

Postmodern Functions of the Mirror in Hungarian and Turkish Literatures

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“The inventor of the mirror poisoned the human heart.”
(Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquietude*)

1. Introduction

Me and Dr. Kincses-Nagy, or ‘Eva Hoca’, as she is known among her Turkish pupils, go back many years, when we were both living in Ankara. Although at that time there was no teacher-student relationship between us, getting to know her led me to be more interested in Hungarian culture. The idea of doing a Ph.D. in Hungary, at the University of Szeged, where the great scholars of Turkology studied and taught, and the actualization of this idea, were all thanks to her. She supported me tremendously from the first day I set foot in Hungary and taught me Hungarian. Thanks to those lessons, my Hungarian has advanced enough to read Hungarian literature, teach in Hungarian, and even translate from Hungarian to Turkish. Taking these into account, I think it would be adequate to make a comparison between Hungarian and Turkish literatures in this volume prepared in honor of Eva Hoca.

In this study, I would like to scrutinize the mirror motif in some works of Hungarian and Turkish literature, particularly in the postmodern context. In view of the connotations of the mirror image associated with self, identity, subjectivism and reflective practice, I think that the analysis of this image in the shared Turkish-Hungarian framework would yield interesting results. Viktor Horvath’s novel *Török tükör* ‘Turkish Mirror’ published in 2009 and Orhan Pamuk’s *Kara Kitap* ‘The Black Book’ (1990) will be at the core of my research, but other literary texts containing the mirror image will also be discussed where necessary.

2. Mirror Motif in Culture, Arts, and Literature

First of all, let us start by stressing that the mirror has different connotations in Eastern and Western cultures, literatures and philosophies. In Western culture, the mirror is evaluated on the basis of its complex interplay with the ego, while in Eastern culture, the enigmatic realm that it conceals or opens into is foregrounded.

In the West, many observations have been made on the mirror and its relationship with humans, apart from the rhetorical features of the mirror in the literature. In particular, the view that art or literature is a mirror reflecting human nature was widespread. Irish playwright and critic George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) explicitly articulated this view in *Back to Methuselah*: “Yes, child: art is the magic mirror you make to reflect your invisible dreams in visible pictures. You use a glass mirror to see your face: you use works of art to see your soul.” (1921:286). While Shaw pictured the mirror as a means of reflecting the human soul, in the widely known realistic novel by French novelist Stendhal (1783–1842), *The Red and the Black*, the novel was not only likened to a mirror, but it was implied that the novel must represent what is happening around the individual like a mirror, as Stendhal himself does: “Ah, my dear sir: a novel is a mirror, taking a walk down a big road. Sometimes you’ll see nothing but blue skies; sometimes you’ll see the muck in the mud piles along the road. And you’ll accuse the man carrying the mirror in his basket of being immoral! His mirror reflects muck, so you’ll accuse the mirror, too! Why not also accuse the highway where the mud is piled, or, more strongly still, the street inspector who leaves water wallowing in the roads, so the mud piles can come into being.” (Stendhal 1830: chap. 19 – Comic Opera)

In this way, Stendhal tried to prevent the criticism aimed towards him for depicting society in its most transparent state. If the image he gave the audience was bleak, it was because the reality was like that, but, ultimately, he did nothing but hold the mirror. Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) also argued that choreography is indeed related to a realistic representation of people, saying that “If art reflects life it does so with special mirrors. Art does not become unrealistic by changing the proportions but by changing them in such a way that if the audience took its representations as a practical guide to insights and impulses it would go astray in real life.” (1974: 203–204)

