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The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities (used to be the Institute for Philosophical Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences before 2012; and the Institute of Philosophy of the Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences before 2019) have been collaborating in the field of Polish and Hungarian comparative intellectual history over last ten years. Their first initiative included a short-term project entitled *Affectivity and its Vicissitudes in Contemporary Humanities and Social Sciences,* supported by the Visegrad Fund. Our cooperation became more established within the frames of projects funded by the bilateral programme of the Polish and Hungarian Academies, entitled *The Impact of Noble Legacy in Shaping Citizenship in Central Europe* (2014–2016, project leaders: Gábor Gángó and Rafał Smoczyński); *The Role of Intelligentsia in Shaping Collective Identities of Poles and Hungarians in 19th and 20th Centuries* (2017–2019; project leaders: Béla Mester and Rafał Smoczyński); and our ongoing research entitled *Westernisers and 'Narodniks'. Dichotomous Identity-Generating Narratives in the 19th–20th-century Polish and Hungarian Intellectual History* (planned for 2020–2022, renewed until 2023 due to the pandemic; project leaders: Béla Mester and Rafał Smoczyński). This volume mirrors the present status of our research based on papers presented during the workshops held in Budapest on 21st February 2019, in Warsaw on 26th October 2019, and in Budapest on 30th July 2020; collected and selected for the 10th anniversary of our cooperation. The editors and authors would like to express their gratitude to the Wacław Felczak Foundation, which supported the publication of the present book.

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Westernisers and 'Narodniks'

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Series editor

BÉLA MESTER

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for this volume were reviewed by

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Eutopias and Dystopias from Hungary

BÉLA MESTER
Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Philosophy

Pessimist Hungarian Utopias in the Interwar Period and after the Second World War

I. Introduction

The genre of utopia has never had a serious role in the history of the Hungarian culture; however, there is an important exception, a series of the *pessimist utopias* written mainly in the interwar period. They are not simply *dystopias,* because their fictive inhuman world offers a real alternative to the existing hopeless human culture, which is often the real dystopia in novels' worlds. These works of pessimist utopias have not found their place in the Hungarian cultural canon; they are marginal works of the Hungarian classics, or main works of marginal figures of Hungarian literature. At the end of my writing, I will touch on the problem of the canonisation of these works and its consequence for future research of the Hungarian history of ideas. In what follows, I will discuss five novels and several short stories of three authors briefly, focused on the topics of the production of ideologies, the role of culture and the crisis of the sexual, individual and cultural identities in their fictive worlds. These questions are in close connection with the role models of the intelligentsia, expressed clearly or in a hidden form in the world of the fictional literature discussed. In the first section I discuss Mihály Babits's *Aviator Elza*. I will also analyse Frigyes Karinthy's novels entitled *Rope-dancing* and *Voyage to Faremido*. A distinguished part of my writing will be focused on Sándor Szathmári's works. I will discuss the last part of his trilogy entitled *Vainly – Past, Present, Future,* and his *Kazohinia* in the fourth and fifth sections, and I will touch on problem of his role in the canon of Hungarian literature separately in the last section.

II. The Symbol of a Female Aviator in a Godless World – Mihály Babits's Last Novel

Although Mihály Babits's *Aviator Elza* was written at the turn of the nineteen twenties and thirties, it clearly mirrors the elementary social experiences of the First World War; they are the parallel appearance of the achievements of modern technology and the re-barbarisation of society. It is the epoch of when millions

of young European men had to eat canned food for the first time in their lives and learnt to shave without the assistance of a barber; since they were required to wear gas masks. (Bertrand Russell's logical paradox *on the regiment's barber* clearly refers to the change of military shaving practices. His example is hardly comprehensible to today's audience for cultural reasons; it needs separate notes for the students.) The symbol of the link of technology and re-barbarisation can be the joint usage of *clubs with nails, flamethrowers and poison gases* in the long trench warfare (*clubs with nails and flamethrowers* were the specialities of the Austro-Hungarian Army, especially on the Italian frontiers). The first versions of Babits's novel were published in two series in a well-known daily newspaper entitled *Pesti Napló,* between 15 March 1931 and 10 January 1932. In the time of its formulation, the cultural and personal memories of the Great War and the similarly violent remembrance of the post-war years were life-like experiences for the majority of his target audience. In this first version, Babits's narratives still appeared as two separate novels. The first one is set in the Hungarian hinterland of an imagined future war; the second one entitled *The Creation of the World* is actually a science fiction about a man-made world, constructed by a scientific experiment. The idea to join these narratives appears in the first edition of the novel, as a separate volume. It can be seen as the *ultima manus* of the author, and from the moment of this writing act, we should regard it as *one, single* novel with its final title, *Aviator Elza, or the Perfect Society* (Babits 1933).[1] The heroine of the novel named in the title, *Aviator Elsa* refers to the cultural remembrance of the Swedish *Elsa Andersson* (1897–1922), one of the first female aviators and stunt parachutists who died tragically in a fly-past show which counted as a recent event at the time the novel was written, and her memorial obelisk was erected at the place of her death in 1926, just five years before the first publication of Babits's novel. For Babits's target audience, her figure was a well-known and vivid symbol a *female Icarus*. However, Elsa Andersson had not any connection with military ideas, her tragic figure, transplanted into an imaginary Hungarian war environment of the future was optimal to create a symbol of a (female) human life offered on the altar of the war. *Elza Kamuthy,* Babits's fictive character is a member of the Hungarian middle class, a sportswoman and hobby-aviator, who is a student at the Faculty of Humanities of the local university. Her every characteristic and activity *prima facie* refers to the survived norms of the civilisation of peace; the narrative of the novel shows

[1] In this paper, all mentioned Hungarian fictions will be referred to by their first editions. There is no room here to discuss the difficult history of the afterlife of these works, consequently, there are no mentions of the different modern editions, except for those that have inevitable text-variants. If there are relevant translations in foreign languages, they will be mentioned after the data of the first Hungarian edition.

us that how the war machinery can gradually use all of them for its own aims, all the way to the elimination of cultural and moral values and personality.

