

Western Canon through Eastern Authors

Post-Comparative Perspectives in Hungarian Literature

Eds.

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The *Association for the General Study of Literature* (www.aitk.hu) at Eötvös Loránd University Budapest intends to publish a contributed volume on Hungarian literature of the 20th century in post-comparative perspective. The volume will contain up to 20 essays discussing Hungarian works in the context of the 'western canon'.

The editors presuppose that the volume could be of utmost interest for its academic and non-academic readers for multiple reasons. First, and this might be the most important aspect, these essays will be able to read the works of the western canon from the perspectives of their specific Hungarian contexts and intertexts, thus exploring in those works and authors what can be recognized only (and exclusively) *through* this context.

On the one side this gesture or specific way of reading may help to identify and describe the not so well-known Hungarian contexts of canonical works of English, German, French etc., while it may help to outline the international contexts of possibly already well-known, canonical works of Hungarian literature. It may also draw attention to less known works of Hungarian literature, which could very well become acknowledged intertexts of appreciated works of the western canon. These readings this way will not cover the whole of this canon of course – the book does not even intend to serve as a substitute for a systematic work of literary history – but they may point at segments of both canons, which were considered to be less central before.

Furthermore, the editors' preface as well as the individual case studies will reflect on contemporary attitudes of the present and future of comparative literary studies, more specifically from the perspective of a minor literature and the respective academic criticism of it. The twenty papers will be effective in applying the practice of various interpretative strategies, procedures and operations of the so called post-comparative perspective in which, we think, comparative literary studies could remain sustainable and fruitful. This perspective can result in a kind of case studies which no longer regard traditional comparative methods as only based on mediations or transactions between national philologies and national literary narratives as exclusive standard of interpretation; they could concentrate on common surfaces and textual events instead. The proposed way of reading intends to replace such methods with approaches aiming to describe the cultural effects of texts, the origins of which cannot be traced back to any national literary tradition in particular but on the one hand, to the facts and events of media history and on the other hand to the circulation of globalizing or already globalized contents.

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I. Poetry through Poetry

Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó

Type—Writers

John Ashbery and Heiner Müller through Dezső Tandori and Endre Kukorelly

Much has changed by the typewriters. Not only that in writing (even in literature) probably unintentional and unnoticeable errors haunt the texts inevitably (and especially in foreign languages – about this later), but also that thanks to the typewriters – again inevitably – the language appears visually and spatially as the finite supply of characters, and even on the price that the backgrounds of and correspondences between the characters (so that, on the one hand, the – referential – meaning, and on the other, the sound and the handwriting of the text) lose much from their sensual presence in the meanwhile. The two, of course, are related: the arrangement of the keyboard (relatively early standardized by the QWERTY-system¹) is based on the needs of technological optimization, that is at most on phonetical semantics, and not on the measure of probability, that limits the individuality (the style?) of writing as well as the fact that machines neutralize both the individuality of handwriting and the (or: a defined) sound as its background (the principle of conjoining the smallest linguistics elements in meaningful units). Typewriting optimizes the articulation of language into phonological elements, and it substitutes the sensuality of the speaking voice by the “white noise” of paper. Thus it is not surprising that Friedrich Kittler was able to demonstrate his thesis on the examples of the literary treatment of typewriters without particular difficulties, that literature withdraws from the role of the intersection of senses by the appearance of the technological media of data-processing. For Kittler, on the one hand, besides Nietzsche who experimented often with the first machines of this kind, the letter poetics of Mallarmé who never wrote on a typewriter, and on the other hand, the critical comments of Heidegger concerning the spread of typewriting and the effacement of handwriting bear witness.

In this respect, the conception of Mallarmé's unfinished 'Le Livre' is based on the insight that the inscription of the linguistic signs happens not before the background of the “white noise” of the paper, the “blanc”-s of which step in the place of the sensual experience of the spoken language. All that which “stands” between the letters is impossible to store in the supply of the letter so that – phrased with Kittler – “the only thing stands on the paper is that the letters are ineffaceably standing on the paper”². The fact that the letters can only store (contain?) letters, and so that themselves, is not a mere tautology, it says only that they are the storage and sings of the ever possible combinations and permutations of the renowned 24 letters noted by Mallarmé, so that their referential background is nothing else than the infinite number if these possible combinations (between them, countless unspeakable). The abstract staves (with phonemes or letters) indeed not only more or less can be connected in a linear way like in the medium of the sound, but also in the unthinkable multitude of the types of permutations.³ From all these permutations, would be

1 Cf. F. A. Kittler, *Aufschreibesysteme 1800/1900*, München, 2003⁴, 234-235.

2 Ibid., 255.

3 Cf. particularly J. Scherer, *Le „Livre” de Mallarmé*, Paris 1957, especially 87-90.

produced the Book, so the medium, in which could be fixed the whole self-referential medium of language that is perceived in this way. But it only *could* be fixed since Mallarmé did not had the technological possibilities by which he could consistantly, by hand- or typewriting, write this book (which has fundamentally changed with the introduction of computers – about this later).

A possibility of selection and reduction that Mallarmé, in this respect, again consistantly, never fulfilled/executed, would have been lied in the reintroduction of the sound into the poetical language, for example, in the syntactical reduction of the coincidence through the rhyme or the metrum/rhythm. It is not the case, of course, that Mallarmé would have managed without this acoustical sensuality of language: one of the most important achievement of the tipographical autonomy of language lied in that through the acoustical sensuality of typography, the very musicality would have become especially regainable in the poetical language threatened by the intrusion of the prose of everyday's language. Among other things, Mallarmé's answer to the "crise de vers" refers to this since the principle of "intonation" alludes, for example, to the special reconstruction of the relationship between typography and poetitvical elocution⁴, while Mallarmé desribed reading – as a kind of visual reading – like the spot of a special, silent "music"⁵. It is right this what offers a possible starting point for the aesthetical compensation: the "musicality" of typographical constellations level off/reconcile, and even exceed the loss of the acoustic presence of the poetical language.

For Heidegger, typewriting is one of the obstacles of accessing the truth. In the lectures on Parmenides in 1942-43, he quite unexpectedly touches upon/starts to talk about the difference between hand- and typewriting. After discussing the hand as the essential idiosyncrasy of man (not like animals, man is able to act ["handeln"], and manipulate ["handhaben"], give a hand ["die Hand gegeben"], and things are exclusively to his hand or ready-at-hand ["vorhanden", "zuhanden"] etc.), he concludes: „az embernek nem pusztán >van< (hat) keze, hanem a kézben rejlik az ember lényege (hat das Wesen des Menschen inne), mert a szó mint a kéz lényegi tartománya (Wesensbereich) az ember lényegi alapja (Wesensgrund)”.⁶ The word can be shown also to the eye, that would be writing, "the word as writing is handwriting". It is explained by that in handwriting „a lét emberre irányuló vonatkozása (Bezug des Seins zum Menschen), tehát a szó, magába a létezőbe jegyződik be (eingezeichnet ist)”.⁷ On the opposite, the typewriter „elszakítja az írást a kéz és ezáltal a szó lényegi tartományától”, which would be hardly possible to imagine formally otherwise than that what is inscribed here to the being (on the paper), would be not Being, but the relation of the machine to man. Once typed, the

4 S. Mallarmé, „Crise de vers”, in Ie., *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris 1945; concerning „intonation” cf. H. Meschonnic, „Mallarmé au-delà du silence”, in Mallarmé, *Écrits sur le Livre*, Paris 1986, 52-53.

5 „Un solitaire tacite concert se donne, par la lecture, à l'esprit qui regagne, sur une sonorité moindre, la signification: aucun moyen mental exaltant la symphonie, ne manquera, raréfié et c'est tout – du fait de la pensée. La Poésie, proche l'idée, est Musique, par excellence – ne consent pas d'infériorité.” (Mallarmé, *Écrits sur le Livre*, 122.)

6 M. Heidegger, *Parmenides* (GA 54), Frankfurt 1982, 119. Szó, kéz és mutató összefüggéséről l. részletesen Jacques Derridának a *Parmenides* és a *Was heisst Denken?* vonatkozó passzusaihoz fűzött kommentárját: J. Derrida, *Heideggers Hand*, in *Uő, Geschlecht*, Wien 1988, kül. 61-79., noha Heidegger írógépek felett gyakorolt kritikája itt kissé egyoldalúan a filozófus írással szembeni általános bizalmatlanságának kontextusába kerül. „Az írógép csupán a baj (ti. a szó írás által lerombolásának) modern továbbromlása”. (Ibid., 77.)

7 Heidegger, 125.

word thus loses its essential reference or – what seems the same – „az írás vonását (den Zug der Schrift)”⁸, that is the virtual reference or orientation of language to the unveiling of things, and to the truth itself. In addition, what is even worse: typewriting and similar other threats do this unnoticeably, since they conceal themselves too. The concealment, writes Heidegger, is the work of such “clouds” which are “signless” (zeichenlos), in the sense that they do not show themselves: Heidegger here talks about „egy minden tolakodása ellenére önmagát megvonó elrejtésről”.⁹ Consequently, the sings, normally, would show themselves as such by pointing at the being,¹⁰ and this is exactly what is concealed by the “signless cloud” of the typewriter. These “signless clouds”, at the first sight, can hardly refer to anything else than the letters. The letters, obviously the letters of typewriting, despite of or just because of the obtrusion/self-assertion of their sensuality, cannot be comprehended as signs since they do not refer to the existential or essential reference of man anymore but to a realm that enables the mechanical production of letters, thus to one (more specifically/accurately: the own) fount. If signs coincides with signs, it is easily apprehensible, they are hardly capable of realizing any kind of reference at all: in case the typewriters deprive or distance man from his own acting or showing hand, it also becomes impossible for him to point out any essential relation of these machines with these hands, with *this living hand*. The typewriters are signless because they are not decipherable as signs, since these signs refer to themselves.

This kind of self-reference, in a particular case, seems to make impossible the self-referentiality of the linguistic sign that, in principle, is rarely missing from the aesthetic standards/foundations of modern poetry. As a postmodern variant, one of John Ashbery's famous poem from 1979 could testify about this contradiction. The poem actually does not do anything else but gives a methodological and repeated refutation of its own opening statement („This poem is concerned with language on a very plain level.”) – that is consequent in a way that the possibility (thus that the poem offers itself as an obvious, clear, plain or simple field of its self-reflection) implicated in the sentence after all is referred to the inventory of the figures heightened in the title. This inventory or list of examples [példatár] is not consisted only of frequently repeated contradictory turns („[...] You have it but you don't have it. / You miss it, it misses you. [...]”; „[...] it wants to be yours, and cannot.”) and oxymoronic syntagmas („A deeper outside thing”, „Open-ended”), since, with some exaggeration, one can put it in a way that with all of its elements, it warns about the contradictory nature of the quoted self-description, for example, by presenting a highly ambiguous or obscure parable about the relationship between the poem and its addressee while restraining itself to a relatively narrow vocabulary and to a highly reduced figurative language [képhasználat]. Intrinsically, between the frames of some kind of face-to-face communication (reminding mostly to the communication of lovers), it presents the process of how in the text, the poem presented in an actually personified form and its reader mutually take aim at each other and miss each other – even in more than one case, suggesting the commutability between the fundamentals (the pronouns) of the investigated relation¹¹ – and with it, of the “plain

8 Ibid., 126.

9 Ibid.

10 See Heidegger's explanation of „Τέχμαρ”: uo., 121.

11 For more on this topic see J. Shoptaw, *On the Outside Looking Out*, Cambridge 1994, 255-256.

level” of the communication –, which then culminates in a subsequent paradoxical identification that closes the poem (“[...] The poem is you”).

The possibility that the addressee of the text him/herself also speaks – as it were asking back (“What’s a plain level? It is that and other things, / Bringing a system of them into play. Play? / Well, actually, yes, but I consider play to be / A deeper outside thing, a dreamed role-pattern”) – could be assumed at two spots of Ashbery’s poem. These intervening bids that, of course – a paradox again – inherently weaken the credibility of the opening of the poem, are inspired exactly to elucidate the nature of the “plain level” which is lead (“play”) by the text that is changing into a slightly (pseudo-)discursive tonality, into a category that, regarding both its oral and written realization, stands closer to the attribute (“plain”) which should have been elucidated originally, than according to its meaning. From this perspective, it can be regarded consistent that this play – “Without proof. Open-ended.” –, as well as, the aimed ground level of linguistic self-reflection becomes untraceable exactly in the mechanical-motoric noise of notation or utterance, even despite of the fact that this is exactly this noise that carries the possibility that it can be recorded and repeated, the possibility of its reproduction: “[...] And before you know it / It gets lost in the steam and chatter of typewriters. / It has been played once more. [...]” Considering either the noise of the rattling or the steam-enginelike juddering typewriters or the chatter of typists (the “chatter of typewriters” could refer to both), Ashbery’s variation to Heidegger’s signless clouds equipped with machinary connotations as if here would recognize exactly in the machinlike-mechanical features of poetical play the reason of why it is incapable to behave as the clear medium of linguistic reflection and self-reflection.

In Hungarian poetry in the first half of the 20th century the explicit reaction to this problem is rare, aside from, of course, the rich examples of the avant garde experiments with typography or with visual poetry at all, moreover, because the latter could hardly proceed from the absent sensual experience of writing. Dezső Kosztolányi’s work, *Gépírókisasszony* [The Typist] from 1924 deserves to be mentioned for this very reason. On the one hand, this poem materializes the poetic expression as some kind of telegraphic communication, on the other hand, however – as far it calls the machine (maybe alluding at the same time to Ady’s *A fekete zongora* [The Black Piano]) “steel piano” [acélzongora] – through the image of the instrument, it also aestheticizes that [the poetic expression].¹² Kosztolányi, in one of his texts from 1909, has already posed the question whether and in what degree the writing materials (steel pen, pen, pencil, machine, or even the color of the ink) change the style, though here he still talks about “externals”.¹³ He is still concerned, however, with the question even in 1936, here primarily as the question of the end of the story of the decline from the quill-pen to the typewriter. The technical improvement of writing materials, Kosztolányi thinks, that obviated the “flaws” of the instrument, lead to stylistic negligence as if rather the technological defects (“tiny bit technological hitches” [apró-cseprő műszaki zökkenők]) would provide “light and power” to the text. The fact that the typewriters contributed to the speeding-up of

12 For the poem see Bednatics, Gábor „Felülvizsgálat és rekultiváció”, in id., *Beszédformák között*, Bp. 2003, 72-74.

Here the poem reveals „the uncovering of the forming of meaning on the basis of the pointlessness of information” (ibid., 72.)

13 Kosztolányi, Dezső, „Az írás technikája”, in id., *Nyelv és lélek*, Bp. 2002³, 327.

writing is described by Kosztolányi besides others as the getting off of the infernal (arousing devilish noise, as quick as lightening etc.¹⁴) machine: “Az írógép megvadult, s magától kezdett írni”.¹⁵ Kosztolányi observes here that the technological superiority of the machine forced some changes in the usage of language, for example, because of that in contrast to handwriting, the typists gain time by ligature and this way they have created “word-snakes” (what means at the same time that type-writing, or to be more exact, the difference between type- and handwriting could make even the boundaries of words and syllables relative, and – as it will be clear later – this plays a significant role in the subsequent Hungarian poetry concerning the subject of the typewriter). In the gloomy closing of the short article, Kosztolányi finally outlines the vision of a human conquered by the (type)machines: a threat lies in wait for the “music” of the human emotions and thoughts that it could become drear as a mere, “soulness clicking/blatter” [lelketlen kattogás] that resembles only to the noise of the piano organ anymore.

Thus this is the literal or conceptual background of the poem written more than ten years previously, and what could be interesting alone, is the question if the poem upholds a compensation against this decline and if yes, what kind of compensation. Most of the features that the previously quoted essay attributed to the typewriter can be found already in this poem: the (dictated!) words run as quick as lightening through the quick “brain” of the machine called devilish and sparkle on the addressed lady's fingers, and even the cliché of the machine-made (“steel”) piano can be found: „Ülsz. / Figyeled azt, amit hallasz és a szavam / villámként cikázik át gyors agyadon / s renddé tömörítve, / ragyogva szikráz ki ujjaid hegyén, / amint vered ezt a zakatoló, ezt az ördögi-keserves / acélzongorát”. In the poem, the emphasis is rather on the figuration of invocation, especially on that the lyrical subject address his/her words to whom transfers his/her words to writing. The invocation here is a dictate: since the addressee from whom – according to the order of the title – the poem creates a portrait, from the very beginning becomes mute on two levels: he/she is silent because he/she is addressed and as he/she were only all ears since he/she has to type merely a dictation. Besides this, he/she makes music at the same time: from what it could be concluded that the sounds of the piano which produces order (condensate) from the words of the poet, constitute exactly the reflection of what happens during an ordinary piano play since while, in the latter case, notated signs are provided with voice, Kosztolányi's typist (who can be only a missy as it can be known from Kittler) silences the sounding (though unorganized: spontain, unconscious?) words of the poet what reflects again only her own muteness against the poet's dictate. In contrast to the piano pieces (that have to be listened to again and again), the *indeed* sounding human words live on in a written form. The poet's dictate has very much a meaning and this is the passing-time-theme, as it can be expected, it is presented in the second passage: „Így múlik el a mi életünk, / (...) / gépek közt / kerepelve folytonosan” which means at the same time, of course, that what becomes here audible, what is said in the real time of the dictation scene, is always mechanical, impersonal tha is it produces the impression of a “rattler” [kereplő]. Kosztolányi helps himself with the verb “rattle” [kerepel] which is, regarding its meaning, not so far from clattering which is referred to the piano by the first

14 „Végül az írógép köszöntött ránk ördögi zajával, villámgyors beidegzésével, elröppenő íveivel” (Uő, „Tinta”, in uo., 402-403.)

15 Ibid.

passage (“the clattering [...] steel piano” [zakatóló [...] acélzongorát])! This is actually hardly a coincidence since the determining situation of the poem is dictation in which the most meaningless clattering or rattling could be only repeated. From this perspective, it cannot be surprising that – as it can be read at the end of the second passage of the poem – neither the self nor the typist are capable of expressing themselves, to express their selves: „Beszélni se tudsz már arról, ami érdekel, / vagy ami fáj még. / Akárcsak én.” The missy are unable to do so since she has to type others' dictation, neither the poet can because his/her speech is only rattling or clattering as a machine, as the machine which, of course, exactly would form this clattering into an order (“and condensed into an order” [s renddé tömörítve]). Thus in this lies the momentum of aesthetic compensation: from the clattering of the self (the heart), order emerges, music (the music of the letters propagated by Mallarmé?) is born when it has been once typed but once it has been typed, it is sounding only as a discourse similar to another (other's) music. Kosztolányi's poem confronts the figure of the unspeakable with the power of poetry under modern technological conditions: typewriting as poetry is music, but a music in which the discourse of the all-time other rattler is only able to act as if it has been condensed into an order.

What cannot be represented in the meanwhile, what was called “signless” by Heidegger, is the moment of inscription itself¹⁶, the event where the discourse and the recording of the discourse “in Being itself” become one – this is one of the most important difference compared to handwriting and its “essential relations”. Typewriting is a dictate, when the poetic voice becomes mute, the discourse of the other, the obstacle of self-expression etc. It is able to store, however, to record inordinate discourses whose order is being restored exactly by sacrificing this feature. How is it able to record itself, though, and represent itself or – to put it differently – how could it point to itself or coincide with itself? This problem emerges or is being redefined exactly with (or by) the technological advantages of typewriting or its superiority in efficiency since not only it can speed-up writing or reading but it is capable of conjoining writing (thus production) and publication (reception) so closely¹⁷ that is only possible in special cases (e.g. during dictation). Looking closely, the problem, of course, is not exclusively specific to typewriter. While the avant-garde typography (at least its important versions) made an attempt to close the rift between reality (or materiality) and the discursive or discourse dependent function (or meaning) as tight as possible, Lőrinc Szabó (once in a while Kosztolányi too) found help in stenography. This motivation to be in touch with the present, with the material presence, what is a constant attendant of every kind of modernism at latest since Baudelaire's *Guys-essay*¹⁸, is continued to be rushed by typewriting, and even in a special direction. These special and not always happy moments (or – rather – the presence effects produced by them) appear in typewriting in a more powerful way on a sensually graspable level: e.g. in the errors that are being inscribed unnoticeably (though later, they got hunted down with red underline in Windows). What is especially important here, is that this kind of errors are probably more frequent in typewriting than in handwriting where “the transition from nature to culture”¹⁹ (at least seemingly) happens in the form of direct continuity between the

16 C.f. Kittler, 2003, 238.

17 What – according to Marshall McLuhan – raises the intensity of the performative effects of presence: c.f. M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, New York, 1964, 228-231.

18 Ch. Baudelaire, „Le Peintre de la vie moderne”, in *Oeuvres complètes II.*, Paris 1976, 698-699.

19 Kittler, id., 235.

human body (hand) and other “beings” (paper), furthermore, the errors made with handwriting by the nature (nature!) of themselves are rather related to constructing sentences, to re-phrasing etc., thus to the elements of the discourse that carry meaning, moreover, that are related to the conditions of meaning, rather than e.g. to the uncontrolled or strayed hand movements from what the typewriter as an instrument of precision demands a different kind of sophistication. The typical errors emerging during typewriting, in which writing as a bolted medium reports of itself, in the decisive majority of the occurrences, they are prosaic errors of the machine that are related to the spatial distribution of the keyboard at best.

The strange thing is that Heidegger's “singless cloud” makes itself noticed exactly in these unintentional and unprojectable moments. In the poetry of the second half of the 20th century these moments or rather in a wider sense the typewriters themselves at all have a representative role in the writing scenes devoted to picturing of the lyric situation. The poet – as the poetry of Heiner Müller or Dezső Tandori can testify with paradigmatic validity – shares his/her solitude as a creator with the typewriter (and as one can say, deprives it from the absolute isolation of the situation of the speech/speech act), moreover as if the presence of the machine provides as some kind of source of inspiration or rather as the origin of the lyric position and of the lyric voice. This amounts to, of course, that the presence doubled by the machine implicitly makes the phrase of the self exterior or objectifies it. In one of Müller's last poems, in his moving sonett with the beginning *Vor meiner Schreibmaschine dein Gesicht*, the self bending above his typewriter (“Ich sitze krumm an meiner Schreibmaschine”) “hears”, or rather “sees” his own speech in a third eye addressing him actually by its vision or look (“Vor meiner Schreibmaschine dein Gesicht / Dein Auge das mich fragt Was willst du sagen”), producing sort of a dumb show in which, moreover, the players of the scene constantly transpose or reflect each other: “Dein Auge hält mich Fest in deinem Blick / Hör ich mich sagen daß mein Leben lohnt / Auf dieser Welt nicht nur von uns bewohnt / Mit deinen Augen sieht mein Kind mich an / Wie lange bleibt es von der Welt verschont / Wenn ich die Frau bin und du bist kein Mann”.

Early, in the opening lines, also at the very beginning of Müller's poetic “self-portrait” (*Selbstbildnis zwei Uhr nachts am 20. August 1959*) impersonalized or distanced by infinitive grammar, appears a typewriter even in a context that connects the operations of literary production and reception (“An der Schreibmaschine sitzen. Blättern / In einem Kriminalroman [...]). This machine remains inactive this time and as if this passivity spread over the supplementary actions of the lyricist who is reading or thumbing instead of writing since his reading – with the expectable supervision of the already suspected or known (or: already read) (“[...] Am Ende / Wissen, was du jetzt schon weißt:”) – proves to be mere repetition. The monotony of the emptied writing or reading scene is interrupted only by one single event from time to time, by the repeated glance to the empty page stiched into the typewriter, that is, one could say, the taking over of Mallarmé's “blanc”: “Manchmal beim Umblättern ein schneller Blick / auf das leere Blatt in der Schreibmaschine. / Das wird uns also erspart bleiben. Wenigstens etwas.” As if the line highlighted witnessed that only non-writing alone, the cancellation or pause of typewriting can prevent the emergence of the parallelism between writing and the uneventfulness of the unnecessary or mechanical reading forced to repetition.

As it becomes clear later from the text, the surroundings of the scene consists of an uncanny object picture of the family with the sleeping wife of the poet in the

background who is then just after one of her unsuccessful suicidal attempts (“Nebenan träumt deine Frau von ihrer ersten Liebe. / Gestern hat sie versucht sich aufzuhängen. Morgen / Wird sie sich die Pulsadern aufschneiden oder wasweißich.”) From this perspective, the time of the lyrical self-portrait belongs to a suspended or a frozen moment, to be more exact, the pause *between* the self-repeating actions or even the *never* passing present between two down-beats of letters to what instead of the rather material event of writing or inscription actually its interception or suspension gets us closer.

