

*Ovidius est magister vitae (et litterarum)*

Language, Literature and Life through Ovid in Hungary  
in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

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M D C C X L I X.

Fig. 1: Edition of Ovid's *Tristia* for use in Jesuit schools. Publii Ovidii Nasonis Elegiae Tristium Libri V [...]. Tyrnaviae: Typis Acad. Societ. Jesu 1749, title page (Keszthely, Festetics Palace, Helikon Library, Sign. 5267, © Anna Tüskés)

Throughout the past decades, researchers of the history of the reception of classical authors have paid particular attention to the study of Ovid's influence. The enormous impact that the ancient Roman poet's large and varied body of work had on later centuries is a richly illuminated topic. As the editors of one of the essential handbooks on the reception of Ovid put it in their introduction, "[a]t the beginning of the twenty-first century, Ovid has proved the most influential and indeed the most versatile by far of all the poets of Latin antiquity"<sup>1</sup>. In the introductory essay of another important collection of studies, James G. Clark argues that

[I]t was not the sober sages of republic and empire – Virgil, Seneca, Cicero – who proved for medieval audiences the most popular and resonant voices of the pre-Christian past. [...] it was [...] Ovid who provided the greatest number and diversity of Europeans with their most memorable encounter with the classical world.<sup>2</sup>

The contributors to these volumes examine the history, the major components and the diverse forms of the reception of Ovid, focusing on the works of individual authors or longer periods in the history of literature. Their studies commonly prove the lasting appeal of Ovid's works to readers from the Augustan period onwards. His lyric and epic poetry was among the favourites of prominent authors such as Dante, Petrarch, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Ariosto, Milton or Goethe – in addition to the enduring popularity of the manuscript or printed copies of his *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti* or erotic poems among minor authors and common people.

There are other ways of approaching the reception of Ovid besides focusing on literary history, however. For example, the classical poet has been widely used as an authoritative source of philosophical or scientific information relating to a variety of topics. In these cases, an exploration from the point of view of the history of philosophy or science may also be worth-

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<sup>1</sup> Carole E. NEWLANDS, John F. MILLER, Introduction. In: John F. MILLER, Carole E. NEWLANDS (eds.), *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*. Chichester 2014, 1–7; here 1.

<sup>2</sup> James G. CLARK, Introduction. In: James G. CLARK, Frank T. COULSON, Kathryn L. MCKINLEY (eds.), *Ovid in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge 2011, 1–25; here 1.

while. Fruitful research can also be conducted in the field of art history, as Ovidian topics have always provided inspiration to book illuminators and other visual artists<sup>3</sup>. Compared to the abundance of international research, however, Ovid's reception in early modern Hungarian literature remains largely unexplored<sup>4</sup>. By collecting data on printed editions, the manuscript tradition and translations of the Ovidian corpus, I intend to explore the lesser-known aspects of the classical poet's historical reception.

During the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, Hungarian readers generally came into contact with Ovid for the first time in the

<sup>3</sup> For the reception of Ovid, see also: Charles MARTINDALE (ed.), *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge 1990; Gregory M. SADLEK, *Idleness Working: The Discourse of Love's Labor from Ovid through Chaucer and Gower*. Washington, D.C. 2004; Theodore ZIOLKOWSKI, *Ovid and the Moderns*. Ithaca, London 2005; Gian Mario ANSELMi, Marta GUERRA (eds.), *Le Metamorfosi di Ovidio nella letteratura tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*. Bologna 2006; Alison KEITH, Stephen RUPP (eds.), *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Toronto 2007; Roy K. GIBSON et al. (eds.), *The Art of Love: Bimillennial Essays on Ovid's Ars Amatoria and Remedia Amoris*. Oxford 2006; Frederick A. DE ARMAS (ed.), *Ovid in the Age of Cervantes*. Toronto 2010; An FAEMS, Virginie MINET-MAHY, Colette Van COOLPUT-STORMS (eds.), *Les translations d'Ovide au Moyen âge. Actes de la journée d'études internationale à la Bibliothèque royale de Belgique le 4 décembre 2008*. Turnhout 2011; Richard E. MORTON, *The English Enlightenment Reads Ovid: Dryden and Jacob Tonson's 1717 Metamorphoses*. New York 2013; Pierluigi Leone GATTI, *Ovid in Antike und Mittelalter: Geschichte der philologischen Rezeption*. Stuttgart 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Ludovicus T. VALI, *De locis poeticis qui congruunt in operibus P. Ovidii Nasonis et Nicolai Zrinyi Cassoviae* 1898; Adolf HAVAS, *Petőfi és Ovidius [Petőfi and Ovid]*. *Egyetemes Philologiai Közöny* [Universal philological bulletin] 23 (1899), 478–479; József WALDAPFEL, *Ovidius Amoresének magyar fordítása 1819-ből [A Hungarian Translation of Ovid's Amores from 1819]*. *Egyetemes Philologiai Közöny* [Universal philological bulletin] 53 (1929), 144–150; István LUKÁCS, *Metamorphosisok a XVIII. század hazai irodalmában [The Metamorphoses in Eighteenth-Century Hungarian Literature]*. Budapest 1944; Károly MARÓT, *Bevezetés [Introduction]*. In: *A kétezres éves Ovidius: Szemelvények a költő műveiből [The 2000-Year-Old Ovid: An Anthology of His Works]*. Budapest 1957, 5–49; József HUSZTI, *Az Ovidius-legenda magyarországi vonatkozásai? [How is the Ovid Legend Related to Hungary?]*. *Antik Tanulmányok. Studia antiqua* 4 (1957), 3–4, 289–300; Béla STOLL, *Ovidius egyik helye a magyar népköltészetben [One of Ovid's Places in Hungarian Folk Poetry]*. *Antik Tanulmányok / Studia antiqua* 4 (1957), 1–2, 124–126; György SZABÓ, *Ovidius költészetének visszhangja az erdélyi magyar irodalomban [Reflections of Ovidian Poetry in Hungarian Transylvanian Literature]*. *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Series philologica* 4 (1959), 129–138; Mária B. RÉVÉSZ, *Hozzászólás a magyarországi Ovidius-legendához [Additions to the Hungarian Ovid Legend]*. *Antik Tanulmányok / Studia antiqua* 8 (1961), 3–4, 287–292; Anikó POLGÁR, *Ráfogások Ovidiusra: Fejezetek az antik költészet magyar fordítás- és hatástörténetéből [Pointing at Ovid: Chapters of the History of the Reception of Classical Authors in Hungary]*. Budapest 2011.

