only been referred to in a few scattered references in the literature, but have not been comprehensively examined and interpreted. An examination of the literary conceptualisation of providence and chance can show how traditional conceptual frameworks become problematic in the face of new experiences, while their meaning is also modified.

Keywords: providence, contingency, autobiography, Miklós Bethlen, early modern

The distinction between the necessary and the accidental, between events that serve a purpose and those that are meaningless, can be found in the semantics developed by a wide variety of cultures to interpret the world. A predominant feature of premodern European culture, shaped by religion, is the belief in divine providence, the notion that events on earth unfold according to a deliberate and purposeful order decreed by the will of a supreme being. In contrast, the modern world is

characterized by the prevalence of the experience of contingency, which posits that events on earth could unfold differently, whether in history or in the destiny of the individual.[1]

As with all great, teleological historical narratives, however, there are many theoretical questions and objections to be raised about the grand narrative of the disintegration of the world order based on the idea of providence. For the purposes of this essay, the most relevant question is whether there exists a discernible shift in the prevailing attitude towards providence in early modern culture, whether it is feasible to delineate distinct periods based on this criterion. In his book on providence and contingency, Werner Frick examines the interpretations of fate in 17th and 18th-century German, French and English novels and concludes that from the late 17th century onwards there are increasing signs of a crisis, erosion and eventual disintegration of the traditional metaphysics based on the centrality of the providential God. Frick stresses that the belief in providence did not disappear suddenly and completely with the Enlightenment, but that there is a shift both in theoretical reflections and novels, the signs of which can be seen in the emergence of competing explanations, and in the reinterpretation or emptying out of the concept of providence. Frick presents Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, published in 1719, as the first example of this shift in the history of the novel. The transitory nature of this novel, according to him, is due to the heterogeneous discourses that can be discovered in the protagonist's self-interpretation: while the novel repeatedly evokes the Puritan concept of providence, there are also moments in which the fictional autobiography provides a secular interpretation of the hero's fate. The novel transforms the understanding of providence in such a way that providence and rational, autonomous action are not in conflict, but rather providence is in the service of secular reason. Robinson's success is therefore both a gift from God and the result of his own efforts (Frick 1988, 103–152).

Frick's analysis fits in well with the view that the early phase of the Enlightenment began in the 1690s, and convincingly demonstrates that the study of the interpretations of fate can provide a more nuanced approach to the literature of this period. At the same time, as many have pointed out, signs of the erosion of the belief in providence can be observed already in Renaissance culture. According to Romance studies, the discovery of the experience of contingency can be observed already in Boccaccio's novels (Neuschäfer 1969). Research in German studies points to the popular *Fortunatus* chapbook as a place where the eclipse of the belief in providence and the overall experience of contingency are shown (Friedrich 2011). And in the field of the history of philosophy, the writings of Machiavelli and Montaigne in particular show strong signs of a move away from the traditional belief in providence (Sanders 2013).

1 For a summary, including different philosophical, sociological and historical approaches to the problem of contingency, see Reichlin 2011.

The way out of the dilemma posed by the different possible starting points is hardly to commit oneself to one or the other, the Renaissance or the early Enlightenment; rather, the lesson to be drawn is that in the case of the early modern period, different, parallel models of the relation to providence and contingency must be reckoned with, and that in the case of the erosion of providentialism, it is not possible to develop a homogeneous, linear narrative. This does not imply, however, that it is impossible to derive valuable insights by examining the texts of early modern culture from the perspective of the relationship between providence and contingency. Rather, it suggests that it is challenging to establish a clear boundary between the periods, at least in this respect. Literary studies can contribute substantially to the study of changing ideas about providence, since it is often in genres that provide a more flexible framework than theological or philosophical discourse that the first signs of change appear. Miklós Bethlen's autobiography, written in the early 18th century is a good example of this.[2]

Hungarian literary history has not paid much attention to the study of early modern ideas of providence and contingency. However, Tibor Klaniczay's dissertation on Miklós Zrínyi's concept of fate and fortune is an important contribution to the subject (Klaniczay 1947). Klaniczay pointed out not only that for Zrínyi the interpretation of fortune and fate was a central problem, but also that he was influenced by Machiavelli's concept of fate, which differed from the traditional Christian one, as he attributed a decisive role to the individual's skill and excellence in the shaping of his fate. That the dichotomy of providence and fortune was not only a preoccupation of Zrínyi can be seen, for example, in the epic poem by another great Hungarian poet of the century, István Gyöngyösi, entitled *Phoenix rising from the ashes, or the memory of János Kemény*, published in 1693 (but probably written earlier, in the 1670s), which ultimately leaves open the question of whether the will of God or the changing fortune is responsible for the tragic fate of the poem's hero:

> Tündérségébül-é a szerencsének,
> Jobbrúl balra hamar térő kerekének,
> Vagy az örök Isten bölcs rendelésének
> Végzésébűl esett, hogy ezek így lének.[3]
> (Gyöngyösi 1999, 123)

As this example shows, in early modern culture the experience of contingency was described primarily through various derivatives of the ancient-rooted notion of fortuna. Research on the history of the concept of fortune shows that in the 17th century (at least in Western

2 For a general evaluation of Bethlen's autobiograpgy see Tóth 2012.

3 "Whether it is the vicissitudes of fortune, / the wheel of fortune turning suddenly from good to evil, / or the wise decree of the eternal God, / that has caused these things to happen."

Europe), scientific, economic and social changes led to the loss of its explanatory power and its replacement by other concepts such as chance, risk and hazard (Brendecke 2017). The fact that the wheel of fortune or the goddess Fortuna does not play a significant role in Miklós Bethlen's autobiography, is perhaps also related to this historical transformation.[4] But his Protestant religiosity, based on the doctrine of predestination alone is sufficient explanation for the fact that the search for and recording of the signs of providence play a decisive role in his interpretation of fate.[5] While the overarching framework of the interpretation of fate in the autobiography is rooted in the belief in providence, there are also elements that are in tension with this belief. Consequently, a more thorough examination of the text from this perspective may prove beneficial.

On the question of divine providence, there is little support in Bethlen scholarship. Yet a good starting point is an observation by Géza Orlovszky. Orlovszky's main idea was that the autobiography of Bethlen is not a completely uniform composition, which is evidenced, among other things, by the fact that it reveals traces of different genre patterns. The differences between the genre patterns are reflected among others in the different – even incompatible – ways Bethlen talks about sexuality in two section of his life writing, in his autobiography proper and in his book of prayers. In the former, he confesses his youthful carnal desires within the framework of a spiritual autobiography, as part of his repentance, while in the latter, coincidence and comic elements play a dominant role: "The parallel narrative of the *Autobiography*, however, is completely incompatible with this trope, since the passions of the flesh are here not silenced by the hero's repentance and his struggle against sinful temptation, but by the practical application of the biblical Onan's practice. The fact that he finally manages to preserve his virginity, at least to some extent, until the age of twenty-four and a half, until his marriage, is achieved by divine grace through a series of accidents, misunderstandings and clumsiness, and the shaping of the narrative is almost comic. The structure of the chapter on the sins of youth might remind the late reader of the irony of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*" (Orlovszky 2017, 187).

Ultimately, Orlovszky argues that the narrative of the autobiography, at least in the chapter describing the sins of youth, is not based on the belief in providence, or at least presents this interpretive framework in a comic or ironic fracture. Unfortunately, he has not supported this

4 Although Bethlen uses the notion of fortune several times in connection with the favourable or unfavourable turns of his own fate, the connection with the traditional fortune topos disappears completely.

5 English studies of the early modern history of the doctrine of providence point out that it was widespread even during the early Enlightenment, and that it was precisely at the time of the rise of deism that a greater number of writings defending the doctrine of providence appeared as a kind of defensive reaction. See Hunter 1966; Thomas 1973, 90–132.

view with a detailed argument, and it is therefore worth examining the issue raised in more detail. What specific passages might support this interpretation? Are there other passages in the autobiography that indicate a similar contradiction? Are there differences in the approach to providence between the prayer book and the autobiography, and if so, are they compatible?

To shed light on these questions, the observations of historical narratology on the early modern period can provide a good starting point. From a narratological point of view, two main types of early modern narratives can be distinguished: on the one hand, providentially driven narratives, moving towards a predetermined goal, and on the other hand, open-ended, causally motivated narratives, in which the development of the plot is not determined by providence but by the intentions of the characters and by chance (Werner 2018, 90–99). From this point of view, the analysis should explore whether Bethlen's autobiography contains traces of a causally motivated narrative. A major difficulty in doing so, however, is that, being an autobiography, the text does not contain any instance that would allow us to judge the characters' intentions, thoughts and actions from an external perspective. The text contains only the autobiographer's interpretation of his own fate. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that the belief in providence is a closed system capable of explaining all events. What may seem coincidental to the secular modern reader, was not contrary to the omnipotence of God to the early modern man who embraced the belief in providence. For, in a worldview based on providentialism, as Leibniz, among others, put it, chance is only apparent, but in reality it is a matter of the absence of knowledge of causes. (Frick 1988, 80) The analysis must therefore examine whether there are traces in Bethlen's self-interpretation that open up perspectives other than those based on the belief in providence.

Bethlen first addresses the subject of the passions of the flesh in chapter four, speaking of his guilty inclinations. First of all, he emphasizes the physical reasons for his carnal desires, thus obviously excusing his own sins, since in this approach, carnal desires are not analysed as a moral fault, but as a consequence of character, temperament, and are considered natural. The discussion of the subject then turns to the struggle with carnal desires: as a practical antidote, he initially tries fasting, but abandons it, as it does not help the problem but is bad for his health; after a careful consultation of the Bible, he then adopts the practice of Onan, convincing himself that it is not a sin in itself. Yet, after these practical considerations, he refers to God's grace above all as a factor that has prevented him from committing a greater sin:

Suffice it that the mercy of God above all things, for which reason glory be to His Holy Majesty, and then the fear of syphilis, and thirdly that filthiness, brought it about that, apart from my two wives, I never consorted with any, and even less indulged in sodomy or other uncouthness (Bethlen 2004, 128).

Bethlen does not claim that he did not commit carnal sins, in fact, he stresses that his life was a constant struggle with sin; however, he insists that he was different from the vast majority of people, and that this was by the grace of God: "Priest, monk, hermit, let none glory in his celibacy, for not one in a thousand is to be found as I was; but most assuredly I do not glory in it, but in God's wondrous mercy, which shall be clearer yet hereunder in my life." (Bethlen 2004, 128).

In this way, the fourth chapter of the first book, on the dispositions, anticipates the twentieth on the sins of youth, and the confession of the *Book of Prayers*. In both, divine grace is shown to be the main protector from sin, whereas in the *Book of Prayers* the emphasis is on the harsh revelation of sinfulness, and in the *Autobiography* on the virtue preserved in spite of sin. The struggle with carnal desires and the confession of sins can thus become a sign of virtue, of election. Today's reader should bear in mind that Bethlen's ideas of masculinity differ greatly from the prevailing ideal of our time: the autobiographer sees sexual adventures as the opposite of masculinity, whereas today they are often considered the very characteristics of masculinity.

At the end of the chapter on inclinations, in his advice to his son about the struggle against carnal desires, Bethlen adds to what he said by naming a few more remedies: "The greatest medicine for this is three or four prayers, sobriety, good company and industry" (Bethlen 2004, 128). Later, in a section dealing with his own suffering during his wife's prolonged illness, he also emphasizes sobriety as a remedy for bodily temptations; here he calls a sober, temperate life a divine gift, ultimately acknowledging God's merit, divine restraint, for not having committed infidelity: "God alone knows what pains she suffered, and what temptations and bitterness of body and soul I went through those six years. It is certain that had God not protected me especially by a sober, moderate way of life, I would have declined morally, as it was harder then to be without a woman than before my marriage; much temptation, desire and lewdness came upon me, but all the same I consorted with no one, indeed, I did not even attempt to, although there was an army of beautiful maids in the house. To God be the glory that He restrained me and forgave my uncleanness" (Bethlen 2004, 322).

Likewise, in the chapter describing the sins of his youth, he emphasizes that his confessed sins can not only teach the reader a lesson, but also testify to the glory of God. And Bethlen also stresses in the often quoted lines that open the chapter that the adventures described here reveal divine providence: "I am not ashamed with Augustus and Petrarch to confess the blemishes of my youth, and in the midst of them to wonder at and glorify my God's gracious providence for me which surpasses human believing [...]." (Bethlen 2004, 223). The efficacy of grace is further exemplified in the section of his prayer written for Lent and Sundays, which addresses the temptations experienced by youth. However, the emphasis in this section is on regret for past transgressions. In his book of prayers, Bethlen conveys a sense of remorse for his sins.

Conversely, in his autobiography, he asserts that, in the eyes of the world, his actions were not of a particularly egregious nature and that he was superior to others.

The list of the sins of the youth in the autobiography is a series of stories presented in varying degrees of detail. At greater length, he only tells of a relationship in Kolozsvár,[6] a love affair in Huszt, and of his adventure in London, after a very brief summary of his first attempts to have sex with women. Among his attempts to have carnal contact with women, there is one where he is laughed at; one where he is told no; in another case Bethlen says no to the woman who makes him an offer; there is one where she does not understand what he wants; and there is one where the accidental appearance of a servant thwarts his attempt. He also describes a case which, by today's standards, would probably be an attempted rape.[7] These incidents are presented by Bethlen in a very brief and objective manner, without any commentary to help their interpretation. The interpretative framework set out in the introduction to the chapter, i.e. that these cases are evidence of providence at work, reflect the perspective of the elderly Bethlen, who was writing his autobiography: the young man obviously did not interpret his failures as a sign of providence, which is why he could continue his attempts. In retrospect, the young man's attempts, his former failures, his upsets, can be interpreted as fortunate turns which, despite his intentions, helped Bethlen to maintain his purity until his marriage. While the young man's actions may appear to be a series of contingent events, the interpretive framework situates them within the context of providence. Given the series of failures and the duality of viewpoints, it is not unreasonable to assume that today's reader would perceive the text as comic or even ironic; however, Bethlen does not violate the coherence of the providential interpretative framework.

In his descriptions of the cases of Kolozsvár, Huszt and London, Bethlen already makes several references to the way providence was manifested in his relationship with women. In Kolozsvár, first, during an erotic dalliance, the woman runs away: "It was a miracle of God's restraint, especially that he held in check her immodest forwardness." Later, after they agree to go further than kissing, "God would not allow it" (Bethlen 2004, 224). Bethlen directs the reader interested in details to chapters XII and XIII, where he recounts that in the summer of 1659 he nearly drowned in a stream in Kolozsvár, but thanks to God's providence he escaped, and then left Kolozsvár with his mother because of military incidents. The key to his escape from the stream is that the footman Jancsi, who was trying to follow him, falls into the same hole as his master and pushes him to the surface with his head (Bethlen 2004, 182). Bethlen attributes the appearance of the footman not to providence but to chance, and we can therefore assume that this

6 Today: Cluj, Romania.

7 "I chanced upon a woman in the privy, and if I could, and if she had permitted me, I would have defiled her, […]" (Bethlen 2004, 223).

lucky turn of events, interpreted as chance, also played a role in the preservation of his virginity.[8] Bethlen does not specify the relationship between the events at the stream and his rejection of the woman. However, the occurrence is also documented in the *Book of Prayers*, and the reflection therein suggests that Bethlen attributes his decision to lead a more virtuous life to divine inspiration, prompted by the fear of God.9 However, the extent to which this played a role in the dissolution of the relationship with the woman remains ambiguous. The justification provided for the dissolution of the relationship is, in the final analysis, his departure from Kolozsvár for reasons that were external to his control.[10] In this passage, Providence is depicted as a divine admonition; however, the role this phenomenon plays in the dissolution of the romantic relationship remains ambiguous. It is uncertain whether the cessation of the relationship can be attributed to contingent reasons or if it is indeed influenced by the divine intervention depicted in the text.

The relationship with the married woman he met in 1660 in Huszt did not become consummate because she did not want an extramarital affair, while Bethlen did not want to marry and thus give up his studies abroad. Here the autobiography refers back to Chapter XII, where we read that, by the grace of God, Bethlen's desire for peregrination was so great that he rejected the love of a beautiful young lady (Bethlen 2004, 180). In addition, it also refers to the serious illness he experienced in Huszt, described in Chapter VII. Chapter VII, which details Bethlen's drinking habits, tells of a two-day bout of vomiting and diarrhoea, which was finally stopped by eating "two or three fragments of white bread soaked in Tokaj wine from the finest aszú grapes" (Bethlen 2004, 145). Bethlen gives a detailed account of his recovery. At first, he attributes his healing to God's help, then to the rebarbarum given by Isaac Basire, his professor at the reformed college in Gyulafehérvár.[11] Bethlen's recovery from the illness is regarded by him as a pivotal moment in his life story, as it precipitated his decision to lead a sober and modest life. He attributes a substantial degree of influence in this transformation to the counsel provided by Basirius, who recommended the consumption of a glass of water following every lunch and dinner, even though he had previously called it a gift from God (Bethlen 2004, 143). It is only clear from chapter six that, having recovered from this illness, Bethlen had made a vow to avoid drunkenness and fornication (Bethlen 2004, 137).

8 Of course, the reference to chance can be interpreted as the young Bethlen's personal interpretation, reflecting his inability to perceive the actions of providence. However, even within this context, it is noteworthy that the narrator does not refer to providence, but rather to chance.

9 "Thy majesty in those two great evil occasions did wondrously restrain me, so I was soon there frightened with the danger of being drowned, and in a little while thou didst carry me so far away and separate me from that person." (Bethlen 1955, II, 156). All the citations from works not published in English are my translations: Gy. L.

10 His mother removed him from Kolozsvár in light of the evolving war situation.

11 Today: Alba Iulia, Romania.

Géza Orlovszky, studying the autobiography in relation to Bethlen's wine drinking habits, interprets the change in Bethlen's attitude as a purely secular education: "The purification from a sinful lifestyle is interestingly not religiously and morally motivated, but rather a process of learning and education, the logical result of »Bildung«. The highly influential teacher of his lower school, Pál Keresztúri Bíró, is himself a character prone to drunkenness; it will be Basirius, a representative of the higher level, who will provide him with lifelong advice, laying the scientific foundations for the long-mature process of conversion." (Orlovszky 2017, 230).

However, if we consider Bethlen's moral purification, which corresponds with his coming of age, as a purely worldly development, we overlook the fact that he attaches equal importance to divine admonition and worldly advice: "Indeed, I would have become a wicked drunken man had not my mother, who did not drink alcohol and despised drunkards, restrained me, and had not God in anno 1660 by a severe and life-threatening illness, by the loss at that time of Várad, and the advice of my sometime tutor Isacus Basirius, Doctor of Theology (of whom more anon), restored me to a healthy life." (Bethlen 2004, 137).

The passage presents the reader with a similar interpretative dilemma to the famous scene in Defoe's novel where Robinson, suffering from a severe fever, attempts to cure himself by smoking tobacco on the one hand, and by reading the Bible and praying on the other. It is not possible to ascertain which he attributes his cure to.[12] Bethlen's text also allows for different readings, but we do not necessarily have to choose between secular and spiritual interpretations: the historical place of the autobiography is marked by the juxtaposition of the two approaches to the cure.[13] A similar phenomenon can be observed in Bethlen's justification of his peregrinatio. It is possible to explain it by psychological factors, as Orlovszky does: "the peregrination to which he then definitively committed himself was both an escape from political and private turmoil" (Orlovszky 2017, 231). But we cannot completely ignore the fact that Bethlen sees in his autobiography (in retrospect) this as a manifestation of providence: he longed to go abroad "by the direction of God" (Bethlen 2004, 180). Let us not forget that these

12 About the interpretation of the scene, see Seidel 2021, 179-201.

13 The ambivalent and changing perceptions of the possibilities of early modern medicine are reflected in Keith Thomas' observation. In discussing the view of providence in early modern England, Thomas notes that it was a common view among English Protestant theologians and physicians in the mid-17th century that remedies should not be over-reliant: without God's help and prayer they would not be of any use in themselves; but in practice, physicians and patients alike often regarded illness as a purely natural, material phenomenon (Thomas 1973, 99).

lines are written by Bethlen who had already repented of his sins in prayer and had confirmed his election.[14]

There is no mention in the autobiography of the connection between the taking of vows and the development of the affair with the married woman, nor is the chronology of these events entirely clear. In any case, Bethlen's carnal desires remain unfulfilled not because he recognises that they are sinful, but because she does not want an extramarital affair and he does not want to marry.[15]

Ultimately, Bethlen does not claim that the illness, understood as a divine admonition, played a role in the break-off, citing as its cause – also contradicting himself – on one occasion the desire for peregrination, on another occasion the woman's resistance (in both explanations, he cites divine providence as the final cause). According to Bethlen's account, four years later (i.e., after his return home), she made a second proposal of marriage, which was endorsed by Bethlen's father. However, Bethlen declined, offering no rationale for his decision, but instead attributing it to divine will: "I was unwilling because God did not wish it, at which all were amazed" (Bethlen 2004, 225). An explanation can be found in Chapter XVII: here Bethlen reports that on his return home in 1664, "my head was more full of Mars than of Venus"; instead of marriage, he joined Miklós Zrínyi as a soldier (Bethlen 2004, 207). Here, as in the case of the reference to the desire for peregrination, the guidance of Providence is in line with Bethlen's own plans.

In recounting his visit to a brothel during his sojourn in London, Bethlen again claims that it was God who prevented him from engaging in intercourse with a prostitute. However, he subsequently states that had he not heeded the counsel of a paternal friend in England and had not feared contracting venereal disease, he would not have abstained from fornication before and after the incident (Bethlen 2004, 235). If the reader follows Bethlen's guidance and goes back to Chapter XV, he will recall that during his stay in England Bethlen "had a tendency to slip into drunkenness and lechery", and that he left England on the advice of Wilhelm Curtius (Bethlen 2004, 198). However, even taking this into account, it remains unclear whether fear of venereal disease played a role in Bethlen's refraining from sexual intercourse during the

14 Levente Nagy sees that Bethlen, because he was not freed from his captivity, could not experience election, and he was struggling all the time (Nagy 2017, 189; Nagy 2020, 241-256). Autobiographies, by their very nature, cannot portray the fate of the individual in the afterlife. From the reader's point of view, this alone may leave room for some doubt as to whether the autobiographer's life was indeed guided by Providence or whether it was a series of contingent events.

15 The prayer book clearly indicates that the reason for the break-up was not Bethlen's vow, but her behaviour: „thou hast wonderfully restrained me, and preserved me from the commission of sin, by the very person who first gave himself over to the occasion of sin, and thy Majesty gave her a better mind. And me, being then chastened with a deadly disease, thou didst vow, I think, that I would keep myself from drunkenness and fornication […]." (Bethlen 1955, II 156).

visit to the brothel addressed to the Saracen King, or if other factors were at play.

In order to comprehend the chapter about the sins of the youth of the autobiography, it is necessary for the reader to recall the preceding chapters or to revisit them. The links with the earlier chapters demonstrate the coherence of the autobiography, but also highlight that providence often works in an indirect way. The unraveling of the details also reveals that in the narrative of the autobiography, some events are already interpreted as divine signs in the narrated past. Thus, the serious illness in Huszt is already interpreted as a divine sign in the narrative past, since the young Bethlen takes his vows precisely because he understands his illness as an exhortation from God. In other cases, however, the situation is not clear. However, in the confession of sins in the book of prayers, it is exclusively from the perspective of the repentant sinner, the new man, that the signs of Providence in the life of the old men can be discerned.

In both his autobiography and his prayer book, Bethlen ascribes his chastity before his marriage to the grace of God. The concept of chance as an explanation for his actions appears only once, albeit indirectly. Also relevant to the question of providence, however, is the dichotomy in the way the fear of syphilis is judged. The *Autobiography* acknowledges it (and onanism) as a beneficial tool in the battle against carnal desires; however, within the strict moral theological framework of the *Prayer Book* it is a source of guilt that he remained virtuous out of fear of disease and not out of love of God. This dichotomy bears a resemblance to the somewhat contradictory assessment of secular honour in the different chapters of the *Preface*. Bethlen first strongly condemns all forms of seeking worldly honour, but later takes the view that seeking worldly honour, avoiding shame and disgrace, can be morally beneficial. The dichotomy between a strict moral theological position and a secular, worldly, practical perspective can also be seen as a sign of a shift in mentality, as a sign of the early Enlightenment.

The question of providence is explicitly thematised in several places in the autobiography. For instance, in the chapters concerning his peregrination, he ascribes various occurrences to divine intervention, underscoring the significance of recording events that exemplify God's benevolence.[16] He perceives divine providence in his survival after being swept away by a stream; in his recovery of lost gold; and in the fact that he happened to go to the same inn as Jászberényi upon his arrival in London (Bethlen 2004, 182, 183, 196). However, at the onset of Book 2, he underscores the significance of documenting these signs of divine providence: "Henceforth I shall record, therefore, that my posterity may have evidence, the more noteworthy achievements, endeavours,

16 "I could write many pleasing and amusing things about my journey, but I am loth to cover the paper with even greater trivia, and will only record these, which testify to God's care for me." (Bethlen 2004, 181) Bethlen may be writing here from earlier records in which he collected instances of divine providence.

obstacles and sufferings of my life, and as best I may shall abbreviate and summarise them, taking due note in particular, at all times and in all respects, of the providence of God towards me and of his consolation among the ceaseless persecutions of the devil and the world which the perceptive reader will everywhere observe throughout my life […]." (Bethlen 2004, 251).

Bethlen also alludes to providence on multiple occasions in relation to his financial prosperity. He himself acknowledges a pronounced predilection for trade, although he reports being censured by his malefactors for engaging in such activities, allegedly as a practice deemed incongruent with a noble existence (Bethlen 2004, 216). The issue of trade and material prosperity is a recurring theme in the pages of the life writing that depict the actions of the mature man. Bethlen frequently attributes his material successes to divine intervention, attributing his prosperous wine trade to divine favor and attributing the expansion of his estate to divine assistance: "At this time too God took pity on me, and gave me Zabola instead of Örményes, and the little estates at Bénye and Medves, so that my prosperity at Szentmiklós was established, indeed grew greatly, and later Örményes too returned to me together with a son. Such are the works of God." (Bethlen 2004, 253). Bethlen's successes in trade, which he later repeatedly reports, are an integral part of his self-characterization as living up to the ideal of a good merchant.[17] The following incident in 1674 is particularly insightful in terms of the relationship between providence and chance: "At that time too God was exceptionally and wonderfully gracious to me. My wife came from Zabola and gave me no peace, but contrary to our custom we went from Holdvilág to Szentivány, in terrible rain and mud. About the ninth or tenth of September I was looking over the grapes, and they were like gooseberries, there was not a soft berry among them and very few bunches. I said to Simon, my Saxon bailiff: Old man, St Mihály's day is only two and a half weeks off, what do you think? He replied: God only knows, no one has ever seen the like; but I fear that these will not ripen in the time, and there are no bunches, I do not know what we are to do. I did not say much but that day at once bought twenty-five barrels of old wine in Szentivány and Örményes at twenty-four forints a 'forty'. I went home, asked my friends for money, and bought sixty barrels of old wine at Ekemező, Szászsebes and Sárd.

17 For example: "My profit in the campaigning was as follows: the Prince sent a horse by my hand as a gift to the pasha of Temesvár, the son of the famous Seydi Ahmet, sometime vizier of Buda; he gave it to an equerry and interpreter, but to me as gift-bearing emissary he gave ten ells of fine pink English cloth; my forty-thaler pair of pistols, a gift from the Elector in Heidelberg (which I would not have sold for a hundred thalers) were stolen from my saddle-bow in the night. I took so much profit from the inn that the six or seven hundred forints that I had taken with me was a hundred more at Szentmiklós when I reached home, although I had certainly spent much, bought things, paid my servants, and paid in cash for fodder so that forty-five horses should have fodder three times daily, which they really did." (Bethlen 2004, 334).

They became good wines in anno 1674, and I had bought them for twenty-one forints. People were astonished at it, and even my good lord Zsigmond Bánffi wrote to me: would I tell him what was the point of my buying old wines. I wrote back: I will tell you myself at the Parliament in November. The Parliament assembled, and the poor fellow said: I understand now, do not tell me. I have had quite enough; the egg is teaching the hen. I gained on this almost twice as much in anno 1676." (Bethlen 2004, 282).

While he ascribes the successful speculation, in retrospect, to divine intervention, his detailed description of the process underscores the pivotal role of his perspicacity, astuteness, and skillfulness. Consequently, a contemporary reader might be inclined to interpret the narrative from a wholly secular perspective, regarding the allusion to God's grace as a superficial formality. However, given the historical context, we need not necessarily take this view, since the Protestant view of the time did not necessarily see a contradiction between faith in divine providence and recognition of individual mercenary achievement. Indeed, as Max Weber noted, a fundamental tenet of Protestant ethics was the connection between material success and divine favor.[18]

One wonders, of course, whether the business action in question is fully in line with the Protestant ideal of honourable commerce.[19] This question may also arise because in his prayer book Bethlen is very vehement in his scourging of his own acquisitiveness, the source of which he identifies with self-love that is alienating him from God: "In what thousands of ways and means I have drawn, stolen, cheated my neighbour, only when that bad money was deposited in this country, how many people have I corrupted by my many-coloured and many-formed miserly dealings, my usury, my many borrowings, my difficult, late and harmful payments, my acquiring wealth by the damage of goods, inheritances and all other things, etc." (Bethlen 1955, II 176).

The reference to the depositing of bad money clearly recalls the events of 1674, since Bethlen used his political insider and landlord status to turn the income from the sale of wine, which had lost value due to the minting of money, into real value. One might therefore also assume that the subject of the prayer regards the purchase of the wine itself as a miserly trade, i.e. that Bethlen takes a more austere view in

18 "For if God, whose hand the Puritan sees in all the occurrences of life, shows one of His elect a chance of profit, he must do it with purpose" – writes Weber, referring to Richard Baxter's views. (Weber 2001, 108). About the relationship of providentialism and individual activity in Puritanism see further: Cohen 2022, 93.

19 Weber stresses that the Puritans, while approving of the business successes of the rational bourgeois self-made man, condemned adventurist capitalism based on speculation (Weber 2001, 111). Among the theologians, Ames and Perkins strongly cautioned against excessive profiteering. See: Ryrie 2013, 102. According to Molnár, Bethlen's trading activities were not driven by the continuous, business-like profit-making model described by Weber, but rather by speculation (Molnár 1994, 112).

the prayer than in the autobiography. It is more likely, however, that Bethlen is consistent, and that he considered the wine business to be fundamentally honest. While his sins of carnal passion are described in great detail in the autobiography, his financial sins are barely mentioned, and it is therefore difficult to judge where he saw the line between honest gain and excessive profit-seeking. In any case, in the autobiography Bethlen allows considerably more room for individual activity, skill and the resulting material gain than in the prayer, where he unrelentingly scourges all forms of self-love.

The predominant trope of the self-interpretation given by Miklós Bethlen in his life-writing is the belief in the power of providence; at the same time, however, in several cases secular considerations, worldly motivations and individual activity also play a role in the development of his life's path. This does not mean, however, that the references to providence in the autobiography are a purely formal addition on the surface of the secular narrative, nor is it just a question of the genre dichotomy between the prayer book and the autobiography; rather, the reasons are to be found in the tension between the belief in providence and the new experiences and patterns of thought of the incipient modernisation.

Given the presence of elements that challenge the validity of providentialism, the interpretation of Miklós Bethlen's autobiography raises somewhat similar questions to Defoe's *Robinson*. For a long time, the evaluation of the English novel has been characterised by the duality of secular readings, which focus the homo economicus and spiritual readings, which focus the *homo religiosus*, and attempts to resolve this duality (Monk 1993, 15-45, McKeon 2002, 315-337). Somewhat similar dichotomies can be seen in the more recent Bethlen literature: while Zsombor Tóth (2007), drawing mainly on the *Prayer Book*, painted a picture of the Puritan Bethlen and emphasized the soteriological features of the autobiography, József Simon (2022), in his analysis of the *Preface*, pointed to the secular tendencies of Bethlen's thinking, above all the emergence of self-interest as a positive category. These two approaches are both firmly grounded, but further analysis is needed to clarify the relationship between the secular and spiritual dimensions in different parts of the autobiography.

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A Hungarian Priest from the 19th Century who Translated Homer

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ABSTRACT

István Szabó was considered the most outstanding Hellenist of Hungary in the 19th century. He was the first who translated the two great Homer's epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey into Hungarian, as well as the fables of Aesop. István Szabó began his service as a priest in the villages of Nógrád. Ferenc Kazinczy also noticed the young priest during his traveling in Northern Hungary, in Palócföld. In 1863, the Historian Frigyes Pesty presented his intention to collect Hungarian toponyms to the Hungarian Royal Council of Governor-General. He collected the toponyms of all the settlements in the Carpathian Basin. The handwriting and correction of the priest-translator István Szabó can be found in the text of the toponym-collection. In my study, on one hand, I will write about the significance of the Pesty's collection, as well as about the literary activity of István Szabó, and his contribution to the collection of toponyms in Nógrád.

Keywords: Nógrád county, Frigyes Pesty, collection of toponyms, Homer, hellenist, 19th century

1. István Szabó, the Priest

István Szabó, originally from the Bakony region of Transdanubia in Hungary, spent a long time living in Palócföld a region of the Northeastern Hungary and witnessed almost the entire 19th century — born in 1801 and passing away in 1892. Though he began his schooling at the significant Reformed College in Pápa, Transdanubia, in 1812, Count László Esterházy, then the bishop of Rozsnyó,[1] admitted him into his Catholic seminary. This led him to continue his

1 Today: Rožňava, SK.

studies at the Premonstratensian grammar school in Rozsnyó.[2] From 1819, he prepared for priesthood at the seminary in this town, and in 1826, he was ordained. Moving from Transdanubia to the northern Karancs Valley, he began his clerical career. He served as chaplain in Karancskeszi for seven years, from 1827 to 1834. His service extended beyond just one community, as the parish of Karancskeszi included four branch churches: Karancsalja, Karancsberény, Bocsárlapujtő, and Karancsapátfalva.[3] In 1834, he left Nógrád for a time, serving in Gömör-region settlements for nine years. He was an assistant priest in Osgyán[4] for three years, then continued his priestly service in the neighboring Guszona[5] until 1842. He served as the parish priest of Pilis in Pest County until 1847, after which he returned to Nógrád, this time to the village of Kazár. Kazár also had branch churches, and he ministered not only in Kazár but also in Mátraszele and Vizslás until his death. Even today, the residents of Kazár remember him as a defining figure in their village's history — a scholar, writer, and translator-priest. His memorial room in the village preserves his legacy. As a young priest, he began translating and publishing works of Greek classical literature, earning him the reputation of being the most distinguished Hellenist of his time. István Szabó was regarded as the most outstanding Hellenist of his time in Hungarian literature. As a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Kisfaludy Society, István Szabó published his works under the name *Kazári pap* ('the priest of Kazár') between 1857 and 1892 (Kenyeres 1982, 679; Szinnyei 1909, 205–207).