In literature, the mirror has been used for centuries to express inexplicable circumstances related to the self in Judeo-Christian tradition. According to Weidhorn, the mirrors were put into motion to raise questions about the objects they were projecting, covering or unmasking, as well as the universal literary theme, the incompatibility between reality and appearance (Weidhorn 1988: 850). It is used as a direct source of self-knowledge, although it has induced apprehension and fear over ages in its capacity to replicate the real. The mirror concealed and maintained the essential self; it was a mental challenge to look into it, while smashing it was a sign of a bad omen (Weidhorn 1988: 851). In antiquity, the mirror was seriously debated in terms of its capacity to capture the real and irresistibly reflect it, whether as a

blessing or a curse. One of the most typical ingenious manifestations of the cynical idea that the mirror is a catalyst for the worst instincts of people, such as self-adoration and arrogance, is the Narcissus myth in Greek mythology (852). As recorded in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Conon's *Narrations*, Narcissus, after he scorns Echo and offends the Nymphs, goes by a pool of water after a tiring hunt, where he falls in love with the image he saw on the top of the water without realizing that it was merely his own reflection: "While he drinks he is seized by the vision of his reflected form. He loves a bodiless dream. He thinks that a body, that is only a shadow. He is astonished by himself, and hangs there motionless, [...] Unknowingly he desires himself, and the one who praises is himself praised, and, while he courts, is courted, so that, equally, he inflames and burns." (Ovid 2000: 402–436). He is scorched by the fire of passion in him, and finally transforms into a white flower as he understands that this love will not come true. Sir James George Frazer suggests that the Greeks believed that it was a sign of death to see one's reflection in the water, and that the water spirits would draw the reflection or soul of the person under water and leave him soulless. Myth of Narcissus points out that the origin of the myth may lie in this belief (Frazer 2009: 458).

It was Lewis Carroll (1832–1898) who had invested a different faculty in the mirror. Carroll's treatment of the mirror as a spatial layer that produces an alternate universe in *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) is inarguably exceptional. The mirror that Alice stares into is no longer a mere reflection suggesting vanity or self-adoration, but a doorway through which the spectator can pass. The realm she enters is an undiscovered alternate universe where "things go the other way", rather than possessing a metaphysical attribute embedded in theologies. Weidhorn thinks that "such a world resembles ours is hardly surprising in a culture in which biologists speak of symmetries (e.g., of the human body), astronomers of twin stars, physicists of antimatter, literary men of doppelgänger, psychologists of repetition" (Weidhorn 1988: 855). It is fair to say that Carroll was the first to try to find out what could be behind the mirror, at least in Western literature, by imagining it beyond its reflective capacities, as it entails an eerie counterpart to our world's reality.

In addition to these, Borges also refers every now and then to the mirror in his short stories. At the beginning of his famous short story, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", in which he imagined a universe parallel to this one, he says that he discovered the land of Uqbar at the intersection of mirrors and encyclopedias. When chattering with his friend, author Adolfo Bioy Casares, the mirror at the end of the corridor "hovers" and they notice that there is something monstrous about the mirrors that day. Bioy then quotes one of the most famous aphorisms of Uqbar related to the mirror: "Mirrors and copulation are abominable, for they multiply the number of mankind." Borges asks his friend where he encountered this "memorable epigram" and Bioy responds that it was in Uqbar entry of "The Anglo-American Cyclopedia". (Borges 1960a: "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"). But, in fact, this epigram takes place in another story by Borges himself, entitled "Hakim, the Masked Dyer of Merv". In this story regarding a false prophet called Al-Moqanna, "The Veiled One", the same sentence

is repeated not word-by-word, but in the same vein: “The earth we inhabit is an error, an incompetent parody. Mirrors and paternity are abominable because they multiply and affirm.” (Borges 1960b: “Hakim, the Masked Dyer of Merv”). From this point of view, it can be seen that Borges utilizes the mirror as a tool for his self-reflective image. His reference to pseudo-sources, such as “Anglo-American Cyclopaedia”—not ‘encyclopaedia’, of which, it appears, that he is the author, reveals the hyper-diegetic structure of Borges’ work. Thus, the land of Uqbar, as well as the story of “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”, comes alive at the intersection of the self-reflective mirror and the not yet published encyclopedias. In this aspect, Orhan Pamuk’s use of the mirror is very close to that of Borges, since the mirror is often crystallized in Pamuk’s fiction for self-reflective purposes.