At the beginning of the narrative of the novel, we are in the *forty-first year of the perpetual fight,* in the city of Szeged. (Babits just talks about 'Sz.', a big Hungarian city on the bank of the Tisza River with a university; and we can go to "Új/New-Sz." through the bridge of the Tisza River. There is no clear reason to hide the name of the city. It was probably the requirement of censorship. The University of Szeged, identical with the university evacuated from Kolozsvár, was an honoured model-institution of the science-policy of the Horthy regime, but in Babits's novel it appears as an image of the decline of the humanities and the academic sphere altogether in the circumstances of the war.) All the promises of modernity were fulfilled in this fictive world, but in a perverted form. More and more social homogeneity means that everyone is a part of the war machinery. Equal rights of women mean obligatory military service for girls. This last step of the development of the total war machinery is the main element of the narrative of the novel. Elza's peaceful middle-class hobby as an amateur aviator became the basis of her military drilling job at the *air force,* according to the logic of war society. Babits formulates a note on the Jewish origin of the Kamuthy, primary *Kamutzer* family; but this line of the narrative remains just a glance, without antecedents and continuations. These rare and sudden notes on the rare rests of the socio-cultural status of the figures of his novel refer to the real time conditions of the epoch of writing of the novel. The writer's hidden statement could be the following: "Take several social types from Hungary, from the 1930s, and let us see the destiny of their daughters and sons in the *41*st *year of the perpetual fight*. Of course, we will see the same perdition of different socio-cultural types; just their lost illusions remain relatively different."

As the time of Elza's military service approaches, the reader gets more and more familiar with the different strata of war ideology. The socio-cultural position of Elza's family offers a good opportunity to describe a complete picture. We listen to mass propaganda through the street megaphones and public radio programs in the so-called 'air-caves' (refuges in the times of a gas attack); in scenes at the university we can observe the special message for the (female) students as the 'guardians of the rest of culture'; and in the conversations of Mrs Kamuthy and a high ranking medical officer, a friend of the family, we can see the core of war ideology that is the *fight for the fight itself.* A significant point of this secret core of war ideology is that the systems of *nationalism and internationalism* play the roles of each other. One of the main characteristic elements of the description of the world scene is a foggy image of the enemies and allies. From a special hinterland-perspective of the novel, both the allies and the enemies appear just on the horizon. In the novel's world it is well-known that Hungary is a part of a large military alliance, and it is mentioned that "the Hungarian soldiers were divided and mixed with other nations on the long frontiers",

but we actually are not informed about who our allies are. They physically only appear once, when they offer technical help with an equipment of the "death ray" for a collective penalty of decimation ordered by a Hungarian officer, but they have no faces, characteristics, or a concrete nationality. The fictive Hungarian war rhetoric of the novel appears in the framework of this abstract alliance, which is a clear limit of possibility of any autonomous strategic decision on the frontiers, on the level of the nation state. Internationalism appears as the ideology of the main war-enemy that is actually unknown to the war-society of the novel's fiction. On the level of the simplified slogans of the war propaganda, Hungarians fights "for their homeland and nation" against the "poison of the internationalist ideologies" and against "Eastern barbarism"; but the army of the "internationalist barbaric" enemy practically functions as a national army. These foggy images of the allies and enemies can hardly be identified with concrete nations and states; but the initial words of the novel's narrator about the beginnings of the "perfect war society" offer an orientation to the audience. By this historical retrospection, the roots of the total military organisation of society appeared "as early as the first half of the 20th century in the forms of 'fascio'-s and Soviets" (Babits's novel was formulated before Hitler came into power in Germany). Babits here clearly refers to the social and political phenomena of his age, namely Mussolini's Italy and the Bolshevik Soviet-Russia; but these elements of the past are known only to a number of clear-minded figures of the fictive society of the novel. (It is an interesting episode of the afterlife of the novel that in the editions of Babits's novel published in the Communist era, these notes about the parallelism of Soviets and 'fascio'-s; and the slogan of "the fight against Eastern barbarism" were censored, differently in the versions published in Hungary and by the editing house of the Hungarian minority in Romania. For these Hungarian philological details, see Mester 2019a. 67–68. n. 2.)

The deepest consequence of war society for the individual is the crisis of sexuality. Amongst men on the frontiers and amongst women in the hinterland, homosexual and lesbian sexuality became normal, but it is far from the freedom of sexual identity and more similar to the sexuality of prisons. The biggest problem is social alienation of men and women. Many men who were socialised in the war could only imagine having sex with a woman non-consensually in a Sadist way, only, or to be asexual, except that they had to be married in order to have children, but this became more and more uncomfortable both parties. The sexual misery of the fictive war-society is clearly described by the tristful love story of the heroine of the novel. Elza's main motive in her relation with Dezső is just that she does not want to join the army as a virgin. Her romance was regarded negatively and ironically in her socio-cultural environment; in the opinions of her (female) fellow students, she should have chosen a lesbian partner from the university, instead of an uneducated (male) soldier. In the novel's world, every healthy man is a soldier and deprived of the normal university

curricula. At the same time, the social practice of voluntary mutilation and the mutilation of new-borns to industrial measures is a part of everyday life for the middle class. Consequently, in the eye of young women, a young man can either be healthy *and* uneducated, *or* mutilated *and* educated. It is true for young men only in the generation of Elza's father that the planned mutilation was not such a widespread practice. (For this problem, see my lecture: Mester 2019b.) In Hungarian literary studies, Babits's prudery is commonplace. In this locus of his novel, this critical topic appears embedded in the statement that he attributes more significance to the question of virginity than it really had in the everyday life of the Hungarian middle class during the interwar period. A close reading of the few pages of this love story in the novel can persuade the interpreter that lost virginity is just a marginal element of the story; its core is the socio-cultural alienation of young men and women, with serious consequences in sexual behaviour which can be summarised as having an asexual attitude.