2. István Szabó, the Translator

He translated numerous works of ancient Greek literature. Even as a young priest, he stood out for his erudition. Ferenc Kazinczy, a key literary organizer of the era, took notice of him during his travels in Upper Hungary. In his travelogue *Hungarian Journeys*, Kazinczy mentions the translator-priest:

"And who would have thought that here, someone reads the Anthology in Greek and transplants Meleager's flowers onto Hungarian soil? – »Oh, where have you strayed, beautiful works of the Greek soul!« – I could exclaim, echoing Molière's famous words. – István Szent-Királyi Szabó, Chaplain in Karancskeszi, between Ludány and Bocsárd, translates them. His acquaintance, as well as that of his esteemed Dean, was most delightful for both of us." (Kazinczy 1831/2015, 175)

2 Today: Rožňava, SK.
3 The latter two merged later to form Karancslapujtő, now part of Nógrád County's administrative area
4 Today: Ožďany, Slovakia, located in the Banská Bystrica region, Rimavská Sobota district.
5 Today: Husiná, Slovakia.

In 1834, he published a collection of translations titled *Greek Flowers from the Anthology* in Kassa[6]. The editor of the *Hungarian Bibliography 1712–1920* (Petrik ed. 1892) mistakenly attributed this work to a certain József Szabó, misinterpreting the monogram Sz. J., although this was actually István Szabó's first Greek translation.

He was the first to translate several ancient classical authors into Hungarian. His translation of *Aesop's Fables* (*Aesop meséi*, Pest, 1846) and Homer's epics were the first to be rendered into Hungarian by someone with an excellent command of ancient Greek. His translation of *The Iliad* was published in 1853 by Gusztáv Emich's printing house in Pest (*Homeros Iliasa*), with an introduction and notes written by the esteemed linguist and ethnographer Pál Hunfalvy. That same year, he also translated four speeches by Socrates (Petrik ed. 1892, 301).

His Hungarian translation of *The Odyssey* was printed in 1857 by the bookseller György Kilián Jr's publisher in Pest (*Homer Odysseaia*). The inner title page stated: "From Grecian by István Szabó, officiating priest of Rozsnyó County, parish priest of Pilis, member of Hun. Acad. and the Kisfaludy Soc."

After translating Homer's great epics, he worked on *The Argonautica* which survived from Apollonius Rhodius, a 3rd-century BC poet. This epic recounts the story of Jason and his fellow heroes on their quest for the Golden Fleece. Szabó dedicated his translation to Antal Lonkay, the publisher of *The Hungarian Knights of the Golden Fleece*, as a "token of eternal friendship and gratitude." He honored his esteemed patron with a laudatory poem written in elegiac couplets and a ten-page tribute, both published in the book's opening pages. The work was completed in celebration of Szabó's fiftieth anniversary as an officiating priest and writer, thanks to a donation from Antal Lonkay. In the introductory pages of the volume, he salutes him on this occasion. And on the occasion of the half-century jubilee, the translator is greeted by several distinguished persons and institutions. First, the publisher himself, followed by the distinguished poet János Arany, who, on behalf of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, praised Szabó as "a true admirer." In his tribute, Arany wrote: "Your reverence's contributions, especially to Hellenic literature and the complete translation of Homer, have ensured your lasting name." (Arany 1877, 17.) On behalf of the Kisfaludy Society, its president, the literary historian Ferenc Toldy, and its secretary, Ágost Greguss, conveyed their congratulations. In their tribute, we read: "You have earned your most beautiful laurels, and even your literary career, as an interpreter of poets, especially Greek poets." (Greguss–Tolnai 1877, 18.) The literary historian Pál Gyulai sent greetings from the section of linguistics and literary studies of the Academy, requesting Szabó to submit another Greek translation to be printed and published as a gift for his fiftieth anniversary. Emil Ponori Thewrewk, president of the Budapest Philological Society, wrote a congratulatory letter, expressing

6 Today: Košice, Slovakia.

his deep respect for the literary world and emphasizing the importance of literature for national education. Alajos Nagy, a teacher whose students learned Greek literature through Szabó's translations, also sent a letter addressed "To Our Deeply Respected Scholar". A similar congratulatory letter came from another institution, the Piarist Secondary School of Budapest, celebrating his literary jubilee.

During his translation work, István Szabó engaged with the works of Hesiod, translated Greek dramas into Hungarian, worked on Demosthenes speeches, translated Greek letters, and introduced epigrams to Hungarian readers. Beyond interpreting Greek classics, he also wrote studies and treatises, making him not only a translator of ancient works but also a literary historian who analyzed and contextualized them. In his major literary history work, Zsolt Beöthy offered a critical assessment of Szabó's translations. However, this critique simultaneously highlights Szabó's merit as a classical philologist: "All these translations […] are faithful in content, yet, regrettably, devoid of poetic sensitivity; they bear the mark of a philologist rather than that of a poet." (Beöthy 1896, 782–783).

3. His Study on the Palóc Dialect

István Szabó, as an intellectual attentive to the values of his surroundings, observed that in the Nógrád settlements where he served, people spoke differently from those in his homeland, the Bakony region of Transdanubia. Initially, as an educated man, he found the rural speech unsettling to his ears and even condemned the Palóc pronunciation. He perceived the dialect as "distorted speech" and noticed its significant deviation from the emerging standard language or from his own dialect (Szabó 1837, 43). However, over time, he came to understand that Hungarian dialects held value, as they preserved ancient forms of the Hungarian language. He recognized the importance of documenting and preserving dialectal features for future generations. After years of service, when he began recording the distinctive language use of the Palóc people, he already referred to the villagers as his "beloved people of the Karancs region" (Szabó 1837, 43). It was upon the request of *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*,[7] a 19th-century scientific journal, that he consciously started collecting the dialectal characteristics of the speakers in his place of service, the Karancs Valley. He dedicated his study to "Mr. István Horvát, the wise friend of the Palóc language and people," who was the editor of *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*. István Horvát was the one who formulated the historical linguistic theory of the Palóc people, elaborating on their supposed ancient origins in multiple studies and advocating for the collection of Palóc linguistic features. Under the pseudonym "a patriot", Horvát published a call for submissions in

7 Scientific Collection, a periodical of wide scope.

Tudományos Gyűjtemény (1817, vol. 1. 114–116), encouraging research on the Palóc dialect.

During his priestly service, through conversations with the local people, István Szabó observed that the intonation, grammatical features, and regional vocabulary of the Palóc dialect differed from the language varieties spoken in other parts of the Carpathian Basin. In his study — one that not only highlights linguistic characteristics but also expresses the joys he experienced during his time there — he offers his work as a token of gratitude, a gift, a "forget-me-not garland". He compiled this study on the Karancs-region Palóc dialect in response to a call for papers by the journal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Szabó 1837).

He begins his dialectological study with a geographical description, delineating the area whose dialect he observed: "Karancs Mountain is located in Nógrád, between the towns of Fülek, Losonc, and Szécsény" (Szabó 1837, 43). From his writing, we learn that he served in this region for seven years and nine months, which gave him ample opportunity to familiarize himself with the Palóc dialect and local customs. His description presents the features of the local dialect, which belongs to the Central Palóc dialect group. In his study, he also incorporates examples from his native Transdanubian dialect, comparing them with the speech of the Palóc people to illustrate the differences.

He made highly precise observations regarding vowel and consonant phenomena. First, he highlighted the characteristic diphthong pronunciation in the region, e.g., *sűrőü* [ʃyːryː], *sőürőü* [ʃøːyrøːy] for *sűrű* [ʃyːryː] ('dense'). He noted that the vowel *a* [ɒ] had three different pronunciations, while *e* [ɛ] and *é* [eː] each had two variations in this dialect. He observed that speakers replaced the long *ú* [uː] at the end of words with *ó* [oː] and *ű* [yː] with *ő* [øː], as in *hosszó* ['hosːoː] instead of *hosszú* ['hosːuː] ('long') and *keserő* ['kɛʃɛrøː] instead of *keserű* ['kɛʃɛryː] ('bitter'). He also noted the palatalized pronunciation of *l* [l], as in *gól'a* ['goːʎɒ] ('stork'). This feature, which had once been widespread across the Hungarian language area, had by then been largely confined to the Palóc region, making it a distinctive trait.[8] He further illustrated the palatalization typical of the Palóc dialect. For example, instead of the standard Hungarian infinitive suffix *-ni* [ni], speakers used *-nyi* [ɲi], as in *látnyi* ['laːtɲi] for *látni* ['laːt.ni] ('to see'). He provided data on the palatalization of *d* [d] and *t* [t], with examples like *gyió* [ɟiːo] (*dió* – 'walnut'), *másogyik* ['maːʃoɟik] (*második* – 'second'), *tyíz* [ciːz] (*tíz* – 'ten'), and *nevetyi* ['nɛvɛci] (*neveti* – 'he/she laughs at it'). His study also documented the *cs* ~ *ty* [t͡ʃ ~ c] variaton, offering examples such as *tyizma* ['cizmɒ] for *csizma* ['t͡ʃizmɒ] ('boot') and *tyipke* ['cipkɛ] for *csipke* ['t͡ʃipkɛ] ('lace'). He noted the characteristic disappearance of final consonants in the Palóc dialect, using the pronunciation of the verbal prefix *meg-* [mɛg-] as *me-* [mɛ-] as an example. Additionally,

8 The historical orthographic representation of this sound is the *ly* [ʎ] grapheme in modern Hungarian spelling.

he described cases of compensatory lengthening, where the loss of *l* [l] resulted in the preceding vowel lengthening, such as *títom* ['tiːtom] ('tiltom' – 'I forbid') and *szíva* ['siːvɒ] (*szilva* – 'plum'). He observed that this phenomenon also affected *r* [r], leading to similar vowel lengthening, as in *mőre* ['møːrɛ] for *merre* ['mɛrːɛ] ('where to'). The sound combination of *rl* [rl] often is *ll* (*pallag* ['pɒllɒg] for *parlag* ['pɒrlɒg] – 'fallow land', *salló* ['ʃɒlːoː] for *sarló* ['ʃɒrló] – 'sickle') and *rs* [rʃ] in pronounciation of other dialects is mostly *ss* [ʃː] (*gyoss* ['ɟoʃː] for *gyors* ['ɟorʃ] – 'fast', *bossó* ['boʃːoː] for *borsó* ['borʃoː] – 'pea').

Among morphophonetic features, István Szabó also observed a phenomenon characteristic of the Central Palóc dialect: the *g* in the verbal prefix *meg-* assimilates to the first consonant of the attached verb. He provided examples such as *meffogom* (*megfogom* – 'I catch') and *mellátom* (*meglátom* – 'I see'). At that time, the superlative prefix *leg-* was still heard as *let-* in this region, a form that later receded. Examples include *letjobb* (legjobb – 'best') and *letszebb* (*legszebb* – 'most beautiful').

Regarding morphological traits, he documented the distinct Palóc inflaction and conjugation patterns that remain characteristic today. He noted that the first consonant of *-val, -vel* ('with') suffix did not assimilate to the final consonant of the noun stem, resulting in forms like *kardval* (*karddal* – 'with a sword') and *kézvel* (*kézzel* – 'with a hand'). He also observed the imperative mood, noting that where emerging standard Hungarian or other dialects use the *-ts* suffix, Palóc speakers pronounce *j* or *jj*, as in *ordíj* (*ordíts* – 'shout') and *tanítjj* (*taníts* – 'teach'). Verbs ending in *-t* in the imperative form have *dd*: *tanídd* (*tanítsd* – 'teach it'). In the early 19th century, István Szabó was still able to document the use of the so-called family locative suffixes among the Palóc people of the Karancs region: variants such as *-nyi* and *-nál* (lativus, 'where to?'), while *-nul* and *-nó* (ablativus, 'where from?'). The characteristically Palóc "short past tense" was already an established feature of the Central Palóc dialect in the early 19th century. He recorded examples such as *süttem* (*sütöttem* – 'I baked') and *ütted* (*ütötted* – 'you hit').

Among regional vocabulary, he highlighted *pegy* ['pɛɟ] for *pedig* ['pɛdɪg] ('however'). He also noted frequent consonant swapping in words, such as *terenyem* (*tenyerem* – 'palm'), *hedegű* (*hegedű* – 'violin'), and *feteke* (*fekete* – 'black').[9]

4. István Szabó's Entries in Frigyes Pesty's 1864–65 Toponym Collection[10]

On February 2, 1863, historian Frigyes Pesty submitted a letter to the Hungarian Royal Council of Governor-General, outlining his intention to collect Hungary's geographical names. The governing body sought an expert opinion from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The

9 See also Gréczi-Zsoldos 2022, 119–123.

10 See Hajdú 2001–2002, 24–26.

Academy's recommendation in support of the initiative was signed on July 20, 1863 by Baron József Eötvös, the Vice President of the Academy. Based on this endorsement, the Council of Governor-General took the project under its patronage and, on February 21, 1864, issued a circular instructing county authorities to carry out the collection. Frigyes Pesty compiled and printed standardized questionnaires to facilitate uniform data collection. These forms were distributed to local officials with the assistance of district magistrates. To ensure the most comprehensive collection of geographical names from every settlement, a guide for completing the forms was also included. The guide explicitly stated the purpose of the project: "The aim is to explain and determine the meaning of all place names in our homeland." (Csáki 2015, 242) Both the questionnaire and the guide indicate that the organizer considered it essential to record the name of "every inch of land, every hill, and every valley." (Csáki 2015, 242). The full collection of place names was never published.[11]

In this toponym collection, István Szabó's name appears in connection with three villages, identified as the "parish priest of Kazár" (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library] Fol. Hung. 1114/38). However, he did not record the field names or fill out the questionnaire himself; he merely added remarks to the recorded entries.

The documentation of place names was typically carried out by the local notary, priest, or schoolteacher. The transcription of the field names for the village of Kazár in Nógrád County does not bear a signature. However, after the collected material, there is a supplementary note signed by István Szabó and dated June 30, 1864. From this note, we learn that it was through his intervention that the responses to the questionnaire were transcribed by cantor-teacher Antal Kluka. In his note, Szabó added historical information about the settlement, claiming that Kazár might have been a significant "stronghold" of the Palóc people in ancient times, as the chronicle he studied indicated that the Palóc were originally Khazars. He also included a linguistic observation, tracing the etymology of the word *kazár*. Among the 505 pages of the Nógrád County collection, it is unique that certain parts of the manuscript — often reflecting the personal spelling variations of less formally educated individuals — were corrected by someone. The evidence suggests that this was István Szabó. His postscript at the end of the text was written in ink significantly darker than that used by the cantor-teacher, and the same darker ink was used for the corrections

11 However, in the 1960s, staff at the National Széchényi Library created microfilm copies of the handwritten material from the 1863–65 collection. Currently, a research group within the Hungarian National Toponymic Program (MNHP) is working to publish the Pesty collection in a unified format, providing a philologically accurate transcription of the entire dataset. This extraordinary onomastic database will be made available both in printed publications and electronically on the MNHP website (https://mnhp.unideb.hu/kiadvanyok_pesty.php) My colleague László Angyal and I are preparing the Nógrád County material for publication.

throughout the text. This strongly indicates that Szabó was the one who revised what he considered incorrect word forms. This case reflects the educational disparities of the time: the linguistic proficiency and spelling accuracy of a simple village teacher and a village priest who authored scholarly works, was a member of the Academy, and translated from Ancient Greek were on different levels. István Szabó corrected the following linguistic inaccuracies in the cantor-teacher's transcription (with the corrections italicized).

In several instances, he refined the use of locative suffixes, correcting the *-ba, -be* forms to *-ban, -ben* in inessive cases, and even added commas where necessary at clause boundaries: "Kazár Község fekszik Nógrád Vármegyébe*n*, a füleki járásba*n*, Délről Nemti […] szomszédságá*ban*, […]"; "[…] a szelei határral öszve függésbe*n* áll"; "a belsö kertek végi*ben*."[12] He corrected the contemporary name variant *Terenne* for the settlement of Kisterenye to *Terenye* in several places throughout the text. He inserted a missing *z* into the name *Vislás* for Vizslás village (although not consistently, as he left *Vislás* unchanged elsewhere, likely due to oversight). The field name *Verepes* was adjusted to *Verebes*. The title *A Község határában elő forduló Helyek*[13] was refined to *Helynevek*.[14] Among his corrections was a phonological assimilation mistake: the cantor-teacher did not indicate the assimilated consonant in the *-vá, -vé* case suffix in the word *földé* (*földdé* – ' it will become earth') and Szabó István corrected this grammatical mistake by inserting a *d* after the word root.

He attached two numbered notes to the text in the description of place names. In one case, the original recorder had simply written: "Földes Úr Ki Pesten lakott"[15]. Szabó supplemented this by providing the landlord's name in Note 1: Miklós Vadasi Jankovics.

A section of the text had been heavily crossed out, likely by the reviewing priest himself. This passage was presumably removed because it referenced superstition, attributing an event to divine punishment — something a Catholic priest would have found theologically unacceptable. The crossed-out passage reads as follows:

"a juh akoly 300. db juhval menykö ütés által porra égett épen Kis asszonynapján esti hat órakor, elérte az Isten büntető keze, mert még az nap d.e. is nyíratott az akkori Árendás zsidó Blabontál Simon."[16]

12 'The village of Kazár lies in Nógrád County, in the Fülek district, bordering Nemti to the south, […]'; '[…] is connected with the boundary of Szele'; 'at the end of the gardens'.

13 "Places occurring within the village's boundary."

14 "Place names."

15 "The landlord who lived in Pest."

16 "The sheepfold, with 300 sheep, burned to ashes due to a lightning strike precisely on the evening of the Feast of the Assumption at six o'clock, struck by the punishing hand of God, because earlier that morning, the tenant Jew, Simon Blabontál, had sheared the sheep."

In another section, the cantor-teacher wrote about the beneficial effects of a well's water. Szabó corrected the verb conjugation and added a personal remark to that of the cantor-teacher:

"[…] vize a köszvényben szenvedöknek hasznos orvosszerül szolgál, a vidékiek is látogatják, és vizét más videkekre is hor*dj*ák."[17]

Based on his personal experience or the testimony of locals, Szabó also believed in the healing properties of the spring. He appended Note 2 at the bottom of the page with his wish: "Even to Pest. If only the relevant authorities would support it."

Similarly, Szabó's handwriting appears in the description of the village of Mátraszele, following the documentation of its field names. His addition reveals that he had overseen the Frigyes Pesty toponym collection in this village as well, as Mátraszele was a subsidiary church of the Kazár parish. He was responsible for the spiritual care of 430 Catholics.[18] His attached note identifies the local recorder of Mátraszele's toponyms: under his supervision, the records were transcribed by the village's cantor-teacher and notary, György Borbás. He dated his note at the end of the text: June 24, 1864.

On the same day, he also countersigned the place-name records of Vizslás. His note confirms that in this village as well, he had assigned the transcription of the Frigyes Pesty questionnaire responses to the village cantor-teacher and notary, József Mikus. The note also reveals that the Catholic residents of this village were likewise affiliated with the Kazár parish's subsidiary church. The total population of the village was 587, the majority being Roman Catholic, and only seven identified as Jewish.

5. Commemoration

In 1995, a statue was erected in Kazár, Nógrád County, in honor of István Szabó, the scholarly priest and prominent figure of the 19th century. Recognizing his contributions as a writer, translator, scholar, classical philologist, and clergyman, the bust was placed in the parish garden. The sculpture is the work of Péter Molnár. Two years later, a memorial room was opened at the same site, showcasing the legacy of the renowned scholar-priest through an exhibition.[19]

In the former Hungarian town of Rozsnyó[20], a bust sculpted by Barnabás Holló was unveiled in 1897, five and a half years after Szabó's death, paying tribute to the great Hellenist and former student of the

17 "[…] its water serves as a useful remedy for those suffering from gout; locals visit it, and its water is taken to other regions as well."

18 The religious demographics are notable: the village also had five Evangelical and fourteen Jewish residents.

19 https://www.bnpi.hu/hu/reszletek/szabo-istvan-tudos-pap-emlekszobaja

20 Today: Rožňava, Slovakia.

local Catholic high school.[21] On October 24 of that year, philologist, translator, writer, university professor, and Academy member Ede Margalits delivered a commemorative speech during the inauguration of Szabó's memorial room and the unveiling of his statue in Rozsnyó. The speech was published as a separate print in the 26th volume of the publication series containing the proceedings of the Scientific and Literary Department of the Saint Stephen Society under the title *Commemorative Speech on Hungarian Hellenist István Szabó*. In his tribute, Margalits praised Szabó with these words:

"We celebrate in him the fiery-spirited Hungarian patriot, who not only rejoiced with those who rejoiced but also grieved with those who mourned. (…) We celebrate in him the perfect and wise man, whose life, especially in our time, can serve as a guiding example." (Margalits 1897, 13.)

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Júlia Apraxin's Unknown Radical Folk Drama in 19th-Century Hungary: The Reimagining of Roma Identity[1]

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ABSTRACT

In the latter half of the 19th century, the restructuring of society and the spread of democratic ideals forced a reassessment of the aristocracy's role. Values such as honor, courage, and nobility—long viewed as the preserve of the elite—were redefined and applied to groups that had previously been excluded from such moral recognition. This article explores one striking dimension of this cultural transformation: the literary representation of the "Gypsy" in 19th-century Hungarian literature. It focuses on the startlingly unconventional depiction of Roma identity in *Corra, the Gypsy*, a recently rediscovered manuscript folk drama by Júlia Apraxin—an aristocratic yet radical female author of mid-19th-century Hungary.

Keywords: Romani representation; theater; Júlia Apraxin; folk drama; People's Theatre (*Népszínház*); 19th-century Hungarian literature

1. Introduction

Canonical literary depictions of marginalized groups are inseparable from a society's own self-understanding. Societies often project onto others precisely those traits they cannot—or will not—acknowledge in themselves, thereby constructing "otherness" as a mirror of their own disavowed qualities. Because self-representations are largely produced by dominant elites, portrayals of vulnerable groups inevitably reflect the interpretive framework of those elites. The literary history of Roma/

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Gypsy representation must therefore be read as a function of this dominant self-conception.[2]

In European literature more broadly, 19th-century Roma figures are usually understood through a handful of emblematic stereotypes—often mutually contradictory. The Roma may appear as the "noble savage," the embodiment of freedom, the bohemian artist, the dangerous seducer,[3] or the thief. Frequently, Gypsies are depicted as emblems of nomadic freedom, closeness to nature, and social marginality. They function as an "idealized Other," at once alluring and threatening. Such portrayals rely on an exoticizing discourse that simultaneously admires and demonizes their difference.[4]

In most cases, the representations of Gypsy female figures also carry a double stereotype: they are both objects of erotic desire and moral threats, for example, Carmen's independence ultimately leads to her death, which is interpreted as the destruction of free female identity in the work. Female Gypsy characters, in particular, are subjected to a double stereotype: eroticized as objects of desire yet condemned as moral threats. The paradigmatic case is Carmen, whose independence culminates in her death—a symbolic annihilation of female autonomy. While Western European literature often orientalized and romanticized Roma figures, Hungarian literature developed its own variations. Chief among these was the "comic Gypsy," a stock character inherited from earlier European traditions but adapted into 19th-century Hungarian cultural contexts. As Sarah Houghton-Walker has shown, early 18th-century texts often cast the Gypsy as an "amusing villain." By the Victorian era, however, shifting socio-political contexts transformed this figure into one embedded in a romantic-nostalgic tradition of representation.[5]

2 The term "Gypsy" is used in this study solely to reflect the historical terminology of the 19th century, while acknowledging the contemporary scholarly and cultural preference for "Roma."

3 For example Prosper Mérimée: *Carmen,* 1845.

4 Social exclusion and vulnerability are defining features of what is perhaps the most influential Western European representation of the Gypsy: the figure of Esmeralda. (Victor Hugo *Notre-Dame in Paris*, 1831).

5 "The date from which my analysis of the Romantic-period gypsy begins is fixed and significant: 1783 was an important year for the public perception of gypsies for various reasons, and this importance is demonstrated in William Cowper's depiction of a group of gypsies written in the same year. The other end of the period of interest is more difficult to set: unsurprisingly, perceptions take a long time to change, and they do not change consistently or completely. As a rough guide, I have posited the year 1830, as the effects of the 1824 Vagrancy Act were beginning to bite (this Act transferred the focus from gypsies per se to their habits of life: pre-eminently, wandering, but also hawking and begging, camping in the wrong place or sleeping in tents or carts, and fortune-telling), though some of the works I consider post-date this marker. In these (approximately) fifty years, something quite different happens to representations of gypsies, and those representations are intimately tied to their historical context. [...] Amongst all of the other concerns they are used to articulate and explore, portrayals of gypsies

This study examines a Hungarian folk drama written in 1863 for the People's Theatre (*Népszínház*) *Corra, a' czigány, vagy a' halász leány* [*Corra, the Gypsy, or the Fisherman's Daughter*]. Its author, Countess Júlia Batthyány Apraxin—a Russian-born aristocrat educated in Western Europe—composed the work both as a contribution to nation-building and in support of the fledgling People's Theatre.[6] I argue that Apraxin's drama offers an exceptional case in Hungarian letters—and arguably a unique one in European literature. Drawing on her familiarity with Western European literary trends, Apraxin crafted Gypsy figures not as confirmations of existing stereotypes but as deliberate refutations of them.

2.1. The History of a Manuscript Once Thought Lost

The official theatrical journal *Színházi Látcső* [*Theatre Spyglass*] reported on 13 April 1863 that "In Buda, a folk drama entitled *Korru, a cigány, vagy a halász leány* [*Korru the Gypsy or the Fisherwoman*] is being prepared. The author is Júlia B. Apraxin"[7]. The very next day, however, *Sürgöny* [*Telegram*] issued a correction: "The title of B. Apraxin's new original play to be performed at the Buda People's Theatre is not *Korru*, as the papers say, but *Cora*. Whether it is a boy or a girl we do not know"[8].

Katalin Barna, the monographer of Apraxin's oeuvre, claimed the manuscript had been lost: "*Korru, a cigány vagy a halászleány* [*Korru, the Gypsy or the Fisherwoman*]. Vaudeville populaire. (Perdu.) 1863" (Barna 1964, 169). Fortunately, however, the original manuscript—with its cast list for the People's Theatre and the individual role scripts—survives in

are significantly inflected by contemporary unease about what Englishness might be, and therefore offer us as readers a way of understanding perceptions of Englishness as well as of gypsies at a particular moment in history. Rather than focus on the Victorian situation as recent scholarship has done, then, this book explores a window of time between those eighteenth-century accounts in which gypsies are figured as amusing rogues, and the nostalgic, romanticized gypsy form (which has abandoned its sublimity in favour of the bucolic fantasy prompted and propagated by George Borrow and the founder members of the Gypsy Lore Society) which we find in the early Victorian period. Between these two situations, the gypsy is used by writers and artists to articulate various dilemmas and anxieties, which take various forms. What these different dilemmas and anxieties have in common is their connection to ideas of knowing, to definition, and to understanding identities which are mutable and troubling." (Houghton-Walker 2014, 10–11, 12–13).

6 On the relationship between the opening of the People's Theatre (*Néspzínház*) in Buda and historical Hungarian nation-building, see Heltai 2009.

7 „Budán *Korru a cigány, vagy a halászleány* című népies drámára készülnek. Szerzője: B. Apraxin Júlia." (*Színházi Látcső*, 13 Apr. 1863, no. 8).

8 „B. Apraxin új, a budai népszínházban előadandó eredeti darabjának címe nem Korru, mint a lapok írják, hanem *Cora*. Már hogy fiú vagy leány azt bizony magunk se tudjuk." (*Sürgöny*, 14 Apr. 1863, no. 85).

the Theatre Collection of the Arad Museum Complex (inventory no. 13413) in Arad County, Romania.[9]

The surviving manuscript, bearing the seal of the Arad Theatre Association, gives the exact title as: *Corra, a' czigány vagy a' halász leány Népies dráma 4 fölvonásban. Írta Batthyányi Júlia* [*Corra, the Gypsy or the Fisherwoman. A folk drama in four acts. Written by Júlia Batthyányi*]. Notably, Apraxin herself labeled the piece a *népies dráma* ('folk drama'), which contrasts with the term *vaudeville* used by Barna. Whereas the French *vaudeville* evoked associations with musical theatre, the Hungarian category of "folk drama" at the time referred to popular stage works, often but not necessarily with musical or song interludes.

The manuscript's front page also records the evaluations and signatures of the drama committee:[10] Bolnai approved the play;[11] Győző Kempelen rejected it;[12] and Gyula Bulyovszky endorsed it,[13] though explicitly noting that his acceptance was offered only out of respect for the author. The manuscript, which suggests the play was never staged, includes a cast list: Corra was assigned to István Együd; his Romani mother, Iszturka, to Mrs. Vinczéné; Lidi the fisherwoman to Laura Szépné Mátray; Márton, the scheming wealthy peasant, to István Bihari; and the two Fegyveressy counts to Ádám Takács and István Bényei. All belonged to the company of the People's Theatre, just as the committee members did. This overlap makes it clear that the original manuscript of the People's Theatre somehow found its way to Arad. The most plausible explanation is that it was taken there by György Molnár, a prominent and innovative theatre director-actor of the period. Molnár not only served as stage director but also founded the People's Theatre in Buda. Molnár visited Arad multiple times during his career, including at least one occasion in 1863 when he traveled with Júlia Apraxin. At the time, the two were partners both personally and professionally, making this drama a valuable document of their intimate relationship as well as their theatrical collaboration (see also Molnár 1880, 1881).

9 A textbook bound in a hardback blue cardboard cover, containing the text of the drama written in black ink, with later additions, corrections, and erasures made in black ink, red ink, and graphite pencil.

10 In the theaters of the period, drama committees played a crucial role. Their task was to make a preliminary assessment of plays proposed for performance and to decide whether a given work could be staged. The repertoire was highly varied, with productions changing frequently and often being presented almost daily. In this fast-paced environment, it was essential to have a professional committee that evaluated both the aesthetic quality and the political acceptability of the works. (For further discussion, see Pukánszkyné Kádár 1939.)

11 The pseudonym of Miklós Bethlen—actor, editor of the periodical *Magyar Sajtó* [*Hungarian Press*], and member of the drama committee of the People's Theatre.

12 He was a staff member of the periodical *Hon* [*Homeland*], working as a journalist and editor, and also served as a member of the People's Theatre drama committee.

13 He was a journalist and editor, as well as a member of the drama committee of the People's Theatre.

2.2. The Plot and Literary Novelty of *Corra, the Gypsy or the Fisherwoman* — Corra as an Atypical Gypsy

The play's protagonist is Corra, the son of a Romani mother and a Hungarian aristocratic father. He is torn between the prejudices attached to his mixed heritage and the aristocratic upbringing he has received, and his story revolves around his quest for both love and a secure place in society. In line with the conventions of folk drama—as well as Apraxin's other works—the narrative unfolds on the shores of Lake Balaton and follows a tangled love story. Corra is enamored of Lidi, a fisherman's daughter, though at first her affections lie with Márton, a wealthy peasant. Over time, however, Lidi grows disillusioned with Márton, and Corra gradually wins her heart through his honesty and chivalry.

Yet the seemingly conventional love story should not obscure the play's innovations. Apraxin's *Corra* transforms the folk-drama form in striking ways and opens avenues for rich interpretation. Although it appears never to have been staged and thus lacks historical reception, the text remains an important source for literary history, theater history, women's history, and social history alike. From a literary-historical perspective, the interplay of genre and representation is especially significant. When placed within the broader context of Roma portrayals in 19th-century Hungarian folk drama, Apraxin's play proves exceptional: its characterizations depart sharply from contemporary stereotypes, and its social critique is at times nothing short of astonishing. The drama also raises questions of women's and theater history—concerning its genesis, its theatrical trajectory, and the author's possible motivations. I will return to these interwoven dimensions later.

The play begins with Corra being summoned home from the count's mansion, where he has been raised, by his Romani mother, Iszturka. As an infant, Corra was taken in by Count György Fegyveressy, who convinced Iszturka to give him the child—fathered, as it is revealed at the end of the drama, by György's brother, Count Antal Fegyveressy. Raised as an aristocrat, Corra consistently conducts himself as such. He refuses to answer, let alone internalize, the prejudices directed at him because of his Romani origins and darker skin. Instead, he seeks to affirm his gentlemanly honor, as in the following scene:

"**Márton:** Well, just look at that—the cigány is playing the lord again!

Corra: I am playing the part of an honest man. You swore love to this girl; now you abandon her without reason. At least listen to what she has to say—or you will regret it! … I will show you that Corra demands obedience when he defends the weak. *To the musicians and dancers.* Enough of the music now—step back a little. Márton wishes to speak with Lidi. *They obey.*

Márton (*angrily*): What is the meaning of this?

Corra: It means that people respect me, but they despise you. *He takes Maris by the hand.* Come over here to the back; they wish to speak

with one another. *Everyone except Márton and Lidi withdraws to the rear of the stage."*(Act I, Scene 3)[14]

The passage above illustrates how the play both employs and subverts conventional Hungarian stage tropes. Instead of reproducing the prevailing stereotype—Roma as vulnerable, marginalized, and morally suspect outsiders governed by inscrutable codes—Apraxin inverts it. In Apraxin's drama, the noblest and wisest figures—the ones who embody bourgeois-Christian virtue—are precisely those of Romani origin. Where secondary literature does mention the play, it tends to interpret this strategy as a democratic mode of representation,[15] akin to what we find in Ede Szigligeti's invaluable folk play *The Gypsy* (1853). Szigligeti's drama, while not entirely free of stereotype, ultimately associates its Romani characters with values aligned to bourgeois-Christian ideals and with a spiritual depth that approximates a modern notion of subjectivity. At the outset of Szigligeti's play, Roma figures are framed in terms of linguistic and situational comedy, their actions marked by compulsion and moral fragility. Yet as the plot unfolds, these elements are progressively overturned. By the conclusion, audiences encounter an honest, self-sacrificing Roma artist who ennobles the world through his craft, and a gypsy heroine, Rózsi, endowed with psychological depth and spiritual complexity.[16] In contrast, *Corra* sharply limits humor in the depiction of its Romani figures. Instead, comedy—whether situational or linguistic—is reserved for representatives of power: the judge, notary, and guards who seek to imprison Corra are rendered in caricatured terms:

"**Count György**. All right—let them in. *(They enter and bow.)* Good day, and thank you for coming… But tell me, what has this Gypsy done?