Apart from literature, the mirror is also seen as a vivid variable in psychoanalysis, painting or cinema. It is used as a medium to explore the depths of human subjectivity, not only with its symbolic implications, but also with its physical properties and capabilities.

French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s (1901–1981) one of the most famous contributions to the field is his theory of self-recognition called “the mirror stage”. According to this theory, a human child can perceive his own reflection as such in a mirror for a short amount of time, at an age where he is outwitted by the chimpanzee in functional intelligence (Lacan 2007: 94). We can consider the mirror stage in this context as an “identification”, that is, “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [assume] an image” (Lacan 2007: 95). There can also be found a link between the mirror stage of Lacan and the myth of Narcissus, as Lacan “pinpoints primary narcissism as starting in the mirror phase of the three stages of psychosexual development, where the subject becomes erotically attracted to the misrecognized perfect image” (Goscilo 2010: 288).

We may also observe how artists have used mirrors in Western painting in several ways. The use of mirrors in the composition of images has been the subject of a large body of work in the history of art. As Leonard Da Vinci once said, in early Renaissance art, there was a widespread notion that “[t]he mind of the painter must resemble a mirror, which always takes the colour of the object it reflects and is occupied by the images of as many objects as are in front.” (qtd. in Yiu 2005: 207). Renaissance painters advised that the mirror can be employed as a technical aid to provide more accurate self-portrait representations or to explore a linear perspective through it (Yiu 2005: 209). Paintings, such as Jan van Eyck’s *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434), Diego Velasquez’ *Las Meninas* (1656) or Edouard Manet’s *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882), all address the issue of meta-representation involving both the mirror and the artist. Here, it is worth recalling Foucault’s analysis on *Las Meninas*, which indicates that it serves as a connection between classical and modern epistemological thought in Europe because representation “can offer itself as representation in its pure form” in this painting (Foucault 1989: 18). Velasquez accomplishes this in a number of ways, including by placing the mirror in the middle of the painting. “The mirror”, for Foucault, “by making visible, beyond even the walls

of the studio itself, what is happening in front of the picture, creates, in its sagittal dimension, an oscillation between the interior and the exterior” (Foucault 1989: 12).

From the early pioneers of Soviet constructivism to the uncanny shots in the psychological dramas of Ingmar Bergman, the mirror has been used for specific applications by the directors. According to Hanich, there are two types of mirror shots in cinema: *complex* and *regular* mirror shots, each serving a different purpose. The former consciously directs our attention to the reflected object or occurrence, while the latter simply “describes” the environment without asking any questions (Hanich 2017: 131). “The mirror and its source of reflection assume a prominent role in the shot”, Hanich says, provided that “they can change the way spectators look *onto*, look *into*, and look *beyond* the filmic image, but also look at it in a puzzled or questioning way.” (Hanich 2017: 132).

Now we have a picture of how the mirror has been used or perceived in the Judeo-Christian canon of the arts. Being associated with mystery and sorcery, the mirror plays an important role in Turkish culture and literature as well, particularly in Sufi doctrines. Sufis have used the mirror image to express some of their elusive mystical thoughts. While the beauty of the spirit is stressed in Sufism, the beauty of the body, as well as decency and manners, are also cherished. God’s creations were thought to be mirrors in which Allah’s presence and manifestation could be seen. It was also believed that the mirror was a way of seeing Him, and that the purest mirror was the heart (*âyîne-i dil, mir’ât-kalb*). Allah created Adam when the world was empty, soulless, glazed, and gloomy, and the cosmos, also known as the mirror of absence, was polished thus. In this regard, just as the universe is Allah’s reflection, the human being, which is a more tangible component of the cosmos, is also His mirror (*mir’âtü’l-Hak*). Sufi poets/philosophers such as Al-Ghazali, Rumi, and Ibn Khaldun used the mirror image to explain the cleansing and enlightenment of the heart in order to prepare it for mystical knowledge (Uludağ 1991).

