

B U D A P E S T R E V I E W O F

BIOINKS

A CRITICAL

QUARTERLY

ÁGNES CZAKÓ - LOST ILLUSIONS

PETER WOZNAK ON 19TH-CENTURY POLISH APPROACHES TO WESTERN CIVILIZATION

ESZTER BABARCZY ON THE STATE OF HUMANITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE

CSABA LÉVAI ON THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

ISTVÁN KEMÉNY ON SMALL ENTERPRISES AFTER SOCIALISM

SÁNDOR VÁRI - A CASE OF FEMALE HYSTERIA IN THE 1880s

ZSOLT BÁNHEGYI - IN PRAISE OF CULTURAL OUTPOSTS

ROMAN ZAORAL - ENEÆ SILVII *HISTORIA BOHEMICA*

JÁNOS VÉGH - WARRIORS AND ANCESTORS

BIBLIOGRAPHIA HUNGARICA:

A SELECTION OF NEW TITLES

AT THE

FRANKFURT BOOK FAIR

1999

THE *BRB* GUIDE
TO BUDAPEST

ICONOLOGY AND INTERPRETATION

GÁBOR TŰSKÉS

Az ikonológia elmélete

(A Theory of Iconology)

József Pál, ed.

Szeged: JATEPress, 1997. (Ikonológia és

Műértelmezés Series 1), 347 pp.

A reneszánsz szimbolizmus

Tanulmányok

(The Symbolism of the Renaissance. Essays)

Tibor Fabiny, József Pál, György Endre Szőnyi, eds.

Szeged: JATEPress, 1998. (Ikonológia és

Műértelmezés Series 2), 215 pp.

György Endre Szőnyi:***Exaltatio* és hatalom**

**Keresztény mágia és okkult szimbolizmus egy
angol mágus műveiben**

(*Exaltatio* and Power. Christian Magic and Occult
Symbolism in the Works of an English Magus)

Szeged: JATEPress, 1998. (Ikonológia és

Műértelmezés Series 7), 331 pp.

Iconography in Cultural Studies

Papers from the International Conference

"Iconography East and West,"

Szeged 1993, Attila Kiss, ed.

Szeged: Szeged: JATEPress, 1996. (Acta Universi-
tatis Szegediensis de Attila József Nominatae, Papers
in English and American Studies VII), 212 pp.

Iconography and iconology are perhaps the most significant, dynamically developing fields in art history today. In recent years they have ceased being auxiliary to the discipline and have become, in a sense, complex epistemological models, which cover art history and comprise and enrich several disciplines. Their place can be located at the meeting point of the various disciplines which study pictures (exclusively or otherwise). At the same time,

there have long been disputes about the theory and methodology of iconology, a fast developing and wide-ranging field. These disputes are often heated, not always productive and, not infrequently, they disregard points of view developed on the basis of different traditions. The literature of iconography and iconology is now so large that it has become practically impossible to survey; but in recent years the outlines of a turning point in the history of the discipline have begun to emerge. In its course the role of the field is gradually being reassessed, and the limits and new possibilities of its application are simultaneously becoming visible. The main features of this turning point are: designating the limits of the iconographical and iconological interpretations more precisely than so far; clarifying the influence exerted by the characteristically 20th-century points of view upon interpretation; defining the epistemological position of interpretation; exploring the possibilities of choice between different interpretations; and paying closer attention to the many variations in the relationship between picture and text. In addition, the study of images as a system of historical sources is becoming gradually more complete owing to the methodical investigation of the history of the relationships between the viewer and the painting.¹

The change is also indicated by the fact that there are numerous different parallel approaches in iconology; it is continually developing and finding new areas of use; and it is repeatedly linked and confronted with other methods of image and text interpretation. Erwin Panofsky, who worked out the theory and method of iconology by uniting various—German, French, Anglo-Saxon—traditions, as well as Jan Białostocki and Ernst H. Gombrich, who further developed his views, very clearly saw the dangers of employing the method indiscriminately. In the works of the iconologists following them one can, however, find numerous examples of looking, without the necessary learning and at any price, for hidden symbolic meanings, of mere text hunting, of abusing the texts included in the interpretation, and of not paying attention to the circumstances in which the texts originated and to the complexity of the relationships between picture and text. A recurrent fault of iconological works is that they overvalue the intellectual content of the images and the learning of the artist and his time, as opposed to verbal, pictorial tradition and wider human experi-

1 ■ Cf., e. g., *Die Lesbarkeit der Kunst. Zur Geistes-Gegenwart der Ikonologie*. Hg. v. Andreas Beyer. Berlin, 1992; *Iconography at the Crossroads. Papers from the Colloquium Sponsored by the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, 23–24 March 1990*. Ed. by Brendan Cassidy. Princeton, 1994.

ence; and they often fail to give due attention to the untrustworthiness of the written text, to its manifold interpretability, and to its independence of the pictorial tradition.