Judge. He stole!

Count György. *(to Corra)* Is that true?

Corra. To such a question—I cannot answer!… And Your Lordship knows it already, whether I speak or not.

Judge. Is that the way to answer the noble lord count?

Corra. I answer as I am asked.

14 "*Márton*. No nézzétek csak, a cigány megint a grófot játssza!
Corra. Én azt játszom, hogy becsületes ember vagyok. Te e leánynak szerelmet esküdtél; most minden ok nélkül elhagyod; hallgasd meg legalább, amit mondani akar, vagy különben megbánod!... Megmutatom neked, hogy Corra engedelmességet akar, midőn ő a gyöngéket védelmezi. *A zenészekhez és táncosokhoz szól.* Most elég volt már a zenéből, vonuljatok kissé hátra. Márton Lidivel akar beszélni. *Azok engedelmeskednek.*
Márton. *dühösen*. Hát mit jelent ez?
Corra. Azt, hogy engem az emberek becsülnek, téged pedig megvetnek. *Marist kézen fogja.* Gyere amoda hátra, ezek beszélni akarnak egymással. *Mártont és Lidit kivéve mindenki a színpad hátterébe vonult."*

15 For a summary of this issue, see Szabóné Kármán 2016, 235–54, especially 245–49.

16 In a previous paper, I analyzed the contemporary novelty of the representation of Rózsi's love affliction (Zabán 2020).

Notary. Silence!

Count György. Let him speak. – Corra, you know how dearly I love you… Tell me—do you still deserve that love? Speak!

Corra. Answer? I?… No—no!… Would *you*, my lord, answer such a question?

Judge. Insolent wretch!

Notary. Remember—you are speaking to the noble lord count!

Corra. Ha! What care I for titles!… Count or no count—I speak to the man, and I demand justice! I have stolen nothing, nor shall I ever steal; and I will not suffer such disgraceful accusations!

Count György. Be calm, Corra, my son!… I know your honesty. It is not before me you must defend yourself. Yet still—you must answer *them*.

Judge. *(elbows the notary)* Hear that, Mr. Notary—how the count speaks with him!

Notary. *(softly, aside to the judge)* Indeed—this changes everything.

Corra. I thank you, my lord… Now I see again the noble benefactor to whom I owe my answer. But in truth—I do not know what these men want of me." (Act IV. Scene 11.)[17]

A central source of dramatic conflict lies in the competing interpretations of social hierarchy. The antagonists equate wealth and power with honor, treating privilege as evidence of moral worth. By contrast, the play's exemplary figures expose the dangers of conflating economic status with genuine honor. The judge and notary, as local agents of authority, unthinkingly assume that an ethnic Gypsy cannot act honorably. They trust the Hungarian character's word without hesitation,

17 "*György gróf*. Jól van, engedd be őket. *Azok bejönnek. Köszönnek*. Jó napot, köszönöm fáradságukat... de hát mit vétett ez a cigány?
Bíró. Lopott!
György gróf. Corrához. Igaz ez?
Corra. Ilyen kérdésre nem felelhetek!... Aztán úgy is tudja Méltóságod, ha nem is felelek.
B1ró. Hát így kell felelni a méltóságos gróf úrnak?
Corra. Úgy felelek, ahogyan kérdeznek.
Jegyző. Hallgass!
György gróf. Hagyják beszélni. – Corra, te tudod, mennyire szeretlek... felelj, megérdemled-e még ezt a szeretetet?... felelj!
Corra. Feleljek?.. én?.. Nem, nem!... felelne-e Méltóságod ily kérdésre?
Bíró. Ejnye te szemtelen!
Jegyző. Gondold meg, hogy a méltóságos gróffal beszélsz!
Corra. Eh! mit nekem!... gróf!... Én az emberrel beszélek és igazságot követelek! Én nem loptam semmit, nem is fogok lopni soha; és én nem engedem, hogy ilyen gyalázatossággal vádoljanak!
György gróf. Csendesülj, Corra; fiam!... én ismerem becsületességedet; és nem is velem szemben kell magadat védelmezned; hanem ezeknek itt mégis csak felelned kell.
Bíró. könyökével meglöki a jegyzőt. Hallja, nótárius uram, hogy beszél vele a gróf.
Jegyző. lassan a bíróhoz. Persze, hogy ez már nagy fordítást tesz a dolgon!
Corra. Köszönöm, méltóságos uram;... most nemes jótevőmre ismerek, kinek felelettel tartozom; de én valóban nem tudom, mit akarnak ez emberek velem."

while Corra's integrity is automatically doubted. Here Apraxin's aims align in part with Szigligeti's. Like him, she seeks to depict a marginalized community in order to reveal that the vices projected onto them are equally present within the "respectable" society that ostracizes them. Their vulnerable position, she suggests, gives their sense of honor an even sharper urgency. Yet Apraxin presses beyond Szigligeti. Through Corra, his brother Jordán, and their mother Iszturka, she presents characters stripped of every conventional "Gypsy" stereotype. Still, their ethnicity remains constantly thematized by the surrounding world—and just as constantly dismantled, scene by scene. Unlike Szigligeti—and unlike Lajos Kövér in *Indiana (*see Kövér 1860*)*[18]—Apraxin neither exoticizes nor romanticizes. In *Corra*, the Roma are not portrayed as a charming otherness but as fundamentally indistinguishable from Hungarians. The play insists that the stereotypical traits do not exist at all, thereby casting doubt on the legitimacy of the very social hierarchies that presume them.

The drama asserts that regardless of ethnicity, color, wealth, or birth, all human beings are fundamentally alike and equal. What corrupts this equality is the lust for domination: those who exploit others inevitably forfeit their honor. This dynamic defines Márton's role: he exploits the women around him, attempts sexual violence (the text leaves the exact form ambiguous), and falsely accuses Corra of theft. In so doing, Márton—not Corra—emerges as the true fraud, incapable of treating either women or Roma as equals. Although the title suggests a drama about the Roma's struggle for social respectability, the deeper conflict lies elsewhere: between gentleman and rogue, honesty and deceit. In this moral economy, the Roma characters prove far closer to the true aristocratic gentleman than to the rapist, swindler, self-serving peasant, or corrupt officials who wield authority:

"**Corra.** The count adopted me as his son… he was never married… he grew very fond of me; I was brought up as if I had been his own child, and I learned the ways of high society.

Márton. And what do those consist of?

Corra. To know how to lie perfectly; to smile at the one you hate; and to scorn the one you love and respect, if by birth they are beneath your rank.

18 This drama also differs in genre from Apraxin's: it is a four-act historical play, first performed at the National Theatre on 9 September 1858, a few years before its publication in this volume. The comic element is unmistakable in the text, and contemporary reviews confirm that audiences likewise perceived the play's representation of the Gypsy as comic: "A szomorújátékban sok a víg elem, nem azért, mert sok benne a cigány, […] hanem, mert tulajdonkép a mű nem csekély részben sikerült genrekép a cigányok életéből vagy ha úgy tetszik – történetéből." ["The tragedy contains many comic elements, not because there are many Gypsies in it […] but because the play is, to a large extent, a successful genre portrait of the life—or, if you prefer, the history—of the Gypsies."] (Nemzeti színház. Sept. 9. Először: *Indiana*. Ered. regényes szomorújáték 4 felv. Írta Kövér Lajos. [National Theatre. 9 Sept. Premiere: *Indiana*. Original novelistic tragedy in four acts. Written by Lajos Kövér], *Pesti Napló*, 11 Sept. 1858, no. 2575.)

Márton. Oh! really?

Corra. I could never grow accustomed to life among these people who—like monkeys shut up in a cage—wish each other good day with a grimace; whose conversation is nothing but empty chatter, and when they try to be interesting, they tear each other to pieces!... Better to step aside from a rabid beast!" (Act I, Scene 2.)[19]

The lens through which the play interprets both the Roma's condition and elite attitudes is telling. For decades, the forced separation of Romani children from their families had been a brutal instrument of state-led integration and assimilation (Szabóné Kármán 2016, 124–129). Apraxin frames this practice within the play as an act of nobility, generosity, and chivalry. This reveals how questions of integration and emancipation are filtered through the worldview of the upper strata, shaped by their ideals rather than by Roma experiences. Consequently, the drama does not ask what the Roma themselves require, what their internal logics or aspirations might be. Instead, it posits that they possess no inherent group specificity at all—that every difference is the product of oppression and segregation. Hence the separation of Corra from his mother is portrayed as morally legitimate: adopted and raised by a count, he absorbs aristocratic codes of honor as if they were natural law.

Yet precisely as an outsider, the emancipated Corra gains the authority to critique aristocratic life. The drama inverts expectations: the aristocrats and wealthy appear as cowardly thieves masquerading as gentlemen, while the Roma embody the moral code of an authentic "dueling society." (see Elias 1996, 44–120). Through Corra's eyes, the play even engages in a kind of reverse exoticization. Aristocrats are likened to apes, rabid beasts, and irrationally exotic creatures—figures of degeneration rather than refinement.

2.3. The Romani Character as Critic of the Aristocracy

Apraxin herself was of aristocratic birth, yet by the early 1860s she had become a social outcast.[20] In the drama's most intense conflicts, she underscores the elite's responsibility toward society at large. Those who wield power, she insists, must recognize the corruption of existing structures and transform them into a system grounded in morality—a

19 "*Corra*. A gróf fiává fogadott... soha sem volt nős... engem igen megszeretett; úgy neveltetett, mintha saját fia lettem volna, és a nagyvilág szokásait sajátítottam el.
Márton. S miben állanak azok?
Corra. Hogy tökéletesen tudj hazudni; tudj mosolyogni arra, akit gyűlölsz; és azt, akit szeretsz és becsülsz, de aki születésénél fogva rangodon aluli, meg tudd vetni.
Márton. Ej! igazán?
Corra. Soha sem tudtam megszokni az életet ezek között az emberek között, akik – mint kalitkába zárt majmok – fintorogva kívánnak jó napot egymásnak; akiknek társalgása csupa haszontalanságról folyik, és ha érdekes akar lenni, egymást marcangolják szét!... Jobb a veszett állat elől kitérni!"

20 Recent research on the unusual life of this rebellious aristocratic authoress includes Kovács 2013 and Kovács (MS).

system that, upon closer inspection, closely resembles the aristocratic code of honor of her own era:

"**Lidi.** Your mother just went to plead with the Count for you… and she crossed paths with his younger brother. They knew each other at once. The Count, full of remorse, begged her forgiveness… he wants to make amends for the past… he claims you as his son… and you are to be Count Fegyveressy.

Corra. I… Count Fegyveressy?… My head is spinning… I can't grasp it…

Lidi. You must see now that you cannot marry the poor fisherman's daughter.

Corra. And must I become dishonorable if I accept that title?… Never! I will not!

Lidi. You owe me nothing. And who knows if your father would even approve?

Corra. A father who would rip love out of my heart would be no father to me!

Lidi. But think of the duties that come with your new rank!

Corra. I'll meet them. I've learned the people's hardships—I know their burdens. I can ease them. And I can be true to my duty just as I am true to my love.

(At the back of the stage, Márton appears, a musket in his hand.)

Lidi. Such a noble heart… no wonder you are worthy of love!

Corra. Now I can call myself a Hungarian, like them. Now I can live for my homeland. And if one day I must die for it—then to shed my blood for the freedom of my people will be my joy!

Lidi. And I will be proud to dedicate myself with you to so sacred a cause. (Act IV. Scene 13.)[21]

21 "*Lidi*. Éppen az imént anyád, ki feljött, hogy a grófot miattad megkérje, találkozott a gróf öccsével... és megismerték egymást. A tettét megbánt gróf anyád bocsánatáért esdekelt... a múltat jóvá akarja tenni... és téged elismer fiának... és te Fegyveressy gróf leszel...

Corra. Én Fegyveressy gróf!... fejem kábul... nem tudom megfogni...

Lidi. No már most beláthatod, hogy nem veheted nőül a szegény halász leányát.

Corra. Becstelen embernek kell-e lennem, ha az említett címet elfogadom?... Soha nem leszek az!

Lidi. Irányomban semmi kötelezettséged sincs, és ki tudja, atyád bele egyezik-e?

Corra. Oly atya, ki szívemből szerelmemet akarná kitépni, az nem lenne atyám!

Lidi. De gondolj új rangod kötelességeire!

Corra. Eleget fogok nekik tenni, mert megtanultam ismerni a nép életének ínségeit; meg tudom – könnyíteni terheiket, és hű tudok maradni kötelességeimhez szintúgy, mint szerelmemhez. *A színpad hátsó részében Márton jelenik meg kezében puskával.*

Lidi. Nemes szívű ember!... mily méltó vagy a szerelemre!

Corra. Most magyarnak mondhatom magamat, mint ők; most hazámnak élhetek, és ha egykor meg kellene érte halni, hazámfiai szabadságáért vérem onthatni boldogságom lesz!

Lidi. És én büszke leszek magamat veled együtt ily szent ügynek szentelni!"

When Corra learns that he is in fact the son of a Hungarian count, what delights him most is not the title itself but the chance to serve his country. He can now call himself a patriot and claim full belonging within the Hungarian nation. The drama thus implicitly questions the liberal-democratic assumption that extending civil rights to the Roma would, in itself, ensure full and positive emancipation. By this logic, Apraxin lifts her Roma characters out of the stock comic roles typical of the genre (see L. Cselle 2021).[22] Instead, she situates them within a broader Western European tradition of Roma representation (see Epstein Nord 2006; Basford 2022) and, arguably, anticipates developments beyond her own time (Houghton-Walker 2014). The play organizes its values within a hierarchy of bourgeois-democratic ideals, drawing attention to the lack of state structures that protect all citizens equally. It underscores the absence of fundamental rights—equality before the law, civil liberty—and the failure of those in power to embody civic morality:

"**Iszturka.** They hauled him off with guards — straight to prison, straight to trial.

Lidi. Corrá? On what charge?

Iszturka. The only charge that counts: the power of the strong.

Lidi. No. I believe an honest person is stronger than that.

Iszturka. Not here. Not yet.

Lidi. But it will be! … I believe the poor and honest have *more* right to demand justice than anyone else! … So tell me—what's the accusation?" (Act IV. Scene 5.)[23]

In the latter half of the 19th century, the aristocracy's role was redefined amid social restructuring and the spread of democratic ideals. The ethical category of honor—once tied almost exclusively to the elite—was reinterpreted and extended to groups previously excluded from such recognition. Apraxin's drama sketches a democratic social ideal, grounded in libertarian principles yet articulated through aristocratic vocabulary.[24] The gentleman's honor becomes synonymous with the fundamental rights of all humans—above all the right to dignity. Within the drama, the status of "gentleman with honor" emerges as

22 An interesting and instructive early twentieth-century summary of the issue can be found in Fleischmann 1912.

23 "*Iszturka*. Őrökkel vezették el, hogy börtönbe zárják, elítéljék.
Lidi. Corrát? és mi joggal?
Iszturka. Az erősebb jogával!
Lidi. Én azt hiszem, hogy a becsületes ember legerősebb!
Iszturka. Nálunk még nem úgy van!
Lidi. De úgy lesz!... Én azt hiszem, hogy a szegény és becsületes még több joggal követelhet igazságot mint a többi ember!.. És mily vád terheli?"

24 Apraxin is known to have corresponded with Lajos Kossuth, one of the leaders of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, who went into exile after its defeat. According to his reply letter, she deeply agreed with his aspirations and political views. (See Lajos Kossuth's letter to Júlia Apraxin, published on several occasions and in different contexts; one of its earliest publications is Molnár 1881, 386.)

the universal goal, the mark of full citizenship—what Corra himself calls "living for one's country." Apraxin's vision is thus both integrative and exclusive: integrative, in that it admits marginalized groups into the civic community; exclusive, in that it grounds social belonging not in natural law or universal rights but in ethical and moral performance. The play therefore does not advocate the erasure of social difference, but its moral reordering. In the world of *Corra*, social mobility cannot be secured by order alone, nor by the accumulation of wealth. Only moral excellence confers elevation.

Yet the drama ultimately resolves Corra's story in a conventional way: beyond winning the hand of the woman he loves, he is revealed to be of noble birth—a narrative closure consistent with similar tales of the era. His repeatedly emphasized nobility of soul[25] therefore proves to be an aristocratic inheritance. By the drama's close, honesty, justice, and refusal to submit to humiliation are fused with patriotism in his character. This resolution is reinforced by the play's steady dismantling of every entrenched stereotype: Corra is not a thief, not a trickster, not a wandering musician, not naïve, not servile. A Roma representation this free of stereotype or comic reduction is unparalleled in 19th-century Hungarian literature.[26] The play combines a strikingly progressive social outlook with the patriotic imperative of its time.

3. Patriotism and Cultural Mission

The theater played a central role in Hungarian nation-building: articulating national ideals, shaping narratives and canon, cultivating an audience capable of bourgeois sensibilities, and guiding the moral development of the country by defining social ideals and ethical norms. From this perspective, the theatrical construction of the Gypsy figure becomes crucial to understanding how the institution functioned. Apraxin's work represents a far more conscious and ambitious effort: to craft a new image of the Roma and to tell their story with the explicit aim of reshaping public thought.

Patriotism functions not merely as theme or device; it is embedded in the drama's logic through multiple contextual layers. The play emerged

25 The fact that the work is not primarily about emancipation but rather about extending the value categories of the nobility to other social groups can be seen in such turns of phrase as when the text emphasizes the characters' spiritual nobility. For example: „Lidi. [...] Corrába szerelmes nem vagyok; de ha az lennék is, korántsem szégyenleném barna bőrét, sőt szerelmem büszkeségem, dicsőségem lenne, mert *ezen barna bőr szép és nemes lelket rejt*!" ["Lidi. [...] I am not in love with Corra; but even if I were, I would not be ashamed of his brown skin, and my love would be my pride and glory, for *this brown skin conceals a beautiful and noble soul*."] (Act III. Scene 4.) - „Lidi. *Nemes szívű ember*!... mily méltó vagy a szerelemre!" [Lidi. *Noble-hearted man*!... how worthy you are of my love!] (Act IV. Scene 13.) – [Emphasis mine – Z. M.]

26 For a summary on the issue, see Szöllőssy 2002.

in a politically and culturally unsettled moment—most likely in 1862–63, during the bleakest years of the Schmerling era, immediately after the dissolution of the Diet. Apraxin composed it for the newly founded People's Theatre (*Népszínház*), an institution established by György Molnár that struggled chronically with finances. Simultaneously, Apraxin's relations with her family deteriorated. The press reported not only her literary efforts but also her initiatives intended to sustain the People's Theatre—and, in effect, to advance Molnár's plans. Contemporary coverage cast these gestures as a departure from aristocratic norms, even as it celebrated the "patriotic woman" as a model of middle-class virtue; patriotism thus veiled the author's radicalism as writer and thinker. During this turbulent period—professionally, socially, and privately—she published a novel, a short story, and then a drama, while newspapers reported her bout of typhus (*Pesti Napló*, 14 Jan. 1862, no. 3576) and a fire in her room (*Sürgöny*, 13 Feb. 1862, no. 36). Recent scholarship characterizes the ensuing half decade as strikingly radical, including, for example, writing provocative fiction and what has been described as the first Hungarian "art novel" with a sympathetic female artist protagonist authored by a woman.[27]

27 Examples include *Hiába beszélnek…* [*They Speak in Vain…*] (*Nefelejts*, 1860); *Szeréndy Ilma Naplója* [*The Diary of Ilma Szeréndy*]; *Ilona*; *Két nőszív* [*Two Women's Hearts*] (1861); and *Bájlaki Zsigmond* (*Divatcsarnok*, 1861). In these works, the democratic social ideal that also appears in *Corra* is articulated through the aristocracy's assumption of responsibility and sacrifice. In *Bájlaki Zsigmond*, for example, Apraxin goes further: she not only insists on the responsibility of the elite but also formulates ideas of democratic reform and reinterprets the very role of the aristocracy from this perspective: "– Demokrata? Igen, az vagyok, és büszke vagyok rá s ha ön azt kárhoztatja bennem, akkor nem érti e szó magasztos jelentését, mely megnyitja előttünk mindannak ajtaját, a mi nagy és szép. Maga a vallás is, nem parancsolja-e nekünk ezen érzelmet, melyet a világ teljesen hamis fényben iparkodott feltüntetni előttünk? Pedig ellenkezőleg, e szó magában foglalja mindazt, a mi nemes és emelkedett van az emberi lélekben. Valóban fényes világban engedi láttatni az emberiséget, általa látszunk valamennyien egy Isten és egy atya gyermekeinek. Valamennyien testvérek vagyunk s a nemes ösztönök, a lélek emelkedett érzetei tesznek bennünket többé-kevésbé nagyokká, de nem a címek vagy a birtok. A pór, kit kifogástalan élete mintaképpé tesz polgártársai előtt, sokkal magasabban áll tiszteletemben mint a herceg, ki nem ismeri kötelességeit. Az előbbit elismerem hozzám hasonlóul, mesteremül, míg a másodikra csak megvetéssel tudnék tekinteni." ["– A democrat? Yes, I am, and I am proud of it. And if you condemn me for it, then you do not understand the exalted meaning of this word, which opens before us the door to everything that is great and beautiful. Does not religion itself command us to embrace this sentiment—a sentiment that the world has striven to present to us in a completely false light? On the contrary, this word encompasses all that is noble and elevated in the human soul. It allows humanity to be seen in a radiant light; through it, we appear as the children of one God and one Father. We are all brothers, and it is noble instincts, the elevated feelings of the soul, that make us greater or lesser, not titles or property. The peasant whose blameless life makes him a model before his fellow citizens stands far higher in my esteem than the prince who does not know his duties. The former I acknowledge as my equal, even as my teacher, while the latter I could regard only with contempt."] (Batthyány 1861,

In this light, *Corra, the Gypsy* was conceived to bolster the People's Theatre's finances, a goal Apraxin pursued on multiple fronts. She sold her jewelry and donated the proceeds to the theater (Molnár 1881, 321–406, esp. 346–47), appeared on its stage, and even organized a full tour—traceable in the press—through Kassa[28] (*Pesti Napló*, 17 Feb. 1863, no. 3903), Miskolc (*Budai Lapok*, 8 Mar. 1863, no. 7, p. 56), Debrecen (*Hölgyfutár*, 1863, 5, no. 28, p. 223), Kolozsvár[29] (*Budai Lapok*, 15 Mar. 1863, 8th issue, 63–64, here 63), Arad (*Hölgyfutár*, 14 Mar. 1863, no. 32, p. 255), Temesvár[30] (*Hölgyfutár*, 28 Mar. 1863, no. 38, p. 302), Szeged (*Szegedi Híradó*, 18 Mar. 1863, no. 22), Szabadka[31] (*Szegedi Híradó*, 18 Mar. 1863, no. 22), Szeged again (*Hölgyfutár*, 31 Mar. 1863, no. 39, p. 310), and Kecskemét (*Hölgyfutár*, 28 Mar. 1863, no. 38, p. 302). After the tour—and before leaving for Paris—she gave several further performances at the People's Theatre. The proceeds supported the institution, making her a de facto ambassador for its financial revival. As part of the same effort, she wrote this folk drama, both to expand the repertoire and to increase revenue. The choice of folk-drama form was likely appealing because it could reach broad audiences while advancing democratic social ideals. *Corra, the Gypsy* thus condenses the through-lines of Apraxin's dramatic, prose, and civic commitments.

Across her writings, Apraxin consistently stresses the aristocracy's duty to Hungary (love of country), the need for an active elite, and the imperative of education—what she elsewhere calls an "aristocracy of mind." Reception texts indicate that contemporary responses to her adoption of the patriotic woman's cultural mission (Mátay 2010; Kovács 2013; Bozsoki 2019) were far from uniform. Her extravagances—challenging social and gender norms—provoked ongoing debate. Even so, public perception softened when her literary and artistic ventures were framed as the "fervor of the Hungarian patriotic woman born in Russia" (*Hölgyfutár*, 1863, 31, no. 39, p. 310). Her efforts were cast as the heroic struggle of a foreign aristocrat who embraced a militant role in Hungarian nation-building and made substantial financial and moral sacrifices to "become" Hungarian.

Because the folk drama under analysis addresses Roma emancipation and the dismantling of Gypsy stereotypes, its reception would be invaluable: the play amounts to an explicit statement on behalf of social groups traditionally excluded from, and stigmatized by, nation-building. Unfortunately, no reception dossier has surfaced. Nonetheless, now that the text is available, we can begin to sketch the unusual position this unknown drama likely occupied—and may yet occupy—in the history

84) This is particularly telling when interpreted in light of *Corra*. On Apraxin and the emergence of the first Hungarian art novel written by a woman author and centered on a female artist, see Levente T. Szabó 2024.

28 Today: Košice, Slovakia.

29 Today: Cluj, Romania.

30 Today: Timișoara, Romania.

31 Today: Subotica, Slovakia.

of mid-19th-century popular theater and in the broader context of Roma representation.

4. Conclusions

In the work of Júlia Apraxin, the construction of the Gypsy figure is consciously aimed at dismantling the stereotypes of the period. This dismantling is not achieved by negating the problem or by remaining silent about it, but by making the stereotypes themselves visible and by refuting them one by one in the logic of the dramatic text. In the figure of Corra, the aristocratic code of honor is explicitly paired with the bourgeois-democratic canon of values. This pairing not only elevates the Roma protagonist above the ordinary level of characterization in contemporary folk drama, but at the same time turns him into a critic of the Hungarian aristocracy, making his position both exceptional and polemical within the cultural horizon of the period.

Júlia Apraxin's text can thus be regarded as a remarkable contribution to the ongoing construction of the canon of literary representation of the Gypsies. At the same time, it is also a remarkable document in the history of Hungarian theater, in the history of women's literature, and in the history of 19th-century social thought, because it reflects on questions of emancipation, of patriotism, and of the transformation of social ideals. The fact that this drama has remained unknown until now, without reception or influence in its own age, constitutes a significant loss within the cultural canon of the period. Its rediscovery, however, creates the possibility of revisiting, broadening, and re-evaluating our knowledge of the literary representation of the Roma in the 19th century, not only in the Hungarian context but also in a wider European horizon. And this is not such a surprising message coming from the pen of a Russian aristocratic lady who transformed herself into a radical Hungarian patriot, writer, and actress.

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Tradition and Transformation: The Changing Genre of the Short Story in Contemporary Hungarian Literature[1]

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ABSTRACT

As a dynamic literary form, the short story offers literary scholarship a unique opportunity to explore the complex tension between tradition and innovation. The interplay between historical continuity and poetic variability becomes particularly evident in the genre of the short story cycle, which integrates the poetic logic of both the classical short story and the novel. This study examines how the short story cycle emerges as a literary form of fragmentation, intertextuality, and narrative openness through the analysis of two contemporary Hungarian short story collections: László Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] and Ádám Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina]. The investigation focuses on the adaptive potential and cultural mediating function of the short story genre, with special attention to the world-building models, cyclic composition strategies, and meaning-generating structures of contemporary texts.

Keywords: short story cycle, short story, genre dynamism, poetic transformation, contemporary Hungarian literature

1. Introduction

In contemporary Hungarian prose poetics, the increased generic mobility and compositional openness of short prose forms have led to a re-evaluation of classical epic genre boundaries (Szirák 2021, 94). The transitional zone between the short story and the novel has become a particularly productive field, giving rise to forms marked by distinctive aesthetic and structural features. Within this context, the short story cycle occupies a transitional position between the short story and the

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novel, establishing itself as a distinctive poetic formation with its own compositional logic. Through its narrative structures, thematic cohesion, and network of motifs, it establishes its own generic identity.

The aim of this study is to examine the specificities of the short story cycle in both historical and theoretical contexts and, through the analysis of two contemporary Hungarian short story collections organized along differing aesthetic-poetic logics – László Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* (2010) [Szindbád, the Detective] and Ádám Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* (2011) [The Birds of Verhovina] – to interpret the narrative, thematic, and hermeneutic implications of cyclical composition. The starting point of the investigation is the hermeneutic recognition that the difference between the short story and the novel is not solely one of length or plot structure but is fundamentally poetic in nature. The short story is grounded in an aesthetics of condensation, symbolic density, and closure, whereas the novel is structured according to the logic of world-building, elaboration, and narrative expansion. The short story cycle is situated at the intersection of these two poetic paradigms: it retains the short story's conciseness and imagistic quality while, through compositional cohesion–recurring characters, motifs, spaces, and thematic patterns – it is also capable of constructing a novel-like world model.

My hypothesis is that the short story cycle constitutes one of the paradigms of postclassical narratology: a generic formation that relies on the aesthetic principles of fragmentation, intertextuality, narrative multilayeredness, and readerly cooperation. Cyclical composition functions not merely as a formal framework but as a dynamic mediator of meaning, activating interpretation through the latent or explicitly articulated relations between individual texts. The cycle is not a closed structure but an open system that does not prescribe but rather generates modes of reading.

The analysis builds on two representative case studies: László Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] exemplifies the spatial and temporal organization of cyclical narrative, as well as the mythical-symbolic recurrence of characters, while Ádám Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] constructs the short story cycle's dark, closed world model, in which recurring spatial and power structures, together with repetitive character configurations, offer a poetic reconstruction of an allegorical totalitarian space.

It is important to emphasize that this study does not undertake a comprehensive, exhaustive analysis of these volumes, nor does it aim to explore fully their novelistic or world-literary contexts. Rather, its focus is consciously and methodologically restricted to the poetic functioning of cyclical short prose – above all the short story cycle – within the framework of Hungarian literary scholarship and contemporary prose poetics. This targeted focus should not be understood as a limitation but as a methodological choice appropriate to the object of inquiry: the genre formation of the short story cycle. The aim of the study is not only to map the poetics of generic transitions but also to demonstrate how

the short story cycle has become one of the key forms of 21st-century Hungarian prose literature – an aesthetic formation that rethinks the relations of narrativity, composition, and reading at the intersection of epic tradition and postmodern formal sensibility.

2. Genre Diversity and Structural Experimentation in Contemporary Hungarian Short Prose

The genre diversity and structural experimentalism of contemporary Hungarian prose do not merely call for the registration of new phenomena but demand a radical rethinking of traditional categories. The classical definitions of the novel, the short story, and the tale –once stable points of reference in 19th and 20th-century poetics–have proven inadequate for interpreting the hybrid, fragmented, self-reflexive, and intertextual poetics that characterize much of recent prose (Luchmann 2011, 1091). Theoretical attention has therefore shifted toward recognizing that genre is not a timeless or closed entity, but a construction shaped by historical and cultural conditions, deriving its meaning from its relation to literary institutions, modes of reception, and social representations. Consequently, the very concept of genre has become a matter of debate: the question is not merely what qualifies as a genre, but what function it serves in mediating aesthetic experience and how its meaning shifts in tandem with transformations of the cultural canon.

In the historical development of genre theory, two major paradigms can be identified. The first conceives of genres within a normative, taxonomic framework: from Aristotle through classical rhetoric and poetics to the literary histories of the 19th century, genres were distinguished according to pre-established rules, formal features, and aesthetic functions. By contrast, the twentieth-century structuralist and poststructuralist paradigm interprets genre as an open, historically variable, intertextual, and discursive construct. Gérard Genette's concept of architextuality defines genre as a relational network; Tzvetan Todorov highlights its historical mobility; Alastair Fowler introduces the notions of "genre families" and "genre patterns" as flexible formations responsive to changes in literary communication; and Jacques Derrida's *La loi du genre* [The Law of Genre] dismantles the illusion of pure generic belonging–works both do and do not belong to genres, and transgression and liminality become the very essence of the generic experience (Derrida 1994, 260–261).

This conceptual framework is particularly productive in examining transitional forms between the short story and the novel. Traditionally, the short story has been defined by brevity, conciseness, and a focus on a single conflict, in contrast to the novel's broader temporal and spatial dimensions, multiple storylines, and extended cast of characters. Yet as Beáta Thomka notes, the short story has always displayed remarkable adaptability, readily incorporating lyrical, dramatic, essayistic, and

documentary registers, thereby reinterpreting its own boundaries (Thomka 1986, 42). Péter Hajdu emphasizes that the short story cycle cannot be subsumed under a single taxonomy: it may function both as an autonomous structural logic and as a loosely interconnected corpus of texts. The tension between autonomy and novelistic coherence represents one of the enduring dilemmas of genre theory (Hajdu 2003, 163).

Numerous works of contemporary Hungarian prose exemplify this permeability and instability of genre. Ádám Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina], Nándor Gion's *Ezen az oldalon* [On This Side], András Müllner's *Kőrösi Csoma Sándor*, András Cserna-Szabó's *Puszibolt* [Kiss Shop], Tóth Krisztina's *Pixel*, and László Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] all blur the boundaries between the novel, the short story, and the narrative cycle. Yet such tendencies are not uniquely contemporary. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Kálmán Mikszáth's *A jó palócok* [The Good Palots] and *Tót atyafiak* [Slovak Kinsmen], Gyula Krúdy's *Szindbád* stories, and Dezső Kosztolányi's *Esti Kornél* collections already pushed short prose toward novelistic expansion. Later, Viktor Cholnoky's stories, Iván Mándy's prose cycles, and Central European authors such as Bohumil Hrabal, Bruno Schulz, Danilo Kiš, and Mircea Cărtărescu each developed distinct forms of genre hybridity (Radics 2020, 30).

Many contemporary authors engage with established genre codes – such as detective fiction, the grotesque, science fiction, or autofiction – not in their original form but in reflective, alienated, and reinterpreted ways. László Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] (Csabai 2010) appears at first glance to follow the conventions of classic detective fiction: a novice detective, a murder, an innocent suspect, and an early-twentieth-century milieu create a familiar genre world. Yet these conventions are gradually deconstructed: the typical crime-genre structure loosens, expected twists are absent, and the narrative transforms into a poetics of prose imbued with cultural-historical and intertextual references (Benyovszky 2018, 279). The title itself evokes literary tradition, signaling a self-conscious play with genre conventions that become both quoted and ironized.

Similarly, Ádám Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] follows the principle of genre hybridity (Bodor 2011). Although its individual texts can be read as autonomous stories, they also function as fragments of an absurd, fantastic universe. The closure typical of the classic short story is undermined by spatial and temporal indeterminacy, the relativization of narrative perspective, and the recurrence of motifs across episodes. The blending of grotesque, fairy-tale, absurd, and lyrical registers creates a texture that reflects on its own construction while resisting canonical classification.