It would be a simplification in a way but one could say that in the 1970s-1980s virtually this or a similar problem is dominating in the Hungarian version of the so called “new sensibility” (as the different neo-avantgarde poetics), as the question of – amongst others – that how can be represented the present of the self and writing (the latter provides after all the only possibility of grasping one's own self for many lyricists of the era). The problem of the typewriter and the endless number of all the possible errors of the machine repeated often with nerve-racking frequency became the constitutive elements of Dezső Tandori's poetry in the 1980s in a paradigmatic way, e.g. of the 550 pages long collection, the *Celsius* (1984) that can be read even as a lyric diary. Here, recording (even as the writing of foreign quotes), the operations of copying or of clarification [tisztázás], the regularly returning technical defects of the poet's typewriter during these processes like their prevention appear as the exclusive subjects of poetry in an exaggerated and infinite-monotonous way. All this has its place on the paper, and this includes misspellings and corrections too. This kind of poetics is apparently based on the assumption or makes an attempt on that writing as action should inscribe itself as if it is in real time: removing the errors of the machine comes with the loss of time that means at the same time that it makes possible to experience the passing time in its reality as far as in the meanwhile, the temporal difference suspends the coincidence between the moment of inscription and the presentation or trace of this moment, however – and this may be the most important – these kind of gestures of the poetical correction would show the (typo)graphic events, that is the unconscious or unpredictable events of inscription as if they can be revoked. That is why in this kind of poems of Tandori, the events of copying, correction and even dictation serve as a typical figuration of the lyric situation, and that is why the reader of Tandori is pressured to *read* every proof-sheet (amongst them which are indeed only readable that is, for example, cannot be read out or repeated aloud – these kinds of distortions of the language, as it will be apparent soon, have a special role in Tandori's poetry).²⁰ The poetic language as typewriting is presented here as a desperate attempt to stop or reverse the passing of time, that is exactly why the act of correction gets a place in the texts, consequently in the form of abbreviations (“corr.”), in a “telegraphic style”, the appearance of which in literature, by the way, was connected to the expressionists by Kittler.²¹ Here lies the

²⁰ These characteristics of Tandori's poetry is rejected by criticism from time to time as, for their infinite repetition exhausted neo-avantgarde theoretical gestures or judged to have ambiguous aesthetic value (see most of all Farkas, Zs. „Az író ír. Az olvasó stb.”, in id., *Mindentől ugyanannyira*, Bp. 1994, esp. 146-150.) It has also been pointed out that Tandori's seemingly very personal poetry is actually absolutely impersonal (ibid., 142-144.) which is not completely relevant, however, since it is only true by assumption that the lyric subjectivity manifests itself as the unexhaustable inner infinity of the self. Individuality, for Tandori, much rather equals merely being a subject, and considering this, this poetry is indeed very personal – only, of course, if it still means anything here at all.

²¹ C.f. Kittler, „Im Telegrammstil”, in H. U. Gumbrecht – K. L. Pfeiffer (ed.), *Stil*, Frankfurt 1988.

possible explanation for the question why all the things of the world, amongst them even the least significant (and mostly them) prove to be equally worth of recording (in writing). (These) things are allegories – their meaning is: the unstoppable passing of time, the prevailing present that continuously becomes past. However, if they become inscribed into the poetic discourse (by the machine), at least this moment of inscription remains. The inscriptions are the material remains of the allegory of time. The essential paradox of this poetic lies actually in this – at least it can hardly be located else where: the inscription of time, of the unrepeatable events are allegorized by the simple possibility of technological repetition. From a technological perspective, this possibility is based on the superiority of typewriting over handwriting: the typewriter of the poet becomes the only genuine place where the events happening to the things can be experienced since the machine's recording capacity and the security of its recording, even despite of the uncountable errors, far exceeds the abilities of handwriting. The machine is what should not (and actually cannot) be deleted in contrast to mere writing or text, see the following lines from the poem *Egy radír megkövül*: „Odébb egy állónaptár, tok előtt; / maga a naptár is tokban lehetne, / mágneses karikája pihen, és / a tokban nem használt írószerek. / Két doboz. Fényképek, jegyek, papírok, / például anyám kórházi betűi, / ahogy gyakorolt, tanult írni újra, / mielőtt újabb agyvérzést kapott. / Olló. Írógépem tisztogatom / vele, ez megbocsáthatatlan, és hogy / beleradírozok a masinába. / A szövegbe? Igen! De hogy a gépbe?” This still life of the study represents a handful of requisites. On the one hand, unused writing materials, on the other, the representations or recordings of past events or moments, their value appears to be as dubious as the value of the calendar which is also disused („maga a naptár is tokban lehetne”) since it is not able to grasp (that is only in an illusory way or rather conceptually) the unstoppable passing of time. The content of the boxes consists of objects that have typically allegorical function: the remains of past events (photos, tickets), and – what is rather surprising at first sight – the papers with the handwriting of the mother. The handwriting that traditionally belongs to the most precise techniques of individuation, or rather the identification of the individual, the unrepeatable identity, is represented by this poem as naked since as something that can be relearned and forgotten (in multiple ways) or lost, as a not so trustworthy medium that here not reflects the continuity of the transition between nature and culture which could provide the access to the “essential changes”. Handwriting – at least according to Felix Müller's poem, *Mommsens Block* from 1992 dedicated to Guattari („Der Mangel an Inschriften Wer mit dem Meißel schreibt / hat keine Handschrift Die Steine lügen nicht”) – lies, or at least has serious deficits of authenticity in front of the uneasier and/or more automatic technologies of writing. In Müller's late poem, *Ende der Handschrift* that in a short and thematic way, even reminds of Tandori's discussed poem, unlike his “self-portrait” from 1959, as if it transfers the ability of fixing the present, of holding or holding back time straight to the typewriter that here, of course, offers itself as the alternative of handwriting exactly because the latter is itself not different either from a machine (though less reliable): „Neuerdings wenn ich etwas aufschreiben will / Einen Satz ein Gedicht eine Weisheit / Sträubt meine Hand sich gegen den Schreibzwang / Dem mein Kopf sie unterwerfen will / Die Schrift wird unlesbar Nur die Schreibmaschine / Hält mich noch aus dem Abgrund dem Schweigen / Das der Protagonist meiner Zukunft ist.”

In Tandori's poem, by all means, handwriting appears in a condition that it functions deprived of its individual features, in a completely random way since the

self of the poem recognizes the place of the letters only with the help of other circumstances (by the knowledge of the mother's disease), while it also turns out that since then they do not have anything to do with the present of the person who wrote them down sometime.²² The “mediality” of handwriting distorted this way is not so far from the machine's at all that proves to be the more reliable between the two which is also expressed in the poem later(): what Tandori calls “unforgivable” is the “cleaning/polishing” of the “machine” that – as it turns out from the “instruments” used for this purpose – is opposed to exactly the physical destruction (slicing or striking out) of the written texts. In front of the obliteration of the texts (that also leads to a special recording or freezing of the single event since it grasps its transient nature – one possible meaning of the paradox of the “petrified rubber” in the title could be identified in this sense), the real threat lies in the (destructive) “cleaning” of the machine since the machine is what – again, in front of the paper – can get closer to the events, perhaps exactly because it carries in (on) itself not the products of past writing acts (the written texts) but only the physical imprints or traces of these events (life). Thus as if Tandori less suspects the events of physical nature than the linguistic ones that they confront the power of the passing time unprotected.

What is able to neutralize (in part) this problem for Tandori are exactly those linguistic elements that are being recorded in writing, lose a great deal themselves from their consistency („Kevés állandót ismersz. Szavadat / se írod pontosan a versed fölébe.” – *Ha szeretsz, mondja Kosztolányi*): they appear repeatedly as variations of different mistypings or as consequences of the force of rhyme or some scansion, thus they are possible always in different ways again and again and actually this variability leads Tandori to “develop” a language that gives the impression as if it is almost completely artificial in which the difference of the correct/right grammar or rather writing itself becomes variable or transient, and hereby the language becomes essentially untranslatable (more about this shortly). Thus it is hardly surprising that the treatment of classical forms or genres in Tandori's poetry is staged in many ways as experimenting with artificial languages or at least with the rules of discourses. In his volume, *Még így sem*, Tandori stages a sort of “massproduction” of sonnets where above each poem, stands only the date of its production (that draws attention again to the event of the one-off production, one could put it that the one-off and unrepeatable nature of the sonnets is manifested actually in the dates that have been made titles) – the classical rhythm/metre here is meant as a formal principle (and maybe this is not so mistaken at all), as an automatic rule that would generate infinite amount of almost as if automatically determined poems.²³ Exactly this recognition makes possible for Tandori to write (intentionally) distorted or destroyed sonnets (marked in a self-reflexive way) which

22 In one his generally insightful observations, Georg Simmel pointed out already at the turn of the century that despite of all its impersonality, the typewriter is capable of making “the unobjectifiable remains” of life as “the undisputable own of the self” to be something that can be experienced: “az írás, ez a külsődleges-dologi cselekvés, amely mégis minden egyes esetben sajátos-egyéni formát ölt, ezt a formáját most a mechanikus egyformaság érdekében feladja. Ezáltal azonban egy másik oldal felől kettős eredményhez jutunk: a leírt szöveg egyfelől pusztán tartalma szerint hat, s a szemléleti formában nem talál sem támogatásra, sem zavaró okra, megszűnik a legszemélyesebb vonásnak az a családja, ami a kézírással kapcsolatban oly gyakran bekövetkezik, legyen szó akár a legkülsődlegesebb és legközömbösebb, akár pedig a legbizalmasabb közlésekről. Bármilyen társadalmassító hatást fejtsenek is ki ily módon az effajta mechanizálások, mégis gyarapítják a szellemi én megmaradó magántulajdonát.” (G. Simmel, *A pénz filozófiája*, Bp. 2004, 593.)

23 Tandori szonettkezeléséről bővebben I. Szigeti Cs., „Tandori Dezső szonettváltozatai”, in *Uő, A hímfarkas bőre*, Pécs 1993, kül. 76-78.

is a gesture that is not unique in Hungarian poetry in the 1970s/1980s (just think of György Petri's sonnet structures that are suspended or that he was "writing on" reflectively²⁴).

However, the rhythmical and other poetical conventions have a partly different function as well that manifests more clearly maybe in the *Celsius*. They realize a rather strange interplay with Tandori's misstypings, corrections, amongst them with wrecks of words that cannot be appreciated metrically (how many syllables, for example, the "word" "cleanşng" [takarştság], the deteriorated version of "cleaning" [takarítás]?) and this way, they constitute a background or a frame for the perception of the errors. The meaning, that is the possibility or the lack of meaning constitutes merely (?) a horizon for the linguistic events that – like some kind of presence, or the simple ensigns of random(ness) (as) (its) presence – push the murmur of letters into the role of actual signs. These appear as unpredictable events, as special "linguistic moments" (J. Hillis Miller)²⁵ because they have to be framed into a more or less prescribed metrical pattern, exactly because this metrical frame is the only level of the volume where the errors do not emerge (or only in a reflective way). The form of these endless poems appears as the other side of the automatism of writing, like a generative rule, to which – unlike the grammatical but even the lexical rules – one has to adapt: there are poems even about that one has to observe the prescribed number of syllables which rule also applies to the poetical reflections. The margins and the articulation of the verse – just like in the case of Tandori's generated sonnets – are thematized as the artificial or conventional reductions of coincidence, and whis is where the acoustical sensuality of of the written language reappears: this would be the music of the machine. Thus Tnadori's poetic machine is double-faced: on the one side, there is the impersonal regularity of the poetic form, on the other side, there are the unpredictable effects of (type)writing. These two sides meet in the moments of reflections, and Tandori stages these as the moments of the prevailing present (as the prevailing moment of inscription/typing, or much rather as unrepeatabe, since expunged, events). What is expressed in this – considering its themes, rather personal or autobiographic – poetry as subjectivity or individuality is nothing else than the automatism of writing that produces uniqueness and unrepeatability (or much rather actually, their effects). The poet, the lyric self that writes or writes itself or inscribes itself, is itself the (or one?) machine. The machine, at any rate, becomes a co-creator: it registers reflections referring to writing that are forced by itself and that during the textualization of the poem, place the self into the role of the copier of quotations that lose ther meaning unperceived. See a quote from the poem, *Engedj egy percig a kirakat előtt* from the *Celsius*: "(...) megtérek idézetekhez, / nőnek, bomlanak, remegnek s folynak szét, / mlz, nem tudom, magánhangzó van-e itt, / mozdulatlanul felejtődött / tekintetünkben --- már azt se tudom, / miről van szó a versben, de másolom: / micsoda föl – s – géphiba csak, - döntüli / parkokból csempészté, csam, jav., csem- / pésztek ide magukat --- hányadszor / vágok neki, hogy folytassam; mit számít, / miért, s miért nem (ha nem, mégsem) nem jobb / azt

24 C.f. e.g. Petri's formally perfect sonnet, *Ne lankadjunk, próbáljunk meg egy szépet* that however is extended by three lines in italics between the 12. and the 13. lines: „*igazán valami szépet akartam írni neked, te kedves, / hát, ez nem ment, és ráadásul aludni se hagylak, / akkor legalább gyorsan véget vetek ennek a kurva szonettnek.*” The “fucking sonnet” does not end, of course, here (there are still the two closing lines), on the other hand, it does end after all in the sense that the added lines destroy the sonnet structure in the moment when thy are talking about its (linear) ending.

25 C.f. e.g.: J. H. Miller, „The Critic as Host”, in Id., *Theory Now and Then*, Durham 1991, 168.

írnom akkor: micsoda – az / idézet tovább! – földöntúli / parkból (megértem volna? van-e jobb, vagy / másabb lehetőség? és mi az enyém? / tisztán látható-e a birtokos / viszony, s ha nem az, hová lötyög ki?) / csempészték idev, jav., magukat, szótag / száma miatt toldok, a szőnyegek, és / hol vannak, hol, azok a dolgok, / amelyek --- mint a szétszórt sírkövek, / a vizenyős őszi délelőttön, park / forma temetőben, az utak mentén?” This quote makes it clearly apparent that the figure of the unspeakable has a syntactical nature for Tandori: the background of the signs is not consists of meaningful references but other texts, interpolations, and as if these mutually divide each other. That is why the self is incapable of finding itself in a grammatical genitivus [birtokviszony] while Tandori's park believed dead from where the curpets smuggle themselves into the poem after a long grammatical reluctance, actually proves to be a cemetery (a home or trace of past presences), and this transition between the afterlife and the (textual) present is actually what becomes inscribed as text: to “extrapolate” [told] refers as much to the extrapolation of extremely self-reflexive texts as to the (further) weaving of the curpets that ply between the two domains smuggling themselves. The articulation of the discourse is not lead here by the force of meaning but the double automatism mentioned above, and the continuous allusions to the presence (to the act of writing) that produce the lack of poetic meaning.

Tandori's volume that attempts to utalize the utmost possibilities that lie in this machine-error poetic, was published in 1991 by the title *Koppar köldüs*. This volume records the poet's Western-European journey, the title consists of the initials of the certain stations: Copenhagen [Koppenhága], Paris, Cologne [Köln], Düsseldorf – with the right Hungarian orthography and provided with the appropriate accents, the title could be read as 'Barren Beggar' [Kopár koldus]: the beggar of language because it hardly emerges as a “possession”, since not as mother tongue, but as a reliable completely foreign language lacking learnable rules exactly because the constitution of meaning lets experience itself in its both graphically and grammatically random events. This begging for a language (moreover, for language at all) whatever barren it might be, in many ways it can invoke the great exile poem from 1971, *Kormányeltörésben* of the poet, István Domonkos emigrated from the former Yugoslavia²⁶ since here also a poetic language is constructed that in a sense, imitates the effects of the special sensuality of the foreign languages²⁷, with the important difference, of course, that these effects are the effects of the written (typed) language for Tandori, tongue-twister effects that confront [ütköztet] the visual or the reading experience of the text with the phonetical borders of speakability.²⁸

The concept of the volume unfolds from the possibilities of transcription implicated in a few lines from Sándor Márai's stateless poem, *Halotti beszéd* (“nevedről lehull az ékezet” – in Tandori's poem: “...lehull az ekzet”), and from Attila József's Óda (“Mint alvadt vérdarabok, / úgy hullnak eléd / ezek a szavak. / A lét dadog, / csak a törvény a tiszta beszéd.” – Tandori: “Mnt alvdt vrdrbk, ugiyj hulnk eled / ezk a szavk / A let dadg” etc.) while Tandori stages the decay or the loss of the (native) language, on

26 The title of Tandori's poem to Domonkos is [A Koppar Köldüs a Koppar Köldüsnek].

27 It belongs to this correspondence that, as everybody knows, the less one controls the language he writes on, the more mistyping he will be the victim of (that is not only the grammatical errors are multiplied).

28 It can be almost called consistent that in the dedication on the cover of the thin volume, amongst others, one can read about the “strange music” of language. See more to the unfamiliarity of (this) poetic language in Tandori's poetry: I. Margócsy, Dezső Tandori: *Koppar köldüs*, in Id., *Nagyon komoly játékok*, Bp., 1996, 228-229.

the one hand, as the loss of the vowels (that is the loss of speakability: one could be somewhat entitled to say that the poetic figure of the unspeakable materializes here simply as the unpronounceable), on the other hand, as the consequence of the purchase of a new German typewriter. The figure of the unspeakable returns in different versions at countless points of the volume, it gains an important role e.g. in constituting the latent parallelism between real life and typewriting where it seems that the training with (or the taming of) the new machine realizes as the lyric self's never-ending attempt to finally type without errors an elegy referring to himself: "Lap er veg. Ezzel akart kifejez, neki föld mert közeleg könyü lene. / Hu, de sok lapon van meg (a másik lehetséges olvasat nyilván: 'Hú, de sok lapom van még'). Leg yen nekem konyfold könyu a föl / legyen nekem a föld, konnyu legyen nekem könnyü a föld begyek- / rolon o lrlombekgyakorlom begyakrolom begyakorlom begyakorlom / ezen az uj gepen hogy legyen nekem könnyü a föld, b egyakorlome ezen / ezen az uj gepen hogy legyen nekem konyük könnyü a föld, uj gepen. / S meg van hely, ami idő. Nem meg kel begyakorol van meg hely s ido ('még van/ megvan a hely'; 'nem, még kell [be]gyakorolni, van még hely – [a papíron és/vagy általában]', illetve 'nem kell még begyakorolni, van még hely s idő' stb.)." (*Beomol bemlo sörsüveg mi mindent nemmono el*). The "banc"-s between the letters, the white noise here, for Tandori, provide the postponing of the end (of death, or of the practice of writing) that is the adjournment of the production of a final text since the latter provides writing with consistency by freezing it as an act. There are only a few places where the text for a few lines unexpectedly becomes (almost) free of errors, these are, without exception, related to death (to the death of Tandori's beloved birds) that has already taken place, and as if they present the resolved discourse of mourning: "Ez nagyon rémes önmagában. Ki is teszem az ékezeteket. / Ezt nem szeeretném másképp írni, Szpero meghalt, pipi meghalt". The correct writing, the final version are the inscriptions of finitude into the text that continues to write itself endlessly. On the other side, as it can be shown on the example of the "trainings" cited just now, there is the white of the paper that is nothing else than the possibility of the emergence of further errors and more versions: that is exactly why it is not possible to universally differentiate between sign and murmur (noise), information and background. The actual language here constitutes the background of signs and, vica versa, noise (the arbitrary or, at any rate, not completely regular disintegration or destruction of words) actually constitutes the signs in front of the background of the possibility of meaning at all.

Though the way Tandori handles this foreign language is not consistent at all points, and it does not set consistent rules for the transformations, this unfamiliarity of language is emphasized by the different mistypings, the abbreviations reminding of stenography, the dismissal of vowels or of inflection, the congestion of consonants, the lack of pronouns and the arbitrary changing of the boundaries of words. This way the destroyed discourse of the *Koppar küldös* is a language insofar as the readers whose mother tongue is Hungarian are able to understand it through some trouble, on the other hand, however, it is not completely a language as long as it would be absolutely impossible to translate since the correct forms of the Hungarian words that can be reconstructed in most of the cases point back to the multitude of corrupted forms²⁹ thus there is no clear rule or code for the equivalences between the correct and corrupted versions since quite a few from the "words" in the text can be

²⁹ See *ibid.*, 230.

complemented according to several, different possibilities of corrections at the same time such as the letter combination of “fel” [up] in the context of the verse: “(...) s hany fel uc fel le uct uczak utcc ucc lac (...)” in the poem *Mintalvat verdrabkhu, meg ödörbn, aztan maj 24 nagy setanp* where the loose coherence of meaning that is still restorable or produceable allows to “translate” “fel” as “fél” [half or afraid] as rightly as “-féle” [kind of] or even as “felé” [towards]. The traces or ruins of the possibility of translation refer back to the spoken language, thus to its acoustic presence, i.e. to the formal principle of the clear differences between the sounds from where all kinds of conventional concepts of language proceed. One could say (write) that Tandori's artificial, alienated and destroyed language should drive every linguist educated on Saussure to despair (or, at any rate, to reread the master's critical argumentations on writing³⁰) since it suspends the validity exactly of the premise of the obvious differences that constitute the single elements and without what the emergence of any kind of sign system would be impossible. However, especially in this context one should not disregard that the description of the linguistic system given by Saussure proceeds from phonological elements, that is from the abstraction of the spoken language, namely, from the possibility of the spatial division of the stream of speech, the first efficient recording technique of the latter was recognized by Saussure in the Greek abc³¹, exactly from what Derrida's detailed Saussure-reading in the *Grammatology* made the famous conclusion that every spoken language always already presupposes writing or literacy, thus that every language includes the trace of writing as some kind of “archi-writing”³². The conclusion, surprising at the first sight, that can be drawn from this in relation to Tandori's artificial language is exactly the opposite: by destroying the phonological equivalences, Tandori re-introduces in his typewriter-poetry exactly the effects or traces of the inarticulate stream of speech or the real-time condition of the spoken language, that is he regards the machine as an instrument that is alone able to sound the music of the abc.³³

Thus, this music, even in this light, is the effect of the coincidence of the inscription or recording and the actual moment of the event itself (even the event of speech). The most significant authors (and quiet a few amongst them – admittedly or not – are the followers of Tandori) who have become decisive in the last 15-20 years for the younger generations in Hungarian poetry, rather seem to doubt this possibility, that is, that typewriting (or any writing) is able to coincide with itself. The typewriter-theme here again regains something from its seemingly “singless” character. The poetic work of Endre Kukorelly provides representative examples, especially his texts written in the beginning of the 1990s that represent the lyric self and his sound as frequent and with as much pleasure as the men or humans in general, the human language and feelings. This technique of lyric self-presentation obviously does not leave the status of the reflections referring to typewriting in the poems untouched. Müller can provide the example again, in his poetry, the self-identification of the self-expressive subject with some sort of machine (like in the case of the Hamlet player in

30 C.f. F. Saussure, *Bevezetés az általános nyelvészetbe*, Bp. 1997², 53-68.

31 C.f. *Ibid.*, 67.

32 C.f. Derrida, *Grammatológia*, Szombathely/Párizs/Bécs/Bp. 1991, 91-92.

33 As a possible (though it is far from Tandori's conception of language) prefiguration of this poetical concept, one could mention here the considerations of Charles Olson, the American poet thought to recognize the possibility of the musical but not metrical articulation of the written language in the typewriters that in a sense imitates the actual stream of speech: c.f. Ch. Olson, „Projective Verse”, in *Id.*, *Selected Writings*, New York 1966, 24.

the *Hamletmaschine*, with the typewriter: “ich bin die Schreibmaschine”) can be observed frequently. In the poem, *Senecas Tod* from 1992, an internalized machine is composing and recording notes in the dying protagonist even when the skill of (hand)writing has already failed („Die Hand konnte den Schreibgriffel nicht mehr halten / Aber das Gehirn arbeitete noch die Maschine / Stellte Wörter und Sätze her notierte die Schmerzen”).

In one of his early poems, Kukorelly describes himself as a voice controlled by a repetitive mechanism (“Gyakran ugyanazokat mondom el / és ugyanúgy mondom el nekik / mert egyszzerűen ilyen a gépezet” – *A valóság édessége*), in an other one, what he addresses to a “Milord”, he represents such a perspective from where the humans are straying in the world as living machines (“Az élők, ahogy vannak, lépkednek / csak, mint a gép. És lépnek, úgy / mint a gép. Mint a gép, Uram.” – *Azt mondja aki él*), and in the tenth piece of the cycle, *Napos terület* the own pain of the self is defined as a machine (“[...] Azonban csak egy / gép. Unalmas, és nem tudhatni / közben semmi, nem tudunk e / semmit, se ő, sem pedig / én. Aprócska, unalmas, / vakító gép a / fájdalom.”) As a machine, the human subject, in a way, becomes alienated from himself, language, movements, body appear without any individuality, however, what still differentiates Kukorelly's living machines from their romantic predecessors, such as e.g. from the humunculus or the living sculptures, stands especially in that in Kukorelly's poems the sensual, fantastical or alien external appearance of these machine hardly gets a role, moreover, there is not really any indication of it. This refers to that here much rather the linguistic representation, the inscription or recording of the “living” makes him inevitably a machine, and that its introduction to the discourse happens as a mechanical “processing”, “a testet gépelem” as it can be read in the poem, *Fejezés*.

