

Will to Language, Culture, and Power. Dániel Berzsenyi and his Martial Poetry

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ABSTRACT:

In his article “Will to Language, Culture, and Power” Gábor Vaderna investigates different discourses of violence in early 19th-century Hungary. According to Norbert Elias, violence has not disappeared from modern society but the individual has transferred the institution, opportunity, and protocols of violence to the state. There are also aesthetic consequences of this process. The question is whether institutionalized violence was a tool of power to stabilize modern societies or rather it was in fact a threat to aesthetic beauty. From the analysis of a poem by the Hungarian poet, Dániel Berzsenyi (1776–1832), written in wartime, Vaderna concludes that the Central European noble classes perceived a tension between the eternal virtue and real history. The exercise of power, the possession of violence and the nation-building potential of culture were closely intertwined in their political language.

Keywords: martial poetry, violence, civilizing process, aesthetics of power, insurrection

(taming violence)

Steven Pinker’s scientific bestseller, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and its Causes* was published in 2011. The author, a cognitive psychologist, located “better angels” mainly in the individual. These are empathy, self-control, moral sense, and reason – all buzzwords of the age of the Enlightenment. However, Pinker asserted much more than what Norbert Elias had said before. As it is well-known, Elias captured the process of civilization in the increasing control over affect (and thus over violence). For him, external pressures

1 This research was supported by the János Bolyai Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

were replaced by forms of self-regulation, resulting in the creation of modern states possessing the monopoly of violence. In Elias' analysis, violence has not disappeared from society, but the individual has transferred the institution, opportunity, and protocols of violence to the state (Elias, *The Civilizing Process*; cf. Esser, "Figurationssoziologie..."). Pinker is much more optimistic: according to him, there is a decreasing amount of violence in the life of modern mankind, and in general, the project of the Enlightenment has not finished yet, although there have been deflections acting as a counterforce, such as great wars or genocides. According to Pinker, we may perceive that there is more violence around us, because our communication is increasingly advanced, and we talk more about the topic (which is actually a proof of decreasing violence). Whether modernity has created increasingly sophisticated forms of violence (as Michel Foucault and his followers think, for example) or violence is increasingly foregrounded in discourse because it is crowded out from more and more areas in modern societies, I will not decide here (cf. Macfarlane, Harrison, *The Justice and the Mare's Ale*; Stone, "Interpersonal Violence in English Society, 1300–1980"; Sharpe, "The History of Violence in England. Some Observations"; Stone, "The History of Violence in England. Some Observations. A Rejoinder"). In any case, the interpretation of the data listed by Pinker and the all-enlightening "facts" have by no means been settled.

A potentially more important circumstance for us is that both Elias, whose theory of civilization is still debated today, and Pinker, who poses as the present-day apostle of positive social utopias, presumed a direct relationship between the individual and society: although the two are of course not completely the same for them due to their mutually hypothesized nature, they also function as mirrors for each other. They both roam the field of social psychology, where the individual's behavioral patterns come together in social formations. (In this respect, the only difference between the two authors is that Pinker has radicalized Elias' descriptive theory.) Elias claims that civilization is nothing but a sum of systems of behavior and gestures, and thus it does not equal culture itself. The "culture" of a society may include many different behavioral patterns (for example, at the beginning of nineteenth century, public executions were held in even peaceful times in Europe); however, in order for civilization to develop, the individual's stoic self-restraint is necessary. At the same time, aggression does not disappear in the process of civilization, according to Elias, instead, its physical practices are replaced by gestures and symbols (Elias, "An Essay on Sport and Violence").

Based on the above, it is not surprising that the literature on Elias has mostly researched the heterogenous Freudian roots of the theory (Linklater, Mennell, "Norbert Elias, the Civilizing Process"; Grubner, "Kultureller Narzissmus"). However, if we look at the period under observation, i.e. early modernity, interesting parallels also appear between Elias' theory and the self-descriptions of the period. Lisa Hill has taken

