

The Productive Moment

Imitation, Horace and Dániel Berzsenyi

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Fig. 1: Jakob Schorn, Johann Blaschke, Portrait of Dániel Berzsenyi. Dániel Berzsenyi Versei [Poems]. Ed. by Mihály Helmecci. Pest: Trattner 1813 (Private collection)

Referring to the Hungarian poet Dániel Berzsenyi (1776–1836) as the “Hungarian Horace” is a commonplace – almost a banality – in Hungarian literary history¹. This status was never a secret, either. In 1808, Berzsenyi wrote the following to his friend Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831), who had introduced him into the small circle of Hungarian writers²:

I have no educational erudition – when I should have been studying, I was already having familiar conversations with Horace and Gessner. Great themes grabbed my attention, and I could not be interested in smaller ones anymore. The other and more appropriate reason for this is my endlessly intrigued and wandering mind [in the Hungarian original: “kalóz elme” – “pirate mind”] that I can only force to persistent attention if I lose myself in one topic and almost smother it. I cannot completely do this if the topic is small. As long as the ode flies high, it is my true friend; however, if I have to write it down, it forsakes my hands.

One need not look behind the scenes to detect Horace’s impact on Berzsenyi, however: Any reader turning the pages of the Hungarian author’s book published in 1813 (second edition published in 1816) will readily recognize the influence of the ancient poet³. Titles such as *Horác* (“Horace”) or *Horatiushoz* (“To Horace”) are the most visible signs, and one comes across lines reminiscent of Horace when reading most of the poems. Nothing could have been more unsurprising at the time, either – “Hungarian Horaces” were popping up everywhere. Latin was the official language of the Hungarian Kingdom until 1844, and Horace was the classical author most frequently cited in

¹ Imre KÓRIZS, Berzsenyi e Orazio. Post equites sedet atra cura. In: Beatrice ALFONZETTI, Péter SÁRKÖZY (eds.), *L’eredità classica nella cultura italiana e ungherese nell’Ottocento dal Neoclassicismo alle Avanguardie. Atti del XI Convegno italo-ungherese promosso dall’Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e dall’Accademia Ungherese delle Scienze, organizzato dall’Accademia d’Ungheria in Roma e dall’Università degli Studi di Roma, La Sapienza, Roma, 23–26 settembre 2009*. Roma 2011, 263–267.

² Dániel Berzsenyi to Ferenc Kazinczy, Nikla, 13 December 1808. In: Dániel Berzsenyi, *Levelezése* [Dániel Berzsenyi, Correspondence]. Ed. by Gergely FÓRIZS. Budapest 2014 (Berzsenyi Dániel összes munkái [Complete Works of Dániel Berzsenyi. A Critical Edition]), letter 10, 17–19; here 18.

³ Dániel Berzsenyi Versei [Poems]. Ed. by Mihály Helmeczi. Pest 1813; Dániel Berzsenyi Versei. Második, megbővített kiadás [Poems. Second and Extended Edition]. Ed. by Mihály Helmeczi. Pest 1816.

education. His poetry not only affected other writers, of course – in fact, his set of texts served as ethical “*loci communes*”. And although Horace’s strong attachment to Epicureanism was widely known at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the idea of moderation (the famous *aurea mediocritas*) seemed to be more important overall⁴. For instance, references to the Roman author occur 42 times in the correspondence between Berzsenyi and Kazinczy – a notable frequency, almost as though it was compulsory to insert one or two more or less well-known *loci* into a letter. Furthermore, it is difficult for us to determine with certainty today whether the writer of a letter quoted Horace or it is simply an overinterpretation to search for Horace in every nook and cranny. For instance, it is impossible to unravel whether Berzsenyi was alluding to Horace’s *serm.* 2, 3 *Ergo ubi prava / stultitia, hic summa est insania; qui sceleratus / et furiosus erit* in his letter to Kazinczy on 18 June 1814 when he argued that “I did not know whether the viciousness of the people is nothing less than fallibility or vapours”⁵. If we conclude that Berzsenyi was indeed evoking Horace (which is entirely conceivable), how can we interpret that he “did not know” about people’s viciousness? Was his intention to imitate the Greek philosopher’s *Ne dixeris* in Horace’s poem? Did Kazinczy promptly recognize Horace’s verses and their original ancient context? If this was the case (which is, again, conceivable), did he come to the same interpretation as his friend?

Although Horace’s *œuvre* as *loci communes* is a gold mine of ethical discourses from which the author’s moral principles can be derived, his influence on poetic practices poses a problem, and it is this problem that I will scrutinise in this essay⁶.