These inadequacies are becoming evident and their recognition enhances the turning point mentioned above. So does the fact that the paradigms within which iconographical and iconological research is carried out are changing. In the history of literature, as well as of art, determining the components of the social function of the works and of the process of reception has come to the fore; there is now increased awareness of the social, institutional, and personal conditions of the modern interpreter; attention is turning toward pictorial and textual sources of a new type, and it is accepted that works necessarily have two or more meanings. In addition, in art history, both the old and the new methods of interpretation are in a crisis: numerous different concepts of art are accepted; the areas of competence of art history and so-called history of images are unclear; the disputes about determining the disciplinary status of art history and about "double art history" have started again; and there is also a dispute about including the new mass media among the subjects of the discipline.

In literary studies it has long since been accepted that visuality is an indispensable element of poetry and that the symbols used in the visual arts help to understand literary pictoriality. Since iconology primarily studies those meanings (*sujets*) which have their roots also in the textual tradition, as well as the authorial program and intention developing from these, its source material often touches on or is identical with that of literary studies. Especially important for literary studies are the iconological studies concerning meanings which cannot be satisfactorily explained by the textual tradition or which indicate a break with earlier traditions in the visual arts. It is well known that in rhetorics and in art theory the meaning, the understanding, and the typology of images and *Bildlichkeit* are in a process of continual change, and that the two kinds of reflexion mutually influence each other. We are familiar with the widespread use of rhetorical models in Renaissance and Baroque art theory and in the practice of pictorial representation but we know little about the topical determination and rhetorical structure of pictorial thinking and scarcely anything about the connection of the rhetorical tradition with actual works and artistic programs.²

An additional fact is that literary scholarship is just beginning to put into words the rhetorical and poetical conclusions which can be drawn from the visual arts for literature and to conduct research touching upon the evolution of the literary use of the compositional principles of the visual arts and of the poetic idea of space. All this shows that not only have the theoretical models and practical results of

comparative literature and of art history had a productive influence upon each other from the very start, but that the significance of the iconological method for those areas of literary studies which touch upon the visual arts is practically immeasurable. At the same time, there is a fundamental difficulty: although a new reference work, showing the connections between literature and the visual arts and the border areas of literary studies and art history, discusses fifteen groups of topics (the number could, obviously, be increased) of different determinations as to genre, subject matter, and history;³ there is as yet no complete theory and generally accepted store of tools for research exploring the mutual influence upon and the interrelationship of the associated arts in an interdisciplinary and historical fashion.

This is, very sketchily, the present international situation in the discipline. It has stimulated a few members of the Institute of Comparative Literature and of the Department of English at the University of Szeged to resuscitate their books series treating iconography, iconology, and symbol theory, which had been started in the mid-1980s under the title *Ikológia és Műértelmezés* (Iconology an Interpretation), and to republish the first four volumes. The series started at about the same time as the wider reception of iconology in Hungary, with the first publication in Hungarian of the works of Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky, and Ernst H. Gombrich. Hungarian art history—represented by authors such as Endre Csatkai, Andor Pigler, Lajos Vayer, Gizella Cenner née Gizella Wilhelmb, György Rózsa—as well as literary studies—represented by scholars such as Lajos Dézsi, Zoltán Trócsányi, József Turóczi-Trostler, Károly Marót, József Szauder—had already begun much earlier examining iconographical topics and the connection between literature and the visual arts; and art historian Ernő

2 ■ Marcus Hundemer: *Rhetorische Kunsttheorie und barocke Deckenmalerei. Zur Theorie der sinnlichen Erkenntnis im Barock*. Regensburg, 1997.

3 ■ *Literatur und bildende Kunst. Ein Handbuch zur Theorie und Praxis eines komparatistischen Grenzgebietes*. Hg. von Ulrich Weisstein. Berlin, 1992.

4 ■ *A magyar művészettörténet-írás programjai. Válogatás két évszázad írásából*. (The Programs of Hungarian Art Historiography. Selections from the Writings of Two Centuries.) Ed., with an introduction and epilogue, by Ernő Marosi. Budapest, 1999, 358 pp.