this the furthest by seeing a direct relationship between the early modern reception of ancient philosophy, especially by Adam Ferguson, and modern sociology, i.e. Georg Simmel, Norbert Elias, Lewis A. Coser, Max Weber, and Karl Marx (“Eighteenth-Century Anticipations of the Sociology of Conflict”). In any case, this warrants the consideration that the self-restraint of pre-modern men can be equally derived from the Stoic ideal of the “public man” (i.e. from the ancient traditions – cf. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*) and from the spread of the bourgeois family model. However, this is only seemingly a paradox: there is a similar vision of history behind the heuristic civilizing narrative of Scottish Enlightenment and the observations of the cognitive psychologist of the modern era. Accordingly, history is a kind of progress from barbarism towards culturalism (whatever culturalism may mean today), from hunting-gathering through shepherding and agricultural social forms to commercial bourgeois societies (whatever bourgeois may mean here – Brewer, “Adam Ferguson and the Theme of Exploitation”). Where Elias still diverts from the civilizing model of Scottish Enlightenment is the separation of culture and civilization: in this sense, Elias is not a successor of enlightenment any more.

In the debate which had been going on at least since the *Berlinische Monatschrift* posed the renowned question in 1784, i.e. “was ist Aufklärung?”, “what is enlightenment?”, the processes of intellectual history tagged as enlightenment also contained indirect and direct statements on the issue of violence. In Central and Eastern Europe from the outset, and in the West at least from the French revolution on, the issue of violence became a key point of Enlightenment in that on the one hand, enlightenment is undoubtedly “man’s emergence from his self-imposed nonage”, as Kant put it (Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”; the original: Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” 481); it was as a result of this that everything based on the assumption of authority or pure faith was ridiculed; thus, several proponents of enlightenment thought that the predestination of authority positions should be replaced by authority based on merit. On the other hand, replacing the outdated pre-modern thought patterns also meant the transformation of the structure of power. It was obvious in the debates on reason and science that new authority was also accompanied by new power, even if it had a different structure than the power structures of the earlier representative public sphere. We could also summarize the paradox of this duality by saying that the proponents of liberty and equality could only liberate themselves and their fellow men through violence. Notice how neutral Kant’s definition cited above is: “Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit.” Man had self-imposed the previous darkness, from which he somehow emerges. However, Kant spends fewer words on practical implementation: if all goes well, our emergence from immaturity will happen automatically. What this speech avoids and hides is that the road to freedom is paved with the everyday practices of violence (Reemtsma, *Vertrauen und Gewalt*

532–537). (All this emerged in the Eastern part of Europe poignantly: while enlightened-absolutist rulers boasted their erudition for all to see, they built a centralized state that wanted to rule over its subjects rather than liberate them. As Ernest Gellner remarked ironically about the transformation of ideas into concrete political action: „There is the rub: how do you modernize your army without producing Decembrists?” see “The Struggle to Catch Up” 14.)

The debate escalated around modern forms of violence when the French revolution transplanted the indirect, discursive forms of violence into practice. The result is well-known; the shock of European *philosophes* was widespread. Edmund Burke’s graphically depicted scenes are well-known, where a band of cruel ruffians and assassins rush into the almost naked queen’s chamber, pierce the bed with a hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards, and the royal family has to suffer through assorted humiliations. Burke does not hesitate to make a direct connection between brute force and philosophical reasoning:

On the scheme of this barbarous philosophy, which is the offspring of cold hearts and muddy understandings, and which is as void of solid wisdom as it is destitute of all taste and elegance, laws are to be supported only by their own terrors and by the concern which each individual may find in them from his own private speculations or can spare to them from his own private interests. In the groves of their academy, at the end of every vista, you see nothing but the gallows. (*Reflections on The Revolution in France* 64.)

In fact, this is when violence became one of the big questions of self-awareness of modernity on the one hand (can we constrain violence? do all intentions to improve society inevitably end in aggression? how do the sophisticated forms of violence undermine the illusion of containing violence?); on the other, Burke also touches upon the aesthetic dimension of violence: namely the sight of a scantily clad queen fleeing brings up the question of the relationship between beauty and ugliness. Burke distils the queen almost into an allegory of beauty (“It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the dauphiness, at Versailles, and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision.” *Ibid.* 63.), and when this beauty is dredged out of her bed, it is actually the disgusting, the hideous, the ugly that overcomes her. Yet being overcome is not a struggle between equals: brute force defeats refinement. Of course, Burke was later often criticized for the pathetic scene (since he himself could not have been there) and its evaluation (the figure of hyperbole is almost a parody of itself). However, the significance of the fact that in his reflections on the French revolution, Burke saw and depicted philosophical, aesthetic, and ethical dimensions together, and he did

so by floating the threat of violence both in the scenes depicted, the political-philosophical problems he raised, and the method and rhetoric of the depiction is undeniable (Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology* 138–163).

