

The Memory of the 1566 Siege of Sziget and of Miklós Zrínyi in Hungarian Literary Tradition

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In this study, I take as a starting point the fact that the memory of the 1566 siege of Sziget,¹ of Süleyman I and Miklós Zrínyi is an essentially international phenomenon. This remembrance has several regional and other variants; however, their examination ought to be viewed from an international perspective, and carried out within an interdisciplinary framework using comparative methods.² With all differences taken into consideration, the depiction of Sziget in the historiography, literature, arts, music, military and political philosophy of European countries shows a kind of unity.³ Several interactions can be observed between different national traditions and genres, and, for this reason, the related works and documents can only be understood together, in their totality. Tradition and, more precisely, the establishment of memorial sites is an extremely complex, dynamic process which evolves in time and constitutes the subject of constant reconstruction and interpretation.⁴ Its evolution is fundamentally determined by concepts relating to the past, the present and the future. It is profoundly embedded in the all-time cultural and

1 Lajos Rúzsás, 'The Siege of Szigetvár of 1566. Its Significance in Hungarian Social Development', in János M. Bak and Béla K. Király (eds.), *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary*. (Eastern European Monographs, CIV.) Brooklyn, NY, 1982, 251–260.

2 Pál S. Varga, Karl Katschthaler, Donald E. Morse and Miklós Takács (eds.), *The Theoretical Foundation of Hungarian 'lieux de mémoire' Studies / Theoretische Grundlagen der Erforschung ungarischer Erinnerungsorte*. Debrecen, 2013. – I am grateful to Csenge Aradi and Bernard Adams who helped me to express my ideas in what I trust is now clear English. The translation of the quotations from the poems was achieved by Bernard Adams.

3 Sándor Bene and Gábor Hausner (eds.), *A Zrínyiek a magyar és a horvát történelemben*. Budapest, 2007.

4 Gabriella Erdélyi, 'A Dózsa-felkelés arcai: tabuk és emlékezet 1514 mítoszaiban', *Történelmi Szemle* 51 (2009) 461–480.

social context, and is influenced by the agents' aesthetic, moral, political and other objectives.

The memory of the 1566 siege of Sziget, together with those of the 1526 Battle of Mohács⁵ and the 1552 siege of Eger,⁶ has intricately intertwined with the history of the 150-year-long Ottoman occupation of Hungary. After Mohács and Eger, Sziget is the third representative memorial site of 16th-century Hungarian history, and in a certain sense it is considered a symbolic counterpart of Mohács. The castle, the defenders, and, above all, Zrínyi, together constitute the starting point of the tradition. The siege itself is one of the major topics of the 16th- and 17th-century literary adaptations of the battles against the Turks, and it left its mark in Hungarian, Croatian and German literature afterwards as well.⁷ The history of literary adaptations demonstrates the strong link between Hungarian and Croatian literature, and its embeddedness in Central European tradition. It is no coincidence that Sziget was given a place both in a 2011 volume presenting the Southeastern European cultural memory⁸ and in a 2013 collection on religious *lieux de mémoire* in Central Eastern Europe.⁹

The Hungarian literary tradition of Zrínyi is primarily characterized by the extraordinary richness and variety of genres, representations, literary devices, ideas and functions. Also, it is on a par with other literary treatments of Hungarian historical topics of international importance. This tradition evolved relatively fast, reached a high level of aesthetic quality, and integrated into itself several components of humanist historiography, the rapidly changing concept of history often determined by religious denomination and national

- 5 Lajos Rúzsás, 'A magyar közvélemény útkeresése Mohács után a XVI. században', in Lajos Rúzsás and Ferenc Szakály (eds.), *Mohács. Tanulmányok a mohácsi csata 450. évfordulójának alkalmából*. Budapest, 1986, 323–335; Pál S. Varga, Orsolya Száraz and Miklós Takács (eds.), *A magyar emlékezethegyek kutatásának elméleti és módszertani alapjai*. (Loci Memoriae Hungaricae, 2.) Debrecen, 2013, 199–402.
- 6 Péter Lőkös and Gábor Tüskés (eds.), *Obsidio Agriae Anno 1552. Texte zur Rezeption eines ungarischen Geschichtsstoffes*. Eger, 2008.
- 7 József Karenovics, *Zrínyi Miklós. A szigetvári hős költészetünkben*. Irodalomtörténeti tanulmány. Budapest, 1905; Ö. István Écsy, *Szigetvár és Zrínyi a magyarországi latin költészetben*. Kaposvár, 1935; Margit Waczulik, 'Szigetvár 1566. évi ostroma az egykorú történetírásban', in Lajos Rúzsás (ed.), *Szigetvári Emlékkönyv Szigetvár 1566. évi ostromának 400. évfordulójára*. Budapest, 1966, 287–306; István Tóth, 'A szigeti hős alakja a magyar irodalomban', in Rúzsás (ed.), *Szigetvári Emlékkönyv*, 307–343; Elisabeth Frenzel, *Stoffe der Weltliteratur. Ein Lexikon dichtungsgeschichtlicher Längsschnitte*. Stuttgart, 1992⁸, 837–838.
- 8 Reinhard Lauer, 'Siget. Heldenmythos zwischen Nationen', in Idem (ed.), *Erinnerungskultur in Südosteuropa*. Berlin, 2011, 189–216.
- 9 Márta Fata, 'Szigetvár 1566', in Joachim Bahlcke, Stephan Rohdewald and Thomas Wünsch (eds.), *Religiöse Erinnerungsorte in Ostmitteleuropa. Konstitution und Konkurrenz im nationen- und epochenübergreifenden Zugriff*. Berlin, 2013, 865–873.

identity. It reflects the re-interpretation of historical figures from era to era, bears witness to the constant vulnerability of the past to the present, and shows the close connection of literature to historiography, fine arts and history of ideas. The figure of Zrínyi provided a good opportunity for the continuous renewal of the tradition, as it enhanced a creative use of rhetoric repertoire and efficiently inspired the working out of new motifs, genre patterns and procedures of composition.

The major aim of my study is to present the Hungarian literary tradition of Sziget and Zrínyi from its inception up to the late 19th century, and to outline the process of constructing this memory and the forming of a particular national narrative. I have set as second goal to mark the intersections, define the main characteristics, and identify the functions of the memory of Sziget. I shall pay heed to the procedure of myth-forming, in the course of which memories of the past condense into stories shaping the experience of the present and the future. I shall prefer to highlight those examples of literature which represent a high quality and are considered important for the history of literary themes (*Stoffgeschichte*). I shall speak of alternative forms of memory, and shall try to avoid the perspective of "heroic act – heroic suffering". The image of Zrínyi depicted by historiography and works written in other vernaculars will be mentioned only if these works are related to Hungarian literature, and only to the extent necessary to explain the phenomena in question. Although tradition in fine arts shows several points of intersection with literature, I shall not discuss that on this occasion as I presented it at a 2007 international conference on Zrínyi in Budapest,¹⁰ and the conference volume was subsequently published.

Antecedents

Sziget first became a literary topic in 1556, ten years before the 1566 siege, in Ferenc Töke's Hungarian-language verse-chronicle entitled *Historia obsidionis insulae Antemi* [The Story of the Siege of Antemus Isle].¹¹ The title refers to Oswald Antemus, the knight who had the castle built, and who, according to the introductory verses, predicted the ruining of Christianity and of Hungarians

- 10 Gábor Tüskés, 'Zur Ikonographie der beiden Nikolaus Zrínyi', in Wilhelm Kühmann and Gábor Tüskés (eds. in collaboration with Sándor Bene), *Militia et Litterae. Die beiden Nikolaus Zrínyi und Europa*. Tübingen, 2009, 319–387.
- 11 Ferenc Töke, 'Historia obsidionis insulae Antemi', in Áron Szilády (ed.), *Régi Magyar Költők Tára XVI. század. Vol. 5: 1545–1559*. Budapest, 1896, 131–150, 333–345; Péter Kasza (compil. and annotat.), *Egy elfeledett ostrom emlékezete: Szigetvár, 1566 / Remempering a Forgotten Siege: Szigetvár, 1566*. Ed. by Pál Fodor. Budapest, 2016, 79–101.

in the following wars as well as the twist of luck in warfare at Sziget. The poem shows the influence of the historical poems of Sebestyén Tinódi, the best-known “rhyming war correspondent” of the time; on several occasions the narrative parts are interrupted by the besiegers’ and defenders’ monologues and dialogues. As reported by Tóke, the siege led by Ali Pasha of Buda, lasted for a total of 77 days. He narrates that the defenders quickly rebuilt the destroyed parts of the castle while the Ottomans were trying to liberate Babócsa, which was then in their hands. The strong resistance, the failure to force the defenders to surrender, the losses and the arguments forwarded by the *beys* and *voivodes* finally led the pasha to end the siege and leave. Tóke attributes the successful defense to a favourable twist of fortune and as a sign of God’s “mercy” on the Hungarians. He lists several fallen and injured Hungarian soldiers by name, who, in his opinion, sacrificed themselves “for us”, saved lives by their deaths and are therefore worthy of respect.

In terms of content the main points of the poem correspond to János Zsámboky’s (Joannes Sambucus) Latin-language historical work published in 1558 in Vienna, entitled *Obsidio Zigetensis* [The Siege of Sziget],¹² and some motifs of it can be detected in Zrínyi’s epic poem. Zsámboky dedicated his work to Márk Horváth-Stansych, the then captain of Sziget, who wrote a Latin-language memoir for the king following the siege (Wittenberg, 1557), which served as Zsámboky’s primary source.¹³ Zsámboky places the events in a broader diplomatic and military context, and considers the unsuccessful siege a victory and an instance of glory. After God and King Ferdinand, he attributes it to Horváth’s sedulousness (*industria*), whom he sets as an example for the aldermen of “perilous places”. Another antecedent worth mentioning is Zrínyi’s letter addressed to Palatine Tamás Nádasdy’s widow, Orsolya Kanizsai, dated 19 April 1566.¹⁴ In this letter Zrínyi calls Sziget the bastion of many provinces, and asks for help. Taking into consideration the “survival of Christianity”, he asks the addressee to send riflemen and some “remarkable persons” for the defense of the castle. He declares that “we have decided ... to lock ourselves up in this fortress, our wish being ... to serve our sweet, doomed country with our blood, and, in the event, by risking our lives”. These lines, written four months before the siege, show that by this time Zrínyi had already decided to hold out to the bitter end. The letter effectively combines the humanist topos of *propugnaculum*

12 Ioannes Sambucus, *Obsidio Zigetensis An. M.D.LVI*. Viennae, 1558. For its English translation, see *Egy elfeledett ostrom / Remembering a Forgotten Siege*, 157–166 (the Latin original: *ibid.*, 183–190).