The explanation maybe lies here for that in Kukorelly's typewriter-poem, *Én nem engedlek el* from 1989 the linguistic representation or perception of the other (the addressee of the poem) provides a possibility for the thematization of the figure of the unspeakable in the context of a self-reflexive writing figuration: “Én nem engedlek el. / Ezeket a billentyűket / leütöttem. Én nem / engedlek. É, n, n, e, m. / Ezek a betűk. Halk / kis kattogások. Ilyen halkan / kattog egy gép. Elsodor-e / valami, idő, anyag, nem / látni, hogy mi. Ezt / leírtam, ezeket a / sorokat leírtam. / Ezt a sort leírtam. Vagy / Ehhez hasonlóakat. Nem: / hasonlókat nem. / Most kimegyek valamiért. / És azt látom, a szobád / ajtaja nyitva van, ott / ülsz az asztalnál, olvasol / nem nézel föl. Nem nézel / ide, csak billegteted az ujjaidat. Kimentem / a konyhába. Kimentem, hogy / egyek valamit. Lenyeltem / két szem epret porcukorral.”

This text starts seemingly with a self-reflexive (type)writing scene very emphatically and obviously – even on the level of the individual signs (“é, n, n, e, m”). The “nem engedlek el” can hardly mean anything else in this poem than: recording, typing, thus it is the seemingly perfect unity of the written and the lived world that is confirmed also by that this grasp both in the real, physical world and in the written or self-writing world can be realized by the help of the hands (fingers) – it is such a harmony of nature and culture that Heidegger controverted from typewriting! Writing, however, above else stores writing: it quotes or repeats (at least, by more chance than the merely “similar”) the already written what is shown most obviously here that in the writing scene, furthermore in the whole poem there are a lot of word repetitions (“Én nem engedlek el”: 1. és 3-4. sor; “Ezeket a billentyűket”/“ezek a betűk”: 2. és 4. sor; „kattogások”: 5-6. sor; „Ezt leírtam”: 9-12. sor; „hasonlóakat”: 13-14. sor; “kimegyek”/“kimentem”: 15. és 21-22. sor; „nem nézel”: 19. sor) that, on the one

hand, bring out significant ambiguities (“leír”, “kimentem”), on the other hand, they culminate in the most self-reflexive from all thinkable writing act: “(...) Ezt / leírtam, ezeket a / sorokat leírtam. Ezt a sort leírtam. (...)”. It hardly needs an explanation that why these lines – except the closure – are in past tense instead of present tense in front of the whole poem. The allusion to the text being written that ends with a grammatical abstraction and/or with a simple tautology, chasing itself forever, it always drops behind itself eventually, and this distance cannot be bridged even by the fastest typewriting one can imagine. This also explains that why time and matter (of a machine?) embody the two threats against the typewriter gets deployed.

The other appearing in the poem indeed cannot be reached any other way: she does not react (“nem nézel föl. Nem nézel ide”), the only movement that is made by the motionless *reader* anyway, that is the only action where life shows itself [hírt ad] is the metaphorical repetition of the movements of the fingers of the typist (“csak billegteted az ujjadat”). Though this single sign of life is related to the operation of the machine, this particularly wordless communication between the I and the you fails because yet, the fingers of the you and the machine does not touch each other at the end: she is thrumming in front of herself only in the air that could be imagined as the unconscious re-play of the music of the blatter as an almost unnoticeable pantomime since the silence and uneventfulness prevailing in the poem refer back exactly to the dissociation of the senses, that is the visual (writing, looking), acoustic (blutter) and the tactile (not-letting-go, typing, thrumming) senses that could actually interlock in the act of typewriting. The interplay of the senses, however, would need simultaneous presence, and its disappearance is finalized by the closure of the poem that returns to the elliptic forms and forms in past tense. Kukorelly's typewriter does not create presence and it even knows about itself – in a self-reflexive way.

In this respect, another interesting example of a similar kind of self-reflection can be found in Szilárd Borbély's poem, *Meg kéne halnom, azt hiszem, ezt álmodtam az éjjel* that was published in his volume, *Ami helyet* (1999) about what the reviews assumed that its composition was mostly defined by the fact that it was written on a computer.³⁴ According to the surprisingly congruent judgments of the critical reception Borbély's poems in this volume are concerned, in different ways and from different aspects, with the question of what lies “behind” language, thus with a region to what the figure of Rilke's angel reactivated by Borbély gets us closer in most of the cases (“Az angyal a nyelv követe, / egy szó, amit maga előtt görget / egy névtelen nyelv. Az angyal / mögött a szél, az ismeretlen / üresség, amelyre nincs szó.”) what uncovers and converts the continuous shifts that define the relations between words and their meaning.³⁵ In Borbély's very reflexive metaphorical language the image of flat surfaces plays an important role, one of these is a “thin skin” [vékony hártya] in the previous poem: “(...) A férgek / meztelenségét érzem, azt a vékony hártyát, amin túl / vannak a jelek, melyeket letapogatok az ujjaimmal. / A több tízezer írásjel és a világ tízezerszer / tízezer más jele. A testem kioltásra váró jele.” To decide about what could be this skin, the skin of the worms is not part of the tasks that have to be solved here, however, that behind this surface there are staves hiding, it could be comprehended as a version of the “signless clouds”. Not (or not only) the things but (their) signs are confined by this skin, it is a double cover up. From the previous lines

34 Menyhért A., „Szétszalazás és összerakás”, in: *Alföld* 2000/12, 63.

35 See this in details: I. Orosz J., „A helyettesítés poétikája”, in: *Tiszatáj* 2001/4; Schein G., „A halott angyal”, in: *Jelenkor* 1999/11.

of the text – – it turns out that the immediate access should be thought as the audibility of “life” (that can be listened to and intercepted) but the self does not hear anything in the poem: that is why he is groping blindly above his staves and this scanning perception not much later returns in the image of the traces of the wide cat’s soles washed away (“[...] A vadmacskák puha talpának nyomai amit elmos / a felhőszakadás. [...]”), thus these cats are crawling unnoticed (noiseless and without a trace) on a keyboard. Since there is hardly another possibility to scan the staves in a way that the surface itself would remain “signless” (without traces) in the meanwhile.

The effects of the immediate experience hide the signs that make it possible: „A férgek meztelenségét érzem” [I can feel the nakedness of the worms] – where the “worms” metaphirocally could refer to the keys that makes a possible coherent interpretation visible leastwise: the nakedness and the worms are both the connotations of death, the death of the human body that could survive itself in the form of the not yet deleted sign e.g. as the trace of the fingers hitting the keys that however – as the image of the paws washed away – is also delivered to oblivion that could happen even through (type)writing (e.g. by hitting the break sign [törésjel]). Writing itself extinguishes these signs that abolish their own “cloud” until it becomes completely signless since behind them there are signs again, furthermore, in uncomprehensible number. All this can be realized by – from a technological perspective – the knowledge of computer softwares since only behind the computer keyboards, it is possible to hide ten thousand multiplied by ten thousand signs. This also means that the “signless” clouds of the surface in this case might be the softwares themselves that, if they are working properly, are able to hide the program languages running the ten thousand multiplied by ten thousand permutations and combinations behind the actually used language by a perfect translation. The latter has to cover the casemaps of these kinds of programs and their mode of operation because – as Kittler points out – in the case of softwares, the normal languages cannot be their own meta-languages at the same time³⁶, moreover, softwares exist only because there are still everyday languages functioning in a semantic way that is they have to function in the context of the everyday language.³⁷

As is well-known, these softwares can write about themselves, read and even translate, and in addition, faster than the living machines whose writing happens today of course through material “inscriptions” anyway, “amelyeket az elektronlitográfia révén nemcsak beégetnek a szilíciumba, hanem amelyek a történelem minden írószerszámától eltérően maguk képesek olvasni és írni”.³⁸ This ability of these machines make possible for a few decades that the perfect permutation of the poetic letters desperately sought by Mallarmé, or that Tondori’s games not taken so seriously could be realized in a “livre” (that is in a program) by the generation of sonetts.³⁹ The best known or the most provocative concept of computer poetry in Hungarian lyre can be found in the “volume”, *Disztichon Alfa*

36 Kittler, „Es gibt keine Software”, in Id., *Draculas Vermächtnis*, Leipzig 1993, 228-229.

37 Ibid., 232.

38 Ibid., 226. However, these inscriptions are not the merely phonological transcriptions of the spoken language, c.f. S. Krämer, „Was haben die Medien, die Computer und die Realität miteinander zu tun?“, in Id., (ed.), *Medien – Computer – Realität*, Frankfurt 2000, 12.

39 „A szoftvert tekintve minden mikroprocesszor lehetővé teszi azt, amiről annak idején a Kabbala álmódott: hogy az írásjelek kódolás vagy számmanipuláció révén olyan eredményekhez vagy megvilágosodásokhoz vezessenek, amelyekre egyetlen olvasói szem sem találhatott volna rá.” (Kittler, *Grammophon – Film – Typewriter*, Berlin 1986, 358.)

(1994) of Tibor Papp living in Paris and inspired by the French Oulipo-poetry, first of all by Raymond Queneau *Cent Mille Millions Poèmes*. The *Disztichon Alfa* is a program that generates verses and poems randomly by defined metrical rules: a software that assumes on the one hand, the Hungarian wordstock, and on the other hand, the syntactical rules of the Hungarian language narrowed by metrical regulations and that, in principle, is able to create all elegiac couplet that can be written metrically and grammatically correctly in Hungarian. Papp's work could show, besides other things, that why Mallarmé could not finish the "Le Livre": the computer capacity needed to execute all the permutational and combinatorial operations was simply missing that is available for a long time in the age of the computer: Papp counts with 16 000 000 000 elegiac couplet that would constitute the work. Of course, nobody is able to read through the work, the program impedes the storage or the recording of some elegiac couplets since these – as a later realization of the Baudelairean idea of the "fugitive beauté" – appear on the screen only for a few seconds thus they will probably not return once again in the life of a reader.⁴⁰

The actual text of the work, however, might be – in front of the supposition of its (human) producer – much rather the program of the software that is what translates a mathematical operational language into a meaningful language. The difference between the levels of the possibility of production in the case of Mallarmé's or Papp's computer program actually makes visible that – as Kittler emphasized several times – these and similar combinatorial and other possibilities depend on the all-time hardware's material and technical capacity, even when these are always hidden, immaterialized or virtualized by the softwares.⁴¹ Thus, following the state of the actual discourse of media theory, one can straightforwardly put it like that in this sense the abc or handwriting are softwares as well. The "real" softwares might be actually the "signless clouds of our age. On the other hand, Papp's computer poetry (as in this context all the discussed texts) exactly illuminates the very fact that so far the lyric language in its own way is writing at the same time, it has to understand or stage itself – independently from that they are "generated" by computers or living machines – inevitably as some kind of software that mediates between materials and unspeakable data, or between events (pulses or engravings, blatters or traces) and meaningful discourses, and it forms them itself even if poetry realized one of the most sophisticated version of human discourses to cover this mediation. Typewriters and the typewriter poetry of the 20th century essentially contributed to the revelation of these signless clouds.

Translated by Melinda Vásári

40 See Papp's chapter in Pál Nagy's monography on the new genres of literature: Papp T., „Múzsával vagy múzsa nélkül?“, in Nagy P., *Az irodalom új műfajai*, Bp. 1995.

41 C.f. Kittler, „Es gibt keine Software“, esp. 235-237.; further „Hardware, das unbekannte Wesen“, in Krämer (ed.), 124-127.

Csongor Lőrincz

The Mnemotechnics of the Poetic Image in Late Modernity
Gottfried Benn and Paul Celan through Attila József

Trying to think about the poetic image, one immediately encounters basic problems of terminology. Of course, the term “image” is often evoked, and without reserve, in the discussions of poetry, and it is also used in the everyday practice of interpretation, with a more or less firm knowledge of its referent. However, the fact that the term “poetic image” comprises such different linguistic phenomena as scene, metaphor, simile, or any motif with minimal visual characteristics, as well as the referential or the fictional image, can be a warning sign that the possibility of defining the “poetic image” is far from being secured.⁴² Leaving aside this terminological overdetermination, literary history also offers divergent paradigms for the definition of “image,” which suggests that one should ascribe different historicities to the many meanings of the concept. In fact, it was this latter insight that served as the starting point for the only available book-length study in the field: Walther Killy’s essay collection, entitled *Wandlungen des lyrischen Bildes*, from 1956. Killy endeavored to explain and to expose what different poets understood under the term “image” by taking into account not only their poetry but also their theoretical writings. The problematic aspect of his book resides, from today’s point of view, in the attribution of a (world)view to the poetic image, a phenomenal or semantic vehicle not yet separated from the tyranny of the imagination⁴³ or of the code of perception. Killy took for granted the symmetry between image and sense without paying enough attention to the textual condition of literature. Today, after the institutionalization of *Bildwissenschaft* (visual studies),⁴⁴ to mention only an external cause, one cannot escape the challenge of questioning and testing whether existing theories of the literary, and, particularly, the

⁴² On the difficulties to define the concept of the “image” in general, see: Heidegger, Martin, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

⁴³ This was already challenged by Heidegger in “The Origin of the Work of Art”: “If we fix our vision on the nature of the work and its connections with the happening of the truth of what is, it becomes questionable whether the nature of poetry, and this means at the same time the nature of projection, can be adequately thought of in terms of the power of imagination.” In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 70).

⁴⁴ Cf: http://sigrid.schade.zhdk.ch/de/documents/WhatdoBildwissenschaftenwants_000.pdf on the difficulties to translate the term into English.

poetic image are able to account for the specific mediality of literary language. For if we take the non-material mediality of literature seriously, then we have to examine something other than the linguistic exposition of some preconceptions about the image that are already at hand.

This has several reasons, but I would like to draw attention to one single conspicuous phenomenon. In Modernity, poems are illuminated by artificial lights, their imaginary spaces are traversed and observed with the help of artificial sources. In Ezra Pound's famous poem, "In a Station of the Metro," the ambiguity of the "apparition" (as both phenomenon and specter) results from the light being technically produced: its blurred character generates visual ambivalence. The claim about the artificiality of the appearing is, of course, also valid in a more general, rigorous sense. In fact, the images present in lyric texts cannot be considered as correlatives of perception but are instead the products of a linguistic constitution. Their coming into being is always predicated upon the textual medium, and although rhetorical figurations always already imply images, the determination of these images is always deferred – up to the point when their legibility becomes questionable.

What are the linguistic or textual possibility conditions in the poetry of the late Modernity and the interpretational relevance of the pictorial or visual instances? To seek an answer to this question, I shall first examine the opening lines of Attila József's metareflexive poem, "Our Poet and His Time" (1937). This poem starts with a deixis, which has been interpreted as an example of autoreferentiality.⁴⁵ However, the first line, "Here is my poem" [*There you are, here is my poem*],⁴⁶ already presupposes a double instance of reception: a *hearer*, since it contains an address and refers to the poem as a conceptual entity (i.e. the poem is done), and a *reader*, since the clause "*here is my poem*" refers to the text, to the printed medium itself. This latter is supported by the second line ("*This is its second line*"), which fulfils the conditions of the blank deixis, the deixis of writing, which in turn immediately erases the deictic instance by not being an

⁴⁵ Cf: Ernő Kulcsár Szabó: „Das Netz des ausgebreiteten Taktes.” *Poetologie von Stimme und Text: die spätmoderne Epochenschwelle in der Dichtung von Attila József*. In: E. Kulcsár-Szabó – Cs. Lőrincz – G. Tamás Molnár (ed.): *Spielarten der Sprache. Transgressionen des Medialen in der Literatur*. Budapest: Osiris 2004, 321-341.

⁴⁶ The quotations are taken from "Our Poet and His Time" in Attila József, *The Iron-Blue Vault, Selected Poems*, trans. Zsuzsanna Ozsváth & Frederick Turner (Bloodaxe Books, 1999), 155. The italicized passages in brackets are the word for word translations of the Hungarian original.

example of anything of a higher order.⁴⁷ “My poem” thus exists between reader and hearer, between materiality and concept. The poem cannot coincide with its pointing to itself, which immediately foregrounds the arbitrariness of deixis as far as the textual context is concerned (even though common sense would dictate that there can be nothing arbitrary in deixis). The line itself – the basic formal unit of the poem, the unmovable given – can only be arbitrarily pointed at, insofar as deixis foregrounds its written character, its exteriority, precisely by staging it and by functioning as a theatrical act (an address). It gives a name to something that has been nameless (“*This is its second line*”), which is a form of catachresis. It thereby resists the voice-giving power of the apostrophe, particularly because catachrestic naming, in this case, not only implies the giving of a name, but is also the mark of countability (“*This is its second line*”). The poem’s textual spatiality, rather than being visually perceivable, therefore has to be counted in a contingent series of numbers – as if the geometrical spacing of the lines gave way to an algebraic operation. This tension between apostrophe and *calculus* relieves the deictic prescription of the voice of address: it cannot totalize the linguistic address since the supposedly singular, linguistic-pragmatic “space” may just as well be a random member of a series that goes beyond it. The gesture of pointing at the “exterior place” necessary for the archive⁴⁸ has to be transferred: if there were such a thing as an absolute deixis, then it would certainly be interiorisable – the act of pointing at would absolutely bring about the thing pointed at. If the textual effect of the line cannot be posited as an example, then it cannot have any kind of identity (“Nothingness so flits within it” [*Nothing is flitting in it, like*]). Hence, even though the typographic form of the text presupposes space, there is no determinable or spatialisable “place” in it, and any attempt at such a determination must remain arbitrary. The virtualization of the given character of the “line” may imply precisely that lines can be transposed, as lines can really be in many other works of Attila József.

The catachrestic aspect inscribes itself in the deictic naming through this very countability, since the semiotic-referential mode of being of the name cannot be circumscribed. One can always proceed to its new meanings while reading, and create

⁴⁷ Cf. Paul de Man, “Hypogram and Inscription” in *The Resistance to Theory* (London, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 2002), 42-43.

⁴⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz. (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 12.

new connections within the textual space. Catachresis functions as the memory of the non-present, in this case, as that of a virtual voice. This mnemotechnic mark of the catachresis, in fact, of naming itself, is the product of a medially conditioned process, that of the *decree*. The catachresis of “This is its second line” carries with it the index of a decree, just like the aporetic wording of “O begins its full recital,” [*It sounds hard with letters K*].⁴⁹ Rather than being a simple naming, the line turns into a textual, medial registration. The mechanical quality of the number thus behaves as the interpretant of the notation.

At the same time, the arbitrariness of the catachresis, the mechanical quality of the decree, and the suspension of any deictic identifiability destroy the determinability of the phenomenal relations: the text becomes empty. Thus, the ability of “Nothing” to be conceptualized, in the trope “Nothing is flitting,” is still dependent upon metaphorical movements. However, if we perform the anagrammatic reading of the line “*Nothing* is flitting *in* it,”⁵⁰ then the phenomenal relations are rearranged, or else entirely disfigured; hence we get the entirely a-phenomenal result that the text is empty, “nothinged,” and at the same time, flitting “in nothing.” The meaning of “nothing” doubles, since “nothing” as, originally, “absence” (“as a something’s dust...”) turns into “nothing” as “emptiness” or “vacuum.” Hence, the tropological determinability of “nothing” also becomes questionable: if it is not “nothing” that “is flitting,” but “something is flitting” in nothing, then “nothing” becomes activated as an adverbial of place, and thus functions as a referent; on the other hand, in case it functions as the subject of the sentence, associated with “is flitting,” it functions as a trope. This duality renders the possibility of the synecdoche uncertain, suspending any expectation concerning the visualization of abstract connections. If, in the anagrammatic constellation, we emphasize the phrase “in nothingness,” then the subject of the sentence, “nothing” disappears, that is, literally becomes “nothing.” This grammatical aporia renders “nothing” accessible, but as memory, thereby doubling it. The word cannot be grasped: it is divided, textually deferred. Consequently, it cannot be identified with certainty as the mnemotechnical index of the concept, that is, it fades into forgetfulness. Similarly, the concept does not

⁴⁹ The Hungarian version “K betűkkel szól keményen” also refers back to the Hungarian title: „Költők és kora,” but in the Hungarian version of the line it is the “hard” quality of the letter “K” that is emphasized, forming a contrast with “sound.”

⁵⁰ In the Hungarian version, the clauses “in” and “nothing” are next to each other and thereby give the anagrammatic reading: “in nothing.”

appear except as the memory of the word, and not as a fixed, cognitive entity. “Nothing” and “something” are not strictly separated, nor do they contain each other. The “poem” is not simply “nothing,” following the aesthetic doctrine of dereferentiality. It is also already “something”; however, the relationship between the two is undecidable. Hence, anagrammatic reading produces a conflict between the grammatical structure and the referential implications of the poem.

The defiguration of the concept “nothing” may suggest that “Our Poet and His Time” cannot originate from the conceptual-referential identity of words; “nothingness” is not something given, which could be the object or the theme of the poem. In fact, the naming of a concept like “nothing” always already functions as an abstract deixis, positing the neutral graspability of the concept, regardless of the referential dispersion generated by the process of archiving. So the poem does not treat “nothing” as a guarantee of dereferentialization, that of a possible separation from the contingencies of language, but, through the dissemination of “nothing,” it rather alludes to the divergent referential implications of the interplay of word, concept and textual place. The circumscription of “nothing” results precisely from textual registrations and anagrammatic figures of reading. “Nothing” can only produce its effects as a memory-like subversion of “something.” Further, the anagram has literally erased “nothing,” but this forgetting as textualization has also rendered the referential status of “nothing” uncertain. The double effect of this medial-textual registration, or inscription, interprets the transformation of voice into writing (where the voice is only present as memory, as something translated, and the text is only present as translation – referring to the forgotten), as the play of reference turning into quotation and quotation turning into reference.⁵¹ This play comes into being through the parallel activation and subversion of a mnemotechnical order.

Referential disfiguration also draws attention to the tension between “nothing” and “second” as countability. In this context, “nothing” evidently equals “zero,” or a non-number, withdrawing itself from the possibility of being signified either by a number, or a

⁵¹ One cannot ascertain the origin or status of the unmarked anagram: is it a slip of the tongue of the dictating voice, or the effect of voice turning into writing? This latent tension becomes visible in reading: reading always brings into play unforeseeable references, the possibility of which (including the possibility of the anagram) cannot be contained by either the supposed intentionality, or the grammar of the text. Cf. de Man, “Hypogram and Inscription.”

word, or any semiotic entity.⁵² The referential dispersion produced by the anagrammatic character of “nothing in/in nothing,”⁵³ the defiguration, the slip of the tongue of the decree, all foreground the heterogeneity of “nothing” compared to the numeric or definitional order. Hence, “nothing,” as non-number, threatens the principle of seriality (i.e. of the countability or definability of the series), thereby representing the possibility of an interruption; this, in its turn, is the possibility condition of repetition, but only becomes active in repetition itself. However, the naming of “nothing” (which cannot escape the asymmetry between its nominal and real definitions) already brings into play referentiality, or the memory of referentiality (“as something’s dust”): “nothing” is not subversive because of its absolute heterogeneity, but rather because of its relationship with the linguistic structure as iterability.

In modernity, the disappearance of iconic relationships is accompanied by technical indices. The aporetic image “A transparent lion lives between black walls” in Attila József’s poem, “A Transparent Lion” can also be read along these lines.⁵⁴ This image can be read as the negative “description” of a photograph, as the reduction of the optical pattern, the phantom-like darkening of the picture. The unreadable image behaves like the (not necessarily image-like) matrix of the visual concept. The self-representation of the poetic “I” oscillates at the crossroads of this matrix and the possibility of its development – the same way the textual status of the text(ual picture) hovers between the development of the picture and its signature, since the evocation of the darkened image cannot function except as reading (and not as the production of any immediate phenomenality). That is, it does not necessarily behave as an image, but rather as the commentary of an image. Thus, the technical development of the picture becomes equal to the act of reading, which does not lead to the birth of the image as such, but to its metaphorical transfer: the “image” will be readable as the copy of the non-visual matrix. This opens a new possibility for the interpretation of the pastness of the poem: the poem’s directedness towards the past can be conceived as the reading of a (negative of

⁵² Cf: de Man, “Pascal’s Allegory of Persuasion.” in *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis, 1996), 55-61.

⁵³ See note 9.