In the novel's world, any form of culture may only have a marginal role. Universities have been feminised and have become passive conservators of books, which have haphazardly remained in local university libraries. Writing and printing new books, or having a discussion with the scholars of other inland or foreign universities is not possible. This image of the academic sphere as a feminine realm is based on the personal experiences of the writer. The first Hungarian woman who earned a PhD degree at a Hungarian university, Valéria Dienes (born Geiger) was Babits's close relative, and her details were used in Babits's earlier autobiographic novel entitled *Halálfiai (Death's Sons)* for a description of the figures of the first female students in the novel's world. Another collective experience of all European countries was the multitudinous appearance of female students in the last years of the war, especially in the medical faculties. (The post-war political regimes usually tried to restrict this early feminisation of intellectual careers; for the majority's opinion this was not a beginning of a new era, just an anomaly of the war years.) The uselessness of the remaining elements of the culture of peace saved by the universities is the clearest in Elza's university studies. Her major was history of religion in a world where the priests are just tolerated figures, without any influence on the government and society. (The Christian chronology based on the 'years of A.D.' is only used in and by the Church, and it is regarded an old-fashioned curiosity. According to the official chronology and everyday language, we are in the "41st year of the perpetual fight", in the novel's fictional world. While the traditional churches clearly lost their influence on society, informal prophets and their believers are persecuted and they are not the subjects of academic research and studies.) As a foreign language, she chose Russian, but her studies based on ancient books, without any assistance to learn pronunciation, did not help when she became a war prisoner "amongst the Antipodes", as Babits calls the culturally unknown enemy who is not further from us than a few hours long flight.

As a novel within the novel, Babits puts a science fiction story into his work about an artificial, manmade globe as an experimental research of human history. The idea of this artificial world first appears as a fiction read by a figure of the novel, the above-mentioned medical officer, a friend of the Kamuthy family, and later Elza's commander; she was his personal aviator-pilot. Later, this world of the fiction within the fiction became gradually more and more realistic; and, at the end of the story, Professor-General Doctor Schulberg meets the "small Earth" of his favourite book in reality. At this point, Babits flashes a vision of the infinite series of the manmade worlds; on one Earth, a scientist creates an artificial Earth that has its scientist who creates a second-level artificial Earth, and so on. In this model of the universe, our Earth is just a chain in the series of artificial Earths. For Babits, the core of this system is the introduction of the idea of a *Godless world*. In his epilogue, he calls upon us to resist war ideologies based on a non-defined Christian humanism that is a general characteristic of his late works. The pessimist version of the human history described in his epilogue is that God will leave the created world when humanity has left God.

III. The Body–Mind Problem and the Human–Machine Relationship in Frigyes Karinthy's Post-War Novels

Despite the fact that he novels of our next author, Frigyes Karinthy were written earlier, during and after the First World War, the social experience of the war appears in a more indirect, abstract form in his works. His *Rope-dancing*, written during the post-war years, is a novel about the disintegration of social and individual identity (Karinthy 1923a). His hero, an unknown aviator with his only passenger, his dead lover vested as a mummy, runs an intellectual and political amuck in Budapest, changing his names, identities and roles from that of a spiritualist of middle class saloons to the leadership of the new-model political mass-movements of this epoch. We can see the symbol of hopeless love and aviation in a different version than it was shown in Babits's novel (actually, Babits's novel was written and edited later than Karinthy's one). This initial picture of a man who has alienated himself from the social world and who is connected emotionally exclusively to his dead lover, is based on Karinthy's tragic personal experiences; his pregnant wife died in the 'Spanish flu' epidemic of the post-war years. The core of the story in the milieu of social chaos of the post-war years, described in non-realistic dream pictures of horror, is a physical and spiritual *hunt for the soul* or *the identity* of the anonymous hero who has no established knowledge about who he really is. He could only achieve his real existential presence in his own life at the end of his life described in the novel – his amuck-running is actually a personal mirror of the chaotic history of post-war Hungary. The moment when he wakes up from the dream of chaos is the same as when

his body, to paraphrase Michel Foucault, *escapes from the prison of the soul,* which is also the moment of his execution. In his case, the soul is the *killer* of the body, which is the only possible basis of human identity. Actually, the concept or imagination of a separate, immortal and pre-existent soul was unveiled here as a mere linguistic construction in the service of war ideology. (A characteristic feature of Karinthy's writings in the last years of the Great War was to show the slogans of war ideology in an un-masked form. This deconstruction of the concept of the soul is both the top and core of the critique of war ideology in Karinthy's œuvre.)