13 For the original Latin text and its English translation, see *Egy elfeledett ostrom / Remembering a Forgotten Siege*, 177–182, 149–155.

14 Emil Hargittay (ed.), *Régi magyar levelestár XVI–XVII. század. Vol. 1*. Budapest, 1981, 147–150.

Christianitatis (the bastion of Christianity) with the idea of service to the country and self-sacrifice, concepts which will become important themes in literary and historical works written after the siege.

Mythicization in the Spirit of Late Humanism

After his death Zrínyi came to be a representative of the Christian hero resisting the Ottomans to defend his country, praised by literature, historiography, fine arts and family traditions.¹⁵ Some humanist topos of national destiny and the allegorical interpretation of Zrínyi’s figure can be detected as early as in the first literary works related to him. Several German, French and Spanish newsletters, leaflets and newspapers reported the siege, the fall of the fortress and the deaths of Süleyman and Zrínyi shortly after the events.¹⁶ These reports sometimes had the same text but with a different title, and were often illustrated. For example, one German newsletter narrates the defeat, Zrínyi’s death and the sending of his head to the emperor based on information from the imperial camp at Győr. Another newsletter, dated 29 September 1566, communicates the detailed report of a *hajdú* (Hungarian footman) who survived.

Simultaneously with the publication of these newsletters, Miklós Istvánffy composed a Latin-language verse-epitaph on 21 November 1566.¹⁷ After serving as a soldier under Zrínyi in the months prior to the siege, Istvánffy calls Zrínyi the honour of Pannonia, the only hope for the decaying country; let the Dalmatian coasts, the Triballs, Illyrians, Dacians, the Danube and the sea testify to his greatness. He also mentions that the Turks sent his head to his children, who buried it fittingly in a marble tomb. Even though his body was killed, his reputation and glory would never fade. This epitaph can be considered the earliest dated literary treatment of the topic.¹⁸

Paul Schede Melissus, who had been appointed *poeta laeratus* by Ferdinand I two years earlier and later became an outstanding figure of German neo-Latin

15 Erzsébet Király, ‘Az európai keresztény hős mítosza és a szigetvári hős’, in András Laczkó (ed.), *Zrínyi Miklós emlékezete. A Szigetváron tartott II. Zrínyi-tanácskozás anyaga (1991. szeptember 26–28.)*. Kaposvár, 1991, 31–37.

16 Ilona Hubay (ed.), *Magyar és magyar vonatkozású röplapok, újságlapok, röpiratok az Országos Széchényi Könyvtárban 1480–1718 / Feuilles volantes, gazettes et pamphlets hongrois ou relatifs à la Hongrie, conservés à la Bibliothèque nationale de Budapest 1480–1718*. Budapest, 1948, 55–58.

17 Nicolaus Istvánffy, ‘Epitaphium Nicolai comitis de Zrinio, qui 8. die Septembris a. 1566. in Zigeth a Turcis est interfectus’, in Nicolaus Istvánffy, *Carmina*. Ed. by Josephus Holub and Ladislaus Juhász. Lipsiae, 1935, 26–27.

18 Flóris Holik, ‘Istvánffy Miklós mint költő’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 32 (1922) 140–146.

poetry, was serving in Maximilian II's camp at Győr.¹⁹ He commemorated Zrínyi in three Latin occasional poems in which he functionalized his figure for different purposes.²⁰ The first poem is a 16-line epigram written shortly after the event, in which the author eulogizes Emperor Maximilian and calls Zrínyi a hero deserving fame and military glory for dying while courageously fighting for his country.²¹ The second, entitled *In P.C.* and dedicated perhaps to Pantaleon Candidus, a late humanist German poet and preacher, recalls the captain's head rolled into a cushion, which the author claims to have seen himself.²² The same motif is recycled in the third poem, in which he praises Georg Farensbach's military merits.²³ Farensbach was first in Emperor Maximilian's service, and then became a general under István Báthory. Commemorating the siege of Sziget, here Schede alleges that as a soldier he actually held Zrínyi's severed head in his hands.

Like the 1556 siege, that of 1566 was also recorded in a Hungarian-language verse-chronicle entitled the *History of Losing Sziget*.²⁴ It is substantially shorter than the first, but it too reflects Tinódi's influence, and the author may actually be the same. It does not refer back to the previous siege and provides poorer and less accurate information than the *hajdú's* already mentioned report. Nevertheless, it includes several international narrative motifs and some earlier unknown details. For instance, it mentions that, as one of the four "terrible things" that took place before the last siege, soldiers killed one another's wives

19 Wilhelm Kühlmann, Robert Seidel and Hermann Wiegand (eds. in collaboration with Christof Bodamer et al.) *Humanistische Lyrik des 16. Jahrhunderts. Lateinisch und deutsch*. Frankfurt/M., 1997, 753–861, 1395–1483; Eckart Schäfer, 'Paulus Melissus Schede (1539–1602). Leben in Versen', in Paul Gerhard Schmidt (ed.), *Humanismus im deutschen Südwesten. Biographische Porträts*. Sigmaringen, 2000², 239–265; Wilhelm Kühlmann, *Vom Humanismus zur Spätaufklärung. Ästhetische und kulturgeschichtliche Dimensionen der frühneuzeitlichen Lyrik und Verspublizistik in Deutschland*. Ed. by J. Telle, F. Vollhardt and H. Wiegand. Tübingen, 2006, 323–353.

20 György Gömöri, 'Az 1566-os év és Zrínyi Miklós Paul Melissus költészetében', in József Jankovics (ed.), "Nem sülyyed az emberiség!" *Album amicorum Szörényi László LX. születésnapjára*. Budapest, 2007, 305–308, accessed 5 June 2016, www.iti.mta.hu/szorenyi60.html.

21 Paulus Schede Melissus, *Schediasmata poetica*. Frankfurt/M., 1574, 11–12.

22 Paulus Schede Melissus, *Schediasmata poetica. Pars I*. Paris, 1586, 66–68; Wilhelm Kühlmann, 'Eruditio und Pietas. Das literarische Lebenswerk des Zweibrücker Superintendenten Pantaleon Candidus (1540–1608)', in Idem, *Gelehrtenkultur und Spiritualismus. Studien zu Texten, Autoren und Diskursen der Frühen Neuzeit in Deutschland. Bd. II*. Ed. by Jost Eickmeyer and Ladislaus Ludescher in collaboration with Björn Spiekermann. Heidelberg, 2016, 105–122.

23 Paulus Schede Melissus, *Carmina duo*. Rostock, 1594, A4.

24 Unknown author, 'Sziget veszeserül való Historia', in Áron Szilády (ed.), *Régi Magyar Költők Tára XVI. század. Vol. 6: 1560–1566*. Budapest, 1912, 300–311, 420–425.

so that the Turks should not have them; one of the soldiers killed his own wife. This motif is known from ancient historiography: In *Bellum Iudaicum* [The Jewish War], Flavius Josephus narrates the suicide of the defenders of Masada. A particularly brave woman fights to the death at her husband's side. The motif of women as heroic defenders is present in several historical and literary works related to the 1552 siege of Eger.²⁵ The poet enumerates a total of nine attempts to storm the castle, and the number of Turks increases as he proceeds, finally exceeding the real number several times over. Süleyman's chagrin at seeing his military failures is a recurring motif; it was this anger and distress that caused his illness and subsequent death, which was kept secret for three days. All this clearly indicates that the mythicizing of the scale of the battle had begun.

According to the poem, the defenders left two beggars at the gates before the last attempted storming. The beggars were wearing clothes filled with gunpowder and they set themselves on fire, causing the death of "countless pagans". It barely mentions Zrínyi, whose figure is not yet heroized. Uniquely among others, the poet claims that Zrínyi did not participate in the final battle, because he had been injured in the eighth assault. He was lying on his deathbed and was found by a janissary, who kept his death secret from the pashas for three days and was later beheaded for so doing. The poem claims that only those 25 defenders survived who hid in the reeds. The Turks first sent Zrínyi's head, wrapped in red velvet, to their Buda camp. It was kept there for three days, washed in wine and vinegar, and then some delegates took it to the Hungarian king together with a threatening message. The closing part emphasizes that Sziget was the only fortress that the Turks occupied "with valour" for they "could not obtain anything with lies". This poem is of great importance as parts of it were later integrated into some Latin and Hungarian poetic accounts.

The most detailed contemporaneous report in prose was made by Ferenac Črnko/Cserenkó Ferenc, Zrínyi's chamberlain, who survived the siege; he was held in Ottoman captivity, and after his release he recorded the events in Croatian.²⁶ Črnko's narrative is diary-like but it does not show the same level of detail everywhere. He talks about the events leading up to the siege, the defense preparations, and quotes verbatim the oath taken by Zrínyi and the defenders. Moreover, he describes the important battles, enumerates the losses on both

25 Péter Lőkös, 'Az "egri nők" motívum kialakulása a magyar és az európai irodalomban', *Studie Agriensia* 27 (2008) 45–60; Julia Papp, 'A vitéz szigetvári nő(k) a 16–17. századi hazai irodalomban és történetírásban', in István Bitskey et al. (eds.), *In via eruditionis. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Imre Mihály tiszteletére*. Debrecen, 2016, 384–393.

26 Ferenac Črnko, 'Podsjeđanje i osvojenje Sigeta', in Milan Ratković (ed.), *Opsada Sigeta. Vol. I*. Zagreb, 1971, 1–27.

sides, and mentions the role that noblemen played in the defense. Furthermore, he presents Zrínyi's preparations for the sortie on 7 September in detail, quotes his words and depicts the circumstances of his death.