⁵⁴ “A Transparent Lion” in Attila Jozsef, *A Transparent Lion*, translated from the Hungarian, with an Introduction by Michael Castro and Gábor G. Gyukics (Green Integer, 2006), 45.

a) faded photograph, as an attempt to remember. The same way as “your words that rang off ages ago” cannot be fully remembered by the “I” at the end of the poem, the mnemonic interpretability of the image becomes questionable in the visual dimension. The image has always already fallen prey to forgetting: the description of the picture can only initiate remembrance without ever being able to develop it fully in the photographic sense of the term.⁵⁵ As a first conclusion, it can be stated that in the (faded) photograph, the exteriority of memory, becomes the index of the exteriorizing of the “I” in a way that is medially conditioned (and cannot be the product of any imagination, however “visionary” this imagination may be). By the same token, the rhetorical code of the text also changes, or at least it opens itself for another possibility of reading: if the poem can be called a “poème conversation,”⁵⁶ then we can read the text as a series of lines written on a postcard or on the back of a photograph, perhaps, to be sent; this is all the more so the case because the poem bears the traces of language use proper to the latter kind of communication (“I don’t have a bite of bread to eat,” “It’s been five weeks, and still I know nothing about you”). In this respect, only the text is present, the image is, paradoxically, invisible and inaccessible to language. Language can only reiterate, defer its reference to the image, the same way the reproduction of the negative of the photograph can result in an endless series of copies. Precisely because of the deictic undecidability of the text, or writing, the addressee of the image cannot be detected: although the text promises the development of the picture, it leaves it in the mode of *subscription*, which is dependent upon interpretation. If the text takes its origin from the remembrance of the image, then the deferral of the appearance or semantic anchoring of the image does not lead to a complete forgetting but rather to the subversion of the

⁵⁵ The “development” is deferred to the future, and remains something always still to come. Cf. Benjamin’s remark in his preparatory notes to the “Theses on the Philosophy of History”: If we want to contemplate history as a text, we have to apply the claim a recent author [a certain Mongold] made about the literary text: the past placed images in it, and these are comparable to the pictures taken by a photosensitive slide. Only the future has developers in its service, which are strong enough to disclose the image in all of its details. Cf. Benjamin, Walter, *Gesammelte Schriften* I.3. (Frankfurt a.M., 1974), 1238; 1243. The postponement of the “development” is in a kind of isomorphic relationship with the mnemonic aspect of the image: the image flashing up in the present moment of cognition can be further defined as memory image [*Erinnerungsbild*].” Ibid. 1243.

⁵⁶ Cf. Kulcsár-Szabó, Zoltán: *Wege aus der Avantgarde. Bemerkungen zur Vorgeschichte der dialogischen Poetik der Spätmoderne in der frühen Lyrik von Lőrinc Szabó und Attila József*. In: *Neohelicon* 2004/1. 181-204.

rhetorical strategies attributed to the text. The text makes the reader experience the “image” only belatedly and in its own changes: the image as such can never be perceived, nor observed. The present of the image is not the present of its iconic qualities, but, as Benjamin would put it, the possibility of its cognition.⁵⁷

In Attila József’s poem, the aporetic coming into being of the poetic image presupposes a mode of staging in which the memory of the visual moment in language is doubly conditioned in the very same language. Linguistic addressability is dependent upon phenomenality or, more precisely, phenomenality is constituted by the apostrophe as a speech act. Materiality cannot, however, be addressed since the address always presupposes a phenomenal figure or a face. Instead, the address generates an exteriority by duplicating what it addresses. If the poetic apostrophe is actualized as a grammatical mechanism (that is, as a citation), then linguistic phenomenalization turns into something non-pictorial, something invisible, since it cannot evoke the illusion of the “image,” and cannot ascertain any visual reference. When the apostrophe becomes overwritten by the textual medium, certain (a)visual effects emerge that owe their birth to textual movements while also offering a resistance to the giving of a face by language, or to visualization. In this sense, they withdraw themselves precisely from presence, which, however, should be the mode of existence of all images. They can only be spoken about from a mnemotechnical distance, they show themselves only in the medium of the memory of the text. The multiplicability of these images, their futureness, can also be attributed to mnemotechnical possibility conditions. These are images “that we had not seen before we remembered them.”⁵⁸

Is it a sheer accident, then, that the prominent poets of the German language late modernity also face the question of the mnemotechnical readability of the poetic image? Gottfried Benn’s poem, *Ein später Blick* (1943), is about, among other things, the constructed character of the image; in fact, its title foregrounds precisely the moment of the act of constitution. Here, *später Blick*, as the act of textual seeing, is thematized without having immediate access to any supposed iconicities. The determinability of the “image” is always already distanced into memory, where “später Späherblick” implies the technico-military metaphor of seeing (cf.: also the military connotation of “überflügeln”).

⁵⁷ Benjamin: *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, 577-578.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* II.3. 1064 (here, Benjamin speaks about Proust)

The image is, therefore, the result of a construction. It owes its existence to arbitrariness and violence: vision is an intervention or an attack against the thing being seen. But if seeing is always already severed from its object, then violence and arbitrariness become necessary or, more precisely, the distance from the object becomes noticeable in the necessity of violence and techné, in so far as the object withdraws itself from the act of intervention. The object cannot be experienced except through textual mediation, that is, it cannot be experienced in itself, it can only be remembered. Hence withdrawal, or distance, is always already temporal. The image is destroyed or divided in mediation: if the arbitrariness of the technically conditioned glance is nothing else but the instance of textuality, then linguistic repetition, as a kind of stammering in the parallelism of “*später Späterblick*,” surrenders the image to the contingent, mechanical iterations of language. This non-intentional repetition threatens, at the same time, the word as a linguistic unit: the violence of language against the image can also turn against language itself, language can also question itself. How can one explore this double arbitrariness or double effect of destruction?

The image constituted by “*später Späterblick*” cannot be determined. This becomes clear from the second stanza staging both the “image” and its memory (“*später Späterblick*”), if it appears at all. What is at stake here? Is it the phenomenal or the non-phenomenal possibility condition of the phenomenal? This undecidability already suggests that these two cannot be separated and that the image cannot be isolated. “*Da ist nichts jäh, da ist nichts lange, / all eins, ob steinern, ob belebt*”: the image or its textual medium are not merely effects, nor are they stable givens. They cannot be forced into the binary of organic/inorganic. The image is not even identical with the life that dooms it to fading; it should not be confused with the presentness of any supposed “now.” It is always severed from the process attributed to it as a temporally or phenomenally restricted vehicle⁵⁹ – one can always return to it differently, and the image will always appear in this repeated act of reading.

⁵⁹ Cf: The description of the “moment” as a “ghost” in Nietzsche’s *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* summarized in Günter Figal’s monograph on Nietzsche: the conception of the flash-like moment does not correspond to the human experience of the present: it is never possible to say what is “now,” or “at this moment”; the sudden (*das Plötzliche*) discloses itself only when it gets separated from what has been for a long time – the way the lightning is separated from the unchanging basis of the sky – and becomes anchored in memory. Günter Figal, *Nietzsche. Eine philosophische Einführung* (Stuttgart, 1999), 51.

The question addressed to the second stanza, because of the conspicuous syntactic undecidability, is the following: *From where* does “Zeichnung” emerge as both sign and image? Does it emerge from “die Krümmung” or from the “Schlange”? The first case implies that we are dealing with the copy (the silhouette of the “Krümmung”) of a copy: with a sign, and not with an image. Consequently, the image can be interpreted as the quotation of a mediated copy, at odds with representation. The fact that this ambivalence of the image is the effect of the text’s grammar again underscores the fact that in this textual field the instance of seeing cannot be merged into the instance of speech; the one who sees never covers the one who speaks.

In this respect, “Zeichnung” – referentially conditioned by the material aspects of the text – is nothing but an image to be interpreted or read and it only becomes readable in the temporality of the text. It is therefore this “dialectical” image that stands in the forefront of interpretation and not the image that is supposedly perceived. The image only appears if it is read or interpreted: it always appears in a second reading. This, however, also implies the erasure of the image: since reading cannot be fixed by any kind of deixis, it also separates itself from any visual instance. To speak with Benjamin: “The image that is read – which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability – bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.”⁶⁰

The third stanza dissolves “Zeichnung” into separate parts, the first of which appears as a truly unreadable image, a secondary “Zeichnung”: “Ein Großlicht tags, dahinter Sterne.” One can notice here (if it went unnoticed before) the temporal index of the possibility (or impossibility) of textual images, due to the reciprocal reflection of the optic aporia. First, it is phenomenality that appears, with the constellation of stars behind. These are, however not present, since “Ein Großlicht tags” cannot be seen (according to the rhyme, the “Sterne” [stars] are “ferne” [distant]). The stars are the memory of the non-present in which they are read, rather than contemplated. If, however, we focus on the stars (even if only in memory), then the whole scene changes: in the distance of a reading that remembers, it is the presence of the “Großlicht” that extinguishes (night as the absence of light). In the mnemotechnical reading, the “Großlicht” extinguishes and something is taken into consideration other than the thing appearing in light. There are no

⁶⁰ Cf. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades-Project*. Rolf Tiedemann, Howard Eiland, Kevin McLaughlin, eds. (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 463.

phenomena behind signs. It is, rather, the other way around: the effect of appearance gives place, in a second reading, to signs. (The same logic is at work in the relationship between “Schlange,” “Krümmung,” and “Zeichnung,” where “Zeichnung” can be read as a sign, if it is considered to refer to “Krümmung,” as a scheme-like copy, that is, if it functions as the materialized memory of a conceptual movement, thus destroying the possibility to model the phenomenon of the image according to the logic of representation). In the conflict between light and sign, one can no longer recognize a Hegelian structure: the “sensory appearance” is not given since sensory appearance always already erases the possibility of the readability of the image. The latter can only emerge at a distance from the image, from its principle of reference. This is the reason why readability cannot be deduced from any showing, from any deixis. Showing necessitates the thing to be shown, i.e., something has to be present so that it can be shown – a phenomenal pattern that showing and the context of showing then endow with a meaning. But if this were the case, then one would again turn the image that is read into a metaphor, even though it cannot be contained by any kind of Hegelian, symbolic mediation. If one sticks to visible phenomenality, then one would also have to rely on and refer to this phenomenality in semantics, maintaining the symbolic structure. The thing shown would then gain its function as an example, and the general drawn from this particular example would be the meaning; it would be the same whether it was the showing that happened first, and the meaning was articulated after that, or if it was the semanticized general that dictated the deictic fixation, resulting in the showing.

Benn’s poem does not send its silent images to any address, hence the land of Goethe’s “Kennst du das Land” turns into mute meaninglessness. The poem is debunked as quotation, as a quotation that is recognized in the reading of *Zeichnung*, which intensifies the latter’s reliance upon interpretation by being itself dependent upon it. If there are only quotations in “Ein später Blick,” then the images that are read cannot be mastered and cannot be inscribed in any eschatological or apocalyptic temporality: they do not refer to any beginning or to any end (“all eins, ob dämmernd, ob erregt”; “und nichts zu schließen, nichts zu sein”). The image that is read will always surpass fixities, and its figure (“Krümmung”) will always be determined by this movement directed towards other references (“es die Krümmung einer Schlange / die sich zu fremdem Raub bewegt”) The figure (of the image that is read) is thus not given as the origin of reading, but rather comes into existence in the textual dynamics that, however, always surpasses

it and can only read its memory. This movement is responsible for the fact that the extinction of the image in the sea (“und einer zieht dich dann hinein”) remains a *promise*, the fulfillment of which is transferred to reading. Language cannot, however, fulfill but this promise; it only defers it. Language cannot fully erase the “image”; it can only repeat it and remember it.

The anonymous power that, in the last line, pushes the “you” into the open must be identical with the arbitrary violence that endeavors to erase the image in the sea. If the “you” is conceived as the poem itself, then this crossing can be read metafiguratively, given that the line “nichts zu schießen, nichts zu sein” refers to both the approaching end and the beginning of the poem through its altered and literalized repetition of the first line. The flying of the “you” above its grounds (“Gründe”) can then be read as a non-stable situating since this metaphor can be endowed (in an unforeseeable manner) with a reference in the act of reading (“und einer zieht dich dann hinein”). However, the literality of “du, flügelnd über deine Gründen” is itself the quotation of the first line. Self-reference thus includes a citation. This reference would turn the “image” of “grounds” (in the first line) – read as the figure of the self-referential structure of the poem – into disfiguration, because the constitution of this figure is the effect of language. Language, in order to explain, or reflect upon its own functioning, has to apply images. The textual force bringing the images into existence also withdraws itself from and disseminates the same images. The images, engrafted with traces of unreadability, therefore retire into a mnemotechnical distance. In Benn’s poem, the self-referentiality of the text cannot be equated with a deictically fixed allusion, in which the text would refer back to itself; on the contrary: self-reference is the quotation of the text, the text to which it alludes, and not its *metatextual* figure (“über deinen Gründen”). *Ein später Blick* thereby draws attention to the impossibility of pure self-reference. A deictically unambiguous self-reference, if this were at all possible, would have to be determinable as an image. Citation, however, always comes from the outside (like der “fremde Raub”) and always draws the image into the temporal movement of readability. The image of the promised self-reference is thus altered and becomes a material residue, a readable image that cannot be eliminated and instead always threatens the order of semantics. From the very beginning, the promise of elimination has the task of activating the mnemotechnics of the image which can only read the image rather than perform or dissipate it. Consequently, because of the mnemotechnical effect of the image that is read, self-reference (which has been

promised as a virtual, future image) cannot be indicated but as something always already past.

The fourth text that I shall briefly discuss is one from a poem by Paul Celan in the collection *Lichtwang* (1970). The poem that begins with the line “AUS VERLORNEM Gegossene du...” stages the dialectics of remembering and forgetting.⁶¹ The first stanza, “AUS VERLORNEM Gegossene du, / maskengerecht,” refers to the act of remembering: the non-present, the lost, is presented in a secondary form as a forged mask of pastness. If the mask is a death-mask, then the poem thematizes the impossibility of bringing back what has disappeared, which can only manifest itself as the impossibility of remembrance – thus surpassing, even if only in a negative form, the main semantic code of the stanza. As a contrast, the third stanza speaks about the erasure of trace(s), which has been actualized, as well as repressed, through an insight into the pastness of memory, which cannot be suspended. This stanza, therefore, stages, at first sight, the “place” and the act of forgetting.

The alienating image of the second stanza is thus situated between remembrance and forgetting. How is one to interpret the image framed by remembrance and forgetting? Can we imagine this image? For it is the image itself that seems to question the possibility of visual representation: if two beings get connected through their eyelids, then, due to this close proximity, they cannot see each other, no matter whether their eyes are open or not. “Eyelid” suggests eyes that are closed. But this cannot be perceived by any beholder, since the place of the eyelids’ actual contact cannot be seen from the outside. This mutual proximity, or radical merging into each other, relativizes the iconicity (the reference) of the supposed image. Even if the image of two unified beings can be imagined by a beholder, the determinability of one single “eyelid” withdraws itself from optical criteria. Furthermore, it can be surmised that even if this phenomenal image could be interpreted from a certain horizon of reading as the articulation of closeness, intimacy, etc., then this reading remains literally blind to what is essential, namely, to the “eyelids.” Thus, the self-reflective image sets firm borders to optical perception (which guarantees the emergence of the concept): the “image” has to be, in fact, read. The “eyelid” only becomes visible, if the eyes are closed – if one takes a distance from or

⁶¹ “AUS VERLORNEM Gegossene du / maskengerecht, / die Lid- / falte entlang / mit der eigenen / Lidfalte dir nah sein, // die Spur und die Spur / mit Grauen bestreun, / endlich, tödlich.”

suspends optical vision. This is also signaled by the hyphenation of eyelid (“Lid-falte”) and the emphasis on “entlang” because one has to interpret a line here, a line that begins in the previous line and in another word, a line that is syntactically and textually marked.⁶²

This stanza emphasizes the binary character of the rhetorical structure of the poem: it speaks about an “I” and a “you” that merge into each other in a self-destructive image. The pronouns clearly indicate the apostrophic instantiation of the relationship between the “I” and the “you” (“eigen,” “dir”). In this sense, the first “eyelid” would belong to the “I” addressed, whereas the second “eyelid” would belong to the “I.” It is precisely this linguistic frame (which should guarantee the symmetry of the apostrophe) that is rendered uncertain by the image: as a result of the total merging, the “eyelid” cannot be identified. Both the first and the second can be the eyelid of each other, and the other way round: the eyelids cannot be distinguished, and, therefore, they become interchangeable. The symmetry of the apostrophe in speech becomes disfigured in the image, since the entities cannot be ascribed to specific persons. Hence, the image destroys precisely the linguistic ground (the distinction between “I” and “you” in the apostrophe) that constitutes, at the same time, its possibility condition. If we also consider the second line, the concept of mask, then the image becomes readable, since the eyelid of the other, as the result of the perfect merging, becomes the mask of the self turned inside out. Here, it becomes clear why the poem speaks only about eyelids and not about a face, that is, about contingent and not necessarily individual characteristics: if it went as far as to present a face, then this face would necessarily be the sign of somebody’s (who’s?) mask. The non-presence of the face yields the disclosure of the face (which is supposedly one’s own) as the mask of the other, and the other way round.

⁶² It is to be suspected that this text by the late Celan withdraws or rereads some of the lyric concepts and images of his early poems. E.g. “Blicklos / schweigt nun dein Aug in mein Aug sich...” (*Gesammelte Werke I*. Frankfurt a.M., 1983. 70.), here, the success of the communication was not yet in doubt (cf: Werner Hamacher: *Die Sekunde der Inversion. Bewegungen einer Figur durch Celans Gedichte*. In: W.H. – W. Menninghaus (eds.): *Paul Celan*. Frankfurt a.M., 1988. 95). However, the poem entitled *Sprachgitter*, its visual structure (“Augenrund zwischen den Stäben. // Flimmertier Lid / rudert nach oben / gibt einen Blick frei”) and a certain parallel between phenomenality and semantics (“Am Lichtsinn / errätst du die Seele”) yield, in this poem, the radical withdrawal of similes and the unmarked space of an overlap between the unremarkable image and the remembered sign. (To *Sprachgitter* cf. Jean Bollack: *Paul Celan über die Sprache*. In: *Paul Celan*. 272-307.). This modification could certainly lead to far reaching conclusions concerning the internal changes affecting Celan’s poetics, however, these cannot be pursued here.

All the same, “maskengerecht” can only refer to one possible interpreter, for this latter can only read the image, without ever being able to understand or exhaust it. For the contingent, broken line or contour of the “eyelid” indicates precisely the non-presence of the face, of the face that the tropological concept of mask implicitly presupposes, thereby anthropomorphising the image. The mask cannot, therefore, be applied as the metaphor of the unreadable image, or else, it can only be considered as one possible metaphor of the latter.

While the code of the first stanza is structured as catachresis, as the mask of what is “lost,” the second stanza cannot be identified as such. For the aporetic image of the merging eyelids was read precisely by this catachresis: it endowed its unreadability with a meaning, and (mis)read it as a metaphor. If the unreadable image cannot be identified with any naming, then is it the case that the unreadable image withdraws itself from the model of catachresis? Although catachresis is a trope where the distinction between the literal and the figural disappears, it is still dependent upon an identifiable transfer – even though the “eyelid,” in Celan’s poem does not substitute the face. The breaking of the line between “eye” and “lid” suggests that this image (or more precisely, this word) operates as a grammatical figure that “function[s] on the level of the letter without the intervention of an iconic factor.”⁶³ The dispersion of the “eyelid” runs parallel with the separation of “eigenen” and the “eyelid,” which is also the result of a line break. Would all this suggest that through repetition the repeated word ceases to be the property of the apostrophe of the poetic “I”? Can we surmise that the breaking or even the dismemberment of the word, as well as the separation of the “eye” from the “lid” (erasing anthropomorphism) can only be activated if there is another “eyelid” emerging that reveals itself in the repetition of the same word? Language needs images in order to be able to articulate the transition between singular repetitions or iterations. However, this transition, the deferral of meaning is not, in its essence, visual; language (or, more precisely, the other, the iteration that incalculably happens) will always suspend the validity of these images, or else, it will always reread, or cite them, and thereby push them into the textual distance that has always already been their characteristic feature in the first place. These images are, therefore, only readable, just like the signs, the repeated “traces” behind the surface that cannot be definitively erased. The memory of their visual quality is impregnated with

⁶³ Paul de Man, “Shelley Disfigured” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 115.

textuality (just like the figure below the grey surface). It does not refer to iconic patterns, because these are the misreadings of linguistic relationships. The double surface is constituted not as the result of a spatial, but rather as the result of a mnemotechnical-referential doubling.

Thus, in Celan's poem, words are more important than images, especially because they constantly get repeated. In this respect, the title of the collection is very telling: *Lichtzwang* [*Lightcompulsion*] is a perverted quotation, that of "Wiederholungszwang" (repetition compulsion).⁶⁴ In fact, the "repetition compulsion" of words always already generates unreadable images. Repetition, in Freud, can be understood as forgetting rather than as remembering: "the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, he *acts* it out, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it."⁶⁵ If light is doomed to the compulsive repetition of phenomenality, then it paradoxically destroys the phenomenal availability of the "image." We cannot see what we remember (the merging through the eyelids also denies the possibility of seeing), and this connection between seeing and remembering only becomes available through a self-doubling, linguistic mediation, and through a reading addressed to another, that is, through a second reading. The memory of the visual always originates in this disarticulation of language: not as an answer, or a compensation, but as the opening of language to its own temporal dimension that always promises more or even less that it can fulfill, while also displacing the boundary between promise and fulfillment. The supposed fulfillment is perhaps but the promise/the slip of the tongue (*Sich-Versprechen*) of language itself, a citation in language.

⁶⁴ It is well known that the late Celan often uses the terms of Freudian psychoanalysis. See, for instance the term "Wiederholungszwang" in the poem "AUCH KEINERLEI..." of the collection *Fadensonnen* (*Gesammelte Werke* II., 201).

⁶⁵ Freud, S. (1914). Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II). The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique and Other Works, 150.

Gábor Mezei

The Text as Body

William Shakespeare through Lőrinc Szabó

Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art...
Here man, the noblest clay, the most precious marble,
is kneaded and carved... (Nietzsche, 4)

There are many possible contemporary perspectives in literary and cultural studies which are trying to determine the relationship between man and medium. From the point of view of reading literature, these perspectives can become really valid in case they try to show how the medium of language is able to perform the anthropos. Media anthropology can become important for literature in case this performativity makes itself possible by language itself, and a comparison of texts based on this perspective may help highlighting how language as a constitutive operation matters while we are doing parallel reading, while we are reading world literature and/or translations. Instead of understanding the human body as theatre, which means, the body represented only in its picture- or language-like qualities, the body as writing, or on a theoretical level (Kamper 171), the texts which are getting into focus here will not only lay stress upon meaning but on the materiality, the auditive and visual features of language as well.

William Shakespeare's Sonnet 55. and its Hungarian translation by Lőrinc Szabó are not only dealing with the question on a thematic level, how the human body can be performed, but they are both using the medial operations of language as well in executing this performative act. While the texts in question are focusing on the possibilities of this performative act, their mutual aim is to carry it out as well; a process in which the materiality of language becomes emphatic. But during all these, the two texts may point at significant characteristics of the relationship between medium and anthropos just because concerning this relationship they seem to be crucially different. To understand this difference makes the presence of some theoretical insights necessary; media theory and the theory of language, especially a distinction Walter Benjamin makes in one of his famous writings, will be just as important as the insights we can gain from the translation text itself. And it is just because of this difference that only those concepts of translation can be relevant

here which, like Benjamin's famous concept, make it possible for a text to be read as a translation even though it is different from the source text. This difference makes comparative reading necessary even when one is dealing with translations, and to understand this difference is crucial first of all because the two texts can point at the nature of their relationship, and we can learn about the basis of comparison only this way.

The roots of the interest in the relation between man and medium can be followed back in time until we reach the problem of the relationship between man and tool, between the human being and technology. The perspective I am referring to by the notion media anthropology is mostly determined by texts which are relevant from a point of view formed by contemporary concepts of media theory. Basically these are perspectives which do not handle technology as a tool, and the medium as a carrier of contents or in its archiving function, but which are understanding the medium through its constitutive, productive operations instead, this way pointing at the relationship of man and medium, the medial precededness of the anthropos, that can be circumscribed just through the reading of the translation text mentioned above. But to quickly throw a light on a possible context of this relation and to make the difference accessible, it worths mentioning concepts which are emphasizing the centrality of the position the anthropos occupies.

The notion of technology understood not only as a tool comes to the front in Ernst Cassirer's text, *Form und Technik*. Cassirer deals with technology as the medium of human self-understanding following Ernst Kapp; and we could say following this insight in a consistent way that „man understands him/herself only in so far as he/she repeats him/herself in a technical way.” (Bolz, 759) Cassirer, and Kapp, who are handling technology as an element determining how the anthropos as organism can be understood, this way attributing initiative function to it are at the same time originating their concept from the centrality of the human body looking at tools as an image of the body, as a mechanism formed after an organic prototype, as the projection of organs. (Kapp, 24-28) Sándor Ferenczi, who is reflecting, among others, on Kapp, and who is discussing „the psychic evolution of mechanics”, is only partly different on that point. While writing about „primitive machines”, he is stating that „they are not projections of organs, but they mean the *introjection* of a part of the outside world to the body, making the self's sphere of operation more wide...”