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⁴ Cf. István BORZSÁK, Horaz in Ungarn. In: Helmut KRASSER, Ernst A. SCHMIDT (eds.), *Zeitgenosse Horaz. Der Dichter und seine Leser seit zwei Jahrtausenden*. Tübingen 1996, 207–219.

⁵ Dániel Berzsenyi to Ferenc Kazinczy, Nikla, 18 June 1814. In: Berzsenyi, *Levelezése* (note 2), Letter 162, 352–354; here 353.

⁶ On the reading of Horace in Hungary, cf. Ábel TAMÁS, *Truditor dies die. Reading Horace as a Political Attitude in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Hungary*. In: Zara MARTIROSOVA TORLONE, Dana LACOURSE MUNTEANU, Dorota DUTSCH (eds.), *A Handbook to Classical Reception in Eastern and Central Europe*. Chichester 2017 (*Handbooks to the Reception of the Classical World*), 245–259.

After Berzsenyi's second and complete edition of poems came out in 1816, Ferenc Kölcsey (1790–1838), Kazinczy's young and talented follower, published the first public reaction to this form of art in the journal *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* ("Scientific Collection"). In his harsh recension, he stated that⁷

The pieces by means of which I have drawn Berzsenyi's poetical character are well-kept results of conjugated studies on Matthison and Horace.

These words seem to be a praise of Berzsenyi's poetry at first glance (the "well-kept results"), but Berzsenyi nevertheless instantly recognized the attack hidden between the lines. After reading Kölcsey's review, he responded with a scathing pamphlet sent to the editorial board of *Tudományos Gyűjtemény*. Soon thereafter, however, he changed his mind – having realized that his response had been too hot-headed and even interspersed with *ad personam* arguments (for example, he had written that Kölcsey's bad eyesight was associated with his bad temper)⁸. Berzsenyi asked to be given back the manuscript of his response, but was not obliged – and a few years later, when he published his more moderate reply, Kölcsey and his friend Pál Szemere (1785–1861) made parts of the original version public. What is interesting for us is that Berzsenyi was angry about the fact that Kölcsey had mentioned his repeated allusions to Horace's poems. In his first (retracted) reaction, he drew attention to the fact that Kölcsey praised his originality, which exceeded that of Horace, while at the same time characterizing him as a simple follower or imitator⁹:

⁷ Ferenc Kölcsey, Berzsenyi Dániel versei [Review of Dániel Berzsenyi's Poems]. In: Idem, *Irodalmi kritikák és esztétikai írások* [Essays on Literature and Aesthetics] 1: 1808–1823. Ed. by László GYAPAY. Budapest 2003 (Kölcsey Ferenc *Minden munkái* [The Complete Works of Ferenc Kölcsey. A Critical Edition]), 53–61; here 57. Original version: Ferenc Kölcsey, Berzsenyi Dániel Versei. *Tudományos Gyűjtemény* [Scientific Collection] 7 (1817), 96–105; here 99.

⁸ On the debate, cf. Gyapay's commentary: Kölcsey, *Irodalmi kritikák* (note 7), 401–416. The critical edition of Berzsenyi's texts: Dániel Berzsenyi, Antirecensio Kölcsey' Recenziójára [Anti-recension on Kölcsey's Recension]. In: Berzsenyi Dániel *Prózai munkái*. Ed. by Gergely FÖRIZS. Budapest 2011 (Berzsenyi Dániel *Összes munkái* [Complete Works of Dániel Berzsenyi. A Critical Edition]), 29–60; [Dániel Berzsenyi], [II. Antirecensio]. *Ibid.*, 88–114; Dániel Berzsenyi, Észrevételek Kölcsey Recenziójára [Reflections on Kölcsey's Criticism]. *Ibid.*, 134–165.

⁹ Berzsenyi, Antirecensio (note 8), 36–37.

Berzsenyi Dániel'
V e r s e i,

kiadta egy kalauz Ertekezéssel megtoldva

b a r á t j a

Helmeczi Mihály.



Második megbővített kiadás.

Pesten, Trattner János Tamásnál 1816.

Fig. 2: Dániel Berzsenyi Versei. Második, megbővített kiadás [Poems. Second and Extended Edition]. Ed. by Mihály Helmeczi. Pest 1816 (Private collection)

Accordingly, the critic extravagantly clothed me in the major lyrical qualities in his characterization. We must watch how and why he pulled off my clothes; we must watch whether he clothed me in these praises to authenticate and hallow his similarly great abuses. – His naughty politics on criticism appeared in his first accusation, when he stated that he would pull these great praises off me saying that the character of my works was only the well-kept result of conjugated studies on Matthison and Horace.