5 ■ *Shakespeare and the Emblem. Studies in Renaissance Iconography and Iconology*. Ed. by Tibor Fabiny. Szeged, 1984. (Papers in English and American Studies III).

6 ■ Papers published in: *Ars Hungarica* 9 (1981), No. 2.

7 ■ "Jelbeszéd az életünk". *A szimbolizáció története és kutatásának módszerei* ("Our Life Is Sign Language." The History of Symbolization and Its Research Methods.) Eds. Agnes Kapitány and Gábor Kapitány. Budapest, 1995.

8 ■ Cesare Ripa: *Iconologia*. Trans., notes and epilogue by Tamás Sajó. Budapest, 1997.

9 ■ *Szimbólumtár*. (Store of Symbols) Selected by József Pál, Tibor Fabiny, and László Szörényi. Budapest, 1997.

10 ■ Peter M. Daly: *Teaching Shakespeare and the Emblem. A Lecture and Bibliography*. Acadia University, 1993.

Marosi is justified when he writes about "the school-like interdependent unfolding of Hungarian iconographical research."⁴ However, the consistent introduction and employment of the iconological approach in Hungary is largely connected with the movement which has become known as the "Szeged workshop." The immediate antecedent of the series was a volume of essays in English, edited by Tibor Fabiny, which discussed Shakespeare and iconography, iconology, and emblematics and appeared in 1984, edited by the Szeged Department of English; it has significantly stimulated Shakespeare studies in Hungary ever since.⁵ The majority of the Hungarian authors of a volume, which contains methodological surveys, case studies, and reviews, such as Tibor Fabiny, József Pál, and György Endre Szőnyi, are also the editors of the series started two years later; this fact, all by itself, shows the close connection between the two undertakings. Among the antecedents one should also mention the interdisciplinary discussion meeting on recent research and methods concerning the period of the Enlightenment, organized by the Art History Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which centered on the possibilities of connecting art history, cultural history, and the history of literature.⁶

Between 1986 and 1998 seven volumes of the series have been published at varying intervals; among them are collections both of texts and of essays, as well as monographs. The first volumes were originally published in a small number of copies, with a primitive process of reproduction; they were quickly sold out and often did not even reach the larger libraries. This, together with the boom in Hungarian iconographical and iconological research and with the further differentiation of the field in the meantime gave the authors a good reason to start a new edition with the publication in 1997 of the sixth volume (1997), with better typography and better printing and a reissue of the earlier volumes, which have become scarce in the meantime. Within the framework of the program supporting the supply of textbooks for higher education, the timeliness of the volumes published as university textbooks is enhanced by the fact that Hungarian book publishing has now also realised how neglected the topic had been, and volumes of essays,⁷ critical editions,⁸ and reference books⁹ are appearing in quick succession. The close connection of the latter undertaking with the series *Ikonzológia és Műértelmezés* is underlined by the fact that both ventures share some editors or selectors.

The first volume, whose editors are Mihály Balázs, Tibor Fabiny, József Pál, György Endre Szőnyi, and László Szörényi, contains texts connected with the theory of iconology (Cesare Ripa, Cristoforo Garda), essays on princi-

ples and methodology, attempts at definitions, and investigations in subject history by English, American, French, Polish, German, and Italian scholars. The essays were originally published between 1939 and 1977 in renowned international periodicals and volumes of essays and were written, among others, by such classics of iconology as Erwin Panofsky, Mario Praz, Friedrich Ohly, Ernst H. Gombrich, and Jan Białostocki. The texts, first published in Hungarian, offer a picture of the more important theoretical and methodological problems of iconology and the possibilities of its application. They are a good example of how to study methodically the interconnections of the traditions in the visual arts and in literature exemplifying an open mind and proper learning.

The core of the second volume of the series deals with the visual elements of Shakespeare's plays and the emblematic traditions. The chief virtue of the selection is that it offers new essays by Hungarian and by foreign authors side by side, mostly written specially for this volume. It is common knowledge that, since the 1970s, writings on the connection between Shakespeare or, rather, Renaissance and mannerist poetry and the visual arts have grown to immense proportions.¹⁰ It has become accepted that familiarity with the emblematic and iconographical traditions can enrich the understanding of texts but, on the other hand, that the iconographical references of the texts, the pictorial associations carried by them, do not, in themselves, offer evidence of direct use of the pictorial sources. With regard to the connection between Shakespeare and emblematics we can say today with certainty that, instead of direct sources, one can, at the most, determine certain parallels, analogies, and possibilities. It has also been established that one must be extremely circumspect when looking for the iconographical sources and emblematic components of literary texts. Emblematics can merely be used as a kind of dictionary to document certain variants of meaning and usage; one must separately examine in every case the composite process by which the emblems became traditional, their context, and their "functioning."