(Ferenczi, 33) From his point of view, even if the „machine” has an effect on the human being, the centrality of the latter is still valid. Just like for Freud who is inventing the notion „prosthetic God”, according to which, the human being, „Man has, as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God. When he puts on all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent, but those organs have not grown on to him...” (Freud, 66)

Marshall McLuhan, though much later, is writing about the central role of the anthropos in connection with the medium from different perspectives. The best way to see that is starting out of his famous books entitled *Understanding Media*, and the often quoted notion of extension he introduced here. (McLuhan, 7) Following this lead, a medium can be understood as a sort of lengthening of a given part of the body, and as he claims at the end of the first chapter, all media are extensions of the human senses (23). It is quite evident that the human body, with its organs and senses, is in this concept a pivotal element, a centre and a starting point at the same time, a centrality that precedes the medium and becomes an extension of the former. This is in the same way in another of his books, that is just as essential from the point of view of his media theory. Here he is writing his history of the media based on how the actual new media causes changes in sensory modes. The effect of the medium on the central human content is in focus here, the anthropos appears again as the always changing centre. The connectedness of man and medium, anthropos and technology may perhaps come to the surface in McLuhan’s concept through the notion of „autoamputation”. This process is carried out by the human body as a result of extreme irritation or as an effect of discomfort, and that at least could be interpreted as a technique of the body (46), but this notion gets a role in the logic of the concept only on a metaphorical level, and within a limited scope. This way we could say that medium, or rather technology is in these cases always additional; even if it changes the position of the human being, or more like its characteristics, it always appears in some kind of a subsequent position, even if it does not come to being following the model of the anthropos; man is still in a central position in these examples as well. Even N. Katherine Hayles, making an attempt to summarize the „posthuman view” seems to adopt this central structure. In case we understand the human body as an „original prosthesis” which we can extend or replace with other prostheses, and while doing so, we are generating „a continuation of a process that

began before we were born” (Hayles, 3), then nothing happens regarding this relationship but the overwriting of the notion of the body with the notion of the prosthesis.

Almost at the same time as *Understanding Media*, there are already a few concepts, mostly in Helmuth Plessner’s and Leroi-Gourhan’s work, where the relation between anthropos and medium, man and technology seems to change. These concepts have an effect on contemporary anthropology as well, for example in Bernard Stiegler’s book *La technique et le temps (Technics and Time 1, 1994)* containing a reading of Leroi-Gourhan’s *Gesture and Speech* – yet using the notion of “extension” without quoting Marshall McLuhan on one single occasion – several references can be found to the above questions. Following – and sometimes close to illustrating – Derrida, Stiegler discusses an exteriorization that has always already been in operation. This, according to Stiegler, happens without a preceding interior position (Stiegler 1998: 141), suggesting parallels between tool and the human being in human evolution, where the invention of the tool happens together with the invention of the human (137), and, what is more, where the invention of the human takes place through a technical device.

However, Helmuth Plessner, in fact much earlier than Stiegler, goes further with the above idea in his *Zur Hermeneutik nichtsprachlichen Ausdrucks*, published in 1967 (Plessner 2003). He points out that the anthropos is always mediated to itself (cf. Kulcsár Szabó 2004: 51), implying that the anthropos is preceded by the medium. This way Plessner has gained special significance for media theory, just like Martin Heidegger, who keeps emphasizing man’s unquestionable dependence on the technical. Heidegger points at the interrelatedness of the human and the technical, denying human existence understood as starting out solely from itself, and without technology (Heidegger 1977: 31).

The relation of man and technology, anthropos and medium understood this way is not pointing towards a redefinition of man, as Friedrich Kittler puts it in *Optical Media*, instead it is questioning the characteristics of these relations. Media anthropology that is in this respect moving away from technology understood as a tool, from the medium appearing only as a carrier of contents, and denying centrality of the human being can start out of medial precededness and the constitutive operations of the medium. And the main question in this present context may be, in what ways these

correlations can get into contact with literary texts, on what surfaces these insights can be engaged with the reading of the following sonnets, and in what directions our sonnets are taking these correlations concerning the relation between medium and anthropos. The translation text of Lőrinc Szabó is performing the anthropos in a way that can happen by the constitutive role of the medium, this way pointing at an auto-operation of language that can become accessible, or understandable just by these insights gained by media theory, and that seems to be in many ways similar to the operations of the medium.

I am planning to read the two texts, Sonnet 55 and its translation in a parallel, comparative way here, that is, instead of providing a close-reading of them, I intend to concentrate on a difference that may be informative in this present context. Both texts are pointing at and questioning their own preserving functions, whether they are able to keep the memory of the addressee, while they are trying to face death and oblivion in different ways. The starting point is in both cases the opposition with the preserving power of the monument, with shaping a human body, or as the Hungarian translation goes, shaping a pillar; sculptural arts are present as a competing medium of poetry. This way the two texts are involving the anthropos not only on the level of meaning; instead of the statue's corporeality and the presence of the addressee, they are coming up with the materiality, corporeality of the texts, pointing at themselves. However, the performance of the body by the text happens in a really different way in Shakespeare's and in Lőrinc Szabó's sonnets. These differences can be observed already in the way the texts refer to the monuments preserving the addressee. While in Shakespeare's text we can read the expression „monuments / Of princes” (Booth, 48), that is – though it can be understood as a possessive structure as well – indicating a human shape, in the translation text, as the expression „királyi” [‘kingly’] has an attributive function, and as we can find the noun „oszlop” [‘pillar’] that emphatically misses all references to any human bodies, all the antropomorphic overtones are omitted. (Szabó, 434) These overtones are on the other hand missing from the translation text, because the figure of the addressee does not appear anywhere, we can come to know of its existence only thanks to the objects surrounding this figure, or more exactly, the addressee's body. Such an object is the laurel wreath, that is not present in the Shakespeare-sonnet, and the houses which are trampled [„tiport”] and ripped [„szaggatott”] by war. These houses are in the

English text named as a result of human work, „the work of masonry”, that is again a point of the sonnet that is – unlike the Hungarian text – not free from anthropomorphism. This is becoming even more emphatic by an other difference of the two sonnets: just like in other cases, the personal pronoun appearing in the third line of the English text („But *you* shall shine...”) materializes itself in the Hungarian text as a personal suffix: „őreid” [‘your guards’]. This way the line „tündöklőbb őreid e verssorok...” [‘these lines of the poem are your guards, more shining’] is drawing attention on the sonnet instead of the addressee, and what is more, on its own textuality.

At the same time the two sonnets are pointing at their own texts in highly different ways, while they are competing with the monuments, or columns: „Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / shall outlive this powerful rhyme”. The English text mentions „contents” („But you shall shine more bright in these contents...”), this way building an analogy with the word „monument” and its etymological roots, that is with the Latin word „monere”, which means ‘to consider’, or ‘to remind’. On the other hand, instead of referring to meaning, instead of signing the semantic layer as a holder of the preserving function, the Hungarian text tries to ensure its survival by the lines of the poem [„verssorok”]. This difference between figures of self-reflection, between meaning and materiality will have a role in the following as well, on the one hand because it can mean a turning point in reading on at least two more significant parts of the sonnets – though during this the difference is going to grow even more refined. And on the other hand this difference is going to be crucial, because it will become important from the point of view of the above described relation between medium and anthropos.

And the sonnets will become even more dissimilar from an other aspect as well; their self-definition happens in really different ways, as the expression „living record of your memory...” and its translation, „emléked örök híradás marad” [‘your memory remains an eternal broadcast’] makes it unambiguous. The Shakespeare-text understands its own function as the putting down, fixing, writing down, making note of memories, making its power to survive monuments increased by the again highly anthropomorphous attribute „living”. But this is not the only way to carry out the performance of the addressee, as taking into consideration the etymological roots of the word „record”, it turns out that even if through the Latin word ‘recordari’ the

meanings 'to bring to mind', 'to recall' come to the front, besides this immaterial note-taking, recording, there is an emphatically material recording, inscribing process going on. As the origin of 'recordari' is pointing towards the word 'cor', which means 'heart', and as the declared aim of the text is to preserve the anthropos, we can not forget about the fact that on the level of letters in this sonnet even the performance of the body, the anagrammatic inscription, the graphic recording of the word „cor” happens. What is more, as the attribute „living” refers to this continuous, not only anthropomorphic, but live corporeal presence, and as the word „record” is in the very middle of the text, the anagram „cor” is the heart of the text even visually, making Shakespeare's poem more monument-, or statue-like, giving the text itself a human shape. The event of this word's inscription can contribute to the competing with the statue, as the inscription in itself holds characteristics of a monument. Through this word that is present in the middle of the text, in the moment of self-definition, the sonnet acts self-reflexively, pointing at its medial operations. This way it is using the sonnet itself, its materiality, the medium of language, the spatiality of writing to carry out the performance of the anthropos, or the body, producing a visually appearing body-text – as Christiaan L. Hart Nibbrig states, though speaking about Shakespeare's sonnet he is not starting out of the medial operations of language (Nibbrig, 20). The last line of the text, „You live in this...” while repeating the word „live” and making it refer to the text, creates another figure of self-reflection pointing at the addressee's presence, that is the result of a process going on in the spatiality of the text – instead of the spatiality the sculptural arts can provide. And the last clause – „...and dwell in lover's eyes” – beyond and beside all that, is focusing on the visual emphasis of the spatiality of writing, together with the fact that the self-definitive line quoted earlier contains the word „rhyme”, pointing at the text's acoustic operations. Which means that Shakespeare's text refers to its own acoustic operations as if they were able to fulfil the function of recording as well. This interpretation seems to be supported by a wider context of the sonnets, too, as the eye can operate in the text as the organ of hearing, just like in sonnet 23: „To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit” (Booth, 23). But even if it is so, and even though we can not totally exclude this reading either, the text – unlike its translation – gives priority for visual, instead of acoustic operations in this recording process, this way justifying those commentaries, according to which the word „rhyme” in the sonnets

has the meaning 'poem' (Booth, 228; 347). Even though performing the body in the spatiality of writing this way sets the text, the sonnet itself against the monument, we can not forget about the fact that this process linked with an act of inscription can really be understood as recording. And we can state that because the aim of this process is to fix already existing contents; it completes the „recording” of the addressee’s figure, and the recording of the word „cor”, or 'heart'; this way the medium of language is fixing in this case meanings, which are preceding it.

The eighth line of Lőrinc Szabó’s text, which is strongly self-reflexive as well, shows strong dissimilarities: „emléked örök híradás marad” [‘your memory remains an eternal broadcast’]. First of all because instead of the word „record” it uses „híradás” [‘broadcast’], instead of referring to fixing, it has an other meaning; it is about giving voice, an action that is missing all kind of agency, all kind of active subjectivity. And on the other hand it is different because this broadcasting – and at the same time the medium of this broadcasting – relates to the addressee in a highly different way. Similarly to the first three lines of the translation text mentioned earlier, we face here a much less antropomorphous part of the text as well, because the word „cor”, 'heart' is not present in the translation text, the personal pronoun is missing as well, and what is more, instead of the attribute „living”, we have „örök”, that is 'eternal'. This way this sonnet points beyond the boundaries of the human existence and opens the space for the angel that comes to the front at the end of the text. And additionally in this case, unlike in the Shakespeare-text („record of your memory”), record and memory are not in a possessive structure, but they are identified with each other, or we can interpret it as the overwriting of the memory by the record, as a result of which only the broadcast remains. At the same time, while the poles of the possessive relation are undefinable, as the expression, „record of your memory” can be read as fixed memory, or as a recording process fulfilled by the memory, in the Hungarian text – [‘your memory remains an eternal broadcast’] – instead of the possessive relation we have an act of identification. This is why in the translation text we can not speak about the memory of the broadcasting, while the broadcasting without any memories is a quite unlikely interpretation of the line as well. As not only the meaning, but the materiality of the sonnet will show it as well, the translation text does not only confront us with the identification, and with the overwriting of the

memories with broadcasting, but even with the event of broadcasting without any memories.

This broadcasting will moreover be some kind of a result of the seventh line because of the punctuation of the Hungarian sonnet, because of the colon closing this line: „s Mars kardja sujt, s gyors tüze ránk omol:...” [‘and the sword of Mars strikes down and its fast fire collapses upon us:...’]. As the sounds of the line „r”, „s”, „d” are repeated in the word „híradás”, the expression „örök híradás marad” [‘remains an eternal broadcast’] can be understood as the result, or remnant that is left after the war’s fire or power, that relies, or that is based on the strong acoustic operations of the line. The broadcasting on that point is nothing more already but the emitting of sounds; it simply happens through the materiality of sounds, which are present instead of the memory, and this way we can call them a broadcast without any contents, without any preceding meanings. Unlike the recording in Shakespeare’s sonnet, the broadcasting here is using the acoustic layers of the text instead of the visual presence of language. The word „híradás” [‘broadcast’] repeating the sounds of the previous line accomplishes this broadcasting by the strong, accumulating sound-emitting. It happens without memory and meaning, without any human presence; instead of all that we only have the materiality of sounds, and this way the text is not only referring to the event of the broadcasting, but even performs it by the voice-giving, acoustic operations of language. This acoustic presentification gets an important emphasis at the end of the translation text: „Míg a harsonás angyal föl nem ébreszt...” [‘Until the angel’s trumpet awakes you...’] And not only because of the acoustic repetitions of the word „harsonás”, that can be understood, or heard as an acoustic variant of the word „híradás” [‘broadcast’], but because it situates the angel’s arrival in the future. And as the angel, according to its Latin origins, is a bringer of messages, the meaning of this broadcast will become accessible in the future as well. The acoustic operations of the medium of language and its immaterial, meaningful layers are strengthening each other on this point of the sonnet. And what is more, this figure – that is beyond the boundaries of the human existence, the corporeal and the material – is not an active agent of the text, it is not blowing the trumpet, it is only a holder, an owner and a symbol in itself. The word „harsonás” [‘that who has a trumpet’] emits a sound by itself, by the sounds of the letters themselves, by the materiality of language. At that point the statement at the

beginning of the sonnet seems to be fulfilled I quoted earlier, according to which the lines of the sonnet („verssorok”) are fixing the addressee, unlike in Shakespeare’s text where the contents are doing the same. The sword of Mars in the translation text is deleting „content”, putting acoustic traits in a central position. Broadcasting happens by the materiality of the sounds instead of meaning, as an emitting of sounds without using the level of semantics; at that point language communicates itself. And as regards the competing relations with the monument we can state that while the monument is trying to save the addressee by an antropomorph body, that is without any languages, the translation text produces a body of language that is lacking any kind of antropomorphous shape. And as not only the meaning but the anthropos is disappeared behind the broadcasting as well, the text is producing a body by its own materiality; it does not want to fix or save the addressee, the medium is present here through its constitutive operation. On the basis of all these we can say that in Lőrinc Szabó’s translation the anthropos is performed by language communicating itself, by its own, acoustic materiality, by the acoustic operations of the medium of language.

This way the differences between the two texts seem to be present mostly from the point of view of recording, fixing in contents or emitting sounds, and regarding the relation of anthropos and medium. But before taking these differences into account, we have to ask the question again, what theoretical discourses can be the most relevant here, or what kind of contexts the texts in question are mobilizing helping us to rethink them on the basis of these present perspectives. Even though we could understand this difference from the point of view of media history, as recording, and making a content widely available is a question of the age of book-printing, or at least of writing on paper, and as the radio and the gramophone serve as technical background for the emitting of the human sound without any human presence, this interpretation does not tell us too much about the relation between medium and anthropos. Because even if media anthropology and these shortly mentioned analogies of media history are in a deep relationship, the differences between the two texts are pointing at the change in the relation between medium and anthropos Heidegger, Plessner and Leroi-Gourhan are discussing, in a more straightforward manner. Reading this difference from the point of view of media history could offer

nothing else but an analogy for this difference, without really pointing at these relations.

The perspective of media anthropology would at the same time be much more relevant here, in case it could not only contribute to the relations of the addressee and the text, thematized by the sonnets themselves, but to the understanding of the relation between medium and anthropos, thanks to the materiality of the texts. And the differences between the texts at the same time can draw our attention to medial precededness. Regarding the relations of medium and anthropos we can say that while Shakespeare's sonnet did the recording of some content, that had already been at hand before, producing a body-text by fixing the addressee's body within it, or at least intending to do so. The translation text's aim was to perform a body using its own materiality, and this way it could be called more like a text-body. Lőrinc Szabó's text this way makes available the experience of medial precededness, as in this case the acoustic operations of the medium of language are performing the anthropos. The medial precededness of the anthropos can happen just because the medium is not only functioning here as a carrier, and is not only recording previously existing contents, but it is present as a constitutive, productive operation as well. This way the translation text does not only point at the always already valid relatedness of the human being and technology, but taking a step forward it presents the anthropos as the product of the medium, it puts the anthropos into a subsequent position.

The difference between the ways of performing the body are emphasized by the last lines of the texts too, as besides the affirmative closure „You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes” we have the causative structure: „versem és a szeretők szeme éltet” [‘My poem and the lovers' eyes make you live’]. This sentence of the translation text points at the way it is performing the body; that this performance happened thanks to the constitutive operations of the medium, the materiality of language. This way it is really only Benjamin's above quoted insight that can describe how these differences concerning affirmativity, or the materiality of language, creating a body-text or a text-body are not excluding the possibility to read the Hungarian text as a translation of Shakespeare's sonnet. The two texts are in many ways dissimilar, but even though they are trying to compete the spatiality of the sculptural arts using different tools, we can still handle them as a text and its translation. But these strong semantic dissimilarities are not pointing toward a tension between meaning and materiality in

either of the texts, because their self-reflexive, self-identifying gestures seem to connect to the operations of their texts. On the level of meaning and on the basis of our present perspectives the most important differences are culminating in how the sonnets mark their own methods. And while recording and broadcasting are really far from each other, this is not a difference of two distinct parts of the texts, but it is very much there by the materiality of language as well; in Shakespeare's sonnet the recording happens by the anagrammatic, visual operations of language, that is, by writing, the translation text fulfills this broadcasting by its acoustic operations. As the semantic dissimilarities between recording and broadcasting are parallel with the differences regarding the perspectives of media anthropology, we are dealing with two sonnets which are consequently following their own self-defining gestures, which are very well aware of their medial operations; the text and its translation are accomplishing the performance of the body by their own materiality. The semantic and medial differences this way seem to be closely connected in both texts separately. Translation happens between a recording process that is dealing with content, and with the acoustic, productive operations of the translation text's lines on the one hand, and on the other hand between positions of media anthropology.

From the point of view of translation theory on the other hand it will gain special significance that the text of Lőrinc Szabó is performing the anthropos through its productive, medial operations, that instead of recording or translating contents, it can be present as a translation text through its own materiality. As the semantic dissimilarities themselves would not make it possible to handle Lőrinc Szabó's text as a translation – though meaning never exists without some kind of materiality – it is the materiality of the text that makes it a translation that „follows” Shakespeare's sonnet, to use a Benjaminian term invented in *The Task of the Translator*. But it is not by chance that Benjamin's notion of translation points at a feature of language through the sonnets discussed above, that comes into focus for him while reading the *Genesis*. This act of creation that has a deep and clear relation to language is highly material in nature in Benjamin's interpretation – even though there is no reference to any kind of materiality in the text apart from the creation of man – because the act of creation happens because of the constitutive operations of the materiality of language. Benjamin is referring to a rhythm of the act of creation here that is established by the repetitions, recurring elements of the text; the creation is

accomplished by the repetitive presence of the words: „Let there be—He made (created)—He named” (Benjamin 1996: 68). The materiality of the translation text – even if it is not only present in its rhythm in this case, but more emphatically thanks to its general acoustic features – has a similar constitutive function, even though we have to note that the theological references of Benjamin’s concept and in his theory of language could hardly be relevant in our context accomplished by media anthropology.

Benjamin’s ideas about the language of man can serve as an important analogy for the material basis of this constitutive operation on the other hand because according to him language does not exist in its verbal contents (Benjamin 64), and because „nothing is communicated *through* language”, but in language; language is not presented here as a tool for communication. And this is exactly the point where the constitutive function of language seems to be connected to the insights of media anthropology discussed above while reading the translation text. According to these, the technical is not present as a tool belonging to man, but as a tool for the invention of the human, and on the other hand the medium – in this case the medium of language – does not get a position subsequent to the anthropos, but as we could see, we can talk about the medial precededness of the anthropos because of the constitutive operations of the medium. The notion of the anthropos understood as a product of the medium and the human being’s medial precededness seem to be present in the translation text in a quite similar sense Benjamin is talking about; language communicating itself, language in its constitutive, productive role – this way getting far from language understood as a tool for communication – has a position in this text that is able to create the anthropos. This is the way a literary text could establish a dialogue with some insights of media anthropology, and this is the way it could throw a light upon some of these insights and how they can really work. The questions concerning the relation between medium and anthropos could be reunderstood in this theoretical context shaped here through the constitutive, productive presence of the medium of language.

Altogether we can say that in case we do not understand technology as a simple tool, and we move away from the notion of the medium based exclusively on the function of recording and carrying contents, we find that man and technology essentially belong together. The two texts and the differences between them throw light on the

insight that – because of this constitutive operation – the production of the anthropos can happen by language, by the literary text as well. Which means, we can attribute such an automatism to the medium of language, that can get into dialogue with Plessner's notion of the human being, according to which man is mediated towards him/herself. On the other hand the translation of Lőrinc Szabó pointed at another possibility of the literary text as well, drawing our attention to a way of performing the anthropos where the materiality of the text communicating itself, and the medial precededness of the anthropos guarantees the fulfillment of this performing act. In this context of media anthropology and while reading the translation of Shakespeare's sonnet 55 it could become visible that the literary text can confront its reader with the experience of medial precededness.

Translation according to these happens not only between meanings and contents but with the participation of the materiality of language, and the constitutive presence of the two texts' medial operations; this is why we can read the sonnet of Lőrinc Szabó as a translation of Shakespeare's text, and this is why we can place them beside each other. And as it is possible because of their visual and acoustic features, a parallel reading will become imaginable, where the productive materiality of language situates them in the presence of accessibility. Such a scene of translation, and the parallel presence of the texts is guaranteed by the medium of language, not understood as a tool but as a constituting operation. And in case it is possible, that we can place these two texts beside each other because of the materiality of language, this aspect necessarily matters when we are choosing our comparables, and while we are doing comparative reading; as parallel presence is always there for comparative literature, this is a perspective we have to take into consideration. Reading Shakespeare through Lőrinc Szabó on the basis of all these means gaining a standpoint formulated by the parallel textual presence of the two texts. This presence established by the constitutive operations of language serves as a basis of this standpoint that could make the difference concerning the relation between medium and anthropos accessible.

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II. Prose through Prose

Tibor Bónus

The Heterogeneity of the Senses
Marcel Proust through Dezső Kosztolányi

Dezső Kosztolányi, probably the greatest figure of 20th century Hungarian prose, during writing his last (finished) novel, *Édes Anna* published in 1926 in an interview where, however, not characteristic of him – since he always avers from interpreting his own works, especially in case of unfinished texts – he speaks about the attitude of his work in progress and for the question of a journalist („Who do you like among the foreign writers?” answers this: „The French. Primarily Proust: he is the closest to me.”⁶⁶ Without starting a philological investigation without much probable prospect (the library of Kosztolányi fell victim to his terhelts son and World War II.) about when and which works of Proust, what parts of *À la recherche du temps perdu* were read by the author, from a letter dated from 1925 and an essay written in 1935 we may draw the conclusion that the grandiose novel of Proust (the last volume of which, *Le temps retrouvé* was published in 1927) was an important reading for Kosztolányi, moreover, he also knew the – then not very extensive – critical reception of the French writer deceased in November 1922, as Kosztolányi subscribed for the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (N.R.F).⁶⁷ In his newspaper article entitled *Short and Long Sentence* he argues for the poetic justification of not only the narrative but also the, for which he provides the translation of two vast sentences of *Du côté de chez Swann*⁶⁸ which, by the way, follows the complexity of the original more accurately than the only Hungarian translation from Albert Gyergyai which was published a couple of decades later. There is no doubt that in case we wanted to ask about the effect of Proust novels on Kosztolányi’s prose, instead of a genetic philological research a comparative investigation focusing on the two literary corpuses would be a more beneficial solution. Beneficial but not satisfying.

However, before we are compelled to give up a comparative analysis and its established methods, it is not uninteresting to review the strong arguments for it. First and foremost such a common denominator which (however the product of a preliminary comparison itself) could so to say secure the starting point of the comparative operations and may – with its strong conventions – avert the suspicion or accusation of arbitrariness or a shallow, *ad hoc* comparison which can never entirely be eliminated. Beyond the temporal proximity and the aforementioned philological traces we may refer to the fact that as Proust is an outstanding reader of his age, so is Kosztolányi, and they not only have outstanding literary skills but they

⁶⁶ SZOMBATHY Viktor, *Kosztolányi Dezső az irodalomról, Európa csődjéről és a mai ember iránynélküliségéről* = Prágai Magyar Hírlap, 1925. február 28.

⁶⁷ See in: KOSZTOLÁNYI Dezső, *Levelek – Naplók*, Osiris, Budapest, 1996, 510. It is about a letter written on 7. June 1925. to an unknown editor, during writing *Anna Édes*, in which this is written: „Kedves szerkesztő uram, küldöm a kötetet s a N. R. F. két *Hommage*-át; a Jacques Rivière-számot, melyben a nagy Proust-tanulmány van [this is the work of one of the best Proust-interpreters of the age who was a late friend of Proust, by the way – my interjection: B.T.], s a Joseph Conrad-számot. (A Proust-számot, bár tűvé tettem a könyvtárat, nem tudtam előkeríteni. Úgy látszik, lába kelt, valaki ellopta.) Szeretettel jó híve: Kosztolányi Dezső”

⁶⁸ Cf.: KOSZTOLÁNYI Dezső, *Rövid és hosszú mondat* = Uő, *Nyelv és lélek*, Osiris, Budapest, 1999, 242-244.

have also outrun the critical understanding of their age as readers of literary texts, attesting to a *deeper understanding of reading or interpretation*, to the (...)