The body–mind problem has a similarly important role in his other novels and short stories, I suppose, because of the influence of several physicalist theories of Hungarian philosophical life in this time, on the one hand a more radical amongst them was the behaviourist theory of Jenő Posch (1859–1923) and a Hungarian spiritualist movement in the early 1920s, on the other. (For a short analysis of Posch's ideas about the body–mind problem from the special point of view of the human–animal relationship, see Mester 2015. 156–158; for an interpretation of the body–mind problem and human–technology relationship, see Mester 2021.) His opinion about the roles of the soul and the body in human identity is clearly mirrored in his short story entitled *Legend on the Soul of One Thousand Faces,* written during the war years (Karinthy 1917). Its main character invents the method of perpetual life by the continuous changing of bodies, but he realises that one cannot make love *with a borrowed body,* because his identity is not hidden purely in his soul. From this point on, the existence of the soul or the false ideas about the existence and role of the soul became a central element in Frigyes Karinthy's thought; it was going to be the core of any cultural criticism, as it appeared in his novel written in the war years, entitled *Voyage to Faremido;* but its central topic guides to the next problem of the present section, namely the human–machine relationship.

Karinthy's second novel discussed herein is a work of the genre of actualisations of Swift's Gulliver, put into a wartime environment. The narrator of the story escapes the war situation by plane and leaves the living area of humanity during an air fight, and he wakes up in a miraculous world of singing machines called *Faremido* (Karinthy 1916; 1965). We can see in here the third version of the symbol of the aviator; from the viewpoint of the intelligent machines, the aircraft–human-complex appears as a *reasonless animal* within the *rational machine*. Let us say that we do not see 'the ghost in the machine', just 'the worm in the mechanism'. The cultural criticism described from the point of view of the perfect machines is based on two oppositions of the real world and *Faremido;* the first one is the contrast between eternal inorganic and the temporal organic life, the second one is the antagonism of the perfect language of the music used by the machines and natural human languages. By the description of *Midore,* Gulliver's mentor in *Faremido,* all forms of organic life is in decay in the body

of a *solasi,* for example the globe, but a form of these *dosire* seems to be a rational being. According to the research of scholar *solasi*s, it is just a joke of nature, because in the head of the rational *dosire*s, the organs of *instinct* and *reason* are compressed inside a narrow hole in the scull, and the rational *dosire*s are determined to kill themselves and/or each other, in any way. This tension of *instinct* and *reason* is the root of any form of culture and concept of the soul, but they are just imaginations before the programmed death of the organism. The musical language of the machines refers to an existing plan of the perfect, rational and economic language of music, developed in the 19th century, called *solresol*. Karinthy extended the real potential as a neutral mediator between languages to a critical relation with reality with a moral consequence; by the perfect musical language of the novel, only things of *real reference* can be explained. By the experiences of Gulliver, a lot of words and expressions of the natural human languages cannot be translated into the perfect language of Faremido. They can be interpreted just as the obstacles of communication, different examples of the *channel noise*. As Gulliver could listen to a record of the scientific observation of the *dosire*s, the expression of *historical materialism* was a real, understandable element of the communication only for him; for the scholar *solasi*s it was just a meaningless *channel noise* of the communication.

A counterpart of his *Faremido* in Karinthy's œuvre can be his short story entitled *New Iliad* (Karinthy 1933; 1980b). It is the single writing of the author, published in the late period of his career that regards the rule of technology to be negative but formulates the possibility of the cultural survival of humankind in and after the rule of machines. We are in New York in the future, when the machines have created their autonomous, self-creating and self-developing world that is inimical to the rarely survived groups of humankind. For the re-barbarised human society, the ruins of the Manhattan skyscrapers are natural mountains, canyons and caves, and machines appear as the monsters of nature, only the *time traveller narrators* can realise that several machine-monsters have well-known *ancestors* as a car, a vacuum cleaner, or a printer. The neo-primitive human society is fighting against the machines as monsters of nature. An important feature of Karinthy's cultural criticism is that the machine-monster killed by the hero of the new epoch, had *printer ancestors* according to the observation of the time travellers. Consequently, the prerequisite of the *creation of a new cultural memory* is that the symbolic tools of the ancient ones, the printers, must be destroyed. This hunt for the monster-machines can be the basis of the next possible level of civilisation, the emergence of a new Homer, the creator of cultural memory as a core of collective identity. However, this naive humanist heroism is unique in Karinthy's œuvre and in the whole of the Hungarian pessimist utopias as well, but we can see the failed illusion about the value of the culture of his epoch at the bottom of his enforced optimism.

IV. Elements of the Hungarian War Philosophy as the Roots of Generalised War Ideology in the Fictions of Mihály Babits and Frigyes Karinthy

Mihály Babits and Frigyes Karinthy in their fictions did not just use the primitive slogans of the propaganda of the last war; his description is seriously based on the Hungarian version of the "war philosophy" that was a wide-spread phenomenon of European intellectual life in the war years. However, Babits's novel was written later, his fiction used the concrete details of this literature, because of its realistic Hungarian environment, while Karinthy tended to generalise the main statements of the same ideology and made them run into absurd consequences that were hidden inside them. By the hypothesis of the present paper, the description of the war ideology of a fictional future Hungary as a coherent worldview of a totalitarian society is significantly based on the writings of the doyen of Hungarian philosophical life in the first two decades of the 20th century, Bernát Alexander, focused on the central term of the *philosophy of war*. Alexander's role in military propaganda is not a well-known part of his œuvre. In this topic, the first pieces of research were made by Gábor Gángó, in the context of the Hungarian events of Leibniz-year in 1916 (Gángó 2011); other authors of this volume, Péter András Varga and Bettina Szabados have recent achievements in the field of researching Alexander's international context (Szekér–Szabados–Varga 2018; Varga 2018). Péter Turbucz's philological and historical research is focused on the war- and post-war periods of Alexander's life and œuvre; the preprint version of his first book inspired me to research of the present topic (see Turbucz 2021; and cf. Turbucz's writing in the present volume).