classroom, as schoolmasters adapted his texts to teach their students to read Latin. Ovid's poems were employed for a variety of didactic purposes, even though the poet himself may never have imagined his books being used for instruction in Latin language and literature. In this practice, the Ovidian texts educated pupils in Latin by expanding their vocabulary, teaching them grammatical structures and introducing them to the rules of writing poems and epistles<sup>5</sup>. As in the previous centuries, Hungarian readers mainly read Ovid's works in foreign editions. Studying the library catalogues and preserved collections of aristocrats, noblemen, priests and *literati* shows that the most popular works by the ancient poet were the *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, *Heroides*, *Epistolae ex Ponto* and *Tristia*<sup>6</sup>. Readers acquired their volumes either in Latin or in German or French translations directly from the publishers or during their travels abroad, with such books typically being published in Germany, the Netherlands, France and Italy. The same tendency can be seen in the collections of Catholic and Protestant school libraries. In Hungary, Jesuits in Nagyszombat (today Trnava, Slovakia)<sup>7</sup> as well as teachers of the Reformed College of Debrecen<sup>8</sup> published text editions of Ovid for the

<sup>5</sup> Cf. for example: Erzsébet SZABÓNÉ FEHÉR, A sárospataki kollégium 19. század eleji kéziratossantervei [The Nineteenth-Century Manuscript Curricula of the Sárospatak College]. *Levéltári Szemle* [Archive Review] 30 (1980), 3, 491–502. Handbooks on aesthetics were also used by the students interpreting the Ovidian texts. Cf. György Alajos Szerdahely, *Eszztétikai írásai* [Studies on Aesthetics]. I: *Aesthetica* (1778). Transl., comm. by Piroska BALOGH. Debrecen 2012 (*Csokonai Könyvtár, Források, Régi kortársaink* [Csokonai Series, Sources, Ancient Contemporaries] 15).

<sup>6</sup> On the editions of Ovid's works in the Ráday Library, cf. Györgyi BORVÖLGYI, *Ráday Pál (1677–1733) könyvtára* [The Library of Pál Ráday (1677–1733)]. Budapest 2004 (*A Kárpát-medence kora újkori könyvtárai* [Early Modern Libraries in the Carpathian Basin] 7), 151. The collection of the library of Sámuel Teleki included nine editions printed in the 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century. Cf. *Bibliothecae Samuelis S. R. I. Com. Teleki de Szék, Pars Prima*. Viennae 1796, 114–115; on Ferenc Széchényi's collection, cf. *Catalogus manuscritorum Bibliothecae Nationalis Hungaricae Széchényiano-Regnicolaris*. I–III. Sopronii: Siess 1814–1815; on the collections of the Festetics and Károlyi families, see the paper by Attila Buda and Anna Tüskés in the present volume. An online database of the illustrations in Ovidian manuscripts and printed editions: Daniel KINNEY, *Revisioning Ovid: Alternative Versions of Ovid's Reception in Image and Text* <<http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu/others.html>> (06/08/2018).

<sup>7</sup> For the bibliographic data of the editions printed in Nagyszombat, see: Stephanus KÄFER, Esther KOVÁCS, *Ave Tyrnavia! Opera impressa Tyrnaviae Typis Academicis, 1648–1777*. Budapestini, Strigoni, Tyrnaviae 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. István SZABADI, Sinai Miklós klasszika-filológusi működése [Miklós Sinai, the Classical Philologist]. In: Enikő BÉKÉS, Péter KASZA, Réka LENGYEL (eds.), *Humanista történetírás és neo-*

purposes of education – but these editions only included expurgated versions of Ovid’s works rather than the full texts. Manuscripts compiled by students who had either been instructed to do so by their teachers or were following their own interests likewise played an important role in the study of the ancient poet<sup>9</sup>.