All this, of course, may not only be obvious from their critical essays or analytic papers (as separately the reception of both authors has revealed, analysed and processed, even if on very different standards) but also plays a crucial role in the formation and readability of their narrative prose which, however, has only been exploited with a wide-spreading force by the Proust-interpretation when it comprehended the whole text of *Recherche* not only as the story of becoming a writer but also as the narrative staging and/or as the learning of reading, this way creating the most memorable event of the impact history of the novel.⁶⁹ Hereinafter it will be important – as we will see – that in Kosztolányi's narrative prose *Édes Anna* may be called a „turning point” where reading, as reading another person or reading of an event (the murder), namely a sas communication and sociality, moreover, the elementary momentum of history gets onto the forefront of a Kosztolányi text in its most complex and most explicit form. We do not even have to say that not independently of the self-interpreting tendencies of the text, the conditions or possibilities of self-reading. According to a comparative interpretation to a common basis or even to its exploitation the answering of the question may be added, what similarities and differences may be observed not only in the writing style or prose style of these two authors (a closer examination should be given to the very much pertinent statement, according to which both of them converged the language of prose to poetry) but also in their perception about the readers. In case the reading of reading could be entirely objectified, namely if we could regard reading – in so far presumed in opposition with the spirit of the concerning texts of both Proust and Kosztolányi – readable, and this way its reading well outlined. However, if there is a moral in which the texts of these two authors (may) share, it is, first and foremost, nothing less than that the boundaries of reading can difficultly be drawn, the contrast of reading and non-reading cannot be stabilised. A comparative analysis, however, must necessarily proceed from concept of reading which is previously located/limited and may be considered as a common basis and also must previously presuppose the objectivisable nature of the reading of reading in order to be able to depict the similarities and differences between reading method and reading perception of these two authors. Of course, this does not mean that we should relinquish among others their approach to language and subject, their relations in, to and out of literature, moreover about aesthetic experience (and in it about perception, about the correlations of perception and abstraction, sensation and logos, sensaion and spirit, or affect and language), about literary canons, about the historicity of literature or even the systematic and extended articulation of their ideas formed about the existence of history, and even the comparison of these aware of the impossibility in question. Not indeed!

It is far from being sure, however, that the most effective form of this is a comparative analysis, together with or despite that at the moment there is not really visible a generic boundary relying on which the strong convention of such an investigation, the expectation coming from the (scientific) rules of literature-interpretation would be by-

⁶⁹ A couple of these important readings: Deleuze, Genette, de Man, Kassel, Bowie, Alan Watt, J. Hillis Miller, Jacques Derrida.

passed or circumvented. And while the boundaries of this, moreover, the inauthenticity of such a comparison may be made obvious even beyond the foregoing to which it is enough to think about the long line of studies or monographies, about their illuminating „power”, interpreting „effectiveness” (albeit implicitly there are better or less wrong among them) which consecutively wear such or similar names: *Proust and Nerval*, *Proust and Balzac*, *Proust and Joyce*, *Proust and Flaubert* or *Kosztolányi and Krúdy*, *Kosztolányi and Thomas Mann*, *Kosztolányi and Milán Füst*, and so on. What is due to which we may feel that the comparative endeavour which is very much widespread, a little obsolete but exceeded not really in its structure but rather in its domain, thematic field is inauthentic? As while the field of comparative literary studies has broadened to much in the last decade(s) that it covers the phenomena, practices and institutions of culture in its most widely understood sense, a significant part of works listed here remained ultimately – Jonathan Culler is right – nothing more than „szofisztikáltan modernizált változata a hatás- és forráskutatásnak,”⁷⁰ namely the classic practice of comparative understanding of literature. And though it is true that the comparative studies turning into cultural studies have simply turned away from reading literary texts or rather read them symptomatically (this way eliminating exactly their literary specificity), and that in opposition to them the comparative procedures remaining in the field of literature at least guard the commitment of literary reading that *it reads literary text in their original language with close reading*, nevertheless these latter ones (too) inevitably bring the objects of comparison and the starting and ending points of reading to a common denominator along some kind of a (generic, thematic or historical) norm or model. It can be stated that while every reading is a kind of comparison, the literary scientific practice of this is only able to preserve the unmistakable uniqueness of certain texts with little chance in their countersign that one which is never some idiom sufficient only for itself but as the Saussureian identity of the linguistic sign, it can only come into existence as a network of endless differences. Comparison, even if it happens not between oeuvres but between certain texts, as an extended intertextual understanding it is under the necessity of looking over the inscription and textual event-like nature of the individual text (which is, of course, inaccessible as a phenomenon).

I have a strong suspicion that all this could only be avoided (and maybe not even entirely) by the considerably circuitous but mainly extensive printing technical solution which signals the arising parallels and connection possibilities in the analysing comments (and with their mediation into the primer texts) of the passages of the texts of *À la recherche du temps perdu* and *Édes Anna* in such a way that it places them in distinctly made up juxtaposed columns, keeping loose the threads of their relations and collations in absence of relevant clear indicators. This typographical method (the original model of which would be Jacques Derrida's book entitled *Glas* which joins the comments on the texts of Hegel and Jean Genet in this way), however, is not possible here, so we can only link together or inside each other the possibly close readings which appeal to the unique and in so far incommensurable (too) performance of certain textual idioms, that we have to decide about the focus of the reader's attention, in this case, we cannot deny, in favour of the Proust novel. This decision is certainly not only printing technical in character and not even justified by

⁷⁰ I.m., 264.

argumentation technical considerations. A comparative analysis – which cannot be carried out in its systematic nature – between the ways of life of these two authors would definitely reveal – which may perhaps turn out from the comments on the two texts – that in Proust the conception and staging of sensation and understanding, perception and reading are characterised by such subtlety and complexity which Kosztolányi could not approximate even in his most successful texts, or could only approximate it. The uniquely organised interplay of such intelligence and sensuality, cultural memory and linguistic invention is probably unequalled in the prose literature of the 20th century, it is only Joyce's *Ulysses*, perhaps, which may be set beside it. This is not contradicted at all by the fact that *Édes Anna* is kept count of as the magistral text of not only the Hungarian but also the European narrative prose, as the three other novels of Kosztolányi, among which *Pacsirta* – published in 1924 – comes near to *Édes Anna* in its poetical construction and semantical complexity. The following reading at important points highlights the interpretation of Proust's novel, affixing some concerning possible readings of Kosztolányi's work and a closer commentary of certain highlighted passages in the main text or in the form of footnotes. These primarily focus on the functional correlations of sight and imagery while it must be remembered that in case of *Édes Anna* when reading the („critical”) reading the topology of senses and with it apprehension of a more extended *aisthesis* which by a long way exceeds the artistic framing of the aesthetic is different from the one on *Recherche*, and gets a role accessible only by the punctilious and comprehensive reading (for which there is no, or only tangential, possibility here, as the Proust interpretation of the Proust text can also only undertake to highlight a couple of aspects) of the unique Hungarian text. At the same time it is an important parallel between two authors that the production of both of them and with it their conception of literature has for long been misunderstood in terms of the formula of an aestheticism or „l'art pour l'art" which was not independent in case of either of them from the projection of their earlier writings on their later ones (in case of Proust among others consequently misreading the notable *Contre Sainte-Beuve*). There is no way now to perform that theoretical framing work which would make visible that the unity and at the same time unreducible difference detectable and understandable in his linguistic and literary essays Kosztolányi fits to the linguistic and literary interpretation formed along the trope of the *symbol*, while by Proust we find such disconnections of language and medium, such radical operations of these which do not circumscribe the performance of the *allegory* by the ideologue of the organic character of language from which the Hungarian poet could not or could only partially prescind. Among the very complicated interpretative activation of technical mediums (which in a way put the perceiving apparatus outside) in the followings we focus on sound and image, on hearing and seeing, on their understanding, on the relation of sensation and understanding, when we put into the focus of our reading the role of the telephone and the photo camera in the novel.

In the report that we have already cited Dezső Kosztolányi says this about his novel *Édes Anna* in progress:

You know, I don't really like talking about my plans because if something is a finished plan today may be destroyed tomorrow. But I am working on a novel at the moment which will be published by Nyugat in the summer and also by Genius later. This reflects a completely new approach to people, and this approach is that we are not separate but in each other, reality cannot be grasped and people live really only in

each others' imagination. This novel is a mirror room where every figure is seen in hundreds of versions. What the truth is and what are people like: indefinite. This is what my novel is about. I will keep to myself its topic, its content, for the time being but I am very much interested.

It is remarkable how the author lives the creation of his own novel as yet blind consequences of the adventures of an epistemological discernment. In the novel several times a realisation is uttered, according to which the „inside” of the other person can never be seen, and is ultimately unknowable, people are impenetrable to each other. A similar realisation associates with the voice of the narrator as with the voices of the characters, both in a direct and an indirect way.⁷¹ The reading of the other structurally contains a hypothetical momentum which we may „identify” as the impossible possibility of reading and which proves to be replaceable from the interpretation of the murder to the interpretation of the novel.

The split – which is unshakable but doomed constantly to forgetting – between what the world, the people seem to be and what they „really” are in the novel – the sound, the hearing, namely the ear, more precisely never completely separately from the temporality of language – implicitly the sight, the distinguished medium, apparatus of the eye. The difference between the external, namely the appearance and the so called internal gives the chance (and with it impossibility) of reading and interpretation in a way that the latter pole of the opposition – following from its mode of living – is confined from the possibility of factual reference, so knowledge about it will remain unsubstantiated for ever. It is exactly the invisibility of the inside which signifies this unknownness which does not mean that eyesight would transmit more reliable ideas of the world than the other senses, however the distinction of sight is undeniable in the millennial tradition of epistemology. The testimony of sight, the certifying process of the eyewitness seems to be more reliable than hearsay, hearing and with it the testifying medium of hearsay. The eye is considered to be a stronger witness than the ear and these two senses (/sensory organs) – as the self-interpretive mediums of the novel – get into tension with each other which is a tension simultaneously between what is language (sound) and what is external to language (image) and between the pictorial and sounding aspects of language. The faith in the

⁷¹ In the internal stream of consciousness-like monologue of Mrs. Víznyó told in free reported speech, in which the woman *musters* the maids, there is the following sentence: „Ki tudja, mi lakozik bennük?”(27.) When Anna spent her first night at Víznyó's, the woman „kulccsal zárta be a szalonba s a fürdőszobába nyíló ajtókat. – Félsz? – kérdezte Víznyó. – Nem. De mégis. Az első éjszaka.”(64.) When Mrs. Víznyó trusts Anna we read this: „Elmúltak azok az idők (...), mikor töprengett, vajon mit is forgathat fejében a cseléd.”(74.) The narrator remarks about poor people at one place: „Csak egymás mellett élnek, folyton dolgozva, önmagukba zárva, egymásnak áthatolhatatlanul, nagy távolságban.”(57.) To be strange to each other according to the novel's example does not remain a sheerly socially confinable phenomenon, so the force of the quoted sentence may be extended to every inter-personal relation. In Anna's perspective opening to the new place the following appears: „Dajkálni szeretett volna itt is valakit, meséket, versikéket mondani. De mit tehetett ezekkel a komoly felnőttekkel, akik külön, zárt életükkel jöttek-mentek körülötte?”(68.) In the narration of the bewilderment and fear after the murder we read this: „- Érthetetlen – dünnyögte Moviszterné. – Az ember félni kezd, nem tudja, kikkel él együtt. Szörnyűség.”(169.) And finally the narrator remarks about the judge presiding in the trial: „Ő, aki már hozzászokott ahhoz, hogy az emberek nem ismerhetik meg egymást, teljesítette kötelességét.”(182.) The narrator joins a similar realisation to his own discursive perspective: „Ilyenkor egy darabig még vártak, majd szóltanak, ki tudja milyen gondolatokba merülve tovább bandukoltak.”(92.) And in the self-suggesting internal speech of Dr. Moviszter such an assumption is formulated as well: „és nézd meg az elnököt is, aki megigazítja öreg, kék szemén az olcsó pápaszemet, és vakarni kezdi a fülét, hogy ne is sejtse, mi forog a fejében, mi zajlik a szívében.”(186.)

eye, in the sight is at the same time the faith in the body as a phenomenon, and it is not by chance that Nietzsche says that „a testbe vetett hit egyelőre még mindig erősebb hit a szellembbe vetett hitnél; és aki alá akarja ásni – teszi hozzá -, az éppen a szellembbe vetett hit tekintélyét ássa igazán alá.”⁷² The body also has a key role in sustaining faith in the self-identity of personality as long as it is the body, its visual form lends the appearance of unifiedness to the consciousness.

At the same time it can be said that in the impenetrability of the other the other may be understood not only in an interpersonal relation but at least as the other of sensation, in case of seeing as the structural but never objectifiable difference of perceptual and spiritual sight. Namely, not simply the sensation of the so called *internal* world – its abstraction – is presupposed by some kind of a blindness, and through this the unknowable but that visible, phenomenal, *outside* world as well in which the body also appears, and which previously could confront the outside exactly due to its knowability, namely evident visibility. To put it another way the unbeknown of the world „prior” to the medium of language and spirit, the (impossible) questioning of which may lead to challenging the concept and meaning of human just like to approving of the other understood in the interpersonal relation (myself in them as the other) as unknown. The other is far from being the designation of an inaccessible meaning or essence, not some hidden, cryptic – but principally revealable – knowledge or sense here. The other is a secret – we may say after the philosopher – namely, it is a secret because it is the other.⁷³ The novel of Kosztolányi produces the delicate – often evident, conventional and therefore hardly seeable – staging of the differences of visible and invisible, sensual and beyond senses, pictorial and linguistic, visual and imaginary which by creating a rich semiotic net determine the reading of the text and make it essentially unclosable.

Presumably we do not risk much if we state that besides Proust’s novel, mostly the texts of Nietzsche must have been a great influence to the author of *Édes Anna*; at the same time the remarkable Proust readings of the last decades have convincingly demonstrated that the effect of the German philosopher on the French novel writer is probably greater or at least as significant as the philosophy of Bergson⁷⁴ among which the latter one is a much more well known connection since it was a starting point for numerous analyses. Albeit it may be solicitous to create thetic correspondences between the narrators of the novels and the utterances of the author and a commissioned speaker (...) The narrator of *Recherche* contemplates his relation to their old and faithful servant, Françoise, about that the differences between personalities may probably be traced back to differences in modes of sensation which are given not social but already natural dimension in the argumentation:

amiből azt is megértettem, hogy nem csak a fizikai világ különbözik elénk nyújtott látványától [*diffère de l’aspect sous lequel nous le voyons* – különbözik attól az aspektusból, amelyből látjuk]; hogy talán minden valóság éppolyan különböző attól, amelyet közvetlenül vélünk felfogni, és amelyet oly eszmék segítségével formálunk, amelyek nem mutatkoznak, de cselekednek, mint ahogy a fák, a nap és az ég se

⁷² Friedrich NIETZSCHE: *A hatalom akarása*, Ford. ROMHÁNYI TÖRÖK Gábor, Budapest, 2000, 282-283.

⁷³ Cf. Jacques DERRIDA: „*Autrui est secret, parce qu’il est autre*” = Uő, *Papier Machine*, Paris, 2001, 367-398.

⁷⁴ See for instance: Large DUNCAN, *Proust and Nietzsche*, Oxford U.P, Oxford, New York, 2001.

volnának olyanok, amilyeneknek látjuk őket, ha olyan lények néznének rájuk, akiknek másképp formált szemük van, mint a miénk, vagy ha ehhez a munkához más érzékük volna, mint a szem, amely a fáknak, az égnek és a napnak a megfelelőjét vetítené elénk [donneraient – vagyis itt az adás, az adomány, az adódás eseményéről van szó, nem pedig, hisz épp a vizualitás hiányáról beszél a szöveg, a vetítésről], de nem a látással felfoghatót.⁷⁵

Sensory organs, among them mostly the eye, are apparatuses which mediate the things of the world to us according to their own laws, and the active, creating work cannot reveal itself directly since to that we only have access through these. This natural dimension favouring the relation of known things and the cognitive action then turns back to an interpersonal relation since a couple of lines later the narrator already says that renouncing firm knowledge which is an effect of the strong suspicion of the performativity of the senses, leads to the situation that the relation of the I and the other should not be conceived as a sheer reflective, objectivising, presentness-like relation but rather more like *an endless mirror-game of beliefs projected on each others' shadows* in which we can only have hypothetical but never justifiable knowledge about the inner characteristics and feelings of the other – as on this analogy of our own.

Így hát ő adta nekem elsőnek azt az ötletet [*idée*], hogy az ember nem áll, mint eddig hittem, világosan és mozdulatlanul előttünk, jó tulajdonságaival és hibáival, terveivel és bennünket érintő szándékaival (mint egy kert, amelyet virágáyaival egy rácskerítésen át nézünk), hanem egy árny, amelyen sose tudunk áthatolni, amelyet nem ismerhetünk közvetlenül, amellyel kapcsolatban számos hiedelmünk van a szavak és még a cselekvések segélyével is, de ezek mind csak csonka és egyébként ellentmondó felvilágosításokat adnak nekünk, egy olyan árny, amelyben egymás után [*tour à tour* – hol ezt, hol azt képzeljük el, vagyis felváltva, mintegy oszcillációszerűen, miközben persze, önkéntelenül, lineárisan is, egymás után] egyforma valószínűséggel képzelhetjük el, hogy szeretet és gyűlölet ragyognak benne. (78-79.)

Establishing the active and performative senses cannot be made phenomenal exactly because it is the framework condition of the world given itself as a phenomenon which simultaneously stands inside and outside of it, in an ungrippable borderline situation, in an unreducable difference which cannot be accessed as presentness. We cannot hear hearing, only the heard, we do not see sight, only the seen, sensation can only access sensation, mediation itself through traces of stimuli in certain senses with the help of aspects given about the world, in its medium, so unmediated. This is an all-time difference of knowledge and action, cognition and happening which is on the other hand a difference of time and space in which the positioning act of both the senses and language resist cognition which is, at the same time, enabled by them. Time, which is decisive in Proust's novel, we may say it plays a central role, practicably can be apprehended as the product of the intervention of mediality which cannot be eliminated, in so far as it is a phenomenalised aspect of the irreducible – however only accessible in its consequences, never as a

⁷⁵ Marcel PROUST, *Az eltűnt idő nyomában III. Guermantes-ék*, Fordította: GYERGYAI Albert, Budapest, 1983, 78. In the followings I am going to refer to this edition in brackets after the quotations.

presentness – difference between the world generated in the senses and the outside world which is hypothesized as the surface of sensation which can never be reached. Space which is always given in the novel as joined with time, in some kind of a necessary connection is also a form which is generated only in sensation and is not an attribute of an outside world, a world which is supposed to be independent of sensation. As Nietzsche writes: „Az idő önmagában egy abszurditás: csak egy érző lény számára van idő. És ugyanez a helyzet a térrel is.”⁷⁶

Although the discourse is primarily ran by pictorial relations, that component of time is written both in the intervening momentum of time and in the all-time difference of perceiver and perceived, seen and sight, which component stages this difference in the transferring movements of image and sound. Sound and time which make the directness of image and space impossible cannot be made direct either, they cannot be torn away from each others' intervention, namely their own phenomenal transformation, medialisation. At the same time it can be said about this short passage that by means of the duett of love and hate and the suspicion of lie it alludes to the fourth, fifth and sixth books of the novel in which to the love to Albertine (which seriously starts or re-starts already in the second part of *Le côté de Guermantes*) the possibility of misknowing, moreover, ultimately, the example of unknowability of the other may be associated. The metaphor of the shadow in the quotation strengthens the circle of notions of photography which – as we will immediately see – is supported by numerous other similes and metaphors and which openly becomes the allegory of interpersonal relations in a part not long before the cited passage.

However, this passage of text would also require longer and more detailed commentary in which the role of psychological codes is also important, here we are under the necessity of highlighting the interpretation of the I and the other and the interpretation which brings the analogy of photo camera into action again.

The narrator in this passage, which comes a couple of days after recounting the theatrical performance, talks about that the servants whom he hired during his life serve as the *negatives* of his own character which have made his own deficiencies *readable* for him in a reflexive relation which is at the same time built on connection:

Ugyanis később másokat és másféléket is felfogadhattam, viszont ezek egyfelől tele voltak a cselédség általános hibáival, másrészt nálam amellet még egykettőre átalakultak. Mivel a támadás törvényei maguk ellen hívják a visszavágásait, mindannyian, csak hogy ne érezzék jellemem érdekesebb vonásait, a magukét ugyanakkor annál simábbá alakították, mindig a megfelelő helyen; ezzel szemben felhasználták az én hiányosságaimat [*lacunes*], s helyükre meg az ő saját előnyeiket telepítették. Ezeket a hiányosságokat éppoly kevésbé ismertem, akár az ő helyzetükből adódó szembetűnő hibákat, épp azért, mert hiányosságok voltak. Viszont az én alkalmazottaim, miközben lassanként elromlottak, nagyon is megismertettek velük. A mindig változatlan, szerzett hibáik révén ismertem meg az én szintén változatlan és természetes hibáimat, s az ő jellemük afféle negatív levonata [*épreuve*] volt az enyémnek. (75-76.)

„Épreuve” means experience, evidence and resistance at the same time besides these the meanings: proof and photographic negatives are important here which puts

⁷⁶ Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *Le livre du philosophe*, 84.

photography and writing into a metafictional parallel. The material character of light, the forgotten materiality of the image is pictured by tactile senses here which by means of the direct closeness prescribed by the connection between the one who senses and the thing being sensed – beside taste – is the one in the greatest opposition with the sense of sight which is, in this sense, is the least material one of our senses as long as it does not require any kind of material directness between the thing being sensed and the one who senses. Later we may observe that its contrast with sound will be the contrast of the impersonal distance and the sound presupposing affective resonance while exactly in this distance it also shows relation with sound. It must be remembered that in the time of Proust, the turn of the century technology was not on the level of development as today, thus the synchronic mediatedness of the motion picture seems to be impossible which becomes important on behalf of telephony because by this time sound can already create the illusion of presentness even between great distances. The cited excerpt is not about outside, visible characteristics but about so called inner characteristics which cannot be seen by themselves not only because there is no self-knowledge without the intervention of the other but also because these characteristics are abstractions subtracted from *actions*, generalisations, ideas which do not govern but interpret them afterwards, and they present our personality as lifted out of time, constant and operating along laws. Just now in the interpretation of the work of the senses we could see that our performative performance conceived as activity can never be made continuous with the momentum of knowing and cognition, exactly because it functions as the framework condition of this.

The military metaphor activated in the citation does not only signal the closeness of the recountment of the visit by Saint-Loup but also reminds us to the Nietzschean association of truth and power, to the antinomic correlation of knowing conceived as analogical power and adequacy. It is meaningful to regard it from this point that the physical laws of photography may produce a parallel with interpersonal relations (the pair of maid and landlord will shortly, on the scene of the phonecall, be switched by the pair of commander and subaltern) interpreted on the basis of the example of military force that the photographic negative is imagined as a pattern of a kind of material, physical contact that activates the sense of touching and is based on force. The photo negative as some sort of a silhouette, a lack that gained contour at the same time transforms not in a natural way but by that artificial act of reading from lack into positive knowledge, image or idea which – as we shall see it – cannot be made independent from sound, from the sense of hearing even as an idealisation. The reading of a negative formed by means of connective, material-like movement, so on the basis of a pattern of an arbitrariness which is in itself void of the duplicational momentum of representation also makes the cognitive seeing in a spiritual sense to be a projection which is defined not only or not exclusively by the reflection of the seen. The photograph and the interpersonal relations modelled with it, the operation of self-knowledge by the pattern of witness is staged and interpreted along such a material mode of connection which is heterogeneous with its representational logic associated to the circle of ideas of the testament on seeing, witnessing and imagery. Azzal, amely a jelenlétet, szemlélő és szemlélt egymásnak való jelenlétét is paradigmaticusan feltételezi, miközben a tapintás a maga anyagszerű közvetlenségével éppen a látásra hagyatkozó reprezentációs logikában elfedett redukálhatatlan távolságra, s így a kép eredendő illuzórikusságára hívhatja fel a figyelmet. All this, along the circle of notions of tactile feeling and grazing

connection, supported by the meaning of the proof of „épreuve” may get into relation with the literal act of writing or printing which also might mean the difference between the material-like sight and the picture developed by it, and might even lead to the antinomic connections of the document or archive and the witnessing, to the law defining the self-interpretation, moreover, the philology of *Recherche*, according to which no evidence („épreuve”) exists in itself since its inscription is necessarily not sign-like, it is always in need of interpretation and mediation.

