

FERENC RÁKÓCZI II AND *CONFESSIO PECCATORIS*

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Ferenc Rákóczi II (1676–1735), Prince of Transylvania, is much better known today in France, Hungary, Poland and Turkey than he is in England, although between 1703 and 1711 his name appeared frequently in the English press and international historiography gives an account of him. In the last quarter of 1704, for example, the *Weekly Review of the Affairs of France* (edited by Defoe) on several occasions gave detailed accounts of events in the War of Independence that he was waging in Hungary. For years the English government played a high-level role as an intermediary between the warring parties, and its extensive diplomatic correspondence testifies that even after the war had failed developments were attentively followed.

Rákóczi was, however, not just a politician and military leader but also a writer. His principal work, *Confessio peccatoris*, is a less well-known item that had its genesis at an intersection of various cultures in early eighteenth-century European autobiography. It is at the same time an original literary work, a unique source for history and the history of thought, and a moving personal document. Rákóczi was a contemporary of Defoe, Swift, Steele and Addison, but differed from them radically in that he represented a concept of literature which was by that time seen as rather archaic. The compound relationship of prince, private individual, seeker after God and narrator is one of the factors that contributes to a peculiar literary quality, as are exile as the basis of genesis and the context of French-Austrian-Hungarian-Turkish thought. There is a close interaction between the characteristics of structure, content, style of nar-

ration and genre, the author's political and ethical demands, his upbringing, the presumed expectations of the age, its systems of symbol and association, together with his eventful life, his personality, and the choice of the Latin language.

What gives the work its literary importance is firstly that it occupies a special place in the process from memoir and religious confession to autobiography and worldly confession. Its subjective quality belongs to history before Richardson and Rousseau, and illuminates from a new angle the way in which the literary, spiritual, philosophical and political currents of the early eighteenth century, the traditions of the genre and rhetorical registers overlaid one another. Likewise there are present in it a lively, frequently projected self-portrayal, a confrontation with the past, the author's intention to justify himself and need of literary stylisation of personal characteristics. The basis of his motivation and his objective – with certain limitations – may be more precisely compared with the motivation and objective of the author of *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*. His criticism of the society of the French court is essentially in tune with the corresponding observations in *Lettres persanes*, and will bear close comparison with the relevant parts of the *Mémoires* of Prince Saint-Simon.

A peculiar blend of autobiographical, religious and other types of writing, an amalgam of fiction and reality, constitutes the work, which is fundamentally Augustinian and Jansenist in flavour. Rákóczi endeavours to go beyond political discord and denominational difference and yokes together divergent spiritual ambitions. He encloses in a unified framework experiences and abstract ideas, fictionalises and poeticises part of the facts of biography and makes delicate use of various techniques for dealing with time. *Confessio* records the turning in upon itself of an originally worldly, extrovert personality, gives expression to the multiple identities of writer, politician, observer and moralist, and creates part of historical and spiritual symbolism. He sheds new light on the transformation of the concept of the proper sphere of the ruler in the first third of the eighteenth century, and promotes the better understanding of works inspired by the interweaving of national politics and religious piety.

From the historical point of view *Confessio* is relevant because it was composed in France and Turkey during one of the most turbulent periods in European history, the years after the end of the War of Spanish Succession; for a while the author played a role in international politics at the head of an anti-Habsburg struggle supported by Louis XIV. The work reflects from a personal standpoint a number of important questions in the European politics of the time. It covers the problems of the ending of Turkish rule in Hungary, which had lasted for a century and a half, the country's new political institutions and its social and economic situation, and sheds light on the struggles for the integrity of the Hungarian state, its modernisation and presence in Europe in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth. It depicts the political alternatives, displays Rákóczi's network of international contacts, and refers to the positions adopted by contemporary European politicians. It analyses from a princely perspective the changes in absolutism and discusses the attempts that were made to create new balances of power and the backgrounds to peace agreements.

