

Doctoral thesis (dissertation) main propositions

”The starred text, separated...”
Intertextual Approaches to Hungarian Literature of the
Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

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1. The objective of the dissertation, defining the topic

The dissertation examines intertextual processes of textual organisation in Hungarian literature from the middle and the second half of the nineteenth century. In his paper concerned with theories of intertextuality, reimagining literary historical textual analyses as intertextual readings, and sketching the general outline a functional history of intertextuality (*Intertextualitás létmód és/vagy funkció*, *Irodalomtörténet*, 1995/4, 495–541) Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó calls attention to the fact that a history of intertextuality (including that of Hungarian intertextuality) will be possible only after numerous preliminary and case studies about every period of literary history in which intertextual connections are the focus of textual analyses.

Rather than undertaking a complete mapping of the intertextual processes of the mid- and late nineteenth century or offering a comprehensive functional history of intertextuality in this period, this dissertation is intended as a significant contribution to the examination of the intertextuality typical of this period from the perspective of functional history.

The chapters are not intended as apologies for any particular theory of intertextuality: the dissertation tries to avoid the kind of discourse which, in its eagerness to demonstrate the viability of a theoretical approach, fits or tailors the actual work of analysis to the theory. On the contrary, the thesis attempts to use the theoretical background as an effective tool in its exploration of meanings and description of literary historical processes. The objective of this dissertation is to produce results and illuminate connections which will contribute to the future publication of a synoptic work which will examine the 19-century tropes and functions of intertextuality in the history of Hungarian literature.

A further aim of this research is to substantiate the presupposition according to which the application of intertextual strategies of textual organisation in classical Hungarian literature is often the precondition of the text's very existence, even if these strategies have a clearly identifiable function or when texts oscillate between the dialogic concept of textuality characteristic of romanticism or modernism and the decentred logic of postmodernism.

The individual chapters are deliberately open-ended, consciously trying to evoke the sense of being unfinished, raising problems and proposing approaches or possible interpretations which could be continued or (re)written; even beyond the fact that every interpretation, every act of written literary history is legitimate only if it is capable of entering a dialogue and of shifting away from existing interpretative traditions in such a way that this shift bears upon itself the imprint of previous moves, and in itself it is only a rivulet – in lucky cases, a river – in the vast stream of literary discourse.

Within the field of the Hungarian literature of the middle and the second half of the nineteenth century, the dissertation focuses on the following (with occasional glances at the early nineteenth century): János Erdélyi's collection of folk poetry, *Népdalok és mondák*, József Kelecsényi's manuscripts entitled *Énekvilág*, *Regényészeti kalászatok* and *Közhasználatú Magyar Nemzeti Regetár*, János Arany's minor and major epic verses and epic fragments, Zsigmond Kemény's novels entitled *Gyulai Pál* and *Özvegy és leánya*, as well as Kálmán Mikszáth's short story *Galamb a kalitkában*. In addition, the dissertation also analyses Hungarian translations of *Don Quijote* and several classics of Hungarian literature bearing recognisable traces of Cervantes's novel.

II. Applied methods

The dissertation draws upon the interpretative strategies of Ronald Barthes's *S/Z* (trans. Mahler Zoltán, Bp., Osiris, 1997), from the international field and József Szili's *Szellemidézés Aranyéknál, avagy intertextuális közelítés a 19. századi magyar líra asztráltestéhez* (Literatura, 1992/1, 45–76) from the Hungarian tradition, that is, the strategies of slow reading, rereading, of moving away from ingrained and canonised interpretations through a charting of textual networks or, for that matter, of reinforcing the canonised reading through new constructions of meaning. In its analysis of texts, text corpora and issues, the dissertation, from among theories of intertextuality, relies most on Gérard Genette's categories (occasionally complemented by Lucien Dällenbach's definition of the 'mise en abyme'), for the reason that, of all theories of intertextuality, it is Genette's categorisation, introduced in *Palimpsestes : la littérature au second degré* (Paris, Seuil, 1982), that seems to lend itself most readily to a functional analysis. In this book, Genette suggests 'transtextuality' as an umbrella term to replace the increasingly widespread 'intertextuality', and, revising his own previous terminology, 'paratextuality,' realising that the phenomenon seems to be more complex than previously thought. Though the five types of transtextual links (intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, archetextuality) can be differentiated clearly, Genette finds it important to emphasise that these categories are not independent of each other; in fact, they are very frequently combined in a text. This is borne out by the object of the research, works of art – primarily narrative – written in Hungarian in the middle or the second half of the nineteenth century, whether they are canonised, marginalised or have failed to attain canonical status despite their contemporary success. The readings in the dissertation also demonstrate that an intertextual reading and interpretative position can be rewardingly combined with other research methods and theoretical

stances; thus, the dissertation draws upon the methods used by philology, textology, structuralism, narratology, reception aesthetics, computational literary studies and mediality studies.