In schools, the *Metamorphoses* was one of the essential texts for linguistic, poetic and rhetoric studies. Although a handful of copies were circulated, it was impossible to acquire one in certain parts of the country during the first half of the eighteenth century. József Hermányi Dienes (1699–1763), who studied in Székelyudvarhely (Oderhellen in Transylvania) in the 1710s, asked his father to buy him the books he needed. He wrote the following into his diary:

Even when I was in the rhetoric class, my father could not acquire any classical books, as these books are awfully scarce

[...]

This time Ovidii Metamorphosis is wanted, but neither in Udvarhely nor elsewhere could my Father find or acquire it.<sup>10</sup>

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*latin irodalom a 15–18. századi Magyarországon* [Humanistic Historiography and Neo-Latin Literature in Hungary in the 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Century]. Budapest 2015 (*Convivia Neolatina Hungarica* 1), 267–271.

<sup>9</sup> Borbála L. KOZMA, Sándor LADÁNYI, *A Dunamelléki Református Egyházkerület Ráday Gyűjteményének (Budapest) kéziratkatalógusa – 1850 előtti kéziratok* [Manuscript Catalogue of the Ráday Archives of the Dunamellék District of the Reformed Church in Hungary]. Budapest 1982 (*Magyarországi egyházi könyvtárak kéziratkatalógusai* [Manuscript Catalogues of Church Libraries in Hungary] 3), 736 K-1. 599: *Opera Publii Ovidii Nasonis*, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, written by Lukács Micski, vols. 1–4; József BÖRZSÖNYI, *A Tiszáninneri Református Egyházkerület Nagykönyvtárának (Sárospatak) kéziratkatalógusa – 1850 előtti kéziratok* [Manuscript Catalogue of the Library of the Tiszáninnen District of the Reformed Church in Hungary]. Budapest 1986 (*Magyarországi egyházi könyvtárak kéziratkatalógusai* [Manuscript Catalogues of Church Libraries in Hungary] 4), 1478 Kt. 1890: József Gyarmati’s *omniarium*, 1804, fol. 1–23; 1758 Kt. 2665: István Csontos, *Sententiae memorabiliores ex Carmine Ovidii excerptae*, 1819; Miksa BÀNHEGYI B., *A Győri Egyházmegyei Könyvtár kéziratkatalógusa – 1850 előtti kéziratok*. [Manuscript Catalogue of the Diocesan Library of Győr]. Budapest 1991 (*Magyarországi egyházi könyvtárak kéziratkatalógusai* 8), 76. sz.: vol. misc., late 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the collection of the Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (Széchényi National Library, Budapest): Quart. Lat. 123 *Disceptatio historica, qua in locum sepulchri Ovidii Nasonis disquiritur, idque Hungariae vindicatur* (18<sup>th</sup> century, 19 fol.).

<sup>10</sup> József Hermányi Dienes *Szépprózai munkái* [Prose Works]. Ed. by Margit S. SÁRDI. Budapest 1992, 157.

Dienes (whose father tried to make up for not being able to purchase the desired book by giving his son a piece of cheese) had better luck with other works by Ovid. According to his diary,

This summer I will read Ovidii Amorum Libros et Libros de Arte amandi, but knowing myself I say if only the adolescents would leave these kinds of poems alone, quae ingvina lámbunt, but my Father does not know what wicked grass I would have stepped on et quod angvis lateret in herba, and that might have been good, because had he forbidden me to read, I would have liked it even more.<sup>11</sup>

As Hermányi Dienes assumes, most parents did not consider Ovid's *Amores* and *Ars amatoria* appropriate for their children. Another Transylvanian author, Sámuel Andrád (1751–1807), wrote the following:

[...] in Transylvania I could never read the Books of Love (Amorum libros) of Ovid. Instead I asked a friend of mine, a nice fellow here in Vienna, to give me his copy which, he said, he had acquired at the age of 12, here in the big city, where people have much experience not only in medicine, but in everything, and the first time I read the book there. I do not know if there were any other reasons, or even for certain that I already had enough sense for it, but indeed I understood every letter of it better than *Metamorphosis*, even without notes<sup>12</sup>.

Ovid's erotic works were deemed harmful and were thus not taught in schools; as a result, it was difficult to find printed copies. According to the censorship decree of 1792, it was forbidden to distribute the works of Kotzebue, Wieland, Rousseau and Ovid in Hungary<sup>13</sup>. Still, the reach of the prohibitions by parents, schools and authorities was limited, since the interested readers were able – though not necessarily easily – to acquire foreign editions or handwritten versions of the *Amores* and *Ars amatoria*. In the second half of the eighteenth century, some of the erotic poems were translated into Hungarian, and several even appeared in print despite the censorial restrictions. Scholarly literature has hitherto discussed the efforts of János

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<sup>11</sup> Hermányi Dienes (note 10), 159.

<sup>12</sup> Sámuel Andrád, *A magyar Democritus életének délig való része* [The Life of the Hungarian Democritus Until Noon]. [Bécs] 1791, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. [János Molnár], *Némely nevezetes emberekről*. [On Some Famous Persons.] In: János Molnár (ed.), *Magyar könyv-ház, IX. szakasz* [Hungarian Library 9]. Pest: Trattner 1797, 10.