In the depiction of historical and political events we are given more than once an inside analysis of the situation and a sketch of society. The author constantly comments on the diplomatic and governmental principles of France, England, Austria, Poland and Russia, and relationships with Italy and Turkey. It is beyond doubt that from the international political point of view Rákóczi overestimated the significance of Hungary, Transylvania and his own role, and in his plans frequently disregarded the realities of the policies of the great powers. From a Hungarian perspective, however, his figure has been for centuries a pillar of belief in the sovereignty of the state, in patriotism and liberty, and together with the Freedom War that he led he has been accorded a place of distinction in the nation's self-esteem and memory.

By this work Rákóczi created a personal variant of religious-autobiographic Neo-latin prose, full of emotion, which in many respects points to the psychological novel and individualisation. *Confessio* can be placed in the process in the course of which Jansenism – together with other seventeenth-century theological and

spiritual tendencies, primarily Puritanism and Pietism – stimulated a significant autobiographic literature and played a part in the literary endeavours aimed at the repression of rhetoric, the advancement of poetics, individual inventiveness and the freedom of the emotions. While his other work, the *Mémoires*, which gives an account of the Freedom War, also documents emotions that are about to break out but are stifled, in *Confessio* there are both traces of a sentimentalism that liberates the emotions and attempts at broadening sensibility. If literary works may be compared in broad terms, the significance of *Confessio* in Hungarian autobiographic literature is certainly no less than, for example, that of Samuel Pepys' *Memoirs* [...] *Comprising his Diary*, some half-century earlier and completely different in character, for English literature.

The first word of the title refers to the Augustinian model followed by numerous other Hungarian and Transylvanian memoirists, among them Miklós Bethlen, and indicates Rákóczi's choice of genre. The title expresses the connection of the work with the Christian tradition of self-examination and at the same time emphasises the difference from that of the memoir. Likewise, its peculiar combining of numerous religious and lay genres and types of text, which closes certain literary processes, points ahead in several respects. The radical nature of self-revelation, the religious piety and rhetorical form allude to Augustinian inspiration, but Rákóczi cannot create the structural unity, continuity of narration, thorough self-examination, and the philosophical, theological and spiritual-affective intensity that characterise Augustine's *Confessiones* and *Soliloquia*.

In his work Rákóczi sets himself several goals. Prominent among these is better knowledge of himself; the analysis of reasons, incitements and motives; the revelation and explanation of thoughts and feelings; justification and apologia for himself and the search for forgiveness; teaching the reader and his moral upbuilding. His declared aim is to show that self which, despite its errors, has found the "truth" of its destiny. He looks back from that "truth", defined in historical, cultural, political, theological and literary terms, and arranges and presents the events of his life in accordance with it. He subordinates and adapts his old "sinful" life from the perspective of

the new life following his conversion, with the intention of making it known and accepted. The work is at once a confession and a political defence, the hidden aim of which is to struggle with the past and, in a certain sense, to change it.

This compound setting of goals and the various elements adopted from various genres stretch the traditional framework of confession. Rákóczi refers to both the name and the text of Augustine's *Confessiones*, borrows from it theological views, rhetorical devices and biographical motifs, and builds all these in creative fashion into his work. The main differences are the greater proportion of historical content, the static characterisation of some of the minor figures and the use of a princely style of speech in addition to *sermo humilis*. *Confessio* is above all the depiction of internal maturing, taking shape and struggle in a quite similar way to, for example, Heinrich Seuse's *Vita* and Teresa de Avila's *Libro de su vida*; its genre is the embodiment of autobiography in confession, an attempted synthesis of confession and autobiography, an individual form of "spiritual autobiography".

Rákóczi primarily intended his work to be an allegory and a moral. This is basically identical with the attitude of the seventeenth-century Hungarian memoirists, and differs on a number of points from the Augustinian tradition. Rákóczi joins the Augustinian confession-model to the range of Hungarian and Transylvanian memoir-tradition which is close to confession, full of personal and national-patriotic self-examination and framed in religion. This last the work completes and in some respects closes it. In addition, Rákóczi adopts and unifies elements from the genres of societal, historico-philosophical and statesmanly reflection, political propaganda, essay, polemic, journal, historiography, novel, travelogue, short story, prayer, meditation, psalm paraphrase, complaint and mirror for princes.