(coalition wars and the Kingdom of Hungary)

Hungarian soldiers fought in the coalition wars against the French from the outset in 1792 as part of the imperial and royal army. Beyond this, more substantial Hungarian armed forces were mustered four times (1797, 1800, 1805, 1809). Article 1741:63. regulated the legal conditions of this. Accordingly, it is the ruler who could muster the noble uprising and insurrectionist forces, but only if the imperial armed forces cannot hold the enemy back and the country is in direct danger. This is why the institution of insurrection fundamentally served self-defense purposes, and it was surrounded by the odium of protecting the homeland. It is not difficult to see that in the age of mass armed forces, an untrained army recruited from noblemen could have been quite outdated. This may be one of the reasons why in the contemporary reception of insurrection, the role of individual virtue gained serious importance, as did emphasizing the fact that patriotic enthusiasm may be what can overcome the enemy (Kecskeméti, *La Hongrie et le reformisme liberal* 271–292).

Insurrections later gained a bad reputation: in the end, the Hungarian troops could not really demonstrate any victories, although Hungarian noble banderia also participated in the united troops of the Monarchy – thus both the successes and the even more numerous failures, as well as the ultimate victory was shared with the imperial army (Wertheimer, *Ausztria és Magyarország...* passim.; Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy* 226–230; Judson, *The Habsburg Empire* 89–102). The notoriety of Hungarians' military performance was mostly due to the connections between the last big noble uprising and the lost battle of Győr/Raab (14 June, 1809). The quick depreciation of the heroism of the wars against the French is due to three different circumstances. First, beyond heroism/valor, money also depreciated. While the shock caused by the states of war that followed each other in waves could not be controlled, the country's economy also faced a significant crisis. This also put the losses due to the state of war in a somewhat different perspective (Mérei, "Magyarország gazdasága..."). Second, while the political structure proved to be enduring (H. Balázs, "La noblesse hongroise et les Lumières"; Szijártó, "The Unexpected Survival of the Dualism of King and Estates"), the method of organizing military troops that had seemed to be working during the French wars was finished for good by the second decade of the nineteenth century. Thus, it might have seemed as if the military failure had also provoked the reorganization of the army. What is more, it may have turned the outdated image of the noble uprising into a cornerstone of the political identity of the

following political generation: this is how the defeat at Győr/Raab could have become a symbol (or parody) of the political problem of conservatism. Finally, from the four uprisings the first three dissolved without any military events. The defeat of the fourth uprising could also have seemed bigger in retrospect, because it had been preceded by increasing anticipation.

However, it is also a significant fact that in terms of the politics of memory, the French wars and the participation of the Hungarian noble armed forces constituted a kind of turning point for the contemporaries. In other words, for them, participation in the wars against the French somehow became an *event*, and they also wished to immortalize its characteristics as an event. Never before had so many poems, pamphlets, articles, and news items circulated around a single topic at the same time as in then. This *memory boom* meant the simultaneous application of several cultural techniques, what is more, these techniques were quite new – and even if the historical agents used gestures of the politics of memory known from earlier times, they produced them in a format renewed in terms of technique, content, or medium (cf. Császár, “Az utolsó nemesi felkelés az irodalomban”). A spectacular example among these gestures was the affair of the monument erected in memory of the fallen *heros* of Zemplén county. Not only because well-known historical figures developed the design, i.e. politician count József Dessewffy and writer Ferenc Kazinczy, but also because the completed product (a carved column with inscriptions) can also be interpreted as a proposal for the localization of a type of monument that had not been present in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary (Dessewffy, Kazinczy, *Vélemények*).