Črnko's text was translated into Latin by the Laibach-born humanist Samuel Budina. The Latin version, published in Vienna in 1568, was entitled *Historia Szigethi* [The Story of Sziget], and was commissioned by Johann Khisl von Kaltenbrunn, counsellor to the emperor and vice-captain of Krajina.²⁷ Budina gave a long title to the work, in which he calls Sziget the strongest bastion in the whole of Slavonia. In addition, in the first paragraph (which he wrote himself) he places the castle somewhere in the Slavonic border region. This must have been done at Khisl von Kaltenbrunn's demand in order to support royal absolutism.²⁸ The translator re-worked the text, in some places adding new pieces of information, in others omitting parts. To take an example, he decreased the South Transdanubian lesser nobility's role in the defense. He elevated the style of presentation to a more elegant and polished level, translated the Turkish words into Latin, and provided Slavonic or Latin versions of geographical and proper names. In Zrínyi's motivational speech before the last sortie there appears the aphorism referring to the obscene gesture of "showing our middle finger to the enemy".²⁹ This aphorism dates back to antiquity and can even be found in Erasmus' *Adagia*, but there is no original version of it in Črnko's Croatian text as we know it today. The Latin version narrates Süleyman's death and its concealment and based on antecedents from Antiquity, it lists miraculous phenomena. It then recounts that Zrínyi's head was severed, displayed to the public, sent to Buda and Győr, and finally buried in Csáktornya (Čakovec). Along with Budina's preface and Zrínyi's epitaph, the volume also contains three Latin poems about Zrínyi. The epitaphs and laments represent him as a symbol of perseverance and sacrifice for the sovereign, for Domus Austriaca, and for the monarchy, and they set him and the siege as an example to follow.

Up to 1570, the Latin version had two German and two Italian translations published in Augsburg, Vienna, Torino and Venice respectively. The translations

27 Samuel Budina, *Historia Szigethi, totius Sclavoniae fortissimi propugnaculi, quod a Solymano Turcarum Imperatore nuper captum Christianisque ereptum est, ex Croatico sermone in Latinum conversa per M. Samuelem Budinam Labacensem*. Viennae, 1568; Imre Molnár (ed., transl. and notes), *Budina Sámuel históriája magyarul és latinul Szigetvár 1566. évi ostromáról*. (Szigetvári Várbaráti Kör kiadványai, 6.) Szigetvár, 1978.

28 Lajos Rúzsás and Endre Angyal, 'Cserenkó és Budina', *Századok* 105 (1971) 57–69.

29 Gábor Petneházi, 'Egy kevésbé heroikus gesztus? Zrínyi újjának mikrofilológiája, avagy a comma Zrinianum', in Enikő Békés, Péter Kasza and Réka Lengyel (eds.), *Humanista történetírás és neolatin irodalom a 15–18. századi Magyarországon*. Budapest, 2015, 66–73.

were re-published several times until the 19th century, a fact which also contributed to international familiarity with the events. The Latin text became a primary source of further historical and poetic treatments of the topic.

Črnko's report was the source of Brne Karnarutić's *Vazetje Sigeta grada* [The Taking of Sziget Castle] (before 1573, first edition: Venice, 1584), an epic poem in four parts, dedicated to Zrínyi's son György.³⁰ Karnarutić treats the report in an independent and inventive way: He edits, omits, condenses, modifies the content and intensifies the twists in the plot. He inserts fictitious dialogues into the text, increases tension, and summarizes the lessons in aphorisms in the margin. Further devices of re-writing include allusions to ancient authors, above all, Vergil, and to this he adds the imitation of epic patterns, images and topoi offered by Marko Marulić. Compared to Črnko, it is an original idea on Karnarutić's part to consider the Ottomans to be God's punishment for the sins committed (like robbing the poor, oppressing orphans and widows, or abandoning the Catholic religion), but this thought was already wide-spread in contemporaneous Hungarian literature. This assumption, along with the foreseeable fall of the Ottoman rule, would constitute the basis for Miklós Zrínyi's epic poem in the 17th century.

An example of neo-Latin historical epic is the poem *De capto Zygetho historia* [A Story of the Capture of Sziget] written by Christianus Schesaeus, a Lutheran clergyman from Saxon Transylvania.³¹ The poem was published in the four-book epic poem entitled *Ruinae Pannonicae* [The Decay of Pannonia] in Wittenberg, 1571, together with another on the siege of Gyula.³² The dedication in verse addresses Ferenc Forgách, bishop of Várad (Oradea), and that in prose addresses István Báthory, prince of Transylvania. The poem, which consists of more than 500 lines, shows a number of correspondences with the Črnko–Budina text and with Ferenc Forgách's historical work which is shortly to be discussed. Schesaeus employs Vergil's technique of writing epics, and uses varied rhetorical devices. He takes several phrases from the *Aeneid*,

30 *Zrínyi énekek. A szigetvári hős Zrínyi Miklós alakja a szomszéd népek költészetében*. Transl. by Károly Kiss, pref. by Gyula Ortutay, notes by D. Sztóján Vujicsics. Budapest, 1956, 19–55; György Frankovics (ed.), *Zrínyi énekek és feljegyzések. Horvát, szerb, bosnyák és szlovák népi énekek*. Pécs, 2002, 52–86.

31 Christianus Schesaeus, 'Ruinae Pannonicae', in Idem, *Opera quae supersunt omnia*. Ed. by Franciscus Csonka. Budapest, 1979, 290–310.

32 In the same year, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the siege, a mourning oration on Zrínyi and two epitaphs on his captains were published by Johannes Liubicz, canon of Breslau: S. Katalin Német, 'Zrínyi Miklós, a szigetvári hős gyászbeszéde, Farkasics Péter és Horváth György epitáfiuma (1571)', *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 120 (2016) 621–630.

but Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Sallust can also be detected.³³ Zrínyi is depicted as a stoic Christian hero who was prepared to die, a worthy adversary for Süleyman. Apart from these two persons, he does not refer to anyone else by name.

Disregarding historical sources and earlier literary accounts, he increases the number of defenders to six thousand, but narrates only three attempts at storming and two sorties. In order to clarify the points of view of Süleyman and Zrínyi, he inserts pairs of fictitious dialogues and letters into the plot. Just like in ancient historiography, he uses speeches to describe the characters. Several scenes, including Zrínyi's speech before the siege and the preparations for the sortie, are presented in the same ways as in the Črnko–Budina text. Zrínyi's firmness is in sharp contrast with the sultan's emotion-governed personality. Seeing the failure of the attempts at storming and the enormous losses, Süleyman curses the builder of the castle. His death, like Herod's, is the result of emotional overstrain, as stated in the Hungarian-language poems as well.³⁴

Scheseus speaks of the mixed ethnic composition of the defenders, considers Sziget the gates of Italy and the shield of Austria; he calls Zrínyi the bulwark of Vienna and the protector of Christianity, thereby emphasizing the importance of the event in Europe. He gives a detailed picture of Zrínyi's preparation for the last siege. He efficiently develops motifs familiar from verse-chronicles: The defenders kill one another's wives and children; one of the wives dies fighting next to her husband. A new and significant theme is that he associates Zrínyi and all the other fallen defenders with Catholic martyrs. Also, he mentions that when Emperor Maximilian received Zrínyi's head he burst out into tears. The poem ends with the Sziget heroes' epitaph and the brief description of Süleyman's entombment.

De capto Zygetho historia also contains Scheseus' epitaph written for Zrínyi, made up of 18 distichs. In this poem he evokes the memory of the heroic Roman patriots Horatius Cocles, Curtius and Atilius Regulus, and praises Zrínyi as the immortal example of self-sacrifice. He closely connects his fame to Süleyman's memory:

Ergo dum memori Solymanni nomen in aevo,
Et tua perpetuo fama vigebit, erit.
Interea placida requiescas conditus urna,
Heros divinis adnumerande viris.

[As long as Süleyman's name survives / Your fame will stand the test of time / Meanwhile, may you rest, laid in the peaceful urn, / Oh hero to be counted among godlike men.]

Of the published historical works using Budina's adaptation as a source, János Zsámboky's is the earliest.³⁵ Zsámboky treats Budina's text freely; taking the court historian's perspective, he makes a selection of the data and changes the sequence of events in some places. He refers to Zrínyi as the "great protector of the Christian world". He asserts that the emperor was planning to send an army of 60,000 soldiers to help the fortress. He touches upon the accusation that Vienna abandoned Sziget, but tries to alleviate it by presenting imperial efforts and military success. He diminishes the weight of the failure by a brief description of the siege. He admits that the defenders were in sore need of military aid, but attributes the defeat to fate.

A different perspective is adopted by Ferenc Forgách, who was first a pro-Habsburg humanist bishop, but was later neglected. Forgách took part in Maximilian I's 1566 military ventures, and was then commissioned by István Báthory to write the history of Hungary and Transylvania between 1540 and 1572. The description of the siege of Sziget is today known from two texts, both attributed to Forgách. The first is Forgách's historical work, the sixteenth chapter of *Commentarii* [Commentaries], first published only in 1866.³⁶ The second is an adapted version, published in a collection dedicated to Zrínyi's memory in 1587, ten years after Forgách's death.³⁷ In the historical work Forgách

35 Ioannes Sambucus (ed.), *Antonii Bonfinii Rerum Ungaricarum Decades quatuor cum dimidia. His accessere Ioan. Sambuci aliquot Appendices*. Francofurti, 1581, 831–834. Cf. *Aus dem Tagebuch des kaiserlichen Hofhistoriographen Johannes Sambucus*. Ed. by Hans Gerstinger. Graz, Wien, Köln, 1965, 20 (Zsámboky's note on the letter of Zrínyi to the emperor from 21 July 1566).

36 Ferenc Forgách, *Magyar története 1540–1572*. [*Rerum Hungaricarum sui temporis Commentarii*] Forgách Simon és Istvánfi Miklós jegyzéseikkel együtt. A herczeg Esterházy-féle kéziratból. Ed. by Fidél Majer, pref. by Ferenc Toldy. Pest, 1866, 295–352. Cf. Ferenc Forgách, *Emlékirat Magyarország állapotáról Ferdinánd, János, Miksa királysága és II. János erdélyi fejedelemsege alatt*. Ed., notes, introd. by Péter Kulcsár, transl. by István Borzsák. Budapest, 1982, 242–3054.