It is worth noting that, in contrast to the negative connotations linked to mirrors in Christian culture, the mirror is presented in a positive manner in Islamic culture. While both Rumi’s *Mesnevi* and Şeyh Gâlib’s *Hüsn ü Aşk* (Beauty and Love) deal with this aspect and interpretation of the mirror, Pamuk reinvents it in his novels, as a tool for the search for the Self. However, in Sufism, the search for the Self always implies the search for Allah, whereas in Pamuk, it is difficult to ascertain whether this is the case.

3. Mirror in Turkish Literature

The mirror (*âyîne*) was associated with positive signifiers in classical Turkish literature. Because of its virtues of clarity, purity, spotlessness, and two-facedness, as well as its capacity to reflect things while only casting their shadows, it was used as a *mazmun* (conventional metaphors that were reiterated over and over by *divan* poets) in *divan* literature (Pala 1991). One of the *divan* poets who placed a heavy focus on the mirror is Nev’î Yahya (1533–1599), who was inspired by the work of Ibn Arabi

(1165–1240), *Fusus al-hikam* (The Bezels of Wisdom), which deals with “the aspects of a single truth in different mirrors”. In Nev’î Yahya’s poetry, the mirror is used as a mystical symbol, and taken in three different ways: the mirror of the cosmos, the perfect human (*insan-ı kamil*, fundamental concept of the Sufi doctrines of Ibn Arabi) and the mirror of the heart (Karayazı 2014: 42).

Necip Fazıl Kısakürek (1904–1983), Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–1962) are among the names that frequently use the mirror image in modern Turkish literature. We can notice that in his book *Çile* (Ordeal), Kısakürek uses the mirror as a metaphor of a peculiar imagination. While the poet used the mirror image in nineteen poems in *Çile*, two of them [*Aynalar Yolumu Kesti* ‘Mirrors Blocked My Way’ and *Aynadaki Hayalim* ‘My Dream in the Mirror’] are exclusively related to the mirror (Okay 1998: 52). Mirror, on the other hand, is used in Tanpınar’s prose and poetry in a manner that converges with Western attributions to it, remaining outside of the Turkish literary tradition. Nurdan Gürbilek, in her book, *Kör Ayna, Kayıp Şark* ‘Blind Mirror, Lost Orient’, points out that Tanpınar has a sweet spot for Ophelia, instead of Hamlet, in a “water-death-mirror triangle”, which is somehow related to the myth of Narcissus (Gürbilek 2007: 103). This assumption is reinforced in a pool of images about Ophelia that Tanpınar replicates, such as “dream of beauty and happiness”, “in the mirror of the water”, “echo”, “crystalline bowl”, “cave of the inner world”, or “water daffodils in still water” (Gürbilek 2007: 104). For Tanpınar, in this respect, the mirror serves as a metaphor of crystal clearness, calm waters and the pursuit of pure beauty (Gürbilek 2007: 110). In addition, Gürbilek determines that Tanpınar, in parallel with his own lack of mother, compares the Orient, which was once the pillar of inspiration for the great empires, with a dead mother, thus a *blind mirror* that has lost its strength and clarity (Gürbilek 2007: 118–119). When all of these are taken into account, it is possible to infer that the understanding of the mirror in Tanpınar, who was inspired by thinkers such as Bergson, Bachelard and Freud, was formed in line with its forms in Western art. It seems, however, he approaches the mirror with a unique outlook as well, by the notion of the “vestigial mirror” which he assigns to the East.

It is Orhan Pamuk, however, who seeks the meaning and the uses of the mirror in the origins of Turkish literature and deals with the patterns of meaning it has acquired in the West. In Pamuk’s work, particularly in *Kara Kitap*, we see that the mirror is engaged along with the “doppelgänger” trope. Guérard refers to this similarity in the introduction of his *Stories of the Double* as follows: “Few concepts and dreams have haunted the imagination as durably as those of the double from primitive man’s sense of a duplicated self as immortal soul to the complex mirror games and mental chess of Mann, Nabokov, Borges” (Guérard 1967: 1). It would not be incorrect to add Orhan Pamuk to this list.