Fekete (1741–1803) and Ádám Pálóczi Horváth (1760–1820)<sup>14</sup>; a lesser-known translation by László Kazinczy of *Amores* 2, 4 will be discussed below. The first complete Hungarian translation of the *Amores* was published in 1820, its Latin text in 1907; *Ars amatoria* was first published in Hungarian as late as 1883<sup>15</sup>.

One of the first Hungarian translators of Ovid was Kelemen Mikes (1690–1761). In letter no. 70 of his *Letters from Turkey*, he comments on the full-length outer garments of Turkish women that covered their entire body by quoting a few lines from Ovid in his own Hungarian translation:

mennél inkább légyen, valami meg tiltva,  
légyen is előttünk, erősen el zárva,  
ámbár ahoz jutni, kellesék fáradva,  
annál inkább birni, azt várjuk suhajtvá.<sup>16</sup>

Quidquid servatur, cupimus magis, ipsaque furem  
cura vocat; pauci quod sinit alter amant.

Ovid, *Amores* 3, 4, 25–26

Elsewhere in *Letters from Turkey*, Mikes writes that it is not the Latin language and literature that school teachers should focus on; instead, it would be much more useful to teach historical, legal, economic and commercial

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Anikó POLGÁR, “Kerek tsetsetskéit feddvén tenyereim”: Galánthai Fekete János *Amores*-fordításai. [“The Palms of My Hands Covering her Round Apples”: János Galánthai Fekete’s Translation from the *Amores*]. In: POLGÁR, *Ráfogások Ovidiusra* (note 4), 169–189; POLGÁR, *Erotikus félhomály és profán epifánia: Az Amores I. 5 és magyar fordításai* [Erotic Penumbra and Profane Epiphany: *Amores* I, 5 and Its Hungarian Translations]. In: *ibidem*, 190–208; POLGÁR, Zoltán CSEHY, *Korinna és a vénasszony: Pálóczi Horváth Ádám és a latin műfordítás* [Corinna and the Old Woman: Ádám Pálóczi Horváth and the Latin Translations]. In: Rumen István CSÖRSZ, Béla HEGEDŰS (eds.), *Magyar Arión: Tanulmányok Pálóczi Horváth Ádám műveiről*. [The Hungarian Arion: Studies on the Works of Ádám Pálóczi Horváth]. Budapest 2011, 219–241; Pálóczi Horváth Ádám *Verses kiadványai (1787–1796)* [Lyric Works (1787–1796)]. Ed. by Barna TÓTH. Budapest, Debrecen 2015 (*Régi Magyar Költők Tára, XVIII. század* 16), 358–359, 821–822.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Publius Ovidius Naso, *Amores*. Transl. by László Peretsényi Nagy. Pest: Trattner 1820; see: WALDAPFEL (note 4). Cf. also: Publius Ovidius Naso, *Amores*. Ed. Geyza NÉMETHY. Budapestini 1907; Ovidius, *A szerelem művészete* [The Art of Love]. Transl. by Tamás SZANA. Budapest 1883.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Kelemen Mikes, *Törökországi levelek és Misszilis levelek* [Letters from Turkey and Other Letters]. Ed. by Lajos HOPP. Budapest 1966 (Mikes Kelemen *Összes Művei* [Kelemen Mikes, Complete Works]), 124.



knowledge, which the students could utilize upon returning to their lands and taking up work as deputies or judges. According to Mikes, the main problem was that after graduating from school, the average young man would “bury his few books and philosophies in some hidden cabinet” and

reveal what he has read of Virgil or Ovid only in the company of his wife or in the sitting room. [...] He spends two or three years accordingly hunting, drinking, or in the court of Venus, and whatever he studied for a few years, he forgets most of it in that short time.<sup>17</sup>

There are sources confirming that some were still of the same opinion as Mikes concerning the usefulness of school education a century later. Antal Pucz (1767–1831), a Catholic parish priest, writes the following in his *Értekezés a' nemzeti nyelv' tökéletesítése és terjesztése módjairól* (“Essay on the Refinement and Promotion of the Hungarian National Language”, Esztergom 1824)<sup>18</sup>:

Boileau and Voltaire did not suffer reading poetry for a year, and eventually they still became royal poets. [...] Our sons spend a lot of time in school; still, their education is nothing but awfully superficial.

This image conjured up by Mikes and Pucz can be qualified, however, by asserting that most readers did not see Ovid’s poems purely as boring assigned reading, but in fact remembered them fondly for a long time. As Sámuel Andrád wrote, even young readers understood the erotic-romantic poems without any notation or commentary. There is a wealth of data suggesting that many works from Ovid’s oeuvre were close to the readers’ hearts: Many memorized or wrote down their favourite passages in their collection of quotes, for example. Besides literary works, we can also find several references to Ovid in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century letters, which shows how readily their authors identified with situations described by the Roman poet and how much his lines helped them to experience, understand and express their own emotions.

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<sup>17</sup> Mikes, *Törökországi levelek* (note 16), 106–110.