Account has to be taken of the influence of the I-literature connected to Port-Royal, including memoirs of Augustinian-Jansenist inspiration, autobiographies and other narrative forms. Some of these appeared in print, some were published in the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first of the eighteenth, and even Rákóczi may have read some of them. There are several such mem-

oirs, Jansenist in flavour and with literary pretensions, which reveal the motivations and thoughts that lead to actions and mark stages on the way from a worldly career to spiritual conversion. There is a close bond in terms of ideas, genre and presentation between the autobiographies, confessions and memoirs of Jansenist inspiration and Rákóczi's *Confessio*. The relationship is enhanced by the fact that the Jansenist works of autobiography – like the confessions of Puritan and Pietist inspiration linked to other denominations, such as, for example, John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* – played a not insignificant part in the rise of the eighteenth-century I-concept and contributed to the genesis, subjectivisation and differentiation of lay variants of the confessional genre.

The connection of *Confessio* with Rákóczi's *Mémoires* creates a different set of questions. The relationship between the two defined in the dedicatory letter to *Mémoires* – «Je vous ai, dans les livres de mes *Confessions*, exposé devant les hommes l'intérieur de mon coeur. Ici je rapporterai aux hommes devant vous mes actions extérieures.» – is a writer's plan which in practice was not realised. In *Confessio* the narrator repeatedly shuns the role of the historiographer; Rákóczi focuses on his internal history and explains certain events by his mistakes. *Mémoires*, by contrast, for the most part, narrates external happenings or outlines them. *Confessio* is self-explanatory, whereas *Mémoires* cannot, for the most part, be understood without *Confessio*.

The genesis of *Confessio* is closely connected to the history of Rákóczi's family, his own political ambitions and his radically altered situation following his exile. He was born into one of the wealthiest families in Hungary and Transylvania, four members of which had been princes of Transylvania in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His father, Ferenc I, had been involved in an anti-Habsburg rising in 1670, and four months after his son's birth had died suddenly under circumstances which remain unclear. His mother, Ilona Zrínyi was the daughter of Péter Zrínyi, who was beheaded for his part in the said rising, and granddaughter of the poet, prose writer and military leader Miklós Zrínyi, whom the Rhine Alliance had wished to become leader of the Christian armies united against the

Turks; a biography of him was published in London in 1664. Six years after the death of her husband she married Imre Thököly; from 1678 he led first a rising, then a campaign against the Habsburgs, while for more than two years she directed the defence of the fortress of Munkács (now Mukachevo, Ukraine) against the imperial forces.

On 1 November 1700 Rákóczi wrote a letter to Louis XIV asking for his support in his political plans. His next letter to Louis was intercepted and went to the Viennese court, as the result of which he was arrested and imprisoned, but he escaped and fled to Poland. In 1703 he returned to Hungary, and with the support of Louis XIV waged war on Leopold I, then on Josef I. On 18 May 1705 Louis recognised Rákóczi as legitimate prince of Transylvania, but the Viennese court, England and the Netherlands did not. After being defeated militarily he again fled to Poland, rejected the compromise agreed in 1711 between the Habsburg dynasty and the Hungarian Estates, together with the offered amnesty, and sailed to France, calling at Hull on the way. Louis allotted him an annual pension, and he lived in the French court under the name of *le comte de Charoche* (after his position as hereditary Lord Lieutenant of the Hungarian county of Sáros).

Rákóczi failed to have his claim to the principality of independent Transylvania validated in the peace talks resolving the War of Spanish Succession. In 1715 the Hungarian parliament stripped him and his companions in exile of all their possessions and declared them banished. In the same year he spent three days in Easter week and the feast of Pentecost with the Camaldulian monks of Grosbois (now Yerres); he rented a house beside the monastery and retired there three days before Louis XIV died. He did general penance and was accepted into the life of the community. It was here that he began to write *Confessio* shortly before Christmas 1716, finishing Book 1 before going to Turkey.