This is also clear to the authors of the essays and, with considerable restraint, they usually only speak about the pictorial elements of the works and the possibilities of their iconographical interpretation. Two papers which form a separate chapter, by Tibor Fabiny and by György Endre Szőnyi, bear witness to the emphatic presence of theoretical intentions: they survey the research into the literary-historical consequences drawn from emblem research and research on the visual elements in Shakespeare's works. As Fabiny states, the emblem is one of the manifestations of the hermeneutics of the Renaissance and of Mannerism, in which the visual image is spiritualized through analogy, by the

creative, aesthetic use of knowledge and gains a new meaning on the level of abstraction. According to Szőnyi, the methods and fundamental principles in the analysis of Shakespeare's imagery are closely connected with the currents of literary theory in vogue at the time of their appearance. And although studying the visual elements had its place in almost all aspects of Shakespeare studies and this approach proved to be suitable for exposing the use of the conventional iconographical elements in a sense different from their original meaning, a summing up of what was discovered using various visual approaches has not occurred yet. Besides the essays discussing pictorial components of *Timon of Athens*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and *Midsummer Night's Dream* a great asset of the volume is two papers, by Imre Téglásy and by Ferenc Zemplényi, about the antecedents and sequels of an emblem by Zsámboky, as well as about Mátyás Hajnal's emblematic collection of meditations which has, since also been published in a facsimile edition.¹¹ The volume ends with an extensive bibliography which is very useful for questions in the research into Renaissance symbolism and motifs.

Besides readers and volumes of essays, another laudable feature of the series is that it offers a place to monographs related to the center of thematic interest of the undertaking or touching upon it. After the volume on the symbolism of the *Divine Comedy*, by the founding editor-in-chief of the series, József Pál,¹² came the work of the other editor of the series, György Endre Szőnyi: it concerns Christian magic and occult symbolism. Szőnyi, as the pioneer and best-known Hungarian scholar of hermetic philosophy and Renaissance magic, asks, using the example of a highly influential 16th-century English mathematician and magician, John Dee: What is the reason that seeing things in a magical way and symbolizing this had a great boom at the time of the Renaissance? His method is complex: in addition to the classical approach based on the history of science and culture he also includes the points of view of history, anthropology, history of mentalities, and psychology. The first part of the book fixes the definition of the ideology of deification (*exaltatio*) which occupies a central place in Dee's system of ideas. In the second part, he surveys Dee's life. He had significant Central European—and, within that, Hungarian—connections. The third part traces the idea of *exaltatio* from its first appearance in classical antiquity until Dee's life-work; the fourth and final part contains a detailed analysis of his theological and philosophical views.

John Dee is considered to be a rewarding topic in researching the English Renaissance; in recent years, however, his evaluation has been quite variable, in fact even contradictory. The reason for the varying evaluations, in the first place, is that most of the time, international research has, expropriated Dee's

person for some intellectual venture of the Elizabethan age and put his personality and oeuvre, which were composite and full of contradictions, into perspective. Szőnyi treats these approaches with a critical eye and attempts to delicately trace the changes and turns in Dee's views. At the center of his analysis are those elements of Dee's main works which touch upon the whole range of Christian-Neoplatonic occult writings; within these the mystical hieroglyphs of nature, illumination, and angelic magic, as well as the role of magic and the magician. The author particularly emphasizes the occult-esoteric iconography of magical symbolism, the title-page graphics and magical illustrations of Dee's works, as well as the pictorial references of the magical literature touching upon all of these.