<sup>18</sup> Antal Pucz, *Értekezés a' nemzeti nyelv' tökéletesítése és terjesztése módjairól* [Essay on the Refinement and Promotion of the Hungarian National Language]. Esztergom: József Beimel 1824, 79.

László Kazinczy (1763–1807) translated the *Amores* in Jablanác, a small town located on the coast of the Adriatic Sea in which he was stationed with his troop in the winter of 1784<sup>19</sup>. In a letter to his brother Ferenc in December 1785, Kazinczy writes about a scene he had witnessed as a guest in Futak. Among the attendees had been a young countess whose beauty inspired a certain General Schmidtfeldt to utter the following “declaratio”<sup>20</sup>:

Holl mich der Teufel, die Gräffin ist die schönste Person, die ich je gesehen hab. Und wenn ich ein Mann von 20 Jahren wäre, ich thäte nichts als verschmachten, in Ohnmacht fallen und sterben. Ich sehete aus blas. – Aber nicht, wie die von der 4 tägigen Fieber ausgegengelte. Ich würde blas wie es uns unser lieber Ovidius lehret. – Nicht war Gräffin, Sie können die Blase. Nein, so ein schönes Kind wie sie kann das unmöglich nicht können.

As we can see, Schmidtfeldt quoted only a single word from Ovid, which seemed to him perfectly suitable for expressing his erupting emotions<sup>21</sup>. László Kazinczy goes on to tell Ferenc that at another time when he had been in private with the countess, he himself had also expressed his admiration of her, and that he considered the General’s words entirely apt for courting in other situations as well. He mentions this so his brother too might be able to recite the little speech to a pretty lady if need be.

Besides young people in love, others turned to Ovid in need of consolation under more difficult circumstances. László Kazinczy, for example, could not only identify with the emotions expressed in the poems when he wished to confess his affection to his beloved, but also when he was stationed at the other end of the country as a soldier. He wrote to his brother about how he penned a few lines from elegy number 10 in the third book of *Tristia* on a wall in the lodgings of the officers on patrol<sup>22</sup>. In his opinion, Ovid’s description applied most precisely to the area of Jablanác, where no vegetation existed on the deserted land and his soldiers felt like they had been sent into exile. A few years later another soldier and poet, Sándor Kisfaludy (1772–

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<sup>19</sup> Kazinczy Ferenc *Összes művei*. Harmadik osztály: *Levelezés* [Complete Works. Third Class: Letters] I. Ed. by János VÁCZY. Budapest 1890, 84–85.

<sup>20</sup> Kazinczy *Összes művei* (note 19), 82.

<sup>21</sup> The quotation “Ich würde blas wie es uns unser lieber Ovidius lehret” may refer to *Ars amatoria* 1, 729–730 *Palleat omnis amans: hic est color aptus amanti; / Hoc decet, hoc stulti non valuisse putant.*

<sup>22</sup> Kazinczy *Összes művei* (note 19), 83.

1844), wrote a few lines confessing his painful homesickness in his diary by quoting a poem of the first book of *Epistulae ex Ponto*<sup>23</sup>:

Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos  
detinet, immemores nec sinit esse sui!

Ovid, *Pont.* 1, 3, 35–36

Several other examples may serve to illustrate how the works of Ovid, initially known and loved by many as compulsory reading, eventually became part of Hungarian popular culture. Despite this popularity, there were a few authors who thought that life could only be learnt through experience and not from ancient poets. In his essay entitled *Mi az oka Magyarországon a játékszini költőmesterség lábra nem tud kapni?* (“Why cannot theatrical poetry gain strength in Hungary?”), József Katona (1791–1830) presents those learning about love from the *Amores* as a negative example. In his opinion, their endeavour was as fruitless as learning playwriting from books<sup>24</sup>. In contrast to this verdict, however, a large amount of data confirms that Hungarian readers – and even scholars and scientists – learnt much about the world from Ovid. His poems not only served as reference points for works on historiography, philology and ethics, but also in textbooks on botany, dietetics and psychology. One example is found in the description of plants in a book entitled *Uj füves és virágos magyar kert* (“New Hungarian Garden with Grass and Flowers”, Bratislava 1775) by József Csapó (1734–1799), a physician from Debrecen<sup>25</sup>. István Mátyus (1725–1802), a polymath from Transylvania, references the *Metamorphoses* and some parts of the *Fasti* in several places in his six-volume *Ó és új diaetetika* (“Old and New Dietetics”) – for example when he discusses eating habits concerning wheat and bread<sup>26</sup>. We can also see an interesting example of referencing Ovid in the 1844 textbook *Mutatvány a tapasztalati lélektan köréből* (“A Note on Empirical Psychology”). Its author Jácint Rónay (1814–1889) was a Benedictine teacher, scientist,

<sup>23</sup> Sándor Kisfaludy, *Napló és francia fogságom* [Diary and My Imprisonment in France]. Budapest 1892, 222, 232. “By what sweet charm I know not the native land draws all men nor allows them to forget her.” Ovid, *Tristia. Ex Ponto*. Transl. by Arthur Leslie WHEELER. Revised by George Patrick GOOLD. Cambridge, MA 1924 (*Loeb Classical Library* 151).