Pamuk’s *Beyaz Kale* (1985, *The White Castle*) is a historical novel focusing on the confrontational relationship between two identical characters, the Italian scholar and the Turkish Hoja. There are times in the book where the duo poses half-naked in front of a mirror and stare at each other. The scene where they confront the mirror and repeat each other’s gestures fits the typical doppelgänger-like portrayal:

“Elini omuzuma koyarak yanıma geçti. Dertleştiği bir çocukluk arkadaşıydım sanki. Parmaklarıyla enseme iki yanından sıkıştırdı, beni çekti. ‘Gel birlikte aynaya bakalım.’ Baktım ve lâmbanın çiğ ışığı altında, bir daha gördüm ne kadar çok benzeştığımızizi. Sadık Paşa’nın kapısında beklerken onu ilk gördüğümde de bu duyguya kapılmıştım, hatırladım. O zaman, olmam gereken birini görmüştüm; şimdiyse, onun da benim gibi biri olması gerektiğini düşünüyordum. İkimiz birmişiz! Şimdi, bu bana çok açık bir gerçekmiş gibi geliyordu. Elim kolum bağlanmış, tutulup kalmıştım sanki. Kurtulmak için bir hareket yaptım, sanki benim, ben olduğumu anlamak için: Aceleyle elimi saçlarımın içinde gezdirdim. Ama, o da yapıyordu aynı şeyi, üstelik ustalıklı, aynanın içindeki simetriyi hiç bozmadan. Bakışımı da taklit ediyordu, kafamın duruşunu, aynada görmeye katlanamadığını, ama korkunun merakıyla gözümü alamadığım dehşetimi de tekrarlıyordu. Arkadaşının sözlerini ve hareketlerini taklit ederek onu sinirlendiren bir çocuk gibi neşelendi sonra. Bağırdu! Birlikte ölecekmiz! Ne saçma, diye düşündüm. Ama korktum da. Onunla geçirdiğim gecelerin en korkuncuydu.” (Pamuk 2006: chap. 6)

This image of the two in front of the mirror shows how twins complete each other, as well as demonstrating how this uncanny resemblance and the appearance of the Other inwardly annoys them. Another instance that ties together the image of doppelgänger and the mirror in Pamuk’s oeuvre comes about in *Kara Kitap*. There are several different projections of the mirror, all connected to the word *sır*, which is used as a homonym for both the mystery and the thin layer applied to the back of the mirrors and to the surface of the metal objects. As the mirrors are bracketed with the mysteries in Turkish culture, Pamuk contemplates this approach by intermingling the Sufi doctrines with the deeply western concept of dual identity. Galip, the protagonist of *Kara Kitap*, senses the unnerving presence of the shadow-like Other, Celâl, as if he is being followed by his alter ego. Celâl, on the other hand, in his Sunday columns, writes about that, when getting a shave, he looks at the mirror and he does not see his own face, he sees the face of columnist Celâl (Pamuk 1991: part I, chap. 16 *Kendim Olmalıyım*). These parts give the impression that they are both in an identity crisis that they cannot make sense of it. Çalışaneller suggests that this scene reveals a split identity, as Galip peers at the mirror and sees Celâl, his author-self: “Galip realizes that he is alienated from himself even in his ordinary life because Jelal invades his entire life” (Çalışaneller 2011: 8).

In the ninth chapter of the second book, *Keşfü'l-Esrar* ‘The Discovery of Mystery’, Galip is anxious to uncover the significance concealed in his face by gazing at the mirror. Inspired by Hurufism, a Sufi doctrine centered on the mysticism of letters, Galip wishes to see a reference to his true Self, looking at his reflection in the mirror. He actually sees the mystery behind the looking glass, and when you get rid of the *sır* (*esrar* is the plural of *sır*), the mirror strips its mysteries off and remains a glass: “*camı aynaya çeviren eczaya Türkçede ‘sır’ denmesinin bir rastlantı olmayacağını o an anlamıştın.*” (Pamuk 1991: part 2, chap. 11 *Kardeşim Benim*).