But what was the cause of this *memory boom*? It had partly historical and partly media-related reasons – more specifically, the coincidence of these generated the never before seen glut of gestures in the politics of memory. This was the era after the politically frustrated period of Joseph II, when the reparation of the relationship between the Hungarian noble estates and the king was at stake. The ruler needed the help of the Hungarian estates (he needed to convince them about taxes and conscription), while the Hungarian estates received an opportunity to repair their battered national self-esteem. Thus, settling the Hungarians’ position within the empire could resurface after 1790 (Balázs, “Absolutisme éclairé – noblesse éclairée”; *ibid.*, “Joseph II et la Hongrie”). What is more, the developments in France were just as shocking for the Hungarian estates as they were in other parts of Europe. The fear of revolt on the part of the ruler and the estates was a common point which strengthened the aulic characteristics of noble patriotism during these decades. (It also may be no coincidence what an astonishing cult of an enlightened absolutist Napoleon emerged in Central Europe after his ascendancy. Not only did it speak to the myth of the invincible general, but it also symbolized a possible route to overcoming fear. For the cult of Napoleon see Hughes, “Clothing the New

Emperor”; for the cult of Napoleon in Hungary see Kosáry, *Napoleon et la Hongrie*.) It was in this historical environment that the new media conditions could be exploited as efficiently as possible. The 1790s saw one of the biggest upswings in Hungarian pamphlet literature – these mostly debated political positions, although many other questions could also be raised. During this period, many different media products were launched – some of which expressly took on reporting on military news, so information about the war arrived every day in an unprecedented way (Vaderna, “Language, Media and Politics in the Hungarian Kingdom between 1770 and 1820”). Finally, the boom in printing opened up to new forms of exhortation. Masses of insurrectionist songs were created during this time (or previous songs were transformed for this purpose), and a significant proportion of these was also printed. Besides the masses of anonymous poets, more and less renowned names cropped up as well. Of course, all this is a rather multifaceted discursive space divided into several subcultures, and the opinions voiced and the social practices used here do not necessarily point in the same direction.

(a Hungarian poet in wartime)

Dániel Berzsenyi (1776–1836) lived in the Western counties of the Kingdom of Hungary during the beginning of the nineteenth century, and that is where he wrote his poems. He only published his monumental odes containing lofty images and hyperboles and conveying majestic aesthetic experience decades later, in 1813; however, these poems reveal much about the poetic representation of war and violence. He also wrote some poems about the insurrection, and he steadily produced texts during the coalition wars. War might have been his everyday experience: troops marched across his estates; at first, he could sell his crop at a good price, but later his money depreciated. His martial poems are pervaded by the pride of patriotism: he saw the following of the ancient constitution in the tradition of the noble uprising, which ensures the freedom of the country. (Of course, he identified the country with the noble estates.) There was a war and Berzsenyi, although with his own paradoxes, reacted to the big debates of his era on violence. The model of development for culture and civilization was very important for him; however, he did not apply a neat version of politeness to the Hungarian situation, but, as it so often happened in Central Europe, he combined it with other types of political language (the language of the ancient constitution or republicanism). He addressed the aspects of violence that destroyed culture on multiple occasions, although as a good patriot he also supported protecting the homeland, acquired through blood, by means of further sacrifices. Of course, for him culture also meant gaining, building, and ruling the monopoly of violence – which would sound strange in other places, but this is a completely legitimate position in this region. With him, this did not contradict the aristocratic

models of spreading culture. Finally, the *power* of Berzsenyi's poetic language (or in another, more critical approach: its excessive pathos) is often mentioned. For him, language was not the territory of violence in the sense of aggression; at the same time, the performative potential of his rhetoric made it possible to dominate discussions, and so it did have something to do with violence.

In the following, one example will be examined to show how Berzsenyi pictured the relationship between violence and culture.