The basis of the interpretation of the pictures is Gombrich's 1972 essay—printed in Hungarian in the first volume of the series—treating the ontological and epistemological questions of Renaissance iconography. According to this essay, mental pictures can be classified, on the basis of their function, as belonging to one of three great traditions. The didactic metaphor based on the Aristotelian tradition is the expression of an idea; for the Neoplatonic tradition the symbolic-intuitive picture is the revelation of something of a higher order; and the esoteric sign rooted in the hermetic-occult tradition is the extreme case of the revelatory picture which has magical power: it not only symbolizes transcendental reality but, at the same time, it represents it. Further, it is important that the basis of the occult *Weltanschauung* of the Renaissance is the Platonic dualistic view, the idea of man's purification and attainment of greater perfection; Dee, too, created his hieroglyphic system under these auspices. Szőnyi makes an effort to consistently separate the iconographical antecedents of the esoteric pictorial tradition from the representations made in the wake of Dee's individual invention; on several occasions he offers a likely interpretation or exhibits the textual sources of the occult images. Dee himself also commented on the mystical pictures which were part of his works; at times the entire text of a work is nothing but the detailed explanation of these symbolic pictures. According to Szőnyi, Dee's thinking was characteristically syncretic and simultaneously con-

11 ■ Mátyás Hajnal: *Az Jesus szívet szerető szíveknek aytatosságára [...] könyvechke*. (Booklet for the Devotion of the Hearts Which Love the Heart of Jesus.) Facsimile edition with an essay of Béla Holl. Budapest, 1992. (Bibliotheca Hungarica Antiqua XXVII.)

12 ■ József Pál, "Sílány időből az örökkévalóba" *Az Isteni Színjáték nyelvi és tipológiai szimbolizmusa* ("From Wretched Time into the Eternal" The Linguistic and Typological Symbolism of the *Divine Comedy*) Szeged, 1997, Ikonológia és műértelmezés Series 6.

13 ■ *European Iconography East and West. Selected Papers of the Szeged International Conference, June 9–12, 1993*. Ed. by György E. Szőnyi. Leiden—New York—Köln, 1996 (Symbola et Emblemata VII.)

tained rationally based disquisitions concerning the natural sciences and magical-mystical elements based on analogies. In the end, the monograph, so to speak, "demythifies" Dee and presents him not as the fanatical hero of magic in the natural sciences but as a significant representative of occultism, which played the role of an important catalyst in Western culture.

We have left till last the volume of essays which was published outside but by no means independently of the series *Ikönológia és Műértelmezés*, as the seventh volume of the *Szeged Papers in English and American Studies*. In 1993 the Department of English of the University of Szeged, the Szeged Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the Society for Modern Philology organized a major international conference under the heading *Iconography East and West*, with the aim of stimulating links between Hungarian and foreign iconographical research and furnishing orientation about new results obtained in that field. The majority of the lectures, whose approach was based on the history of ideas or on history and applied emblematics, were published in the distinguished series *Symbola et Emblemata* edited by Bernhard F. Scholz;¹³ the minority are contained in the volume to be discussed now. It is here that we must mention that in 1998 the "Szeged workshop" organized a second *Iconography East and West* conference, centered around the questions of fantastic imagery, and that in the first place it was György Endre Szőnyi who was responsible for the successful realization of both conferences.

The volume contains the texts of a total of seventeen lectures; the ratio between Hungarian and foreign authors is about half-and-half. The series of essays of theoretical interest starts with Peter M. Daly's survey of the new research results and perspectives of emblem research. The article clearly indicates that by now, the initial enthusiasm of research has been replaced by a period of sobering up; besides the methodical exploration of the corpus of sources, questions of genre theory and of interpretation have come to the fore. Special mention is due to Tibor Fabiny's essay on the hermeneutical problems of visual perception as culturally determined, on the conflict of sensing oriented toward the "eye" and toward the "ear." The case studies follow, grouped chronologically, from the Middle Ages to the present; two further essays each deal with a question of detail of the iconography of the Eastern church. The analyzed sources are extremely wide-ranging: extending from a 12th-century bronze door cast for the Płock cathedral, the late mediaeval representations of St Anne, and the iconography of musical instruments, through the pictorial references in early modern English literature accompa-

nying the discovery of America, the representations of violence in English Renaissance plays, and the flags of the English Civil War, to the woodcuts of 16th/17th-century calendars, Baroque picture poems, and state seals. Accordingly, the methods employed are varied: besides the empirical analyses one can also find a semiotic approach, individual psychology, and film aesthetics. A separate essay discusses the possibilities of using computers in emblem research.

To sum up, we see the significance of the undertaking discussed in that it effectively transmits the recent international results of iconography and iconology for the benefit of research and teaching in Hungary; that it stimulates Hungarian researchers to independent work; and that it ensures on a high level the direct inclusion of recent Hungarian results in the international dialogue. The activity of the "Szeged workshop," which was already been carried on for a fifteen years, also calls attention to the fact that there is an urgent need to draw the conclusions and to take methodical stock of the iconographical and iconological explorations of Hungarian art history, history of literature, and other disciplines studying pictorial representations. □