The author of *Kara Kitap* inserts his own text into this eternal reflection, argues Koçak and continues: “The mirror is in *The Black Book*, but ‘a black book’ is also in the mirror; *The Black Book* shows us the mirror, and the mirror reflects the black book. The ‘mystery’ of the book is the secret of the mirror: the medicine that turns glass into a mirror when it is put on its back.” (Koçak (1991: 76; translation mine). Following this, an obsessed reader of Celâl, who knows every detail about him and thinks that he is the brother of Celâl’s/Galip’s, reminds Galip of what he said about the secret: “Okumak aynanın içine bakmaktır; aynanın arkasındaki ‘sırrı’ bilenler öteki tarafa geçerler, harflerin sırrından haberdar olmayanlar ise bu dünya içinde kendi yüzlerinin yavanlığından başka bir şey bulamazlar” (Pamuk 1991:part 2, chap. 11 *Kardeşim Benim*).

In a later part of the novel, the mirror is used for a separate but rather significant purpose. In this chapter, entitled *Esrarlı Resimler* ‘The Mysterious Paintings’ the mirror is put forth in order to illustrate one of the main practices in Islamic/Eastern art: copying. The chapter includes a rewriting of “Rumi’s famous Mesnevi parable” on a painting competition between two painters, one of whom wins the competition by using a mirror to reflect the other’s work (Gökner 2013: 224). In fact, the epigraph at the beginning of the chapter (*Esrarını Mesnevi’den aldım*) beforehand provides hints on both what the mystery behind the mirror was and what Pamuk aims to imply by rewriting this parable. This line in *Hüsn ü Aşk* by Şeyh Gâlib, who openly admits that he was inspired by Rumi’s *Mesnevi* when he crafted his own poem, is preceded by the line in which the poet pleads his ‘guilt’: “Çaldım velî mîrî malı çaldım” (Şeyh Gâlib 2002: 141). Lifting from a parable by Rumi, in the same vein as Şeyh Gâlib, Pamuk’s purpose here is to demonstrate how the true talent is to reflect the works of masters. In essence, the story that was written in the 13th century summarizes the issue of originality in art, as well as the practice of copying and creation by transformation in Eastern art. Probably this parable, like many others told by Rumi, was taken from some older poet, which sums up the issue in form and substance at once. Indeed, Turkish *divan* poetry had developed with a literary convention called *nazire*, which led poets to reecho each other’s poems with slight variations in wording for centuries. However, as Pamuk describes in detail in this chapter, everything can alter, even though they look the same when copying someone else’s work, like in the case of “Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote” by Borges. Therefore, the mirror appears not only a reflector of the question of identity in Pamuk’s novels, but it undertakes a significant role in coping with the problem of art and originality as well. This dual-sided approach to the mirror can be attributed to the achievement of Pamuk’s long-held goal of uniting East and West. This time, he does it through the mirror that, in this regard, takes a position that reflects the East to the West and multiplies the West in the East.

4. Mirror in Hungarian Literature

First of all, it is worth indicating that my reflections on the mirror theme in Hungarian literature are restricted to the concept of ‘Turkish mirror’, which emerges in two specific contemporary novels. Many other examples of the use of mirrors in literature or history of Hungary in modern and pre-modern contexts may also be presented, such as the books written in the genre known as “Mirrors for princes” (*Királytükörök* or *fejedelmi tükörök*), such as *Intelmek* (1027), written by St. Stephen I of Hungary (970–1038) for his son, St. Emeric (1000–1007–1031). However, the mirror that I intend to speak about here is different from such works written in the genre of political literature, it is rather a mirror that has found a place in contemporary literature, especially in historical novels. These historical novels written in postmodern fashion are Viktor Horváth’s *Török tükör* and László Darvasi’s *A Könnyemutatóványosok legendája* ‘Legend of the Tear Jugglers’ (1999).

