

Alexander Apponyi and the Dream of Scipio

Bibliophilia and Neo-Platonism in the Nineteenth Century Book-Collections

One of the most famous and productive Hungarian bibliophiles and bibliographers was Count Sándor (Alexander) Apponyi de Nagyappony (1844-1925), born in Paris, in a family of diplomats, book-collectors and many other prominent members who made lasting contributions to the arts and sciences¹.

As we – the librarian public – widely know his biography, I mention only the most important facts of his book-collector's moments. Alexander Apponyi begun his activity as a diplomat – like his father, Rudolf Apponyi – hence he spent many years of his young ages in London; on the stage of cultural diplomacy he met influential persons inspiring him to collect old printed books, especially works of authors on special events of all-time historical Hungary (e.g.: pamphlets that describe the events of the war against the Turkish conquest in the 16-18th century, more the reports about the War of Independence headed by Ferenc Rákóczi II – approximately 3000 volumes - and very thoughtful is his engraving collection always with some sort of special Hungarian issue). This amount of books became the so-called *Hungarica* collection depicted by the bibliophile himself in the preamble of his catalogue where speaks about two different categories: 1. Hungarian writers' works published abroad and written in languages other than Hungarian; 2. Foreign writer's books pertaining to Hungary or dedicated to Hungarians which were published abroad.² The second category was later expanded, because as Apponyi himself put it, "pertaining to Hungary is a rather broad concept".

Up to the present it was the *Hungarica* collection – given to the National Széchényi Library of Hungary in 1925 by Apponyi's last will and testament - to come into the consideration of the professional and amateur bibliophile audience³ because of its peculiarity and of its special gathering aspects. Less we know about Apponyi's personal interests. The works reflecting the collector's personal attendance and on the other hand being outside of the principal point of view of the collecting aspects of the *Hungarica*, the so-termed *Rariora et*

¹ Csilla BÍRÓ. *Apponyi Hungarica Book Collection in the National Széchényi Library, especially the sermonaria of the collection*, study of the lecture held on the Apponyi conference, (Apponyi Family in the Book-Culture), Oponice, Slovakia, 23rd of October, 2014.

² *Hungarica Ungarn betreffende im Auslande gedruckte Bücher und Flugschriften, gesammelt und beschrieben von Graf Alexander Apponyi*, Teil I., Band I – II., neubearbeitet von József VEKERDI, Budapest : Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 2004, XIII – XIV o; The Apponyi Hungarica Catalogue is available via internet: <http://www.arcanum.hu/oszk/lpext.dll/?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&2.0> [Last accessed: 08-04-2015]

³ Vide the studies edited in the volume *Magyarország és Európa az Apponyi-gyűjtemény tükrében. Emlékezés és kiállítás Apponyi Sándor születésének 150. évfordulója alkalmából*. Szerk. W. SALGÓ, Ágnes. Budapest : Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 1995.

Curiosa collection - with its 516 old printed books and 24 manuscripts⁴ - would attract the curiosity of the public. The description of these rare volumes was prepared by Gyula Végh⁵, president of the Bibliophile Association that time, per procuration (by commission?) of Apponyi, but the catalogue was published only after the count's death. This register talks about 34 incunabula (books printed before 31 dec. 1501), 13 Aldina (editions from the Venetian Aldo Manuzio's typography), 30 editions from the Elzevir press, more volumes from the typographers Frobenius and Plantin, numerous *editiones principes*, and 7 old Hungarian books that could not be inserted in the *Hungarica* collection because of their foreign authors and foreign languages.

Regarding to the theme of these tomes, we can find even classical opera from Greek and Roman writers, as those of the Renaissance humanists, in particular, the books of the Nogarola family, Italian ancestors from Verona, collaterally related to the Apponyi House. Many of these rare volumes are illustrated with initials and engravings made by Dürer, Holbein, Amman, etc... In another context some volumes are curious and singular because of their provenance, considering the *marginalia* written by famous authors and commentators, or the *ex libris* of appreciable private libraries, e.g.: Buoncompagni, Firmin-Diderot, Borghese, and in our case – regarding the book I would like to present in my study -, the Kelmscott House, library of William Morris.