<sup>24</sup> Katona József *Összes művei* [Complete Works] 1. Ed. by Andor SOLT. Budapest 1959, 73.

<sup>25</sup> József Csapó, *Uj füves és virágos magyar kert* [The New Hungarian Garden with Grasses and Flowers]. Pozsony, Pest: Landerer 1792, 289, 410.

<sup>26</sup> István Mátyus, *Ó és új diaetetika* [Old and New Dietetics]. Pozsony: Landerer 1793, 49, 51.

member of the Hungarian Academy of Science, tutor of Habsburg princes and Kossuth's children, and the first Hungarian to teach Darwinism. In his work on psychology, Rónay provides a biological and physiological description of emotions, illustrating fear with a quote from the *Metamorphoses* (14, 210 *Me timor invasit, stabam sine sanguine maestus*)<sup>27</sup>.

Because Ovid's oeuvre contains an encyclopaedic array of descriptions of various phenomena and a wide variety of life situations – as well as a lot of general wisdom – a wide range of readers found him compelling. Additionally, the ancient author's poetry as a whole had a huge influence on the poets and writers of Hungary, particularly from the last third of the eighteenth century onward<sup>28</sup>. The translations of the *Amores* and *Ars amatoria* have already been discussed above, and starting in the 1770s, Hungarian poets of every level of talent attempted to translate at least some of Ovid's poems. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, full translations of the *Heroides*, the *Metamorphoses*, *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* by Antal Egyed, Imre Homonnai and Pál Wiski were published – some of them even in more than one version.

Besides the aforementioned translators, the work of Ádám Pálóczi Horváth (1760–1820) should also be highlighted – though not necessarily for his translation of the *Amores*, but because it is his poetry and prose that reflects Ovid's impact most vividly among those who wrote in Hungarian during the period. Ovid's works were the most important texts besides the Bible to Pálóczi Horváth, who was of Protestant origin and wrote in a variety of genres. Besides the Book of Moses, he also quotes the Roman poet in support of his theological-ontological arguments on the creation of the world in

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<sup>27</sup> Jácint Rónay, *Mutatvány a tapasztalati lélektan köréből* [A Note on Empirical Psychology]. Budapest 1844, 14.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Anikó POLGÁR, *Felülrás és korrekciós igény a fordításban: Gyöngyösi István és Ányos Pál heroida-fordításai* [Overwriting and the Need for Correction in Translation. István Gyöngyösi's and Pál Ányos's translations of the *Heroides*]. In: POLGÁR (note 4), 43–54; Anikó POLGÁR, "Holtig Ulyssesnek Penelopéje leszek": *A heroida-fordító Dayka Gábor* ["I Will be Ulysses's Penelope Until I Die": Gábor Dayka, Translator of the *Heroides*]. In: POLGÁR, *Ráfogások Ovidiusra* (note 4), 55–70; on the reception of the *Heroides* in the poetry of Ferenc Faludi and in folk poetry, see: Rumen István CSÖRSZ, *A kesergő nimfától a fonóházi dalokig: Közköltészeti hatások a magyar irodalomban (1700–1800)* [From the Mourning Nymph to the Songs in Weaving Houses: The Influence of Folk Poetry in Hungarian Literature]. Budapest 2016 (*Irodalomtudomány és kritika. Tanulmányok* [Literature and Criticism. Studies]), 102–104.

his two rhyming didactic poems *Vidám indulatú haldokló* (“Dying Happily”) and *Legrövidebb nyári éjszaka* (“The Shortest Summer Night”)<sup>29</sup>. In his opinion, the pagans accepted the teachings of ancient Jewish philosophers, which is why the descriptions of the world’s creation found in the Bible and in the first book of the *Metamorphoses* are so similar. His argumentation also goes into detail about how Ovid was just as wise and knowledgeable as Moses, and the only reason he did not see everything clearly was that he lacked “such a good glass eye” (with “glass eye” meaning “glasses”)<sup>30</sup>. Pálóczi Horváth considered the Roman poet to have been a historian as well, and Ovid thus serves as the main source for his history of the world: In the historical account entitled *A’ magyar Magóg pátriarkhátul fogva I. István királyig* (“From Magog Patriarch to King Stephen I”), he quotes Ovidian texts<sup>31</sup>. He likewise borrows from Ovid in his book on astronomy, inserting the so-called “tales” from the *Metamorphoses* as fictional parts to entertain the reader. In some of his other writings such as the epic poem *Hunniás*, there are references to a number of Ovidian texts apart from the excerpts from Virgil<sup>32</sup>.

An important consideration is that Pálóczi Horváth saw both his own and a fellow poet’s poetic forefather in Ovid. In a poem written in three parts in 1784 and entitled *Igaz barát* (“True Friend”), he bids farewell to the terminally ill Pál Ányos<sup>33</sup>. Besides touching upon theological and philosophical topics, the text grieves for the ill friend “according to the poems of the ancient poets” and attempts to comfort him by stating that there is truth in teachings about reincarnation. Along the same lines, he discusses how the soul that incarnated in Ányos had formerly resided in Orpheus before moving to Ovid. The same concept can be found in Pálóczi Horváth’s novel about Freemasonry entitled *Felfedezett titok* (“The Secret Revealed”), where the characters are not identified by name but the narrator similarly talks about

<sup>29</sup> Pálóczi Horváth *Verses kiadványai* (note 14), 425–496, 694–701.