Török tükör outlines some of the incidents that took place during the Turkish conquest of Hungary, but from a Turkish point of view. The authenticity of the novel stems from the idea of recounting an era of centuries-old grinding wars from the ‘enemy’ viewpoint. Horváth’s novel reflects a somewhat new, rather vibrant vision of war and conquest, seemingly transforming *Egri Csillagok* (1899, Eclipse of the Crescent Moon), the popular Hungarian historical novel by Géza Gárdonyi. It does so by mirroring not the same but in a way similar series of circumstances narrated in Gárdonyi’s epic novel. Although the novel includes both good and evil, the characters of *Török tükör* are not inherently good or evil, whether Turkish or Hungarian. This is one of the most important features that distinguishes the novel from traditional historical novels that have made a significant contribution to the construction of national identities (Bhabha 1990). In this regard, the mirror here symbolically serves not only as a way of representing the point of view in a certain historical period by turning the eye to the other side, but also as a medium for converting narrative identity from romantic historical novel to postmodern historiographic metafiction.

Török tükör does not, in effect, tackle with the issue of identity, as Pamuk does in *Kara Kitap*, but does address the problem of double by using the mirror as the core motif. Horváth’s novel creates a change in the identity of the story, at least for the Hungarian reader. In this way, change of identity only takes place on an extra-diegetic basis, when the author pretends to be a Turkish and a Muslim, in order to grasp the city, Pécs, in which he grew up from the eyes of a Turk around five centuries ago. Written in the genre of historical adventure, the novel narrates the coming-of-age story of Ísza, in the same vein as that of Gergő in *Egri Csillagok*. Yet Ísza’s childhood and adolescence are much more vibrant and joyful than that of Gergő, who appears in the novel as *Gergely diák*, the son of the blacksmith Gáspár Bornemissza. He gives the impression that he is this story’s Alice, who infiltrated into Ísza’s world through a Turkish mirror, only to see how everything was reversed there. This reaffirms the possibility that Horváth’s novel is a mere reflection, or a transformation, of that of

Gárdonyi. The tale of Ísza bin Juszúf in the Hungarian lands, where he grows up as a foreigner, but most importantly as an invader, is such a cheerful story that is unusual in a historical novel. Ísza, as the novel's self-reflective narrator, is trying to explore this unfamiliar land in a dream-like and mystical environment while growing up. There is brutality, deception, and the vocabulary of hostility and xenophobia, but they are all employed through a kind of historical irony that is not intended to provoke any nationalistic fervor that we encounter in conventional historical novels. Even though it is written in Hungarian and, apparently, firsthand to Hungarian readers, the narrator seeks to persuade us that it is written by an Ottoman Turk, as the Hungarians in the novel are derogatorily referred to as *gyaur* (infidel), *barbar* (barbarian), *pogány* (pagan), etc. The speech mode used by the narrator and the other Turkish characters is rich with many Turkish words, expressions and idioms, such as “*otthoni számla vásárba nem való*” (Horváth 2009: 93), which are authentic enough. The novel's textual double, *Egri Csillagok*, also incorporates similar Turkish vocabulary, which is another evidence of the transtextual connection between the two novels. In this respect, *Török tükör* can be seen as a mirror of the events that took place in Hungary in the 16th century from a flipped perspective, as Horváth recovers them by substituting his name as Ísza.

Horváth's novel gives priority to the power of storytelling rather than to the so-called historical reality. Thus, the mirror does not serve to demonstrate how the Ottoman historiographers portrayed incidents differently from the Hungarian ones, but instead represents a mystical, vivid and polychromatic representation against the static and questionable facts of historiography. This style is somewhat similar to Pamuk's playful metahistorical novels, as neither aim at positing an untold historical fact dug into the depths of the history, but rather cherishing the power of telling and retelling tales.

