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Antimilitarism and Avant-Garde: the Hungarian journal *A Tett* (Nov. 1915-Oct. 1916)

“We were wolves living outside all the cages
and our recompensation was that we could shout on our way”¹

The overwhelming majority of European intellectuals backed their state and supported the war, some until the very end: as Christophe Prochasson notes in an article on European intellectuals and writers in WWI, there was little room for maneuver and it was particularly impossible to avoid being caught up in the culture of war² (as it is well-known: during WWI the culture of war was a cultural discourse with the stigmatization of the enemy in its focus)³. Although “wartime was not a time for the critical intellectual”⁴, we can not reduce the entire spectrum of intellectual debate and opinion to these positions during WWI. A new feature in the history of intellectuals appeared: the dissent. The dissents were those intellectuals who dared to adopt a vigorous antiwar stance: they firmly opposed the war and called for it to end immediately.⁵ The rallying point of these tiny groups was their regular meetings or journals. On the other hand, criticism did not concern only these dissents: most of the time it was a complex issue, the range was vast and could last from moderate and eventual criticism to an energetic and more stable one.

According to Prochasson, German and Austrian intellectuals “were not affected by pacifism to the same degree as their French, Russian, and British counterparts”.⁶ However, I think, this statement needs to be modified. If we consider all the small nations and peoples involved in WWI on the German and Austrian side one by one, we can face a certain variety of antiwar stance, and most of

¹ Lajos Kassák, A magyar avangard három folyóirata [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], *Helikon*, 1964, 2nd-3rd issues, 215.

² Christophe Prochasson, Intellectuals and Writers in John Horne (ed.): *A Companion to World War I*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 323.

³ Stéphanie Audoin-Rouzeau-Annette Becker, *1914-1918 Understanding the Great War*, London, Profile Book, 2002, 102-103.

⁴ Anne Rasmussen, “Mobilising minds” in Jay Winter and al. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, Vol. III., Civil Society, Cambridge, University Press, 2014, 390.

⁵ Christophe Prochasson, “Intellectuals and Writers”, op. cit., 327.

⁶ Ibid.

the time not a very moderate one. Depending on these peoples and nations, also a more energetic antiwar current was able to appear. [Needs to be translated]: Magyarországon az értelmiségi közvélemény – igaz – szerényebb része 1915 elejétől egyre inkább ebbe az irányba húzott, és 1915 nyarától fogva a szkepticizmus mellett az erőteljesebb háborús kritika is hallatta a hangját.

The semimonthly *A Tett* (The Action), the first aesthetic avant-garde journal published in Hungarian was at the same time the first firmly antiwar platform in the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. It was founded by Lajos Kassák, a former qualified industrial worker of humble origins himself, who had been already known at that time in literary circles for his poems and short stories published by modernist literary reviews and the socialist press. In late 1915, he succeeded to launch a journal, the *A Tett* alongside with a couple of similarly young poets and critics, devoted to the avant-garde poetics, as collaborators (first of all: Mátyás György, Aladár Komját, József Lengyel, Vilmos Rozványi, János Mácza, Imre Vajda, Tivadar Raith). As the readership is concerned, the journal was popular among radical and atheist (mostly Marxist) youngsters gathering around the Galilee Circle founded before the war.⁷ In 1916 Kassák himself emphasized that “the youth” was theirs, however these youngsters came from a very specific milieu and, naturally, it did not cover all the youth.⁸ Currently we have only the numbers given by Kassák himself: from the second issue on *A Tett* was edited in one thousand copies which is very probably not equal to the sold issues.⁹ To compare, the greatest modernist literary review *Nyugat*, that had been launched in 1908, was sold in a couple of thousand copies during WWI. During its existence, *A Tett* was regularly pestered, and finally and irrevocably banned in October 1916, almost one year after its introduction. The banning of the journal also coincided with and introduced a new phase in the history of Hungarian censorship during WWI when censorship became harsher. (During the first years of the conflict, the press was still distributed without any prior control, however self-censorship – including silence – played an important role.)¹⁰

⁷ Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete* [The Life of a Man] vol. II., Budapest, Magvető, 1983, 255.

⁸ Lajos Kassák, Szintetikus irodalom [Synthetic Literature], *MA*, 2nd issue, 15th Nov. 1916, 19.

⁹ Advertisement in *A Tett* only came from sympathetic cabarets, school of arts, or photography workshop so selling issues was a major source of income for the journal. (See for instance: *A Tett*, 1st issue, Oct. 1915, 20.) Lajos Kassák, *A magyar avangard három folyóirata* [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], op.cit., 215. Regarding the broader public reception of *A Tett*, Kassák himself said in 1916 that, except for very few, the public found the “movement” “an insane mania, a hip humbug”. (Lajos Kassák, Szintetikus irodalom [Synthetic Literature], op. cit., 19.)

¹⁰ Eszter Balázs, “War Stares At Us Like an Ominous Sphynx” Hungarian Intellectuals, Literature and the Image of the Other (1914-1915) in Lawrence Rosenthal – Vesna Rodic (ed.), *The New Nationalism and the First World War*, Berkeley, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, 97.

Lajos Kassák's way to *A Tett*

The outbreak of the war deepened Lajos Kassák's already growing distance from the Hungarian socialist movement as well as from modernist literature, more particularly the emblematic autonomous literary review, *Nyugat*. In his autobiographical novel published almost a decade after the end of the war – *The Life of a Man* (*Egy ember élete*) – Kassák explained that the passivity, and shortly after, the enthusiasm towards the war characterizing his fellow workers disgusted him as much as the patriotic ardor of “the bohemian and genius writers” in cafés.¹¹ But what about WWI-contemporary sources themselves? His correspondence is very poor for the period and more particularly for the first year of the conflict¹², but we have access to his articles he published more or less regularly in a weekly called *Új Nemzedék* (New Generation) with political, economic and literary interests and being launched late 1913. Kassák accepted to write in *Új Nemzedék* at the request of the editor-in-chief, István Milotay, a 30 year-old journalist, just before the outbreak of the conflict, in July 1914.¹³ The journal's aim was to introduce democratic features into Hungarian society, a goal of a major importance in a country where only approximately 5% of the society could vote or be elected. However, the journal's democratic voice and claim for more sovereignty of Hungary were blended with a harsh refusal of the so-called “plutocratism” (an idea attributing an overwhelming importance to banks in a country's economy and politics) and, in the process of time, more and more dose of Anti-Semitism as well. In addition, the journal aimed at moral hygiene from the beginning: in its editorial late December 1913 István Milotay claimed for the protect of “the Hungarian spirit against the nocuous foreign intellectual and moral effects”.¹⁴

Kassák remained at *Új Nemzedék* which, at the outbreak of the war, accepted only progressively the fact of the conflict.¹⁵ Eager for the democratization of the country but definitely being turned away from the major supporter of this idea in Hungary, the official socialist movement, Kassák began to publish also on the war in *Új Nemzedék* as early as September 1914. In his first analysis he expected revolution in Russia only thanks to “the victory of foreign armies”.¹⁶ This rather explicit allusion to the victory of the Central Powers and their civilization

¹¹ Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete* [The Life of a Man], op. cit., 173-174.

¹² His correspondence has not yet published until now and it is accessible in the Kassák Múzeum, Budapest.

¹³ Letter of István Milotay to Lajos Kassák, 07/14/1914.KM – lev. 323. Archives of Kassák Múzeum, Budapest.

¹⁴ [István Milotay], Az Új Nemzedék a közönséghez [Új Nemzedék to the Public], *Új Nemzedék*, 1st issue, 25th Dec. 1913, 1.

¹⁵ Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, op. cit., 218. He debuted by a short story – Családi körben [In family] – in the issue of 26th July 1914. (31st issue, 14-18).

¹⁶ Lajos Kassák, Az orosz forradalom lehetősége [The Probability of a Russian Revolution], *Új Nemzedék*, 38th issue, 13th Sept. 1914, 5-6.

effect paving a way for a “rebellion” in Russia was followed by a harshly critical portrait of France in war.¹⁷ “The ideal of liberty for the oppressed nations” went bankrupt due to Republican leaders, and French state crashed due to “the physical sterility of the race and the spiritual decadence,” claimed Kassák. These stereotypes which widely circulated in the Hungarian (as well as European) press and were particularly used by essentialist nationalists already before the war, are completely unknown in Kassák’s oeuvre preceding and following this very specific short period.¹⁸ According to Kassák, in France, only “apache anarchism” (mob rule) could be expected and this is the mob that will take power and prepare soil – once again! – to “victorious foreigners”. Kassák was even more explicit in the editorial of the 4th of October 1914 issue of *Új Nemzedék* regarding his hope for a victory of the Central Powers: from the point of view of the masses, the popular interests are only defended by these nations, while the Entente powers, except for England, were no more than warmongers.¹⁹ Also he added, this could simultaneously bring an end to the whole ‘latinité’. Germany is described as the opposite – the ‘ideal state’ – and in similar terms to those used by the patriot press in order to legitimate the German war effort. Unity of its people, vigor, defense of human values and – as an issue particularly important for a leftist thinker like Kassák – social solidarity would characterize the Germany in war against “Tsarist barbarism and French decadence”. In opposition to these latter nations, Hungarians, being forced to combat, are also finding values and sense in the war. Similarly to Germans, the war is a “legitimate economic fight” for Hungarians, and it “liberates Hungarians from the worrying barbarian eccentrics” – an allusion to Serbia, Hungary’s enemy number one. This article can be seen – as Kassák-expert Gábor Andrási noticed as well – an “indirect apology of the war”.²⁰ In the following pages, Kassák even gave an analysis – signed only by his initials – of the probable consequences of the taking of Antwerpen by the Germans, a pure military achievement – a rather unlikely topic in his oeuvre.²¹ To sum it up, he made the war appear legitimate with similar arguments during the first months of WWI than the patriot pro-war writers from whom he always kept himself away.