<sup>30</sup> Pálóczi Horváth *Verses kiadványai* (note 14), 434.

<sup>31</sup> Ádám [Pálóczi] Horváth, *A’ magyar Magóg pátriarkhátul fogva I. István királyig* [From Magog Patriarch to King Stephen I]. Pest: Trattner 1817.

<sup>32</sup> Pálóczi Horváth *Verses kiadványai* (note 14), 55–240.

<sup>33</sup> Pálóczi Horváth *Verses kiadványai* (note 14), 269–282.



Fig. 2: Zsigmond Kóré, Ádám Pálóczi Horváth  
(Wien, Austrian National Library, PORT\_00021889\_01)

his ideas on reincarnation at a friend's deathbed<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, Pálóczi Horváth considered Ovid his own predecessor as well: He brings the ancient Roman author up for the first time in the foreword to his collection of poems published in 1788 and entitled *Holmi* (roughly translatable as “Belongings” or “Things”), arguing that like himself, Ovid was an author who wrote a wealth of lighter, entertaining erotic and romantic poems and who – despite trying to compensate for those works with his more serious writings – was sentenced to exile<sup>35</sup>. Shortly after the publication of *Holmi*, Pálóczi Horváth was accepted into one of the Masonic lodges of Pest, where he acquired the name Arión (Fig. 2). The only surviving authentic portrayal of him was created in 1791 and shows a half-length figure of the writer surrounded by Masonic symbols, with two lines from *Fasti* about Arion underneath him.

nomen Arionium Siculas impleverat urbes  
captaque erat lyricis Ausonis ora sonis;

Ovid, *fast.* 2, 93–94

To Ádám Pálóczi Horváth, Ovid was the one poet among all the classical Roman authors who served as a reference point for his own creative persona; he considered Ovid the poet of all poets. Some of Pálóczi Horváth's contemporaries likewise expressed the opinion that the Hungarian language was particularly suitable for the translation of ancient literary works in Latin. György Aranka (1737–1817) wrote the following in 1806<sup>36</sup>:

Si nisi quae forma poterit te digna videri / Nulla futura tua est: nulla futura tua est<sup>37</sup>. Hogy ha csak egy hozzád illő remek anyagi szépség / Egy se lehetne tiéd: senki se lenne tiéd. Ezt az utolsó versét Ovidnak még eddig, [...] se az Ánglus, se a Német nem tudja helyesen fordítani.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ádám Pálóczi Horváth, *Felfedezett titok* [A Secret Revealed]. Ed. by József NÉMETH. Budapest 1988, 33–35; Ádám Pálóczi Horváth, *A Secret Revealed*. In: Réka LENGYEL, Gábor TÜSKÉS (eds.), *Learned Societies, Freemasonry, Sciences and Literature in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Hungary: A Collection of Documents and Sources*. Budapest 2017, 204–216.

<sup>35</sup> Pálóczi Horváth *Verses kiadványai* (note 14), 267.

<sup>36</sup> György Aranka, *Elme játékjai* [Mind Play]. Nagyvárad: Szigethy 1806, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Ovid, *her.* 15, 39–40 “If nothing but what's possessed by beauty will seem worthy to you, none will be yours in future, none will be yours in future!” Ovid: *The Heroides*. A complete English translation by Anthony S. KLINE. 2001 <<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Heroideshome.php>> (06/08/2018).

Si nisi quae forma poterit te digna videri / Nulla futura tua est: nulla futura tua est.  
Neither German nor English translations have yet been able to properly reproduce this last poem by Ovid.

From the end of the eighteenth century onward, quantitative poetry came heavily into fashion among Hungarian poets. They not only maintained the original metres when translating the works of ancient authors, but applied these forms successfully to their own works as well. Not all critics agreed with the extent of imitation of the Roman poets, however: Mátyás Ráth (1749–1810), a scholar of linguistics, wrote the following in his review of *Zoologicon*<sup>38</sup>, a hexametric didactic poem published in 1780 by János Molnár (1728–1804), a former Jesuit<sup>39</sup>:

I would rather wish the young minds studying poetry to learn poems like this instead of the elegies of Ovid, in which there is not much more than weird thoughts to learn about.

It should be added, however, that Molnár relied partly on ancient authors and partly on more modern scholarly work while composing his poem – meaning that he himself learnt a lot from Ovid. The nineteenth-century author, teacher, politician and academic officer Károly Sasku (1806–1869) concurred with Molnár in regard to the classical poet's re-evaluation<sup>40</sup>:

This period [the classical period of Latin literature] is famous for the epic authors imitating Homer. There was nothing new in their works, generally even less than in Homer's. But this was only because Rome was never free. And no one becomes a poet if his spirit is not free. The art of Ovid was sparkling in that period, but not one of his pieces resembles the glorious purpose of poetry. He was a genius, the biggest any human being can be, but his heart was not a noble one, not even in proportion to any common man's. He enriched Homer's treasures with a number of images; but these images are only preparations and instruments for reaching the highest purpose of poetry.