37 Petrus Albinus Nivemontanus (ed.), *De Sigetho Hungariae propugnaculo. (Zrínyi-album)*. Wittenberg, 1587. Facsimile edition with a study by András Szabó. Budapest, 1987.

33 Hermann Wiegand, 'Miklós Zrínyi der Ältere (um 1508–1566) in der neulateinischen Dichtung Siebenbürgens im 16. Jahrhundert. Zum 10. Buch der Ruina Pannonica von Christian Scheseus', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 138–150.

34 Ödön Simai, 'A szigeti veszedelem első költői feldolgozása', *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny* 27 (1903) 127–145; István Hegedüs, *Scheseus Ruinae Pannonicae című epikus költeménye*. Budapest, 1916; Ilona Bitay, 'Christian Scheseus irodalmi munkásságának magyar vonatkozásai', in Elek Csetri, Zsigmond Jakó and Sándor Tonk (eds.), *Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok*. Bukarest, 1979, 70–77.

illustrates the chaos dominating the Győr camp, and the disregard for the Hungarian magnates. When presenting Zrínyi he does not leave his earlier haughtiness out of account. He calls the fallen Sziget, together with Gyula, the “fortress and key to Christianity”. By doing so, he – like Zsámboky – applies the topos “bastion of Christianity” to Zrínyi and Sziget, and considers both to be the bearer of Hungary’s vocation to Europe.³⁸ He mentions the soldier who took the news of the fall to the Győr camp, and who may be a source of his narrative. He presents the most important events of the siege in a condensed manner, and describes the conditions, blaming the imperial court for not having provided a sufficient number of soldiers in the border fortress. He briefly narrates the sortie and says that by his loyalty and self-sacrifice Zrínyi finally made up for his earlier violent deeds.

Roughly the first half of the 1587 version shows correspondence with this first work of Forgách. However, the negative description of Zrínyi was omitted from the later version, and was replaced by new material emphasizing the heroism of the defenders and Zrínyi. These include the already mentioned stories about the slaughtered women and the wife fighting with her husband, Zrínyi’s last speech, which bears resemblances to Budina’s text, and the motif of the letter which the Turks dictated to Zrínyi’s sons’ captured trumpeter in an attempt to persuade the captain to surrender. Although this last motif is lacking in Hungarian and Western European sources, it can be found in the historical work of Selaniki Mustafa, who himself participated in the siege.³⁹ Moreover, the descriptions of the sortie are totally different in the two versions. The adapter omitted any negative remarks made about the Habsburgs and inserted an excerpt from Paolo Giovio which denies any accusations concerning Zrínyi’s murder.

The historical, literary and artistic traditions of the 16th century are closely brought together in the volume *De Sigetho Hungariae propugnaculo* [On Sziget, the Bastion of Hungary] (Wittenberg, 1587), illustrated with three woodcut representations of Zrínyi and his coat of arms.⁴⁰ This collection is an important stage of mythicization: It magnifies the historical significance of the siege, stylizes the figure of Zrínyi and raises it to symbolic heights. It demonstrates the process in the course of which late humanist writers and poets turn the defense and loss of Sziget into victory, the turning point of the Ottoman wars. The volume, which comprises Latin-language prose and poetry composed in

the two decades following the siege, was commissioned by Imre Forgách, Zrínyi’s son-in-law, at his own expense. Moreover, Forgách contributed to the anthology with a manuscript he himself had compiled. The book was edited by Petrus Albinus Nivemontius, a Wittenberg teacher of poetics, and follows a well thought-out programme: It assembles earlier historical writings and poetry related to Zrínyi, and supplements them with more recent ones. The first re-worked excerpt of Ferenc Forgách’s historical work was also published in Wittenberg, including the changes already mentioned; moreover, the volume included Budina’s account, together with the inherited poems.

In total, the book contains about 50 poems, 38 of which praise Zrínyi, and the rest – with one exception – the publisher. They vary in the genres of commemoration, mourning and glorification.⁴¹ Some of the poems were written by Hungarian and Transylvanian noblemen, Calvinist preachers and preceptors living in Ottoman Hungary and by Silesian intellectuals, while others were composed by Hungarians studying in Wittenberg. A shared theme is the comparison of Zrínyi to Roman and Greek heroes; they apotheosize him, referring to him as the “Phoenix of Hungary”, the champion of Christianity, or the victor. The paradoxical idea of the “defeated victor” appears in its most elaborated form in Nicolaus Rhedingerus’ poem:

Ergo quid invictos iactus Romane Camillos?
Quid Fabios? Gentis numina a magna tuae?
Vivi illi: hic etiam avulsa cervice triumphat,
Illi victores: hic quoque victus ovat.

[Oh, Roman, how come you take pride in your invincible Camilli? / And why in the Fabii? Are they the great protecting spirits of your nation? / They are alive; but he [that is, Zrínyi], triumphs with his neck severed. / They are victorious; but he rejoices in defeat.]

Albinus Nivemontius describes Zrínyi’s armaments and speech, and then compares him to a “lion of great courage”, whose merits, perseverance and valour will live eternally. Bálint Szikszai Hellopeus, whose four poems were included in the volume, narrates the events of the siege through Zrínyi. He puts the captain on a par with Hector, who also sacrificed his life for his nation. According to Zrínyi’s fictitious farewell speech, the defenders’ souls will be elevated into heaven by angels. Zrínyi, rising from his grave, warns Hungarian

38 Cf. Lajos Hopp, *Az „antemurale” és „conformitas” humanista eszméje a magyar–lengyel hagyományban*. Budapest, 1992, 111–115.

39 Selânikî Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selânikî*. Ed. by Mehmet İpşirli, İstanbul, 1989, 32–33.

40 Albinus Nivemontanus, *De Sigetho*.

41 András Szabó, ‘Das Zrínyi-Album (Wittenberg 1587) im Lichte der neueren Forschung’, in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 151–158.

nobility: Spare the people, fight and do not trust allies. Mátyás Ilóczy is the only author in the volume who attributes Süleyman's death to Zrínyi. Several of the writers highlight Zrínyi's importance in Europe, and apply the idea of "antemurale" to Sziget. Hieronymus Wolf considers Hungary the bulwark of Germany; Pál Fabricius goes as far as stating that Zrínyi was the "saviour shield of the whole Christian land". The idea also appears that Zrínyi's death was a propitiation to God for the sins the Hungarians had committed, and therefore the country will be preserved from ruin.

This anthology, prepared by international cooperation, elevated the siege of Sziget to the rank of a historical turning point, an event that determined the fate of Hungary and the Christian world. In the meantime, it transformed the capture of the castle into a defeat that broke the Turk's strength, and created the myth of a victorious defeat. It placed the siege into the centre of the Ottoman–Hungarian wars, making it the bearer of Hungary's fate. By applying to Sziget and Zrínyi the topos of Hungary being the "bastion of Christianity" it attributed an European significance to Sziget. The collection shows that around 1587 the memory of Zrínyi and Sziget existed as a representative historical tradition and as a victory-myth in the family and in that segment of Croatian–Slovenian, Hungarian and German intelligentsia which considered it important to keep alive the past and to work out new patterns of identity. Later treatments of the topic, including the poet Zrínyi's epic, were to a great extent inspired by the humanist tradition, the European perspective, the exaltation of captain Zrínyi and the new motifs manifested in the collection. All this also signals that the siege of Sziget went through a quick process of mythicization; by the end of the 16th century the figure of Zrínyi had reached mythological dimensions as a result of the interaction between textual canonization, poetry and historiography.

The Affective Fictionalization of Patriotism

From the beginning of the 17th century, Zrínyi and Sziget played a crucial role in the ideology of independence wars and in the construction of a new national mythology. The most detailed historical description of the siege was made by the royalist patriot Miklós Istvánffy, who continued the tradition of humanist historiography. His work entitled *Historiarum de rebus Ungaricis libri XXXIV* [The 34 Books of the History of the Hungarian People] (Cologne, 1622) was

written more than 30 years after the siege of Sziget.⁴² It discusses the events of the period between 1490 and 1613, and the narration of the siege is placed in the 23rd book. Istvánffy based his work mostly on Črňko–Budina and Forgách, and supplemented these with his own memories and family traditions. He presents the position of Sziget, the structure of the castle, the Turkish camp and the siege in detail. He calls some of the defenders by name, and mentions some typical characteristics of theirs. He reports in detail Zrínyi's death, the fate of his head, and Süleyman's decease. He creates effective scenes, makes Zrínyi speak at length twice, and puts him on a parallel with King Matthias. His major goal is to demonstrate examples of heroic virtues and to propagate the idea of a war to liberate Hungary from Ottoman oppression. He transmits the thought of Hungary being the "bastion of Christianity" with force, and in order to serve this ideal he inflates the story of the siege almost to epic heights. The Hungarian translation of *Historiarum* was made in 1629, but it existed solely as a manuscript until the beginning of our century.⁴³

In the winter of 1647–48 captain Zrínyi's great-grandson of the same name composed his heroic epic poem entitled *Obsidio Sygethiana* [The Siege of Sziget (The Zrinyiad)], which is indisputably the most substantial literary treatment of the subject.⁴⁴ Of the epic poets, Zrínyi was the only one to have been an active soldier and a general. Another special aspect of the work is that Zrínyi elaborated his own family's mythology. The epic is an important piece of European baroque, which summarizes, transforms and expands the earlier tradition, and efficiently incites its later evolution. It consummates and puts into a new poetical dimension the process by which the idea of national independence and the defense of the country and of Christianity inspired heroic epic poetry encouraging anti-Ottoman sentiment in the eastern part of Central Europe.⁴⁵ It was published in Vienna in 1651, in the collection *Adriai tengernek Syrenaia Groff Zrini Miklós* [Count Nicolas Zrínyi, Siren of the Adriatic Sea], which, besides the epic, included lyric poems and heroic epigrams. Zrínyi dedicated the book to "the Hungarian nobility". The poet's younger brother Péter Zrínyi set about translating the epic between 1651 and

42 Nicolaus Istvánffy, *Historiarum de rebus Ungaricis libri XXXIV*. Coloniae Agrippinae, 1622, 467–488. Cf. Miklós Istvánffy, *Historiae de rebus Ungaricis. A magyarok történetéből*. Transl. by László Juhász, introd. and notes by György Székely. Budapest, 1962, 284–290, 338–356.