¹⁷ Lajos Kassák, Egy új francia forradalom perspektívájában [In the Perspective of a New French Revolution], *Új Nemzedék*, 39th issue, 20th September 1914, 6-8.

¹⁸ Gábor Andrási, A fiatal Kassák Lajos a szocializmusról [The young Kassák about socialism], *Literatura*, 4th issue, 1979, 393-394. Andrási took notice of these articles of Kassák but without analyzing them in the context of WWI and he remained more interested in Kassák’s writings on socialist parties. (Gábor Andrási, A fiatal Kassák Lajos a szocializmusról [The young Kassák about socialism], art. cit., 377-397).

¹⁹ Lajos Kassák, A Háború értéke nálunk és – náluk [The value of the war at us and – at them], *Új Nemzedék*, 41st issue, 4th Oct. 1914, 1-3.

²⁰ Gábor Andrási, A fiatal Kassák Lajos a szocializmusról, art. cit., 394.

²¹ K. L. [Lajos Kassák], Följegyzések. Antwerpen [Notes. Antwerpen], *Új Nemzedék*, 42nd issue, 11th Oct. 1914, 4-5.

Also, by publishing his memories about his pre-war European trips in the November issues of *Új Nemzedék – From the notes of a vagabond* which became later a source, however selectively used, for his post-war autobiography –, he compared his trips to France and Germany by claiming explicitly that “the nicer memory was to Germany”.²² He described Germany as an empire complemented by “citoyen socialism” and where the whole country is a huge united family with its typical representatives such as the craftsmen having Goethe and Schiller in their rucksack and who were welcomed even by the police. On the contrary, foreigners were hated in provincial France where there are no normal vagabonds only beggars who are “all homosexuals and transmit diseases”. This stigmatization of French vagabonds was closely related to the stigmatization of France as sterile, a widely circulated stereotype at the time also by French themselves due to the memory of the French-Prussian war in 1870 and the decrease of birthrate. Kassák also added – a sign of his Philo-Semitism – that only Jewish cashier were nice in provincial France. Literature and arts, he claimed, were only coming from Paris and nothing to do with the French countryside where people only read cheap clerical papers and remained excessively ignorant, a fact which was longtime hidden by the Hungarian “Paris-lovers”. However, when he compared city life of the two countries in the next edition of his “notes”, he already mentioned that while in Germany the police was very strict with them and ousted them from the country (a contradiction with his previous notes!), Paris – open to all nations – received them “loudly, with a big hug”.²³

[NEEDS TO BE TRANSLATED]

Kassáknál a francia főváros és a francia vidék szembeállítását 1914 augusztusát követően szintén a „háború kultúrája” által meghatározott retorikai fordulat volt, amit jó pár, korábban Párizs-rajongással jellemezhető magyar író kármentésként használt. Ők a komoly ellenszél dacára sem fordultak szembe egy az egyben a francia kultúrával. Erre azért fontos rámutatni, mert a magyar szellemi életben nemritkán olyanok kompromittálták magukat a francia irodalom és kultúra stigmatizálásával a háború elején – Laczkó Gézától kezdve Kosztolányi Dezsőn át Herczeg Ferencig –, akik hosszú évekig a francia kultúra első számú közvetítői voltak. Kassáknál Párizs különlegességének kiemelése („a városok városa”²⁴) például nagyon hasonló ahhoz, ahogy a *Nyugat* folyóiratban 1914 őszén – elenyésző kisebbség részeként – Ady kelt a francia kultúra védelmére, megkülönböztetve a francia fővárost (Párizs „női város”, „új Athén”), amely

²² Lajos Kassák, Egy csavargó noteszkönyvéből. (A német és francia csavargó-világ) [From the notes of a vagabond. The German and French universe of vagabonds], *Új Nemzedék*, 45th issue, 1st Nov. 1914, 8-9.

²³ Lajos Kassák, Egy csavargó noteszkönyvéből II [From the notes of a vagabond II], *Új Nemzedék*, 47th issue, 15th Nov. 1914, 8-10.

²⁴ Lajos Kassák, Egy új francia forradalom perspektívájában, art. cit., 8.

megtestesíti az univerzalizmust, magától az országtól, amely a háborús pszichózisba süllyedve, elveti azt.²⁵

However, as early as October 1914, he already expressed his confusion about war in a poem entitled *Sheep of Mars* – an early expressionist poem –, which was also published in *Új Nemzedék*.²⁶ The following two lines express this feeling of confusion the best:

“and me, shepherd of gentle thoughts, with fast lungs
I’m singing of you, fire of tempestuous angers: War (...)
[where]The steel choir of canons sing a mindless song to the soldiers”

Another poem, *Song of Bells*, published in the next issue, is entirely designed to express not only a confusion but a clear antagonism of poetry and war which is condensed the best in the last line: “ferocious creaked-voice mortars mock our melodies”.²⁷ During spring 1915 Kassák continued to publish “war poems” completely lacking traditional themes and forms of the genre which were now published individually.²⁸ One of these, also providing the title to the volume including the poems in question, the *Epic in Wagner’s Mask* (*Éposz Wagner maszkjában*) was a totally avant-garde poem.²⁹ As Albert Gyergyai, a literary critic from the postwar generation, says: “There are only febrile rolling lines, only dark visions about soldiers, fights, war masses and cities and, from time to time, as an arabesque, the poet’s own destiny.”³⁰ The publication of these poems provide us with a good example that there could be a discrepancy even in the same person between analysis of war (media of pro-war ideas) and fictional writing (a medium of a step forward towards antimilitarism).³¹ Also intellectuals’ correspondence could show a similar discrepancy: Kassák’s correspondence of April 1915 revealed a deep feeling of isolation and loneliness as he complained to the writer Dezső Szabó of lacking company and friend in the “flow of blood”.³² Poetry, in general, proved be a useful medium during WWI for writers for shifting from legitimation of the war to antimilitarism.

²⁵ Eszter Balázs, *War Stares At Us Like an Ominous Sphinx*” Hungarian Intellectuals, Literature and the Image of the Other (1914-1915), op. cit., 109-110.

²⁶ Lajos Kassák, *Marsisten nyája* [The Sheep of God Mars], *Új Nemzedék*, 42nd issue, 11th Oct. 1914, 7-8. [“És én a szelid gondolatok pásztora, gyors tudóvel Most rólad énekelek szilaj indulatok tüze: Háború (...) Az ágyúk acékorúsa értelmetlen dalt énekel a katonáknak”.]

²⁷ Lajos Kassák, *Harangok éneke* [Song of Bells], *Új Nemzedék*, 44th, 25th Oct. 1914, 10. [“vad repedt torkú mozsarak csúfolják csengő énekünk”]

²⁸ Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete* [The Life of a Man], op. cit., 186-188.

²⁹ Pál Deréky, *Latabogomár, ó talatta, latabogomár és finfi* [title untranslatable], Debrecen, Kossuth, 1998, 8-10.

³⁰ Albert Gyergyai, *Kassák Lajos válogatott versei* [Selected Poems of Lajos Kassák] in János Szávai (ed.), *Kassák. Esszék, tanulmányok* [Kassák. Essays and Studies], Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó, 1990, 28.

³¹ Noticed also by Gábor András in *ibid.*, *A fiatal Kassák Lajos a szocializmusról*, art. cit., 394.

³² Letter of Lajos Kassák to Dezső Szabó (04/15/1915), KM-lev. 381.1. Archives of Kassák Múzeum, Budapest.

Even if Kassák had wanted to express his own opinion individually, as the launch of his own journal was not authorized in November 1914, he continued to write in *Új Nemzedék* for want of a better solution until October 1915. In his next writings in *Új Nemzedék*, by abandoning the comparison of France and Germany which had been a major topic of his articles during the first months of WWI, he shifted to the subject of the attitude of European socialist parties and movements regarding war. Very soon he expressed sympathy for English workers being “for-progress in the milieu of the war” and he also expected a revolution there, and not in France or in Russia.³³

A turn seemed to happen in late January 1915: in his article entitled “The International and the War”, as a pure gesture of antimilitarism, he already blamed European socialist party leaders for volte-face and abusing workers and the masses.³⁴ In his following articles on socialist parties’ attitude he also published more than one manifestos and proclamations of groups opposing against the war: when the whole Hungarian press was aloud of blaming Italy and Italian culture at the entry of the war of Italy at the sides of the Entente, he published a supportive article in which he emphasized the antimilitarism of Italian Socialists.³⁵ However, except for poems, it was only regarding issues of socialist parties that he expressed energetic antimilitarism until the founding of *A Tett*. In other publications in *Új Nemzedék* such as his essay of May 1915, he remained divided concerning WWI. In this essay he noticed as a total absurdity (more particularly in Springtime) the outflow of heavily injured soldiers into the streets, being called by him “brothers of martyr”.³⁶ Nevertheless, by hoping for a democratization process thanks to the conflict, he was still speaking about “an effort superhuman of a glorious war” and “the combative Hungarians”. Also he used the widely circulated stereotype of the nationalist press: thank to “our heroism, the foreign countries having been ignoring Hungary for a last, are now recognizing its importance” and this heroism is due to humbles. He hoped, as a result of a victorious war, the politization of the masses. In “The Red Circle”, published in July and which was his last analysis in *Új Nemzedék* (he continued to publish short stories until late October 1915)³⁷, he put as a fact the antimilitaristic turn of the

³³ Lajos Kassák, Angolok [Britons], *Új Nemzedék*, 49th issue, 29th Nov. 1914, 6-7; *ibid.*, Disszonanciák (Az angol munkáspárt és a háború) [Dissonances (The British labor and the War)], *Új Nemzedék*, 51st issue, 13th Dec. 1914, 6-8.