In the next part of my presentation I wish to talk in depth about a precious exemplar, a rare copy printed in Vienna presumably in 1501 or 1502 from Apponyi's *Rariora et Curiosa* collection. In the register of Gyula Végh this volume has the number 42, with the following description: *In hoc libello continentur Somnia Danielis. Somnium Scipionis M. T. Ciceronis. Animi causa lectori pulcherrima. (Fametszet: Nebukadnezár és Dániel. Végén:) Impressum Viennae per I^o W. (Winterburger.) S.a. (1501. körül). 4^o 12 sztlan lev. Fametszetű kezdőbetűk. Langer I. 113. l. W. Morris Kelmscott-Housei kvtárából⁶.*

(This book contains the Dreams of Daniel, and the Dream of Scipio from M. T. Cicero. For the nice pleasure of the reader. Engraving: Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel. In fine: printed in

⁴ PUKÁNSZKYNÉ KÁDÁR, Jolán. *Az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Apponyi-gyűjteménye*. In *Az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár évkönyve*, 1968 – 1969, Vols. 12 – 13, p. 159-170.

⁵ VÉGH Gyula: *Rariora et curiosa Gróf Apponyi Sándor gyűjteményéből*, Budapest : kiadja a Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Könyvtára, 1925.

⁶ The bibliographical description of the edition in the VD/16: *Normnummer*: VD16 S 7005. *Weitere Nummern*: VD16 C 3628, *Weitere Pers.* Cicero, Marcus Tullius – PND 118520814, *Titel*: In hoc libello continentur II Somnia Danielis II Sōnium Scipionis M.T. Ciceronis II ... II, *Ausgabebezeichnung*: (Impressum vuienne II per Io. W[interburger]II) [um 1502], *Impressum*: Wien: Winterburger, Johann, 1502, Kollation [12] Bl.: TH.; 4, *Enth. Werke*: 1. enth Werk: Cicero, Marcus Tullius: Somnium Scipionis [EST: de re publica, Ausz.]. (VD16 C 3628, *Quelle*: Borsa Wint. 3, *Medientyp*: Monographie

Vienna, by I[ohannes] Winterburger, circa 1501 [without date] [12] fol., 4°, woodcut initial letters, Langer I., from the library of William Morris – Kelmscott House.)

Before I would proceed with the analysis of the printed text, let me enlighten first of all – but superficially - the milieu of the cultural history that time in Europe. In Italy, during the Quattrocento-era not only the classical Greek and Latin grammar and literature, but the ancient philosophy also began to wing its flight among the intellectuals. If we would really like to simplify the Renaissance history of the philosophy, we should talk about two main traditions; the first came from the medieval scholastic convention namely the Aristotelianism, and the other could be considered a sort of new age thoughtway that went back to the roots of the Platonic school. Unfortunately the narrow frames of my study doesn't let me to submerge deeply in these interesting issues – but if we focus only on the topic of the dream, we should approximate to understand at least one point of view of the differences between the two interpreting traditions.

First I make an attempt to examine the Christian dream interpretations, which have a very evident source: the Holy Scripture, mainly the texts of the Old Testament containing numerous dreams and interpretations of the prophets: it's enough to retrace the dreams of Joseph and Daniel. As the Bible-translations used a simple, but metaphoric and symbolic language, just from the beginning of the Christian time, during the long lasting centuries, starting from the Early Church Fathers were born a rather severe canon of reading. In the Middle Ages, in respect of cultural, and spiritual history we should draw attention to the doctrines of Aristoteles, who was in essence regarded as the Master of Logic until the end of the XII. century. In the first decades of the XIII. century however, his *Physica (Philosophy of Nature)* came into light, and became the center of the intellectual interests. Pope Innocence III just in 1205 urged the university professors to travel in Greece to study the old texts in their natural and original ambient. Owing to this papal advice there had been evolved a sort of ardor of travelling and studying between the scientists, with the aim to expand their own Greek grammatical and philosophical knowledge; due to this movement many works of Aristoteles had been translated into Latin from the original language. The tractate titled *De insomniis et de divinatione per somnum* became one of his most popular and most cited works in the XIII. century. His doctrines here presented are rather opposite to the Christian interpretations: that is to say that the dreams don't either have any kind of divine origin, nor transmit divine messages: they can be reckoned only as manifestations of sensational

impressions resulting from our human nature and material existence⁷. But since the age of Pope Saint Gregory the Great (ca. 540-604) the dreams were evidently considered as divine enouncements, or certain dreams were regarded as deriving from the Devil with the intention to illude and seduce humans beings. Therefore the official policy of the Church inhibited the university professors to teach Aristoteles in the first and second decade of the century, with the chance of the punishment of excommunication. Poestriorly, for the year 1255 Aristoteles became absolutely accepted thanks to the Dominican Order: we have to remind ourselves that the father of the scholastic philosophy based on Aristoteles, Thomas of Aquino (1225-1274) was also a Dominican friar.