43 Miklós Istvánffy, *Magyarok dolgairól írt históriája Tállyai Pál XVII. századi fordításában*. Vols. I–III. Ed. by Péter Benits. Budapest, 2001–2009, 236–243, 411–427.

44 Miklós Zrínyi, *Összes Művei*. Ed. and introd. by Sándor Iván Kovács, notes by Sándor Iván Kovács, Péter Kulcsár and Gábor Hausner. Budapest, 2003, 24–222.

45 István Lőkös, *Zrínyi eposzának horvát epikai előzményei*. Debrecen, 1997, 127–151.

1655, and then made the Croatian translation of the whole volume, adjusted to the expectations of the Croatian readership. The work was entitled *Adrianszkoga mora Syrena Groff Zrinszki Petar* [Count Peter Zrínyi, Siren of the Adriatic Sea] (Venice, 1660). This double volume written by the Zrínyi brothers counts as an original literary phenomenon in the age. In addition to its Hungarian and Croatian versions, the epic can now be read in English, French and German.⁴⁶

Based on the pattern of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the epic is divided into 15 books, the number of stanzas symbolically referring to the year of the siege. This number symbolism is present in some other details as well. Besides praising his ancestor and making a memorial for him Zrínyi's principal aim was to call upon the nation to chase the Turks out of Hungary, to suggest a plan of action and to set a moral example for it. Accordingly, the work is strongly impregnated with the intention of persuasion and make-believe. The structure of the plot follows the biblical historical-theological model of "national sin – collective punishment – conversion and possibility of salvation", and Zrínyi varies this theme with the epics of Vergil, Girolamo Vida and Torquato Tasso, making use of the hero-centered structural approach in their works.⁴⁷

His major statements are as follow: 1. The Ottoman conquest is God's punishment for the sins of the Hungarians, namely, religious disunity, moral debauchery, avarice, rivalry, and military indiscipline; 2. The Sziget defenders are not peccants, their moral greatness is unquestionable; 3. Their heroic death is a sacrifice which appeases God's anger; 4. Their defeat is actually a victory that signals the beginning of the doom of the Ottoman Empire; 5. Lost virtues can be revived, through which the Turks are vincible and can be expelled from the country; 6. The prerequisites of liberation are the achievement of national unity and the renewal of military and moral powers.

A central theme of the work is the maxim "one's own defeat is actually a moral victory", well-known from both earlier treatments of the topic and European cultural history. This thought efficiently feeds strategies of encouraging the defeated. National self-criticism constitutes an integral part

46 Graf Nikolaus Zrínyi, *Der Fall von Sziget. Obsidio Sigetiana*. Übersetzt von Arpad Guillaume, mit einer Einleitung von Arpad Markó. Budapest, 1944; Miklós Zrínyi, *The Siege of Sziget*. Transl. by László Körössi, introd. by George Gömöri. Washington, DC., 2011; Miklós Zrínyi, *La Zrínyiade ou Le Péril de Sziget épopée baroque du XVII^e siècle*. (Édition bilingue hongrois-français.) Introduction, traduction et notes de Jean-Louis Vallin, post-face de Farkas Gábor Kiss. Paris, 2015.

47 László Szörényi, 'Der Fall von Sziget im historischen Kontext des europäischen Heldenepos', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 185–197; Farkas Gábor Kiss, *Imagináció és imitáció Zrínyi eposzában*. Budapest, 2012; Gyula Laczházi, 'A szenvedélyek és a költészet hatalma Zrínyi Miklós Syrena-kötetében', in Réka Lengyel et al. (eds.), *Amicitia. Tanulmányok Tüskés Gábor 60. születésnapjára*, Budapest, 2015, 127–139.

of the narration: Its main role is to provide an interpretation to history and to one's own self, therefore developing a new national identity.⁴⁸ In the exposition, the enumeration of sins and their contrast with the appraisal of the Hungarians of the past clarifies and explains the conflict of the epic poem:

His holy name receives no adoration,
The blood his pure Son shed no veneration,
Good deeds of charity no exhortation,
Nor yet the old their due consideration.

But with much foul language, moral turpitude,
Hatred and jealousy men strive to delude,
Indulging in slander and in conduct lewd,
With theft and murder their ways long, long imbued. (I, 9–10)

Zrínyi modifies and fictionalizes the historical data to an extent never seen before, and further increases the symbolic importance of the siege. The presentation of Süleyman and Zrínyi is initially realistic, but in the course of events the sultan is gradually transformed into a tyrant, a demonic figure, whereas Zrínyi becomes a mythical hero, a martyr, and a subject of glorification. The captain's fate is sealed by the words of the crucifix which bows before him three times during his prayer. At the end of the epic, his apotheosis gives a logical and realistic closure of the evolution of his character and faith. Although law always stands by Christians, the poet draws complex characters on both sides, and attributes admirable qualities to several Turkish figures. Zrínyi's description is especially elaborate and multifaceted. In the final battle, anachronistically, Süleyman dies by Zrínyi's hand, and the soul of the deceased captain, together with those of the defenders, is taken to heaven by angels.

The main characteristics of the narration include the delaying and variation of events, the sophisticated use of devices creating tension, and the detailed presentation of the shift in power relations between the two camps. In addition to the inserted detours and episodes, an important role is also attributed to dreams foreshadowing the events, supernatural elements, reiterative allusions to the denouement, speeches pre-empting the moral, fictitious monologues woven into the plot and to prayers. The poet condenses the ten attempts at

48 István Bitskey, "Mindenképpen emberek s vitézek legyünk" (Zrínyi Miklós nemzetképe), in Ildikó Horn et al. (eds.), *Művészet és mesterség. Tisztelegő kötet R. Várkonyi Ágnes emlékére*. Vol. I. Budapest, 2016, 349–360.

storming into one, and inserts a tragic romance story and wedding scene on the Turkish side. Tools of make-believe feature details of weaponry, clashes, the accurate representations of the soldiers' mentality, epithets, duels, speeches of exhortation and farewell, dialogues, and discussions. The themes of poetic reflections include, for example, the size of the Turkish army, the sultan's character, fortune, revenge, the divine guidance of human fate, and poetic craftsmanship.

Christian doctrine, along with the Christian–Muslim opposition, is a powerful engine of the events. Zrínyi puts any criticism of Germans and the expression of negative sentiment towards the ruling Habsburg dynasty into Turkish mouths. He takes a substantial part of his historical data from the Črnko–Budina text, Istvánffy's work, and from the poems of Karnarutić and Scheaseus.⁴⁹ Zrínyi's knowledge of antique epic traditions, 16th- and 17th-century poetics, and theories of *ars historica* literature can also be detected in the background, not to mention the inspiring effect of humanist panegyric and the Wittenberg-published anthology. The central elements of Zrínyi's *ars poetica* include the close interconnection of rational analysis and heroification, political message and moral philosophy, fiction and imitation, and the pursuit of subjectivity and polysemy. It is important to remark that the epic fits into the context of the lyric poems in the volume, and can therefore be interpreted only in synthesis with them, as part of a composition carrying moral philosophical implications.⁵⁰ There is a close connection between the subjective narrative strategy of the epic and the concept of emotions in the lyric poems. The moral and political ideal represented in the work is attested by the personal demeanour of the narrator.

The Siege of Sziget is the expression of a secularized and self-critical concept of nation that overcomes confessional identity, and it is also a collection of topoi relating to national history. It evokes the parallelism in the destinies of the Hungarian and Old Testament Jewish peoples, the thought of Pannonia's fertility (*fertilitas Pannoniae*), and the idea of collective culpability. Zrínyi provides us with a community-building interpretation of the past and a political-military overview of the present, indicating the actions to follow. His categories of values are most succinctly expressed in captain Zrínyi's speech addressing his soldiers:

49 Rezső Szegedy, 'Zrínyi Miklós és a Szigeti veszedelem a horvát költészetben', *Irodalom-történeti Közlemények* 25 (1915) 291–299, 406–430.

50 Gyula Laczházi, 'Poetik der Leidenschaften in Zrínyis barocker Gedichtsammlung', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 174–184.

We may not fight for any other cause,
But only for our Christian land adored,
And for our wives, our children, our liege lord,
To save our lives and honour draw the sword. (V, 27)

The values listed here will later be completed by the ideas of *fama bona* (good faith), *virtus* (virtue), *humanitas* (humanity), *gloria* (glory), *laus* (praise) and *aeternitas* (eternity). Zrínyi transforms negative history into positive memory, building upon supra-national values that point towards the future.⁵¹ In the same way that Zrínyi's work and its Croatian translation was inspired by Karnarutić's epic, Pavao Vitezović Ritter drew freely upon *The Siege of Sziget* when writing his epic *Odiljenje Sigetsko* [The Farewell to Sziget], first published in Linz in 1684, and then re-printed in Vienna the following year.

Cult-creation in the Context of National Resistance and Habsburg Imperial Ambitions

Following Zrínyi's epic poem, more than 80 years passed in Hungary without the publication of any new literary work on the siege of Sziget. The reason behind this is twofold: On the one hand, it would have been extremely difficult to compete with the standards set by Zrínyi. On the other hand, the historical context did not favour the literary treatment of such a patriotic subject, considering that these were the last decades of Ottoman occupation and the Habsburgs imposed absolutism on the country.

The events of the Ottoman wars in Hungary provided an almost unexhaustible source to school drama in the 18th century. There is only one literary work related to Zrínyi that we know of from the first half of the century, namely a drama written by Andreas Friz, a Spanish-born Jesuit of Pozsony (Bratislava).⁵² This Latin-language play was staged in Pozsony in 1738, and was originally intended as a school drama for rhetorical practice, but was then presented in the residence of the archbishop as well. The same year the text was published in print with the support of Imre Esterházy, archbishop of Esztergom. The play consists of 380 hexameter lines; it is divided into three acts, and played by only five actors. Unconventionally, Friz provides a familial frame to the conflict

51 István Bitskey, 'A nemzetsors toposzai a kora újkori magyar irodalomban', in István Bitskey, *Mars és Pallas között. Múltszemlélet és sorsértelmezés a régi magyarországi irodalomban*. Debrecen, 2006, 37–60; Idem, 'Die Topoi des nationalen Selbstverständnisses bei Zrínyi', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 159–173.