In such works, genre does not operate as a prescriptive structure but as a poetic and citational component of contemporary prose. The alienation of genre templates, the rearrangement of literary language, and the play with cultural codes generate a dynamic horizon of meaning

formed through the interaction between text, reader, and cultural field (Pilař 1994, 12). Genre hybridity thus represents not merely a formal experiment but a defining self-reflexive feature of contemporary literature–the foundation of the polyphonic poetics and open forms characteristic of modern Hungarian prose (Szirák 1998, 97).

The development of the short story genre in Hungarian literature is closely intertwined with the literary, social, and institutional transformations of modernity. Although early antecedents–such as the anecdote, exemplum, morality tale, and folk narrative–were already present in the late eighteenth century, the true poetic and institutional consolidation of the genre occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. The short prose emerging at the intersection of Romanticism and Realism–particularly in the works of Kálmán Mikszáth, Mór Jókai, and later Sándor Bródy–laid the groundwork for the short story's rise as a central form of modern Hungarian prose (Dobos 1995, 32–40).

In the early 20th century, the *Nyugat* generation–most notably Zsigmond Móricz, Gyula Krúdy, and Dezső Kosztolányi–elevated the short story to the status of high literature while expanding its stylistic and poetic range (Dérczy 2012, 19–21). Móricz's works offered acute social observation, Krúdy's explored dreamlike temporality and nostalgia, and Kosztolányi's exemplified psychological depth and ironic aesthetics. During this period, the short story emerged as a distinct poetic universe with its own formal, thematic, and rhetorical features.

The interwar and postwar decades brought further transformation. In the 1950s and 1960s, the short story often served as a social "mirror" under official literary politics, while simultaneously providing space for formal experimentation and allegorical depth. Writers such as Géza Ottlik, Péter Lengyel, and Péter Nádas foregrounded fragmentation, the interplay of memory and experience, and linguistic reflexivity, thereby extending the poetic scope of the genre. After the political transition, postmodern and postclassical tendencies intensified: fragmentation, irony, self-reflexivity, intertextuality, and media interpenetration became defining features.

Contemporary authors including Ádám Bodor and László Csabai continue to rewrite and reimagine the genre's conventions. Their short prose simultaneously preserves and deconstructs tradition, transforming the short story into a form that not only embodies brevity and concentration but also questions the very limits of narrativity. As such, the short story becomes not merely a literary form but a medium through which cultural memory and identity are articulated–a dynamic reflection of its historical moment, its readership, and its evolving aesthetic horizons.

3. The Genre Transition Between the Short Story and the Novel: The Poetics of the Short Story Cycle

Building on this historical-poetic framework, the genre transition between the short story and the novel becomes particularly significant. While this genre permeability is often interpreted as a characteristic of postmodern narrative modes, its roots trace back to the late 19th century, when the works of Mikszáth, Krúdy, and Kosztolányi already exhibited the novel-like expansion of small prose forms and the development of intertextual and compositional connections between individual stories. A prominent example of the blurring of genre boundaries is the short story cycle, which, as a transitional form, simultaneously preserves the condensed, epigrammatic structure of the short story while opening towards the novel-like unity, thematic coherence, and world-building. Three main interpretative directions have emerged in the scholarly literature in relation to this issue: the philological approach (e.g., István Vadai) focuses on the genesis of the text and authorial compositional strategies; the hermeneutic approach (e.g., Mihály Szegedy-Maszák) emphasizes the role of the reader's activity; while the compositional approach (e.g., Péter Hajdu) concentrates on the narrative and motif-related connecting elements (Radics 2020, 31). The synthesis of these three directions enables the recognition that the short story cycle, as a genre, becomes a paradigmatic figure of post-classical prose through the foregrounding of poetic openness, fragmentation, and readerly activity. In Mihály Szegedy-Maszák's interpretation, the genre definition itself functions as a mode of reading, which does not prescribe the interpretation of the text according to pre-existing norms but instead structures itself from the text's perspective (Szegedy-Maszák 2013, 163). This is confirmed by Tibor Elek, who interprets the genre's "intermediate" positions not as a lack but as a productive instability (Elek 2009, 169). Based on this perspective, it becomes clear that the formal fissures, absences, or inconsistencies in short story cycles-using Zsófia Szilágyi's words–are not flaws but rather create the interpretative space and the possibility of co-authored readings. The cyclical arrangement is not merely a structural form but a meaning-field that restructures itself in the process of reading, creating the illusion of novel-like continuity through poetic breaks, silences, and repetitions (Szilágyi 2005, 22). Sándor Olasz, in his discussion of Iván Mándy's prose, identifies the causes of genre transition in the historical transformation of the novel canon and changes in reader expectations, while applying Gérard Genette's paratext theory to highlight that genre classification is itself a result of a reception act (Olasz 1998, 460). Péter Hajdu, on the other hand, systematizes the typology of cyclical cohesion following Forrest L. Ingram (1971), Susan Garland Mann (1989), and Maggie Dunn & Ann Morris (1995) emphasizing the importance of spatial and temporal frameworks, narrative perspective, shared motifs, and thematic unity. This system is further complemented by Ágnes Gereben in her analysis

of Isaac Babel's cycles, focusing on the role of the title, opening text, and conclusion in structuring the cycle (Gereben 1985, 290–307). Although the difference between the short story and the novel is often defined in terms of length or plot differences, according to Árnika Veréb's formulation–building on Cortázar's famous analogy – this is a deeper, poetic difference. According to Cortázar, the short story is the equivalent of a photograph, while the novel corresponds to a film: the short story presents a scene enclosed within a frame, the intensity of which lies in its condensation and the multifaceted illumination of a single moment, while the novel, like a film, builds its world and meaning through narrative unfolding and gradual revelation of details (Veréb 2019, 77). Extending this analogy further, the difference between the short story cycle and the novel can also be grasped: while the film (novel) unfolds through a dynamic sequence of images, the short story cycle is more akin to capturing a single scene from different angles – like a series of photographs placed side by side, which form a whole not through narrative unity but through their compositional and perspectival differences. Thus, the short story cycle finds its genre character not in linear storytelling, but in shifts of viewpoint, thematic resonances, and the mobilization of reading positions.

4. Cyclical Poetics and World Models in Contemporary Hungarian Prose: The Novella Cycles of László Csabai and Ádám Bodor

The theoretical approaches outlined above can be exemplified through contemporary works that consciously explore the boundaries of the short story cycle. Among them, László Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] offers a particularly revealing case. László Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] (2010) is one of the most distinctive novella-cycle experiments in contemporary Hungarian short prose. The volume integrates the micro-topography of small-town existence, the fragmented experience of history, and the ironic rewriting of the detective genre within the poetic framework of cyclical composition. It simultaneously offers autonomous short stories and the illusion of a larger world model: the reader encounters both the closure of individual narratives and the fragmented yet connectable unity of the whole composition. This duality most clearly highlights the generic particularities of the novella cycle and situates Csabai's work firmly within the focus of this study – the exploration of how short prose forms expand toward novelistic structures.

One of the most important poetic principles of the collection's organization is spatiality. Nyárliget, the fictional small town in Eastern Hungary, combines the features of realist topography with those of an allegorical microspace. The town's narrow streets and its emblematic institutions–school, police station, pub, hospital – jointly contribute

to a setting that functions as an autonomous poetic entity. Nyárliget is not merely a backdrop but an organizing principle in its own right: the stories continually return to it, while its extension, boundaries, and closure define the possibilities of narrative movement. A second key space, Baghdad, becomes a locus of historical experience and personal memory: fragments evoked from a distant wartime past enter into dialogue with the events of Nyárliget. The tension between these two spaces–the permeability between local provinciality and global history –constitutes a central element of the cycle's spatial poetics, signalling in the deeper narrative layers the interweaving of collective and individual memory. According to Katalin Bódi's interpretation, these spaces not only connect but also "interweave" the separate stories, enabling a dynamic of cyclical re-reading and re-contextualization (Bódi 2011, 82–83).

Temporal configuration is equally crucial to the volume's poetics. The stories do not follow a linear chronology but are organized along fragmented and recurrent temporal planes. The past linked to Baghdad, the present of Nyárliget, and the continuously recurring event-motifs form a cyclical pattern. This cyclical handling of time is not merely a structural device but a poetic equivalent of mnemonic experience: the rewriting of time, the constant return of the past, and the monotonous repetitions of the present all contribute to the reader's perception of the book as not a mere sequence of juxtaposed stories but as parts of a larger narrative organism.

The characters also contribute essentially to the cyclical organization. The figure of Szindbád – evoking both Krúdy's legendary wanderer and the archetypal detective – is the central protagonist of the book. Here, however, Szindbád is no longer a nostalgic voyager of desire but a small-town detective whose presence is marked by mythic recurrence: he reappears and transforms, assuming different roles in various stories while preserving the same core of identity. Alongside him, Inspector Csonka appears as a grotesque and ironic companion, reducing the process of investigation to a series of banal situations and thereby reinforcing the parodic rewriting of the detective genre. The secondary figures–the townspeople, officials, and local authorities–are typified characters whose recurrent appearances underscore the closure of the communal space. The repetition and variation of characters form one of the fundamental principles of the novella cycle's poetics: the figures are never confined to a single story but continually exceed the boundaries of autonomous narration. This fragmented, non-linear narrative mode corresponds to István Vadai's concept of the "wandering character," which envisages the cycle's cohesion not through historical continuity but through the repetition of characters and their world-creating presence (Vadai 1997, 68).

The collection's generic intertextuality deserves particular attention. Csabai's volume openly plays with the conventions of crime fiction: the logic of crime, investigation, and resolution is present, yet constantly

subverted, diverted, or rendered grotesquely uncertain. Instead of the detective novel's linearity and logical closure, fragmentation and ambiguity prevail. Szindbád's investigations never yield clear solutions; the mystery remains unresolved, proliferating into new enigmas. At the same time, Krúdy's literary heritage undergoes an ironic reinterpretation: the superimposition of the name and the character functions both as homage and deconstructive gesture. Through this genre play, the volume both aligns with and departs from the detective tradition, creating – through the form of the novella cycle – a novel-like yet perpetually destabilized world.

The narrative strategies likewise reinforce cyclical functioning at the level of readerly cooperation. The disrupted chronology, fragmentary information, and recurring motifs are all poetic devices demanding active reconstruction from the reader. The open structure of the book offers not a linearly traceable plot but a textual space where connecting details, interpreting mysteries, and recognizing recurrences are indispensable components of the reading process. The novella cycle thus emerges not only as a formal structure but also as a reception-aesthetic configuration: the reader's experience becomes integral to its poetic organization.

The problematics of history and memory are equally fundamental. The criminal enigmas are not merely genre motifs but metaphors for the unassimilable experience of history. The evocation of Baghdad refers to the traumas of past wars and to the historical burden of East-Central European small-town life. The detective plot is thus transformed into an ontological and mnemonic mystery: the investigation exemplifies the impossibility of reassembling temporally dispersed and fragmented experiences. The cyclical composition of the volume therefore functions not only as a formal device but also as a historical-poetic statement: history is rewritten not in linear continuity but in repetitions, absences, and distortions.

Overall, *Szindbád, the Detective* [Szindbád, the Detective] exemplifies how the novella cycle operates as a transitional generic formation. The collection simultaneously relies on the closure of the autonomous short story and on the illusion of a novelistic world model. The cyclical poetics of space and time, the repetition and variation of characters, the generic intertextuality, and the narrative strategies all function as organizing elements that expand short prose toward the scope of the novel. This dual operation renders Csabai's volume especially relevant to the present study, serving as a case in point that demonstrates how the novella cycle can transgress the boundaries of the autonomous short story and create complex, polyphonic, novel-like world models within contemporary Hungarian prose. While Csabai's *Szindbád* illustrates the cyclical and intertextual dynamics of the detective novella cycle, Ádám Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] demonstrates how similar poetics can be mobilized to represent the allegorical world of totalitarian experience.

Ádám Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] represents a unique literary construction in which the poetics of the novella cycle serve the allegorical representation of a totalitarian world model. The world of the text is governed by closure, cyclical composition, and internal repetitions. The thirteen novellas of *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina], though seemingly separate tales, form a poetically tightly interwoven, unified textual world (Radics 2023, 33–34). The individual chapters can be read as autonomous novellas; at the same time, recurring motifs and a variational mode of narration organize them into a coherent macro-composition. This duality produces the poetic feature by which the volume appears simultaneously as a novella cycle and as a novel: a series of self-contained stories from which an overarching world model emerges.

The dominant experience of the textual world is that of repetition and variation. Numerous motifs reappear throughout the book, yet never in identical form: multiple versions of Anatol Korkodus's death, differing accounts of Nika Karanika's injury, or the two distinct names of the women's penal camp all emphasize the poetic uncertainty of narration. Repetition here is not merely rhetorical but the organizing principle of the world-view: the truth of events never unfolds in a single version but in multiple, mutually contradictory forms. This mode of operation recalls the essence of the novella cycle, which gains its poetic power from the coexistence of variants. The chapters of *Verhovina* do not build upon each other linearly but are arranged as variations, becoming a literary model of totalitarian experience. Within dictatorship, official histories are perpetually rewritten, the past is never stable, and meanings and facts are incessantly destabilized. Through the organizing power of repetition and variation, Bodor constructs the poetic counterpart of this condition.

The world of the collection is defined by the closure of a hermetic space. The settlement of Jablonska Poljana is an isolated community cut off from the outside world, where everyday life is regulated by the administrative and disciplinary mechanisms of power. This space evokes both archaic and postmodern dimensions: the coexistence of primitive modes of life and modern allusions lends the textual world an anachronistic character, enabling it to transcend specific historical time and function as an allegorical spatial model. One emblematic sign of totalitarian order is the boarded-up window of Augustin's house, through which food must be delivered while questions of guilt and responsibility remain uncertain. Such motifs operate as metaphors of confinement, discipline, and secrecy, drawing the entire settlement into the logic of the prison.

Narration reinforces this worldview in a distinctive way. Adam's first-person account conveys the experience of the world's end not as a linear story but as a series of divergent, repeating, and variant chapters. The first-person narration often becomes neutralized: the detached tone, impersonal detailing, and shifts in perspective suggest that any version

of the story may be possible, yet none can be deemed definitively true. This linguistic indeterminacy forms part of the totalitarian model itself: responsibility blurs, and the meaning of events remains perpetually relative. The reader thus receives not a coherent story but the illusion of a fragmented yet self-contained world. According to Zsófia Szilágyi, one of the most important genre-poetical features of Bodor's texts forming into a cycle is that the creation of unity "will largely be the reader's task, meaning the construction is built in the reader" (Szilágyi 1998, 515).

One of the book's most significant poetic innovations is the complexity of its motif network. The recurring appearances of stench, water, ice, lightning, birds, the cookbook, and the reversed letter "N" create an increasingly dense web of meanings. The variants of Anatol Korkodus's death, for example, simultaneously illustrate the disintegration of the world and the inscription of the body into the landscape: in one version he is preserved as a crystallized statue within a spring, in another he gradually merges with the earth. This network of motifs serves as an allegory of the totalitarian world's collapse and self-annihilation: power disintegrates not through external attack but as the consequence of its own internal logic. Emese László draws attention to this structural feature, emphasizing that the individual stories stand on their own, as the narrator does not allow "the reader to wander off into the tangled forest of the plot" (László 2012, 210).

The bird motif in the title deserves particular attention. Initially appearing as a promise, it is repeatedly revoked throughout the chapters, only to be realized in the closing section. The return of the birds signifies both fulfillment and illusion, for even within the framework of a disintegrating world it offers no genuine redemption. Thus, the motif of the birds may be read as an allegory of cyclical organization: the poetic movement of the volume likewise promises and retracts, varies and repeats, culminating in a single encompassing illusion.

Onomastics likewise plays a key role in constructing the world model. The grotesque and foreign-sounding names, as well as their variations and distortions, evoke the logic of totalitarian record-keeping. Names simultaneously denote and destabilize, serving both as markers of identity and as instruments of its erasure. This dual function mirrors the operation of totalitarian systems: everyone is accounted for, yet no one possesses a stable, individual voice.

The world model of *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] is therefore dual in nature: it is organized by the poetic principles of the novella cycle and at the same time offers an allegorical representation of totalitarian experience. The two dimensions reinforce one another: cyclical repetition and variation are not merely aesthetic devices but correspond to the temporal and spatial experience of dictatorship. The closed settlement, the disintegration of power structures, and the destabilized narrative variants all serve as instruments for the poetic reconstruction of totalitarian space. At the same time, the autonomy of

chapters and the connective force of the motif network jointly sustain the illusion of both the novella cycle and the novelistic world model.

In this respect, Bodor's volume is simultaneously a generic-poetic experiment and a literary model of political experience. Through the compositional logic of the novella cycle, it constructs a world that conveys the self-dissolving, apocalyptic experience of totalitarian order. A focused and selective analysis thus does not narrow but rather captures the essence of the work: *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] emerges as a poetic construction of both the novella cycle and the totalitarian world model.

5. Conclusion

The analyses of *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] and *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] demonstrate that the short story cycle in contemporary Hungarian prose operates as a complex and dynamic genre formation situated between the traditions of the short story and the novel. Both Csabai and Bodor mobilize the cyclical principles of recurrence, variation, and fragmentation not merely as compositional devices but as means of constructing distinctive poetic worlds. In Csabai's work, cyclical composition functions as an aesthetic experiment in narrative openness: the intertwining of mythic recurrence, intertextual play, and spatial duality generates a poetics of ironic destabilization. In contrast, Bodor's cycle transforms repetition into an ontological and political condition, creating an allegorical representation of totalitarian experience where closure and dissolution coincide.

In both cases, cyclical composition serves as a mode of world-making that transcends the formal boundaries of short prose. The autonomy of individual stories coexists with the illusion of an encompassing totality, allowing the reader to experience the tension between fragmentation and continuity, between discrete narrative units and their cumulative world-model. This duality—of openness and enclosure, difference and recurrence—constitutes the defining aesthetic paradox of the short story cycle.

From a theoretical perspective, the novella cycle exemplifies the postclassical narrative paradigm grounded in intertextuality, multiplicity, and readerly cooperation. Its coherence is not imposed by authorial authority but generated through interpretive activity: meaning emerges from the interplay of gaps, echoes, and repetitions across the textual network. In this sense, the short story cycle functions as an open system of narrative relations rather than a closed compositional form.

Within the broader context of twenty-first-century Hungarian prose, these works confirm that the short story cycle has become one of the most vital vehicles for rethinking narrative form. It mediates between epic continuity and postmodern fragmentation, between

historical memory and aesthetic experimentation. The genre's capacity to combine the autonomy of the short story with the expansive world-building of the novel renders it a privileged site for exploring the poetics of transition – between forms, temporalities, and modes of experience.

Ultimately, the novella cycle emerges as both a structural and hermeneutic paradigm: a genre that not only reflects but actively theorizes the conditions of contemporary narration. Through the cyclical reconfiguration of time, space, and character, works such as Csabai's *Szindbád, a detektív* [Szindbád, the Detective] and Bodor's *Verhovina madarai* [The Birds of Verhovina] articulate how the modern short prose form can accommodate complex, novel-like world models while maintaining its fragmentary and self-reflexive character. The study of these texts thus contributes to a broader understanding of how Hungarian literature continues to negotiate the intersections of memory, history, and form within the evolving landscape of postclassical narrative poetics.

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Changes of Eras in the History of 20th Century Hungarian Literary Translation[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the changes of eras in the history of 20th century Hungarian literary translation, and, as a case study, focuses what was called the "Horace dispute" in more detail. The dispute analysed was connected with the bilingual (Latin–Hungarian) Horace volume published in 1961, but its focus was not only on Horace and the translation of ancient poetry, but also on general questions of translation theory: the questions of fidelity to form, the perception of the nature of the other language, and the demarcation of the boundary between translation and transposition. The paper explores the background of the Horace dispute and the network of relations between editors and translators, based on editorial correspondence and manuscript documents. The aim of the paper is to examine the background patterns of cultural mediation and to explore the underlying factors of the change of eras through the chosen sample.

Keywords: change of eras, literary translation, Horace dispute, 20th century Hungarian literature, history of literary translation

1. Introduction

The eras of the history of literary translation parallel the changes in literary history, as changes in the institutional background also lead to changes of eras in the history of literary translation, and the altered circumstances also affect the specific translation solutions. The field of literary translation is the most regulated of all literary expressions: in addition to publishing plans, calls for proposals, scholarship systems,

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ideological expectations or manipulations, market demands can also strongly influence the birth of a literary translation. Since literary translation is socially and culturally embedded, it is worth examining the translator's personality, network of contacts, institutional background, audience and client expectations, and the intellectual context in which the translation was produced. As the client is an important factor in the translation of works of art, in addition to the recipient, the production of translations is significantly influenced not only by changes in literary taste but also by the institutional system and power relations. "Authority draws the ideological parameters of the acceptable. It influences (sometimes outright dictates) the selection of texts for translating as well as the ways in which those texts are to be translated" – states Levere (1992, 116). In analysing literary translations, we cannot ignore the expectations behind the creation of a translation, why certain texts are translated and others are not (Gentzler 2001, 194). In a summary of the history of translation, in addition to the how, it becomes important to consider the "when, by whom, what, and for whom" translations were done (Józan 2020, 29).

This paper discusses the key translation dispute in 20th century Hungarian literary translation history and the translation history processes that preceded it. The first section analyses the changes of eras in 20th century Hungarian literary translation history by placing them within a broader translation history horizon. The second section examines the influential Horace dispute that represented the consequences of the change of eras of the 1950s in the light of the documents related to the preparatory work for the translation volume of all of Horace's poems published in 1961, revealing the impact of the basic factors of the change of eras on cultural mediation, the status of the literary translator, and the specific translation solutions. In the dispute, in which philologists appear as representatives of power, the change of eras that took place in the history of Hungarian literary translation in the 1950s can be traced: the representatives of the new approach to translation, which sought to reconstruct the circumstances of the source text and convey its linguistic strangeness, distanced themselves from the translation style of the journal *Nyugat* (1908–1941), which they called translation impressionism.

2. Changes of eras in the history of 20th century Hungarian literary translation

In the history of translation, as in the history of literature or the arts, we can observe the alternation of certain trends. The process is somewhat similar to the shifts in the history of science (Kuhn 1970): the new trend always constructs its own institutional system, and can only be comprehensively implemented if it is supported by publishers, patrons, translation clients, schools, universities or the dominant ideology.

When a new trend in translation history seeks exclusivity, it often proclaims its own superiority in the name of developmentalist thinking. This is particularly evident in the case of what has been referred to the reconstructive trend in the history of 20th century Hungarian literary translation (Polgár 2003), whose main representative was Gábor Devecseri (1917–1971).

According to Devecseri, the translation literature of all nations can be roughly divided into two periods: in the first period, the source work only ennobles the works born under its influence, and only some of the beauty of the source text is transferred, while in the second period the translator is able to create the work in its entirety in their own language (Devecseri 1961, 606). Devecseri, therefore, without being aware of the paradoxical nature of complete equivalence between source and target texts (Barna 2015), believed that translators in the new era could reproduce the original text in its entirety. Devecseri believed in the historical development of translation, and he illustrated this with a metaphor of transposition that was consistently thought through: in his view, we go from the grafting of the branches to the complete transposition, which requires the training of the translation literature or language based on initial trials. Devecseri's chronology was linear, assuming a progression from the beginnings to the more mature and more developed, while considering his own era as the peak of translation history. In his view, in the new era, it was not the translators who had to take into account the needs of the recipients of translations, but it was the readers who had to immerse themselves in the foreign spirit, to become mature enough to receive new kinds of translations: the translator, according to Devecseri, exempts their reader from "learning a foreign language, but cannot save them from immersion in the foreign spirit"[2] (Devecseri 1938, 404).

In the early periods of the history of literary translation, the boundaries of the translated and the original work were strongly obliterated, and literary translation was related to the concepts of imitation and paraphrase. The idea of close translation in the history of Hungarian translation emerged in the Age of Enlightenment, and its system of rules was developed in János Batsányi's work (1787), which can be regarded as the first study of translation theory written in Hungarian (the antecedents of which are the translator's prefaces, epilogues and reflections which appeared as texts accompanying specific translations). We can consider Batsányi as one of the founders of the reconstructive theory of translation; the same principle was followed by Ferenc Kölcsey, who translated Homer, and who stated in a letter in 1815 that he translated word for word, because if he did not do so, it would not be a poetic translation but a paraphrase (Ritoók 2006, 38). Close translation did not become the sole dominant form of translation in the Age of Enlightenment, but only represented one

2 "az idegen nyelv megtanulása alól, de nem mentheti föl az idegen szellembe való elmélyedéstől."

of the options alongside free translation or paraphrase. The literary historian Ferenc Toldy challenged the Batsányi–Kölcsey principle in two influential lectures given at the Kisfaludy Society in 1843, in which he called for a "freer artistic and nationalist aspect"[3] rather than a "grammatical tyrannical one"[4] (Ritoók 2006, 53). Toldy's views led to the emergence of a Hungarianizing tendency that dominated both verse forms and realia, a typical representative of which was János Csengery (1856–1945), for example, and which was taken up in the 20th century by translators associated with the journal *Nyugat* (1908–1941), but it still had its supporters later on, as evidenced by the Hungarian verse form adaptation of the Odyssey (by Gedeon Mészöly) completed as late as 1959. Mészöly's experiment can be traced back to 19th-century principles (Mészöly 1982, 550-574), so it is not surprising that it was not successful in professional circles in the mid-20th century (Horváth 1961).

Csengery, a translator of ancient literature, repeatedly referred to the poet-translator practice of János Arany, and argued that the choice between a "true to form"[5] translation and one "in the modern form"[6] should be made according to the purpose of the translation (Csengery 1938, 230). For Csengery, the choice of verse form (following the views of the German philologist Wilamowitz-Moellendorf) is determined by the host culture: if a poem which has a fixed verse form and style in its original language is to be translated into another language, it must be adapted to the form and style of the target language (Wilamowitz-Moellendorf 1891, 11).

The Catullus dispute, which erupted in connection with the translation of Catullus by János Csengery and Gábor Devecseri, is representative of the clash between two approaches to translation. Csengery first published a selection of Catullus's poems (Catullus 1880)[7] and then, at the beginning of the twentieth century, he published the first complete Hungarian translation of Catullus (Catullus 1901). The first version of Devecseri's translation of Catullus, published in 1938, can be read as a superscription of Csengery's translation of Catullus. One of the cornerstones of the Catullus dispute is the exact, true to form translation of the poem's meter, another is the use of words and expressions that represent a new style, which Csengery considers too modern. The decisive objection to the hyper-modern words and bold word combinations criticised by Csengery in Devecseri's translation is, of course, the change in the outlook of the age. Underneath the questions of form or differences in word usage lay fundamental changes in the way we think about literary translation and the role of the literary translator.

3 "szabadabb művészit és nemzetit".
4 "grammaticusi zsarnokló szempont".
5 "eredeti mértéket utánzó".
6 "modern alakban való".
7 The translator used the name *Csengeri* when he published his translations of Catull, and *Csengery* at the time of the dispute with Devecseri.

The method of domestication used by Csengery was to eliminate the foreignness of the text while maintaining the translation's character by adapting it to the specific national forms. The procedure sought to give the target text the same canonical position in its own cultural milieu as the source text occupied in its own. This was most evident in the use of verse Hungarianization, e.g. the replacement of the verse forms used in Catullus's verse with Hungarian song forms, while the Latin names are retained in order to maintain the character of the translation.

The method of integration, which was typical of the poets of the journal *Nyugat*, launched in 1908, reinterpreted the text on the basis of spiritual and poetic affinities. It was about capturing the momentary mood of reading poetry, the essence of which was to incorporate the translated work into the translator/poet's own oeuvre. The literary translators of the *Nyugat* were themselves poets, and literary translation was linked to great personalities "who answer[ed] to each other, across ages and countries", "and reach[ed] out to each other over the heads of peoples" (Babits [1936], 11).[8] The poets of the first generation of the *Nyugat*, Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi and Árpád Tóth, considered poetry translations to be an integral part of their own poetic oeuvre, and this was reflected in the translation methods and paratexts of the translations, the methods of publication, which often interwove the original.

Mihály Babits, the Hungarian translator of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, considered himself a relative of the great spirit: "Dante can only be translated by a poet. Whether this poet is worthy of Dante, whether he is related to Dante, I do not know, but if I did not think so, I would not have written a single tercina" (Babits 1978, 285). One of the most characteristic features of the *Nyugat*'s approach to translation was its emphasis on this equality, in contrast to the humility of later translators. The individuality of the translator was also considered important by Dezső Kosztolányi, who argued that translation is influenced by four factors: the source and target languages, and the individuality of the author of the source text and that of the translator. In his essay on the Hungarian translation of Edgar Allan Poe's poem *The Raven*, his main argument against criticism of his own translation was that the translation bore not only Poe's name but also his own: "My work is the natural result of the English and Hungarian languages, of Poe's individuality and of my own individuality. For the poem published in the *Nyugat* bears not only Poe's name, but also my own"[9] (Kosztolányi 1990, 566).

8 Although Babits does not use the quoted terms in connection with literary translation but with the current of European literature, they are clearly applicable to the relationship between the original poet and their literary translator.

9 "Az angol és a magyar nyelv, Poe egyéniségének és az én egyéniségemnek természetes eredője a munkám. Hiszen azon a versen, ami a *Nyugat*-ban megjelent, nemcsak Poe neve szerepel, hanem az enyém is."

Babits expected a translator with a personality worthy of the author of the work to be translated to seek a perfect solution, and in his opinion "only one perfect solution is possible for a tercina of Dante's: woe to the one who fails to find it"[10] (Babits 1978, 274). The emphasis on the experimental character of literary translation in the epilogue to the translation anthology of Miklós Radnóti, a member of the third generation of the *Nyugat*, was intended to resolve the paradox of the impossibility of translation: "The poet who translates poetry knows that it is impossible to 'translate', one has to rewrite a foreign poem, and that every literary translation is an experiment. And he also knows that, with few exceptions, there is no foreign poem that cannot be translated *into Hungarian*"[11] (Radnóti 1943, 170). The great poet's or translator's self-consciousness, which made *Nyugat* poets measure themselves against the greatest, and without which they would not even begin the work of translation, was accompanied, in the case of Kosztolányi and Radnóti, by a great degree of caution: the term experiment suggests an unresolved, unfinished state, and calls for further attempts, in the knowledge that perfect solutions are unattainable. István Vas came to a similar conclusion, although his starting point was not so subjective: in his opinion, a work cannot have a definitive translation because it cannot have a definitive explanation either (Vas 1982, 14). Therefore, a new translation of the same work is not superfluous, since every era provides a new interpretation of the masterpieces of world literature.

The new paradigm that replaced the translation tradition of the *Nyugat* started in the 1950s and paralleled social changes. The function of literary institutions and, within them, of literary translation changed and became subordinated to ideological goals. Literary translation was also embedded in a process controlled from above, as translators worked with pre-selected texts, and the assignment of tasks took little or no account of the individuality of the translator (Szilágyi 2004, 1328). Some representatives of the new paradigm of literary translation (e.g. Gábor Devecseri) came from the third generation of the *Nyugat*, but after the change of eras they distanced themselves from their earlier ideals. When Devecseri's translation of Catullus was first published, he defended the ideals of the *Nyugat* in the dispute with Csengery, but later became the founder of a new trend that was opposed to the translation ideals of the *Nyugat*. What has been referred to as the Horace dispute (Rónay 1979, 176-199; Polgár 2003, 132-137; 2006, 7-19; Kőrizs 2008, 14-28; Imre 2020; Hajdu 2024, 158–161), which erupted in connection with the bilingual Horace volume published in 1961 (Horatius 1961), shows the opposition between the two translation approaches.

10 "csak egy tökéletes megoldása lehetséges: jaj annak, aki ezt az egyet el nem találja!"

11 "A műfordító költő tudja, hogy nem lehet »fordítani«, csak újra megírni egy idegen verset s hogy minden műfordítás – kísérlet. És tudja azt is, hogy kevés kivétellel – nincs olyan idegen vers, amit ne lehetne éppen *magyarra* fordítani."

The Horace volume and the associated discussion papers, reviews and speeches illustrate the changing perception of the *Nyugat*'s approach to translation. In the volume, the translations of the great literary translators of the *Nyugat* (Babits, Kosztolányi, Radnóti) were included in the appendix as "transpositions" or "experiments'. The term "experiment", as used by the classical philologist Róbert Falus in his review of the Horace volume (Falus 1962, 217), can no longer be explained by the cautiousness of Kosztolányi or Radnóti as translators but is clearly connected with the disparagement of the translations of the Nyugat authors and their exclusion from the field of literary translation. In these translations, the advocates of the new trend see laxity and impressionistic superficiality instead of a faithfulness to the mood.

3. The Horace dispute and the eclipse of the literary translation tradition of the previous era

István Vas, the author of the most combative essay in the Horace dispute (Vas 1974), argued that the field of classical translations was a "reservation" which, in the *Nyugat*, "had not yet been so completely enclosed by classical philologists"[12] (Vas 1974, 605) as in the 1950s/60s. According to him, the great translators of the *Nyugat* started from the realization that "Sophocles or Horace need not be translated any differently than Shakespeare or Baudelaire; [...] in other words, they did not recognise the autonomy and reservation character of the field of Greek and Latin translations"[13] (Vas 1974, 612). According to Vas, Devecseri was a unique phenomenon in the history of ancient literary translation because he was the only poet who did not venture into the territory of the reservation from outside but had grown up there, and thus gave the dictatorship of the classical philologists "a moral, even an artistic basis"[14]. The use of the terms "reservation" and "dictatorship" was also justified by the publishing methods of the 1950s, with the systematic and strictly controlled publication of Greek and Latin works. But this was not the only issue in the case of the translation of the classics. Here, the "philologists' reign of terror"[15] marked the advance and development of a new trend of literary translation, which had its roots in the 1930s. A characteristic feature of this trend was the increased cultural alienation of Latin literary translations, accompanied by a linguistic reform and the development of a specific language of

12 "rezervátum", "még nem sikerült a klasszika-filológusoknak olyan tökéletesen elkeríteni"

13 "Sophoklest vagy Horatiust sem kell másképpen fordítani, mint Shakespeare-t vagy Baudelaire-t; […], más szóval: nem ismerték el a görög és latin fordítások területének autonómiáját, rezervátum jellegét."

14 "erkölcsi, sőt művészi alapot adott"

15 "filológusok rémuralma".

literary translations: "Latin poems become philological parables instead of live poetry in Hungarian"[16] (Vas 1974, 614).