His statement is the very opposite of the one he made that I praised Horace with my characteristic quality. How could I learn from him something that does not exist and, at the same time, something in which I exceeded both him and Matthison?

It is questionable whether this contradiction analysed so deeply by Berzsenyi was indeed intended in Kölcsey's original critique or not (I think not). What is more interesting to us is the way in which Berzsenyi perceived his own practice of imitation¹⁰:

So, I learnt from Horace, as Horace learnt from Pindar, and as Pindar learnt from others. However, as the critic claimed, I honoured myself with the most distinguished quality, namely that I distinguished my personality in my poetry – and thus expressed my erudition in a wrong way. If someone says both truths and lies, he either cannot see or does not want to see – and both are great mistakes!

The subtle allusion to Kölcsey's bad eyesight in the last sentence is not worthy of further comment. Two noteworthy arguments do appear in the quoted paragraph, however: Firstly, that it is only natural for a poet to learn from his precursors. Latin poetry was based on imitation, just like modern poetry should be. No one becomes a *poeta natus* – at least in the sense that they could unfold the *ingenium* hidden in themselves. Secondly, if someone were only a servile follower of a paragon, they would not be original. On the contrary, Berzsenyi argues that there is no total imitation and the artist cannot simply copy the original, instead having to remake it in some way – and the remade piece should be identical neither to the original nor to other artworks. In this sense, following the path of total imitation would be a great mistake.

I do not think Kölcsey would have contested Berzsenyi's points – presumably, the critic would have agreed with the criticised poet, as no one had contrasted the original with the imitation. Berzsenyi likely realized the weak-

¹⁰ Berzsenyi, *Antirecensio* (note 8), 37.

ness of this interpretation of Kölcsey's viewpoint, and thus omitted this argument when he rewrote his *Anti-recensio*. Nevertheless, the "imitation vs. originality"-debate would become the Gordian knot in the discourse on Berzsenyi's poetry, and we can thus discern the roots of one of the major dilemmas of the later reception of Berzsenyi in this dispute. János Erdélyi (1814–1868), a well-known Hungarian philosopher and critic, asserted in 1847 that¹¹

the picture that was drawn by the brush of the public consensus is mightily respectable, but the strokes are strange. Because we do not believe that there really could be two equal persons whose thinking would fully accord with each other like Berzsenyi's with the Roman poet's [i. e. Horace's]. Neither did Berzsenyi exceed him, nor did he lag behind him, but he sang about evanescence and satisfaction, prudently living in time and wisdom, like the Roman poet did, and albeit with no less force, still only imitating Horace.

What Berzsenyi had originally understood as an indirect attack against his poetry eventually became a direct criticism after some thirty years. Erdélyi claimed that Berzsenyi's face was hidden under a mask, and he asked whether anything remained after extracting Horace from Berzsenyi. Who was the poet under the mask? On the other hand, we might also ask whether it is truly meaningful or appropriate to read a nineteenth-century poet as if he were a reincarnation of an ancient one. Over the past two centuries, imitation has featured as a central topic in Berzsenyi's reception. Some criticised it, as we have seen in the case of Erdélyi and Kölcsey. The mildly ironic beginning of Erdélyi's article serves to illustrate this viewpoint¹²:

The picture by which the public described Berzsenyi resembles a Greek athlete. The child of a past century – he is still standing among his companions, like a Greek artwork that lost its way and came up between the new statues in Munich; that was made somewhere else; that is only a memorial of the greatness of a by-gone era.

¹¹ János Erdélyi, Berzsenyi Dániel összes művei [Review of the Complete Works of Dániel Berzsenyi]. In: János Erdélyi, *Irodalmi tanulmányok és pályaképek* [Literary Essays and Portraits]. Ed. by Ilona T. ERDÉLYI. Budapest 1991 (*A magyar irodalomtörténetírás forrásai* [Sources of Hungarian Literary History] 14), 129–149; here 130. Original version: [János Erdélyi], *Lírai költészet* [Lyric poems]. Berzsenyi Dániel összes művei [Dániel Berzsenyi, Complete Works]. *Magyar Szépirodalmi Szemle* [Hungarian Literary Review], 10 Jan. 1847, 17–21; 17 Jan. 1847, 38–44; 7 Feb. 1847, 86–92; 14 Feb 1847, 106–111.

¹² Erdélyi, Berzsenyi összes művei (note 11), 129.