³⁴ Lajos Kassák, Az Internacionálé és a háború [The International and the War], *Új Nemzedék*, 4th issue, 24th Jan. 1915, 12-15.

³⁵ Lajos Kassák, Az olasz szocialisták [The Italian Socialists], *Új Nemzedék*, 24th issue, 13th June 1915, 5-7. However, in an article entitled The Red Circle he also used stereotypes on Italians, but not in a context of hating. (See Lajos Kassák, A vörös karika [The Red Circle], *Új Nemzedék*, 28th issue, 10th July 1915, 9).

³⁶ Lajos Kassák, Amit az utca beszél [Of what the Streets are Talking About], *Új Nemzedék*, 22nd issue, 30th May 1915, 18-19 (see for the quotation: 18).

³⁷ Lajos Kassák, Vöröskardos faluk [Villages of Red Swords], *Új Nemzedék*, 44th issue, 31st Oct. 1915, 11-13.

majority of the socialist leaders throughout Europe, and reported on the Chicago conference of socialist parties and its probable effects on European socialists.³⁸ However it was only in *A Tett*, launched by him in November 1915 that he would become an energetically anti-war intellectual.

Types of antimilitarism according to Lajos Kassák: definitions between 1916 and late 1920's

Probably because Kassák himself changed his mind about the war during the conflict of 14-18, he was interested to define antimilitarism already during the conflict. As early as 1916, he was critical towards those who had opted only for a modest or a less energetic criticism towards the war: “if I open my mouth, it counts more than if you are jarring a whole year about the slow burning sore of your heart” – he said in May 1916.³⁹ More than two years later, in September 1918, he emphasized the importance of his own journal: “in the midst of depravation during the war this art group [*A Tett*] was the only one pulling the boat against the deluge of general opportunism”.⁴⁰ After the end of the war, in December 1918, he opposed directly “active antimilitarist” and “passive pacifists”.⁴¹ In his biography of the late 1920's, his opinion was already much more moderate, however still emphasizing the difference between the main antiwar positions during the conflict: “they were not warriors, but brave mourners”⁴² (namely the representatives of moderate criticism). Kassák pointed out that these writers, who had been modestly criticizing the war, in fact, fulfilled a minimal role in the war effort: they felt solidarity with the fallen soldiers and their families, and supported soldiers on the front, but without turning openly against the conflict. In his biography, Kassák also stressed that expressions of suffering by these writers helped him considerably to stand up energetically against the war, and he spoke with respect about writers “in whom the human soul manifested” after the enthusiasm or silence of the first months.⁴³ As he wrote, he aspired to do more than these writers by finding a clear-cut way out from “that intellectual chaos” to become a “warrior”, “not only” a “mourner”. In effect, the great journal of the literary

³⁸ Lajos Kassák, “A vörös karika” [Red Circle], *Új Nemzedék*, 28th issue, 10th July 1915, 8-10.

³⁹ Lajos Kassák, “Szegény”-pózban [In the Posture of a Poor], *A Tett*, 13th issue, 6th May 1916, 201.

⁴⁰ Lajos Kassák, “A “MA” demonstratív kiállításához” [For the Demonstrative Exhibition of MA], *MA*, 8th-9th issues, 15th September 1918, 90.

⁴¹ Lajos Kassák, “Tovább a magunk útján” [Carry on our Way!], 20th December 1918, *MA*, 138.

⁴² Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete* [The Life of a Man], op. cit., 183.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 192 and 196.

modernism, *Nyugat* fulfilled such a role all along the conflict in spite of its more and more energetic critics towards the war since the summer of 1915.⁴⁴

As another sign of refusing the war was the fact that Kassák also escaped the enlistment by simulating a chronic sickness: he needed to do so since, unlike those Hungarian intellectuals who wanted to avoid being enlisted, he was not well connected. He was very proud of avoiding enlistment by the end of the 1920's: "not to be a soldier when almost everybody is, is one of the greatest achievements".⁴⁵

Central feature of the antimilitarism of *A Tett*: contrasting pro-war discourse as well as intellectual conformism

After the failure of launching his own literary and artistic review in November 1914, he only received the authorization one year later, in November 1915. The Hungarian law of 1914 permitted to launch non-political journals without any limitation; in the case of political journals, however, a deposit had to be payed. So, the choice of starting a literary and artistic review in the case of Kassák and his fellows matched with strategic reasons since they wanted to talk about both literature, arts and politics.⁴⁶ Now let us take a look at the promoted topics and their development over the year long existence of the journal launched in November 1915: I have listed ten main topics dominating all sixteen issues.

1. reconsideration of the traditional patriotic and religious poetry;
2. reconsideration of the motifs of the conventional religious painting;
3. representation of the horror of the front in poems and prose;
4. denouncing the patriotic heroes' cult in case of dead poet-soldiers and war reporters;
5. publishing ironic soldiers' songs to denounce the 'heroic' ones;
6. denouncing the patriotic use of Shakespeare during WWI;
7. legitimation of Individualism as a primer source of creation and opposing Anti-Individualism;
8. selection of authentic 'war literature' and denouncing conformist literature;

⁴⁴ Eszter Balázs, "War Stares At Us Like an Ominous Sphynx" *Hungarian Intellectuals, Literature and the Image of the Other (1914-1915)*", art. cit., 108-113.

⁴⁵ Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete [The Life of a Man]*, op. cit., 256., 266-269.

⁴⁶ At least, in his autobiography, Kassák told that they had wanted to launch a "socialist journal" to speak both about literature and politics. See Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete [The Life of a Man]*, op. cit., 196.

9. a new interpretation of the relationship between war and literature and war and arts;
10. international horizon with a sharp interest in writers and artists of the enemies.

The common ground of these different topics was the refusal of the “war of culture”, focusing on the stigmatization of the enemies, being widespread also in a complex way in *Nyugat* until the late Spring of 1915.⁴⁷ Kassák highlighted this ethical stance retrospectively as well: “We declare that we, human beings, do not identify ourselves with the government and are brave enough to call our brothers brothers.”⁴⁸

The very first issue already reflects on the topic of the war of ideologies and the mobilization of the minds. The immense investment of individuals was seen as a complete waste by the journal as opposed to the majority of Hungarian ideological and cultural vectors that supplied meaning to this investment. In a very dark style, by exploiting all the morbidity of death on the frontlines, the very first short story published in the first issue dealt with the identification of dead (and often mutilated) bodies, called “agnostication”.⁴⁹ Opposing the patriotic use of war as a theme emphasizing moral and spiritual renewal, this publication presented the war with its horrors. The tragic theme was also reflected in descriptions of nature, presented as something similar to a human body in the course of decomposition. Such an approach to war was very common in the fine arts all around Europe, especially after 1916. Also, in some short stories and poems published by the journal – such as in *Fejfa* by Lajos Kassák himself in the first issue⁵⁰ – war appeared as a disaster periodically overtaking humanity. This specific topic, appearing both in arts and in literature in general, can be seen as the first stage of exit from the war all across Europe: a stage that, however, until the very end in most cases could not be transformed into an energetic opposition against the war.⁵¹

Traditionally, in the time of war, substantial values of life came into focus, therefore talking about the simultaneity of *eros* and *thanatos* was a general topic related to other wars long

⁴⁷ Eszter Balázs, “War Stares At Us Like an Ominous Sphinx” Hungarian Intellectuals, Literature and the Image of the Other (1914-1915), op. cit., 108-111.

⁴⁸ Kassák Lajos, *Egy ember élete* [The Life of a Man], op. cit., 278.

⁴⁹ Vilmos Rozványi, *Novella és egyéb kísérletek* [Short Storys and Other Experiments], *A Tett*, 1st issue, Oct. 1915, 4-5.

⁵⁰ Tamás Föld [Lajos Kassák], *Fejfa* [Headstone], *A Tett*, 1st issue, Oct. 1915, 11-12.