(mythology, history, event)

At the beginning of 1797, the French troops made substantial advances, which also made it possible to attack Vienna. Francis I called the Hungarian noble uprising to arms on 8 April, 1797. The estates of Vas county gathered on 15 April, 1797 under the open sky, in the court of the Szombathely episcopal palace, to discuss the consequences of the state of war. They decided to arm the banderium, which consisted of 2,000 infantrymen and 1,000 horsemen (*Magyar Hírmondó* 11.31 [18 April, 1797]: 470–471). On 2 May, the horsemen were already gathering in Szombathely, for the time being under the leadership of lord-lieutenant prince Lajos Batthyány (*Magyar Hírmondó* 11.37 [9 May, 1797]: 556.). Prince Miklós Esterházy was still in Pápa in June and oversaw the gathering of the banderia of Veszprém county (*Magyar Hírmondó* 11.47 [13 June, 1797]: 556.). By the end of August the different banderia united around Szombathely. We can read about the parade of the county troops in the *Magyar Hírmondó* [*Hungarian Herald*] newspaper in detail. The anonymous correspondent commented on what he saw the following way: “In light of their upstanding behavior, prince Esterházy, their district general, issued ten kreuzer from his own to every private and twenty kreuzer to every junior officer, so they can have fun. His Highness the Prince encouraged the Veszprém infantry troops in the same way for their good behavior, distributing the deserved reward in the form of money. Unless there is any obstacle, we will have a big maneuver again on the last day of August.” (*Magyar Hírmondó* 12.18 [1 September, 1797]: 294.) The soldiers did need to be appeased with some payment, considering that the promised military operation was cancelled, and after some time spent waiting around, the troops were disappointed to be eventually disbanded. Of course, Berzsenyi's odes knew nothing about this failure.

Berzsenyi wrote his ode for the occasion of the Szombathely encampment in 1797: *Herceg Esterházy Miklóshoz* (*To Prince Nicolaus Esterházy*). The stake of the ode is how to find language for lawful violence. To paraphrase the problem a little: how can you find a language for legitimizing violence (its deontological ethics) where some kind of linguistic violence forces the historical characters to commit violence for

the sake of the community? And does the order of discourse contain the deontological ethics of power and violence?

Let us first see the text. On the left side I present a modern transcription of an 1808 manuscript copy of the poem, while on the right side I present a prose translation (Manuscript Collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, M. Irod. Lev. 4r 44. sz. 119r–120r. The critical edition of the oeuvre: Berzsenyi, *Költői művei*):

Herceg Eszterházy Mikloshoz.	To Prince Nicolaus Esterházy
[1] Pannon legelső embere, támasza! Elődeidnek fegyvere népeket Győzött, s hazánkért számtalanszor A viadal mezein csatázott.	Foremost man of Pannonia, her own support! The weapon of your ancestors destroyed peoples and it has fought for our homeland on the battlefield countless times.
[2] Ők voltak a harc vérvizatarjain S a béke napjain bölcs vezetők, atyák, Kormányra termett őrszemekkel Szélveszeket zabolázva tartók.	They were the wise leaders and fathers on the days of rains of blood of battle and days of peace, who cast protective eyes on the helm and reined in the windstorms.
[3] Mely áldozat volt a vezekényi harc! Bús tisztelettel könnyezi a magyar Négy bajnok Esterházy véres Porba kevert ajakit s halálát.	What sacrifice the Vezekény battle was! With sadness and respect, the Hungarians mourn the bloody lips of the four victorious Esterházys mixed in with the dirt and their death.
[4] Láttam te benned buzgani véröket S orcádra öntött nemzeti lelköket, Láttam szemed villám sugárát S ősi dicső vasadat kezvedben.	I saw their blood gush within you and their national spirit glisten on your face, I saw the lightning ray of your eye and your ancient glorious metal [your sword] in your hand.
[5] Rémulve megszűnt a fene háború; Int a kegyetlen tengerek Istene Képével a forró haboknak, S eltűnik a Pelagus dagálya.	The ruthless war ended in a dreadful way; the God of the ferocious seas faces and beckons the hot waves, and the flood of Pelagus disappears.
[6] Szép a borostyán, s győződelem szekér, Szép a vitéznek sebhelye homlokán, Félisten, akit nimbuszával A hatalom s tudomány ragyogtat.	The amber and the triumphal chariot are beautiful, the scar on the valiant's forehead is beautiful – he is a demigod, whose glory is illuminated by power and art.
[7] Minden nagy és szép, melyet az óvilág És e jelen kor mívei közt csudálsz, Héro, dicsőség, fényes ország, A tudomány gyönyörű gyümölcse.	All is great and beautiful that you admire among the creations of the ancient world and the present time, <i>heros</i> , glory, a rich country, the beautiful fruit of art.
[8] Ez hozta Mennyből földre az isteni Szikrát, ez oldott a butaság alól. A bölcs Athénát s győzhetetlen Róma fejét ez emelte égre.	This is what has brought the divine spark from Heaven down to Earth, this is what has saved us from folly. This is what has raised wise Athens and the head of invincible Rome to the sky.

