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Dante Alighieri: *Comedy* I. *Inferno*. Commentary

Edited by János Kelemen, in collaboration with József Nagy.

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The present volume is a significant result of a substantial research-project which has the aim to produce and to publish the first Hungarian Commentary to the *Comedy*.¹

It is known that Dante's poem has had several literary – complete or partial – translations into Hungarian. Among these, from the point of view of scholarly accuracy, the most important translations are those of Károly Szász (1886–1899), of Mihály Babits (1912–1922) and – recently – those of Sándor Szabadi, of Ferenc Baranyi, of Ádám Nádasdy, and of Gyula Simon. These translations contain notes which give some basic information for an adequate interpretation of Dante's work, but among these authors it was first of all Károly Szász who attempted to develop a commentary to his own Hungarian translation of this œuvre. The par excellence classical Hungarian translation of the

Comedy is undoubtedly that of Mihály Babits, but – besides the fact that this scholar published important studies on the *Comedy* – in the edition of his own Hungarian translation of the *Comedy* Babits used exclusively notes containing only essential information. So the main predecessor is the exegetic work of Károly Szász, but obviously the authors of the present volume – who constitute the research-team of the Hungarian Dante Society (János Kelemen, József Nagy, Norbert Mátyus, Béla Hoffmann, Eszter Draskóczy, Tihamér Tóth, Márk Berényi) – used mainly, as sources (besides the results of the research on Dante in Hungary), some of the most important works of international Dante-studies, which is evident on the basis of the huge bibliography of this volume.

The volume is structured in the following way: for each Canto of the *Inferno* it prints the main Italian text of the Petrocchi-edition (of 1996) in parallel with the Hungarian paraphrase (or rough translation), with the commentary – in footnotes – to the Hungarian text (with the necessary references to the Italian text), and finally with an essay which gives an overall interpretation of the Canto in question.

As it is rightly stressed by the editors and by Norbert Mátyus in the *Preface*, the

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aim of the Hungarian Commentary to the *Comedy* is essentially to make possible for Hungarian readers (researchers, university and high school students, general readers) to grasp the main semantic layers (besides the mechanisms which generate certain meanings) of one of the most important works of world literature, obviously on the basis of the results of classical, modern and contemporary Dante-research, establishing this way a new foundation for the scientific approach to the Dantean œuvre in Hungary. It's clear that without such scientific analysis and reflections any possible future attempts at literary translation can hardly have good results. For this reason, in the analysis and in the commentaries to the Cantos the treatment of problems related to literary translation keeps recurring.

On a more general level, in the present volume the analysis of the Dantean text shows necessarily the traits of an inter-disciplinary approach, with ample references to the historical, philosophical, theological and religious-doctrinal aspects, besides the political, juridical, medical, literary, artistic and musical-historical aspects of the *Comedy* and of the whole work of Dante.

The latest Dante-studies which had the aim to contribute to the edition of the Hungarian Commentary of the *Comedy* – i.e., studies published since 2004, year of

the foundation of the Hungarian Dante Society on the initiative of Professor János Kelemen – received a further impulse by the oncoming seventh Dantean centenary, which will certainly have (and has already) a deep cultural impact internationally.

As it is reiterated by the authors of the *Preface*, it can be hoped that by the present volume (and by the following two – *Purgatory* and *Paradise* –, in preparation with the same editorial principles) Hungarian Dante-scholars will have the opportunity to preserve and simultaneously to renew the scientific and artistic legacy of the great Italian poet, philosopher-theologian and political thinker.

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By this publication we also commemorate those Hungarian researchers who for many years supported this project but could not see the publication of the volume: Géza Bakonyi, Gábor Hajnóczi, Erzsébet Király, Géza Sallay, József Takács, Aurél Ponori Thewrewk.