One shared feature of the individual chapters of the dissertation is that they – regardless of which of Genette’s categories is emphasised, being the foreground against the background of one or more of the other categories – ultimately present a kind of generic oscillation, shift or transformation. Accordingly, this study – insofar as it points to aspects that belong in the phenomenon of architextuality – is also the continuation of László Imre’s research in genre studies (*Arany János balladái*, Bp., Tankönyvkiadó, 1988; *A magyar verses regény*, Bp., Akadémiai K., 1990; *Műfajok létformája XIX. epikánkban*, Debrecen, Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 1996), since genre studies is an intertextual mode of reading even if it does not use the terminology of theories of intertextuality.

Established in 1836 in Budapest, Kisfaludy Társaság (Kisfaludy Society), one of the most important scenes of nineteenth-century institutionalised literary life, had a significant influence on the processuality of the history of Hungarian literature for several decades. What was left from the donations towards the publication of the works of and erecting a memorial to the poet Kisfaludy Károly, Kisfaludy-Társaság spent on prizes awarded to the winners of literary contests. Prizes were awarded either to works of literature (‘költői feladás’) or to works expounding questions of literary theory/aesthetics (‘költői-történeti’, ‘szépműtani’). Moreover, the Society launched various “enterprises” to improve literary taste and to preserve literary traditions. These calls for applications or enterprises often thematized a topic or a problem for decades, defining the main directions of literary discourse.

We frequently find that the award-winning theoretical pieces – unless they happen to strictly pertain to one’s topic – are mostly forgotten. Conversely, treatises by canonised authors which, in the final analysis, formulate answers to the theoretical questions posed by Kisfaludy Társaság (sometimes several decades after the call) even though they were not written in response to any of the Society’s calls – N.B. these answers emerged as literary works of art rather than as theoretical works – are read and consulted even today.

Thus, when describing the intertextual forms and strategies of the period, and highlighting their significance in terms of functional history, the dissertation interprets texts which connected in directly or indirect (philologically unsubstantiated) ways to two of Kisfaludy Society’s cultural enterprises (the publication of Kisfaludy Társaság’s folk poetry collection, the translation of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* from Spanish to Hungarian, in its entirety) and four theoretical invitations (scholarly description

of Hungarian mythology, a review of aesthetic elements necessary for writing contemporary epics, a comparison of drama and fiction, and an expounding of the theory of the novel).

III. Results

A) Chapter two, following the introduction, has the indisputable result of unearthing József Kelecsényi's manuscripts both for the study of literature and ethnography. The reading of the manuscripts has a significance for cultural history as it introduces new viewpoints and offers new methods of examination to researchers of demotic, common poetry and folkloristics. In the dissertation the case of Kisfaludy Társaság's folk poetry collection (starting in early 1844), the first volume of *Népdalok és mondák* edited by János Erdélyi, and the contemporary practices of forming, recording, and proofreading texts are approached, on the one hand, from the perspective of József Kelecsényi's legacy of manuscripts, on the other hand, the chapter also introduces Kelecsényi's encyclopaedia of Hungarian mythology, which he originally started to write for the Társaság's tender. The novelty of the thesis is that, by reading Kelecsényi's variant of 'Népdalok és Mondák' in terms of tropes of intertextuality, it not only provides solutions to one or two philological problems that have emerged, for instance, in relation to Erdélyi's letters, but also extends our knowledge about the contemporary extratextual context of the collection enterprise. This analysis also contributes to our knowledge of the theoretical discourse on folk poetry in the 1840s and 1850s, specifically of Erdélyi's shift of perspective. Furthermore, the dissertation also points out the oscillation between orality, manuscript literacy and printed literacy, and, related to this, acknowledges a form of generic (medial) metamorphosis that is not periodically recurrent.

By examining Kelecsényi's manuscripts, the thesis argues that, if seen as paratexts, texts by authors who are seen as being on the periphery of literary history, texts verging on becoming sheer "speech of madness" (őrületbeszéd) assume metatextual tropes, verifying the results of research on the demotic and common poetry from the last two decades (mainly the works of Imola Küllös, Ilona Erdélyi, István Csörsz Rumen, Judit Czövek, Judit Gulyás, Mariann Domokos, Róbert Milbacher and Ádám Gaborják).