While both Kölcsey and Erdélyi felt the power of Berzsenyi's language, they did not hear the true Hungarian voice in his poetry ("the strokes are strange"). Others, however, thought to have found the "unknown Berzsenyi" under the mask: The twentieth-century classical philologist Karl/Károly Kerényi (1897–1973), for example, discusses how the picture of an original thinker can be drawn from his poems, and he argues that both Berzsenyi and Horace used a form of primordial mythology originating in the same human condition¹³. Most of the defenders of Berzsenyi's poetry neglect Kerényi's concept of a universal mythology, however – instead searching for allusions to Horace in Berzsenyi's poems and collected *loci communes*.

I would like to provide a simple example to demonstrate the complexity of Berzsenyi's poetic practice with specific regard to the principle of *imitatio*. The poem entitled *Horác* ("Horace") undoubtedly invokes a number of the Roman poet's famous verses. I will cite the text of the second edition published in 1816, with Tamás Kabdebó's translation provided below¹⁴:

Horác

Zúg immár Boreas a Kemenes fölött,
Zordon fergetegek rejtik el a napot,
Nézd, a Ság tetejét hófuvatok fedik,
S minden bús telelésre dőlt.

Halljad, Flaccus arany lantja mit énekel:
Gerjeszd a szenelőt, tölts poharadba bort,
Villogjon fejedén balzsamomos kenet,
Mellyet Bengala napja főz.

Használd a napokat, s ami jelen vagyon,
Forró szívvel öleld, s a szerelem szelíd
Érzésit ki ne zárd, míg fiatal korod
Boldog csillaga tündököl.

¹³ Károly KERÉNYI, *Az ismeretlen Berzsenyi* [The Unknown Berzsenyi]. Budapest, Debrecen, Pécs [1940] (*Magyar éjszakák* [Hungarian Nights] 11).

¹⁴ For the text by Berzsenyi, see the critical edition: Berzsenyi Dániel *Költői művei* [Poetical Works of Dániel Berzsenyi]. Ed. by Oszkár MERÉNYI. Budapest 1979 (Berzsenyi Dániel *Összes művei* [Complete Works of Dániel Berzsenyi. Critical Edition] 1). For the translation, see: Dániel Berzsenyi, Horace. In: Tamas KABDEBO, Adam MAKKAI, Paul TABORI (eds.), *The Poetry of Hungary. An Anthology of Hungarian Poetry in English Translation from the 12th Century to the Present*. Chicago 1976, vol. 1, 160.

Holnappal ne törődj, messze ne álmodozz,
Légy víg, légy te okos, míg lehet, élj s örülj.
Míg szólunk, az idő hirtelen elrepül,
Mint a nyíl s zuhogó patak.

Horace

Storming now Boreas there high above the hills,
Clouds of dark and severe furies cover the sun
Look at the hilltop enveloped in the snowstorm
All is set for wintery rest.

Listen to the song of Flaccus's golden lute,
Pour wine in your glass and stoke the fire of the hearth
Let the magical balsam shine upon your head
It was boiled in the heat of Bengal.

Use your days and whatever the present can give
Embrace with a burning heart but don't exclude
Love's tame emotions while the happy star of youth
Will shine on your horizon.

Don't dwell on tomorrow, do not dream of the far
Be merry, have enjoyment while you can,
While we talk time flies away suddenly
Like the arrow and the roaring stream.

The literary historian exploring Berzsenyi's poetry is generally in a difficult situation. When speaking to classical scholars on this topic, they will likely list similarities between Berzsenyi and Horace that had previously not been recognized. In the following table, I have collected a number of obvious correspondences between the ancient master and his nineteenth-century follower¹⁵.

¹⁵ I cite the translation by Anthony Kline: Poetry in translation <<https://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Horacehome.php>> (28/02/2017). For the Latin texts, see Q. Horati Flacci *Opera*. Ed. Stephanus BORZSÁK. Leipzig 1984 (*Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana*).