⁵¹ See for example: Peter Parent, *German Encounters with Modernism, 1840-1945*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 140; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, German artists, writers and intellectuals and the meaning of war, 1914-1918 in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 26.

before 1914. Mentioning libido, physical love and death together, however, gained an actualizing purpose as well during WWI, being reflected in many literary texts published in *A Tett* where contributors were willing to stress that the suffering of male bodies was exceptionally immense during the Great War.⁵² A particularity of that war, apart from death, was that mutilation caused an outstanding suffering for men as well as for their families. Kassák himself even foresaw the difficulty of demobilization after the war because of this specific problem. He stressed that “in front of the open eyes, mutilated men would be roaming for long as exclamation and question marks”.⁵³ So male bodies became the center of preoccupation in *A Tett*’s poems, short stories and other texts, sometimes alongside with women’s bodies.⁵⁴ Kassák’s youngest sister, Erzsí Ujvári’s texts told about mutilated bodies (*Vision*) and also about the sexual deprivation of women while their husbands are on the front and how mourning turned soon into a searching for a new partner (*War, Woman and Tomorrow*). This latter text emphasizing eroticism and body as source of vitality and energy ignored the dichotomy of ‘masculinized’ front and ‘feminized’ homeland based on bourgeois ideologies of gender.⁵⁵ (Also women’s participation in Kassák’s reviews reflected that during WWI a way was paved for new models of gender and that in the vision of these leftist intellectuals “a new model of companionable relations between the sexes”⁵⁶, meaning a ‘brothers-and-sisters in arms’, emerged.)

The growing importance of the human body in *A Tett* confirms that the violence of war, as well as the male and female bodies had an important place in the context of the Great War. As Joanna Bourke highlights in her book on male bodies in Great-Britain during the war of 1914-18,

⁵² See Vilmos Rozványi, Csóktrambulín rétorá [Rhetorician of the Kiss-Trampoline], *A Tett*, 15th Nov. 1915, 23.; Mátyás György, Éjnekindulás [Departure by Night], *A Tett*, 5th issue, 5th Jan. 1916, 71-72.

⁵³ Lajos Kassák, Programm [Program], *A Tett*, 10th issue, 20 March 1916, 155.

⁵⁴ See Vilmos Rozványi, Férfítettek ünnepére [On the Celebration of Mens’ Bodies], *A Tett*, 5th issue, 5th Jan. 1916, 79. Béla Székely, Vér [Blood], *A Tett*, 6th issue, 20th Jan. 1916, 98-99. Lajos Kassák, Eltolt figurák [Spoiled Characters], *A Tett*, 8th issue, 20 Feb. 1916, 125-132.; Aladár Komját, without title, *A Tett*, 9th issue, 5 March 1916, 151.; Lajos Kassák, Himnusz [Hymn], *A Tett*, 15th issue, 1st July 1916, 250. Mátyás György, Fetrengők [Wallowers], *A Tett*, 10th issue, 20th March 1916, 156.; Miksa Nád, Rokkant katonák kórusa [Choir of Disabled Soldiers], *A Tett*, 10th issue, 20th March 1916, 167-168. József Lengyel, Nyári erdőn és tisztáson [In a Summer Forest and Slash]; *ibid.*, Vert ember, ha énekel [A Beaten Man if He Sings], *A Tett*, 13th issue, 6th May 1916, 221-222; Erzsí Ujvári, Vizió [Vision], *A Tett*, 17th issue, 20th Sept. 1916, 316-317. On Women’s Body: Erzsí Ujvári, Háború! Asszony! Holnap! [War! Woman! Tomorrow!], *A Tett*, 13th issue, 6th May 1916, 204. Székely’s short story concerns rape as well: a soldier rapes a young woman while his unit is quartered in a house.

⁵⁵ See for the dichotomy: Birthe Kundrus: Gender Wars. The First World War and the construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic in Karen Hagemann - Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, *Home/Front. The Military, War and Gender in 20th Century Germany*, Oxford-New York, 2002, 161.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 166-167. In the next journal of Kassák, *MA* of Budapest (1916-1919), alongside with Erzsí Ujvári also Irén Réti published poems and different texts. See on women’s role in the activist reviews: Györgyi Földes, Avantgárd, nők, háború. Ujvári Erzsí és Réti Irén az aktivista folyóiratokban [Avant-Garde, Women, War. Erzsí Ujvári and Irén Réti in the Hungarian Activist Reviews], manuscript, 2014.

this conflict had profoundly changed the perceptions of the male body.⁵⁷ Studying the body in the context of this industrialized war seems to me even more important because death and injury had significantly changed in their forms compared to previous conflicts, while the old aestheticism of heroism and courage disappeared.⁵⁸

A Tett was confronted with the huge influence exercised by the action of intellectuals and mobilized writers: due to the unprecedented development of networks of communication and information his mobilized counterparts had the monopoly of speech by 1914.⁵⁹ Kassák and his fellow authors tried to oppose the cultural engagement that was based on the deployment of professional expertise and on an important organizational effort.⁶⁰ Early in the autumn of 1915, at the moment of a series of attacks on autonomous intellectuals accused of being skeptic towards the war effort by Jenő Rákosi, a very mobilized writer and journalist who used his own press to express pro-war ideas, Zoltán Franyó, a young poet (and a temporarily discharged officer from the frontlines) raised his voice on the pages of *A Tett*.⁶¹ He even supported moderate criticism of the war by claiming that “the reactionary camp, hundred times defeated, had resurrected again” and accused Rákosi of being “an aesthetic mercenary soldier” (...) “willing to drown anybody who is brave enough to do anything else but being enthusiastic, is not afraid to write about anything else but alerting the troops and is brave enough to scream other than “long live the mother country”!”⁶² While pointing out the necessity of turning against “the big evil ones”, he also declared that in the journal there was “not enough room to take revenge on all the evilness” which meant: *A Tett* had its own aesthetic and social message to deliver and did not want to reduce its pages simply to polemics and criticism towards militarism.

Also the cult of the intellectual hero dying in combats provoked criticism in the journal: the journalist and writer Elemér Bányai, alias Zuboly (Bottom)⁶³ was celebrated during the previous weeks as the incarnation of the intellectual-soldier hero by the big press and by intellectuals close to the power. As a critique to the journalist-writer Elemér Bányai’s obituary published in the

⁵⁷ Joanna Bourke, Introduction. Embodiment in *ibid.*, *Dismembering the Male. Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War*. London, Reaktion, 1996, 20.

⁵⁸ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau – Annette Becker, *1914-1918 Understanding the Great War*, *op. cit.*, 24-30.

⁵⁹ Anne Rasmussen highlighted the role of the stream of printed material that ensued from the over-mediation that the war provoked from the outset. (Anne Rasmussen, *Mobilizing minds*, *op. cit.*, 391.)

⁶⁰ See Eszter Balázs, *War Stares At Us Like an Ominous Sphynx” Hungarian Intellectuals, Literature and the Image of the Other (1914-1915)*, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Zoltán Franyó, *Néhány gorombaság az igazság nevében [A Couple of Rudeness in the Name of Justice]*, *A Tett*, 1st issue, Oct. 1915, 18-19.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁶³ A nickname referring to a character in Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Nightdream*.

patriotic press, Károly Gallowich, a temporary author of *A Tett*⁶⁴, noted that one should not speak of the “great dead” in Bányai’s case who could have eventually saved his own life if he had been affiliated with the *Pressquarter* (organization of the k. u. k. army’s journalists, photographers and painters permitted to fill in and represent the battlefield life) and who was celebrated by the same people in his death who ignored him in his life.

The journal reflected regularly on what happened in the allied Germany both in the political and in the cultural realm. The pro-war German scientific and artistic production was harshly criticized in *A Tett* (while the “enemy’s” pro-war ideas and productions were silenced probably because their influence was significantly less measurable in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy than the Germans’). The Hungarian import of German short stories was held up to ridicule in *A Tett* by pointing out their low quality.⁶⁵ Similarly, the mobilization of German scholars was harshly criticized apropos of the republication in 1915 of the *Die Nationen und ihre Philosophie* of Wilhelm Wundt, called as “the philosophy agent of the Central Powers”.⁶⁶ Imre Vajda, a sociologist and a mediator of German culture and politics in the journal being familiar with German Social-Democrats, presented the *Mitteleuropa* conception, created by Friedrich Naumann, a liberal social scientist, as a concept that was widely debated by Hungarian intellectuals in Spring 1916.⁶⁷ Although this presentation was not in favor of Naumann’s conception about the German-directed Central-Europe that would include besides Austro-Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia, all sovereign countries, was much more analytic than regarding other German productions: Vajda claimed that *Mitteleuropa* was indeed a “product of the war”, “a common orientation of our defensive and progressive politics” (in other terms Germany’s own way countering British individualism). He also stressed that it served “an afterlife of the material and spiritual trench system” and “a terrain of preparations for the next war”, in other words, it can be seen as a refusal of demobilization.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Later on, in the 4th issue, Kassák noticed that Gallovich had also published in *Magyar Figyelő* [Hungarian Observer], the big cultural pro-war review of circles close to power. (Napló [Journal], *A Tett*, 4th issue, 20th Dec. 1915, 68.)

⁶⁵ Ernő Kázmér, A Café Gröszenwahn lelke. A német regényexporthoz [The Soul of the Café Gröszenwahn. On the Export of the German Novels], *A Tett*, 8th issue, 20th Febr. 1916, 121-122.

⁶⁶ Imre Vajda, Wundt. Die Nationen und ihre Philosophie, *A Tett*, 8th issue, 20 Febr. 1916, 135.

⁶⁷ Imre Vajda, Középeurópa [Central Europe], *A Tett*, 9th issue, 5 March 1916, 137-139. On the Hungarian Mitteleuropa-debate during WWI see Iván Berend T., *Válságos évtizedek. A 20. század első fele közép- és kelet-európai történetének interpretációja*, Budapest, Magvető, 1987, 85-86; György Litván, *Jászi Oszkár*, Budapest, Osiris, 2003, 105-106.