Although to develop this would go far, the possible connection cannot be withheld which may be observed between the Freudian conception of the archive and its Proustian staging, especially as the modelling of the sensational apparatus is also carried out by a mechanical equipment relying first on image then on writing, the photo camera, then the mystic writing pad.⁷⁷ Let alone that for the psychoanalyst – similarly to more passages of Proust's text – on the one hand it is the eye, on the other it is the interlocking of the spirit and the soul, sensation *and* remembrance which proves to be interesting, and with its enigmatic nature in need of explanation. Assigned to repetition, to the permanence of trace the analogic work of the mind ensuring cognition, which is a necessary condition of language and remembrance, does not really follow the perceiving operation of the eye but rather closely correlates with it. The seeing of the consciousness understood metaphorically, namely as an internal eye and the seeing of the eye understood literally, as a perceiving device cannot be separated while they radically differ at the same time. The antinomic correlations of perception and remembrance, imitation and knowing play an important role also in the many times cited fragments by Nietzsche according to which the remembrance relying on repetition and working always already in perception might be the reason why our senses can never perceive clear differences only forms organised by resemblance and analogies.⁷⁸ Before we turn to the direct context of the telephony scene which may put the complicated relation of image and sound into a newer light from the aspect of the interpretation of aesthetic experience, let's return shortly to the staging of the relation of seeing and reading in *Édes Anna* where the strategy of the narrator who confines himself to what is perceivable by the eye (with the body in it) on the one hand suggests that the events narrated by him „appear objectively”, factually, almost without interpretation. „Nem szabad összekeverni egy fókuszált elbeszélés által adott *információt* és azt az *interpretációt*, amit az olvasó ennek az *információnak* adhat.”⁷⁹ This – by the way, considering its presupposition not unproblematic – warning of the narratologist to the reader of *Édes Anna* may be especially relevant due to the narrator's attitude which is conspicuously abstain from explicit interpretation and is focusing on the formation of spectacle. At the first sight Kosztolányi's work may be listed among the novles which are written in a way – with the words of Kittler – that „they can be hallucinated as films”, so that beyond the visually oriented narration, together with this they put into motion „such objective and consistent optical leitmotivs which can be screened unproblematically later.”⁸⁰ On the other hand, though, the reduction to controllability (to the body) witnessing of the narrator

⁷⁷ Cf.: Sigmund FREUD, *Feljegyzések a varázsnóteszről*. = *Pszichoanalízis és irodalomtudomány*, Szerk. ERŐS Ferenc, BÓKAY Antal, Budapest, 1998, 285-287.

⁷⁸ Cf. Friedrich NIETZSCHE, *I.m.* 93.

⁷⁹ Gérard GENETTE, *I.m.* 213.

⁸⁰ Friedrich KITTLER: *Optikai médiumok*, Ford. KELEMEN Pál, Magyar Műhely, Ráció, Budapest, 2005, 11, 147.

factually knowledgeable by the eye (and in another sense the ear)

Másfelől viszont az elbeszélői tanúságtételnek éppen az *ad oculosra*, a szem (és más tekintetben a fül) által faktikusan megismerhetőre, ellenőrizhetőre (a testre) redukálása, ennek tendenciája felelős a regény enigmatikusságáért, főképp ez okozza az ismeretlenség és a megismerhetetlenség effektusát.

The discursive eye of the narrator in *Édes Anna* tendenciously concentrates on the not-fittingness-together between the sensually perceived and mentally seen. This eye is not an innocent eye, it is governed by the the suspicion created by the possibility of theatricality and the involuntary elimination of this suspicion, hypotheticalness in the act of reading. This binary, antinomic disposition is also present in the perspectives of the characters since the judgement about Anna and finally the explanations of the characters of the murdered may be arranged between the poles of suspicion and trust which are both unfounded. The narrator readily takes up or joins his own perspective (so *not* his voice) to the perspective of a character, the latter of which he most of the time strives to keep in the dimension of outer vision. It may be observed that when narrating sight (which has a favoured place in the sensation of characters) the narration always pictures the connection of temporal moments, the difference of bodily or sensual and mental sight. The character represented to be seen – just like the narrator – is „pri”marily someone who senses and only „after” it does he/she become an interpreter, and this is, of course, not only true in case of seeing. The momentum of sensation would presuppose the literal, proper description of an outside reference while it brings into play exactly the unbridgeable difference of vision and sound. The sensual sight is exactly that cannot be designated on which the abstractive work of logos does not project itself and to which it does not compare itself.⁸¹ Namely, such a sight which cannot be mediated by the text. This unique vision deprived of name and the identificational momentum of designation is not „mediated” or pictured by the narration with the technique of circumcription, hypotyposis or circumstantial ekphrasis but a little paradoxically with the help of general articles and pronouns or depersonalising denominative structures which mostly intensify the generalising tendency of language.⁸² All this linguistic abstraction suggests an affinity between the shadow(ing) working as the condition of the

⁸¹ „Amire a látás vonatkozik, az látható. Látható pedig egyrészt a szín, másrészt az, amit körülírni lehet, de megnevezni nem.” ARISZTOTELÉSZ, *I.m.*, 77.

⁸² From the point of view of the title hero, laying on the bed, who spends her first night in the home of her new masters, we read: „Kevéssel rá a konyhába benyitott *valaki*. Meztláb, hosszú, fehér ingben, mint egy kísértet, odalépett az ágyához az asszonya, nézte, hogy alszik-e már. Egy negyedóra múlva újra megjelent *ez az alak*. Anna akkor már nem látta, mert fejét a párnába fúrva aludt.”(65.) This detail may be edifying (and also bears witness) concerning the invisible relation between the seeing perspective and the grammatics of narration: there is no considerable semantic and grammatic difference between the two appearances of Mrs. Vizy, the two narrated sights, and while the first sight we may also assign to Anna’s perspective as well, on the other hand, with the second sight this cannot be carried out exclusively due to a referential momentum can this procedure (which only turns out at the end of the sentence): Anna is asleep. All this seems to prove that perspective is not strictly a grammatical, moreover, in a sense, not even a linguistic product. The guests leaving after the afternoon tea would like to say goodbye to Anna, and Mrs. Druma despite the request of hostess („Hagyd.”) opens the closed door of the kitchen. „Drumáné már kinyitotta az ajtót. A *sötét* konyhában a szemetesláda mellett *egy alak állt*, kezén egy *fekete* férficipővel. *Fényesítette*.”(87.) When Jancsi slips into Anna’s bed after their first night together, suiting to his perceiving focus the texts writes this: „A lábánál mozgott *valami*: egy fekete folt. – Mi az? – A csirke....”(112.) (every italics: B.T.) The noun „form” by means of the „formation” word form brings into sightful (and not only formal) contact the momentum of the sense of seeing and the linguistic figuration.

illuminating power of language and the similarly shadow-conditionalised nature of seeing.

The following example – in opposition to the citations of the last footnote – in part already divides the objected phenomenon from the circumstances of restraint of sight and darkness forming perception:

„Az asszony, mikor a konyha ajtaja elé ért, hirtelenül megállott.

Benn a konyhában egy idegen férfi volt, akit nem ismert. Ott ült az asztalnál s mellette – elég messze tőle – Anna.

Láttára az ismeretlen férfi illetudóan fölkel, és köszönt:

– Jó estét kívánok.

Most jobban lehetett őt látni, mert a lámpa megvilágította halvány arcát és szőke, selymes haját. Világosszürke ruhát viselt, hosszú nyakkendőt.

Vizyné csak fürkészte egyre bizalmatlanabbul, magában tanakodva.

– Nem tetszik megismerni – mondta a férfi nem kellemetlen bariton hangján, és mosolygott. – A kéményseprő...

– Á, maga az? Nézze, meg sem ismertem. Így még nem is láttam. Jó estét, Báthory úr, jó estét.

(...)

Vizyné szeméről most hullott le a hályog.”⁸³

The chimneysweep looks unbeknown to Mrs. Viza since she knew him for his black, begrimed face and so highlighted eye so far („Nagy kék szemei voltak, egész valószínűtlenül nagyok, mint a színészekéi, mikor aláfestik.”(133.)), and now he stands in front of her in private clothes, washed, with a bright face cast off the shadow-like mask of grime, therefore, and also due to his bright clothes she does not recognise him. There is no pervasion between the unique, illuminated, pale face and the black, contour-like face almost distorted into a cliché just like there is no pervasion between shadow and its „original”, body and name, face and name belonging to it.⁸⁴ Mr. Báthory seeing that the woman does not see him, namely it is

⁸³ KOSZTOLÁNYI Dezső: *Édes Anna*, (Szerk. VERES András) Ikon, Budapest, 1992, 136. All the quotations from the novel come from this edition, so in the followings I will give the page numbers after the quotations in brackets.

⁸⁴ A similar difference appears in the typing description of the working papers of the maids and the unique sight of Anna facing the lady, or in the notable mistake of Mrs. Viza, when she assigns the name Anna Édes – not knowing its external reference yet – unfoundedly to the sight of another woman. The contrast of black and white is consequently emphasised by the text at the time of the appearance of the chimney sweeper, and in a motivic-symbolic system of connections this is also in contrast with the snow-white clothing of Jancsi (even as an example of the arbitrary relation of external sight and soul, sensible and moral): „Báthory úr egy pillanat múlva künn volt a havas háztetőn, ügyesen mászott a szelemen felé, mint egy macska, állt a kémény mellett a magasban a seprővel – fehérben a fekete -, mint egy fekete kandúr.”(132.) Or: „Mikor ajtót nyitott [Anna – B.T.], látta, hogy a kéményseprő. / - Jaj – suttogta -, de megijedtem. / - Csak nem tőlem? / - De. / - Miért? / - Olyan fekete. / A kéményseprő ott állt a folyosón a fekete ruhájában, vállán a fekete kanállal, a fekete kötéllel. / - Hogy tud olyan fekete lenni – mondta Anna az ijedelem és a mosoly között -, mint az ördög. / - Na – tréfált Báthory úr -, nem vagyunk mi olyan rosszak. / Belépett. Lánca csörgött a homályban. / - Nincsenek itthon? - kérdezte. / Valamivel előrébb jött a konyhai lámpa fénykörébe. (133.) (Italics from B. T.) The reflection on sight and lighting always go together in the text. A similarly the tension of moral colour-symbolism and sensual sight in the description of Jancsi’s clothing which we have already mentioned: „Jancsi fehér volt, tetőtől talpig fehér, mint egy ellentengernagy. Fehér porcelánnadrágot viselt, fehérkabátot, fehér sportcipőt. Úgy kiöltözködött, mintha a sötét idők nyomot se hagytak volna rajta.”(97.) It is exactly the snow white fop, and not the black

not him she sees, declares his occupation as a caption written under his own face – also on the voice of a generalising simile, a cliché – , which also substitutes a proper noun here. In the excerpt the narrator sometimes aims his perspective on Mrs. Vizey, while sometimes – with the eye on the chimneysweep – he simply lends it to her, namely, he makes it interchangeable with that of the character. The narrator confines himself to consequences read from the face of the woman as an outside view – seen by everyone including the chimneysweep – when signalling the internal perspective of the character („csak *fürkészte* egyre bizalmatlanabbul, magában tanakodva”, majd már az asszony szavaiként: „Nézzé, meg sem ismertem”, „így még nem is *láttam*”), however, the eye of the chimneysweep is not activated by means of focusing – neither does his internal perspective – in the text, and only partially due to him being a supporting character. As mental and sensual seeing, as the chiasmus of image and sensation, as tense turning-in-each-other practicably all quotations – as some kind of foreshadowed consequence – exemplify that between the contour-likeness of ideality and the sensual uniqueness of the sight the relation is not successive, namely, not temporal, on the other hand that ultimately the condition of sight is some kind of a blindness, which blindness may only be „identified” by means of that sight which involuntarily must blind one to blindness.

So the clichés and fossilised linguistic turns heartily used by the narrator on the one hand greatly contribute to the transparency of the visually oriented text, to the reading hurrying to reference (we may think about that in language the elements pointing outside it, on the thing signalled by it, the deixes are the most abstract) on the other hand, though, this transparency, which creates the illusion of the presentness of sensual sight, is produced by linguistic elements (behaving as forms) which are abstract, intensely generalising and shadow the literal or referential meaning level of the text. So this is how the chiasmus of sensual and mental sight takes linguistic „shape.” It can be said that the text is transparent and visible at the same time, its sight on the other hand cannot be accessed without the idea of the text, namely without the mental (transparent, contour-like). The sight behind the text can only be shared (repeated) only in the abstract ideality of verbleness and thus in the shadow-like surface of the text – so in its dividedness from sensual sight -, while the unique, arbitrary and unexchangeable – and undividable – momentum of imaginary visuality can necessarily be not cut out of reading.

The interpretant of the narration confined to the visual surface may be the already mentioned film, the movie⁸⁵ which appears thematically at more places in the text.

chimney sweeper that becomes a morally dubious character. It is not irrelevant that the dark can only leave a mark on the bright, the opposition of two colours, black and white is togetherness as well. The black colour expresses the impenetrability and moral stigmatisation of the other in another place and time. The Ficsors after the murder „Annát befeketítették, alattomos, titkolózó, mindenre képes leánynak állították be”. The secret and incalculability may mean – preceding every moral – the original *blackness* of the inside of other, which, from the perspective of the Ficsors, who concentrate on the moral act, of course, cannot be apprehended but is an incalculable possibility of meaning.

⁸⁵ Here we have to remark that the medium of the film interpreting perception and remembrance, or even understanding is conspicuously missing from Proust’s novel, for which we may find an explanation in the notable book of Georges Brassai (or Gyula Halász), who connected the „truth” of the photograph with the idea of the personality as basically discontinuous in *Recherche* with great pertinence. See: Georges BRASSAI, *Marcel Proust sous l’emprise de la photographie*, Gallimard, Paris, 1997. Later, of course, we will see an example for the complex function of the photograph and the camera in Proust, the passage which is one of the most well-known ones and which stages photographic seeing most spectacularly, the description of the kiss given to Albertine, however, will not be touched upon here. We will also bring an

Jancsi, who wishes to be a cinemactor, on the day of the departure of the Vizys egy pantefon mellett goes to the cinema and at one time Stefi also takes Anna to the cinema who has never seen a motion picture before. The narrator at one place says this about the face of the crying Mrs. Vizedy, according to the perspective of her husband: „rakosgatja a váncosokat, arcán a nagy-nagy, csillogó könnyekkel, mint a moziban Asta Nielsen.”(29.) To Anna it is not only the ideality of the world – so momentous in Jancsi’s life – mediated by the cinema and the theatricality of the motion pictures are alien but since she exclusively senses the formation of the visual surface, she cannot put the sheer temporal line of motion pictures into a logical-narrative scheme, namely, a story either.⁸⁶ The servant girl unable to correspond the seen picture and the abstract, discursive-logical, namely invisible narrative to each other sees the movie as a random hence unexperiencable/unlivable connection. So the seeing perspective of Anna taken up by the narrator here as well – as in the narration of the murder in court – stages when the eye resists to see the sight as a *link* in a causal chain. The detail in which the description of the housecleaning functions as a line of pictures cut next to each other, as a movie-like sight is at least that important.

„Anna reggeltől estig a por és szemét glóriájában állott. Feketét köpött, szürkét trüszkölt. Verte a matracokat, mintha haragudnék rájuk. Loholt föl a lakásba, le az udvarba, százszor is. Csorogtak az ablaküvegek, csobbant a rocskákban a szennylé, loccsant a rongy. Keresztfákhoz kötözve törölte az ablakokat. Már sikálta a padlót, már beeresztette halovány viasszal, már táncolt a lábára szíjazott keféken, már fényezte a parkettet, csúszkálva, görnyedezve, térdepelve, mint egy templomban, valami hosszantartó örökimádás közben. Roszogott az üvegpapír rozsdás záraikon. Lehozni a padlásról az eldugott szőnyeget, kibontani naftalinos bugyrából, kiporolni az állványon. Hamar ezt a széket oda, hamar azt az asztalt amoda, a zongorát még kissé előbbre tolni. Még csak a csillárokat fölakasztani, de vigyázva, hogy el ne törjük, egy-két új körtét becsavarni, még csak a krémszín függönyöket az aranyfüstös lécekre, rávarrni a rézkarikákat, és készen vagyunk.”(71.)

The linguisticity of the passage, its textual dimension does not dissolve completely in the imaginary reference of sight insofar as the visually loaded sentences are consequently crathylian sounding, namely, they imitate the sound of the evoked picture sequence with the help of onomatopoeic words – not conspicuously – according to the laws of sound symbolism: „Csorogtak az ablaküvegek, csobbant a rocskákban a szennylé, loccsant a rongy.”, „Roszogott az üvegpapír rozsdás záraikon.” An while the effects of sound and image – almost in a motion picture like way – support each other, in the meantime it is also the consequence of sound symbolism that it baffles attention from visuality back to the linguistic field (to thespatiality of the sounding language). In this audiovisuality the temporal-logical relationship of image and sound is undecidable, to image sound, and to sound the

example for the role the photo camera gets in *Édes Anna*.

⁸⁶ „Anna szabódott, hogy nincs ruhája, de végül elment. Ekkor látott először mozit. A vásznon autók cikáztak, valaki belepottyant a tóba, a gróf a grófnéval csókolózott a kertben. Stefi a koronaórról beszélt. (...) Közben magyarázta a képeket. Egy sovány moziszinészt különösen kedvelt, valahányszor feltűnt, mindig megérintette Anna karját. „Látja, ez az én *zsánereim*. A magas és sovány. Hát a magáé? / Ő erre nem tudott mit felelni, mert azt sem értette, mi az a *zsánereim*, aztán zavarta a sok kép, a körülötte ülő közönség. Megköszönte Stefinek, de többet nem ment el. Nem ért rá.”(131.)

image seems to function as an origin. So during this to and fro game or – with the famous word of Valéry's definition of poetry – *pendulum movement* („pendule qui oscille”)⁸⁷ which is to strengthen the érzékletesség of the diegetic world, the prose text at the same time also separates from the pictorial basis of world-like reference. So the movement of back and forth running cannot only describe Anna's line of activities but also the reading moving to and fro – simultaneously in time and space between space and time – between the dimensions of the text. The motion picture likeness of the passage together with highlighting the tight correlation between the spatial and temporal momentum of language, it may also make obvious the inseparability of movement and immobility, pictorial and narrative from different aspects. „Csorogtak az ablaküvegek” – the illusion hidden in this statement (as a sight) is built on the indistinguishability of a stable background and a moving foreground: the moving liquid and the motionless glass are both transparent therefore movement „spreads over” to the motionless. Spatiality of language is inaccessible without reading, without the temporality of the moving eye just like seeing also always has to be movement and eventness, even if the image itself is motionless. The sight even when it withstands the narrative – and in case of the text of *Édes Anna* this is consecutively the case – it can never be independent from it in an antropomorphic sense, moreover affinity may be discovered between the temporal depth and narrativity of the image which cannot be eliminated and between language with logic and transfer-likeness of causality in its. Which is far from meaning that the temporal relation between the stability of the sight and its temporal-spatial movement.⁸⁸ The duo of sight and sound in the citation may refer back to the tension between the blind repetition of rumour and the testifying presence of sight which is a determining pattern of the self-interpretation of the text. The last third of the passage associates the pictorial dimension with the vocalicity of the order while the infinitives used to express work processes and work phases suggest the impersonality of work, namely the role of the maid besides enhancing the pictures *and* (which is not quite the same) the *rhythm* of the text. The spatiality of the quick sequentiality of action is emphasised by preverbs and demonstrative pronouns referring to spatial movements, while temporality, besides the adverbial of time „soon”, is further emphasised by the adverbs „already” and „yet” which interpret the sequence of present sights from the viewpoint of the forthcoming, from the end or desired aim of the work.⁸⁹ Kosztolányi's novel connects the aforementioned tension of sensual and mental consequently with the problem of signal-likeness and with it the problem of reading. Waving the white cloth, its sight may parallelly be read both as a political signaling and as an everyday action lacking any kind of semiotic dimension or communicational intention (e.g. that Mrs. Víznyó shakes the tablecloth out on the

⁸⁷ Cf. Paul VALÉRY, *Poésie et pensée abstraite* = Uő, *Variété III, IV, V*, Gallimard, Paris, 2002, 681-682.

⁸⁸ „a mozgás, a test, a szem mozgása az, amin a látvány (vision) függ. Csak azt látjuk, amit nézünk. Mi lenne a látvány a szemek mozgása nélkül, és hogyan lenne lehetséges, hogy a mozgás ne homályosítsa el a dolgokat, ha maga pusztán reflex lenne vagy vak lenne, ha nem lennének meg az antennái, tisztánlátása, ha a látvány nem előzné meg benne önmagát?” Maurice MERLEAU-PONTY, *L'Œil et l'Esprit*, Gallimard, Paris, 1964, 17. For the relation among thinking, causality and temporality of picture see: Paul VIRILIO, *La machine de vision*, Galilée, Paris, 1988, 17.

⁸⁹ The „already”: for the stressfully expressing that something happened or happens earlier than expected. The meaning of „yet” used here is not given by Magyar Értelmező Kéziszótár but it may be summarised somehow like this: emphatically expressing that something that is being done will have been done soon. So „yet” interprets a future aim as a present action.

balcony.⁹⁰ The sensible sight gives the handle for both readings, however, only about the lonely cloth shaking may be said that its sight supports these two readings – as mutually exclusive – and at the same time makes them unestablished since the activity carried out en masse (working as a kind of spatial repetition) improbabilise in the tension of a political or symbolic reading and an accidental everydayness or singleness the latter possibility. The sensual can only be resistant to the symbolic forms of the political, the moral and the legal by means of the unique (if you like it: the individual) and the event-like. A small event eventuating in the medium of the sound, namely the noise on the evening of the historical turn before bedtime may highlight how the sensation of the sound heterogeneous with space and pictorial origin makes inaccessible even its own causal-logical grounding together with its sensual „origin”.⁹¹ The indistinguishability between the tire of the car and the sound of the cannon, about which the narrator does not decide, re-stages the difference between the conceptual-mental and the thing sensed, and also the involuntary, unavoidable ideologicalness or if you like its politicalness of the former.⁹²

Subtile and much interesting contemplations beyond sounds and images very thickly interlace Marcel Proust's novel, *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the story of which we only highlight one junction which has a key role regarding the narration of the phone-call and the homecoming to Paris, namely the part of the text (maybe arbitrarily) chosen for analysis, and most importantly, regarding the interpretation of the sound. At the beginning of the dwelling in Doncières, right in the passage where Marcel goes up to the room of Saint-Loup who sent him forward until he talks to the captain, the evoked self standing in front of the room listens to the sounds of the crackling fire and cannot join an image to these sounds, or more precisely to their origins, and suddenly he gets the impression that there is somebody in the room. The sounds challenge the identification, the referential stabilisation of their own origins as images but they inherently different from it. It is important that as readers we cannot know that Marcel recognises the noise of he fire, namely the possibility of this noise even before he entered the room, and he is unable to decide between the two possible origins of the noise or he does not recognise it and immediately imagines a human

⁹⁰ „Felesége egy asztalkendőrt rázott ki az erkélyen, azzal vádolták, hogy jeleket adott az ellenforradalmároknak. El is hurcolták a parlamentbe, csak éjfélkor engedték haza, testben-lélekben megtörve.”(23.) In this part Víz is the narrator: „Nem láttad azonban az elejét. Én ott voltam. Úgy kezdődött, kérlek [a krisztinai ellenforradalom – B.T.], hogy zsebkendőket lobogtattak. Az egész Krisztina tér fehérlett. Megálltak a villamosok, mindenki levette kalapját, a Himnuszt énekeltek.”(24.) „A nemzeti hadsereg elővédjei 1919. november 14-én, péntek reggel érték el a Duna vonalát. Pesten még karhatalmi osztagok tartották fenn a rendet, mikor az Attila utcán már sastollak lengettek, s közkatonák rohamsisakjai ragyogtak fenn a napban. / Mindenki az ablakokhoz tódult, lobogtatta kendőjét a zömök alföldi fiúk felé, akik feszesen meneteltek.”(129.)

⁹¹ „Víz riadtan ült föl az ágyban. – Ágyúznak – suttogta. – Nem – mondta Vízyné, aki szintén fölült. – De igen, a Vérmező felől. Már csak a csönd reszketett. Autók zúgtak a Várba vivő úton, mely politikai változások idején ütőérként méri a város és ország idegességét. Kutyák ugattak. – Talán egy autó gumija – magyarázta Vízyné. – Aludj.”(30.)

⁹² The voice in a favourable case, following imagination, due to a strong conventionality, may also be the reliable mediator of sight, like for instance in the scene where Jancsi and Anna after their first night together, at night, in the bed „follow” from the sounds what is happening in the stairway: „Éjfél után kocsi állt meg a ház előtt. Csöngetett valaki, és a házmester kaput nyitott. / Suttogva tárgyalták, ki lehet a kései látogató. / Az illető elhaladt ajtajuk előtt, fölment a második emeletre, és ott zörgetett. Hallották Moviszter doktor hangját. Pár perc múlva már ketten jöttek le együtt, a doktor beült a kocsiba s elbogarogott. Egy beteghez hívták.”(115.) Before their lovemaking Jancsi is anxious that from the sound of his steps to the maid's bed on the squeaky floor his deed will be obvious, his secret act may publicly be unveiled.

actor behind the noise, and in this case in the retrospective situation of the narration it is not the succession of time which prevails. Spatialisation of the narration abolishes its own presupposed event and empirical origin, and just like metalepsis, it reverses the temporal and logical connections. The *szémák* of fire and ash, tightly interlocked with sounds, will be very important in the narration of the phone-call, just like the antropomorphisation related to visualisation, to the picture identified as the source of sound and to the figure or the face as well.