When it comes to imitating the Roman poets, Ferenc Kazinczy had contradictory opinions as well. As a young poet, he translated part of the

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<sup>38</sup> Joannis Bapt. Molnár, *Zoologicon, complexum historiam naturalem animalium*. Budae: Typis Regiae Universitatis 1780.

<sup>39</sup> Molnár János magyar és deák könyvei [Hungarian and Latin Works]. Győr: Streibig 1792, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Károly Sasku, *Az okoskodás és költészet tudománya* [How to Become Intelligent and the Art of Poetry]. Pest 1836, 88–89.



*Heroides*<sup>41</sup>, and in his autobiography entitled *Pályám emlékezete* (“Memoirs of My Life”), he claims to have loved the *Metamorphoses* even as a child and to know many of its passages by heart. In a letter written in 1814, however, he states that “our semi-docti were spoiled in school by Ovid,” wishing that the poems of Ferenc Faludi (1704–1779) and Ferenc Kunics (1697–1763), two exceptional Jesuit poets from the eighteenth century, would serve as an example for later students<sup>42</sup>. Meanwhile, another group of writers trying to refine the Hungarian literary style and improve Hungarian language were convinced that they could only achieve the desired result by following the example of ancient Roman authors. According to the members of the *Erdélyi Magyar Nyelvmívelő Társaság* (“Society in Transylvania for the Cultivation of the Hungarian Language”)<sup>43</sup>:

Concerning this matter, the Society is happy to agree that if someone uses Hungarian in a way similar to Terentius, Cicero, Caesar, Virgil, Ovid and Horace, at the same time attaching dignity and sensitivity of expression to the beauty and purity of being Hungarian, then that is the utmost honour they can give to the Hungarian language, and they cannot find a better and quicker way to cultivate it.

Ferenc Verseghy (1757–1822), a versatile poet and translator, held a similar opinion<sup>44</sup>:

Latin [people] needed Quintilianus, Cicero, Ovid; the Academie de la langue française for the French and the della Crusca society for the Italians; while the Germans sought Adelung to reach perfection, which makes them shine. Was it then only the curious privilege of the Hungarian language to have its culture upside down: when no one thought about Hungarian grammar, the language shone the brightest?

With this argumentation, Verseghy intends to prove the need for a Hungarian Literary Society or Academy. He considered the ancient Latin authors to be akin to an association for the cultivation of language and thought that

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Ferenc Kazinczy, *Pályám emlékezete* [Memoirs]. Ed. by János VÁCZY. Budapest 1900.

<sup>42</sup> Kazinczy Ferenc *Összes művei. Harmadik Osztály: Levelezés* [Complete Works. Third Class: Letters] 12. Ed. by János VÁCZY. Budapest 1902, 139.

<sup>43</sup> Elemér JANCsó, *Az Erdélyi Magyar Nyelvmívelő Társaság iratai* [Documents of the Society in Transylvania for the Cultivation of the Hungarian Language]. Bucharest 1955, 187.

<sup>44</sup> Ferenc Verseghy, *A' tiszta magyarság, avagy A' csinos magyar beszédre és helyes írásra vezérlő értekezések [...]* [Pure Hungarian Speaking, or Studies on Fine Hungarian Speaking and Writing]. Pest: Eggenberger 1805, 6.

there should be a consensus – following the Latin authors’ example – regarding the basis and improvement of literature in Hungarian. He considered writing independent literary works and translating the classics of world literature to be equally important and eventually began his own translation of the *Metamorphoses*, though he left out the romantic and erotic scenes from the text in the name of morality<sup>45</sup>.

The analysis of the presented literary and historical sources shows that Ovid’s works still met various needs of generations of Hungarian readers during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Many of them used the classical author’s texts as schoolbooks for learning Latin grammar, rhetoric and poetics, while for others they served as a guideline regarding life principles or as an inspiration and blueprint for composing literary works in Latin or Hungarian. Another fascinating form in which Ovidian texts survived was through the application of elements of classical knowledge by authors of philosophical, historical or scientific works in their various essays and studies. It is likewise worth mentioning that Ovid’s influence extended beyond the limits of linguistic or literary education, high culture and high literature: His works also instructed a wide readership on how to live and love. In his treatise entitled *Pro cultu litterarum in Hungaria vindicatio*, the Piarist priest Josephus Dezericius (1702–1765) argued that even the pigherds in Hungary were able to speak Latin fluently and recite Ovid’s verses<sup>46</sup>. Although Dezericius no doubt overestimated the erudition of common Hungarian people, it is clear that because of the popularity of his topics and his narrative mastery in their elaboration, Ovid found his way into the minds and hearts of less educated readers as well.\*

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Verseghy Ferencz’ maradványai és élete [The Unpublished Works and Life of Ferenc Verseghy]. Ed. by Ferenc Sággy. Buda: Királyi Magyar Univ. 1825, 13–116.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. László SZÖRÉNYI, Desericzky Ince védirata a magyar műveltségről [Ince Desericzky’s Defence of Erudition in Hungaria]. In: *Humanista történetírás* (note 9), 168–177.

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