[9] Nézd a virágzó Gallia népeit S Nelson hazáját, – rettegi a világ Ez ész s erő két nagy csudáját, S hirdeti napkelet és enyészet.	Watch the peoples of thriving Gaul and Nelson's homeland – the world fears these two big miracles of reason and power, and this is what the East/sunrise and the West/decay announces.
[10] Hát nemzetednek mért fakad oly soká A rég ohajtott laurus? – ezer nemes Vállvetve törtet, s gátokat ront, Ah, de acél hegyek állnak ellent.	Oh why does the long-desired laurus take so long to spring for your nation – a thousand noblemen push forward shoulder to shoulder, destroying all obstacles, but, alas, the steel moun- tains resist.
[11] Téged, hatalmas herceg, az istenek Fő polcra tettek, véreidet segéld, Vidd a dicsőség templomához: Ajtaja zára lehull előtted.	You, mighty prince, the gods have placed in the highest rank, help your flesh and blood, bring it to the tem- ple of fame: the lock of its door will drop in front of you.

When we start reading the poem, we can find one of the best-known narratives of the historical self-identification of Hungarian nobility at the beginning:

Pannon legelső embere, támasza!
 Elődeidnek fegyvere népeket
 Győzött.

[Foremost man of Pannonia, her own support!
 The weapon of your ancestors destroyed peoples.]

Here a reference is made to the historically continuous tradition of noblemen sacrificing their blood for their homeland as the direct descendants of their settler ancestors. And this tradition obliges noblemen (in this case Esterházy): he has to conform to the tradition that sees the guarantee of a nation's future in a stoic ethics that sacrifices the individual's interests for the sake of the community. Of course, what kind of legacy the past puts on the present, as a kind of difficulty, is far from clear. Here Berzsenyi, in line with the classical perception of time in Hungarian patriotic poetry, places the glorious past and the losses of the past next to each other. Victory is mentioned first (first stanza), then the Esterházys appear as the keepers of peace (second stanza), and finally, the losses appear in a harmonic structure (third stanza). Meanwhile, the Esterházys also rise up when the wise leaders and fathers rein in the windstorms. In this stanza, Berzsenyi refers to Boreas, the ancient northern wind: he took Orithyia, the beautiful daughter of king Erechtheus, because the king of Athens did not want to give her hand to him in marriage. One of the following kings of Athens, in order to placate Boreas, who was still seething later, built the tower of the winds in his honor. (The most widely known version of the story: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 6,675–721. See also Pausanias, *Description of*

Greece, 5,19,1.). In this allegory, the wisdom leading to peace belongs to the Esterházy: they are the ones who can rein in the wild windstorms. So the historical example in the following stanza is also placed in the following mythological light: this is how the four Esterházy fallen in the battle of Vezekény become mythical figures themselves. (After the battle of Vezekény – today: Veľké Vozokany, Slovakia –, in 1652, the Esterházy family organized a spectacular representative funeral: this is how they expressed their loyalty to the Habsburgs and their family's power among the Hungarian nobility.)

The “victorious battle – peace – lost battle” sequence may be an innocent parallel, but it also may include the necessary progress of all historical peoples' lives. It is about the organic metaphor that imagines the fate of the nation as a parallel of a person's life, and it extends this narrative pattern to almost all more ambitious historical narratives. Of course, for this, Miklós Esterházy's figure should also include this history, more specifically, the history of his family, and more broadly what the history of this family includes, i.e. the history of the nation. The four Esterházy who died a heroic death in the battle of Vezekény become the same as the Esterházy who is Berzsenyi's contemporary, who will thus be obliged to follow his ancestors who took on martyrdom, even to their deaths.