<p>Zúg immár Boreas a Kemenes fölött <i>Horác v. 1</i> Storming now Boreas there high above the hills</p>	<p><i>nunc mare, nunc silvae</i> <i>Threicio Aquilone sonant.</i> <i>ep. 13, 2–3</i> and now the sea and the woods resound with the Thracian northerly</p>
<p>Nézd, a Ság tetejét hófuvatok fedik <i>Horác v. 3</i> Look at the hilltop enveloped in the snow-storm</p>	<p><i>Vides, ut alta stet nive candidum Soracte.</i> <i>carm. 1, 9, 1</i> See how Soracte stands glistening with snowfall.</p>
<p>Gerjeszd a szenelőt, tölts poharadba bort <i>Horác v. 6</i> Pour wine in your glass and stoke the fire of the hearth</p>	<p><i>Dissolve frigus ligna super foco</i> <i>Large reponens atque benignius</i> <i>Deprome quadrimum Sabina,</i> <i>Thaliarche, merum diota.</i> <i>carm. 1, 9, 6–8</i> Drive away bitterness, and pile on the logs, bury the hearthstones, and, with generous heart, out of the four-year old Sabine jars, O Thaliarchus, bring on the true wine.</p>
<p>Villogjon fejedem balsamomos kenet <i>Horác v. 7</i> Let the magical balsam shine upon your head</p>	<p><i>Nunc et Achaemenio</i> <i>Perfundi nardo iuvat.</i> <i>ep. 13, 8</i> Now's the time to delight in The flow of Persian nard</p>
<p>Használd a napokat <i>Horác v. 9</i> Use the days</p>	<p><i>Carpe diem!</i> <i>carm. 1, 11, 8</i> Seize the day!</p>
<p>a szerelem szelíd Érzésit ki ne zárd, míg fiatal korod Boldog csillaga tündököl. <i>Horác v. 10–12</i> don't exclude Love's tame emotions, while the happy star of youth will shine on your horizon.</p>	<p><i>nec dulcis amores</i> <i>Sperne, puer, neque tu choreas,</i> <i>Donec virenti canities abest / Morosa.</i> <i>carm. 1, 9, 14–17</i> Don't spurn sweet love, my child, and don't you be neglectful of the choir of love, or the dancing feet, while life is still green, and your white-haired old age is far away with all its moroseness</p>
<p>Holnappal ne törődj, messze ne álmodozz <i>Horác v. 13</i> Don't dwell on tomorrow, do not dream of the far</p>	<p><i>Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quaerere!</i> <i>carm. 1, 9, 13</i> Don't ask what tomorrow brings</p>
<p>Míg szólunk, az idő hirtelen elrepül, <i>Horác v. 15</i> While we talk, time flies away suddenly</p>	<p><i>Dum loquimur, fugerit invida / Aetas.</i> <i>carm. 1, 11, 7–8</i> The envious moment is flying now, now, while we're speaking</p>



Fig. 3: Unknown engraver, Portrait of Horace, copperplate engraving
(Budapest, Eötvös Loránd University, University Library, KRNY, KEP05302)

We find tropes from at least three of Horace's poems here: two from *Epodes* 13 *Ad Amicos*, two from *Odes* I, 11 *Ad Leuconoen*, and four from *Odes* I, 9 *Ad Thaliarcum*. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Horace's poems were well-known, since they were the very basis of education in the Hungarian Kingdom at lower as well as higher levels. But there is no real need to even question whether Horace was a well-known author or not, as the verses cited by Berzsenyi in his poem are in fact some of the most widely known among all of Horace's *loci communes*. (As a personal example, I learnt *Ad Leuconoen* and *Ad Thaliarcum* in secondary school in Hungary in the 1990's.) Moreover, *Ad Thaliarcum* and the epode *Ad Amicos* are close relatives in Latin literary tradition; citing one of them automatically evokes the other. These verses are not only commonplaces in world literature; Berzsenyi was obvi-

ously trying to formulate a notion as to the essence of Horace's poetry. The title *Horác* refers not only to the ancient poet in particular, but also to a set of norms and values associated with him that Berzsenyi's readers could apply to their own lives.

The imitation of ancient authors can be discussed in many ways. To begin with, it is of course possible that János Erdélyi was right and Berzsenyi was merely imitating Horace's poems. In his abovementioned critique, Erdélyi writes that

the poem entitled *Horace* is identical to the one Horace wrote to Thaliarchus (Lib. I. Ode IX.), the main idea is also the same: 'Hieme indulgendum voluptati'.¹⁶

In this interpretation, the poem becomes a type of translation originating in the "school of classicism". Behind this statement lies the well-known narrative that academic classicism was succeeded by Romantic originality – and in this narrative, the monotonous repetition of old poetic clichés learnt in school is to be considered imitation. Although the historians of eighteenth-century literature worked out several alternative narratives, the expectation of originality overshadowed everything like the sword of Damocles. The ongoing developments in anthropology (the way in which people define and describe themselves) had an impact on poetry as well as on society, however. As the social occasions of the representative public sphere disappeared and new social practices came into fashion, a newer poetic language could be established and simultaneously serve the bourgeois public¹⁷.