Török tükör, with its title, signifies a reversal of the image of the past, though it does not contain a concrete mirror in the narration itself. But it might be inspired by a concrete Turkish mirror, which alters the shapes of the figures it represents, that took part in Hungarian literature: *A könnyemutatványosok legendája*. Darvasi's novel also retells the sorrowful incidents that occurred in the region around the Carpathian Basin, Transylvania and Transdanubia during the one and a half century Ottoman invasion of Hungary. Technically, it has the same theme as *Török tükör*, but the image it reflects is much more gloomy and obscure. As another example of historiographic metafiction, this novel also impairs, by its very nature, the one-sided rhetoric of historical narratives (Hites 2004: 476). Unlike *Török tükör*, brutality, pain, and misery are prevalent notions in this novel, but they are not only performed by Turks or Hungarians, they rather come from all directions and often strike the weakest. In a deeply forthright discourse of historicity, Darvasi's novel accentuates the gruesome circumstances that people had to face in the relentless times of war, a concern that historians usually ignore. But what concerns our subject here is a mirror, a blind mirror from Istanbul, sent by the Ottoman Grand Vizier Köprülü Mehmed Pasha to the Prince of Transylvania, George II Rákóczi, in 1657, due to his intervention in the conflict

between the Swedes and the Poles. The narrator describes the mysterious mirror as follows: “*A tüköröt száz látó kézműves csiszolta és faragta egyetlen világtalan mester útmutatása alapján. A mesterek csak éjszaka dolgozhattak, ha aludt a fény, mely a tükörök lelke. E sztambuli tükörnek az volt a tulajdonsága, viselje bár a gazdája a legragyogóbb öltözékeket, mégis nyomorúságos nincstelenként tűnhet föl a keretben, ha úgy érdemli. Rákóczi György fejedelem sokáig bámul a sztambuli vaktükörbe. Úgy mutatja őt a tükör, mintha már semmije nem lenne e világon. Se pénze, se reménye, és mintha az Isten is elhagyta volna. A fejedelem köszöni az ajándékot, aztán titkos helyre viteti. Az is lehet, hogy összetöreti, elássza, kútba dobhatja. A fejedelem nem hisz abban, hogy a nagyvezír tükre jól látna, ahogy egy tükör egyébként helyesen láttathat valót és jövődőt. Köprülü Mehmed tükre hazug, dög tükör!*” (Darvasi 2016: 14–15)

Although Prince Rákóczi is reluctant to believe the bad luck that the mirror might bring to him, it becomes prophetic of his ill-fated expedition as he falls off his horse in front of the entire council of Krakow as soon as he arrives in the city. This enchanted mirror may be a source of inspiration for Horváth, as both novels have similar content but are dealt with differently. They both revive the past, but one does so light-heartedly, the other so cynically. In this regard, Horváth’s attitude to the past is far closer to that of Orhan Pamuk.

5. Conclusion

Various interpretations have been given to the mirror in the East and the West, as the mirror performs different functions and symbolizes different things in literature and arts depending on the context. In Turkish literature, the mirror is closely identified with the mystery, besides being viewed as a way of reaching Allah in Sufism, which has been reinvented in contemporary canon. Orhan Pamuk combines this interpretation of the mirror in Sufism with the *doppelgänger* trope, a concept linked with the mirror in terms of an identity crisis in Western culture. We have also seen that a special mirror called Turkish mirror is mentioned in two contemporary Hungarian novels. It is important to note that both novels are historiographic metafiction which revisit the occupation of Hungary by the Turks. While in one of these novels (*A Könnymutatványosok legendája*), the Turkish mirror occupies a small place as an instrument having a disruptive impact on the one who looks into it, in the other (*Török tükör*), it constitutes the entire frame of the book, claiming that the whole story of that historical era is told from a Turkish viewpoint. On the other hand, in view of the fact that both Pamuk’s novels and the Hungarian novels in the sample are written in a postmodern manner, we can infer that the mirror metaphor takes on new facets in postmodern narratives that had not been discovered before.

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