⁶⁸ Imre Vajda, Középeurópa [Central Europe], art. cit.

From issue to issue in the critical column entitled ‘Arts’, authors of *A Tett* were contradicting Hungarian mainstream pro-war cultural events and products and blaming conformism. The expressionist painter Béla Uitz for instance opposed the official expectations towards Hungarian painting during the so-called ‘Winter Exhibition’, an officially organized exhibition: he argued against the idea that war would be a turning point in arts that needs representation in exhibitions.⁶⁹ Instead, he claimed that “the battles of painting are not being fought on the battlefield” and that painting progressed better before than during the war. Lajos Kassák presented the turn of young painters gathering under the name the “Young” as being well-set and measured.⁷⁰ Also he claimed that “in the harshest social reaction” and “at the dawn of commercial artistic romanticism” this return to politics should be evaluated as a “romantic – without politics – politics”. This swing from politics – that historiography dealing with intellectuals would call, regarding the next periods, “antipolitics” – was interpreted by Kassák, so a dissent intellectual, as a typical (conformist) reaction of many intellectuals during the war. Béla Uitz again, in his report on the ‘Spring Exhibition’ (1916) proved to be disappointed by youngsters persisting in “barbarism”.⁷¹

The journal also tried to unfold the wartime strategy to use Shakespeare by intellectual circles close to power. In Hungary, like in Germany, circles close to power used the cult around Shakespeare and the respective national Shakespeare studies to refute the accusation of barbarism.⁷² Since the violation of Belgium’s neutrality by Germany at the very beginning of the war, the press of the Entente and the neutral countries blamed Germany and their allies of being barbaric. Consequently, the countries being accused felt compelled to elaborate a strategy in order to refute this blame. In Hungary, bodies of knowledge associated with the intellectual establishment took part in this strategy by claiming moral ownership of Shakespeare. In *A Tett*, Imre Wirkmann called the anniversary preparations of the Shakespeare-committee of the Kisfaludy Society, the bastion of literary conservatism, “fireworks”. He denied that Shakespeare “would be the apotheosis of the artistic plenitude” and, consequently, for current dramas he could

⁶⁹ Béla Uitz, A fiatalok két tárlaton (Téli tárlat. Nemzeti Szalon) [Youngsters in Two Salons (Winter Salon. National Salon)], *A Tett*, 4th issue, 5 Jan. 1916, 68.

⁷⁰ Lajos Kassák, Politika? Művészet? (A Fiatalok katalógusa) [Politics? Art? (Catalogue of Young People)], *A Tett*, 12th issue, 20th April 1916, 185-187.

⁷¹ Béla Uitz, Cigány és Csaba a tavaszi tárlaton [Cigány and Csaba in the Spring Salon], *A Tett*, 12th issue, 20th April 1916, 200.

⁷² Eszter Balázs, “War Stares At Us Like an Ominous Sphynx” Hungarian Intellectuals, Literature and the Image of the Other (1914-1915), art. cit., 99-102.

only be a source of inspiration.⁷³ He also attested that during the lectures and celebrations the committee preferred to put forward the cult around the figure of the playwright (with mystery in its focus) instead of a reliable national and international scholarship on his person and work. This “glorification nausea” – as Wirkmann noticed – also convinced him that the Kisfaludy Society, as a literary institution, needs to be closed down.

War literature written by “impressionistic writers” (who belonged mainly to autonomous literary circles), such as Tamás Előd or Ákos Dutka, or the otherwise appreciated Ernő Szép were harshly criticized for their conformism by concluding that for these writers “the problem of the war literature is a question of etiquette”.⁷⁴ However, the greater “official” war literature remained untreated for at least two reasons: it was seen as propaganda literature and then completely worthless from a literary point of view and because Kassák and his circle tried to shake those writers up who declared themselves modern and anti-war at the same time. The critique on the *Nyugat*-related Ernő Szép’s writings on the war was similar: “the war is the capitulation of minds facing that blind rush for twenty months and the passivity, characterizing the thinking of the “Széps”, is the engine of that rush”.⁷⁵ Béla Balázs, who freshly broke up with *Nyugat* because of his narcissistic devotion for the hostilities, published his journal entitled *The Soul in the War* that Ferenc Koszorú qualified in *A Tett* as “a gesture of a man of abstractions being a complete failure in the world of realities”.⁷⁶ He also blamed Balázs’s anti-intellectualism and aestheticisation of the war by stressing that the war is “the brutality of men made by culture and the only beauty coming from it is that Man ceased to croak”. The very sarcastic military songs by Aladár Komját opposed the songs written and sung in the battlefield, collected in a great number by intellectuals in order to legitimize the national literary renewal as well as to support the resolutions of democratization in favor of the humbles, more particularly the peasants taking arm in huge number. These ‘patriotic’ songs were published mainly by the pro-war mainstream press.⁷⁷

A couple of articles presented the subversion of the typically addressed topics in the pro-war literary reviews and press. Such a topic was the failure of individualism. Since the beginning

⁷³ Imre Wirkmann, “A Kisfaludysták Shakespeare-cécójához” [On the Firework on Shakespeare of the Kisfaludy Society], 14th issue, 3rd June 1916, 225.

⁷⁴ Imre Wirkmann, “Emőd Tamás: Dicséret, dicsőség” [Tamás Emőd: Merit, Honour]; “Dutka Ákos: Az yperni Krisztus előtt” [In Front of the Christ of Ypern], *A Tett*, 11th issue, 5^h April 1916, 184.; Imre Wirkmann, “Szép Ernő: Élet, halál” [Ernő Szép: Life, Death], *A Tett*, 13th issue, 6 May 1916, 224.

⁷⁵ Imre Wirkmann, “Szép Ernő: Élet, halál” [Ernő Szép: Life, Death], art. cit., 224.

⁷⁶ Ferenc Koszoru, “Balázs Béla: Lélek a háborúban” [Béla Balázs: Soul in the War], *A Tett*, 14th issue, 3 June 1916, 246-247.

⁷⁷ Aladár Komját, “Katonadalok 1916-ban (Iskolai olvasókönyvek számára) [Military Songs in 1916 for School Readers]”, *A Tett*, 12th issue, 20 April 1916, 188-189.

of WWI widespread in the circles close to power who celebrated ‘collectivism’ but also at some autonomous writers among whom there were followers of aestheticism from before 1914⁷⁸, the idea of failure of individualism was challenged in *A Tett*. Zoltán Haraszti emphasized that individualism is not over due to the war, on the contrary, it is still a basic criteria for doing art.⁷⁹ He also claimed that contrary to the general belief, collectivity can more often be the source of extremity than individualism. Imre Vajda also attested the widespread opinion about the failure of individualism and brought up a concrete example to show its devastating social effect (he evoked a recent law regarding rights and duties of servants by which “the police state had attacked the right to dispose of his or her own body”).⁸⁰ At the end of his article, he referred to 1792 and declared the civil rights again, as well as he evoked the spirit of György Dózsa, the rebellious “peasant leader”, with modest noble origins. Dózsa was executed by the high nobility in 1514 and his figure had already transformed into an icon at the political and cultural left by 1900. In the circles close to power another general topic was the exaltation of heroism of Hungarian peasants and their artistic representation. Imre Vajda noted ironically the zeal of “conservative poets” in this regard: the Hungarian peasant who recently carved his place out in Hungarian literature, became even more approved of due to the war. His heroism and self-sacrifice was exalted in the Parliament by thousands of poems.⁸¹

A Tett also wanted to proclaim what authentic “war literature” was. Pál Fehér greeted Pál Göndör’s novel reflecting the real war, “with its misery and brutal, animalistic infamy”.⁸² The same enthusiasm was expressed by Aladár Komját in a next issue regarding the *Letters of Harry Russel-Dorsan*, – a fictional novel written by Dezső Szomory, serially published in episodes by *Nyugat* (and which nowadays became one of the most celebrated Hungarian war novel about the Great War!) – by calling it “a synthesis of the current European culture”.⁸³ Szomory, who was considered by the avant-garde movement as an “impressionistic”, that is to say a sclerotic writer in its terms, in the context of the war became a warmly welcomed intellectual for his authentic antimilitarism. The journal also commemorated those who it felt close to and who died on the

⁷⁸ See for example Dezső Szabó, “A francia pszichéhez” [The Question of the French Psyche], *Husadik Század*, 1915, 1st issue; “Az individualizmus csődje” [The Bankrupt of Individualism], *Husadik Század*, 1915, 8th issue.

⁷⁹ Zoltán Haraszti, “A betüktől az istenig” [From Letters to God], art. cit., 38.

⁸⁰ Imre Vajda, “Dózsa György ébresztése” [The Awakening of György Dózsa], *A Tett*, 7th issue, 5 February 1916, 101-102.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 102.

⁸² Pál Fehér, “Göndör Ferenc könyve: a Háború nyomában” [Pál Göndör’s Book. On the Track of the War], *A Tett*, 5th issue, 5th January 1916, 84.