By courtesy of the Manuscript Archive of the National and University Library of Debrecen, a crude digital version of *Népdalok és mondák* I has been completed as an appendix to the dissertation. This is a unique copy of the volume, complemented by Kelecsényi's manuscript sheets. One can pick a title from the table of contents and go to relevant parts of the printed-manuscript volume through hyperlinks. A further useful addition for researchers of common poetry and text folkloristics is the Kelecsényi directory (made on the basis of DEENK

Manuscript Archive, OSzK and the Manuscript Archive of the Hungarian Academy), József Kelecsényi's compiled bibliography as well as his only extant transcription of a tale, both the original record and a transcribed form.

B) The novelty of the third chapter is that it uses a specific reading strategy in its attempt to verify the ideas of contemporary literary theorists (such as Péter Dávidházi, Pál S. Varga, Róbert Milbacher) who analyse János Arany's struggle with the epic from several perspectives.

When considering the most basic question of Arany's epic poetry: "nem chimaera-e népepost gondolni?" ("isn't it a chimerical idea to conceive of a folk epic?") through examining archetextual and hypertextual strategies or choosing other (more diffuse) types of intertextual reading, the most effective way is to proceed in terms of an affirmative/subversive intertextual opposition. When investigating the meanings and functions of the referred text's elements, we have to establish whether they are examples of strengthening integration or altering integration, since Arany's chronologically imbricated epic efforts describe a peculiar rhythmical curve of affirming and negating the epic. Accordingly, an epic intertext-system and a novelistic intertext-system have to be taken into account. Reading the paratexts of Arany's epic works, which display a broad spectrum of intertextual strategies of textual organisation while conceiving of the handling and bequeathing of texts in remarkably (post)modern terms, the dissertation formulates the following hypothesis: the author, in his unceasing endeavour to achieve compositional perfection, encoded his (dis)belief in the possibility of the epic into those segments which are seen as the doorsteps of these texts.

The dissertation adopts an entirely novel approach to this issue when it analyses paratexts equipped with powerful mechanisms in the construction of meaning and having peculiar positional links with the main text – demonstrating that this issue can be raised even at these quasi micro and fuzzy levels of intertextual interpretation. In the light of the genre dilemma, the dissertation attempts to analyse the functions of a certain group of paratexts in János Arany's epic poetry. This analysis focuses on titles, subtitles, variants of titles, epigraphs, settings, the author's notes, drafts, prefaces and epilogues.

C) The fourth chapter explores the characteristics of Zsigmond Kemény's novelistic art, characterising the author's intertextual organising strategies in an unusual way. The result of the chapter in terms of research methodology is the unprecedented depth of the exploration of textual networks in Kemény novels.

It is not only the epic that novelization as a phenomenon undermining classical genre hierarchy sets against the novel but drama as well. Kisfaludy Society had been inviting responses

to questions about the comparison of drama and the novel, highlighting their modifying effect on each other, years before the issue of the obsolescence of the epic was first raised.

Zsigmond Kemény is faced with this historical/theoretical generic dilemma both in theory and in practice at a historical juncture when the traditional genre hierarchy was disrupted by the following factors: the appearance of mixed genres, the rising “fashion” of the novel, aesthetically relevant fiction receiving the accolade of art, and the reactive effects on the writing of drama of changes in acting. He recognizes that the licentiousness of the novel can be an asset for the genre through which generic patterns can be preserved or certain generic functions can be transferred. He makes, to use Kemény’s definition, writing a “drámai szerkezetű regény” (“novel with dramatic structure”) a programme for authors, by which he intends to salvage the aesthetic values of a weakening genre while also wishing to create/stabilize the place of a rising genre in high poetry. At the same time, he means to perform intervene in the field of reception aesthetics and the sociology of reading through getting the recipient, who prefers reading novels and is influenced by acting, back to reading drama with the help of the dramatic structure.

The fourth chapter intends to address an issue not unfamiliar in the long and rich reception of Kemény (especially the works of Jenő Péterfy, János Barta, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák and Péter Bényei) through a novel approach: in this part of the dissertation, two of Kemény’s novels (*Gyulai Pál*, *Özvegy és leánya*) and some of the critical writings and treatises produced while he was working on the novels are placed on the curve comprising ‘generic experiment – theoretical conclusions – perfected praxis of a writer’.

Furthermore, through the example of *Özvegy és leánya*, this chapter highlights (besides the architextual transformation) the transtextual saturation of Kemény novels, with special focus on the textual worlds of the characters, interpreting the novel as a double hypertext – with the first hypotext being Gáspár Ráskai’s *Egy széphistória az vitéz Franciscóruul és az ő feleségéről* and the second the story of John the Baptist’s beheading.