52 Andreas Friz, *Zrinus ad Sigethum*. Posonii, 1738.

between apparent failure of faith and unswerving patriotism. He is the first playwright not to have staged Süleyman.⁵³

In the first scene Friz places Zrínyi's son, ready to sacrifice his life for the country, in Sziget castle. However, two of the castle soldiers warn him against the futility of continuing the fight and offer him an image of a heroic future, with the intention of using him to persuade Zrínyi to surrender to the Turks. In the second scene, the son categorically rejects the plan first, but finally they manage to persuade him and he asks his father to surrender. Zrínyi appears only in the third scene as an *athleta Christi* (Christ's champion), and imitates God and Abraham in being willing to sacrifice his son. He resists fiercely, vetoes all the arguments, and finally convinces his son and the soldiers that the only possibility is patriotic self-sacrifice. In the closing scene they are all waiting for death together. The play lacks spectacular battle scenes and allegorical frame-plays. Friz elevates the self-sacrifice of Zrínyi and his son to a sacral level. His major aim is to emphasize the Christian defenders' moral superiority and to present the idea of patriotism efficiently.

The play was translated to Hungarian in 1753. Its significance is increased by the fact that we know of 14 Zrínyi-themed Jesuit performances from the period between 1740 and 1770, staged in more than ten places, some of which could have been presentations of this play or a version of it.⁵⁴ This means that the number of Zrínyi-related performances in Hungary exceeded those dealing with the 1552 siege of Eger. In the second part of the 18th century, Zrínyi was commonly represented as an example of Christian faith, loyalty to the king, and patriotism. The Jesuit Mátyás Platthy's short Latin-language epic poem entitled *Nicolaus Zrinyius* was published by the poetics students of Nagyszombat (Trnava) University in 1751.⁵⁵ The main source of the work was Istvánffy. There is strong emphasis on the presentation of the Turkish and Hungarian camps, supported by a variety of tropes. Zrínyi is depicted as the fearless hero who is proud of his soldiers, but inflicts capital punishment on oath-breakers. For courage and power Platthy compares him to Hector. In his last words, Zrínyi holds up his own fate as an example to his descendants, and dedicates his soul to God, king and country.

Following a temporary stagnation, the late 18th century sees the evolution of a real literary Zrínyi-cult in the frame of which he became a symbol of national

53 Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, 'Zrinius ad Sigethum. Théorie dramatique et pratique du théâtre dans l'oeuvre d'Andreas Friz S. J.', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 242–257.

54 Imre Varga and Márta Zsuzsanna Pintér, *Történelem a színpadon. Magyar történelmi tárgyú iskoladramák a 17–18. században*. Budapest, 2000, 145–152.

55 [Matthias Platthy], *Nicolaus Zrinyius honori ... neo-baccalaureorum, dum in Alma Archi-Episcopali Universitate S. J. Tyrnaviensi Prima A.A. L.L. et Philosophiae Laurea donatur. Promotore R. P. Ignatio Sajgho A poesi Tyrnaviensi dicatus*. Tyrnaviae, 1751.

resistance, a desire to bring back lost grandeur, aspirations for independence, and, on the other side, the symbol of Habsburg imperial patriotism. The next Hungarian-language treatment of the topic was published in 1779, 120 years after Zrínyi's epic. Sergeant János Kónyi composed a "Hungarian military romance" in verse, a genuine Zrínyi-adaptation, adjusted to the expectations of the age.⁵⁶ It reflects a profane life philosophy: He abandons epic conventions and supra-natural motifs, and elaborates on the romantic strand. He compares Hungary to an oak tree which no element of nature can damage. The figure of Zrínyi is de-emphasized to some extent, and the theme of collective sacrifice is accentuated. The language is characterized by popular expressions, richness of imagery and ironic humour.

From the 1780s on, there are more and more Hungarian pieces of literature on the subject. In his 1782 epigram entitled *Gróf Zrínyi Miklósról* [On Count Miklós Zrínyi], Pál Ányos invokes Zrínyi and the Sziget heroes to protect Hungary against Joseph II's rule.⁵⁷ In the spirit of patriotism, he calls upon the nation not to cry over Zrínyi's grave, for "no champion's heart can be soaked in tears". Andreas Friz's already mentioned play was rewritten into Hungarian hexameter by Dávid Baróti Szabó in 1786. Baróti Szabó accentuated patriotic characteristics, gave Hungarian names to the two soldiers, and featured a third soldier, who was not there in the original and who also bore a Hungarian name.⁵⁸ The author made several versions of the translation, and utilized the figure of Zrínyi in his own poetry. The rewritten text was published in print three times within a short period. Around 1790, Gedeon Ráday made an attempt to re-write Zrínyi's epic in hexameter of which only 23 lines were finished, the rest re-worked in prose.⁵⁹ A merit of Ráday is that he tried to keep to the epic as far as content is concerned. The main objective of the above-mentioned adaptations is to strengthen national sentiment, culture, and the national aspect of literature, and also to refine the language.

The 1790s see the appearance of monarchist and Josephinist writers of German, Austrian and Hungarian origin who sympathize with the political system and put Zrínyi in the service of Habsburg interests in their German-language works, which were also translated into Hungarian. The first to mention is Clemens Werthes, professor of arts at Pest University, who wrote a three-act tragedy

56 János Kónyi, *Magyar hadi román, avagy gróf Zrínyi Miklósnak Sziget várban tett vitéz dolgai*. Pest, 1779.

57 Pál Ányos, 'Munkáji', in *Magyar Minerva*. Vol. 1. Bécs, 1798, 34.

58 Dávid Baróti Szabó, 'Zrínyi Szigetnél. Szomorú játék', in Dávid Baróti Szabó, *Vers-koszorú*. Kassa, 1786, 7–36.

59 Gedeon Ráday, 'Gróf Zrínyi Miklós Szigeth Vára veszedelmének köttetlen beszédre-való fordítása', in *Magyar Museum*. Vol. 3. Pest, 1789, 212ff.

entitled *Niklas Zrini, oder die Belagerung von Sigeth* [Miklós Zrínyi or the Siege of Sziget] in 1790. The Hungarian translation of the play was published the same year.⁶⁰ The plot follows the triple scheme of “ebbing hope of victory – undertaking a patriotic act – preparation for death.”⁶¹ The first act centres around Zrínyi’s exhortative speech and the oath-taking. The captain’s son appears here as well, and he is erroneously believed to have been taken into Turkish captivity. The motif of the “generous” Turkish offer in return for surrender is repeated several times. Zrínyi’s son’s sweetheart features as a new character. The second act treats the issues of indecision, regained unity, and the evasion of tragic conflict. Zrínyi receives a letter stating that he will receive his son back on condition that he surrenders the castle. The captain and his wife clash: Whereas the wife would sacrifice anything for her son, Zrínyi considers honour more important than life. In his second speech, which constitutes the climax of the play, Zrínyi persuades his mutinous soldiers, and then his son returns unexpectedly, bringing the news of Süleyman’s death. The third act starts with a silent night scene, the defenders say goodbye to one another, and prepare for death. In his last speech, Zrínyi evokes the obligations of honour, and the play ends with Zrínyi’s wife blowing up the gunpowder tower with the Turkish intruders in it.

In contrast with the protagonists of earlier works, here Zrínyi acts less consciously, his portrayal fluctuates. Werthes keeps to historical sources only partially, he attributes certain functions to other characters, and may have borrowed some of the motifs from Friz’s play. The defenders are represented as a group united by affectionate family ties, and the motif of love also appears. In keeping with the expectations of the era, Werthes privatizes and emotionalizes the story. The structure is closed, and the idea of dying for honour and glory is in evidence from the very beginning. No conflict evolves between national and private interests, any such events diverge into another direction. The real prize is the preservation of one’s inner liberty in death. While praising Hungarian patriotism, Werthes emphasizes the idea of loyalty to the king.

60 Friedrich August Clemens Werthes, *Niklas Zrini, oder die Belagerung von Sigeth. Ein historisches Trauerspiel in drey Aufzügen*. Wien, 1790; Friedrich August Clemens Werthes, *Zrínyi Miklós, avagy Sziget várának veszedelme. Egy históriai szomorú-játék, három felvonásokban*. Transl. by I[stván] Gy. Cs[épan]. Komárom, 1790. The critical edition of the Zrínyi-dramas by Werthes, Kind, Pyrker and Körner: Kálmán Kovács (ed.), „Zrínyi, Zrínyi, Zrínski”. *Szigetvár német-magyar emlékezete 1790–1826*. Debrecen, 2017.

61 Robert Seidel, ‘Siegreiche Verlierer und empfindsame Amazonen. Friedrich August Clemens Werthes’ Trauerspiel *Niklas Zrini oder die Belagerung von Sigeth* (1790)’, in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 258–273.

From National Romanticism to the Critical Reflection of Memory

The decades at the turn of the 1800s witness a real rebirth of the subject: Zrínyi was one of the first to be canonized as a heroic and national ideal. In the course of the 19th century, Szigetvár became a famous memorial site of the Hungarian past, together with Eger and Mohács. Likewise captain Zrínyi was promoted as the symbol of moral standards set for Hungarians and became part of the national identity. The intentions and ambitions of the present were to a great extent projected onto idealized figures of the past, including Zrínyi. In the first half of the 1800s the captain and the 17th-century Zrínyi-epic were considered of political importance, and were interpreted accordingly. In the second half of the century, Zrínyi was elevated to a cult figure symbolizing anti-German and anti-Austrian patriotism. The topic opened the way for sentimental expansion, the elaboration of tragi-comical situations, and the implementation of humour in the popular genres of the age. Most adaptations can be described in terms of tension between historical authenticity and exemplification, stereotyping and individualization, and normative evaluation and narrative methods of triggering sympathy.