The idea of the work came to Rákóczi at the particularly grievous point in his life when he realised that he had ceased to be an emigrant and had become an outlaw. The starting point of the work is the prince's banishment and his struggle to discover a new purpose in life: having previously played a leading role in his native land he

had been forced to give it up, to abandon his country and his people, and he acknowledged his political errors and moral shortcomings. Rákóczi did not – as did, for example, St Augustine, Rousseau and Goethe – write his confession towards the end of an upward arcing period in his life, but in a transitional period, in the uncertain condition of searching for a new role and preparedness for political activity. This liminal situation – banishment – defines the way in which the work was created, its attitude, the course of its composition and the interlocking and interrelatedness of personal, national and religious questions.

In March 1717 Rákóczi received letters from the sultan and the grand vizier in which they invited him to Turkey, promising political and military support. On 10 October he arrived in Gallipoli (now Gelibolu). He wrote the second and third books of *Confessio* between 1718 and 1720 in Turkey, in Drinápoly (now Edirne), Yeniköy (now a suburb of Istanbul) and in the place where he finally settled, Rodostó (now Tekirdağ), but these too are intellectually the fruit of his withdrawal to Grosbois. The Treaty of Pozsarevác (now Passarowitz) was concluded between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire on 21 July 1718, which again frustrated his political ambitions. In 1718–19 he made futile attempts to influence through diplomatic channels the political and military situation in Europe and the peace talks between the Sublime Porte, the Habsburg Empire and Venice. He recognised the failure of his proposed activity in Turkey and wanted to return to France, but the Duc d'Orléans made it known to him that in the new political situation that was not desirable.

The sources of which use is made in the work include St Augustine's *Confessiones*, the influence of seventeenth-century Augustinianism and Jansenism, and the historical philosophies of Bossuet, Fénelon and René Rapin. Present too are elements of Christian stoicism, Jesuit devotional literature, and an understanding of the concept of the nation, tinged with religion, of Hungarian and Transylvanian origin. Rákóczi invokes more than once a line of the exiled Ovid – *Ludit in humanis divina potentia rebus* (Epist. ex Ponto, IV,3,49) – and very frequently quotes or paraphrases the Bible and Christian phraseology. In contemplative passages use of the Bible

translation of Lemaistre de Sacy and of the works of the Jansenist Pierre Nicole can be detected.

From the literary point of view Rákóczi may have been stimulated by the writings of such as Mateo Alemán, Boccaccio, La Bruyère, La Calprenède, Marguerite de Navarre, Mme la duchesse de Mazarin, Montaigne, Charles Perrault, Racine, Saint-Évremond and Scarron. These, which include a number of memoirs, were all to be found in his library at Sárospatak. Of the library in Rodostó, about a third were works of a Jansenist nature or Jansenist tendency, and so included items by Arnauld, Quesnel, Nicole, Sacy, Le Tourneux, François Paris, Duguet, Pouget and Dusaussoy.

Confessio is chronologically organised, divided into three books representing the chief periods of Rákóczi's life. Book I, which is in literary terms the most finished, deals with his first twenty-six years, from his birth to the years preceding the Freedom War. Book II covers the years 1703–16, that is to say, his life between the ages of twenty-seven and forty, and describes some of the more important events in the Freedom War and the time that he spent in Poland and France. Book III runs from 1717, when he was forty-one, until 1720, the actual time of writing when he was forty-four, and deals with the first four years of his time in Turkey. Despite the difference in the lengths of time accounted for – 26, 14 and 4 years respectively – the three books are roughly equal in length.

In all three books there is a steady alternation of narrative, autobiographic and meditative, reflective passages. Rákóczi switches regularly from objective description of the times in an even-paced narrative style to an emotionally charged lyrical form of expression which blends together national prospects and personal confession when treating of questions of fate, religion, and subjective way of speaking. He often signals in advance the change from one to the other. Descriptions of the frequent removals and journeys increase the variety of the narrative sections.