The volume begins with an *Exordium* in the folio A₁: *Liber de somno et vigilia*, with the description of the character and the tipical features of the dream deriving from the nature of the human body. Thain main question is to ask, if the dreams should foretell the future or not. Averroes and Aristoteles said that is not natural to tell the future interpreting the dreams, but special cases can happen when prognostication would be however possible: first, when the dreams refer to our state of health, and second, when they inspire us to start an activity. But every dream depend on our physical state: e.g.: if we eat too much, or drink some wine, we get obscure dreams without the hope to be able to interpret them.

After the introducing preface, the author brings some examples for the dreams that can predict the future, like the dream of Nebuchadnezzar interpreted by Daniel about the great kingdoms of the humanity or the dream of Andromakhe who saw the death of his husband, Hektor etc... At the A₂ fol. we can read the title *Incipiunt interpretationes Somniorum Danielis prophetae*, the preamble exposes, that Daniel for Divine inspiration listed his interpretations of the dreams, and now the typographer is publishing it for the “pleasure of the readers”, in alphabetical order. As far we know, the Holy Scripture never contained a similar compilation— even if the medieval tradition later used to compose compendiums of dream-interpretations that could not be originated in the Bible. Let me present the more interesting examples:

- *Aurea vestimenta se induere videre: invidiam vel tristitiam signat* (If you see yourself wearing golden clothes: means sadness)
- *Boves vel elephantes domare: molestiam gravem significat* (To domesticate elephants and bulls: means great inconvenience)
- *Crines longos se habere: fortitudinem significat* (Long hair means having force, fortitude)

⁷ LERNER, Robert E. *Himmelsvision oder Sinnendelirium? Franziskaner und Professoren als Traumdeuter im Paris des 13. Jahrhunderts*, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 259 (1994), p. 337-377.

- *Concumbere* (To sleep with somebody, something, and it's interpretations, for example to sleep with a women, to sleep with a sheep: quarrel and illness)
- *Dracones videre: gaudium signat* (To see dragons: happyness)
- *Eunuchum se videre: damnum vel infirmitatem significat* (If you see yourself as an eunuch: means illness or damage)
- *Mortuum qui se videt in somnis: gaudium signat* (if you see yourself dead: happyness)

Etc...

Et the end we can read the explanation: these dream-interpretations are not fictions as they could be found in old manuscripts... Maybe for the 15-16th century-readers it was a really sufficient explanation, but the modern critical philology would need more detailed and profound textual researches based on the primary historical sources.

The author's last comment on the dreams in this essay is about the occasional dreams, e.g.: when we have a nightmare, our body begin to sweat, we have strong palpitations and other physical reactions like as we had went through a real experience. According to Aristoteles, the explication of the phenomenon is that our body during the nightmare behaves like in real situations, because believes that the nightmare is concrete.

The Aristotelian doctrines has survived so far also in the 15th century, and this is the point when we have to make an attention to the Platonic idea of the dreams. With the development of the pretense of the scientist to study the philosophical and letteral writings in their original languages, free from the errors made by scholastic translators, a movement had been started by Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374) to find as many original manuscripts as possible hiding somewhere in the monasteries of Europe. His claim was to reconstruct the original texts appropriate to the author's intents with the method of the critical philology⁸. In place of Aristoteles distorted by the medieval commentators – Plato's works begun to have a rather strong respect. The Quattrocento writers imitating Petrarca, made an attempt to observe and to contemplate on the Platonic philosophy: most of them begun their studies in Greek with reading Plato itself and the followers, but one part of them attended to Cicero and Macrobius. The reason why they selected Macrobius and Cicero: first of all: Petrarca called Cicero's works into being, and made a sort of cult of him in the Renaissance, and in an other way, Cicero could have been regarded as a particular follower of Plato at least in respect to his political treatises. He wrote a philosophical-political tractate on the republic⁹ in six books

⁸ PFEIFFER, Rudolf. History of Classical Scholarship. From 1300 to 1850, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1976, p. 3-16.

⁹ Marcus Tullius Cicero: *De re publica*

following the footsteps of Plato (*Politeia*), but one of them, namely the 6th book was missing for a very long time. Why is it so important? The sixth book of Cicero's *De re publica* concludes the essence of the Platonic philosophy, in particular because of using the dream as a sort of transmitting instrument.