The three life phases in the first three stanzas can also be read as potential mirrors of Miklós Esterházy's fate. However, in the specific wartime situation which the title specifically locates in space and time, it is not the same at all which of the three possibilities will eventually prevail. The fourth stanza announces the interplay of the specific situation and the dimension of deontological ethics that is elevated to the mythological space: in this case “I saw” can both mean literally that Berzsenyi indeed saw Esterházy, but also how he manifested in the “national spirit” and “the lightning ray of your eye”; and the “ancient glorious metal” again both contains the historical agent appearing in the specific historical situation as well as the *heros* emerging from the mythology of the past. Concerning the latter, the historical agent's task is to grow into the *heros* created (imagined) in the past. This growth is served by what can be called the violence of language. In the next few stanzas, Berzsenyi flashes a series of analogies in the philosophy of history, while it is unclear throughout if the “I saw” leading in the train of thought is a description of the specific situation (in which case Esterházy's elevation is nothing but some kind of flattery) or if this “I saw” already signals the Neoplatonic *exaltatio*, a transcending of the natural order that is only possible for the poet (in which case the following are rather fantasies or visions).

The fifth stanza, which envisioned the end of the “ruthless war”, could both be a vision running into the future (the wars against the French will end sooner or later) and the narrative pattern of the mythical tradition at the same time. Berzsenyi combined two mythological stories: a Greek and a Latin one, both only indirectly. He specifically

mentioned Pelagus. This name probably came to him in connection with the story of the flood of Deucalion: in the Greek myth, Zeus wanted to destroy the world with a flood because Lycaon, Pelagus' son, had served him human meat for dinner (Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 3,3,1; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII,2,1; the most widely known version – but Pelagus does not appear here: Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1,230–415). The other element of the story that Berzsenyi refers to is well-known: it comes from the beginning of Virgil's *Aeneid*, where Neptune calms the frenzied waves, thus saving Aeneas' life (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1,125–156). However, this scene, stripped of its context, is left on its own to some extent: it is impossible to know if Esterházy is the same as Aeneas, who is adrift on the waves of the sea, looking for a new homeland, or if the calming of the sea only signals the beginning of a new, more peaceful period (and the Virgilian scene is only flashed as an aside). It is unclear if Aeneas-Esterházy is a founder of this better era (i.e. if Aeneas' future, which the reader obviously knows, is implicit in the image) or if the new era will necessarily come (and Esterházy's glorious military achievement, which he is yet to accomplish, will lead to it).

The following stanzas do not help decide the dilemma, either. Berzsenyi piles images on top of each other; however, the logical relationships between these images remain unclear. Beauty and greatness appear at the conceptual level, but we cannot find their definition. Thus, the amber, the triumphal chariot, the scar on the valiant's forehead, the *heros* who is becoming a demigod, the victor, glory, a rich country, and the beautiful fruit of art are all beautiful and great. He actually only reveals that

Minden nagy és szép, melyet az óvilág
És e jelen kor mívei közt csudálsz.

[All is great and beautiful that you admire among the
creations of the ancient world and the present time.]

This “all” is what he lists. However, whether there is an order of values among these, or, if one follows the next in chronological order – we do not learn anything about that. In effect, it is in the unity of battle and art that Berzsenyi was looking for in the parade of images. As he stood in the flood of the ocean with the image of the “god of the seas”, i.e. as he bravely faced the frenzied waves, obviously it is also Esterházy's duty to do the same. However, when these waves overcome him, he is obliged to filter the beautiful and the great from this commotion. Power and art are not present here as a dichotomy but next to each other – and they obviously need to manifest in Esterházy. At the same time, the flood of the sea of images (following the analogy of the tides of the ocean) does not seem to be quieting, instead it flows pathetically for a few stanzas. This flood goes back to the situation at the beginning of

the poem (i.e. that the troops are gathering in the middle of a war, and Esterházy has to lead them).

The eighth stanza elevates the poem to the perspective of world history. Namely, in world history, it is power and art that “illuminate” – Athens is obviously an example of art, while Rome is rather an example of power; however, it is probably not too much to assume that both big empires were built on art and power. (Incidentally, there is another reference left on its own here – this time about Prometheus, who donated art to people.) The two imperial capitals appear in a positive sense here: the history of these cities is an example of the alignment of beauty and greatness, art and power.