In the following, I will analyse the structure of Alexander's *war philosophy,* its place in his œuvre and in the cultural memory of the historiography of Hungarian philosophy. For us today, the elements probably used by Babits and Karinthy have special importance. For the evaluation of the publications and lectures of Bernát Alexander in the genre of "war philosophy", we should consider the following circumstances. "War philosophy" is not a Hungarian speciality, it emerged in all of the European countries at war, with highly similar inner tensions in their content; it is the opposition of the reality of extended military coalitions and the national rhetoric of public communication. The solution is the emphasis of national culture as the main defender of the whole of European culture against the barbarism of the national culture of military enemies. Within the public communication of European intellectuals for the war, in the German scene, the role of the philosophers was more significant than in France or in Great Britain. The Hungarian version of "war philosophy" is clearly linked to the German one, not only because of the military alliance but for structural reasons as well. In the Hungarian case, in the evaluation of Alexander's war writings, we should consider that Alexander's œuvre is highly fragmented; he wrote

very few longer works or syntheses of his opinions. In this œuvre, the volumes of collected essays edited by him represent a kind of synthesis; consequently, the fact that he published a collection of his war essays after two years after the end of the war has special importance, without any revision of the text, entitled *After the War* (Alexander 1918/2014). It means that he regarded this text corpus as valid and valuable for the after-war period as well, and he did not think that it was a moral or intellectual mistake. The cultural memory of Hungarian philosophy has forgotten these writings for two reasons. At first, the memory of the Second World War and the Communist dictatorship covered the memory of the Great War; secondly, for the first serious researchers of Alexander's œuvre, these writings were morally and intellectually uncomfortable.

The first writing from this text corpus is entitled *The War as an Educator of the Nation* (*A háború, mint nemzetnevelő,* first published in 1914). It is a typical writing of the war literature of its time; the moral and physical challenges of the war offer a possibility to the following step of the development of nations, based on a moral revival. This is more than simple war propaganda; it is the close connection of this writing with other articles and lectures published in the peace period, about national philosophy, and the role of philosophy in the national culture, which was a central question of his thought. Another characteristic writing is entitled *On the Philosophy of War* (*A háború filozófiájáról,* first published in 1915). It is a key to his war-literature; he tries to apply the categories of the neo-Kantian *theory of values* for the war experience, and to find the moral *values* behind the *facts* of the war. It is important and interesting that the logical structure of this writing is parallel with a lecture of professional philosophy held in the same period, on the 22nd May 1918, entitled *Facts and Values* (by the evidence of the report on the annual meeting of the Hungarian Philosophical Society, see *A Magyar Filozófiai Társaság Közgyűlése* 1918). This parallelism demonstrates that the "war lectures" for an extended target audience and the writings for the scholar periodicals did not represent for him an essential but only stylistic difference. In the end, I should mention his paper entitled *The Acting Thought* (*A cselekvő gondolat,* first published in 1915). It can be regarded as the last conclusion of his "war philosophy". In his previous writings he demonstrated the existence of the philosophical values of the war and the significance of the war in national development. In this third step, he details the role of philosophy in the collective acting of the nation in the form of a fight in this epoch. It is clear that for Alexander, "war philosophy" is just a formulation of the conclusions of his philosophy developed during the peaceful years. For Babits and Karinthy, this continuity was disbelief and dangerous in the shadow of the new war.

V. From Pessimism to a Trans-humanist Vision – the Novels and Short Stories of Sándor Szathmári

Central elements of the above-discussed writings of Frigyes Karinthy, namely the problem and the nature of the perfect language and the tension between rationality and the biological-emotive instincts of the same human being are the fundaments of the thought of the best follower of Karinthy, Sándor Szathmári, in a more systematised and developed version. The first sentence of the foreword to Szathmári's novel entitled *Vainly – Future* is that "the words are not to explain our ideas and to understand each other", and he repeats this in the epilogue entitled *A few useless words again* (see in Szathmári 1991). It is the first significant writing in his œuvre, and in here the critique of culture based on the critique of natural language is restricted to ideological languages, yet, extended to the ideologies of the aesthetical rebels at least. Szathmári's trilogy can be regarded as the adventures of a time traveller in the past, present and the future, always under the same talking name (Kálmán Hajós, 'Colman Sailor'), and connecting with the same typical characters, after the model of the *Tragedy of Man* by Imre Madách, and Frigyes Karinthy's above-mentioned time traveller stories. Szathmári's trilogy was written at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, (at the same time when Babits's last novel I analysed above), but its last parts were published only as late as in 1991.

In the novel's fiction we are in 2082. Communist revolutions during and after the Second World War, (which were forecast in Szathmári's novel, similarly to Babits's work), established a new order of international relations in Central Europe; all the countries of this region have a Communist political system combined with mutual hate, based on extreme nationalism. However, there were rebels in the 1980s, and they achieved several so-called "people's rights" at the time of the novel's story, these rights were gradually eliminated; government is close to the total control of society. It is a definite *dictatorship of the proletariat,* in other words, the *nomenclature* called *vanguard proletariat ('élproletár')* over the empirical working class called *machinists ('gépész'),* and the intellectual middle class of *headworkers ('fejmunkás')*. It is funny to meet Szathmári's fictive Hungarian Communist terminology in our time, imagined in the interwar period; it is a mixture of the remembrance of the political language of the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, several modified elements of the Marxist terminology and the uncontrolled fantasy of the author. (One of the keywords, 'headworker / fejmunkás' is a characteristic expression of 1919; another central concept, the exclusive usage of the word 'proletariat' for the nomenclature of the Communist Party is Szathmári's invention.) The novel is a headworker's story in its essence; the caste of headworkers is the producer of the ruling Marxist ideology in "ceremony-masters" in the "neo-socialist" reformers within the party, and in the activists of the underground *Anthropist* resistance as well. Szathmári

offers caricatures of the ideological jargon of these groups; the best is the picture of the circle of the sectarian ideologists of the *Anthropism* with the continuous citations of the fictive author called Hartleben, based "on the German original version".