In the 10th book of Plato's *Politeia* we can read about the vision of Er, the Pamphylian¹⁰. Plato tells the story of a warrior (Er the Pamphylian) killed in a battle whose body with all the corpse of the other militants were collected together to complete the 12 day-long obsequies, but his body miraculously was still undamaged and undecomposed even after 10 days. When the 12th day of the obsequies had arrived, and a pyre had been prepared to incinerate his body, Er the Pamphylian suddenly came back to life as he had woken up from a very long and deep dream, and began to tell all the visions he saw unconscious about the immortality of our souls and about the justice and rightfulness of the Underworld.

This was the allusion that used also Cicero in his 6th book of the *De re publica* describing the dream of the younger Scipio about the neoplatonic immortality-conception of the soul, about the disposition of the spheres and the Milky-Way System, then finally about the prize of the Underworld existence that is the premium of excellent statesmen who spend all their life labouring on the prosperity of the republic.

At the C₂ folio of this rare volume we can find the whole text of Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*.

The work itself – as I have already mentioned – was missing for a long time, but the text and the philosophy was widely known due to Macrobius¹¹, famous for his two main works survived, the *Saturnalia*, a compendium of ancient Roman religious and antiquarian lore and the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, which was an important source for Platonism in the Latin West during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Little is known for certain about Macrobius, but there are many theories and speculations about him. He states at the beginning of his *Saturnalia* that he was "born under a foreign sky" (*sub alio ortos caelo*), and both of his major works are dedicated to his son, Eustachius. His major works have led experts to assume that he was a pagan.

Which "foreign sky" Macrobius was born under has been the subject of much speculations. T. R. Glover considers Macrobius either an ethnic Greek¹², or born in one of the Greek-speaking parts of the Roman Empire, such as Egypt, due to his intimate knowledge of Greek

¹⁰ Plato: *Politeia*, X. 13-16.

¹¹ Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius (ca. 385/390 - 430)

¹² GLOVER, Terrot Reaveley. *Life and Letters in the Forth Century*, Cambridge : University Press, 1901.

literature. J. E. Sandys went further¹³ and argued that Macrobius was born in one of the Greek provinces. However other experts point out that despite his familiarity with Greek literature Macrobius was far more familiar with Latin than Greek—as evidenced by his enthusiasm for Vergil and Cicero—and favor North Africa, which was part of the Latin-speaking portion of the Roman Empire. The most important of Macrobius' works is the *Saturnalia*, containing an account of the discussions held at the house of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus during the holiday of the Saturnalia. It contains a great variety of curious historical, mythological, critical, antiquarian and grammatical discussions. There is little attempt to give any dramatic character to the dialogue; in each book some one of the personages takes the leading part, and the remarks of the others serve only as occasions for calling forth fresh displays of erudition. Macrobius is also the author of a commentary in two books on the *Dream of Scipio* narrated by Cicero at the end of his *De re publica*. The nature of the dream, in which the elder Scipio appears to his (adopted) grandson, and describes the life of the good after death and the constitution of the universe from a Stoic and Neo-Platonic point of view, gave occasion for Macrobius to discourse upon the nature of the cosmos, transmitting much classical philosophy to the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

In my study I focus on his second important opus, the *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*. When the younger Scipio¹⁴ went to Africa, had a dream. Upon his arrival in Africa, Scipio Aemilianus is visited by his dead grandfather, Scipio Africanus Maior¹⁵, hero of the Second Punic War, and his father, Aemilius Paulus¹⁶. He finds himself looking down upon Carthage "from a high place full of stars, shining and splendid". His future is foretold by his grandfather¹⁷, and great stress is placed upon the loyal duty of the Roman soldier, who will as a reward after death "inhabit... that circle that shines forth among the stars which you have learned from the Greeks to call the Milky Way". Nevertheless, Scipio Aemilianus sees that Rome is an insignificant part of the earth, which is itself dwarfed by the stars.

The planetary spheres are enumerated with references to Pythagorean thought and the idea of the *Music of the Spheres*. Then the climatic belts of the earth are observed, from the snow fields to the deserts, and there is discussion of the nature of the Divine, the soul and virtue, from the Platonic point of view. The soul is coming from the Divine scintilla namely the fire-

¹³ SANDYS, John Edwin. *A history of Classical Scholarship*, Cambridge : University Press, 1908, p. 238.