In the following, it is from this abstract, both historical and mythical perspective which in any case was far from the ongoing war, that the poem switches back to the specific situation of reciting the poem. Berzsenyi first takes a look at the situation from the European horizon of the French wars, followed by the Hungarian situation. The ninth stanza clearly shows the connections between art and power that flashed from a mythical perspective above; however, here the two big empires are already contemporary France and Great Britain:

Nézd a virágzó Gallia népeit
 S Nelson hazáját, – rettegi a világ
 Ez ész s erő két nagy csudáját,
 S hirdeti napkelet és enyészet.

[Watch the peoples of thriving Gaul and Nelson’s homeland – the world fears these two big miracles of reason and power, and this is what the east/sunrise and the west/decay announces.]

Gaul and Nelson’s homeland are the modern-era analogues of Athens and Rome. Berzsenyi also attempts here to subtly refer the duality of art and power (the two great miracles of reason and strength) back to the dilemma of birth and decay. Namely “napkelet és enyészet” can also mean ‘from East to West’, i.e. that these two empires, which are otherwise fighting each other, are recognized all over the world; on the other hand, he describes the West with the noun “enyészet”, which quite obviously plays on the possibility of ‘decay’.

Three layers are posed on top of each other in the poem: the tenth stanza is the one to jerk the train of thought back to Hungarian reality. He expresses this in the form of a contrast: the nation does not obtain glory even though a thousand noblemen (i.e. the army led by Esterházy) are fighting for it. However, in light of the above, it is not clear on what scale this battle is taking place: the Hungarians are fighting a mythological battle (mentioning *laurus* may refer to this), fighting in a perspective of world history (the culture and power of Athens and

Rome), or are the troops gathering in the Szombathely camp trying to climb “the steel mountains”?

It is in this tripartite division where Esterházy appears in the eleventh, final stanza, and the ethical dictate of sacrificing for the homeland prevails in these three perspectives both at the same time and separately. “You, mighty prince, the gods have placed in the highest rank” – here is the mythological perspective; “help your flesh and blood” – here is the historical perspective (the history of the family obliges), as well as the reference to the specific situation. The topos of the “temple of fame” can thus be invoked here: it can unite these three dimensions, as well as absorb the alignment of culture and power presented by Berzsenyi. (The Temple of Fame has become a *topos* of the European literature after Alexander Pope, see Bennett, *Chaucer’s Book of Fame*.)

As we have seen, power and violence are closely linked in Berzsenyi (they are virtually synonyms in this poem). The other side is culture (what is art and reason here). However, these two spheres of existence do not contradict each other, instead, whoever also has a privilege in the other dimension of existence can keep the power to themselves. Speech about strength, when it takes place in a poem, necessarily uses the language of culture, although even in this case, it allows space for power. Berzsenyi solves this by having a basic historical narrative (history is analogous with organic life), but the individual possessing power and culture (here: Miklós Esterházy) can place himself in the common force field of myth, history, and reality. Power can thus elevate the individual from historical necessity and make him a mythical *heros*.

(power and violence)

Modernity demands the minimization of violence from the future. From the future, because it cannot contain it in its own present (Reemtsma, *Vertrauen und Gewalt* 182–184). For Berzsenyi, it is not so much the legitimization of violence that is the question but its essence. He shows the noble-estate image of military virtues, which so frequently recurred in the insurrectionist patriotic poetry of the beginning of the nineteenth century, both in a mythological and a world history perspective. Possessing strength and power through virtue not only points to the individual’s epic heroism, but it also suspends the perspectives of temporality in that the historical agent (here: Miklós Esterházy) assumes the timelessness of virtue. This is where the stake is in Berzsenyi’s martial poetry: can the agent existing in time switch to an atemporal form of existence? The poem under analysis gives an affirmative answer to this question. However, the Napoleonic wars forced the poet to re-evaluate. In 1805, he wrote several odes in which he only sees it possible to bridge the temporal rift through an apocalypse that converts everything into the present. The fate of the nation, the essence of virtue (its possession or abandonment) can also stay open as a dilemma, because violence and

power are not the privileges of the pre-modern individual anymore but a function of the linguistic-discursive achievement of modern societies.

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