The most problematic parts of István Vas's discussion paper were those concerning the question of poetic form, since in this respect there was no consensus among the proponents of the *Nyugat* school of literary translation. István Vas considered Lőrinc Szabó's method and his metric licentiousness to be an example to be followed, arguing that the naturalness of Lőrinc Szabó's translations came precisely from the liberation of metrical rules. Vas denied Gábor Devecseri's thesis (which Babits also held) that the Hungarian language was perfectly suited to the reproduction of ancient versification, saying that this suitability of the Hungarian language was only apparent: "we cannot achieve the same naturalness with the same prosodic purity"[17] (Vas 1974, 608). It was no coincidence that Gábor Devecseri reacted most sensitively to this question in his letter of response (Devecseri 1973, 336-360), in which he openly distanced himself from Babits's heritage: in his opinion, Babits's translation of Theocritus, which was interspersed with metrical looseness and anachronisms (and which István Vas quoted as justification for his own views), was a gem of Hungarian poetry, but not of Hungarian literary translation literature. According to Devecseri, metrical clarity did not come at the expense of poetry but made the poem more poetic and beautiful.

György Rónay (Rónay 1973), who defended the position of the *Nyugat* authors in connection with the views of István Vas, also disagreed with Devecseri in this respect. In his opinion, there were also ways of permissible metric licentiousness, and the main fault of the Horace volume was precisely that it insisted more on the "sanctity of metrics" than on the naturalness of the Hungarian language. Rónay stressed that, in Latin, metrics also had an intellectual function, "the rhythmic distribution of weight is usually also intellectual: the metre facilitates understanding"[18] (Rónay 1973, 149); however, Hungarian translations that rigidly adhere to metrical rules were often intellectually vague, with the flawless "bouncing" of the metre working against "natural Hungarianness"[19] (Rónay 1973, 147). Devecseri's reply revealed that he assumed a priori forms that were more suitable for expressing certain ideas than others, and that, consequently, the translator who was mapping the ideas of the work to be translated was unconsciously forced to find the same form as the author of the source text.

The dispute was also held orally in the Literary Translators' Section of the Writers' Union, and the transcript of Devecseri's speech survived in his estate, in which he had argued that, while the translator could

16 "a latin versek magyarul eleven költészet helyett filológiai példatárrá válnak".

17 "ugyanazzal a prozódiai tisztasággal nem tudjuk ugyanazt a természetességet elérni".

18 "a ritmikai súlyelosztás többnyire egyben értelmi is: a metrum megkönnyíti a megértést".

19 "természetes magyarosság".

choose from many different forms, it was best to try to choose exactly the same form as the original author, since form, in his view, had a communicative role.[20] The loosening of the antique metre, according to Devecseri, resulted in an "approximate poem"[21] (Devecseri 1973, 333), and it was because of this application that he considered the *Nyugat* era to be metrically Iron Age: "How did the Iron Age come about, in which people of high culture also slipped back into the theory of approximation?"[22] – Devecseri asked in his essay "Ancient verse form – Hungarian text", in which he outlined the history of the Hungarian establishment of ancient verse (Devecseri 1973, 331). If the correspondence was inconsistent at the metrical level, Devecseri argued that the contradiction was inevitably also apparent at the stylistic level: the loosening of the metrics of the translated work was, in his view, a means of stylistic falsification.

Behind the poetic questions and metrical problems lay ideological differences. The representatives of the new trend did not see the treatment of metre as a purely technical problem: the representatives of the reconstructive trend, which opposed the *Nyugat*, saw in the loose treatment of metre only arbitrariness and superficiality, which, as Róbert Falus wrote, testified to "the translator's whole moral and aesthetic position": "whether he consider[ed] it more important to interpret the chosen original with humble fidelity, consciousness and experience, or to his own arbitrariness"[23] (Falus 1962, 208).

The dispute revealed not only a clash of translation principles but also dissatisfaction with the editorial methods of the time, which some translators felt were at the mercy of politics. In the new era, the translator was forced to collaborate with the editor as well as the proofreader, and editorial interference, to varying degrees, had to be expected for all texts. During the preparatory work on the 1961 Horace volume, Gábor Devecseri was responsible for selecting translations, liaising with translators, and editing the translations, including metrical corrections and new solutions. Devecseri's poetic afterword (Devecseri 1961) also provided background information on the editing of the volume and reflected on the work of the translator–editor. Devecseri distanced himself from the 1935 selection titled *Horatius noster* [Our Horace], which also drew on earlier periods of Hungarian translation history. He stressed that they were not making a selection but wanted to show "the *whole*", "which is beautiful only when it is fresh"[24] (Devecseri

20 Devecseri Gábor, *A költői műfordítás elvi és gyakorlati kérdései* [Theoretical and practical issues of poetic translation], Petőfi Literary Museum Manuscript Repository, Devecseri papers.

21 "körülbelül vers"

22 "Hogyan is került sor arra a vaskorra, melyben magaskultúrájú emberek is a *körülbeliség* elméletébe csúsztak vissza?"

23 "a fordító egész morális és esztétikai alapállásáról","arról, hogy mit tart fontosabbnak, a kiszemelt eredeti alázatosan hűséges, tudatos és átélt tolmácsolását-e vagy pedig saját önkényét."

24 "az *egészet*", "mi úgy szép csak, ha egész friss"

1961, 606): the goal was to present a new literary translation ideal by presenting a range of new literary translators, and therefore they left out the old Hungarian translators and the poets of the "semi-past" (by which Devecseri meant the poets of the first half of the 20th century). Devecseri was enthusiastic about poetic team-work: in his epistle he compared editors to sheep dogs, who "with loyal principles, run and bark"[25] to herd the flock of translators together (Devecseri 1961, 606). Undertaking translations was a matter of both livelihood and prestige in those days, and many people tried to get into the volume but were forced to submit to the will of the "herding sheep dog"[26], the editor.

The editor's interventions and the extent of textual modification are shown by the publisher's documents, author's proofs and correspondence relating to the editing of the Horace volume. Devecseri not only alerted the translators to the parts to be corrected, but (as if it were only a matter of changing his own text) directly participated in the shaping of the texts by making suggestions that could be metrically incorporated into the text. During the editing of the volume, he corresponded extensively and also consulted the translators by phone. In addition to the published discussion papers, the documentation preserved in the Devecseri estate shows that the dispute about the clash of translation principles had already begun before the book was published. Since the discussions (often even the discussion of specific translation solutions) were conducted partly by phone, the correspondence is largely the material accompanying the translations of the poems that were completed and sent to Devecseri. Most of the translators were initially enthusiastic about working together and contributing as co-authors to the new Horace image. "I would be very happy if I could help in the birth of a complete new Hungarian Horace, or if a ray or two of its glory could fall on me", wrote, for example, the classical philologist and literary translator István Károly Horváth in his letter.[27.]

The poet Géza Hegedüs, who later (obviously as a consequence of the editorial reactions) became the author of the first discussion paper questioning the principles of translation (Hegedüs 1959) even before the publication of the volume, started work enthusiastically. Géza Hegedüs's discussion paper and the three Horace translations following the paper, all published in the journal *Nagyvilág*, were preceded by an exchange of letters and phone calls. None of the three Horace translations published in the journal (Carmina [The Odes], Book 1, Poem 30; Book 1, Poem 38 and Book 3, Poem 26) were included in the Horace volume published two years later, which is a sign that they did not meet the requirements that the editor had in mind, i.e. the new literary translation style.

25 "hű elvekkel futva-csaholva"

26 "terelő puli"

27 István Károly Horváth to Gábor Devecseri, 9 December 1957. Petőfi Literary Museum Manuscript Repository, Devecseri papers. In Hungarian: "nagyon örülnék, ha egy teljes uj magyar Horatius megszületésénél én is segithetnék, illetve, annak dicsőségéből egy-két halvány sugaracska rám is esne."

Hegedüs sent to Devecseri a translation of the Horace poem *Persicos odi* [I hate Persian pomp] (Carmina [The Odes], Book 1, Poem 38) on an undated postcard, with a familiar-sounding accompanying text, which shows that the editor had not ordered the translation from Hegedüs, and this was reason enough for its omission from the volume. Metrically and stylistically, the translation did not meet the expectations of the new trend. In terms of metrical licentiousness, Hegedüs was aligned with the poets of the *Nyugat*, and in terms of style he created a hybrid text: he mixed sublime and archaic elements with modern, urban expressions, believing that since Horace combined mythological imagery with everyday expressions, the best way to approximate his style in Hungarian was to "put words used at the card table next to the names of the gods"[28] (Hegedüs 1959, 1881).

István Vas's translation was included in the volume, but not in the version in which the translator would have liked it. In his discussion paper, Vas criticized the fact that Devecseri, the editor, had only communicated his suggestions for corrections to him by telephone, and that he (not being able to judge the correctness of the suggestions offhand) accepted them out of courtesy but later regretted his hasty decision (Vas 1974, 618–620). He cited as an example the change of the last stanza of a Horace ode (Carmina [The Odes], Book 4, Poem 12.). The poem had already appeared earlier in István Vas's translation in the bilingual volume *Horatius noster* [Our Horace] (1943, 175), reflecting the translation style of the previous period, and later in István Vas's anthology of his own selected translations (Vas 1955, 20).

Devecseri included his translation of the poem in the 1961 Horace volume in a "corrected" version (Horatius 1961, 299). "My old Horace experiment was included by Devecseri in his anthology", wrote Vas. "And then before closing the volume he called me, saying that he had some suggestions which would make my translation more precise; and of course it's up to me whether I accept them, but he would be happy if I did"[29] (Vas 1974, 618). The subsequent changes not only made the text fragmented, stalling the momentum of the first version, but also caused logical inconsistencies. One of the aims of István Vas's discussion paper (in addition to expressing differing views on translation theory and poetics and metrics) was to make a firm distinction between the translator's and the editor's versions, and to restore the original version. He clearly distanced himself from the elements that were subsequently introduced into the text: "I shall therefore stick to my old, somewhat explanatory solution"[30], he wrote (Vas 1974, 619). In the new edition of his collected translations (Vas 1982, 23–24), he did not include any of the lines that Devecseri had changed.

28 "istennevek mellé kártyaasztalnál használatos szavakat állítunk."

29 "Régi Horatius-kísérletemet Devecseri átvette antológiájába." "A kötet lezárása előtt aztán felhívott, hogy van néhány javaslata, amely pontosabbá tenné fordításomat; persze, rajtam áll, hogy elfogadom-e, de örülne, ha beleegyeznék."

30 "Maradok hát a magam régi, kissé magyarázó megoldásánál."

The poet Gyula Takács also adhered to the individualist principles of the *Nyugat*, and after he could not reach the editor by phone, he wrote to inquire which of his translations were to be published, and how, with what changes. "I would like to know what you publish in the Horace volume? Also how, i.e. what are the intended changes? I prefer my own text to another's, even if it is two words under my name," he wrote to Devecseri in a letter dated October 16, 1961.[31] The letter indicates that the individualistic translator did not want to blend into the shared text but wanted to preserve the individual flavor of his translation. The concern was justified, as evidenced by the proof, that have survived in the estate (the traslation of Horace's epistle, Book 1, Poem 10). In the accompanying letter, the translator asked the editor to submit his text to the printer in this form, but when compared with the printed version, it is clear that not all of the corrections were incorporated into the final text. The editor had the final say, forcing even the most individualistic author to compromise.

An examination of the background materials on the editor's work reveals that the editor's idea was to achieve as close an approximation of literalism as possible, but this was not always possible because of Horace's tight metrics and often resulted in incomprehensible texts with Latin grammar and fragmented syntax. Devecseri's aim as an editor was to make the translation not only an "inspired variation"[32] but also a mirror image of the original (Devecseri 1973, 337) – and the mirror image for him was not the contours of the figures but the point-to-point correspondences. In addition to the approximate perception of the poem's meter, he considered another error to be the "approximate, allusive and transposed"[33] indication of the poem's subject, and the two were, in his view, interrelated (Devecseri 1973, 341). He considered the altering of the original poem's meter the greatest "embezzlement"[34], and the omission of ornamentation the smallest "embezzlement", which, according to Devecseri, is not merely ornamentation but "part of the living fabric of the poem"[35] (Devecseri 1981, 111). In the case of the Horace volume, the juxtaposition of the mosaics, as his interlocutors pointed out, did not result in the transfer of "Horace's mood"[36] (Rónay 1973).

31 Gyula Takács to Gábor Devecseri, Petőfi Literary Museum Manuscript Repository, Devecseri papers. In Hungarian: "Szeretném tudni mit közöltök a Horatiusban? Azt is, hogyan, ti. mi a szándékolt változtatás. Én ti. jobban szeretem a saját szövegemet, mint a másét, ha két szó is, a nevem alatt."

32 "ihletett variációja"

33 "a vers tárgyának körülbelüli, utaló és áttett"

34 "sikkasztás"

35 "részei a vers eleven szövetének"

36 "a horatiusi hangulat"

4. Conclusion

The history of Hungarian literary translation went through two changes of eras during the 20th century: the first turn was associated with the first generation of the *Nyugat*, which opposed the national school, and the second turn with the third generation. However, while the first generation, despite individual differences, can be said to have been united in its rejection of the literary translation of the previous era, the third generation was not unanimous in its support for the new conception of literary translation, although many of its members were forced to make concessions. The change of eras is best illustrated by the translation oeuvre of Gábor Devecseri, while the dispute that erupted over the Horace translations is a good example of the fluctuations in translation principles, the political pressure of translators, and the desire to preserve earlier views on translation. Several of the third generation of translators (Gyula Takáts, György Rónay, and István Vas) later stood up for the principles they had learned in their youth, while Gábor Devecseri, a believer in radical innovation, worked to consciously overwrite the earlier approach to translation.

An analysis of the translations and of the background material has shown that the specific translation solutions and editorial corrections were based on a conscious eclipsing of the literary translation concept of the previous era. The 1961 bilingual Horace volume was intended to function as a mirror, and translation, according to this metaphor, is not a work in itself, but only a reflection, a mirror of something true and original. "Translation is not only an inspired variation, but also, as far as possible, a mirror image of the original",[37] Gábor Devecseri believed, and for him, one of the indispensable conditions of this mirroring was faithfulness to form (Devecseri 1973, 337–338). Since the mirror can also distort or modify the proportions of the original image, the mirror metaphor also warns that the truth or falsity of an image cannot be determined as a matter of course. The Horace dispute, which started from the questioning of specific translation solutions and editorial interventions, reached a theoretical level, gaining a translation theoretical nature rather than a translation methodological one, and it also documents the change of era in translation that took place in the meantime. While the individual taste of each translator remained in line with the principles of the *Nyugat*, the change was mainly detectable in terms of editorial principles. In many respects, the Corvina Publishing House's attempt to publish Horace is considered, by the profession today, as a failure, but the change of eras was clearly achieved, despite individual protests. And in that change a major role was played not only by Devecseri's work, which is still influential today, but also the institutional publishing apparatus that supported the new views.

37 "A fordítás nemcsak ihletett variációja, hanem – amennyire csak lehetséges – tükörképe is az eredetinek."

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Languages, Identities, and Transformations in András Ferenc Kovács's Poetry

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ABSTRACT

András Ferenc Kovács (1959–2023) was a contemporary Transylvanian Hungarian poet, translator, and editor, renowned for his innovative and multifaceted contributions to modern Hungarian literature. His poetry blends traditional lyricism with postmodern techniques, emphasizing intertextuality, allusions, and irony. In his poems, self-irony, rhetorical play, fragmented or deformed words, and nonsense serve the same purpose as the increasingly complex allegorization: exposing the mechanisms of power that insidiously undermine culture, language, and identity. Simultaneously, within certain socio-political contexts, his works highlight the morally questionable compromises of literary life under the shadow of the communist dictatorship. Kovács's fragmented language and surreal imagery underscore the constraints of censorship and the absurdities of power. Themes of Transylvanian Hungarian identity emerge in his allegorical explorations, often layered with irony and self-reflection.

The study examines how András Ferenc Kovács's poetry uniquely combines traditional lyricism with postmodern fragmentation, creating a layered dialogue with cultural and poetic heritage.

Keywords: Transylvanian Hungarian poetry, contemporary literature, masks and transformations, poetic role, communist and post-communist period

1. Masks and Voices

When examining Transylvanian Hungarian poetry of the 1980s, alongside the lyrical works of László Király[1] and Géza Szőcs[2] (see Szilveszter 2020, 311–313), it is perhaps primarily the first two collections of András Ferenc Kovács – *Tengerész Henrik intelmei* [The Admonitions of Henry the Sailor] (1983) and *Tűzföld hava* [The Winter of Tierra del Fuego] (1988) – that are characterised a mode of expression that later, with varying emphasis, became a guiding force for the post-transition generations of poets. This poetry exhibits an unusual richness, blending old Hungarian lyrical traditions with the 20th century vernacular, or the theatre jargon, which are as much present as the literature and mythology of classical literature and mythology. An informal tone, alternating between fragments from the works of – in some cases fictional – French and Spanish authors, Anglo-Saxon poetry traditions and the gestures of commedia dell'arte figures, reveals itself in a unique poetic space, whose inalienable characteristic is the postmodern technique of allusion and citation, the hiding individual moving between texts, the clown mask, and allegorization.

Instead of the avant-garde clichés, András Ferenc Kovács's first two books of poems are defined by classicization, traditional forms and genres, a light and ironic creative attitude that contemporary critics labelled, for lack of a better term, as role-playing, reminiscent primarily of troubadour lyricism (Szigeti 2017, 33–41), an attitude which looks with some scepticism at the social and community building role of language and poetry. This lyrical attitude contains dialogue with the poetic legacy of Bálint Balassi, Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, or even Jenő Dsida *Episztolatöredék apámhoz* [Epistolary Fragment to My Father], *Köröcskéző maszkabál* [Masked Ball in Circles], *Naiv glossza* [Naive Gloss]. It is characterised by the desire for a distinctly biographical, elegiac portrayal of a contemporary Transylvanian Hungarian identity and living spaces, radically different from the traditional Transylvanist

1 László Király (1943–) Transylvanian Hungarian poet, writer and translator, born in Sóvárad, held a degree in Hungarian Language and Literature (Babeș–Bolyai University, Kolozsvár), worked initially as a teacher before he became a reporter (Előre), and later editor of Utunk (Helikon from 1989 onwards).

2 Géza Szőcs (1953-2020) Transylvanian Hungarian poet and politician, son of István Szőcs, writer and translator. After 1986, he went into political exile in Switzerland, in Geneva, where he worked as a journalist. In 1990, Szőcs returned to his natal land, and was active in the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ), for which he sat from 1990 to 1992 in the Romanian Senate. From 1993 onward, he lived in Hungary. He served as Secretary of State for Culture of the Ministry of National Resources in Hungary from 2010 to 2012. In 2011, he was elected president of the Hungarian PEN Club.

perspective:[3] *Il Transilvano* [The Transylvanian], *Vásárhelyi passió* [Marosvásárhely Passion], *A hómezőn fekete lovasok* [Black Riders on the Snowfield]; as well as by role-playing that hides the true face of the self behind various texts, quotes, theatrical gestures and masks of real or imaginary figures: *Pulcinello fohásza, szerenádja Pulcinellához* [Pulcinello's Supplication, Serenade to Pulcinella], *Juvenalis Egyiptomban,* [Juvenal in Egypt], *Andalúz költő románca* [Romance of an Andalusian Poet]. "In the works of András Ferenc Kovács – as Ernő Kulcsár Szabó observes –, quotation, fictional and real allusions, the disassembling and assembling of the voices in a new way, and the relativization of the lyrical speaker – occurring through the historical complexity of the formal tradition – give rise to a poetics that anticipates several versions of postmodern Hungarian poetry" (Kulcsár Szabó 2004, 253).[4]

Simultaneously, the turn toward tradition in Kovács's 1980s work is realised not only through the palimpsest-like layering of meaning dimensions, the interplay of various strata of culture and historicity, but also through the virtuously diverse, capable of evoking both the lightness of Villon's poetry or the voice of Milán Füst:[5]

> Like fierce caravans, oh, blessed torments travel across
> the Arabias of broken bodies, traders in dreams –
> offering written pitchers, carpets of spheres! My heart
> too is but a handful of pearls – exchangeable for dust, scatterable
> in the words of nomadic days… Oh, nothing that can be bartered for Berber wind,
> you are both beautiful and terrible – the watchfires of tent camps
> frozen on the tusk of the moon, you, the rising of
> warlike camels, the death of chess pieces in desert light
> *Mint ádáz karavánok, ó!* [Like Fierce Caravans, Oh!]
> (*Tűzföld hava* [The Winter of Tierra del Fuego] 1988, 13.)

This orientation does not suggest that the poems lack political engagement, that they are detached from communal issues, or are independent of the realities of the era. On the contrary, due to

3 Transylvanism mainly consisted of three different ideological orientations: emphasizing the rights of Hungarian speakers to of surviving on the native land as a moral imperative, highlighting the specificity of "Transylvanian Spirit", and creating the historical background of national consciousness (Szávai 2004, 166–179).

4 All quoted texts and poems appear in my own translation.

5 Milán Füst (1888–1967) was a Hungarian poet and writer known for his introspective and deeply philosophical poetry. His work often explores themes of existential angst, loneliness, and the complexity of human emotions. Füst's style is marked by its modernist tendencies, combining lyrical intensity with a reflective, almost meditative tone. Though his poetry was less recognized during his lifetime, it has since gained appreciation for its depth and originality. He was also influenced by European literary traditions, blending them with a unique, personal voice.

rhetorical play and self-reflection, these poems often employ a mode of expression in which the communist dictatorship, the poet's role, and the individual's relationship with power appear in a distorted mirror. This is evident even in the first poem of the *Tengerész Henrik intelmei* [The Admonitions of Henry the Sailor] collection, *Ballada megadott témára* [Ballad on a Given Theme], which ironically reflects the reality of compromises made in the hope of success, where rebellious behaviour is reclassified as opportunistic compliance:

poetry contests and mastersingers
I have to laugh that I am swaggering here
stumbling around puppets, grinning
in a crowded dive among a thousand pipers
dissected nothing, precious misery
acute color blindness, pumped-up arrogance
the theme is lousy but fits perfectly here
I die of thirst beside the fountain's water
(*Tengerész Henrik intelmei* [The Admonitions of Henry the Sailor] 1983, 5).

The identification with Villon's vagabond role serves both the dialogue between texts that expand the rhetorical horizon of the poem and the (re)creation of a lyrical situation connected to the updated discourse on Transylvanian Hungarian identity. The refrain, which can be understood as a literal quotation – although in some respects it actually prevents access to the "concrete" meaning of the poem – ironically points to the ethical questions of literary life, under the shadow of communist state power, as well as the societal/intellectual role of poetry. Therefore, the poem may be seen as rejecting compromises made with the system to achieve certain cultural concessions or personal positions, and a refusal of the personality cult: "Tiny prince, your parade is horribly dull / don't be merciful, I don't plead for grace / today the world falls this way, tomorrow that way/ and we die of thirst beside the fountain's water."

The inseparability of poetry and political stance, the reassessment of the position of literature, or the strategy of reading between the lines, all find themselves in an ironic situation here, just like the authenticity of the poetic voice or the acceptance of the lyrical pose as a genuine portrait. The poem *Dadogódia-dal* [Stammerer's Triumph] also aims at revealing the compromising, conventional attitudes and questioning the real value of the artwork and the validity of the poet's role:

ave caesar, you hired us for lies
why should we care now
about Parnassus' laurels if we live on pay
(*Tengerész Henrik intelmei* [The Admonitions of Henry the Sailor]. 1983, 50).

From this perspective, it becomes clear that artistic freedom in a dictatorship is entirely subject to the dual burden of state censorship and the expectations of the audience, independent of the creator's will: "raging circus, bitter bread / exiled poets grinned they fled / the century's slashed its veins caesar." At the same time, András Ferenc Kovács's 1983 poetry book, *Tengerész Henrik intelmei* [The Admonitions of Henry the Sailor], also reflects a style characteristic of the contemporary verses of Aladár Lászlóffy[6] and László Király, reminiscent of the mood of Menippean satires. In the apocalyptic vision of poems like *Salétrompuszta* [Nitre Plain] or *Szélnek eresztett menazsériák* [Menageries Scattered to the Wind], circus performers and props become figures of the here and now, embodying the obliteration of tradition and culture, reflecting a world of lacking values: "they have arrived, they are all circling here / uninvited, the St. Vitus dancers and the stump / orators here put on their show..." (*Tengerész Henrik intelmei* [The Admonitions of Henry the Sailor] 1983, 75). In this context, the lyrical identity takes on a diffuse historical form. The poems present a wandering soul, an individual who belongs to nowhere, a temporally and spatially homeless figure, experiencing a lack of freedom, as well as the inhumanity of a chaotic world. All of these are conveyed through the forced assumption of the clown mask and the vagabond role. In this artistic orientation, the return to traditional genres and the dialogue between texts become as important as the allegorical depiction. "The poet taking cover behind the costumes – as Éva Cs. Gyímesi notes in her analysis – is, in fact, restlessly searching for a meaning hidden from him. The passion of this search transcends the bleakness of an absurd philosophy of existence: behind the mask of the modern clown, the comedian weeps, no matter how well he disguises it" (Cs. Gyímesi 1999, 260).

Several poems in András Ferenc Kovács's 1988 poetry collection *Tűzföld hava* [The Winter of Tierra del Fuego], including *Alkony vak hegedőssel* [Twilight with a Blind Fiddler] and *Távoli tájkép térzenével* [Distant Landscape with a Brass Band], can essentially be associated with this allegorical field of meaning, depicting characters such as the minstrel, the fairground musician, the circus performer, and the goliard. Closely connected to lyrical tradition and history, these poems convey motifs of existential alienation and threat, presenting a peculiar "reality" in which ideological oppression and the intellectual's vulnerability to power come to the forefront. In these poems, the central dilemma revolves around the choice between surrendering one's individuality for total assimilation and embracing the status of a persona non grata: "Tremble at the morning / trumpet call – it cries for you / and shatters

6 Aladár Lászlóffy (1937–2009) Transylvanian Hungarian poet, writer, essayist. From 1961 on he worked as an editor for Állami Irodalmi Kiadó [National Literary Publisher], later for the Napsugár, Dacia Könyvkiadó [Dacia Publisher], Előre and Utunk journals (from 1989 Helikon). His work has been honored with several prizes, including the Kossuth-Prize, and The Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary.

in the wind / siren requiem. Hide / in a uniform / you too, hide in a cheerful / uniform-grin // The fog is already sending / its brass bands. Shout / hooray – it's worth it, poet / you could be – free / if you were. The new hope attacks / with trombones, / frayed trumpet fire" (*Távoli tájkép térzenével* [Distant Landscape with a Brass Band], *Tűzföld hava* [The Winter of Tierra del Fuego]. 1988, 36).

In the poems of András Ferenc Kovács from the 1980s, the conscious dismantling of linearity, syntactic, and grammatical structures can, in a certain reading, ironically point to censorship imposed on artistic texts or the dictatorial creative or receptive attitudes. Fragmented words and half-sentences often crystallise new meanings. The lines in Übüper utazása Micsináljunkban [Ubu Père's Journey in Whatchagonnado] excellently illustrate this poetic orientation:

ubu cae shark the idiotic ROlation
gesticulating on a rocket, squeaks and chops
whirling and prances about, it jigs and joggles
breezy propaganda gossips around it
grandmasters and noble dumb-noses
everyone who claps licks the cornucopia
but he twangs, chatters, farts far away
jiggles home with a tin whistle
(*Tengerész Henrik intelmei* [The Admonitions of Henry the Sailor]. 1983, 52).

The mutilated, deformed words or gibberish here may serve a similar purpose as the allegorization that escalates to the point of incomprehensibility: exposing the power machine that grinds down culture, language, and identity. However, the poetic expression, dismantled to the point of meaninglessness – while seemingly renouncing any clear connection to external reality – also meets the demands of a discourse conducted against power.

In her essay entitled *Kritikai mozaik* [Critical Mosaic] Éva Cs. Gyímesi states the following: "The experience of reading poetry proves that the internal coordinates of the poetic situation can never completely detach themselves from the external coordinate system of the situation – except, perhaps, in the form of utopia. In most cases, only the possibility of symbolically and metaphorically modelling the situation remains, without the prospect of surpassing it. The imagery and metaphors are fundamentally shaped by the distinctive geographical-historical space, the world that poetry considers its homeland, its birthplace" (Cs. Gyímesi 1999, 9). This passage is not only valid as a diagnosis for the literary works analysed but also as a self-reflective, intellectual confession of a state of existence in communism.

2. Playing with the Old Ones

After the regime change in Romania, in the poetry of András Ferenc Kovács, the tradition that was already characteristic of the volumes of the 1980s seems to be complete: playing with different avatars, pseudo-identities, and alternating language registers, intertextual references, and forms of speech (see Lőrincz 2006, 142–150). In these poems, the lyrical self, hidden behind fictitious locations and characters, often appears in an indeterminate linguistic and historical context (see Demény 2017, 101–104). This multiplicity of the poem's rhetorical dimensions makes it difficult to clearly determine the identity of the "real" speaker. Self-portrait-like texts, such as *Be jó ismerni KAF urat!* [How Nice to Know Mr. KAF!] and *A kaffogás művészete* [The Art of Barking], visibly play on the identity of the creator and the speaker; but the individuals in the *Jack Cole*, *Caius Licinius Calvus*, or René Sándor Lázáry poems are not so closely tied to the schematic traits of the actual author. The origin in these works is subject to a diffuse movement, which, through multiple layers of concealment, prevents the coordinates of the depicted space and time or the lyrical identity from being associated with real-life events or the figure of the biographical author.

It may suffice to mention here the poems written under the name of René Sándor Lázáry in the late 1990s and early 2000s, which are also marked as translations or adaptations in their subtitles: *Kereskedő Alexandriából. Fordítás-próbák Sir Archibald Blacksmith révén, görögből* [Merchant from Alexandria. Translation Attempts via Sir Archibald Blacksmith, from Greek], *La primavera (Japán rajzok Julimnak)* [La Primavera (Japanese Drawings for My Julie)], and *Lenge, latin szerenád (Petronius Arbiter éneke)* [Light, Latin Serenade (A Song by Petronius Arbiter)].

The "*Description de l'Égypte*" *(Verses Napló Kairótól Núbiáig)* ["Description de l'Égypte" (Diary of Poems from Cairo to Nubia], signed by the alter ego René Sándor Lázáry, is such a play with words and dream scenes. Ironically, the location and the experience associated with it seem to be the source of the "travel diary" here, but these fictitious events are actually created only by the stream of the linguistic field, sounds, sonority, and names. The speaker himself alludes to the imaginary nature of the "narrated" story:

> *Memphis, on the 25th of May, 1879*
> Oh, how much green is pil'd up in the Journal –
> Poor me, I almost believe it!
> Beyond Memphis, at Dahshur, on the Nile
> A cow carcass grazes on holy water… (*Jelenkor* 2002, 3: 305.)

The poem thus is replaced into the original environment of lyricism, music, and language, into the gravitational field of a self-creating rhetorical horizon, whose sole purpose is the play with words, since

the "individual" and the "message" can both be put in parentheses. The seemingly tragic speech, which is actually based on the superficiality of poetic tradition, essentially exposes the fictional nature of historical consciousness:

Gizeh, on the 17th of May, 1879
Pyramid upon pyramid… What a monotonous refrain!
Khufu rhymes with Menkaure and Khafre,
And we chew on sherbet and schnaps!
In vain did Khufu build a bigger one perhaps –
You arrogant pyramid, you'll wear away soon enough!
[…]
Karnak, on the 7th of July, 1879
Amon sails his crafted boat into the night:
A solemn ray rocks on Thutmose's sacred lake.
The young Khonsu now`s crossing the dream:
The moon is white, deathly silent the toll-house…
I too will be gone – and the word won't pain my mouth.

The gibberish the allusions, and deliberate anachronisms evoke the mood of Menippean satire, as does the presence of footnotes,[7] playful name creations, or various techniques of genre and form mixing.

Alongside the clown mask and identity-multiplying postmodern playfulness, however, the relationship to cultural and poetical tradition, including Transylvania and Hungarian identity, is also emphasised in András Ferenc Kovács's poetry of the last two and a half decades. A distinctive type of this orientation is represented by works in which references to one or another characteristic of minority existence can be read as part of a broader textual context, as a detail of a consistently constructed allegorical image, connected to a situation based on some analogy, to a foreign ethnic group, historical figures, or events. This depiction is looking back to the characteristic speech type of Transylvanian Hungarian poetry in the 1970s and 1980s, which, under the dual burden of social expectations and censorship, subordinated the concrete references in the poem to the gestures of meaning multiplication, rhetorical play, and ironic alienation. The poem *Anonymus Smyrnaeushoz!*

7 A footnote beneath the poem, detailing the fictitious experiences of the journey: "(On the morrow, by vessel unto Dabud; thereafter: Tafa, Beit-el-Wali, Kalabsha, Dendur, Gerf Hussein, El-Dakka, Quban, El-Maharraqa, Wadi es-Sebua, Amada, Derr, Aniba, Qasr Ibrim; even unto Ipsambul, that is, Abu Simbel. My Nubian sojourn proved at whiles perchance yet more wondrous and more dreadful than all that had gone before. The desolate heat, the grandeur and multitude of marvels, together with mine own unflagging ardour, at length overcame me: I was spent, unable to write, or scarce set down aught save sundry jottings, prose-like impressions, and those but laboriously, in fragments, with trembling hand […] It is the ninth day of October in the year 1879, close upon midnight, with jackals crying round about. The day after tomorrow it would already be time to move on… Final destination: Napata – Meroë – Khartoum! Done!)"

[To Anonymus Smyrnaeus!], dated 1990, may be the first example of a lyrical attitude that evokes the voice of Greco-Roman poetry in such a way that apostrophic speech, recalling the turbulent centuries of European culture – in an allegorical reading sensitive to the identity of the creator and the actual message –, prevails as a reflection on the situation and struggles of Hungarians in Transylvania:

> forget not, traveller, the taste of the last word
> in your mouth the triumphant shouts of arsonists
> the wise generations of library fires
> […]
> forget not, traveler, the imperial desire
> the universal reconciliation of ashes,
> the abduction of words, the conquest of letters,
> forget not the counter empire of inner speech.
> (Üdvözlet a vesztesnek [Greeting to the Defeated]. 1994, 22).