Secondly, Berzsenyi did not simply translate an ode or blend together two or three poems. Instead, he placed the originals into a different context: He let the cold mythological wind Boreas blow over the Kemeenes, a Hungarian mountain range, and the mountain Soracte near Rome is replaced with a Hungarian mountain named Ság (though Tamás Kabdebó's translation leaves

¹⁶ Erdélyi, Berzsenyi összes művei (note 11), 134.

¹⁷ Cf. John MULLAN, *Sentiment and Sociability. The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford 1988; Katja MELLMANN, *Von der Nebenstundenpoesie zum Buch als Freund. Eine emotionspsychologische Analyse der Literatur der Aufklärungsepoche*. Paderborn 2006 (*Poetogenesis. Studien zur empirischen Anthropologie der Literatur* 4); Gábor VADERNA, *A költészet születése. A magyarországi költészet társadalomtörténete a 19. század első évtizedeiben* [The Birth of Poetry. The Social History of Poetry in the First Decades of Nineteenth-Century Hungary]. Budapest 2017.

these references out). The poet speaking in this poem is clearly not Horace, and this fact is emphasized in the second stanza: “*Halljad, Flaccus arany lantja mit énekel!*” (“Listen to the song of Flaccus’s golden lute”). These words make it unclear whether the lyrical subject is only quoting conventional truisms (which are recognizably by Horace) or whether we are listening to Horace himself. It is impossible to determine who is speaking here, and this is because imitation always constructs possible worlds where some otherness is revealed; fiction and reality are intermingled. In the first lines, mythological winds waft over real, identifiable geographical locations, entangling the poetic world (i. e. tradition itself) with the social existence of a Hungarian poet. Changing the poet’s voice to another one (the imitation) is not simply an allusion: Listening to Horace’s words, it becomes impossible to define the borders between the voices of Flaccus and Berzsenyi.

Imitation is a never-ending process of tradition: Quotation, interpretation and perception of the world by listening to the voices of others go hand in hand. Returning to the question of the significance of the poem *Horác* in the early nineteenth century, it is no coincidence that Berzsenyi chose *Odes* 1, 9 – for it is not only the most famous poem by Horace, but its text likewise represents a dialogue with another poet. Horace imitated Alcaeus as he rewrote and put into a Roman context some of the verses of his Greek precursor¹⁸. Besides following the metrics of Alcaeus, the frequently quoted opening of the ode *Ad Thaliarcum* (*Vides, ut alta stet nive candidum / Soracte*) is a direct quotation of the Greek poet in which Horace places the hill originally on the Peloponnesus near Rome. The Latin poem thus also struggles with the act of imitation, and this is why a number of classical philologists explain the paradoxes of space and time precisely with that act¹⁹.

Horace imitates Alcaeus, and Berzsenyi imitates Horace. In Berzsenyi’s poem, the reader is in Hungary, and Rome is a possible world far away. Moreover, the small pleasures of life lead the reader beyond the space outlined in both poems: In Horace, it is the “four-year-old Sabine jars” (which

¹⁸ Horatius, *Ódák és epódoszok* [Odes and Epodes]. Ed. István BORZSÁK. Budapest 1975 (*Auctores Latini* 18), 65.

¹⁹ Cf. Laurence CATLOW, Fact, Imagination, and Memory in Horace: “Odes” 1, 9. *Greece & Rome* 23 (1976/1), 74–81; here 76. On the complexity of intertextuality in the early imperial period: Lowell EDMUNDS, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Roman Poetry*. Baltimore, London 2001.

are “both physical and metaphysical”)²⁰ that alienate the poetic world from that of the reader; in Berzsenyi, it is the “*balzsamomos kenet / Melyet Bengala napja főz*” (“the magical ointment boiled in the heat of Bengal”). Bengal is the mystical-oriental other: We do not know exactly what it is, but if one tries it, one can feel it on one’s skin. It does not refer to an actual hedonistic lifestyle (who could procure oils from Bengal in nineteenth-century Hungary?), instead representing something rich and strange – and *other*. In contrast to Horace, Berzsenyi increases the distance between the lyrical subject’s position and the symbol of luxury he recalls. The reliance on delights and their figurative revocation are parts of a poetic game that takes the given advice (in the form of ethical maxims) seriously while simultaneously warning that one can hardly fully comply with the rules. The sensual delight is finite, however: “*Zúg immár Boreas a Kemenes fölött*” (“Boreas is storming high above the hills”) in the first stanza, and time flies very fast in the last. The first and last verses thus frame the sensible advice and warn of evanescence. In this sense, the imitation is successful if the poem can pass the ancient wisdom on to the reader²¹.