The interpretation of *Özvegy és leánya* is built around the text(ual) worlds induced by the novel. The term “text(ual) world” is used in a broader sense than its original acceptance by the Szeged School of semiotics in their system of literary theory. The dissertation calls the simultaneous presence (integration of complex states of affairs) of certain texts (which can be possible worlds on their own) the world of text. Thus, the text world of the novel is shown as made up of further/different text worlds in a mosaic or puzzle-like manner: the elements of the puzzle/mosaic are pieced together by the textual knowledge of the narrator, the characters and the recipient (perhaps including the implied author). This approach differs from that of the Szeged School of Semiotics in its practical methodology as well, since the aim is not to examine

similarities and/or contrasts arising from referentiality and to identify the resulting regularities, but to refer the text worlds to each other, to observe their dialogues or the way they talk not to each other but next to each other, taking into account the fact that the world of the reader – a linguistic entity – belongs as much to the universe of text worlds as the studied material.

D) The fifth brings several new results in the fields of philology, reception and the history of influences whilst determining the place of Cervantes's novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha* in Hungarian literature in the second part of the nineteenth century. There are few texts in the history of world literature which exert their influence either as closed, self-enclosed texts or through a figure (or figures) that have attained emblematic status – even if taken out of their original textual universe. Cervantes's novel, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* and *Don Quijote* (bearing Sancha Panza in mind as well) belong to this small group of texts and figures. In the Hungarian literature of the long nineteenth century, the intertextual trace of the book surfaces continuously, sometimes manifesting itself in weaker, sometimes in stronger forms, occasionally becoming topical, while at other times it becomes a structuring principle which guides the entire text. The analysed period abounds in epic works that can be interpreted in this way from certain aspects; if we look for a pretext behind these narratives (of crisis), we find *Quijote*, in some cases as a hypotext but more often as an architext. Architextuality here is meant not only as the evocation of to a certain generic pattern but – in accordance with Genette, for genre is only one aspect of an architext – as a more complex and silent connection which refers to textual patterns (created by a certain number of relatively constant thematic, modal and formal categories that stand above history) existing in a combinatorial spatial system.

This can be seen in János Arany's or Gyula Reviczky's lyric poetry, János Arany's multidimensional epic poetry (in *A nagyidai cigányok* [1851], *Bolond Istók* [1856-1880], *Toldi estéje* [1854] or *Toldi szerelme* [1879]), but also, much earlier, it is present in Gvadányi's verse narrative of the village notary [1790; 1796]. It also appears in verse novels: although László Arany's in *A délibábok hőse* [1872] contains only a single direct allusion to *Don Quijote*, the figure of Hübele Balázs is a worthier inheritor of a thematic, formal, modal, and narrative patterns than Gusztáv Csengey's hypertextually conceived *Don Quijote* [1903] with its „búsmagyar” ('melancholic Hungarian') Máncai Béla. It is present in different depths and playing different roles in functional history, either as a direct allusion, treated with self-reflexiveness, and/or in implicit ways in numerous novels and short stories, be they forgotten, on the verge of being consigned to oblivion or still in the canon (József Eötvös: *A karthauzi* [1842], *A falu jegyzője* [1845]; József Székely: *Liliputfalvai Liliputi Tóbiás* [1851], Zsigmond Kemény: *Férj és nő* [1851–1852], *Özvegy és leánya* [1855–57], Pál Gyulai: *Egy régi udvarház utolsó*

gazdája [1857], Mór Jókai: *Fekete gyémántok* [1870], János Asbóth: *Álmok álmodója* [1876], István Toldy: *Anatole* [1872], Kornél Ábrányi: *A dicsőség bolondja* [1875], Jenő Rákosi: *A legnagyobb bolond* [1882], Sándor Bródy: *Don Quixote kisasszony* [1886], Zoltán Ambrus: *Dom Gil, a zöld nadrágú* [1894] Kálmán Mikszáth: *Nemzetes uraimék* [1882–83], *Beszterce ostroma* [1894], *Prakovszky, a siket kovács* [1895–96], *A gavallérok* [1897], *Az új Zrínyiász* [1898], *A mi örökös barátunk* [1899], *A sipsirica* [1902], *A vén gazember* [1906], *A Noszty-fiú esete Tóth Marival* [1906–08] and Géza Gárdonyi: *Az öreg tekintetes* [1905]).