Among the Kavafis transcripts published in 2005, the poem *Gyászkórusok* [Funeral Choruses] also fulfils this play with (fictional) historicity, allowing the ironic-allegorical orientation of the search for identity to build upon the well-known motifs of Greco-Roman culture and literature (see Kerti 2019, 59–70). Here, too, the dialogue with tradition is connected to a lyrical context that, in a certain reading, becomes capable of recreating the topoi of "Transylvanian Hungarian identity":

> Advancing, or always retreating,
> from defeat to new triumph,
> from triumphs to continuous defeats,
> from exile to banishment,
> always opposing, or always maneuvering,
> always fleeing to feasts,
> all patriots, all traitors too:
> Sparta`s friends, Persia's friends
> Spartan mercenaries, Mede leaders all!
> (*Jelenkor*. 2005, 10: 889)

However, in these allegorical readings, the content of statements relating to Transylvanian Hungarians instantly dissipates the moment we separate the text from the information about the real author's identity, namely András Ferenc Kovács, the poet of Marosvásárhely.[8] Indeed, due to the unrevealability of the speaker's identity and the emphasis on the "transcript" character of the poem, this dimension of meaning can be overwritten by an interpretation that evokes classical Greek heroes, the characteristics of the Athens–Sparta–Persia) relationship, and the

8 Tg-Mureș, Romania.

traditions of ancient history and philosophy. In this way, the reliance on cultural memory in András Ferenc Kovács's poems foregrounds the experience of otherness, highlighting the awareness that, from a postmodern perspective, dialogue with historical texts, literary works, and the canonised national tradition is at the same time a hermeneutic and deconstructive relationship. According to László Bedecs, such poetic masks "make it impossible to identify the poet, that is, to assign the prophetic voice, while simultaneously freeing the poet from expectations and obligations" (Bedecs 2003, 202).

Furthermore, the alter egos in András Ferenc Kovács's texts, such as the dual alienating techniques of the poems of René Sándor Lázáry, which build on both fictional personality and fictitious dating, allow the speaker to develop a multidirectional approach. This, on the one hand, by adhering to traditional forms of poetry, evokes figures, events, and requisites of the national past, while on the other hand, it maintains an ironic distance from this extremely selective, ideological, illusion-based horizon, which is subordinated to the self-righteousness of collective memory and amnesia, as well as to the interests of those in power. For instance, the poem *Edények romlása* [Decay of Pots], signed by René Sándor Lázáry, reviews the history of Transylvania from the era of the Principality onwards through the metamorphosis of a wine cup that has advanced to the status of a church chalice. The elevated diction and archaization, reminiscent of 16–18th century historical songs, reinforce the authenticity of the "speaker", as well as the current validity of the "message", but also maintain a playful-ironic distance, especially because the narration comes from the mouth of a fictitious person who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries:

> Anna Bornemissza was a diligent housekeeper,
> This clean jug is from her kitchen:
> Perhaps Apafi himself poured wine from it,
> And a servant of the emperor drank it before him!
> Thieving times are upon old goblets –
> We constantly diminish, arguing over words,
> Hope once devout has turned into chatter,
> Our faith rings hollow, a dented drinking vessel.
> (*Tiszatáj.* 1995, 9: 30–31.)

The duality of pathos and irony is heightened by the imitation of the speech style of the Reformed preachers, the musicality produced by pure rhymes, the quickening pace of the narrative, and the sententious conclusion: "No miracle or place shall be given to us anew. / We exist … Like a silver communion chalice: / Its luster wears from many bitter mouths, / Until it becomes a copper cup at the final reckoning."

This same tone essentially characterises the texts of *Kettős portré Erdélyből* [Double Portrait from Transylvania], *Diárium* [Diarium], *Metamorphoses Transylvaniae*, [Metamorphoses Transylvaniae], and

Erdélyi kripta: Pantheon [Transylvanian Crypt: Pantheon], signed by René Sándor Lázáry, published in the mid-1990s, with fictitious dates between 1921 and 1924. The awareness of the irreparability of historical crimes, as well as the need to address the contemporary Transylvanian Hungarian society, which builds castles in the air from illusions of the grandeur of the national past, can be discerned in these poems. Internal rhymes and references to ancient mythology serve the same purpose here as the archaisms, the gestures of alienating the text, as well as the presence of the footnotes – simply dubbed "philological gags" by Gábor Képes (2004, 105) –: they promote a playful-ironic detachment and self-reflection, that is, the need for an attitude facing reality:

He honours God – jovial Péter Bod:
No blight touches him, nor shallow doubt.
She called upon His face, enclosed in grace –
In vain did Árva Kata Bethlen lament.
Wise Hungarian Athena, mournful Minerva,
Who gains redeeming cheer through duty's chain now?
We whisper pale, like old parchments:
For naught – stiffened into martyrs, saints.
(*Kettős portré Erdélyből* [Double Portrait from Transylvania] *Forrás*. 1995, 9: 2)

The proliferation of the lyrical tradition in these poems points not only to the possibility of recreating reality as fiction, but also to the existence of humans and culture, the individual and the world in language and their dependence on language. Perhaps in this relation we should interpret *Psalmus Transsylvanicus* [Psalmus Transsylvanicus], in which the elevated tone and the attempt at self-definition based solely on linguistic identity appear in the context of role-play-like dialogue that ironically reinterprets the psalm of the Reformed priest of the 16–17th century Albert Szenczi Molnár:

In you we trusted from our ancestors' falling,
Psalm, you were our shelter,
When there were no words left,
And home was but formed from dust –
No symbol on our tattered flag,
Only our hearts flap in times of shame.
(Üdvözlet a vesztesnek [Greeting to the Defeated]. 1994, 33)

However, it seems obvious that this mode of speech perceives the entire Christian cultural sphere as only a symbolically accessible, formal dimension, which can still be protected by the energies of community and social cohesion from disintegration for a while, but whose essence can be considered – at least for the self – lost forever. The absence of transcendence and its transfer into a profane, desacralized space, opened

by the Reformation and completely emptied in modernism, thus puts the genre itself in quotation marks, regardless of the fact that at the level of stylistic imitation the poem is closely tied to the text of *Psalm 90*.

In conclusion, it may be argued that in András Ferenc Kovács's poetry, the creative engagement with language and tradition entails not only a poetic orientation but also a distinctly ideological positioning. In this context, postmodern identity is frequently interwoven with the motifs of Transylvanian discourses, through which the subject's selfhood is articulated within a sharply delineated historical and textual framework. The fractured linguistic texture and surrealist imagery function not merely as aesthetic gestures but as indices of the systemic constraints of censorship and the absurdist logic inherent in authoritarianism. Through the deployment of alter egos and the construction of fictive topographies, Kovács destabilizes conventional boundaries between biography, historiography, and fiction, producing a poetics that oscillates between the personal and the collective, the historical and the fabulated.

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The changing strategies of self-fashioning in minority literature, with special regard to Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia

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ABSTRACT

Minority literatures are politicized entities organized along rather complex strategies of self-interpretation. Minority literature is always a relational concept: it tries to interpret itself in relation to the literature of the majority or the universal, while also trying to take into account specific, individual qualities. This study attempts to draw the lines of the strategies of self-interpretation and face-shaping in Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia from 1918 to the present. It traces the historical and poetic changes in the various interpretative frameworks and also attempts to pay attention to the relationship between Hungarian literature in Slovakia and Hungarian literature in Romania (Transylvania), since what has been called Transylvanism has long been the model of Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia, too. Various ideological constraints led to the development of increasingly specific concepts, such as minority messianism or the ideology of communist universalism. Self-fashioning is a term of new historicism, but the theoretical framework will also be extended to transcultural literary interpretation. The relationship to identities is also a fundamental issue in minority studies, and their performativity and malleability become especially interesting. It is very important to distinguish between the poetic and political aspects of these phenomena. Today, the poetics of transculturalism makes some of the products of minority literature exceptionally exciting, in which linguistic hybridity, transitions, vernacular linguistic experience or minority esthetics may play a major role. Social homogenization and insularity have been replaced by strategies of poetic dynamism. The study also looks at trends in polycultural integration.

Keywords: minority studies, self-fashioning, Hungarian Literature in (Czecho) Slovakia, transculturalism

The question of whether there is or was (or will be) a linguistically and esthetically self-identical Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia is the subject of an almost periodically renewed debate (Cselényi 2005). The literary discourse of the Hungarian speaking minority, which we call this only for want of a better term, began with the establishment of

Czechoslovakia in 1918 and continues to this day. Its basic characteristics include the loss or gain of domain which parallel the complicated changes in geopolitical borders, the discourse of the language of the subordinate, and the impossibility of classification of authors and works according to precise criteria. Neither place of birth, nor the publication of their work, nor language, nor identity are criteria in themselves. Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia is the result of the interplay of several interpretative strategies. By the end of the Czechoslovak period between 1918 and 1939, the country's identity was already in question: some areas were annexed to the German Empire, others to Hungary, and a fascist Slovak puppet state was created (there were still Hungarian literary aspirations in Slovakia, although the proportion of minority population had changed significantly). This first period is usually referred to as the period of Slovensko (and Rusynsko) Hungarian literature. After World War II, Czechoslovakia was restored, but Subcarpathia was annexed to the Soviet Union, and the field of Hungarian literature in Slovensko and Rusynsko was reorganized. This is the period of what has been termed as Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia. In 1993, Czechoslovakia split apart, and it led to a small scale but still noticeable reorganization, and Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia has since been referred to as Hungarian literature in Slovakia. The spaces of Hungarian literature in Slovensko, Czechoslovakia and Slovakia have thus been rather unstable, and strategies of identity formation remain regional rather than collective, although the political representation of interests requires joint action.

This volatile spatial experience has also kept questions of collective self-definition and self-fashioning in constant flux. There have been as many strategies as there have been ways to contextualize this problematic literary and esthetic space. Alongside collective self-fashioning and profile creation, there have also existed individual creative strategies, and this has remained a function of how open the author's profile has been to the possibilities of connection. The minority status of a writer can also be their defining characteristic. At other times, minority identity is an almost negligible component of a strategy of self-formation. Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia can be conceived of as a self-principled, "mission-heavy" minority literature, it can be emphatically regional literature, a transcultural complex, and it can also be integrated into universal Hungarian literature (Németh 2005, 5-52), but due to its multi- or transcultural characteristics, it can also be linked to the discourses of Slovak (or earlier Czech) or Central European regional literatures, although based on literary-political rather than esthetic principles (Németh 2022, 96–113).

The obvious question is whether the so-called minority author chooses only a poetic-linguistic program or something else as well? If we look for the answer in the famous book on Kafka by Deleuze and Guattari, it is clear that the answer is more complex, because the language of the minority author has a very strong deterritorialization index due to the

absence of what has been termed the language of space of reference (Deleuze and Guattari 2009, 33-56). In our case, the deterritorialization index is interesting in relation to Hungary: certain registers of the Hungarian language are not integrated into the minority language use but are absent or only partial, and this can and does have a literary dimension. If a Hungarian author also writes in Slovak (e.g. Gábor Farnbauer) or in Hungarian despite their basically Slovak language disposition (e.g. Peter Macsovszky, Mila Haugová), they are exploiting the poetic tension of deterritorialization, and this can be classified as a poetic gesture of discourse-generating power (Csehy 2020).

Deleuze and Guattari's other important thesis is that in minority literature everything is re-politicized and acquires a collective value, and thus a specific sensibility is developed (2009, 37–40). Literature and politics form a system of relations that oscillates between two extremes: a predominantly esthetic, seemingly "anti-political" direction and one that is committed to minorities (nationally, politically, ideologically, etc.). In both cases, the voice of the subordinate is ultimately heard. And it is in the same system that a way of speaking is formed based on the mixing, mutilation or obfuscation of (or perhaps the shift between) languages, or on the esthetics of local dialectal or vernacular varieties, which in its transcultural complexity may seem exotically closed or perhaps enigmatic, but it is possibly in this domain that the degree of self-identity is strongest.

Minority literature can be a diverse terrain for a moral-esthetic emancipation process, but it can also be a stigma, a community program, an activism that the author either shyly rejects (because they see it as a sign of ghettoization) or proudly embraces (because they see it as a mission of some kind). But literature can also be minority literature in the sense that it is born on the margins of a "big" or "stronger" literature, and this essentially results in language shift (Toldi 2013, 44–53). Or it can also be minority literature in the sense that it is born on its own (but linguistically distinct) margins of another literature, such as Kafka's oeuvre written in Prague German. Imre József Balázs distinguishes four basic modes of language use in the playing field of the minority literary "schizophrenia" of what he calls *minor* and *major* language use (Balázs 2006, 229–236; 2008, 245–257; 2017, 115–132). The local language is the language of everyday life, of intimacy, the other language is the language of the state and of power (in the case of Transylvania, this is Romanian), the third used language mode is the "language of the space of reference", which is the "heroic" language of the great literary ancestors, a "utopian language variety", and even, in a certain sense, sacralized, and then there is the "cultural language variety", which can be conceived of as "taking on the characteristics of all three other language varieties, while at the same time being able to distance itself from them and to reflect them. In this way, we can explain how it is possible that in the different periods of Hungarian culture in Transylvania, there have been new attempts to 'swallow' the

cultural language: the Transylvanist literature of the 1920s and a strand of literature of the 1970s attempted to identify the language of culture with the sacral language variety (Kántor and Láng 1973, 11–12). In the 1940s and 1950s, the language of literature was flooded with the traits of the bureaucratic language of power. The literature of postmodern fragmentation or the late modern literature of the 1960s and 1970s can be read as a kind of 'minor' language variety, which Deleuze and Guattari evaluate in terms of the trait of multilingualism. If we follow this line of thought, the language of culture can indeed be seen as open to all these varieties: they can be mutually used and understood" (Balázs 2006, 229–236).

If we look at the history of the efforts of Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia to interpret itself, we get a very varied picture. Ethnicity is also always a spectacular representation. It is represented in the paradigm of the "we-structure", since – in our case – the minority ethnicity (Hungarians in Slovakia) is in relation to two larger and more coherent main identities, the Slovak and the Hungarian. In both directions, it is necessary to formulate some kind of self-definition and to develop some kind of dual presence strategy. Ethnicity also manifests itself in techniques of identification and transmission, and this is linked to the shaping of cultural memory. In what follows, I will examine these strategies of self-fashioning by means of a brief overview of attempts at establishing a homeland and narrative in what has been called Hungarian literature in (Czecho)Slovakia. This history of change is also a history of variability, i.e. movement traced in the collision zone of different concepts in cultural politics, society and ideology.

Gábor Kemény, in his first work to summarize the history of (Czecho)Slovakia(and referring to it as Uplands, following colloquial usage) Hungarians entitled Így tűnt el egy gondolat [Thus an idea disappeared], matter-of-factly links the concepts of value and minority destiny. Kemény's conception offers the algorithms of a program based on a pseudo-esthetics and exhausted in literary-political gestures, which suggests a limited, missionary, and mystical traumanarrative. This way of speaking would thus provide the real voice of "Northern Hungarian literature" (Kemény 1940, 73). Kemény simultaneously stresses the principle of integration (that minority literature is an inseparable part of Hungarian literature) and the importance of distinction (that the unity of the sense of mission and the individual voice that voices it).

Aladár Komlós, in his essay entitled *Magyar költészet Szlovenszkón* [Hungarian poetry in Slovensko], published in the journal *Nyugat* in 1926, already considered the theory of value-relativizing "literary price inflation" to be generally valid for minority literature. Critical permissiveness and solidarity resulting from an attitude that fetishizes national destiny are not suitable for the development of a serious literary discourse. "We are Hungarians, let us not hurt each other. Today, when the fate of Hungarians is going so badly, we must not make unfavorable criticisms of the art of the successor states. Hungarians will

perish if you don't buy the *Collected Poetical Works* of this or that good Hungarian author immediately", reads the ironic text (Komlós 1926, 396). The thinking typical of the early period of minority literature thus expanded the concept of literature itself, seeing it as part of the strategy of saving the nation and the language. The best authors, such as the young Sándor Márai or László Mécs, esthetically stepped out of this hybrid mode of discourse that embodied group identity. This departure was criticized sometimes, and mythicized other times. According to Pál Szvatkó, "Márai is as big as a whole minority literature", but "Slovensko identity" was as present in his works as the taste of Macedonian tobacco a Macedonian could feel when smoking a cigarette in London (Szvatkó 1937, 11). He denounced the fact that Hungarian literature in Slovensko was rather "only" supplier literature, that the most prominent authors were allowed to be part of the universal Hungarian literature, and that it had no real identity in relation to other national regions lost to Trianon (especially the Transylvanian model). At the same time, the narrative of Márai's oeuvre in Kassa appeared as a mythical energy, even as perceived today.

The first anthology that can be considered a representative Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia was edited by Ferenc Sziklay titled *Lirai antológia* [Lyric Anthology] and published in Berlin in 1926, containing the work of twenty-six authors (Sziklay 1926). The book was subtitled *Szlovenszkó és Ruszinszkó magyar költőinek alkotásaiból* [From the works of Hungarian poets of Slovensko and Rusynsko]. It could not be published in Czechoslovakia: the new state imposed a ban even on the import of Hungarian books, lifted only in 1928 (Mezey 2006, 53). This anthology was therefore essentially an "illegal" enterprise, financed by the Hungarian state. Lajos Turczel described Sziklay's purely Slovensko and Rusynsko anthology as a "serious literary and literary life organizing act" (Turczel 1987, 77-78). This book did not offer a unified minority position or outline a definite and unified esthetic strategy, emphasizing primarily the minority presence. Gyula Farkas, a lecturer at the University of Berlin, even denounced the lack of a collective Uplands feel, stressing that the poems lacked "the deep rootedness and complex problematics so characteristic of Transylvanian poetry" (Farkas 1927, 28–29). The forcefulness of the Transylvanian model would dominate even in the 1930s. In the foreword to the second volume of the anthology *Szlovenszkói Magyar Írók* [Hungarian writers of Slovensko], this was expressed emphatically: "Transylvania, the builder of fraternal unity and of the unified literary arc that understood the song of the new times, also set an example for the Slovensko that is an unquenchable wellspring of literary values" (Dallos and Mártonvölgyi 1937, 6-7). Lajos Tamás's study comparing Slovensko and Transylvania was published in the journal *Magyar Minerva*: the comparison was based on statements that were treated as facts, according to which "the adjective Transylvanian is today a special honor in universal Hungarian literature", and that Transylvanian literature annually produced new

values and an "elevated Hungarian spirit" (Tamás 1934, 161-162). It was the premise of Transylvanian works that they were to convey the lessons of minority fate, and this, at least according to Tamás, was the secret of their success. The Transylvanian identity, which was presented as static, was also more coherent in terms of its historical-sociological components than the Slovensko one: Transylvanian literature was "more deeply Hungarian", Transylvanian literature was "more deeply rooted, more closed". Contrary to the mystified interpretation of Transylvanian artistic identity, the number of Slovensko defects was, according to the author, almost innumerable: the Slovensko multicultural perspective made it impossible to go deeper, literature in Slovensko was too experimental and Western-oriented, its language adhering to a purist pan-Hungarian national ideal; in the Slovensko system, the heroism of literature founding essentially denied historical tradition (lyricists traced their own family tree back to Endre Ady), while in Transylvania it found it in its rich history and continued it (Kántor and Láng 1973, 7–14). In 1932, Endre Kovács used the analogous literary program in his title: *Erdély példája Szlovenszkónak* [Transylvania is an example for Slovensko] (Kovács 1932, 14). Kovács encouraged a literary exploration of Slovensko and the acceptance of a "new psychological situation". It is not to be neglected that the Transylvanian journal *Korunk*, for example, has maintained lively contacts with Slovensko authors from the very beginning (1926), and even if Sándor Csanda's statement that "the most significant forum of Hungarian scholarly-publicistic literature in Czechoslovakia between the two world wars was *Korunk* in Transylvania" is a clear Marxist exaggeration, it illustrates the paths of intellectual cooperation and convergence of worldviews (Csanda 1985, 9). This idealistic Hungarian literature in Slovakia, which is both companionable and individualistic, is sometimes accompanied by anti-centralist outbursts: Zoltán Fábry, for example, frequently expressed anti-Budapest views in the 1980s, condemning the relationship of official Hungarian literature to minority writers, and in one of his writings even speaking of a "dead center" and suggesting the emergence of "reviving peripheries" (Fábry 1981, 45-48). According to Fábry, Slovensko is partly a "book colony", but mainly a "mentality colony" (Fábry 1981, 358-360): the real model for periphery literature was not the pan-Hungarian context, but the Transylvanian model, which Fábry also over-mystified in his statements about the 1920s and onwards.

In his 1926 volume of essays, Imre Keller, on the other hand, called for metropolitan standards instead of a separate way ideology (Keller 1926). He considered the "benevolent indulgence" approach on the part of Hungary a trap. What was needed, in his view, was not a unique model, but domestic critique heightened almost to the point of "cruelty" (Keller 1926, 149). Gyula Alapy, who wrote about with the first ten years of minority literature (Alapy 1929, 171-192), thought in terms of the indissolubility of the integrity of Hungarian literature, using Slovensko as a purely geographical auxiliary term, and rejecting any

kind of ex post facto historical construction, including the applicability of the Transylvanian model.

The mere existence of László Zapf's essay *Magyar irodalom Csehszlovákiában* [Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia] (Szeberényi 1984, 109–118; Göllnerová 1933, 89–96), however, already testifies to the fact that the logic of the pan-Hungarian integrity was adopted by the need to develop a new scholarly narrative conceived in the spirit of Slovensko. This was also supported by official cultural policy, since the threat of irredentism was eliminated by the heroism of "creating a literary life". Zapf's work was written as a university thesis supervised by Pavel Bujnák, who provided the Hungarian program at Comenius University with lectures exclusively in Czech and Slovak (or a unique mixture of the two languages), and this model fitted in his nationalist, distorted conception of literary history perfectly. Bujnák became known as an advocate of the complete separation of Hungarian literature in Slovakia, who, in addition, adjusted to the contemporary geopolitical situation and historically separated, post facto and on a territorial basis, the part of the Hungarian literature that was "the Slovensko part", and presented the authors of Hungarian literature as Hungarianized Slavs (Bujnák 1933, 378–390).

The traditional pan-Hungarian concept continued to prevail in anthologies published in Hungary: for example, the *Uj anthológia* [New anthology] compiled by Mihály Babits and published in 1932 ignored the specific issues of Hungarians outside Hungary, its editor thinking instead in terms of a unified Hungarian literature on an esthetic basis and following the confrontation of generations (Babits 1932).

The more significant concepts of cultural and literary policy with regard to the self-understanding of what is referred to as Slovensko Hungarian literature can be divided into the following way: human literature (Zoltán Fábry's concept), proletarian culture as a radical counterculture (Edgár Balogh's concept), minority messianism (Dezső Győry's concept), and the ideal of the Swiss model (Pál Szvatkó's concept). Fábry's humanist program shifted towards Slovensko identity, created on the analogy of the Transylvanian model, and then took an increasingly radical left turn, defining itself as a literature of reality. Edgár Balogh, a Transylvanian, in his 1932 essay *Harcos proletárok kultúrája* [The culture of the valiant proletarians], already saw the question of minority literatures resolved within the framework of a future hegemonic proletarian culture (Szeberényi 1984, 152–160; Kántor 2007, 67–73).

The ideology of minority messianism, called into being by Dezső Győry, can also be interpreted as a form of decentralization and minority self-defense. This idea creates the notion of the "minority genius" from the perspective of regionalism, and in fact treats literature as a socio-cultural tool. According to Rezső Szalatnai, "Győry was the first to say that Slovensko is our homeland" (Wallentinyi 1937, 15). Sándor Berkó's summary of the history of literature in 1939 made Dezső Győry

a central figure in minority literature, who "recorded certain stages of the social and intellectual development of the Upland Hungarians as a fine seismograph" (Berkó 1939, 945). "I believe in a Minority Genius", wrote the author, and then he outlined a definite program: "And as you are acquiring such a minority spirit, you are planting this spirit in all Hungarians. You all in Slovensko, in Transylvania or in Vojvodina – all Hungarians in Europe: you are a minority in the same way. Hungarians need a new life. A great Hungarian Renaissance. Then you can redeem the world. You can give the world a new Messiah: the Messiah of life on earth. The Messiah of the future. This is what the Minority Genius means'" (Győry 1927, 2). Rezső Szalatnai also propagated Győry with great enthusiasm in the 1928 issue of the pamphlet *Vetés* [Sowing]: "Open Győry's volumes of poetry as a prayer book. Let the vision of his eyes become part of your vision, let the rhythm of his heart be one with your heart, and let his muscles, stretched to the sky, be your muscles of messianic power" (Szalatnai 1928, 6). Szalatnai went as far as speaking of a new spiritual form, built on the diasporic existence, and described the philosophical and literary esthetic foundations of Győry's poetry in key terms of Taine's positivist program: he saw poetic power as embodied in the intimate relationship between the historical landscape and the responsible poet (Wallentinyi, 1937, 91).

In the 1930s, Pál Szvatkó developed his own autonomist theoretical framework based on the Swiss model. His paper *A svájci példa* [The Swiss example], published in 1937 in the journal *Új Szellem*, proposed the creation of three Hungarian cantons within Czechoslovakia. Highlighting the positive effects of decentralization, he made a clear distinction between canton and self-government, while also trying to justify the possibility of a national autonomous form of life by drawing a parallel with the county tradition of historical Hungary (Szvatkó 1994, 92, 180-189). Szvatkó denied mystification and messianistic notions: he wanted to realize his program of minority self-organization based on the urban literary tradition and the traditions of "Indo-Germanic" bourgeois Hungarians. His European vision was the widest among the theorists of the time: he sought an esthetic-based literary consensus, backed by a healthy construct of tradition. The essence of this construct of tradition was based on the old traditions of Hungarian literature in the Uplands (Pázmány, the printing presses of Nagyszombat and the Szepes region, Kármán, Madách, Jókai, and Mikszáth) (Szvatkó 1994, 7–26).

With the annexation of Rusynsko and the creation of the independent Slovak State, not only the borders but also the boundaries of literature changed. The anthology *Szlovákiai magyar költők kis antológiája* [Small anthology of Slovakia Hungarian poets] was published in 1940, during the time of the independent fascist Slovak State (Csáky and Aixinger 1940). The anthology is evidence of a reduced presence: the truncation is not only territorial, but also racial and ideological. In the midst of prison ordeals and censorship restrictions, Zoltán Fábry's 1941 essay (sent under

a pseudonym to the Bratislava *Magyar Hírlap*) is particularly important for redefining the relationship with tradition: "In our lands, the absence of tradition once meant protest, free flight, root-and-branch denial and trying everything. Today, life without tradition means rootlessness, drifting away, running away, and assimilation" (Fábry 1985, 222).

The new post-war minority era unfolded immediately in an ideologically contaminated space. The constructive relationship with tradition outlined above could not even unfold, since Marxist and even Stalinist literary politics called for a departure from the national tradition. The example to be followed was that of proletarian internationalism and Soviet literature at the top of the literary hierarchy. József Szőke, in the foreword to the anthology Új *hajtások* [New shoots], formulated this departure from the national tradition as follows: "Our beginning writers see their role models in Soviet literature, as the high standard of literature that they strive to achieve in their work every day.They work and create together with Slovak writers, learning from the experience of the work of Slovak and Czech writers" (Szőke 1953, 7). Minority fate was presented as a multiply contaminated space of existence: "Gone from the stage of Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia are the lying penscripts who faithfully served the gentry and cozied up to fascism, gone are the nationalist hirelings who tried to incite the Slovak and Hungarian working people against each other, gone are the scribblers who brooded over the 'minority question' and the 'destruction of the Hungarian race'", stated Szőke (1953, 7). The new Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia was degraded into a servile, reproducing literature and subordinated to the operation of the Sovietized Czechoslovak cultural policy machine. Literature became a form of power representation. In essence, self-interpretation remained within the slowly taming Marxist paradigm until 1989, minority literature was dissociated from that of Hungary, while at the same time it established its official institutional system, ranging from controlled publishing to Marxist workshops for producing the history of literature. The bourgeois literature of the first period also fell through the cracks of this paradigm. Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia was divided by its Marxist theorists into so-called "periods of blossoming" (Fábry 1963), which were far from involving any blossoming. This blossoming, however, did not take place in the wild, but in a closed greenhouse: the relatively isolated realm of Hungarian authors in Czechoslovakia. The works of Hungarian authors in Czechoslovakia who fitted in well with official Czechoslovak cultural policy were published in Slovak or Czech translations, and book-exchange agreements allowed Hungarian minority works to reach socialist Hungary.

After 1989, space was opened, and the most innovative concept of minority culture was developed by Kalligram Publishing House, based on the common experience of the Central European region. The period between 1991 and 2016, which was marked by the name of publishing house's director László Szigeti, was characterized by an

international openness that found inspiration in the works of Milan Kundera, Miklós Mészöly, Adam Michnik, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Konwicki, Bohumil Hrabal, Pavel Vilikovský, and Jan Patočka, among others, who advocated regional cultural dialogue. The concrete and metaphorical boundaries of the Central European region are sometimes delimited as the terrain of grotesque or absurd play, defined by the dynamics of mergers and splits. This is not to be neglected even as an esthetic-poetic starting point. Minority literatures have hitherto been regarded primarily as path finding dwarf literatures, with some added local "surplus value", but without any discourse-forming power in terms of their intrinsic value. With the creation of the Slovak branch of the publisher, it essentially doubled in size. The multilingual presence was also felt on other fronts: in the movement of published books between Central European languages, in their circulation, in the publication of multilingual but almost identical international series, in the public discussion of shared cultural and literary issues, and in the mutual cultural sensitization. Hungarian literature in Slovakia became a part of this vital system, and, thanks to its dual ties, it was able to occupy a relatively prominent position in this discourse. Movement between languages was ensured by mutual translation. Far more important than the author's identity affiliation and biographical data was the representation of the multifocal identities formed in the texts and the need to create a shared Central European esthetic narrative, which also functioned as a world literary entry point and a regional trademark. The political and cultural diversification of the Visegrad countries gradually pushed the idea of Central Europe into the background, and the common esthetic paradigm also lost its appeal. With the transformation of Kalligram, this large-scale regional dialogue was also transformed, with an undoubted loss of prestige in terms of the development of a world literary horizon.

Thanks to the transcultural movements and the spread of transnational historical understanding (Gyáni 2018), broader and networked interpretative spaces similar to those described above were once again created in the late 2010s. An example of this is the excellent publication *Literární kronika první republiky* [A literary chronicle of the first republic] edited by Petr Šámal, which includes the literatures of the Hungarian, German, Rusyn, and Polish cultural milieus in the Czech and Slovak literary history discourse, and sees a linguistically diversified political-cultural space as a unified network (Šámal 2018, 266–270).

The concept of multiculturalism based on multivalency and dialogue, which is also marked by the name of Kalligram, can be seen as a continuation of the concept represented most succinctly by Zoltán Németh Hungarian literary thought in Slovakia. Following Wolfgang Welsh's interpretation of transculturalism (Welsh 1999, 194–213), Németh developed his own strategy for the study of regional literature (Németh 2023). It is based on the assumption that it is not only homogeneous national perspectives that are unsustainable, so is

the idea of the homogeneity and separability of cultures. Hybridity or permeation and networking are among the basic properties of texts, and a particular aspect of the author's self-fashioning and fate history (multiculturalism, migration, identity, etc.), as well as the culturalpolicy context, are part of the literary narrative. Drawing on the conceptual apparatus of her transcultural lexicon (confluence, amalgamation, literatures of mobility, cosmo-nomadic and neo-nomadic lifestyles), Arianna Dagnino concludes that transcultural literatures cross borders and assert global perspectives at the same time, and therefore cannot be fully classified within any single national literary paradigm (Dagnino 2012, 1–14; 2015, 199–204; Wiegandt, 2020). According to Németh, "Hungarian literature in Slovakia could rightly appear in both Hungarian and Slovak literary history, it is not worth discussing in isolation" (Németh 2023, 14). In the study of the spaces and border crossings of multiculturalism, which is an inescapable given, language also necessarily transforms contamination, hybridity and the experience of migration into poetic energy. This kind of multilingualism also entails an internal multilingualism of literary expression, but the change of language and identity also becomes a relevant interpretative context.

Németh devotes a special chapter to perspectives on a transcultural history of minority literature, but the very title seems to generate a contradiction. If it is not an exaggeration to claim that a transcultural narrative can be constructed synecdochically, the notion of minority automatically loses its contours, since various (regional and global) minority components are mixed into the narrative (Hungarian, Slovak, Jewish, queer identity or inclination, migrant experience, cosmo-nomadic lifestyle, etc.). In essence, is it the proportion of the components of the mixture that determines which minority literature the given text belongs to? If we also take the breakdown of linguistic (including grammatical) boundaries seriously, the hegemony of the discourse of power will remain a matter of perspective, and in this relational system, it will again become unnecessary to reconstruct the historicity of the minority literary narrative. If we make permanent translation in general terms the basic communication model of transcultural existence, then we also produce misunderstandings and losses in addition to the creation of a shared communication platform. Is it a question of creating geometric spaces of our own construction, which the interpretative invention fills with content and creates a historical dimension? The interpretive strategy offered by the variant of transculturalism applied to Hungarian literature in Slovakia, in my opinion, is not yet able to offer a coherent historical concept but can, at best, be considered an innovative reading technique, which struggles mainly with the truisms of the romantic national literary view, with inherited trauma narratives, and with concepts projected back to earlier historical processes. By its very nature, the transcultural interpretative strategy actually devours its subject and, if not invalidates, then obscures the contours that were previously considered to be the basic characteristics of text, authorship

and context. The text is liberated and placed in many new (global or even regional) contexts, multiplying itself, and it is precisely because of this multiple functionality that its capacity for dialogue is highlighted. The history of Hungarian literature in Slovakia as a context, if it is still needed at all, can be at most a component of this system, and it is by no means necessarily the most essential component of the text's identity.

To sum up, the complex conglomerate of literature of the Hungarians living and working in the former Czechoslovakia and present-day Slovakia is a highly diversified and multicultural space that has attempted to articulate and assert its own position in a variety of contexts. This almost continuous process of self-definition and self-literacy, full of contradictions and ranging from the founding of literature to the extreme of potential self-absolution, is a history of change whose lessons can be applied to the study of the dynamics of narrative construction in the history of minorities in general.

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From *I Ching* to the Beatrice Concerts

Esoteric Neoavant-garde Experiments by Judit Kemenczky

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ABSTRACT
Judit Kemenczky is one of the most important Hungarian neo-avant-garde female poets, although relatively few people seem to know her oeuvre. As a member of the Fölöspéldány [Duplicate] Group, she performed at several „literary evenings" and meetings combined with rock concerts (mostly with the group Beatrice), where participants from literary backgrounds often presented their works in an almost performance-like manner. This subversive way of presentation, or even the neo-avant-garde poetics of her texts, played with and subverted at the same time esoteric themes and motifs borrowed from different historical periods and cultures. East Asian culture was an important source for her work, and she integrated I Ching [The Book of Change] also into her writing. In my study, I will focus on this connection in Judit Kemenczky's works, i.e. the complimentary dualism of tradition and experimentation, as well as of movement and constancy.