Further characteristics of the structure are discontinuity, the montage-like arrangement and a constant change and merging of time-levels. Events in the course of life, various experiences, portraits, Biblical stories and spiritual contemplations create a system

the main function of which is to prove that he is one of the chosen and to show the magnitude of the task undertaken. At the start of the second part of Book I there are two longish reflections with separate headings: one on the favourite Jansenist themes of the fall of Adam and the renewal of corrupt human nature, and the other on ideal of the good ruler.

With regard to the limits of the three books the structure is logical, but the description of development towards the attainment of the callings of prince, military leader and politician is at the same time notably brief. The three books and the sections within them are closely interconnected. They are linked by the hidden symbolism of "I" and of the status of child of God, that is, by the idea of the chosen child, the depiction of the movements of the soul, just as by the idea of a political and spiritual return home. They are further joined by the identical reaching back to historicity and the events of personal fate, and the fact that Rákóczi at all times subordinates the narration of memory to the meta-narrative of confessional.

The basis of Rákóczi's self-appraisal is the recognition that an order determined by the Creator rules in the world, and that the wish of the creature is subordinate to the divine will. As narrator he frequently attributes his decisions to the accomplishment of the will of God, but he also reveals reasons, or part of them, that he considers valid. One of the focal points of thought in *Confessio* is the story of rebirths: the title itself alludes to the birth of Jesus, there is a separate meditation on that subject in Book I, and the whole work is shot through with references, allegories, metaphors and symbols to do with Christmas. A second notion is that Rákóczi is a sinful, erring and fallible man, and at the same time is, from his birth, the chosen one of Providence; a prince, who has tried to free his people from foreign oppression. He has now been converted, done penance, received his punishment, and therefore is going to Turkey so as to perform, after the disasters, the task that he interprets as God's new test. Providence, which furnishes the opportunity for the deliberate gathering together and *ad libitum* dissociation of events by meditation and prayer is one of the basic motifs of the work as a whole.

Rákóczi views his career as a process of development, but he presents the phases of it in various ways, with different degrees of detail. He combines the epic designs of accounts of conversion and *via salutis* with the structure of the broken arch of his *curriculum vitae*, while repeatedly calling his life a pilgrimage. The idea of desire for the principality appears frequently. He acknowledges his shortcomings as a military leader and concedes his failures as a politician. The meditations and supplications point beyond themselves; they link events together and evaluate them. He frequently draws parallels between his fate and Biblical stories. At the end of Book III he calls his work a sacrifice, defends it against future critics, and asks God to accept it.

As Rákóczi sees it, history is not a completed process; he puts the fate of Europe, the history of Hungary and his own life consistently into the history of salvation. The apocalyptic view of history appears as part of the religious symbolism which permeates the work. Rákóczi updates and develops further a conception of history, sixteenth-century in origin and widespread in a variety of forms, according to which the Hungarian nation, once endowed by God with all good things, would suffer ruin for its sins until it purged them.

The main elements in policy were the display of the experience of the Freedom War that he waged, its idealism, and the role that international politics played in it. He places particular emphasis in his narrative on the oppression of the Hungarian people by alien powers and the proof of the right to resist that this conferred. He sheds light on the historical reasons for this, criticises the Hungarian aristocracy and the Habsburg rulers, and depicts in detail the duties of the prince. He clarifies the complex relationship between the freedom of the people and that of the Estates, and adopts a stance on the side of the unification of Christian denominations and religious tolerance. He is explicit in recognising that his person has, for the most part, been merely a pawn in the political activity of the great powers. His subjective judgements are often extended to cover historical events and their participants.