The essence of the critique of the ideological language is mirrored in the second part of Szathmári's work, in a new autonomous society, liberated from the rule of Soviet-Hungary. In the fiction of the novel's world, the rulers save a safety valve of societal tensions; it is to offer the possibility to the machinists and headworkers for making their self-governed communities separated from the official Soviet-Hungary under very hard financial requirements. The second part of the novel describes one of these societal islands; the readers can hope that a utopia will be offered within the dystopia of the fictional world of Szathmári. In the society of equal citizens, there is no place for *vertical* metaphors and traditional authorities; consequently, the vocabulary and metaphors of the language of power must be changed as well. In a homogeneous society of equal producers, no one can be on the top, or on the bottom of a scale of social status, and with the decline of the rule of the proletariat (i.e. nomenclature), its name evaporated as well. In the new reform-society, the head of the community must be called a *machinist* as all the other citizens and producers, and his status as a leader must be expressed by a *horizontal* metaphor; he is the *Centre Machinist ('Centrumgépész')*. In the novel's narrative of course, our hero, Kálmán Hajós achieved the rank of *Centre Machinist,* but he remained an intellectual in his attitude, i.e. a 'headworker'. He believes that the teaching of the official *Catechism* of the new reform society, formulated by him, can be a hidden capsule of authority-free thinking for future generations. But, as he made it clear in his foreword, "the words are not to explain our ideas and to understand each other"; the antiauthoritarian sentences of the *Catechism* are used by the security service of reform society against the authority of a prophetic, religious critic of the rulers. The conclusion is clear for the future of Hungary, and for the whole of humanity; *vainly,* i.e. it is in vain to hope that the injustice and pain of existing societies can stop as a result of applying rationality because of human nature and the nature of human language.

Szathmári's more consequent and much more known masterpiece is his *Kazohinia*, written in the middle of the 1930s, just after his abovementioned trilogy. The history of the publication of the novel is highly adventurous, mirrors the different periods of the modern history of Hungary. The first edition was published in a mutilated version, because of the censorship in the shadow of Hungary's participation in the Second World War (Szathmári 1941). The second edition can be regarded as the first complete, unmutilated version with the author's theoretical essay on the experiences of the Great World Crisis (1929–1933), and the Second World War entitled *The Song of a Poor Comedian (A szegény csepűrágó dala),* written after the war as an epilogue (Szathmári 1946). This essay is absent

from the later editions, it is available solely in a posthumous collection of the author's shorter writings (Szathmári 1989). The attitude of this epilogue follows the central idea of a short story of Karinthy entitled *Hippodrome (Cirkusz);* the message of the writer must be packed in an amusing form but there is no guarantee that the audience will understand. (Szathmári regarded this writing of his elected master as his own *ars poetica.* He translated it into Esperanto with his personal confession about the importance of this writing for him; see Karinthy 1968.) The genre of the novel is an actualised Gulliver story dedicated to Frigyes Karinthy, who read the manuscript before his death and declared that he could give up the authorship of each of his own works written in this topic for this book. The narrator of the story finds himself on the island of the *hin*s called *Kazohinia* after an ocean storm. His first experience is the regular, artificial and perfect language of the local people. It is a human one, but in its structure and semantics it is similar to the musical language of *Faremido*. In the perfect world of the *hin*s, there are no words for the phenomena of culture, religion and the majority of the elements of psychic life, because these have no reference in the real world. The core of this cleaned out vocabulary is the lack of any concept or term for the soul. Our hero cannot fit into this perfect but soulless society and asks to move to the territory of the *behin*s, which is a settlement of hopeless psychotic patients. In the world of the *behin*s, he first meets a form of the *hin* language that is corrupted in its phonology, grammar and semantics. These deformed linguistic phenomena refer to the imagined things without real reference, expressed by irregular linguistic elements. A large intellectual underworld is manifested as a caricature of human culture; taboos about food and women, religious and political beliefs and dogmas, sacral and political symbols emerge with their well-developed fictional terminology. Within this perverted world of culture, the terminology of art has a direct connection with the trends of art at the time of the first publication of the novel; the slogans of "white seat in a white room" and "the seat for the seat itself" can be familiar to anyone. (A similar aesthetical discussion was described in the second part of his previous novel, but it had a more direct reference to the real scene of fine arts in the novel's epoch.) The core of this crazy vocabulary is the *bruhu,* a *behin* term for the soul as the first cause of everything, and the *böto* as the final end of human life with the connotation of *happiness* and *salvation*. To find the missing soul is not good news for our hero, because it is connected to the periodical wars of the *behin*s; it is necessary because of the ill structure of the *behin* mind, and it is described similarly to the picture of *dosire* in *Faremido*. The war of the *behin*s, called *buku* in their language, mirrors both religious and national fanaticism. War is not just an unpleasant episode of the *behin* history and culture, but its core and final end. *Behin*s must exterminate each other if they do not give up their culture based on the imagination of their *bruhu* (soul); consequently, the soulless world of the *hin*s is the sole guarantee of avoiding the mutual extermination of humanity. The

end of the narrative is the *termination* of the *behin* settlement by the medical service of the *hin*s, before they could exterminate each other in their final *buku*. The term used here for human beings, *termination (megszüntetés),* was just a cynical euphemism for the executions in Szathmári's previous novel in the terminology of the *Red Guards (Vörösőrség)* of the fictive Soviet-Hungary. In the final chapter of his *Kazohinia,* it became a *hin* term of a kind of the institutionalised euthanasia; and this modification of the field of meaning clearly expresses how the author's thinking became more pessimistic.