Keywords: Neo-avant-garde, Fölöspéldány Group, punk, East Asian culture, I Ching

1. Introduction

Judit Kemenczky (1948–2011) is one of the most important Hungarian neo-avant-garde poets, yet relatively few people know her work.[1] As

1 Judit Kemenczky poet, writer, painter, translator, orientalist. She studied at the Faculty of Humanities of ELTE (University Eötvös Loránd) between 1970 and 1978, and she published her first poems in the anthology of young writers entitled *Ne mondj le semmiről* [Don't give up anything] with János Pilinszky's dedication. After falling in love with and marrying József Bakucz, she lived - with a two-year break - in Boston, USA, from 1985 to 1991. She returned home after Bakucz's death in 1990. She published several books (*A vesztő* 1979, *Sorsminta* 1882, Az *amerikai versek 1985–1991* 1992, *NapFutók* 1996, *Templomszáj* 2002,

a member of the Fölöspéldány [Duplicate] Group, she performed at several "live" literary evenings and meetings combined with rock-punk and alternative concerts, where participants from the literary scene presented their works in form of performances. This subversive performance style, or rather, the neo-avant-garde poetics of her poems (both in print and as picture poems), played with and at the same time subverted her esoteric themes borrowed from different historical periods and cultures. An important source for her work was the East Asian culture, including the *I Ching* [The Book of Changes]. In my paper, I will focus on this connection in Judit Kemenczky's work, i.e. the complementary duality of tradition *versus* experimentation and subversion, and of movement *versus* permanence.

Judit Kemenczky's debut can be considered a quite exceptional, emphatically successful one. János Pilinszky presented Judit Kemenczky's poems in the anthology of young poets in this way: "Oh God, how difficult to write a preface to a young poet's poems! [...] Especially if she is talented. [...] Because the beauty of talent is that it is unpredictable, that it is surprising". (Pilinszky 1974). Géza Szőcs, who made his debut as a neo-avant-garde poet, says that his generation looked up to Judit Kemenczky who was the same age as them, and expected a big breakthrough from her: "her poetry was exceptionally important to many of us who were in our twenties in the 1970s: it reinforced in us the understanding that there is another canon beyond not only the official but also the unofficial canons. [...] ." (Szőcs 2008, 29; Pályi 2011) He continues, however, that this could not have succeeded because Judit Kemenczky refused to meet any expectations, even of this kind, and went her own way, ending up with a version of religiously inspired poetry that was not really in demand in any branch of contemporary literature and art. András Pályi writes in his necrologue, reflecting on the same trajectory, that Kemenczky "went from the ironic-reignified experience of the Duplicate Group to the ecstasy of the 'sun run'" over the years: "She was one of the most compelling poetic voices of the time, but her contemporaries had no affinity to hear and process it" (Pályi 2011, 1340).

Hullámlovasok 2005). She translated Nō dramas (her work was awarded the Book of the Year prize), and the works of 12th-century mystic visionary Hildegard von Bringen under the title *A megváltás tüzes műve* [The Fiery Work of Redemption]. She won the Milán Füst and Déry prizes. She published - among others - in magazines featuring neo-avant-garde authors, such as *Mozgó Világ*, *Árkánum* and *Magyar Műhely*, but also in *Jelenkor* and *Kortárs*. She started later as a painter, but had several individual exhibitions in Hungary and abroad. The most successful was her exhibition with József Bakucz, which was organized posthumously for her husband in the Vizivárosi Gallery. Here Judit Kemenczky exhibited hand-painted flags with oriental symbols, later she created surrealist-mystical sacred paintings.

2. The Duplicate Group

According to András Pályi, Judit Kemenczky was "a determined member of the Duplicate Group, and in this circle she was considered an eccentric with her disciplined behaviour, her fascination for Eastern cultures and her mystical inclination" (Pályi 2011, 1338). The Duplicate Group was named after the workplace of Judit Kemenczky and Balázs Györe, the Duplicate Centre of the National Széchényi Library of Hungary: a part of the Book Distribution Department, whose function was to recycle and sort out publications that had become useless in libraries. The members of The Duplicate Group were Sándor Bernáth(y), El Kazovsky (El Kazovszkij), Balázs Györe, Judit Kemenczky, János Kőbányai, Ferenc Temesi, Ákos Szilágyi, Endre Szkárosi, along with Athéna Görög and Adrienne Scheer.[2]

In an essay in 1998, Ákos Szilágyi also recalled the connotations attached to the name, which the members of the group completely identified with, both personally and in relation to art: superfluousness, aimlessness, lostness. "We got the name Duplicate because in 1979 Balázs [Györe] and Judit [Kemenczky] worked at the Duplicate Center of the National Széchényi Library. They put the stamp on the discarded books: surplus copy/duplicate. Almost by itself the name expanded in our imagination, by itself, it acquired existential and ontological relevance to our personal and literary destiny, and by itself it became the name of the zeitgeist of the dying decade" (Szilágyi 1998, 172; Havasréti 2006, 213–214).[3] Formally creating a group also had a gestural value in terms of cultural and political considerations, since the contemporary authorities favoured popular front initiatives, and were not really enthusiastic about artistic groups, seeing in them the possibility of becoming a party.

The formation of a group requires a high degree of sociability and a strong tendency for cooperation, which the members of the Duplicate Group possessed to different degrees. Their aesthetic ideas also diverged - however, this diversity and fragmentation was also suitable for avoiding the homogenization of the members' artworks. To illustrate this, Endre Szkárosi recalls in his memoirs a controversy between him and Judit Kemenczky: "Judit was quiet, but sometimes very vehement, and when she sometimes got into it, she said very clever things, and very firmly. Once she was very upset with the way I was performing because she found the *Militarist song* [Militarista dal], but especially the *Army* [Sereg], very aggressive. She almost lost her head, she scolded me so much for them. I hummed, I said, I can't change what I'm doing once I see fit to do it as I do it. After all, our poetic characters were so different

2 Athéna Görög was married to Endre Szkárosi, Adrienne Scheer to Balázs Györe. They did not take part in the performances, but they were very close to the company.

3 See also: "[…] It excluded man and art from itself as a duplicate. The history of modern art - the history of the gradual awareness of superfluousness - is the history of its becoming a duplicate." (Szilágyi 1986, 13–14).

that these eruptions were legitimate. This kind of thing has come up on other occasions, and I have always argued that the interesting thing about our collaboration is that we are all very different, and each of us is a rather sovereign creative personality. It's not worth forming a team with the same kind of people. Judit and Balázs are a bit esoteric, János is quite media-oriented, Ákos is philosophically grotesque, Temesi was unclassifiable at the time, and I am, to be honest, a radical avant-garde." (Szkárosi 2011, 110).

By analogy with Lélegzet [Breath] Group, Havasréti calls the Duplicate a "live journal", saying that its so-called „literary concerts" can be described as that. It is a "live journal", because its medium of communication is the verbal, not the written, printed form. That's a decision based on aesthetic, metaphysical, political considerations, and aims to break the hegemony of official and printed literature, to create community and trends, to evade censorship, to accept the metaphysical primacy of the living word, experimentalism and multimediality (Havasréti 2006, 210). Havasréti identifies the patterns and scenes of rock concerts and theatre performances as the model for the Duplicate concerts, and notes that in the performance, in parallel to the authors reading their works, elements and representatives of the associated arts (music, theatre, visual arts) also played a significant role (Havasréti 2006, 209). However, we should note that the concert of Duplicate Group itself was also a performance, in which some of the participants acted on stage, often improvisationally or just by creating works of art as an event. (El Kazovsky, for example, who painted on his own body, or drew on paper, and hung these works on a wall, etc.). The intention of the Duplicate group was certainly to cross genre boundaries, to break conventions, to improvise, to use randomness in the creative process (Pályi 2011, 1338). Otherwise, the literary members were also present – sometimes with the same works, but as individual authors – in the printed press, in organs such as *Mozgó Világ*, *Magyar Műhely*, *Arkánum*, and sometimes later *ÉS*, *Tiszatáj*, *Kortárs*, *Jelenkor*. The important final moment of the group's operation was the publication of the anthology *Ká!Ká!Ká! From the collection of the Duplicate Group, with texts, pictures, comics, photos*[4] (Parti Nagy 1986). The slim book – which after the group photo opens with Kemenczky's poem *SORsMINTA*, where the author presents, among others, the team members in an amusing cavalcade – announces in its cover text the following, more or less Dadaist (anti-) programme written by Ákos Szilágyi: "Kick the bulging butt of human progress[5]! Speak to the everyday! Avoid today's literary forms before literature throws you out! Anyone who does not do so will himself be reduced to nothing. How to speak to it? With actions, gestures, your life, the way you look at someone, the way you eat breakfast, the way you read the newspaper and browse the housing advertising section,

4 The volume was already completed in 1982, but had difficulty getting through the obstacles of socialist publishing routines.

5 „Nembeliség", a concept by György Lukács.

the way you laugh when filling out a lottery ticket, the way you write a poem, the way you capture a thought, the way you remember, the way you talk to someone." (Szilágyi 1986, 17.)

The background of the collaboration between punk and neo-avant-garde subcultures is hereby described by József Havasréti. The parallels stated are, of course, mostly based on the rebellion and total denial dada and punk, and their attitudinal, genre and aesthetic similarities follow from this: "The interactions between avant-garde intellectual culture and punk/rock culture are based in part on the fact that punk aesthetics is an exemplary embodiment of subversion and of cultural heteronomy. Affinity between punk and avant-garde can be found in the sign-using techniques, in their subversive attitude, their unconventionality and their use of scandal as a genre. It helped to build relationships and to make the actors feel at ease in what was, in effect, a familiar environment, even when exploring foreign territories" (Havasréti 2006, 242). To understand the analogy between punk's stylistic features and the avant-garde sign system, Dick Hebdige mentions punk's provocative collage aesthetic and the components of the punk scene, such as music, lyrics, dress, dance, design and ideology (Hebdige 1995, 182). Bea Hock, moreover, sees in this collaboration the intention to create a platform and to escape political control (even raising the possibility of expropriation): "By doing so, they created an access for the intellectual vanguard (which was otherwise relatively successfully controlled by the political power), to the nonconformist punk culture, while providing them with the band's crowd as an audience." This collaboration has not always been successful given that Beatrice's audience did not always enjoy the avant-garde texts of the Duplicate Group, as can be seen, for example, from the fact that one of herperformances had to end prematurely on the beach of the paper factory in Csepel (Szilágyi, 1998).

It should be noted here that the concert stage is not the only place where punk and (neo-)avant-garde could make an alliance. It is enough just to consider El Kazovsky's visual art and perhaps his/her lesser known literary work. If we look at the international scene, the American novelist Kathy Acker's novels, for example, punk and avant-garde are even more obviously connected, even overlapping (along with a conscious critical feminist position). In any case, it is also questionable if Beatrice's music was punk in the Western European sense: it was somewhere between rock and punk at the time, although they also played Sex Pistols songs at their concerts. What punk and "bum" subcultures had in common was their social base: originally, their members came from the lower middle and working class, and their music was meant to express their political and social discontent, their anti-establishment, sometimes angry rebellion.

The first performance of the Duplicate Group with Beatrice was in 1979 at Fiatal Művészek Klubja [Young Artists' Club], when János Kőbányai, who was then involved in hobo culture, and wrote a sociographical study about it, advocated a collective performance

for Beatrice and the intellectual-artist circles enthusiastic about rock music. The collaboration may have been helped by the fact that Sándor Bernáthy, a graphic designer, created several Beatrice album covers and promotional materials, and that – according to his memoirs – Beatrice frontman Feró Nagy also intended to combine the band's „scandalous" musical activities with "high" art, to create his own subculture (in this, he did not question the socialist system, but instead imagined it within its framework).[6]

For this first evening – where Beatrice not only played their own songs, but also punk songs – Kőbányai invited Károly Csató, Balázs Györe, Judit Kemenczky, Ákos Szilágyi, Ferenc Temesi, Péter Turcsány and Endre Szkárosi from the literary scene. The company later organised other concerts, for example in Szeged, at the JATE Club, then at the Jókai Cultural Centre in Budaörs, and at the beach in Csepel. In the end, however, Beatrice, publicly accused Duplicate of trying to get their mass base for itself and withdrew from the collaboration. As it turned out much later, after the regime change, the reason for the break-up was rather that the band was threatened by the KISZ committee in Budapest, which was becoming increasingly suspicious of the band in 1979–1980, and saw a danger in the cooperation between pop and elite culture. The Duplicate group also performed at the Telecommunications Technical College in Győr, where the evening was banned and no audience attended, apart from the members of the college's party committee (27 Nov. 1980). They entered the stage in Miskolc at the University of Heavy Industry with the group Bizottság (30 Nov. 1980), and at the Nagykanizsa Jazz Festival with Vilmos Jávori and Mihály Dresch, and in February 1981 with the group Dimenzió (László Dés, János Másik, Totó [Tamás Tóth], István Baló) at the City Centre Youth House, thus expanding their fanbase to the musically attuned and a more intellectual, that is, alternative-underground audience. Collective work did not always go perfectly at the beginning, the musicians found difficult to reach common points, to find ways to play under or alongside the lyrics; but by the time of the concerts, the programme usually came together. On 30 December 1987, they played one more time on the University Stage, where different concerts took place, including Matuska Szilveszter Sound, Art Deco, Endre Szkárosi, Ádám Dévényi, Duplicate.

6 Shortly before the Duplicate period, for example, he had an initiative where he said: "I thought there was a neglected generation, or rather a cursed generation (...) This generation has not been led into social life. Never mind, we will create our own culture! I will prove that the audience who come to the Beatrice concerts are not anti-establishment: they are cultured, decent people. There are one or two idiots among them, but that's another matter. I have announced at the concerts that everyone is invited to contribute cultural works, paint, write music, short stories, poems, comics, whatever." This effort failed, however, and Beatrice became even more suspect to the KISZ committee, and they allied with the Duplicate Group. See more: Zoltán 2010, 47.

In 1980–1981, Judit Kemenczky was invited twice to participate in the group called Lélegzet [Breath] – or in other words: in the live journal, that is, in a live performance of journal texts. Lélegzet was a more homogeneous group of mainly writers and intellectuals, with the following core editorial team: Ádám Tábor, Eszter Tábor, Péter Rácz, Balázs Györe, Endre Miklóssy (Artpool, CD 03/55–56). She participated, also with musical accompaniment, in the so-called 3rd live edition of Exit 84, which was founded to replace the banned Mozgó Világ magazine.[7]

The Duplicate group also integrated action and visual elements (costumes) into their literary concerts. For example, this is what Szkárosi wrote about the performance in Budaörs (12 August 1979), organised in collaboration with Beatrice: "Hundreds of people gathered outside, when Bernáthy, in a black caftan, with a shaved, pigtailed head, started to open Kőbányai's exhibition: he threw watermelons against the wall, which fell red and green and opened on the ground. Inside the stage, everyone was equal to the task, Szilágyi, for example, wrapped himself in a huge nylon bag and read his poems - in the appropriate parts of the programme, of course. Temesi put a garland on his head, Balázs was wearing some kind of uniform. Judit dressed Indian style, I put on a lurex vest with safety pins on my naked torso and women trousers with tiger skin pattern. [...] Meanwhile, János began to read his sociography, and as his lecture became longer and longer, we started to insult him in a show-like manner, walking around, spraying him with talcum powder, shouting into his text, etc. - He obviously didn't like it, but it needed some kind of extra action. [...] In the meantime, of course, El was continuously painting his body on top of a cupboard, and those who weren't in action were also doing something quietly." (Szkárosi, 2011, 106–107.)

Szkárosi was a bit fooled by his memory, as we can see from the film of the evening (which was planned to be part of László B. Révész's TV documentary on the relationship between Hungarian hobo culture and punk music, but had to be cut out due to the censorship) (Szilágyi website). From this black and white film, edited to 12 minutes and without sound, it is visible that Judit Kemenczky is not wearing an Indian sari, but a dark kimono with a large embroidered motif on the back, and El Kazovsky is sitting on some kind of seat (although it could be a little cupboard placed on the floor); he paints not only on his own body, but also on paper and next to him, there is a characteristic sculpture of dog, also made of paper. The scenery also includes a cage with birds, a samovar in which the participants make tea, a low table with a small kettle, cups and a thousand small objects, a removable picture frame with glass,

7 The two poems performed by Judit Kemenczky: *Fogai között bambusz vívóbot* [Between his teeth a bamboo fencing stick], *A vörös martinászlány* [The Red Smelter Girl]. Other participants are Gábor Németh, László F. Földényi, László Márton, Miklós Peternák, András Wilhelm, Endre Miklóssy, Péter Rácz, László Surányi, György Kozma, Endre Kukorelly, János Sugár.

etc. Since the footage is silent, the only thing that can be said about Judit Kemenczky's recitation is that she performed her poem by heart, rhythmically, and behind her, bassist Lajos Miklóska accompanied her on guitar with loose hand gestures, joining in from time to time. After Judit Kemenczky has finished, she sat down on the floor at the coffee table and remained there for most of the film, her back to the audience, who could only admire the large embroidery on her kimono (occasionally she laid back, poured herself tea, etc.). Meanwhile, the others were reciting, reading, playing music, walking around on stage, drinking tea, Feró Nagy was teasing Kőbányai, Bernáthy was examining the others with a stethoscope on all kinds of body surfaces, and playing with a picture frame. They also adapted - probably consciously - the concept of Katalin Ladik's famous performance: they were pressing the face onto the glass plate and distorted it. The silent film extract does not show that Szkárosi would have performed her own poem more aggressively than Judit Kemenczky (although there was obviously some difference in the text content), at most he used more body gestures; Kemenczky was speaking very still, but rhythmically, with great determination.

According to her friends, Kemenczky was a devout Christian even when it was not yet obvious to everyone from her poetry and from her artwork, but she was convinced that Christianity and Zen Buddhism (including Taoism) were essentially one and the same (András, 2016, 28). Her translations were also determined by this approach, as she translated religious literature, such as Nō-dramas as well as Hildegard von Bingen's mystical visions. In the afterword of the former, she describes herself as a Zen-practising, Schintoist mystery play translator, who at the same time clearly identifies herself as a Christian. In her poetry, therefore, there is also transcendence, even behind simple experiences and perceptions, which are closely intertwined with incandescent visions and symbols (sometimes conventional, directly interpretable, sometimes archetypal), permeating the text.

Her poems written in the seventies and eighties - especially the volumes *A vesztő* [The Loser], *Sorsminta* [The Fate Sample] and *Az amerikai versek* [The American Poems] – can be definitely considered avant-garde beyond their hermeticism and esotericism: these are texts constructed like a montage, often in an inorganic way, composed of small fragments of images. Often, these elements are juxtaposed in a surrealistic, dream- or vision-like way, or through associations evoked from the unconscious – or, more precisely, sometimes we can almost feel them flowing, pouring.

At times, however, the structural principle is different: built upon the juxtaposition of different cultural and literary elements or references, of building blocks borrowed from different cultures, religions, periods, sometimes from different languages. In these cases, it is the result of a conscious construction, while at other times the author seems to be playing with them, or even colliding them in a dadaistic way. In some

of her texts, Judit Kemenczky also makes explicit references to the dada, for example, the poem *Azt fogja akkor tőle* [He will then him] written a few years later, seems to contain a dada programme in its fragments, or more precisely, she fixes the fact of mixing dada and mystical poetry in her own poems: „ozone / of Dadaist / freshness (...) they have been fixed to the time machine with Dadaist na/ils since the mystic lip-light punched me / Came the ice rain ice light since then it's been doing it with na/ils since then it's been flying with nails"[8] (Kemeneczky 1989, 6).

She seems to have been influenced occasionally by Allen Ginsberg and Charles Bukowski, especially in the passages presenting the contemporary world – but in her texts, marginality (embodied by bars, heroin) is merely sometimes placed in an American context (see, for example, the "Janis Joplin-poem" "Girl with a Unicorn" in *A vesztő* [The Loser]), while in other cases she evokes the typical, avant-garde, sometimes depressing scenes of socialist Europe, which are also imbued with the anxieties of Eastern European intellectuals. This is visible, for example, when she recalls the cigarette-smoky conversations in Ádám Söröző [Adam's Pub], accompanied by a huge amount of beer and shots.

The average reader – who probably has no background in orientalist studies – will mostly perceive the influence of Eastern religions and Western mysticism, cultural diversity, pop-cultural elements, the incompatibility and incoherence, sometimes the typical Eastern European anxiety and sense of alienation, perhaps the playfulness and humour too. If they are more informed in the avant-garde language, they can occasionally hear the voice and the phrases of Lajos Kassák from his long poem, *A ló meghal […]* [The Horse Dies], and also of *Számozott költemények* [Numbered Poems]. If – and this is probably much rarer – they posses the necessary knowledge of religious history, for example of the symbolic signs and kuans of the *I Ching*, then they can obviously decode them and understand much more of this esoteric content.[9]

3. *The Book of Changes* and the avant-garde montage

There is one more aspect to consider: namely, that this structure of montage, the assemblage (juxtaposition, even superimposition) of different historical periods, cultures, ways of thinking, religions, is

8 „dadaista / frissesség /ózona [...] Dadaista szögekkel vannak az időgépre rögzít / ve mióta a misztikus szájpadlásfény bevert / Jött a jégeső jégfény azóta szögekkel csin / álja azóta szögekkel röpül"

9 The audiences at the literary concerts were quite heterogeneous, but it is perhaps not worth asking serious sociological questions about how much of this hermetic lyricism the typical Beatrice fan could decode. They may have felt the Eastern esoteric inspiration, but, unlike American hippies, it was too abstract and intangible for a „hobo" or a punk, and they were probably not enthusiastic about it; they were likely more captivated by the performance situation, or perhaps by the humour of the everyday, yet surprising references and incongruity.

highly compatible with the main teaching of one of Judit Kemenczky's main references, the *I Ching* [Jüan Kang, Ji King, Ji Qing, The Book of Changes], and that is the unity of diversity and the eternity of change (i.e. its equivalence with immutability). The *I Ching* is an ancient book, more than three thousand years old, that is closely related to the Taoist belief system: it is an intellectual background of Taoism, while others believe that Taoist thought was already spreading at the time when it was written.

Taoism is not, of course, the only Eastern religious source of Kemenczky's art, Shintoism, Buddhism and Confucianism also appear in it, as do Chinese and mainly Japanese literary intertexts. In the present study, however, it seems revelatory to highlight *I Ching*, firstly because of the frequency of quotations, secondly because the approach presented in this book permeates practically all Eastern thought, and thirdly because its basic concept can be largely paralleled with the specific poetic procedure of Kemenczky's poetry, which her critic Gábor Cyprian Csajka called a "four-dimensional", "montage in development" (Csajka 1989, 393).

At first glance, the *I Ching* contains predictions, but its deeper message is to capture a specific world vision, showing that we are only a part of an interconnected system that is impossible to overcome: the order of the world can only be accepted, not controlled or changed (which is not necessarily equivalent to inactivity, because order itself is dynamic). According to its principles, "first and superior to all is the Universal Rule, the Ultimate Cause, the one and Eternal, which is itself the constant, though ever changing: one, but all at once. From it, from the primordial beginning, all things originate and return, though nothing comes from it and nothing goes towards it. It is not tangible, but it is everything." (Beőthy-Heténvi 1989, 15). So, a creator and omnipotent God, although more abstract, more impersonal than the God of Judeo-Christianity. "The most obvious sign of the Absolute and the Only in this world is the Change (*Ji*)" (Beőthy-Heténvi, 1989, 15): everything moves and changes, from its creation to its passing. Change is eternal, but not random or chaotic: it fluctuates in accordance with the development of the two main organizing forces (the active, celestial, solid, spiritual, „masculine" yang and the passive, earth-based, weak, material, "feminine" yin). In other words, to return to Judit Kemenczky's poetry: if we concentrate only on the two main strands in it, i.e. the religious-mystical tradition and the avant-garde, we can already say that her poetic texts are created from these as different, even opposite (active-passive) force potentials, or in other terms, from the joint operation and dynamics of the two basic text types associated with them. But going beyond that, in the Taoist spirit, we can even conclude: even if the world is in a constant changing state, it only means that it has permanence and universality; thus historical ages, dynasties, cultures come and go, are born and pass away, but since they are essentially one, they can be unproblematically, even necessarily, interlaced in a literary text.

This approach is thus inspired by a strong metaphysical inspiration on the one hand, but also by the contemporary experience of modernity: the acceleration of mass communication and the nature of cultural differences as a unifying or at least harmonizing force. Like a spectator quickly switches between television channels presenting a wide range of countries, historical periods and themes, and practically perceives the world at once, the poem jumps from image to image, from reference to reference. As Gábor Cyprian Csajka articulated in his sensitive and subtly nuanced critique (in which, as we have seen, he called Kemenczky's technique a "four-dimensional", "happening" montage in relation to *A vesztő* [The Loser] and *Sorsminta* [The Fate Sample]): "Her method is the elimination of traditional (homogenizing-metalogical) methods, she absolutizes time, she opens up counterspaces in space, in order to populate with her heroes the already happened and the possible. Visions and facts, segments of reality and fragments of myth, the living and the dead, Buster Keaton and Buddha, Lajos Miklóska on bass and St. Teresa of Avila mounted on the Wheel of Fate, in a single nightmarish collotipia, here is the gift of twentieth-century mass communication, the possibility (and the necessity!) of a total perception of the world, the unprecedented intensity of the world, in whose radiance the entire human past and present are projected onto us." (Csajka 1989, 393).

In fact, the volume analysed here, *Sorsminta* [The Fate Sample], contains a text unit with this title, as the last part of the cycle, *Három történet* [Three Stories] is *Harmadik történet: A Változások könyve* [The Third Story: The Book of Changes]. However, the only quotation from the source text is the poem's closing, incorporating one of the kuan and its roughly fixed meanings, re-poeticising them, and associating abstract notions with them (separation, union, consequence). And before that, a (nightmare) dream or visionary text with relatively inorganic juxtapositions of details. First an apparently ordinary apartment interior, the full title and motto of Péter Pázmány's Hodegus, and then the interior - if it is at all the same as the previous one - becomes more and more visionary, with a jasmine bush invading from the outside, which slowly opens up above the lyrical self in the bamboo hat towards the free sky and nature, but all supplication is useless, the devotion turns into horror, "hell blue" tears into the heart, dead birds pour from the wall. Finally, it seems as if the quoted kuan both interpreted (rather vaguely) and perhaps dissolved with its prediction what had been said:

Finally, the
sunshine brings the I GING to life
The third Book of Changes
holy sign
L I
▬▬▬
▬ ▬
▬▬▬
The fusion, or

the separation the pheasant, the eye the fire
the sun the posterity the soldiers' weapon the
the tortoise shell in summer the fruit, hanging from the stem
the consequence the emerged
belly the snakes (55)[10]

4. The Duplicate Group and the *Tao*

The last section of this paper gives examples from one of the books of this period, *Sorsminta* [The Fate Sample], of how mythological and religious elements (including those of Eastern belief systems and philosophy) are mixed with fictionalised representations of the Duplicate group, its members as individuals, and pop cultural references as well.

Poem 9. OPENING GAME or THE NŌ OF GODS AND POETS

The very title of the first poem refers to the Nō-dramas, whose worldview she later presented in the preface to her translation of the volume with the characteristics of *The Book of Changes*, as described above, and of Eastern and mystical approaches in general: "take place in a world where, at the bottom of things, the principle of identity and unity with everything is at work; a tangled web of events, seemingly made up of only, incomprehensible and incoherent fragments of the world. In fact, it is a sacred unity: mercy and love pervade and permeate the world of passions, sins, power, revenge and madness. Here, the convention system that we value has and can have no meaning" (Kemenczky 1994, 13., Pályi 2011, 1339).

At the same time, the environment depicted in the poem is predominantly 20th century: indoors with a typewriter and a glass, outdoors with a light pole, chewing gum and a carousel. An opening presents a young woman or a centuries-old image of a god's face seems to connote the Eastern world, but then Paracelsus and later a porcelain Christ enter the picture. The "leaking sky" carries away the wreckage of airships with the kitchen rubbish, "in the sugar bowl a dwarf / changes his sky-blue dress / scrubs the pan / washes his head / the silver thread of his wig / traces translucent lines / behind him / on the white paper" (10) – this image, which recalls later Lynch films, also contains strong traces of its own creation (the wig strokes as brushstrokes on the paper, which can refer to painting, but also to writing, calligraphy, similarly to the typewriter of the opening image). It is only towards the close of the

10 Végül a / napfénytől életrekel az I GING / A Változások Könyvének harmadik / szent jele / L I/ ——— /
— — / ——— / Az egyesülés, vagy / a válás, a fácán, a szem a tűz a villám / a nap az utókor a katonák fegyvere a / teknősbékapáncél a nyáron szárán függő / gyümölcs a következmény az előreugró /
has a kígyók (55). The translations of the poems published in the study are my own. (F.Gy.)

poem that we come again to a golden statue of Buddha laughing on a lotus throne, to whom the lyrical self seems to put the question: "Is this my heart?" (13).

Poem 8. A long journey

The poem, which opens with a young prince (obviously an ancient-medieval figure) living with nomads, leads to overt punk references towards the end. The young man could be the Japanese protagonist of *The Tale of Genji*, the oldest novel in the world, who also appears in other Kemenczky texts, or the prince ('leader') of *The Book of Changes*, whose figure is, moreover, linked to the basic meaning of Ch'ien, 'heaven', and its qualities of 'creator', 'active', 'solid', 'clear'.; tigers and dragons are also featured in the text. The poem also talks about iconic phenomena and figures of the modern world, the TV shows of the Western bloc, and a socialist party secretary from the socialist bloc cautioning by raising a finger; but the perfectly eclectic declaration is that of an old man bowing several times, in response to whose bowings something is happening in all parts of the world:

He bowed a third time
He cried and begged
With
the voice of a rabbit
The sound of falling iron crumbs
with electric amplifiers' sound
the otherworldly voices of dead people
On the voices of those
who are born now
on white
leatherette beds:
OH ELOHIM
ELOHIM OH OH OH ELOHIM OH AMIDA
BUDDHA AMIDA BUDDHA DAIOSHO RAGORATA
DAIOSHO Sogyanandai BODAIDARUMA
O MEIN HERR IM DEINEM LEIB
IN DEINER GNADE EWIG VERNICHTET" (19)[11]

On this, as if by magic, the lyrical self begins its journey on a scribbled "imaginary map", moving like a flying carpet, rising and falling in the air, or even „on yellowed strips of paper", or perhaps "wrapped in oil-soaked linen, Torah and bamboo rolls, in peeled bark of cedars". Here, the question is certainly legitimate whether the point here is the various

11 Harmadszor is meghajolt / Sírt és könyörgött / Egy /nyulacska hangján / lehulló vasreszelék hangján / elektromos erősítők / halottak másvilági hangján / Azokén / akik most születnek / fehér / műbőrhuzatos ágyakon: / Ó ÉLÓHIM ÉLÓHIM Ó Ó Ó Ó ÉLÓHIM Ó AMIDA / BUDDHA AMIDA BUDDHA DAIOSHO RAGORATA / DAIOSHO Sogyanandai BODAIDARUMA / O MEIN HERR IM DEINEM LEIB / IN DEINER GNADE EWIG VERNICHTET".

actual physical mediums (described in their materiality) of the old man's transcultural and translinguistic supplication's: the paper, the Torah or the bamboo scroll. Or perhaps it is also the question of the written avant-garde poem incorporating all of them – at least virtually –: that the text of the poem emphasises its own textuality as well as its fixedness and its mediality (in this particular case).

From the carpet, the lyrical speaker sees post-apocalyptic urban images all over the world, and then – and here he reaches the punk subculture – the Punk Jesus with Madonna and a pagan world tree: an associated fashion code, that these three are linked by a needle. But finally, in the poem's conclusion, he seems to be holding the golden apple of Chinese culture, shining with jewels of knowledge, spirit, peace and harmony.

(A LETTER to YANG) (LEVÉL YANG-nak)

As we have already seen, Yang in the *Book of Changes,* and in Taoism in general, is one of the inherent - masculine, active, spiritual – forces, which is here personified: it is to him that this poem, the last poem in the volume, is written. However, Mr K'ung-Ci – also known as Confucius – in the opening image is the addressee of the heroin sent in the chest. He is also indirectly connected with the *Book of Changes*, since on the one hand, one of its prefaces was long attributed to him, and on the other hand, the authors of later medieval Confucian teachings also made frequent reference to this book. The addresses are both Kaifeng, a centre of ancient China and San Francisco, an important city of modern Western culture. However, other important texts from Eastern culture also appear in the poem, including *The Tale of Genji*, considered to be the oldest novel in the world, written by the 11th century Japanese noblewoman and author Murasaki Sikibu. The medieval story tells of Genji, the handsome and clever prince who falls in love with his stepmother, but also becomes involved in a number of other love affairs. The text of Kemenczky's poem does not make a coherent narrative, several temporal and narrative levels are merged in it, yet, not only the protagonist of the old Japanese novel, but also its author are fictionalized, and it seems as if the pronoun „at them" in the following verses also refers to them. This might leads us to the conclusion that the Duplicate Group discs as 20th century Budapest objects are available in the shops of these two persons, and that the lyrical self asked to save them for Yang.

YANG!
Today I sent the first case of cocaine
for Mr. K'ung-Ci San Francisco
Kajfeng
They asked what it was: I said
a bowl of Sunflower Sutra
[...]
Meanwhile

I visited Murasaki's shop
- you know that little curvy Japanese lady
from the 11th century with her ivory pipes
Sweetheart
so longs for it,
who has already passed over the mountain of Death
I can't even look at the traces he left behind

Prince Genji messaged
on the death of his young wife
And I saved it
to them
a „Duplicate" disc for you
literary concert from the 80s Budapest.
He who among bran
will be eaten by pigs
That's what you said about me back then. (94)[12]

7. vers. Jóspálca [7. Poem Oracle-stick]

Most explicitly, this poem draws a parallel - somewhat dubious, but at least ironic - between the two networks of reference or codes, the Chinese thought (religion and philosophy) of the necessity of calm and inner peace, and the punk subculture of chaos, loudness and rebellion. It is probably not a surprise, but rather a logical consequence, that by the end of the poem the oracle sticks mentioned in the title - the usual instruments of divination in *The Book of Changes* – dissolve on their own.