⁸³ Aladár Komját, “Szomory Dezsőről” [On Dezső Szomory], *A Tett*, 9th issue, 20th February 1916, 136.

battlefield for example Andor Erős, a young artist with expressionist and cubist taste⁸⁴ and whose drawings were published by the journal as a tribute.⁸⁵

Also *A Tett* told its opinion on war journalism: when Ferenc Molnár, – having made his name as a playwright already before 1914, and who transformed himself into a war reporter from the very beginning – was decorated by Emperor Franz Joseph himself for his work, it was still Aladár Komját who claimed that Molnár had been honored for his loyalty and euphemistic style, while other reporters such as, for example, László Fényes had to turn back from the frontline “because they had not blinded themselves facing the horrors of the war”.⁸⁶ Like Molnár, Fényes was also a reporter of the tabloid *Az Est*, however he was close to the Radicals (liberal democrats).

Some similarities with the patriotic pro-war press?

Nevertheless, more particularly until Spring 1916, there were a couple of topics that Kassák’s journal shared with the majority of the actors within the Hungarian literary field (moreover European): (1) the war is inescapable, all men are affected by it; (2) the war can be the source of poetic inspiration; (3) the war should be also a source of vitality, a renaissance. The differences are in the style and the consequences drawn. Zoltán Haraszti greeted a new art which is “infinite, perspective and transcendental”.⁸⁷ Andor Halasi also announced a hopeful future after the war: “The pain is an icy cloud, the sun is shining behind it.”⁸⁸

One should mention as well that the journal taking its name after the German expressionist (activist) and anti-war journal of the same name *Die Aktion*⁸⁹, named itself “The Action” which, of course, did not mean war.⁹⁰ Unlike the pro-war press that often juxtaposed ‘action’ and ‘word’ at the beginning of the conflict, here on the pages of *A Tett* authors rather called for more “energetic words” – a revolution in literature and art – without contrasting ‘word’ and ‘action’.⁹¹ Clearer

⁸⁴ Béla Uitz, “Erős Andor” [Andor Erős], *A Tett*, 6th issue, 20th of January 1916, 100.

⁸⁵ “Ligeti rész. Tusrajz” [Greenwood. Black Ink], *A Tett*, 6th issue, 20th of January 1916 6.; “Akt. Tusrajz” [Nude. Balck Ink], *A Tett*, 13th issue, 6 May 1916, 212.

⁸⁶ Aladár Komját, “Molnár Ferenc rendjele” [The Order of Ferenc Molnár], *A Tett*, 3 June 1916, 247. Molnár remained for *A Tett* and also for MA a prototype of the writer arrivé (Lajos Kassák: “Szintétikus irodalom” [Synthetic Literature], MA, 2nd issue, 15th December 1916, 18).

⁸⁷ Zoltán Haraszti, “A betüktől az istenig” [From Letters to God], *A Tett*, 3rd issue, 1st December 1915, 37-39.

⁸⁸ Andor Halasi, “Dráma” [Drama], *A Tett*, 6th issue, 20 January 1916, 85.

⁸⁹ *Die Aktion* (1911-1932) was founded by Franz Pfemfert.

⁹⁰ Emphasized also by the contemporary Mihály Babits, poet of the review *Nyugat* in “Ma, holnap, irodalom”.

Referred to it by Imre Bori in Imre Bori –Körner Éva, *Kassák irodalma és festészete*, Budapest, Magvető, 1988, 63.

⁹¹ Andor Halasi, “Új irodalmi lehetőségek” [New Literary Possibilities], *A Tett*, 2nd issue, 15th November 1915, 22.

manifestations of the literary and artistic program of the journal alongside with the title were presented in several issues. For example, in the second one, Andor Halasi emphasized movement and energy as a source of vitality for the journal – based on the opposition to “impressionism” and aestheticism seen as the incarnation of immobility: “We are living the epoch of acts now. Literature is waiting for its liberating troops.”⁹² By that, he unwillingly confirmed the opposition of action and immobility, widespread at the beginning of the conflict in pro-war intellectual circles in the entire European continent.⁹³ Nevertheless, he gave a humanistic approach to action and mobility being in line with other texts in the journal⁹⁴ as well as with the program written by Lajos Kassák several issues later, in March 1916.⁹⁵

In the program, Kassák called attention to a major paradox of the war: while societies were brutalizing themselves during the war (“educated humanity has never shown itself in such a naked brutality in front of their thinkers”), intellectuals, however, were still expecting a moral clearing. With an astonishing capacity of predilection, he also asserted that despite of its immense size, the war would only be a horrifying episode in the history of humanity, however with an alarming memory. According to Kassák, in many domains such as politics, economy and social life, a process of internationalization already took place except for the arts that “deafened and blinded themselves in the jungle of phrases of sterile “national pride” and “heroic romanticism”. On the contrary, literature and the arts have to shape future generations and should be “the most fanatic spokesman of progress” while having permanent contact with “the progressive political and economic movement” while filing a leading role in the state administration. This last idea was closely related to the still enduring contention about the definition of the “intellectual” which lasted since 1908, the launching of *Nyugat*⁹⁶; Kassák here required both autonomy and civic role for the intellectual, that is to say, the two-dimensional characteristics of the 20th century

⁹² Andor Halasi, Új irodalmi lehetőségek [New Literary Possibilities], *A Tett*, 2nd issue, 15th Nov. 1915, 21-22.

⁹³ Horust Thomé, A háború és a nyelv [The War and the Language]. *Enigma* [Enigma. Journal of Art Theory], Háború 2 [War 2], 29th issue, 2001, 10-11.

⁹⁴ See Imre Vajda, Világnézet [World View], *A Tett*, 5th issue, 5 Jan. 1916, 69-70. “Action steps out of the soul’s atmosphere. Action swings towards infinities and universalities. (...) Pantha Rei, everything flows. (...) It gives an orientation to social progress. (...) Social Democracy is not enough for action, but it believes in socialism. (...) Action is not folkloric and does not descend to the level of the masses, but rather it lifts them up”. [A *Tett* kilép a lélek atmoszférájából.)...] A *Tett* a végtelenségek és az univerzalitások felé lendül.(...) pantha rei, minden folyik. (...) irányt ad a társadalmi haladásnak. (...) A *Tett*nek kevés a szociáldemokrácia, de hisz a szocializmusban. (...) A *Tett* nem népies és nem száll le a tömegekhez, hanem magához emeli őket.”]

⁹⁵ Lajos Kassák, “Programm” [Program], *A Tett*, 10th issue, 20 March 1916, 153-155.

⁹⁶ See Eszter Balázs, « *En tête des intellectuels* ». *Les écrivains hongrois et la question de la liberté et de l'autonomie littéraires (1908-1914)*, Paris. EHESS, 2008.

intellectual as defined by Pierre Bourdieu.⁹⁷ This claim for literature's freedom fight, as in *A Tett* Andor Halasi wrote in his agenda "12 points" based on the model of the 12 points of the Revolution in 1848⁹⁸, had a great importance in the context of the debates about the role and function of literature in the war. Halasi claimed the freedom of the Hungarian literary field that was, according to him, under the influence of the "most corrupted adventurers": the "rude hands, narrow-minded brains and political footmen".⁹⁹

Kassák gave a long definition of 'new art' in the "program", replacing the previous concept of 'new literature' coined by *Nyugat*, launched in 1908, a concept which became a widely debated issue by then.¹⁰⁰ Kassák opened a new front in the debate: by also deploying the term to every art, he wanted to monopolize the term for his avant-garde movement. According to him, the "new art" had to liberate itself from the conventional theoretical and technical bonds and can not lie to any of the "isms" ("it could not approve either Christianity nor Futurism"), had to react to every natural phenomenon, did not know any limits in space and in time. It had to be open to the sciences as well as to spiritualism, eroticism and technique and had to greet the creative forces except for the war which "dirtily holds down these forces" and, at last but not least, it could not be a national or ethnic art for art's sake.¹⁰¹ Once again he claimed that he made the program "under the magnifying glass of the censorship".¹⁰² The censorship probably read his remark which did not prove to be sufficient to ban the whole journal. *A Tett* was definitively banned because of publishing works of artists from the enemy countries. Altogether it proves that, from the point of view of censorship, publishing texts related to culture and even to public life, whether they were very debatable regarding or even outstandingly against the war effort, was not as alarming than that of reproductions of works of art by authors of the enemy countries.

⁹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, The Corporatism of the Universal. The Role of Intellectuals in the Modern World, *Telos*, 81st issue, Sept. 1989, 99-110.

⁹⁸ Andor Halasi, 12 pont [Twelve Points], *A Tett*, 11th issue, 5 April 1916, 169-170.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Eszter Balázs, « *En tête des intellectuels* », op. cit.

¹⁰¹ As far as the journal's reception by other actors of the Hungarian literary field, apart from some very scandal-provoking presentations, Mihály Babits's presentation in *Nyugat* was the only one that triggered a long response from Kassák where he defined the difference between the literary modernism of *Nyugat* seen by him as arrivé and devoted to art's for art sake, and their own literary conception which is turned to the people and to life. (Lajos Kassák, Az új irodalom. A legifjabb költőknek. Válasz Babits Mihály tanulmányára [The New Literature. To the Youngest Poets. Response to Mihály Babits' Study], *A Tett*, 20 Sept. 1916, 301-304.) Later on, Kassák compared the "new art" to posters since both are characterized by "individual demonstration and free power" and where "the only acceptable issue is life". (Lajos Kassák, A plakát és az új művészet [The Poster and the New Art], *MA*, 1st issue, 15 Nov. 1916, 2-4.)