All of the works mentioned above offer the possibility of architextual (or any other transtextual, focusing on the condition of transformations) modes of reading.

Whereas the translation history of Cervantes's work has been explored in detail, its Hungarian reception and influence can only be pieced together from other authors' studies in a mosaic-like, deficient fashion. The fifth chapter of this dissertation aims to make up for some of this missing work when it looks at the *Quijote* phenomenon in the second half of the nineteenth century through a partial examination of the translations as intertextual formations, reading contemporary periodical pieces about *Quijote* as metatexts, and an archi/hypotextual interpretation of works of literature (privileging János Arany's oeuvre throughout). The dissertation attempts to answer questions like: why is it exactly the second half of the nineteenth century that Cervantes's novel becomes significant for a wider reading public and the critics in Hungary? Why is it that the period from 1849 to 1905 saw the highest number of partial and full-text translations? Why does it attract the attention of literary and critical discourse practically for the first time? Why is it accorded "Hungarian *indigenatus*" – accepted into the Hungarian literary canon – in a period of national trauma following the events of 1848-9? Why does Don Quijote become one of the icons of late nineteenth-century national characterology? What kind of a model of identity construction could the "comprehended" Don Quijote/*Quijote* present to individuals person or an entire nation? Why is *Quijote* the literary work that appears as a pretext in the above mentioned (melancholic) texts? What kind of poetic and narratological strategies does the Hungarian epic of the nineteenth century inherit from Cervantes? What novel strategies of reading (the world) do the texts from the middle and the late nineteenth century offer to the contemporary and today's reader?

E) The sixth chapter presents Kálmán Mikszáth's genre dilemma through the analysis of one particular text. In 1891, Mikszáth writes his *Galamb a kalitkában* ("A Caged Pigeon"), a work consisting of two parts which, according to the authorial narrator's intention, are two versions of the same story. The first story takes place in medieval Italy, whereas the second is set in late nineteenth-century Hungary. The two – seemingly quite different – short stories offer a

reading contract (*contrat de lecture*) according to which the opus can be understood as a metaphorical interaction of the stories, a dialogue between texts or a the staging of a stylistic and generic dilemma through a single work of art. The first short story is an adaptation of the Amicus and Amelius tale type to which the eighth short story of *Decameron*'s tenth day belongs. Although in terms of source and object history Mikszáth's work brings in other texts, we find a series of inter- and arcetextual allusions that strengthen the impression in the recipient that he should read the first story as a Boccaccio style tale. The two texts read each other and form a dialogic relationship between Boccaccio's short story and the short story from the end of the nineteenth century (by Mikszáth) which tries to exceed it. The sixth chapter proves that while as a result of the common title the two texts relativize each other (without making value judgement), the whole text is created in a way that in its deep structure it varies Boccaccio's short story after all.

F) The last chapter of the dissertation is an excursus about the fact that intertextual approaches to nineteenth-century Hungarian literature may bring new insights for the theory of reading, textology or computational literary studies. This section of the dissertation sketches a possible ideal of *Özvegy és leánya*'s digital publication (so far, no attempt has been made to publish a single classical Hungarian novel in this manner), which moves from hypertextual reading to reading hypertext, reckoning with different types of users.

In our digital age, the intertextual reading and interpretation of the opus, the drastic changes and and the simultaneity in data carriers urge us to envision and, in a fortunate case, execute a new hypertext edition. The vision does not intend to make theoretical declarations but it hopes to provoke theoretical problems while, through introducing the superstructure and specific examples, it illustrates the potentialities residing in editions of this kind: how it could incorporate its own publication history, generate parallel popular and critical editions, target several types of readers (functioning at high school or university level, encouraging both amateur and professional expert users), enabling a (re)construction of the novel's reception and influence and even that of a continuously developing text network. The chapter also shows the uses of initiating a dialogue among previous variants of texts, as well as the interpretative potentialities residing the procedures of classification, taking notes, linking and intratextual strategies. We also get an insight into the adaptations of Kemény's novel – even through a medial shift.

The accomplishment of the dissertation is that, through the intertextual examination of texts, it, on the one hand contributes to the exploration of the functional history of Hungarian intertextuality, while, and on the other, it presents several new philological findings and new connections as well as putting processes of literary history into a new perspective. Moreover, it

calls attention to the fact that 200 years ago, parallel to the compulsion to textualize, to record and contain the genres of oral tradition into books, new literary genres emerged – and now in the era of new mediality, through the multiplication of carriers, there is also a process of salvaging (also in the metaphorical sense), of “saving as” – among other things, the documents of classical Hungarian literature.