„The mood should be a mirror-like lake,
on which the signs of superhuman existence are clearly recognizable."
Not that it makes much difference
the cobbled concerts of the Duplicate group
and the procession of Asian horde
The master
riding on a white tiger's back
to the gates of heaven
but YOU
are all fools
He concluded
the Chinese Co K'iu-ming

12 YANG! / Ma föladtam az első láda kokaint / K'ung-Ci Úr részére San Francisco / Kajfeng / Kérdezték mi az: Mondtam / egy tál Napraforgószutra (…) Közben / Beugrottam Muraszaki boltjába / – tudod az a kis töpörödött japán hölgy / a 11. századból az elefántcsont szipkáival / Szívem / annyira áhítozik utána / aki már túljutott a Halál hegyén / hogy itthagyott nyomaira / sem bírok nézni / Üzente Gandzsi Herceg / fiatal felesége halálakor / És félretettem / náluk / egy „Fölöspéldány" lemezt Neked / irodalmi koncert a 80-as évekből Budapest. / Jó születésnapi ajándék mi? / Aki korpa közé keveredik megeszik a disznók / mondtad rólam akkoriban. / Alászáll és felemelkedik. (94)

(who was a disciple of Confucius and was blinded at the end of his life) (23)

But security
is no finer jewel
than around the neck of bassist Lajos Miklóska
a leather necklace with a zip fastener" (23-24)[13]

6. vers. LEVÉL RIESEN-RA(N)D óriáskerék ÚRNAK SORSMINTÁVAL [Poem 6. LETTER to Mr. RIESEN-RA(N)D ferris wheel with FATE PATTERN]

This picture poem, which indirectly gives the title to the volume, is already playful in its title, varying the name of the fictitious letter's addressee – Mr RIESEN-RA(N)D – meaning both Ferris wheel (Riesenrad) and huge edge/border (riesen Rand). The former, the Ferris wheel, will appear on the first page of the poem as a picture poem element, the latter as a page frame on the other pages, surrounding the (half-)long poem base (and, from a thematic point of view, it may even be associated with the rubber band of the edge of the subway platform or the handrail of the escalator, which appear several times in the text). On the front page under the wheel you see this: The "Fate pattern spins the Ferris wheel", which makes it even clearer, we are actually seeing the wheel of fate, which in Western thinking might suggest that fate is changeable, down one day and up the next; in Eastern religions – Hinduism, Buddhism – as samsara, it rather denotes the cycle of the soul's destiny, the wandering of the soul in different beings until it reaches enlightenment. The red axis of the wheel is a pattern of number lines from zero to nine, then backwards from nine to zero, and so on (the same pattern is already present in the title and structure of the volume). The wheel blades are also made up of fragments of text, which add up to a highly fragmented and incoherent monologue in the form of indirect speech about the horror of a soul arriving at the gates of heaven, the house of God, a city created by a saint and a lion, and „blades and knickers of Toledo". This is followed within the text by the (semi-) long poem, which – as a framework, a "giant edge/border/perimeter" [riesen Rand] – is surrounded by mixed and in this form somewhat

13 „A kedély legyen tükörsima tó, / amin az emberfölötti lét jelei világosan felismerhetők." / Nem mintha / Sok különbség lenne / a *Fölöspéldány* összeácsolt */koncertjei /* és egy ázsiai horda / ünnepélyes felvonulása közt / A mester / fehér tigrisháton lovagol / az ég kapuja felé /de TI / egytől egyig hülyék vagytok / Szögezte le / a kínai Co K'iu-ming / (aki Konfuciusz tanítványa volt, és az élete végén megvakult).
(…)
De a biztonság
nem díszesebb ékszer
mint Miklóska Lajos basszusgitáros
nyakán
a cippzáras bőrnyakék" (24)

gibberish-like philosophical reflections on subjectivity, grasping the depth of consciousness, morality, Platonic references, etc.

The basic text itself is a montage or a surrealistically assembled mixture of actions, events and quotations, in which all the members of the Duplicate Group also appear, their actions and reactions drawing the main "narrative". Some seem to be doing everyday activities. (Szilágyi) Ákos, for example, carries the food he has bought up the escalator in a bag – but when they mend their shabby linen shirt with Temesi, it becomes unreal because of their palm-sized size and because they converse in the ancient language of the Persians. Balázs (Györe) buys milk and croissants, lights a cigarette and selects books at the National Library's Duplicate Center. (Greek) Athena adjusts (Szkárosi) Endre's scarf and wraps his sandals in newspapers and takes them to a shoemaker – indeed, in accordance with her first name, she leaps out of Zeus' leg and lies on the linoleum floor of a coffee shop as a marble statue with broken fingers. (El) Kazovsky adjusts a lace collar around the neck of one of his papier-mâché dog statues. However, the others perform only surrealistic actions. Kőbányai (János) with his helmet down in the subway shoots into Kazovsky's sportbag, while Bernáth(y) behaves in the strangest way: some of his actions are clearly Kassák-intertexts (he's flying „with vulture and parrot wings", with ECET [vinegar] inscription in his beak), at other times – although the poem contains Kassák linguistic structures and the image is surrealistic – it can be suggested that we are watching a typical Bernáth(y)'s performance in Budaőrs (1979), seen in the film:

and Cato was a true Roman
added Bernáth(y)
        he raised a blue plastic gillyflower
and seventy-nine times
        spun his rattle (32)[14]

Some intertexts and quotations are simply introduced into the poem associatively, through an analogy of sonorities – or vice versa, some surrealistic images are derived from cultural quotations. The example of Cato cited above and the „ECET" inscription in Bernáthy's beak, for example, are linked in this way:

with vulture and parrot wings
with ECET
inscription in his beak
Bernáth(y) Sanyi flew by
There was a disturbance in the monitors
CETERUM
CENSEO CARTHAGINEMESSEM DELENDAM (31)[15]

14 s Cato igazi római volt /tette hozzá Bernáth(y) /kék műanyag szekfűt / emelt a magasba és 79X / hetvenkilencszer / megforgatta a kereplőjét.

15 Keselyű és papagájszárnyakkal /ECET / felirattal a / Bernáth(y) Sanyi repült arra / A monitorokban zavar állt be / CETERUM / CENSEO CARTHAGINEMESSEM DELENDAM.

Judit Kemenczky in her later poetry also drew on Taoist, Buddhist, Confucian, Shinto and Western mysticism, but her main question was clearly about the possibility of creating transcendence through textual means, whereas in *A vesztő* [The Loser], *Sorsminta* [Fate Pattern] and *Az amerikai versek…* [The American Poems…] she had still adopted a more ambivalent and ironic approach. Although she richly incorporated these allusions into her poems, and her images were sometimes visionary, she also dissolved the seriousness of the situation with a palpable doubt, subtle irony, and sometimes playful humour. Later on, this loosening will be less present, and there she will put together her material in larger patches, and perhaps more didactically and pathetically. From this point of view, her poetry became perhaps more monotonous, more boring, and could no longer be considered clearly avant-garde. And all of her work from the last decade of her life, which was largely afflicted by illness and pain, remained unpublished and in her legacy collection.

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Regional Dialect Use in School and Teachers in Southeast Hungary[1]

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ABSTRACT
This paper is part of a larger ongoing research project titled *Patterns of Language Regard in the City of Szeged, Hungary and Its Vicinity: A Study in Perceptual Dialectology*. The data were collected in the research site in southeastern Hungary, in Szeged, Hódmezővásárhely, and Balástya, through sociolinguistic interviews with ten teachers at each site. The paper focuses on one aspect of the relationship between regional dialect and education: teachers' attitudes toward the use of regional dialects during classroom interaction. The central question is how primary and lower secondary school teachers perceive the role of dialectal speech—both their own and their students'—in formal classroom settings. Attitudes toward regional dialects—whether negative or tolerant—do not vary significantly according to the location of the school (village, town, or city), but reflect the individual teachers' personalities. Some tolerate their students' regional dialect while others correct non-standard language use.

Keywords: perceptual dialectology, Szeged dialect, teachers' attitudes towards regional dialect

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1. Introduction

1.1. About the Hungarian Language Community

Speakers whose native language is Hungarian live "within the culture of the standard," as Milroy (1999) describes it. This means that within the Hungarian language community, as described by Milroy (1999), the standardization has many consequences, such as the following: the standard language variety has the highest prestige, while non-standard varieties are undervalued; speakers believe in absolute correctness; and their linguistic views are shaped by the ideology of standardism. Analyzing the internal relations of the Hungarian language community, Kontra (2018a, 2018b) demonstrates that most native speakers of Hungarian consider the codified standard variety to be superior and more valuable than other varieties.

The spread and maintenance of the linguistic ideology of standardism are reinforced through channels such as education, mass media, and popular science. As Kontra (2019, 85) points out, even literacy (reading and writing) education in the Hungarian school contributes to promoting the superiority of the codified standard. This is further supported by the fact that Hungarian regional language varieties have not developed a significant tradition of writing, and for Hungarian speakers today, written language use esentially equates to the use of the standard variety.

Sándor (2018) reviews the role of public education in disseminating doctrines about the superiority of the standard. An important observation about the social diffusion of views regarding various linguistic forms is that strong and categorical value judgments and stereotypes are attached to particular varieties within the community—and that these stereotypes present in native language classes influence students' attitudes.

Education has an extremely important role in spreading standard ideology and the standard variety of the Hungarian language within the Hungarian speech community. For many decades, one of the fundamental goals of native language teacher training has been to prepare them to teach the standard language and to teach in the standard variety. Thus, native-language teachers working in public education have played a significant role in disseminating the ideology of linguistic standardism (Sándor 2014, 388-432; Parapatics 2020b; Jánk 2021). Therefore, an absolutized interpretation of linguistic correctness permeates public thinking on a wide scale.

1.2. Language Perception Formation and School

A key part of an individual's linguistic socialization is the formation of personal patterns in evaluating and relating to linguistic variability and individual varieties—this process occurs alongside language acquisition. From the moment a mother first corrects her child's speech based on her own internalized linguistic norms—effectively obeying societal

expectations—the development of this personal system of linguistic attitudes begins.

Besides the family, the school becomes a defining arena for this process, especially primary education, which can have a decisive impact during the first school years. This is because students, at the age when they begin schooling, are in a sensitive phase of linguistic socialization, and because the teacher represents social authority and mediates society's expectations regarding language use, as well. The system of norms communicated both openly and subtly through education includes socially expected views on language use. These encompass how students should relate to linguistic variability in general and to specific varieties and forms.

A relevant question is whether language ideologies, that may threaten the linguistic diversity and that are brought by students from their family environments, appear in compulsory native language education. Among these ideologies, linguistic homogenism and its closely related counterpart, standardism, must be mentioned (Lanstyák 2011). When examining teachers' linguistic views, we do not claim that students adopt them unchanged—but many studies show that the dominant native language ideologies in public education leave long-lasting marks on generational thinking.

Hungarian studies provide many convincing examples: Ludányi (2017, 2019), analyzing letters sent to the major Language Consulting Service in the country, concluded that most writers believe in the supremacy of the standard language. Szabó (2012), in a study with primary school children, demonstrated how central rules—and pseudo-rules—are in their understanding of language, likely due to rule-centered language teaching. Our previous study, the Szeged Sociolinguistic Interview (Kontra, Németh, and Sinkovics 2016), shows that informants over sixty express linguistic beliefs about correctness that they encountered decades ago in the norm-enforcing native language classes of the 1950s and 1960s.

1.3. The Situation of Hungarian Regional Dialects in the Early 21st Century

In his summary assessment of the current spread and status of Hungarian dialects, Kiss (2017, 200) notes that "most members of the Hungarian language community still come from dialectal backgrounds, and thus their language use carries more or fewer regional features." He believes that the accelerated change in Hungarian regional dialects began in the mid-20th century. This process is noticeable mainly in two ways: first, the contexts for regional dialect use are shrinking; second, regional features are diminishing, with change generally moving toward the standard.

Regarding geographical coverage, regional dialects no longer cover the entire language area—spatial retreat is clearly noticeable. Kiss (2017) also highlights important functional changes: the former primary functions of regional dialects—as tools of communication and

carriers of culture—have diminished somewhat, while their role as social symbols has come to the foreground.

It is important to note that Hungarian native speakers living in countries neighboring Hungary show a stronger dialectal influence in their communication. Many of them have a vernacular that is a local dialect, and they do not even speak the standard variety of Hungarian. The stronger presence of regional dialects is also indicated by the fact that among Hungarians living beyond the border, the language of education and church services is not free from regional influences either (Péntek 2002).

2. The Study

2.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Before addressing the research questions of this study, it is necessary to present the theoretical-conceptual framework within which we discuss the topic. One of the key concepts of our investigation is *language regard*. We use this term in the sense described by Preston (2018): it is an umbrella term used in folk linguistics that encompasses the views, knowledge, beliefs, ideologies, and attitudes of everyday (i.e., non-linguist) speakers about language—in summary, everything that determines how language appears in the mental perspective of non-linguist speakers.

It is important to emphasize that linguistic beliefs do not need to align with scientifically proven facts or theories, because their influence on language use is not determined by this alignment, but rather by the fact that—regardless of scientific validation—they exist in the speaker's consciousness. Therefore, language superstitions or beliefs can be just as influential in shaping an individual's linguistic behavior as the body of knowledge accumulated by academic disciplines.

Preston (2017) emphasizes that it is not possible to create a comprehensive theory to explain linguistic variation and change if we ignore the linguistic beliefs of speakers. Accepting this and building upon it from a sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological perspective, we believe that one significant and determining cause of changes in language use is the transformation of thinking about language, i.e., the change in language regard. For this reason, we consider it crucial—in terms of mapping the direction, dynamics, and expected outcomes of ongoing linguistic changes—to be able to describe the changes in society's beliefs and mentality regarding language.

2.2. Main Research Questions

In this study, we examine the role that education might play in the above-described changes affecting Hungarian dialects, particularly through the way it shapes the linguistic beliefs of younger generations. We are also interested in the extent to which education contributes to

the continued societal pressure on dialect speakers to conform to the standard language variety.

The relationship between dialect and education is a vast area with extensive literature: most recently addressed in a monograph by Parapatics (2020a), and in case studies by Németh (2020, 2024a, 2024b). Fehér (2024) empirically demonstrated the metalinguistic awareness of bidialectal preschool children.

From this broad problem area, we focus on one subtopic: the use of regional dialects during classroom instruction, more specifically, the teachers' views on this issue. The central research question is: according to the interviewed primary and lower secondary school teachers, to what extent can regional dialectal speech play a role during classroom instruction, including both teachers' and students' speech? We consider this question crucial in terms of the role of education, because formal classroom speech situations can legitimize certain language varieties while discriminating against others. This is where younger students encounter which varieties are considered socially acceptable in formal contexts.

Students' beliefs related to this may be shaped by many factors, both explicitly and implicitly. Explicit influencing factors can include teacher intervention: negatively evaluating or correcting a student's speech (based on linguistic or social norms), or the teacher correcting their own speech (possibly with explanation). Implicit influence can stem from the teacher's chosen mode of speaking or from which non-standard forms they leave uncorrected in student responses.

To answer the research question, we posed the following questions during structured sociolinguistic interviews:

Can the teacher speak in regional dialect during the lesson?

Is it the teacher's task to correct a student's regional dialect?

Is it the teacher's task to contribute to the preservation of regional dialects?

Is it the teacher's task to promote the spread of the standard language?

We do not find it necessary to formulate hypotheses regarding the central research question and the expected responses to the interview questions, as our investigation is explicitly exploratory in nature.

2.3. Data Collection and Corpus

The study presented in this paper is part of a larger ongoing research project titled *Patterns of Language Regard in the City of Szeged, Hungary and Its Vicinity: A Study in Perceptual Dialectology*. The research is being conducted in southern Hungary, specifically in the so-called Southern Great Plain dialect region, within the Szeged-area dialect group.[2] Fieldwork is taking place in three settlements of different sizes within the dialect area: the largest is Szeged, a regional city (158,000 inhabitants); the second is Hódmezővásárhely, a town about 25 km

2 On the classification of Hungarian dialects, see Juhász 2001.

from Szeged (42,000 inhabitants); the third is Balástya, a village about 20 km from Szeged (3,200 inhabitants) (see Figure 1. below).

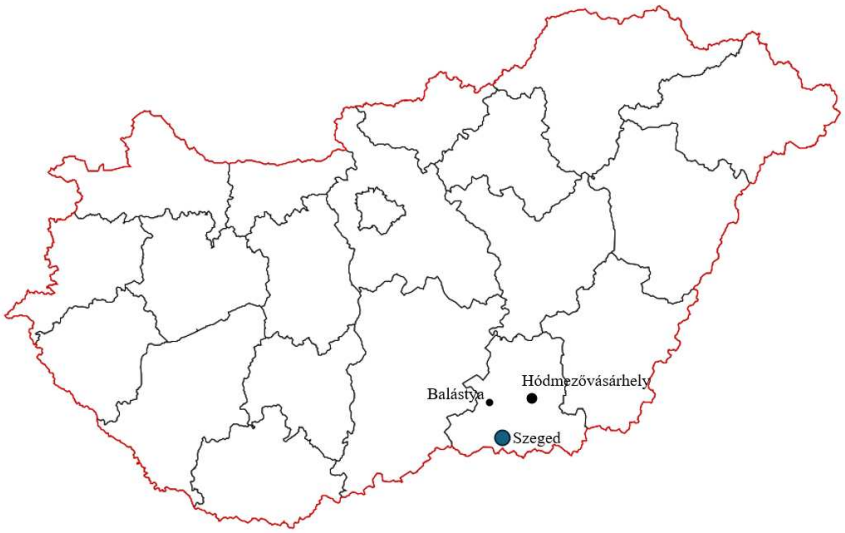

Figure 1. The research sites in Southeast Hungary

The central question of our research is: What happens to students' language regard from the start of primary school to the end of the eighth grade? We aim to explore this mainly in terms of what kind of views students hold regarding dialectal speech (which for many is their vernacular variety) and regarding its speakers, and how they perceive the standard language variety and those who speak it.

After a multi-week observation period, data collection began in a selected primary school in each settlement: we conducted structured sociolinguistic interviews focused on linguistic beliefs with both first- and eighth-grade students and their lower and upper-grade teachers. In each location, 8 first-grade students (ages 6–7), 8 eighth-grade students (ages 13-15), and 5 lower-grade and 5 upper-grade teachers were interviewed. We also interviewed 8 people each from the students' parents' and grandparents' generations per location, totaling 126 individual interviews.

Alongside modules with guided conversation, the interviews also aimed to uncover implicit cognitive content related to language through various tests and the use of the matched-guise technique (Kontra, Németh and Sinkovics 2016). The structured sociolinguistic interviews with teachers lasted on average 1 to 1.5 hours.[3]

This paper analyzes the data from the 30 teacher interviews in terms of how they responded to the questions outlined above. When relevant, we also include excerpts from parts of the interviews not directly linked to the targeted section but closely related to the subject. Of the 30

3 For a more detailed description of the research, see Berente et al. 2023.

interviewees, 15 teach in lower primary and 15 in upper primary grades, with each settlement represented by ten teachers. The teachers form a heterogeneous group in terms of both their formal qualifications and the subjects they actually teach.

3. Results

We interviewed 30 teachers, of whom 7 do not speak the regional (or any other local) dialect according to their own account (3 in Balástya, 1 in Hódmezővásárhely and 3 in Szeged), so they do not use the regional dialect in class or with colleagues. Six teachers could speak the regional dialect but do not use it in class. (Please note that these are self-reported data.)[4]

As for the question "Can dialect be used in school?", it may seem strange or weird to ask teachers such a question, but Hungarian language culture, as mentioned, is highly normative and standard-oriented. For a long time (not uncommon to this day), the main principle in teacher training, especially in elementary teacher training, was that the teacher should speak the standard language and expect the pupils and students to do the same. Numerous observations and surveys show that teachers stigmatize students who speak the regional dialect, classifying their speech as incorrect, making comments like "It is not correct", "It does not exist in Hungarian" etc. (cf. Sándor 2014, 420-422). The general expectation is that the teacher should behave and speak in an exemplary manner.

All teachers answered that a teacher could speak in regional dialect in class. However, one of them immediately changed her opinion. She (from Balástya, a village) clearly objected to the teacher speaking in regional dialect: "I think they can speak dialect, but (.) but it would bother me, or I don't like it. So, I don't want to go to a class where the teacher speaks the regional dialect, or if I am a teacher, I don't want to speak the regional dialect when I teach anything."[5] Later in the interview, she also explained that she would be bothered if her children's teacher spoke in dialect: "Because we don't read or write like that", [6] which is in line with standard language ideology (cf. Kontra 2019, 85).

Several teachers mentioned certain aspects of the teacher's speech. Namely, five of them (all of them teachers in grades 1 to 4) add that it is advisable to avoid the use of regional dialect in Hungarian lessons because of the literary texts and the reading and writing lessons. Two teachers also mention the problem that if the teacher or the student

4 We do not have thirty answers for all questions because sometimes the question was not asked or was not answered, or the respondent moved on to another topic.

5 „Szerintem beszélhet, de (.) de engem zavarna, vagy én nem szeretném. Tehát én olyan órára se szeretnék menni, ahol tájszólással beszél a tanár, illetve hogyha én vagyok tanár, én se szeretnék úgy beszélni, hogy tájszólásban tanítok bármit is."

6 „Mer<t> nem úgy írunk, nem úgy olvasunk"

comes from a different dialect area, the teacher's speech may be strange, and some of them mention problems of comprehension. Nevertheless, there are no such big differences between Hungarian dialects that it would cause difficulties of comprehension (as in Germany or Italy).

Four of them point out that the teacher should transmit the standard norm because it is the expectation, e.g. "We are officially supposed to represent standard language, right?"[7]. Another teacher[8] also refers to some kind of external expectation:

T We are obviously expected to communicate according to standard language norms.

FW Do you think it's expected?

T I think so.

FW Who expects it?

T uhm well uhm I guess the educational authority. [laughing] Don't they?[9]

She mentions some kind of external expectations but uses an indefinite (general) subject. The fieldworker therefore asks for the subject, and after some hesitation and an expression of her own uncertainty (uhm I guess), she clarifies her answer, and the educational authority is named the right agent, which is shown by the question tag following her own statement (cf. in more details Németh 2024a).

The National Core Curriculum does not cover how a teacher should speak. The role of the teachers is described as follows: "Teachers are an indispensable part of successful mother tongue and literary education. Their behavior, their commitment to the profession, their personal examples are in themselves a model for their pupils" (NCC 2020, 300). In other parts, it adds that the teachers are free to choose their pedagogical methods (NCC 2020, 301).

Two teachers of Hungarian language and literature also mention that not all dialects can be eliminated in adulthood which means one cannot switch to standard without an accent. Some do not focus on expectations but on the credibility of the teacher. Three of them felt that there was no issue if the teacher speaks the regional dialect because it is part of the teacher's personality and credibility: "So it is best if the teacher is part of the local community, so the children are from here, s/he knows the locals, their habits, their way of speaking, so they should

7 „nekünk ugye hivatalosan úgymond a köznyelvet kéne képviselni"

8 Since there is only one small school in Balástya, we have not provided any information about the teachers' ages or the subjects they teach in order to preserve anonymity.

9 „T …tőlünk nyilván elvárják, hogy a köznyelvi normák szerint kommunikáljunk.
FW Gondolod, hogy elvárják?
T Én úgy gondolom.
FW Ki várja el?
T öööö hát öööö gondolom az oktatásügy. [nevet] Nem?"

be part of it, in order to be able to interact with parents and children."[10] This means that a teacher can interact more effectively with pupils and their parents if he or she knows them and their local speech patterns. Her teaching practice is in accordance with her views, as she uses the regional dialect in class.[11]

Some teachers use the regional variant when telling a story, or when they have to discipline pupils: "but there are also situations when I have to shake things up a bit on purpose, so in a situation that motivates or solves a situation or solves a disciplinary situation, I start to use the regional dialect".[12] Or another: "But they know it, it's a scolding for sure. When I'm using the Szeged dialect, there's trouble there."[13] In other words, it is so unusual for pupils to hear a teacher speaking a regional dialect (in Szeged) that the use of it can also have an attention-grabbing function. Some also said that they only use it during recess or on field trips with their pupils, in other words, during extracurricular activities.[14]

Although, all of our respondents think that teachers can speak in regional dialect in class, many of them do not actually speak it. So, we should ask the question: why do most of them avoid regional dialects in class? Many explain it by the role of the teacher, by perceived expectations. A teacher from Balástya who can speak the local dialect, does not use it in class: "Because I think it's a kind of [...] obviously there's a role when you go into a classroom, you have to stand out there, there's a way of presenting yourself."[15] However, he is permissive towards his colleague, because he thinks she can speak: "Well, 'cause 'cause she is herself in the classroom, it is very important for a teacher in its profession to give itself to the children, because they are so receptive to the fact that if they see a mock or false pose that I am in, they will never be able to accept me. And they don't accept what I say, whatever subject we're talking about".[16] This is in contrast with his own example (see below), because he said previously that he spoke differently in his

10 „Tehát az a legjobb, ha része a helyi társadalomnak az a tanár, tehát a gyerekek is idevalók, ismeri az embereket, a szokásaikat, a beszédmodorukat, hát része kell, hogy legyen, hogy tudjon együttműködni a szülővel és a gyerekkel."

11 Her views and attitudes are analysed in Németh 2024b.

12 „de olyan is van, hogy direkt egy kicsit föl kell rázni valamit, tehát egy kicsit ilyen motiváló vagy ilyen helyzeteket megoldó vagy fegyelmi helyzeteket megoldó szituációban azért előjön az, hogy én elkezdek *ö*-zni".

13 „De azt azt tudják, hogy az tuti, hogy szidás. Amikor én már *ö*-zök, akkor már ott baj van."

14 It is important to note that this is based on self-report, and we have not been able to verify these answers.

15 „Mert szerintem ez egy ilyen […] nyilván van egy szerep, amikor bemész egy osztályba, hogy oda ki kell állni, ott van egy megjelenési formád."

16 „Hát mer mer ugye az, hogy ő önmagát adja az órán, ugye a tanárnak az nagyon fontos a hivatásában, hogy önmagamat tudjam kifelé adni a gyerekeknek, mer ők arra vevők, hogy- hogyha látják, hogy egy mű- ál- meg egy póz amibe én vagyok, akkor soha nem fognak tudni elfogadni sem, és amiket mondok sem úgy fogadják el, akármilyen tárgyról beszélünk."

role as a teacher than he does at home. The possibility that he himself could be a teacher using his own regional dialect does not seem to occur to his mind.[17] Others have also suggested that being a teacher is a role, and they do not speak regional dialect with parents during office hours or parent-teacher meetings.

We asked not only about the teachers' regional dialect speech but also about those of the students. The question was whether it was the teacher's job to correct regional dialect features. All 30 teachers said that it was clearly not their job and that they do not correct them, as a regional dialect is not an imperfection. Four of them added that they would indicate in written work that pupils should write according to the standard.

The perspectives of two teachers are worth highlighting. One of them said: "There are sometimes words, that slip out, I hear them right away, and I correct them right away."[18] He explains why he does not use the regional dialect at school this way: "there I am a teacher, my role there is to be a teacher".[19] On the subject of correcting regional dialect use, he said: "I don't think it's my job, but I do correct it, but it's not very common."[20] In other words, it is not known how often this happens, nor it is known why a dialect feature is being corrected. A few sentences later, he adds that he does not correct the pupils: "Because I would be hurting the child's identity a little bit."[21] When he makes this important argument referring to the children's identity, it contradicts his earlier claim that he sometimes corrects the pupils. But this may be related to the fact that as a teacher he consciously avoids the use of regional dialect, even though he tolerates the usage of other colleagues ("I think it's fine for her to speak like that."[22]), he assesses quite differently in his own case.

In the context of using the standard language and regional dialect, we also asked whether it was the teacher's task to ensure the survival of the regional dialect. Most of them argued that it is the teacher's task, for example, not to criticize or correct the students' speech or to encourage them to use the regional dialect. Some are hesitant, for example because they believe it is a kind of tradition-keeping, and that may not be a teacher's task. Others interpreted the question as a mandatory task, and they are not aware of such a task. Three teachers (from the three research locations) say that it is not (yet) a task because pupils are familiar with the regional dialect, and they use it. Only one of them reflects on her

17 See more details in Németh 2024b.

18 „Egy-egy szó van, mikor kicsúszik, és úgy csúszik ki, azt egyből hallom, de egyből kijavítom."

19 „ott én tanár vagyok, ott nekem az a szerepem, hogy tanár vagyok".

20 „szerintem nem feladatom ez, de ki szoktam javítani, de nem nagyon szokott ilyen lenni."

21 „Azért mert valahol az identitását sérteném meg ezzel egy picikét a gyereknek."

22 „Szerintem nyugodtan beszéljen így."

own classroom speech when she says that the teachers are discouraging the use of the regional dialect when they do not use it in class.

Most of the teachers do not correct their students' use of regional dialects, and many of them feel it is their duty to do something to preserve dialects. However, this positive attitude is modified by comments made in other parts of the interviews. A teacher in Szeged says that regional dialect is beautiful: "Because I consider dialect to be the jewel and ornament of our language, and I would be sorry if it were to disappear from our language because it makes our language beautiful."[23] However, a few sentences later, in response to the question what disturbs her in speech, she mentions examples, such as *csináli, mondi* (the verb suffix is different from standard Hungarian: *csinálja* 's/he does sth', *mondja* 's/he says sth'). The suffix is a bit archaic but a typical feature of the Szeged dialect, i.e. she does not know the dialect suffix, so she does not attribute the grammatical differences to the regional dialect. Some teachers correct traditional dialectal forms such as *mén* (standard Hungarian *megy* 's/he goes') or the personal pronoun *ű* [yː] (standard Hungarian *ő* [øː] 's/he').

The latter view demonstrates what is also evident in other interviews, namely that there are non-standard phenomena that are acceptable if speakers identify them as regional dialectal features, but if they do not, they are associated with less education and are treated as an educational and social marker. One teacher reflects on this dilemma: "but there are a lot of words that I don't really know if they are dialectal or just used by more uneducated people."[24] Since non-standard items and grammatical errors are invariably corrected by teachers, it can be difficult for pupils to decide whether a linguistic phenomenon is a regional dialect feature or a grammatical error (from a prescriptive point of view). A similar observation has been documented by Winifred Davies (2006) in Germany: teachers were consistent in their positive assessment of the standard, but only relatively stable of what specific language forms counted as standard, and there were very large differences between teachers in terms of tolerance (Davies 2006, 485-486).

Another key question explored in the study was whether teachers viewed the promotion of standard Hungarian as part of their professional responsibility, particularly in relation to regional dialects. Two respondents answered that promoting standard Hungarian is not their task, but it could be; two others rejected the idea that promoting standard Hungarian fell within their duty, and one said that the teacher should illustrate the standard but not promote it. As one of them summarized it starting with a rhetorical question: "But why promote it? Because then you are already doing something against the existence

23 „Mert én a tájszólást a nyelvünk ékének, díszének tartom, és sajnálnám, ha kikopna a nyelvünkből, mert ettől szép a nyelvünk."

24 „de van egy csomó olyan szó, amiről én nem tudom igazán, hogy az most nyelvjárási vagy csak éppen tanulatlanabb emberek használják."

of local characteristics."[25] Only a small minority—five out of thirty teachers—believe that standard Hungarian should not be promoted over regional dialects which is to say, only five subscribe to the concept of additive bidialectism, a concept that values both the regional dialects and the standard variety as complementary rather than hierarchical. In contrast, a majority affirmed that they should promote standard Hungarian, and some of them called it "correct speech". This framing implicitly positioned regional dialects as linguistically "incorrect" or subordinate, despite of the fact that most of the participants simultaneously acknowledged the cultural value of dialects as traditions worth preserving. The tension here is striking: while regional varieties were romanticized as a heritage, standard Hungarian was framed as the pragmatic, rule-governed variety essential for formal communication and social mobility. Several teachers further emphasized that promoting "correct speech" extended beyond mere usage of the standard variety; it also required adherence to prescriptive grammatical and orthographic norms.

As for the standard language, language variation and varieties, the latest National Core Curriculum (NCC 2020) is theoretically modern, aligning with contemporary pedagogical and sociolinguistic theories. It emphasizes language awareness, the relationship between language and identity, and linguistic diversity (cf. Jánk 2024, 222). It requires appropriate language use in different situations, but does not require the use of standard language, only in writing.[26] However, there is an exception: "Students' language expressions should follow the grammatical and orthographic rules of correct Hungarian." [27] (NCC 2020, 301). However, further regulations of the curricula adhere prescriptive views. As Parapatics (2024, 193–194) pointed out, the official guidelines for the Hungarian school leaving exam disregard students' dialectal backgrounds, privileging the standard language and penalizing dialectal features, thus implicitly undermining linguistic diversity. The question remains whether teaching practice aligns with this requirement. The thirty interviews conducted with teachers reveal a picture very similar to that described by Andrea Parapatics. Based on her experience in public education, she observed that most teachers hold a positive attitude toward regional dialects—or at least what they perceive as such—and strive to foster students' respect for them. However, in practice, many tend to adopt a standard-centered approach (Parapatics 2020a, 69).

Finally, it should also be noted that many teachers—regardless of whether they support the dialect—report correcting linguistic errors

25 „De hát miért terjessze? Mert akkor már ellene tesz annak, hogy a helyi sajátosságok meglegyenek."

26 The same can be stated for the previous version of National Core Curriculum [2012] (Parapatics 2020b: 60).

27 „A tanulók nyelvi megnyilatkozásai megfeleljenek a magyar nyelvhelyesség, illetve helyesírás szabályainak."

in students' speech (following prescriptive rules). The results reveal an ideological gap: despite teachers' awareness of the symbolic value of dialects, their conception of linguistic authority is still deeply rooted in standard Hungarian, mirroring larger social hierarchies viewing standardization as legitimate.

4. Conclusions

In our sample of respondents, attitudes towards regional dialects, whether they are negative or tolerant, do not appear to be dependent on the research site, i.e. whether the teacher teaches in a village, a town or a city. This may be due to the small sample size of 30, the fact that some teachers commute from other cities (e.g. from Szeged), or similarities in their higher education backgrounds. Therefore, it seems unpredictable whether a student may encounter a teacher who respects their vernacular or another one who corrects the regional dialect features and insists on using the standard. Consequently, it can happen that one teacher constantly corrects non-standard language use, while another is tolerant of non-standard variants.

Davies reported similar results in her survey of teachers in Germany, where she also found large individual differences (Davies 2001, 2006). In Austria, however, the degree to which the standard is demanded over local variations varies by region and by the type of school (Buchner-Elspaß 2018). It must be noted, however, that teachers' attitudes toward non-standard varieties vary from country to country (cf. Walsh 2021).

Since in our research we also interviewed parents and grandparents about the same topics, dialect and standard usage in school, and teacher talk, we plan to compare their expectations with what we have presented in this study about teachers.

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