¹⁰² Lajos Kassák, Programm, op. cit., 155.

Censorship on A Tett

a. “Blasphemy”: the 2nd issue’s case

By the autumn of 1915 *A Tett* had already been pestered a couple of times: in the very first issue the article of Zoltán Franyó (supra), a writer and a permanently discharged officer, had to be partly omitted and a couple of paragraphs left blank due to the article’s radical voice¹⁰³ (Kassák told later on in his recollections that “the parts left in white in the articles can be seen as shouting marks against the situation”¹⁰⁴).

A reproduction of an expressionist work of art, the *Mourning of Christ* by Péter Dobrovits (printed on a double page in an image supplement of the second issue), alarmed also the censors due to its unusual artistic expression as it touched on a traditional religious topic seen as of high political importance during WWI because it served as a symbol of self-sacrifice. Péter Dobrovits (known as an internationally recognized painter as Petar Dobrović) – an artist of Hungarian, Serbian and German origin, who was educated in Hungary and influenced by Hungarian modernist painters in his early period – met Lajos Kassák and the painter Béla Uitz at the Kecskemét Art Colony in 1911/12. Although he had received a scholarship from the Hungarian state with several other students of Croatian and Serbian nationality in 1910-1911¹⁰⁵, Dobrovits was mainly considered in 1915 as a Hungarian artist. Regarding the confiscation of the second issue it was undoubtedly the antiwar message of his work that played a role and not his origins.

Dobrovits’ painting along with the short story of Lajos Kassák intitled “Anarkhista-temetés” (Anarchist Burial) and inspired by a painting of the Italian futurist Carlo D. Carra were judged as dangerous to social order and the authorities confiscated the copies of this second issue of *A Tett* as it constituted an act of “blasphemy” before being distributed.¹⁰⁶ In the next issue Kassák himself announced that the confiscation of the journal would be followed by a judicial process.¹⁰⁷ Finally it did not happen and Kassák was brave enough to republish the painting of Dobrovits in the 8th issue without, of course, an official authorization by mentioning that it had been saved from “the cellars

¹⁰³ Zoltán Franyó, Néhány gorombaság az igazság nevében [A Couple of Rudeness in the Name of Justice], art. cit., 18.

¹⁰⁴ Lajos Kassák, A magyar avangard három folyóirata [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], op. cit., 219.

¹⁰⁵ György Várkonyi, Petar Dobrović in Hungarian Art, Petar Dobrović (1890-1990). Retrospektivna izložba, Zagreb, Muzejski proctor, 1990, 32, footnote n9.

¹⁰⁶ 5484/1914 M.E. (KM an 10/1, Archives of Kassák Múzeum, Budapest) and referred by Ilona Illés in ibid., *A Tett, a MA és a 2X2 repertórium* [Repertorium of *A Tett*, the MA and the 2X2], op. cit., 7.

¹⁰⁷ Napló [Journal], *A Tett*, 3rd issue, 1st Dec. 1915, 52.

of the prosecution to the public”.¹⁰⁸ This explicit reference to the existence of censorship shows well the limits of free speech in Hungary during WWI which were rather flexible until 1916 compared to France or the Austrian part of the Monarchy. Kassák explains this, in his recollections in the 1960’s, when talking about the chaotic functioning of the Hungarian censorship.¹⁰⁹

b. “Dangerous to the interests of warfare”: the case of the ‘international issue’

The journal refused to express the hatred of the enemy which was, however, central element of the “war culture” in Hungary as well. Early in December 1915, Lajos Kassák expressed his journal’s antiwar position in the intellectual field by republishing his expressionist poem entitled *Craftsmen* (*Mesteremberek*), originally published in 1913, which in the context of the First World War regained new signification: his friends and himself were not “scholars”, “priests” or “heroes ready to die in the front”, instead they wanted to create a new kind of art along with “new poets” “from Rome, Paris, Moscow, Berlin, London”.¹¹⁰ More than anything else, international orientation was the most targeted issue in the journal by the censorship.

However, *A Tett* did not respond to the ideal of simultanism, namely the equality and fraternity of the avant-gardes in their pure form, an orientation that would become so primordial to *MA* [Today]. *MA* was Kassák’s next avant-garde journal launched in November 1916 when *A Tett* was definitely and irrevocably banned. In *A Tett* Kassák promoted a couple of symbolist, post-symbolist and naturalist authors who could not be easily related to the typical avant-garde program. Kassák and his team were mainly concerned with expressing ‘vitalism’, under which they meant an explosion of life force against an increasingly mechanized society. ‘Vitalism’ in literature appeared before WWI and was based on the belief that the material world and humans are best understood as being shaped by a dynamic field of energy and flow. Henri Bergson’s scientific theory of *élan vital* (vital force) had an important effect on this pre-war European artistic current.

Moreover, Kassák wanted to differentiate himself from the already existing literary modernism in Hungary that he found too established and “impressionistic”, and thus already

¹⁰⁸ Napló [Journal], *A Tett*, 8th issue, 20 February 1916, n9, 136.

¹⁰⁹ Lajos Kassák, “A magyar avangard három folyóirata” [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], op. cit., 218.

¹¹⁰ Lajos Kassák, “Mesteremberek” [Craftsmen] from the *Éposz Wagner maszkjában*, *A Tett*, 3rd issue, 1st December 1915, 42.

sclerotic. Therefore, he published several French contemporary writers, Remy de Gourmont, Jules Romains, René Arcos, Georges Duhamel, Paul Fort: all of them were characterized by a monk-like work ethic that Kassák highly appreciated, most of them were members of the anarchist and post-symbolist *L'Abbaye* group (1906-1909) that Kassák got to know during his journey in France before WWI. These French writers were printed on the pages of *A Tett* next to the Italian F. T. Marinetti, author of the Futurist manifesto and the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire, friend of Cubist painters, both of them major figures of the avant-garde movements of this period. While Marinetti had been already translated in 1913 by *Új Revü* [New Review], Apollinaire was published at first in Hungarian in Kassák's journal.¹¹¹ The poem *Zang tumb tumb* of Marinetti celebrating the Italian-Turkish war was published without any comment in *A Tett* which shows the ambivalent attitude of Kassák towards Futurism¹¹²: he was attracted by this new artistic vision but abhorred by their militarism. However, Kassák very probably ignored the patriotism of Apollinaire who received French citizenship not very long ago when he had joined the French army and where he published a couple of poems ambivalent towards the conflict. Although better known, the role of the Italian Marinetti in WWI was not treated in the journal either. Walt Whitman, known as the “father of free verse” and known for his vagabond lifestyle (he was popular among Hungarian modernist writers already before WWI), and Belgian Emil Verhaeren who wrote in the French language and was one of the major figure of European artistic revival before WWI, were also published¹¹³ – the latter was known all over Europe, including Hungary, for adverse attitude towards Germany during First World War. The common feature of these writers was related to the writers' style and origin: every author mentioned here represented, in the eyes of Kassák, a 20th century literary and artistic renewal and was a citizen of the enemy or – in the case of Verhaeren and Withman – a neutral country. However, the selection was only directed by their artistic vision that Kassák liked (thanks to his “autodidactic instinct”¹¹⁴) regardless if they supported or not the war efforts of their own countries. The fact that they were citizens of the enemy countries certainly raised the attention of censorship.

¹¹¹ Guillaume Apollinaire, Saint-Mery muzsikusa [Musician of Saint-Mery], *A Tett*, Oct. 1915, n1, 8-10; Lajos Kassák, A magyar avangard három folyóirata [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], op. cit., 221. Kassák heard about Apollinaire at first (and about Picasso and Walt Withman) during his European trip, in Paris in 1909. (Lajos Kassák, Vázlat, önarcképhez [Esquisse for an Auto-portrait], in Béla Pomogáts, *A virágnak agyara van. In memoriam Kassák Lajos* [The Flower has Tusks. In Memoriam Lajos Kassák], Budapest, Nap Kiadó, 2000, 6. On Marinetti's Hungarian publications see György Tverodta, *Németh Andor. Egy közép-európai értelmiségi a XX. század első felében* [Andor Németh. A Central-European Intellectual from the First Part of the 20th Century], I, Balassi, Budapest, 2009, 32.

¹¹² Marinetti, Csata. Súly+szag (Battle. Weight + Odor) (without the name of the translator), 1st July 1916, 15th issue, 251-253.

¹¹³ Walt Withman, Könyvek [Tears] (translated by Andor Halasi), *A Tett*, 20th Dec. 1920, 4th issue, 62.

¹¹⁴ Imre Bori – Éva Körner, *Kassák irodalma és festészete* [Kassák's literature and painting], op. cit., 58.

It was only about Rémy de Gourmont, who died in October 1915 that Zoltán Haraszti, in a necrology, emphasized his open-mindedness and that he coined the phrase “*joujou patriotisme*” referring to the fact that nationalism was a tool for manipulation in the hands of politicians. As far as Gourmont’s open-mindedness, Haraszti noted that while he was a supporter of the *latinité*, he also appreciated the German *Kultur* by quoting German writers.¹¹⁵ He was represented as a “man of acts”, a socialist and an aesthete at the same time.