The third approach results from the second: It is difficult to believe in the doctrines originating in Horace’s works. In the ode *Ad Thaliarcum*, Horace contrasts the pleasures of youth with the moroseness of old age (v. 17 *Donec virenti canities abest / Morosa*). According to one of the classical interpretations of the ode, one can comprehend the paradoxical and non-referential relations between time and space as being motivated by the lyrical subject’s emotional fluctuation²². Nevertheless, Berzsenyi barely skims this controversy between youth and old age: The age of the lyrical subject is indeterminable, with the only certainty being that the addressee is younger: “*míg fiatal korod /*

²⁰ Leonard MOSKOVIT, Horace’s Soracte Ode as a Poetic Representation of an Experience. *Studies in Philology* 74 (1977), 113–129; here 122.

²¹ Lowell EDMUNDS comes to similar conclusions regarding Horace’s ode: *From a Sabine Jar. Reading Horace, Odes 1.9*. Chapel Hill 1992, 122. Edmunds argues on the theoretical basis of deconstruction.

²² On this debate, cf. EDMUNDS, *Sabine Jar* (note 29), 93–110; Carol Clemeau ESLER, Horace’s Soracte Ode. Imagery and Perspective. *The Classical World* 62 (1969), 300–305; Leonard MOSKOVIT, Horace’s Soracte Ode (note 28); David W. T. VESSEY, From Mountain to Lovers’ Tryst. Horace’s Soracte Ode. *The Journal of Roman Studies* 75 (1985), 26–38; Carl P. E. SPRINGER, Horace’s Soracte Ode. Location, Dislocation, and the Reader. *The Classical World* 82 (1988), 1–9.

Boldog csillaga tündököl (“while the happy star of youth / will shine on your horizon”). The threat of old age is inferred from the weather conditions (first stanza), making the perspective of transience a literary allusion. It is more important here that Horace’s voice intrudes into the gap between the lyrical subject of unknown age and the younger addressee. The reader recognizes that the advice was given to Thaliarchus (and to Leuconoe) by Horace, but it is not a foregone conclusion that this advice has the same meaning under the Soracte and Kemenes mountains. Is this Horace’s voice, or is somebody citing Horace in nineteenth-century Hungary? Or is it perhaps a form of self-reflexion? It is difficult to conclusively answer these questions.

Berzsenyi obscures the contrast of young and old, creating another contrast instead. “*Vides [...] Soracte*” says Horace, while Berzsenyi says “*Nézd a Ság tetejét*” (“Look at the [Ság] hilltop”). For Berzsenyi, it is more important to reflect on the ways of perception: “*Halljad, Flaccus arany lantja mit énekel*” (“Listen to the song of Flaccus’s golden lute”), he writes, thereby including the different senses (vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch) in his argument. To him it is not time that destroys the luscious life of youth, but vision, hearing and the other ways of perception that are largely incompatible with one another. He believes this incompatibility to discredit the advice of “*Holnappal ne törődj*” – *Carpe diem!* (“Seize the day”). Of course, mixing modes of perception is not typical of the model poems *Ad Thaliarcum* and *Ad Leuconoen*, but similar issues can be found elsewhere in Horace’s poetry²³. For Berzsenyi, the difference between the various senses causes problems – and in this he follows Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766), in which the German philosopher makes a distinction between poetry, sculpture and painting. According to this approach, painting (and other spatial arts) can only capture a single moment while poetry (and other temporal arts) cannot; vice versa, poetry can tell a story, which painting cannot do²⁴.

²³ Cf. Jürgen Paul SCHWINDT, *Zeiten und Räume in augusteischer Dichtung*. In: Jürgen Paul SCHWINDT (ed.), *La représentation du temps dans la poésie augustéenne. Zur Poetik der Zeit in augusteischer Dichtung. Internationales Kolloquium der Forschergruppe “La poésie augustéenne”*. Heidelberg 2005, 1–18.

²⁴ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie*. In: *Werke 1766–1769*. Ed. by Wilfried BARNER. Frankfurt 1990 (Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden* 5, 2), 11–321; here 117.

Die Malerei kann in ihren koexistierenden Kompositionen nur einen einzigen Augenblick der Handlung nutzen, und muß daher den prägnantesten wählen, aus welchem das Vorhergehende und Folgende am begreiflichsten wird. Ebenso kann auch die Poesie in ihren fortschreitenden Nachahmungen nur eine einzige Eigenschaft der Körper nutzen, und muß daher diejenige wählen, welche das sinnlichste Bild des Körpers von der Seite erwecket, von welcher sie ihn braucht.