In spite of this highly pessimistic end of his best known novel, the most *pessimistic* future of humanity linked with an *optimistic* vision of the future of the universe is mirrored in his late short novel entitled *The World of Machines* (Szathmári 1964; 1988; 1989). It is a coming of the heavenly utopia of Karinthy's *Faremido* to Earth. The rationality of the machines is the single requirement of the development and survival of the universe, but it causes the extermination of the hopeless humanity based on the classic utilitarian principle of offering painless and pleasant existence for the greatest number. Today we can read it as a great transhumanist vision, based on the experiences of both World Wars.

VI. Dystopias and Pessimist Utopias of Babits, Karinthy and Szathmári in the Hungarian Cultural Canon and in the International Context

I mentioned above the problematic status of the novels discussed in the Hungarian cultural canon, and their connection to each other. Our first author, Mihály Babits has an indisputable place in the cultural canon, but it is based mainly on his poetry. His novel entitled *Aviator Elza* was not available after the war for decades, and its new editions in the 1980s was censored. According to its interpretations, it was never in the core of his œuvre. In the case of Karinthy, his novels and short stories discussed here are in the shadow of his satiric writings, and of his longer works written during his last years. However, both Babits and Karinthy were the representatives of the same generation of the same important literary periodical entitled *Nyugat (West);* they are usually associated with different topics and literary ideals. Our third hero, Sándor Szathmári was never part of professional literary life, but the fans of his cult-novel entitled *Kazohinia* formed an underground group of interpretation over the last eighty years, and it had sympathies of several representatives of elite culture. It was an ambivalent phenomenon that in the golden age of Hungarian science fiction literature, in the seventies and the early eighties, Karinthy and Szathmári were found as "noble ancestors" of science fiction in the process of the establishment of Hungarian science fiction literature. It was useful for the revival of Szathmári in his last years, who could not publish in Hungarian during the main part of his lifetime but moved him and the other "proto-science-fiction" authors far from the core

of the national literary canon. (For the necrology of Szathmári written by the central figure of the Hungarian science fiction scene, see Kuczka 1975. Kuczka uses the official form of the name of the author, 'Szathmáry'; whose penname was always spelt 'Szathmári'.)

The personal connection of Karinthy and Szathmári is clear; Szathmári saw Karinthy as his master, and Karinthy estimated Szathmári's talent; but it is less known that several elements of the later works of Szathmári clearly refer to the topics of *Aviator Elza,* and one of the last works read by Babits was Szathmári's *Kazohinia,* which put him on the short list of candidates for the Baumgarten Prize, the greatest one in Hungary at the time. (In his last years, Babits was muted by throat cancer and he communicated with his family and his friends in writing. His 'conversation notebooks' were published; for the locus where he mentions Szathmári's novel, see Babits 1980. 390. The next Baumgarten Prize after his reading of Szathmári's book was not decided by him due to his death.)

Besides these personal connections, all three authors are linked with their common theoretical interest about the structure, societal role and semantics of human language. We have seen above that in the cases of Karinthy and Szathmári, this interest has a special role in their novels. (In the case of Babits, there was no room to elaborate on this question in detail here, but the critique of language is a relevant point of view in the interpretation of his novel as well, at least in the topic of the description of the language panels of war propaganda and ideology.) This interest is manifested in their activity in the movements of international languages. Babits was an activist of the Ido language, Karinthy was the president of the Hungarian Esperanto Society for his last years, and their several works were published both in Esperanto (Babits 1929; Karinthy 1934) and in Ido (Babits's several poems in periodicals and Karinthy 1923b). In the preface of the Esperanto edition of his *Faremido,* he drew a parallelism between the musical language of his novel and Esperanto, and he regarded it significant that his novel about the perfect language was published in an international language, although he did not mention the previous Ido version. (Ido appeared as a radical reform of Esperanto, supported mainly by French ex-Esperantists. In Hungary, it was popular in the 1920s; the core of its activists was recruited from French-oriented intellectuals.) We must mention that the time of connection of international language with Babits and Karinthy was a Golden Age of the Hungarian Esperanto culture. Aesthetical and language-norms of the so-called *Budapeŝta Skolo* were inevitable for a long epoch; the opinions of the leader of the edition house and the periodical entitled *Literatura Mondo,* Kálmán Kalocsay was close to Babits's *Nyugat* in his ideas about aesthetics and the principles of translation. Kalocsay actually regarded *Nyugat* as a model for his *Literatura Mondo*.