The journal was definitely banned on the 2nd of October in 1916 apropos of its ‘International Issue’ published several weeks earlier. The prohibition took place in compliance with the law of 1912/LXIII.¹¹⁶ The Department of Interior referred to its content “dangerous to the interests of warfare”.¹¹⁷ According to Kassák himself publishing three Russian (Wassily Kandinsky, Mikhail Artsybashev, Nikolai Kulbin), two French (Paul Fort, Georges Duhamel), one Belgian (Paul Verhaeren), one South-Slavic (Ivan Meštrović), one “British” (Bernard Shaw) one Italian (Liberio Altomare), and the firmly antiwar activist Ludwig Rubiner of German origin was in itself an insult to the state in war.¹¹⁸ It is also telling about the antimilitarism of Lajos Kassák and its team that in a large measure only German pro-war literary and scientific discourses were presented in the pages of *A Tett* (supra) and German antimilitarism only took place in the International Issue, August 1916 (through the figure of Ludwig Rubiner). The only writer of Austrian origin who was mentioned on the pages of *A Tett* was Karl Schönherr due to its play on an adultery among peasants and translated into Hungarian.¹¹⁹

But according to Kassák, this particular issue was nothing else but a pretext for the ban. Referring to the example of the graved pieta, a work of the Croatian Ivan Meštrović (tagged by the artist himself “Serbian”¹²⁰) and that of an African mask, I would challenge the statement of Kassák-expert László Ferenczi: these works were not only interpreted, in the name of fraternity, as

¹¹⁵ Zoltán Haraszti, Rémy de Gourmont, *A Tett*, 1st issue, Oct. 1915, 13-14.

¹¹⁶ This law, called the “exceptional law”, gave effect to exceptional power in the case of an important crisis such as, for instance, war. However, it remained in use during the postwar Horthy era. (Balázs Sipos, *Sajtó és hatalom a Horthy-korszakban. Politika- és társadalomtörténeti vázlat* [Press and Power in the Horthy Era. A Political and Social History], Budapest, Argumentum, 2011, 118.)

¹¹⁷ See *Könyvtári Szemle*, 1916, 2nd issue, 85.

¹¹⁸ Lajos Kassák, *A magyar avangard három folyóirata* [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], op. cit., 221.

¹¹⁹ [anonyme], Schönherr Karl, *A Tett*, 5th Febr 1916.

¹²⁰ Such was a voluntary gesture since Meštrović acted as a mediator between the Entente powers and the South-Slavic politicians during WWI. He was widely known for his adversary opinion concerning the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the latest since his exhibition which took place in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1915. He was very much supported by R.W. Seton Watson, a major critique of the Monarchy as well. During WWI he wanted to reflect South-Slavic heroism mainly by religious theme – his Pieta published by *A Tett* is such a work of art. (Ilona Bunde-Todorov, *Ivan Meštrović*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1993, 14.)

contemporary art objects without needing a sophisticated technical knowledge,¹²¹ – a way of interpretation initiated by French Cubists such as Picasso and which was highlighted by Kassák himself in an article in 1916¹²² –, but they also served to energetically denounce the war of culture. It is well-known that soldiers drafted from the colonies who served in the Entente armies were harshly targeted by the German and also by the Austro-Hungarian press.¹²³ Although being a widely recognized theme in pro-war cultural production, the pieta, was tagged “Serbian” therefore it became a target for Hungarian censorship. The hatred of Serbians, after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife, persisted even among lower social classes along with the hatred of Russians (more persistent than for instance the hatred towards the French and the British). These publications alongside with an energetically antiwar and pro-revolutionary editorial (which also identified a European pacifist network by mentioning Romain Rolland¹²⁴, Hall Cain¹²⁵ and Karl Liebknecht) and other articles emphasizing pacifist views or written by writers of the “enemy nations” (Russian, Serbian, Belgian, French, English), with a cover in red could definitely raise the attention of the authorities. The authorities became even more aware of these voices since during the years of the so-called “*treuga dei*”¹²⁶ (similar to the “*union sacrée*”) coming to an end just in the summer of 1916 following an important loss on the Russian battlefield – due to the subsequent political crisis when the hunt for scapegoats within the country began. Kassák, posteriorly, attributed the banning of the issue in question to these publications, as well as the final banning of the entire journal.¹²⁷ The first lines of the editorial to the ‘international issue’ reflect their stance:

“We, as young men of Pest, do not believe in miracles nor do we believe in the cosmic character of the war, we are smart enough and now we are letting our voices out towards the East, the West, the North and the South where people live whose red greetings we

¹²¹ László Ferenczi, *Az avangarde kronológiái [Chronologies of the Avant-Garde]* in Lóránt Kabdebó, *Tanulmányok Kassák Lajosról [Studies on Lajos Kassák]* Budapest, Anonymus, 2000, 12-13. Probably a direct source of this African art inspiration could be Carl Einstein’s *Negerplastik* (München, 1915). I’m grateful for this information to Pál Merse Szeredi, historian of art (Kassák Múzeum, Budapest).

¹²² Lajos Kassák, *Az új irodalom. A legifjabb költőknek. Válasz Babits Mihály tanulmányára [The New Literature. To the Youngest Poets. Response to Mihály Babits’s Study]*, *A Tett*, issue 17, 20 Sept. 1916, 302.

¹²³ Hungarians could have personal experience as well: some soldiers of African origins were captured at the very beginning of the conflict in the Serbian front and was announced by the big press. See [anonym], *Néger hadifoglyok Pécssett [Negro prisoners of war]*, *Népszava*, 6 Sept. 1914, issue 217, 11.

¹²⁴ Rolland was the best known pacifist by contemporaries in WWI in Europe.

¹²⁵ Cain wrote a series of articles for *The Daily Telegraph* about how the war was affecting “ordinary” people. These were published in 1915 as a book entitled *The Drama of 365 Days: Scenes in the Great War*. In 1916 he was invited to work with Lord Robert Cecil at the Foreign Office towards the creation of the League of Nations after the end of the war.

¹²⁶ The concept was created already before WWI by the count Albert Apponyi for the union in the war effort of political parties in the Hungarian Parliament.

¹²⁷ Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, op. cit., 294.

heard. (...) We are not only bringing an art of an absolute value, but we want to give signs of our painful liveliness from the fainting Hungarian waste lands.”¹²⁸

To avoid state repression and surveillance again, Kassák decided to start a new journal under the name of *MA* with avant-garde art in its focus. He claimed later on, in his recollections, that he had made up a strategy of putting a greater emphasis on arts – fine arts, theater and music – than on literature which allowed him to distract censorship and spread antimilitarism in a more clandestine way until the end of the conflict without being censored again (“it’s more difficult to control the arts in their content” – Kassák said in the 1960’).¹²⁹ As far as the *MA*’s popularity, its enlarged network – the founding of a proper publishing house and a theater school, holding matinees, organizing exhibitions, editing postcard series with reproductions of avant-garde artists, etc. – served a more effective popularization of their ideas in a broader sphere of society.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, I have found the changing proportion of literature and of art works was not of a high-contrast in the pages of *MA* and it was the demonstration of internationalism that changed significantly in comparison to *A Tett*. Internationalism was demonstrated considerably much less by the publication of literary and art works of the foreign avant-garde, than by promoting their reviews (the Swiss *Le Plus Grand Monde*) or their books (*Die Aktion, Der Sturm*) in the pages of *MA* as well as during conferences and other events. Kassák also organized the distribution of these editions, as well as theirs postcards (*Der Sturm* edited postcards with reproductions of the European avant-garde artists).¹³¹ By the end of WWI the number of publication of foreign literature and art in the journal significantly increased, a fact confirming that neglecting them previously was a strategic choice.¹³² Their experience with *A Tett* made Kassák and his friends more careful, a case when the stressed internationalism was leading to its prohibition. Ironically, *MA* was annihilated by the Hungarian communists in July 1919 by referring to a lack of paper, during the Republic of Councils¹³³ that followed up the short-lived bourgeois Republic which was formed by the end of the war. During Kassák’s emigration to Vienna following the move of the self-proclaimed ‘counter-revolutionary’ Horthy regime in Hungary *MA* was relaunched and it was

¹²⁸ editorial board [Lajos Kassák], Jelzés a világba [Sign to the World], *A Tett*, 1st Aug. 1916, 277.

¹²⁹ Lajos Kassák, A magyar avangard három folyóirata [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], op.cit., 226-227. However, reporting on architecture and art of dance would only be important later in the edition located in Vienna.

¹³⁰ Anonym [Lajos Kassák] Propaganda, *MA*, 1st issue, 15 November 1916, 15.

¹³¹ Lajos Kassák, A magyar avangard három folyóirata [The Three Journals of the Hungarian Avant-Garde], op.cit., 228.

¹³² See Ilona Illés, *A Tett, a MA és a 2X2 repertórium* [Repertorium of *A Tett*, the *MA* and the *2X2*], op. cit., 128-143; 163-182. Verhaeren, Barbusse, Rilke, Ibsen, Strindberg, Walt Withman as well as Picasso, Rodin, Marc Franc, Umberto Boccioni were the few exceptions between 1916 and 1918.

¹³³ Reclamation letter of Lajos Kassák to Szellemi Termékek Országos Tanácsa [Public Council of Intellectual Products], 8th July 1919, KM-lev.388, Kassák Múzeum, Budapest.

in Vienna that Kassák arrived to the thought of writing an autobiographical novel reflecting on the war.

This paper was supported by Kassák Museum (branch of Petőfi Literary Museum) as well as by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.