¹⁴ Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor (185 BC – 129 BC)

¹⁵ Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus Maior (236 BC – 183 BC)

¹⁶ Lucius Aemilius Paulus (229 BC – 160 BC)

¹⁷ HAVAS László. *A Szent István-i Intelmek egy lehetséges neoplatonista forrása: Macrobius*, Könyv és könyvtár (2005) XXVII, Debrecen : A Debreceni Egyetem Egyetemi és Nemzeti Könyvtárának Évkönyve, p. 5-25.

substance, common with the immortal essence of the stars. The soul, before it's descent from the firmamental spheres to the Earth, drinks from the water of the Lethe river to forget everything of it's lives before, and during it's descent takes upon itself the particular features and characters of the certain planets while arriving to it's final destination: the „Terra”.

However, the *Commentary* of Marcobius has survived during the centuries of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, unlike the original writing, the *Somnium Scipionis* of Cicero. An interesting event of the history of critical philology was the re-discovery of the original text: it happened in 1819 when cardinal Angelo Mai who became librarian of the Vatican, found it under the cover of a Vatican Palimpsest. The finding of the original opus lunched great waves of interest among the scientists.

After reading the texts, we should examine the conditions of the publication. As I have already talked about, this rare printed book is a very early 16th century work from Vienna, printed by Johannes Winterburger¹⁸ (1460 - 1519), an interesting figure of the Hungarian history of typography.

There can be found more volumes printed with the dates between 1482–1486 in Vienna, but there's no information about a permanent printing house in the austrian capital, so it can be assumed that the printer of this time was only the migratory Stephan Koblinger (Vicenza, at the end of the 15th century). It was Johannes Winterburger in 1492 to found the first standing printing office: a man full of erudition and prestige in the royal court, who learnt and improved his knowledge of typhographical profession in Switzerland. His typography worked as the only press house in the city for 18 years when in 1510 Hieronymus Vietor (1480?–1546) arrived from Krakow opened the second one with print characters brought from Italy. The third printig office was founded by Johannes Singrenius (?–1545) with it's famous engraving illustrated rare volumes; among the three Viennese printers Singrenius is considered to be the most important.one. Hovwever, to return to my original subject, Winterburger: he is important for us, Hungarians, because we are aware of the fact that Winterburger was invited in the Hungarian royal court in 1492 to transfer his typography in Buda, but he was not disposed for the translocation.

Beside the typographer one more thing remained to be be discussed in my study: the provenance of the book. The last owner of this rare volume was Sándor Apponyi, whom bibliophile activity was just presented at the beginning, but it's penultimate possessor was not

¹⁸ For his complete and detailed biography vide: <http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz85814.html> (Last accessed: 14.04.2015.)

a little important personality, especially in the political and artistic scene of the 19th century's England: namely William Morris, father of the Kelmscott House.

William Morris (24 March 1834 – 3 October 1896) was an English textile designer, poet, novelist, translator, and socialist activist. Associated with the British Arts and Crafts Movement, he was a major contributor to the revival of traditional British textile arts and methods of production. His literary contributions helped to establish the modern fantasy genre, while he played a significant role in propagating the early socialist movement in Britain. Born in Walthamstow, Essex to a wealthy middle-class family, Morris came under the strong influence of medievalism while studying Classics at Oxford University. Morris is recognised as one of the most significant cultural figures of Victorian Britain¹⁹; though best known in his lifetime as a poet, he posthumously became better known for his designs. Founded in 1955, the William Morris Society is devoted to his legacy, while multiple biographies and studies of his work have seen publication. Many of the buildings associated with his life are open to visitors, much of his work can be found in art galleries and museums, and his designs are still in production.

In January 1891, Morris began renting a cottage near to Kelmscott House, No. 16 Upper Mall in Hammersmith, which would serve as the first premises of the Kelmscott Press, before relocating to the neighbouring No. 14 in May, that same month in which the company was founded. Devoted to the production of books which he deemed beautiful, Morris was artistically influenced by the illustrated manuscripts and early printed books of Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Before publishing its first work, Morris ensured that he had mastered the techniques of printing and secured supplies of hand-made paper and vellum which would be necessary for production. Over the next seven years, they would publish 66 volumes. The first of these would be one of Morris' own novels, *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, which was published in May 1891 and soon sold out. The Kelmscott Press would go on to publish 23 of Morris' books, more than those of any other author. The press also published editions of works by Keats, Shelley, Ruskin, and Swinburne, as well as copies of various Medieval texts. Thanks to this illustrious figure of the 19th century's England and due to his very diversified artistic and bibliophile activity, the volume was conserved in excellent conditions and get to the property of Sándor Apponyi's *Rariora et Curiosa*, and now is in the ownership of the National Széchényi Library of Budapest to enrich our cultural heritage.

¹⁹ MACCARTHY, Fiona. *William Morris: A Life For Our Time*, London : Faber & Faber, 1994. 2010.

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