The inspirational power of literary tradition is demonstrated by the fact that Zrínyi remained the bearer of different aspirations and complex meanings up until the end of the century; at the same time his figure underwent gradual secularization. At the turn of the century, it became more and more the practice to mention his name, soul or spirit and weave them into poems in different correlations. For instance, Mihály Csokonai Vitéz uses Zrínyi to criticize followers of German trends (*A borital mellett* [Sipping Wine]), and Dániel Berzsenyi does so to encourage the degenerate nobility fighting against the French in his poem *Az ulmai ütközet* [The Battle of Ulm]. András Fáy refers to Zrínyi in one of his tales which criticizes noblemen who still bask in the glory of their past.⁶²

The same topic often appears in German romanticism as well. The first autonomous work of this kind was Johann Fridrich Kind’s novelized historical narrative, published in Pest in 1808 and translated into Hungarian in 1817.⁶³ This sentimental story is made up of 22 chapters, and it centres around general

62 Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, *Költemények. Vol. 3*. Ed. by Ferenc Szilágyi. Budapest, 1992, 163, 777; Dániel Berzsenyi, *Művei*. Ed. by László Orosz. Budapest, 1999, 68–69, 540; András Fáy, *Állatmesék*. Ed. by Magda Erős, postscript by József Szaunder. Budapest, 1964, 72–73.

63 Johann Friedrich Kind, *Nikolas Zriny, oder die Belagerung von Sigeth. Ein historisch-romantisches Gemälde ...*. Pest, 1808; Johann Friedrich Kind, *Gróf Zrínyi Miklós, vagy Sziget várának ostromlása*. Transl. by Péter Csery. Pest, 1817.

Lőrinc Juranics' love for Stephanie. Zrínyi is against this marriage, and dismisses Juranics after the secretly held wedding. He and his wife take an oath of allegiance and are allowed to stay in the castle. During the siege, Stephanie finds a manuscript on Juranics's table: It is the story of Irene, a woman loved by Süleyman (*recte* Mehmet II the Conqueror) but beheaded for the janissaries' sake. She reads it, realises what is going to happen to her, but when her husband returns home he cannot kill his wife. They die together in the sortie, and this is when the figure of Zrínyi steps forward.⁶⁴

Some of the attempts of dramatization are less successful because they lack the possibility of development for the heroes and other characters. The majority of authors went back to the same sources either directly or indirectly, and they did not aspire to an original treatment of the historical material. All this entailed that the action and the motifs were to a great extent similar. János László [Johann Ladislaus] Pyrker, a Hungarian-born Austrian Cistercian, later archbishop of Eger, represents Zrínyi as the father of his soldiers and a husband worrying about his family in his five-act tragedy entitled *Zrini's Tod* [Zrínyi's Death] (Vienna, 1810). The captain knows he cannot expect any help from the king, but his loyalty is unswerving. A novel romantic motif is that he places his wife and daughter into safety in a subterranean corridor. Moreover, he is in the centre of the sortie scene. The play lacks Hungarian national spirit, instead it accentuates the ideal of an aulic Austrian imperial patriotism and dedication to the Habsburg sovereign.

Pyrker's drama was studied by Theodor Körner when writing his own five-act Zrínyi-themed tragedy, staged in Vienna in 1812.⁶⁵ Unlike the plays of Werthes and Pyrker, Körner features other places besides Sziget, namely the Turkish camp and Belgrade. The historical context, the beginning of the liberating wars against Napoleon, appears only indirectly.⁶⁶ The dramaturgical position is organized around the double opposition between politics and private life, and between friendship and inimicality. Zrínyi's daughter Ilona and one of his soldiers, Juranics, become entangled in a romantic relationship. Zrínyi and Süleyman are primarily concerned with their own glory and immortality, and

64 Cf. Bernhard Walcher, 'Zrinyi im historischen Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts und der deutsche Philhellenismus. Joseph Alois Falckhs Roman Paul Juranitsch oder Die Türken vor Sigeth (1828)', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et litterae*, 304–315.

65 Theodor Körner, *Sämtliche Werke in vier Bänden. Bd. 3. Einleitung von Hermann Fischer*. Stuttgart, 1880, 3–94.

66 Kálmán Kovács, 'Theodor Körners Zriny. Die Wiedergeburt des Nikolaus Zrínyi um 1800', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 285–303; Kálmán Kovács, 'Die Rezeption von Theodor Körners Zriny und die Konstruktion von nationalen Mythen', *Zagraber Germanistische Beiträge*, Beiheft 9 (2006) 109–122.

both validate their actions by appealing to the sense of community. At the climax Juranics stabs his sweetheart so that she should not be taken by the Turks. Körner borrowed the closing scene from Werthes' play, the blowing up of the gunpowder tower. The play is based on the triple idea of patriotism – culture clash – romantic death-wish.⁶⁷ The theme of "one's own defeat is actually a moral victory" also appears in the piece. The work is found at the intersection of different paradigms, and Körner uses keywords of various ideological content. It is perceptible that he accentuates the ideals of God, country and people more than the notion of the sovereign. By suggesting an almost fraternal relationship between Zrínyi and his soldiers Körner essentially represents a bourgeois-plebeian-patriotic tendency.

The play saw several editions and was translated into English and French as well. It was translated into Hungarian by three persons and received sharp criticism. Its reception differed in nature and dynamism in Hungary, Croatia, Austria and Germany. Its Croatian translation, published in 1840, served as the basis of the libretto of the 1876 Croatian national opera. The play became part of the Croatian national identity, and was regarded as a national symbol for a while in Hungary as well. Pál Szemere's translation, made in 1818 but published only in 1826, had an influence on the Hungarian theatrical language.⁶⁸ Szemere modified the ideological complexion of the drama, in the sense that he tried to eliminate plebeian allusions.

Ferenc Kölcsey, a prominent critic of the time, wrote an elaborate criticism on the play reflecting its reception in contemporary Hungary.⁶⁹ According to Kölcsey, Körner's Zrínyi is a "German Zrínyi", and he calls him to account for his knowledge of historical and current Hungarian affairs. Moreover, Kölcsey thinks that Zrínyi is overshadowed by Süleyman in the play, although the latter is not a dramatic character either. The captain's character varies between leader, patriot and father, but all in all he stays static. Kölcsey reproaches Körner for faults in dramaturgy, and considers Zrínyi's epic poem better upon comparing the two works. Nevertheless, he admits that the author "wanted to glorify our Zrínyi and nation despite being a foreigner". Kölcsey's criticism, together with Szemere's translation, was re-published in 1879.

67 Roman Luckscheiter, 'Theodor Körners Zriny-Drama und die Faszination von Tod und Niederlage', in Kühlmann and Tüskés (eds.), *Militia et Litterae*, 274–284.

68 Theodor Körner, *Zrínyi. Vitézi szomorú játék öt felvonásban*. Ed. by Dániel Petrichevich Horváth. Kolozsvár, 1819; Theodor Körner, 'Zrínyi. Tragoedia öt felvonásban', in *Élet és Litteratura*. Transl. by Pál Szemere. Pest, 1826, 6off.

69 Ferenc Kölcsey, 'Körner Zrínijéről', in Idem, *Minden munkái. Vol. 3*. Ed. by József B. Eötvös, László Szalay and Pál Szemere. Pest, 1842, 173–228.

Ferenc Kazinczy, a leading figure of the Hungarian language and literary reform, published the poet Zrínyi's works in 1817,⁷⁰ and in 1825 wrote a historical treatise entitled *Zrínyi Miklós Szigetvárat* [Miklós Zrínyi in Szigetvár].⁷¹ First he meditates on the notion of heroism, then presents Süleyman's preparations and the castle, followed by Zrínyi's portrayal. An important part of the treatise is Zrínyi's fictitious speech in which he highlights loyalty to religion, to the king, and to his "valiant companions". In his fragmentary poem *Szigetvár*, Kazinczy prepares the description of the soldiers' deaths by applying the well-known repertoire of early Romanticism to it.⁷²

The heyday of Romanticism, or more precisely the 1820–30s, was a period when several poems treated the figures of both the captain and the poet Zrínyi, parallel to the strengthening of the nobility's resistance (aiming at independence from Austria) and to the commemorations in Szigetvár starting in 1833. The majority of these poems represent different versions of patriotic poetry that evolved in the Reform Era. Mihály Vörösmarty's elegy entitled *Szigetvár* (1822) is an outstanding example of the period.⁷³ It was written after the poet's visit to Szigetvár following his trip to Mohács and Sikkós. Zrínyi's epic was one of his preferred readings and had a substantial influence on his poetry. In a letter of 1822, he refers to Hungary as "Zrínyi's country". At the beginning of the poem, Vörösmarty evokes the venue and the battle fought there. Like the 17th-century poet, he contrasts the captain's heroism to the present that has forgotten the "prospering of the country" and has wasted both money and glory:

Te a' hazáért halni tudál; dicső!
Mi nem tudunk már érte csak élni is;

[You could die for the fatherland; it was glorious! / Now we can't so much as live for it.]

By evoking the figure of Zrínyi, Vörösmarty calls attention to the helplessness of his generation and to the failure of the fight for independence. In 1828, he composed a long elegy on the poet entitled *Zrínyi*, which starts with Hungary's isolation and loneliness.⁷⁴ It is characterized by the mixture of poetry and

70 Ferenc Kazinczy (ed.), *Zrínyinek minden munkái*. Vols. I–II. Pest, 1817.

71 Sámuel Igaz (ed.), *Hebe*. Bécs, 1825, 3–22.

72 Ferenc Kazinczy, *Összes költeményei*. Vol. 1. Ed. by Lajos Abafi. Budapest, 1879, 168.

73 Mihály Vörösmarty, *Kisebb költemények*. Vol. I. (1826-ig). Ed. by Károly Horváth. Budapest, 1960, 192–193, 601–603.

74 Vörösmarty, *Kisebb költemények*, Vol. II. (1827–1839). Ed. by Dezső Tóth and Károly Horváth. Budapest, 1960, 22–24, 302–309.

prose, a sharp, occasionally retributory, pathetic tone, and the pain and disappointment felt when contrasting the unworthy present with the glorious past. Vörösmarty becomes absorbed in the poets' visions, evokes the heroes of the epic poem, and explains that whereas the poet Zrínyi of the 17th century revived a glory historically given, he himself does not enjoy the earlier conditions of combining patriotic act with poetry, of experiencing battles and depicting them at first-hand. Vörösmarty does not treat captain Zrínyi separately; rather he emphasizes the defenders, a group of people prepared to make any sacrifice for their country. Another example that contrasts the active past with the whining present is his epigram entitled *Sziget* (1830).⁷⁵ Varying Ányos' well-known theme, he asks his compatriots not to weep over the fall of the castle, for

Ott hős Zrínyi körül bátor daliái nyugosznak:
Gyöngé panasz szózat bántja nagy álmaikat.