Fundamental in the assessment of the authenticity of historical and personal connections is the fictive rhetorical position announced

in the title of *Confessio*: Rákóczi is carrying on a lonely conversation with himself "at the manger of the Redeemer who has been born in his heart". In fact, however, the soliloquy, the fictive life-confession, is much more complex than that, broader in scope and illusory: he is maintaining a dialogue in his many-layered narrative not only with himself past and present, but also with Jesus, God, his contemporaries, other princes and future readers. Reference to these latter is frequent. Particularly instructive from the point of view of authenticity is the place where he states partly contradictory facts about the preliminaries to the Freedom War, and then says that he had persuaded himself, following the teaching of a certain "misguided theologian", that remaining silent, even indeed lying, was permitted if life was at stake.

To some extent, Rákóczi gives a different account in *Mémoires* of events related in *Confessio*. Historical sources do not justify certain details, or actually question them, and he is silent about numerous well-documented events. For example, the biased portrait of his stepfather Imre Thököly (including the story about the snake crawling into his cot – a disguised Hercules-myth applied to himself – and the motif of the attempt at poisoning him) – are literary embellishments to the concept of the work. Rákóczi betrays very little detail of his association with the Polish princess Elżbieta Sieniawska, which he calls "sinful", which went on for years and is evidenced by their correspondence.

To the modern eye the choice of Latin may appear little more than an anachronism, but it makes sense when one bears in mind the religious-theological tendency of the work and the European readership for which it was intended. In eighteenth-century Hungary Latin was reckoned a living language; it was the official language of the state long after Rákóczi's death, and even in the second half of the century items written in vernacular languages were sometimes translated into Latin. Rákóczi was thoroughly familiar with Jesuit Latin, and onto that were layered the Latin of Augustine's *Confessiones*, that of the writings of Hungarian nobility and of French Latin literature, all with their mutual influence. The effect on language and style resulting from French reading material can also be detected.

Confessio is characterised by a high degree of conscious stylisation aimed at giving conviction. There is a clear distinction between the elegant presentation of the autobiographical, narrative passages, in which minute details are treated quite freely, and the style of the meditations – elevated, passionate, sometimes theatrical, pathetic, and enriched with supplications, paratactic structures and repetitions. Rákóczi makes fluent use of both to suit the event or subject in question. The vocabulary is rich and varied, and there are to be found technical words and expressions current in theology, politics, military science and law alike. He generally describes his experiences graphically, observantly, adapting his style to events as they turn out and making varied use of modes of presentation. Descriptions are sometimes emphatically simple, mundane, almost journal entries; the favoured method of summarising vicissitudes is condensation. He frequently quotes exchanges of political views in the form of dialogue, and in meditative passages exploits the possibilities of dialogue structure to the full.

The main characteristic of the manner of narration is the juxtaposition of the rational and the metaphysical, the clash of literary expression and spiritual inspiration, and the mythicisation of narration. The faces of the narrator I and the narrated I blur into one another, the autobiography becomes poeticised. Rákóczi actually creates a fictive face by language, stylistic and rhetorical devices. The voice of the lay narrator blends into the speech of the Christian making confession, the different layers are built up on one another and the fictional elements are integrated most circumspectly, almost imperceptibly. Rákóczi makes skilful use of storytelling techniques as part of the tactics of persuasion. He often expresses political meanings and personal associations by means of religious symbols, allegories and metaphors.

Among the features of the manner of narration are tendencies to simplification, to lyricism and to rhetoric, but we also find subjective reference to the past, emotional continuity, apocalyptic tone and self-stylisation. The nuancing of events and characters is often assisted by brief references and additions. At other times, pages of discussion, commentary or analysis are added to the brief descrip-

tion of an event. Rákóczi's direct, easy-going personality is signalled by the repeated placing of subjective factors in the foreground: other sources too indicate that as prince – untypical for the time – he tried hard to establish close links with his subjects. As narrator he often alters his recollections slightly or deliberately remains silent, as, for example, in his account of his escape from prison. He often refers to choosing between events and to the fact that he is not saying everything that he knows, what he heard, or in what he took part.