Szathmári, as a member of the next generation was socialised in this flowering period of Esperanto literature of the interwar period. Later when he learnt the language at a level needed for writing fictional literature, he gradually formed

two, partly separated audiences of his works, a Hungarian and an Esperanto one; and almost the all of his writings were published in two languages, Hungarian and Esperanto after his *Kazohinia*. They are not simple translations, but equal, parallel authorised versions that are significantly different in several loci. First of all, he had to modify the terminology of his masterpiece, in the Esperanto version, omitting several Hungarian letters not known in Esperanto orthography, in the description of the terminology of the *behin* settlement. A friend of the novel's hero, *Zemöki* will be *Zemoki,* and the name of the narrator's wife, *Zajkübü* will simply changed to *Zajkubu,* but this was not enough in a few of special cases. The term of *bivak* ('barbarian, blaspheme man') often used cannot be simple *bivako,* with a normal ending of nouns, because it has another meaning in Esperanto (cf. English 'bivouac'). Consequently, it would be modified to *bivag.* The most symbolic modification is the new term for *böto*. Its simple transcription was *boto,* which is a normal Esperanto word with another meaning (cf. English 'boot'); consequently, Szathmári created the word *boeto,* which can be a linguistic joke with *beato / beata* ('blessed' in a religious meaning, generally used only in its adjective form as *beata*). At the end of the modification of the *behin* terminology, in the Esperanto version it is clearer that *hin*s use the normal (Esperanto) language; and the *behin* vocabulary is not just a collection of meaningless words, but a perverted form of the perfect language of the *hin*s. (The priority of Hungarian or Esperanto versions was a central question of the Szathmári-philology. Vilmos Benczik demonstrated the priority of the Hungarian version persuasively; see Benczik 1988; 1989. The role of Kálmán Kalocsay in the creation of the Esperanto version remained open, yet.) In his *The World of Machines* and in other short stories of the last period of his career, differences of the versions are not based on terminology only. For example, *The World of Machines* is significantly longer and more consequent in its Esperanto version; the extermination of humanity and the emergence of a new world of new-type rational beings is described in detail, as a positive future of the universe, but as a judgement for humanity. In the Hungarian version, Szathmári stops before the last steps of the story, and remind the reader that it was just a bad dream, and we can still save the future of humanity. It is the topic of the Szathmári-philology of the future to find the reason of these significant differences between the Hungarian and Esperanto versions; maybe they are simply based on the censorship of the Communist era.

Szathmári's double audience is clearly mirrored in the best Esperanto interpretations. (In the Hungarian context, he is counted just a Hungarian writer.) It is enough to refer to the most important two writings. Kálmán Kalocsay, in his preface of the first Esperanto edition of Szathmári's Kazohinia entitled *Under Pretext of a Foreword (Pretekste de Antaŭparolo),* put the work in an interesting interpretative context within the frame of a fictive conversation of *Konter, Preter, Malger* and *Super*, (symbolic names derived from normal Esperanto

prefixes). By the fictional interpreters, Szathmári must be either materialist or idealist, existentialist (we are in Paris in 1958), or 'homarano'. The first three are well-known trends of Western thought, but the word 'homarano' can be familiar in the Esperanto literature, only; it is the central term of Zamenhof's humanist vision. After he offered this context of European philosophy and Esperanto literature, Kalocsay links the novel to Hungarian culture at the end of his essay: "we should recognise what was expressed by the Hungarian poet in the following way: »We are sleeping with a tiger«". Kalocsay in here quotes Sándor Weöres's one-line poems (No. 30: "Tigrissel alszunk"), which was probably known and used by Szathmári as well, (for Kalocsay's preface, see Szathmári 1958). Another example is when the inevitable authority of the Esperanto language and literature, the Scottish poet William Auld, who was familiar with Hungarian literature, in his *Introduction (Enkonduko)* for Szathmári's collected short stories, reminds the Esperanto audience that, despite the fact that Szathmári is an Esperanto classic, the roots of his thinking are found in Hungarian culture, as he is a follower of the tradition of Imre Madách and Frigyes Karinthy (see Szathmári 1964; for Auld's relationship with the Hungarian literature see Auld 1974).

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PESSIMIST HUNGARIAN UTOPIAS IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD AND AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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The present paper offers a reconstruction of a trend in Hungarian literature I call *pessimist utopias*. They are not simply *dystopias;* however, several works and narratives can be regarded as the representatives of the latter genre at first glance. The main characteristic of a *pessimist utopia* is that the kind of fictional worlds that usually appear as *dystopias,* are actually real solutions to the fundamental crisis of humanity in these works, according to the authors' goals. In the works discussed, the most characteristic examples of this phenomenon are the fictions of an over-rationalised society or the rule of machines over humans. I first discuss the fictions influenced by the shocking emotional and intellectual experiences of the First World War, which was called the Great War at the time. The first fiction analysed here is Mihály Babits's last novel entitled *Aviator Elza, or the Perfect Society*. The interpretation of the novel focuses on three main points. The first one is a sensitive description of a perverted relationship to one's own body in the practice of mutilation of newborn babies to avoid military service, and the asexuality of youth, caused by the cultural alienation of young men at the frontiers and young women in the hinterland. The second one is the description of the language and functioning of war ideology; the third one is the perspective of a series of artificial words as they appear in a science fiction within a novel, with a conclusion of a possibility of a Godless world on a manmade Earth. The central topic of the next section is the body–mind problem and the human–machine relationship in several novels and short stories written by Frigyes Karinthy. The common core of the fictions discussed, *Rope-dancing, Legend on the Soul of One Thousand Faces,* and *Voyage to Faremido,* is the *hunt for identity* through a critique of the traditional concept of the soul in the focus. A separate section discusses the impact of real 'war philosophy' in Hungary at the time of the Great War in the description of war ideologies in Babits's and Karinthy's fictions. The third author discussed is a representative of the following generation, Sándor Szathmári. I discuss his early novel entitled *Vainly – future*, his well-known masterpiece entitled *Kazohinia* and his short novel entitled *The World of the Machines*. In the interpretation of my paper, Szathmári appears as a highly consequent disciple of Karinthy's, who follows his master's ideas to the extremes. In the last section, I discuss the relationship between the three authors and the idea of an international language and Hungarian science fiction literature which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.