[There around the heroic Zrínyi sleep his valiant knights: / a feeble lament will disturb their great dreams.]

In the same way as Vörösmarty, Kölcsey also features both Zrínyis. In his philosophical poem *Vanitatum Vanitas* (1823), he mentions Zrínyi of Sziget with painful irony.⁷⁶ In his spiritual-moral testament connecting social duties with love for the country, entitled *Parainesis* (Exhortation, 1834), he puts him on a par with Leonidas and Regulus.⁷⁷ In what remains of his particularly gloomy poems *Zrínyi éneke* [Zrínyi's Song] and *Zrínyi második éneke* [Zrínyi's Second Song], it cannot be decided with certainty which Zrínyi they evoke as a symbol of patriotism.⁷⁸ In the former, a person of no concrete identification answers the repeated questions of a wanderer; the reason behind pessimism is that "the glorious nation ... / ... lives but in name – it is no longer here!" The speaker can be the ghost of either Zrínyi, but it cannot be excluded that the dialogue is "the inner dialogue of a soul in constant fight with ... itself".⁷⁹ The second poem is even stronger in tone, passing judgement on "the wild hordes

75 *Ibid.*, 88, 400–401.

76 Ferenc Kölcsey, *Versék és versfordítások*. Ed. by G. Zoltán Szabó. Budapest, 2001, 116–118, 788–811.

77 Ferenc Kölcsey, *Parainesis Kölcsey Kálmánhoz*. Ed. by Gábor Szigethy. Budapest, 1981.

78 Kölcsey, *Versék és versfordítások*, 157–158, 176–177; Adam Makkai (ed.), *In Quest of the 'Miracle Stag': The Poetry of Hungary. An Anthology of Hungarian Poetry in English Translation from the 13th Century to the Present*. Vol. 1. Chicago, Budapest, 1996, 196–198.

79 Kölcsey, *Versék és versfordítások*, 939–948.

now attacking Hungary ... her own children, once all nursed by her". An argument for evoking captain Zrínyi in the poem is the concept that "patriotism proven by action and heroic death ... must have been a telling example ... when contrasted with today's squalor".⁸⁰

In the 1840s, poets criticizing the present day and Austrian oppression raise their voices more than ever before. János Garay evokes the image of the German-led army delayed near Győr, procrastinating over the liberation of Sziget, in a narrative poem entitled *Zrínyi Miklós Szigetnél* [Nicholas Zrínyi at Sziget] (1846).⁸¹ He calls upon the Hungarians of the present to "save" Zrínyi. In Garay's poetry Zrínyi is the symbol of liberty and the fight against Austrian rule. Likewise Sándor Petőfi also recalls captain Zrínyi in his poem *A nemzethez* [To the Nation], written in August 1848, a critical period in the Hungarian war of independence.⁸² He articulates his programme clearly when saying

Haljunk meg, ha nem szabad már élnünk,

...

Legyen olyan minden ember, mintha

Zrínyi Miklós unokája volna,

[Let us die if we may no longer live / ... / Let every man be, as it were / Miklós Zrínyi's descendant.]

The 1850s witness the accentuation of romantic elements in the literary treatments of the subject, and the well-known aspects of loyalty to king and religion are given prominence for a short time. Traces of a different perspective, together with new motifs, can be detected in Mór Jókai's four-act tragedy in verse entitled *A szigetvári vértanúk* [The Martyrs of Szigetvár] (1860)⁸³ and in Kálmán Mikszáth's *Új Zrínyiász* [New Zrinyiad], an 1898 novel.⁸⁴ Jókai begins to dismantle the paradigm of heroic remembrance, and Mikszáth completes this process, both writers heading towards a modern way of commemorative thinking. In Jókai's tragedy, it is not the battle between Zrínyi and Süleyman that is emphasized, but the double conflict between Zrínyi's sister Anna and Szelim,

80 *Ibid.*, 1013–1025.

81 János Garay, *Összes Munkái*. Vol. 2. Ed. by József Ferenczy. Budapest, 1886, 53–57, 461–462 (here with the title: *Zrínyi Miklós 1566. szept. 7.*).

82 Sándor Petőfi, *Összes Költeményei*. Budapest, 1972, 959–961.

83 Mór Jókai, *Drámák (1843–1860)*. Ed. by Andor Solt. Budapest, 1971, 585–672.

84 Kálmán Mikszáth, *Összes Művei*. Vol. 10: *Regények és nagyobb elbeszélések*. X. 1897–1898. Ed. by István Király. Budapest, 1957, 47–216.

who denied his Hungarian identity and converted into a Muslim, and between Zrínyi and Szelim.

Szelim used to be Anna's fiancé, but was taken into Turkish captivity, where he became the sultan's favourite. Süleyman sends his message to Zrínyi by the hand of Szelim; in it he asks the captain not to sacrifice himself for the West, but to ally himself to the Turks instead. The message is followed by various attempts at bribery, but Zrínyi rejects everything. It is not difficult to see that the allusions are actually Jókai's references to servants of the Austrian political system and to careerists who deny the country for economic advantage.

In the second act, Zrínyi charges Anna with escaping from the castle and reporting on the defenders' situation. In the second scene of act II, Szelim sees a dream of Anna appearing in the form of Hunnia, holding a shield with Hungary's coat of arms on it. The ending is typical of Romanticism: Thanks to Anna's influence Szelim reconverts into a Hungarian, and the two young people become reconciled before they find death in the explosion. Jókai's major aim is to criticize those who turn against the interests of the country, at the same time expressing his hope that turncoats can be good patriots after all. Moreover, the play represents the interaction of different literary treatments on significant Ottoman sieges: The love between the renegade and Anna is parallel to that of Omar and Ida in Vörösmarty's epic poem *Eger* (1827). The Austrian censorship permitted the staging of the drama only after certain omissions, but even in its mutilated form it was one of the most frequently played pieces during absolutism, for its function as a wake-up call to the nation. For decades, it was considered a representative national drama. It became part of commemoration ceremonies; it was staged at gala performances on the 300th anniversary of Zrínyi's death and at the millennium.⁸⁵

Mikszáth's novel is a persiflage on the fake national identity prevailing in the last decades of the 19th century, and on the self-deceiving lies of social and political affairs and modes of thinking in that era. It is simultaneously an important attempt to renew the literary Zrínyi tradition. The writer follows the scheme of Ruritanian romance, placing an imaginary historical situation into the centre of the story.⁸⁶ He employs the strategy of historiographic metafiction, and uses this event of the past only as a starting point; he develops, updates and makes a parody of it, taking it into the direction of the anecdotic and absurd. In actual fact, he brings forward the Day of the Last Judgement, and places the resurrected Zrínyi and his companions into the reality of late 19th-

85 György Eisemann, *Mikszáth Kálmán*. Budapest, 1998, 60–66.

86 Eszter Tarjányi, 'Mikszáth Ruritániája. A populáris irodalom hazai előzménye', *Irodalom-ismeret* 1 (2016) 44–59.

century Hungary. The news of the resurrection reaches Rome, and the pope greets Zrínyi, the champion who “died a heroic death for the Christian faith”, in an encyclical.

As they go along Zrínyi and his companions get into more and more absurd situations. The Parliament discusses their case several times, and Mikszáth features well-known political figures of the age. They organize big events to celebrate them; on their way to Budapest they attend a performance of the Jókai-play written about them. When Zrínyi is in need of money, he surrounds a country house with his men, turns out the proprietor, and locks undesired persons into the cellar. The defenders listen to the romantic-nationalist historian Kálmán Thaly's presentation on the *kuruc* era. As a bank director, Zrínyi commits fraud in the capital, and has the indignant shareholders slaughtered. He is charged with disorderly conduct and is imprisoned along with his soldiers. The king pardons them, and orders Zrínyi to Vienna for a meeting. He appoints him counsellor, presents him with the castle of Vajdahunyad, and offers him lavish yearly allowances. In the Epilogue the gift castle is defended against the Cossacks, the sortie is re-enacted, and the attackers kill the captain for a second time. His soul is taken to heaven by angels, a direct reference to the poet Zrínyi's epic poem.

In Mikszáth's work, Zrínyi provides only the frame of the authorial intent and becomes the protagonist of a politic satire, his myth allegorically projected onto fiction. In sketching his character, Mikszáth could have relied on the current historiographical results of the second part of the 19th century. Nevertheless, his view on history is more differentiated and sensitive than that of most contemporaneous historians.⁸⁷ He does not question heroism, but associates it with qualities and behavioural patterns which are unacceptable in the modern world. By contrasting the past with the present, it becomes possible to depict the key figures of late 19th-century political, social and cultural life in Hungary, and also to criticize the Parliament and public affairs. The major devices of criticism and the representation of society are alienation, imitation, analogy, disguise, humour, satire and irony. The question proposed in the “Zrínyi-debate” in Parliament, that is, whether it is possible to reconcile moral ideals of the 16th century with those of the present, is left open by Mikszáth. He amusingly creates a novel playing-field for this national theme: Instead of nurturing national identity, he emphasizes the parodistic de-mythologizing tendency, and contrasts it with the mythology of a heroic past.

87 Péter Hajdu, 'A szigetvári hős feltámadása. Mikszáth és az Új Zrínyiász', *Forrás* 42:5 (2010) 44–49.

His re-writing of history is effortless and free of pathos, a wish to develop a new historical identity.

With the title and the end-quotation Mikszáth signals that he considers his work and its epic antecedent the imitation of both historical and literary texts. By projecting different timelines on one another, he reflects on the question of the narratability of the past, and raises the issue of creative versus imitative memory. While placing the subject of the narrative into the context of historical representation, he gives a critique of the ceremonial commemoration of national history. He implies that what memory maintains, and what the present wants to pride itself on – being the heir to that certain past – cannot be reconciled with a concrete experience of the past. He recognizes that the interpretation of history is always determined by the positions of the present. The genuine relationship to history is an illusion, the past can at best survive as an inclusion in the present. Nationalist-conservative criticism revealed its incomprehension of the novel saying that “the pathos of [Zrínyi's] martyrdom does not tolerate humour of any sort”.