Hence the two different modes of creating art would have their effects on each other. Lessing not only emphasizes the difference between them, he also asserts that the most substantial works of art history transcended these limits²⁵:

Doch, so wie zwei billige freundschaftliche Nachbarn zwar nicht verstaten, daß sich einer in des andern innerstem Reiche ungeziemende Freiheiten herausnehme, wohl aber auf den äußersten Grenzen eine wechselseitige Nachsicht herrschen lassen, welche die kleinen Eingriffe, die der eine in des andern Gerechtsame in der Geschwindigkeit sich durch seine Umstände zu tun genötiget siehet, friedlich von beiden Teilen kompensieret: so auch die Malerei und Poesie.

These encounters, Lessing argues, are more significant when art attempts to capture only one moment. For this, the artist (whether poet or painter) must enter foreign territory and create a productive moment by using his or her *Einbildungskraft* (imagination)²⁶:

Kann der Künstler von der immer veränderlichen Natur nie mehr als einen einzigen Augenblick, und der Maler insbesondere diesen einzigen Augenblick auch nur aus einem einzigen Gesichtspunkte, brauchen; sind aber ihre Werke gemacht, nicht bloß erblickt, sondern betrachtet zu werden, lange und wiederholtermaßen betrachtet zu werden: so ist es gewiß, daß jener einzige Augenblick und einzige Gesichtspunkt dieses einzigen Augenblickes, nicht fruchtbar genug gewählt werden kann. Dasjenige aber nur allein ist fruchtbar, was der Einbildungskraft freies Spiel läßt. Je mehr wir sehen, desto mehr müssen wir hinzu denken können. Je mehr wir darzu denken, desto mehr müssen wir zu sehen glauben.

²⁵ Ibid. 130. Cf. David E. WELLBERY, *Lessing's Laocoon. Semiotics and Aesthetics in the Age of Reason*. Cambridge, New York 1984, 198.

²⁶ Lessing, Laokoon (note 32), 32.

The problem of artistic perception did not merely devolve from Lessing to Berzsenyi, however: In the late eighteenth century, the question how anyone could perceive and depict a heuristic experience became a thorny one²⁷.

In Berzsenyi's ode, the penultimate verse is borrowed from Horace; the notion that time flies is a well-known topos and commonplace metaphor. *Dum loquimur, fugerit invida / Aetas* – there is a hint of self-irony in this utterance: You have to enjoy pleasures because time flies, but you have simultaneously wasted your time listening to my advice on enjoying pleasures. Berzsenyi places a double simile in this metaphor in his last verse:

Míg szólunk, az idő hirtelen elrepül,
Mint a nyíl s zuhogó patak

While we talk time flies away suddenly
Like an arrow or a running stream

Time flies fast in the way an arrow flies rapidly; and it flies fast like the quickness of a running stream. Both metaphors say the same – that time passes quickly – so what, then, is the problem here? The problem is that the arrow and the stream are not fast in the same way: The rapidity of an arrow is momentary, it has no temporal extension; the quickness of a stream, however, is permanent and continuous, and it is thus not worth capturing only a single moment of it. This is the very trouble with perception: We cannot see the arrow's flight, and can only understand its power by observing the damage it causes. We can, however, watch the stream through time. We also cannot hear the arrow well, but the sound of the stream is very audible. The effect of this ending can be realized in the poetical technique: the rhetoric of the poem makes the *productive moment* perceptible.

In my interpretation, this complexity of metaphors expresses two things. On the one hand, it demonstrates the paradox between satisfying all sensual desires and the perceptual experience of the world. To give such advice *Carpe diem!* is contradictory, since we have no time to moralize if we take

²⁷ Cf. Jürgen TRABANT, Image and Text in Lessing's Laocoon. From Friendly Semiotic Neighbours to Articulatory Twins. In: Avi LIFSCHITZ, Michael SQUIRE (eds.), *Rethinking Lessing's Laocoon. Antiquity, Enlightenment, and the "Limits" of Painting and Poetry*. Oxford 2017, 345–363; Jürgen TRABANT, Language and Image as Gesture and Articulation. In: Sabine MARIENBERG (ed.), *Symbolic Articulation. Image, Word, and the Body between Action and Schema*. Berlin, Boston 2017, 47–70.

our own advice seriously. On the other hand, the complexity of perception shows that truly imitating the ancient world is impossible. One can capture the essence of Horace's ethical position between the Stoics and Epicureanism, but their bright constellation cannot be fully reconstructed. Perception itself destroys imitation, and I believe this circumstance was one of the fundamental issues of sensible poetry in the early nineteenth century²⁸.*

²⁸ Cf. Jerome MCGANN, *The Poetics of Sensibility. A Revolution in Literary Style*. Oxford 1996.

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