A wish to entertain the reader is shown by the miniature portraits and well-rounded anecdotes and descriptions of nature – self-contained, effectively drawn and full of tension. Rákóczi paints observant, sensitive pictures, of his stepfather, nobles taking part in the Freedom War, Louis XIV, people in the Church and imperial officials. These portraits form a loose series; they bring out characters, are in the main painstakingly executed, and express the narrator's personal sympathies and biases.

The religious symbolism that runs through the entire work is an important means of self-expression. Rákóczi adopts a spiritual interpretation of the Bible in accordance with the Port-Royal tradition and represents that variant of typological thought in which the allegoric role of the prefigurations was reinforced, the reference of the figures to individual persons came into the foreground (subjectivisation), and the rhetoricisation of the typology was achieved. He regularly uses biblical *loci* to refer to himself and draws parallels between his own fate and Biblical events and parables.

The Jesus – Rákóczi symbolism is fundamental: the notion of following Christ, going by the Way of the Cross, the bearing of crosses. His favourite Biblical images, for example, are the people of Israel wandering in the wilderness, Moses, the good shepherd, and the good Samaritan. In the image of the flock with and without the shepherd Rákóczi applies to himself one of the favourite contemporary notions of the theory of the state. At the end of Book I, before leaving for Turkey, he quotes the example of David being led by the Lord among the Philistines. As in *Mémoires*, he uses the symbol of Caesar's crossing the Rubicon, taken from Roman history, to parallel his own crossing of the Polish-Hungarian frontier that marked the

start of the Freedom War. The contrast between Jesus' poverty and Rákóczi's former princely wealth is stressed throughout the work.

Part of the stock of rhetorical devices consists of metaphors and forms of thought, images and symbolic motifs based on metaphor. Favourite metaphors, for example, are the theatre and the road, and the wanderer approaching God by a rough, stony road or through a swamp. Rákóczi uses the figure of Proteus as a metaphor for man's innate self-love, which lived in him too. Transitory scenes of loneliness and want form a series of literary motifs, and Rákóczi frequently uses rhetorical devices to arouse sympathy.

After 1720 there may have been more than one manuscript of *Confessio*. The only one presently known, preserved in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, was bound together with manuscripts of two other Rákóczi works, *Aspirationes/Aspirations* (in Latin and French) and *Réflexions sur les principes de la vie civile*. The text of the latter, in which subjects related to *Confessio* are to be found, was completed by Rákóczi in 1722 in Rodostó. Between 1721 and 1723 he wrote *Meditationes/Méditations*, parts of which relate to the body text or some soliloquy in *Confessio*, a number of the motifs and typological patterns of which run through it, and with which parallels of form and views can be found. *Tractatus de potestate/Traité de la puissance* was composed between 1722–25 in Latin and French; like *Confessio*, it is a work of a typological nature; the two share sources in terms of content and attitude and have some topics in common. In a letter to the Camaldulians at Grosbois dated 23 July 1726, in a time of plague at Rodostó, Rákóczi bequeathed his heart to Grosbois (it was sent there after his death) and commended to the monks the reading of *Confessio*.

Two eighteenth-century translations of *Confessio* into French are known, the one complete, the other partial. The former was made by Chrysostome Jourdain, head of the Grosbois house in about 1776. The latter is an adaptation and contains only the part up to the journey to Italy in 1694. It was found among the manuscripts of the Benedictine monk Jean-Baptiste Bonnaud (1684–1758), a former member of the Oratorian community, who died in the monastery at Saint-Germain-des-Près, and is presumed to have been his work.

The Latin manuscript lay hidden for a long time, and *Confessio* was published, in a defective edition, only in 1876. The first Hungarian translation appeared in 1903; a shortened version of Jourdain's French translation, modernised and contaminated with the text of *Mémoires*, appeared in 1977, and a new Hungarian translation came out in 1979. The work has been constantly used in Hungarian historiography and literary tradition since the end of the nineteenth century, and is very often and from many perspectives reckoned a basic and highly esteemed account of Rákóczi's image and time and a primary source of historical value.

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