The fire, just like the sound with an undefinable source is also restless and menacing, meanwhile as something already seen, the identified origin of the sound, namely as the constant re-placer of logs as well it appears as something which is similar to an antropomorphic figure, this, however, is caused by *the description, not the sight*: «J'entrai; il en laissa rouler une, et fit fumer une autre.» („Benyitottam; megint meggörgetett egyet, egy másikkal csak úgy ontatta a füstöt.”) The sentence evokes both the rolling and the lighting of the cigarette so as if the ambiguity of language reproduced the the undecidability of the origin of sound. The antropomorphic character of the description is openly strengthened by the following statement, based already on visual similarity.⁹³ Fire, the sound and activity of which was connected with fear and destruction before, from now it becomes a prop of coziness, and in terms of this the flames resemble such a fiery or fervent („ardente”) animal who licks the wall of the fireplace with its tongue.⁹⁴ The room of Saint-Loup in which, among others, the illusion of the presence of its occupant is given by open books, implies self-mirroring possibilities of meaning, a component of which – the parallel of room and consciousness, room and reading – we will handle in connection to the telephonists, here it is enough to mark the image of the fire, animised and antropomorphised at the same time, as the image of the warmth of home. The other aspect of self-mirror is not fully independent of the present reader's operation of fitting the text that just has been read into a philosophical context, moreover, it may also give an interesting legitimation of this. About the open books of Saint-Loup lying in front of Marcel's eye a passage of *Recherche* might come into our mind which narrates his getting acquainted with Robert in Balbec, and in which we learn about this young man so likeable to Marcel that he is an unconditional devotee of Nietzsche, what is more, his enthusiastic fan, and that he reads Nietzsche and Proudhom in his freetime. From this point the relationship of the one who evokes and the one evoked may become complicated – parallelly – just like the look of the evoked self cannot sheerly be ordered to an eye and an inner sound as a

⁹³ „S még akkor is, ha nem mozdult [mármint a kandallóban a tűz, mely áthelyezi a fahasábokat – B.T.] olyan volt, akár társaságban a neveletlen emberek, állandóan lármázott [*des bruits*], s ez a lárma, ha láttam a lángot, a tűznek a lármaja volt [*du moment que je voyais monter la flamme, se montraient à moi des bruits de feu* – attól a pillanattól fogva, hogy láttam a lángot, úgy mutatkozott meg számomra, mint a tűz zaja, Gyergyai antropomorfizál, miközben a „bruit” a franciában nem feltétlenül antropomorfi, noha kétségtelenül jelenthet pletykát is], de ha a szoba fala mögött, a másik szobában lettem volna, azt hittem volna, hogy valaki benn az orrát fújja s hangosan toporog [*se mouchait et marchait* – az alliteráció s így a tűz lángját is felidézõ hangszimbolika felől is fontos itt az eredeti].”(87.)

⁹⁴ It may be observed that the fire's becoming homely – which was the interpretant of voice earlier – is accompanied by homophonic collocations, effects of sounding based on similarity: „se mouchait et marchait”, „chambre charmante”, „attente ardente”, on the role of these we will return in the interpretation of phonecalls.

consciousness, its sight is at least as much reading as his talk can be considered as listening.

In the next moment Marcel notices the ticking of the watch left behind by his friend without seeing the watch itself, and he is unable to find the location of the sound's precise origin. The appearance of the watch may not only be justified by the tight, example-like relationship of time and sound here but – not independently of this – also by the paradox relation of sound and image, sound and deixis. Not to mention the etimological references of the word, namely that the expression „montre” which derives from the Latin „mo(n)strare”, took the meaning of chronometric device rather late, and before it meant not only indication but also was a military term which denoted the review of the army, an inspection.⁹⁵ The watch is nothing else but the device of spatialising time in which indication refers to such a phenomenon which cannot be directly comprehended by the senses, and exists exclusively as something relational, as an antropomorphic phenomenon. Indication presupposes pictorialness while time is invisible and measurement, in the light of the former, also connotes metrics, assigns a form to time which otherwise resists form and which is heterogenous with measurement.

Hallottam Saint-Loup órájának ketyegését [*le tic-tac*], ott volt egészen közel hozzám. Ez a tiktak mindig máshonnan hangzott [*changait de place à tout moment – állandóan helyét változtatta*], mert nem láttam magát az órát; úgy hallatszott, mintha hátulról, előlről, jobbról, balról jönne, olykor meg is szűnt [*s'éteindre – elaludt, kialudt (akárcsak a tűz)*], mintha messzebb lenne. Egyszerre mégiscsak megláttam az órát az asztalon. Akkor aztán a tiktakot egyetlen biztos helyről hallottam, ahonnan nem is mozdult el többé! Legalábbis azt hittem, hogy arról a helyről hallom; nem ott hallottam, hanem csak ott láttam, a hangoknak nincs helyük [*les sons n'ont pas de lieu – sons, azaz általában a hangoknak, ami lehet zöreij, zaj (bruit) és voix (emberi hang) is*]. De legalább a mozgásukhoz próbáljuk csatolni őket, amivel viszont az a hasznuk, hogy értesítenek bennünket róluk, ezzel meg ezek szükségesnek és természetesnek tetszenek (*paraître – látszanak*). (87.)

The sounds are not identical with their imagined spatial movement, they are neither origins, nor consequences of this movement, they simply signal that they are in a non-substantial, merely conventional contact relation with it. With what we phenomenalise in the form of images and never as the invisible vibration of the air. Similarly to the way the movement of the clock-hand also differs from the absolutely non-spatial „getting on” of time. Sound neither moves nor is it motionless since just like in case of time, sound has no spatial dimension either. By means of the „tick-tock” sound symbolism it signals a to and fro movement as well while as an onomatopoeic word it makes it rhythmic already in its name, and fits the monotonous ticking of the watch – knowing no rhythmic differences in itself – into the artificial system of similarities and differences.

We fix sounds to sight, to concrete place as their origin in order for them to become natural and familiar, and reading sounds by means of this representing and pictorial referncing momentum at the same time we involuntarily also deprive them of their immaterial materiality without meaning. The sound without a visible origin, without

⁹⁵ Cf. *Dictionnaire étymologique et historique de la langue française*, Szerk. Emmanuèle BAUMGARTNER, Philippe MÉNARD, Paris, 1996. 508.

source is disturbing and unusual exactly because it cannot be assigned to some spatial movement which movement loses its naturalness and its familiar, necessary, causally explained character and identity. So we have access neither to the actor, nor to the action or happening which we could indicate as the causal origin of sound, though exactly the suspension of this origin by sound would point out that sound is not in a causal but rather in a tactile relation based on habit. It is not only the sound – without a visualisable origin – suspending or multiplying its origin is disturbing but also a world without sounds, given only to eyesight. And here comes a long contemplation in the book on the one hand about the effects of the ear-plug, on the other about the sensation method of the deaf which discusses the consequences of the eyesight separated from hearing. According to this the perspective of the deaf person or someone living with an ear-plug, who hears sounds hollowly or not at all, appears to be just as disturbing as the hearing of a sound which cannot be traced back to its origin. The world without sounds is mute, for its happenings accessible only to the eye get their ethereal, phantasmal character because these happenings – similarly to the sounds before – are also deprived of the signs of the action's origin which in this case – surprisingly – are not other but the sounds. According to this, sounds are signs of performance, of the act of creation, as the pictures proved to be earlier, namely which endow the formation, the establishment with an origin. Hence sound is on the one hand is void of spatial origin, non-phenomenal, however, on the other hand it is the steady sign, warrant of this – among other antropomorphic – origin without which, in turn, the the happenings of the seen world would suddenly get an ethereal, immaterial and mechanical but not fully desantropomorphic character. Although here it is exactly the illusoriness of causality what is at stake from which causality one can only exit with trouble even being aware of this discernment, it can be said that such chiasmus of sound and image can hardly be explained otherwise than with the inseparability by means of the constant changes, chiasmatic transference of these two, which inseparability had been embodied by transparent, bodiless ideas in the language which cannot become independent from logic, and the patterns of which, on the other hand, are the circular transferences of the tropes.

Akkor aztán ha a beteg [akinek légmentesen betömték a fülét – B.T.] olvas, a könyv lapjai maguktól nyílnak-fordulnak egymás után, mintha csak egy istenség lapozná őket láthatatlanul [*feuilletéés par un dieu – a láthatatlanul* nem kell, de kétségtelenül odaérthető]. Egy készülő fürdő lomha zaja [*lourde rumeur – nehéz morajlása; a rumeur*, mint láttuk, jelenthet pletykát is, akárcsak a *bruit*] megenyhül, megkönnyül s úgy távolodik, mint egy égi madáracsicsérgés [*gazouillement – a szó jelenthet még dalolást, dúdolást, és ami itt különösen fontos, csobogást, patak csobogását is!*]. A hangos zaj hátrálása, gyengülése [*amincissement – szó szerint elvékonyodása, vagyis térbeli képzet a hangra*] kiolt belőle minden ellenünk irányuló [*agressive*] hatalmat. (...) Kártyát vetünk és nem halljuk, úgyhogy már-már azt hisszük, nem is forgattuk [*remuées*] meg a lapokat, hogy maguktól mozognak, kitaláljuk a kedvüket, hogy szórakozzunk velük egy kicsit [*allant au-devant de notre désir de jouer avec elles – eljönnek vágyunknak, hogy játszunk velük*], s maguktól jönnek, hogy játszanak velünk. (88.)

The above mentioned examples of reading and card bring the grazing of cards in the picture, while the bath evokes the murmur of water, the sound of paper and water which got into an interesting relationship earlier along the photograph and writing and

speech. It is at least this important that all of these examples belong to the sensation of direct material contact, namely, to touching which at the same time – with the intervention of the image – has been transferred to the sensation of hearing, to the mediation of sound. Earlier we quoted the remark Nietzsche according to which we may seek the the development of the origin of causality in the metalepsis proceeding from the sensation of touching, and this may be relevant here because the lack of the sound marking tactic relations leads to the lack of the happening as a cause ordered to sight and the lack of logical relation, and this way to metaphysical notions. The conventional difference of cause and causality ceases to exist in a world without sound or lowered sounds, and this results in the illusory assumption of automatism or the transcendent actor. Beyond that the separability of cause and causality in the self-mirror function of the examples may point out that the author or the reader whom we regard to be the origin of a linguistic act may be conceived – and similarly to its reverse in an unestablished way – as the product of this act without subject as well. The example of the bath with the image of the „baignoire” alludes to the theatrical description, and together with this it may tell on the complexity of the interlocking pictures of Proustian prose, on its astonishing denseness and intensity. However, the direct proportionality between the fading of the sound and the distance and lightness is more important here: the volume of the sound is indicative of the proximity, weight and mass of water, however, the fading of sound discloses the illusoriness of these changes and metaphors made causal, the nature of the relationship between touching and hearing, seeing and hearing based on contingent, metonymic contact. The noise, at the same time, as the noise of fire, as a noise circumventing the unidentifiable, the identifying acts of figuration appeared to be menacing, here also appears as menacing, as a not-I threat which is bounteously removed and lowered by the ear-plug, and with this it leads to homeliness and a sense of security. However, with the same movement the ear-plug – which is called despotic just like the sound earlier – by eliminating sounds, the heard world as the other becomes threatening again to the self since in the long run it leads to its becoming empty. According to the narrator’s train of thought the seen outside world, the real world becomes similar to scenery to the deaf person, it loses its reality and life becomes pure appearance, an ethereal, silent film-like experience. An experience in which inanimate objects get soul but which at the same time is ruled by automatism and habituation which empty the actor as a subject as well.⁹⁶ Without sounds which also proved to be the embodiment of causality, we ourselves *seem to be missing*, as the origins of the consequences of our actions, as the causes of these actions, in one word, as actors. Seeing without sounds, we might add, is language, and with it it presupposes a sensation without proper names through which when perceiving not only others but our own self that idea is missing – we might remember – which created the identity of the other or the self by being projected on the pure sight as shadow, already at its formation.

This assumption may perhaps even better be understood from the philosophical tradition which closely connects together – as did Kant in his anthropology – hearing and intellect, we may say it identifies them with each other, and in a sense it subordinates seeing to hearing understood as the medium of discursive logic. The

⁹⁶ „Mivel a zaj a süketisége előtt csak felfogható formája volt valamilyen mozgásnak, a zajtalanul mozgó tárgyak, úgy érzi, oktalanul mozognak; megfosztva minden hangbeli minőségtől, spontán tevékenységet mutatnak, mintegy élni látszanak; mozognak, megmerevednek, lánggra gyulladnak, csak úgy maguktól.”(90.)

sound serving as the basis of language means nothing in itself, it is not in relation with the objects in itself, it is originally independent of picture, therefore it is exactly the ablest to sign concepts. Albeit eyesight is the noblest of all sense, as it is the furthest from touching, concerning the most comprehensive spatial things, and – this will also be important from the point of the photo camera – its organ under the influence of affections, still hearing is the least replaceable of all our senses. The ones deaf from their birth remain dumb as well and they will only have access to the *analogon* of reason.⁹⁷ Hearing is in a distinguished relation with internal sensation, feelings and this way with psychology, and from this point it is also not a coincidence that in the analytic explanation of the effects of the ear-plug and deafness the narrator resorts first to the analogy of love than to the analogy of friendship. While eyesight is the most independent of affections, sound is the most closely attached to them and it is probably due to this that the seen world draws away when eliminating hearing and its joys and sufferings cease to exist for the experiencing self so that the self as an actor also becomes a distant viewer, and its own body gets deprived by the image of the identity of origin. The drawing away of causality by sound the self contemplates itself as an other detached from it, while the earlier relation of the self to others gets eliminated, suddenly it finds itself alone past saving. The self becomes empty without hearing since it becomes unable to hear itself as the other, just like in several passages this emptying is carried out by the unconsciousness of habituation. For the deaf person their own body, and also its movements lose the identity which could be guaranteed in itself neither by the body nor by the name (as a sound warranting the idea of unmistakable identity). So sound constructively makes its own origin inaccessible as an immaterial materiality, a spaceless entity without meaning, while through the unbreakable link between hearing and understanding in a way it also creates this origin, it is also a warrant of the *hozzáköltés* to the acting event.

Sounds, as conventional signs of movements, also inform us about happenings which we do not see at the moment, so their role is indispensable in securing the sense of being in space and homeliness. They give a sequence of pictures about the world outside the horizon of seeing, and through this they warrant our sense of security in space, mostly in a way which has become unnoticed in habitation. Exactly because of this the lack of sounds emerging due to the effect of the ear-plug may be just as disturbing as strong noises are threatening. All this, among others, is exemplified by the text with the occurrence of dream which is a decisive reference from the beginning in the Proustean interpretation of sensation – with the similar function of the sick man – , inasmuch as the dream may be an especially telling opportunity of the dulling or ceasing of senses, the complicated relation of sensing apparatuses open to the internal, conscious sensation and to the outside world. Freud might offer a fruitful parallel here since the psychoanalytic explained the dream as something which refers back to the original mediality of waketime-sensation, inasmuch as in terms of a self-sustaining economy it shows the constitutive resistance of this sensation to the threatening character of the outside world which it mediates as transformed and muted, and on which, of course, it is dependent as well. As in case of memory operating in present sensation, in case of dream sensation it is observable as well that sensation must be secured from the directness of the outside world (we weave strong noises in our dream, but if they step across a boundary,

⁹⁷ Cf.: Immanuel KANT, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*, Paris, 1993, 89-91.

compensation decomposes and we wake up).⁹⁸ This equalising, compensatory role of the sense also presupposes a constitution based on the measuring, *measure*, to put it another way, on *form*. The example of the dream is not followed by the event of removing the ear-plug by chance, the conclusion of which finally leads to the picture of the senses appearing as – not completely independently of each other – adjustable measures and measure instruments influenceable by habits, which simultaneously strongly form the object of our measuring, the mediated sensation.

Ha meg, ellenkezőleg, kiszedjük egy pillanatra a gyapotot a beteg füléből [*les cotons superposés à son tympan* – a dobhártyájára helyezett gyapotot], a hang fénye, teljes napja egyszerre megint felragyog vakítón, mintegy újjászületik a mindenségben; a száműzött zajok népe máris ott terem, teljes gyorsasággal; s olyan áhítattal halljuk a hangnak a feltámadását, mintha zenélő angyalok zengnének hálaéneket. Az üres utcák megtelnek egy percre az éneklő villamosok egymást követő gyors szárnyaival. S a szobában benn maga a beteg teremti meg, nem mint Prométheusz a tüzet, hanem a tűznek a zaját. S aszerint, hogy növeljük vagy kiszedjük a vattacsomókat, mintha csak felváltva játszanánk ezen a két pedálon, amellyel a külvilág hangzókésztségén tágitottunk. (89.)

We must remember that the Proustean event of „*mémoire involontaire*” can also be interpreted as the renewal of habituation, of sensation which is blunt due to repetition which at the same time cannot be voluntary, in opposition to the malleability of present sensation. The outside, mechanic device of the ear-plug, which may influence together with the volume of sound all of its attributes, all of the components of its quality, sheds light on the originally medial mode of operation of the hearing apparatus. On the fact that the ear-drum does not only let through but also filters the sound, dulls and modulates the vibrations coming from the outside, and that its sensibility may be modified as a kind of scale.⁹⁹ And as habitual and the unhabituated, the new and the repetitive form no clear contrast, the opposition of silence and earsplitting noise is also that of two insecure border points which can be described primarily as the correlation of poles mutually pervading each other. In consequence of the sounds of outside world suddenly touching our ear, the sudden change of the mode of sensation, the renewal of the sound they bring the picture of spatial movement before our eyes so that at the same time they also separate from them, in a way they precede these movements, and as during this they join them, the unrealistic, floating and angelic character of the pictures becomes apparent for a moment. As if sound would create the pictures not heard but only mediated by it, with a performativity similar in its melodiousness and harmonising effect, just like Berma's sound irradiated the theatrical sight.

The narrator, namely the evoking or remembering self, who connects his contemplation about hearing with the perspectival situation of his one-time self, a little earlier he quotes the words of his friend, Saint-Loup uttered upon his arrival with which he characterises the hotel chosen for him, Marcel as follows: «cet hôtel est assez adapté à votre hyperesthésie auditive.» (371.) („ez a hotel rémesen illik a maga

⁹⁸ Cf. Sigmund FREUD, *Álomfejtés*. Budapest, 1988, 29-34.

⁹⁹ See more on this: Jacques DERRIDA, *Tympan = Uő.*, *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris, 1972, I-XXV.

felfokozott hallásérzékéhez” (83.)) This narrator whose evoked person – who is not independent of autobiographical references either¹⁰⁰ – is soothed by his soldier friend by saying that in the hotel where he is going to live in he will have no neighbour, he will be completely alone, says this ruminating on the deaf:

A süket embernek, magányos és szomszéd nélküli házában, aki már a teljes sükettség előtt is tartózkodóbbnak mutatkozott és érezhetően hallgatagabb volt, a kiszolgálását most szinte tilalmas módon mintha némák végeznék, akárcsak egy tündérvjáték királyánál. Akárcsak a színpadon, az az emlékmű vagy középület [*monument* – egy szó jelenti itt a kettőt] – kaszárnya, templom, városháza –, amelyet a süket az ablakából szemlélhet, csak afféle díszlet, semmi más. Ha egy nap összeomlana, porfelhő maradna utána és látható romhalmazok; viszont kevésbé valóságos, mint egy színházi palota, amely, igaz, vékonyabb, s úgy hullana szét az elvárásolt mindenségben, hogy súlyos és széteső terméskövei se szennyeznék be holmi ordináré zajjal [*de la vulgarité d’aucun bruit*] a csend szűziességét. (90-91.)

The theatrical, scenery-like sight of a reality deprived of all sounds, which unfolds in front of the eye of the deaf person, at the same implicates the elimination of directness and of the sense of touching, and represents the seen things as two-dimensional instead of three. The lack of sound so the lack of the sensation of space as well, while the drawing away of objects reduced to their visuality are accompanied by the change of interpersonal relations – the rest of the people on the other level draw away to become a picture too, moreover, according to a preceding passage, a marionette-like puppet, a sheer apparition. As earlier the directness of touching helped in unveiling the other way forgotten distance in seeing the present, here the lack of sound fills in a similar illuminating function inasmuch as the silent picture shows the original separatedness of me and the other which is accompanied here by the total objectification of the other. That separatedness, that constructive difference of singularity which is finally covered by the sound and the illusion of idea responsible for communication, interpersonal change-processes and affections as well. The eye of the deaf person, however, it is not articulated here, functions as a kind of photo-camera which records the sight but essentially it is not in an emotional relation with it. While the consciousness of the deaf person is a magical, enchanting room where there are no sound, however, the telephone-box is a place where I can only hear the sound of the other. The destruction of sight cited in the quotation may also exemplify that the camera-like eyesight of the deaf person ensures a kind of eternal present for them in which the passing of time, and temporality as such have presumedly no role at all (or probably only plays a role analogically, indirectly). Considering it from this point time is connected to sound, to hearing and to the affections attached to things seen, moreover to intelligence, and the lack of these also shows the impossibility of mourning. That mourning which in the conversation with the grandmother represents the original testamentality of the voice of the living, the anticipated possibility of the mourning of the living as their death, their eternal absence. The text also pictures the deaf person’s deprivedness of sound together with reason by presenting the deaf person as unable to plan even for the closest future who – living in an eternal present

¹⁰⁰ Proust’s auditive hypersensibility is known, due to which he excluded noises (besides street air tenaciously threatening his asthma) with a peculiar, almost maniac precision, covering the walls of the room with cork coating. The rebuilt model of the room can be visited in Paris, in Musée Carnavalet.

– is also unable to create the continuity of present and future. The French language has a word (originating from Latin) in which we may see the tight relation between conversation and causality and this way sound and logic, sound and communication, and it is hardly accidental that this word, „causer”, similarly to „idée” can also be found in the first sentence of the passage contemplating the telephone and telephony.

Marcel, the narrator at the beginning of the passage remembers that on a morning Saint-Loup confessed that he wrote to his, his friend’s grandmother that she should call his grandson on the phone that day. Saint-Loup probably wanted to surprise Marcel, so he told it only the last day. He wanted surprise, an unexpected event like telephony which – as the narrator remarks – at that time was not yet so widespread as at the time of reminiscence which, in turn, cannot be localised since the language does not refer to the spatial and temporal origins of writing. The unusual, event-like, not yet experienced telephone which is new to the senses yet, is at the same time immediately accompanied by the naturality of habituation when the text reports how Marcel was unsatisfied with the circumstantiality of putting through the call. Repetition is working already in the first momentum of the new, never yet present sensation, s az egyfelől az élet öfenntartó védekezése a szokatlan, az ismeretlen fenyegető közvetlenségével szemben, másfelől a megszokásnak az észlelést eltompító, s az esztétikai tapasztalat valamint a „mémoire involontaire” eseményeiben legyőzhető, kijátszható hatalma. It can be said that the structure of the passage on telephony – which, by the way, is the inserted modified version of an article written by Proust on the phenomenon, and which also appears in his early novel entitled *Jean Santeuil* where the grandmother is yet substituted by the mother (about this substitution, see later) – reflects the non-successive relation of event and its repetition, inasmuch as in the passage theoretical generalisations at first divert then precede the narration of the unique event.

It is important that the phonecall supervenes on the idea, intervention and mediation of the friend. The conversation with the person closest to Marcel, the grandmother, which is almost as if he talked with himself, is still initiated by a stranger. This conversation is characterised by a circular structure which converges it to an almost „s’entendre parler” autoeffective happening, while the text presents the this economy, the closed circle of communication on the one hand as an event which cannot be anticipated, while on the other – in connection with this – as an event dependent on the other, on its contingency. Moreover, as we shall see, the continuity of speech is nothing less here than the short interval between sudden interruptions.

Mint ma mindnyájan, nem találtam kedvem szerint elég gyorsnak, a maga hirtelen változásaiban, ezt a csodálatos tündérvilágot [*admirable féerie*], amelyben pár pillanat elegendő, hogy megjelenjék mellettünk, láthatatlanul, de jelenlévőn az, akivel beszélni akarunk, s aki az asztala mellett, a lakhelyén (nagyanyám lakhelye Párizs volt), más ég alatt, mint a miénk, nem egyforma időben, előttünk ismeretlen körülmények és foglalkozások [*préoccupations* – elfoglaltságok] között, amelyekről ez a lény fog bennünket értesíteni, hirtelen sok száz mérföldre lesz szállítva (ő és egész környezete [*lui et toute l’ambiance où il reste plongé* – ő és az egész hangulat vagy légkör, amelybe belemerülve (úgy is mint a vízbe) marad]), fülünkhöz közel, abban a percben, mikor szeszélyünk akarja [*ordonné* – elrendeli, parancsolja; a hang és a parancs összekapcsolódása miatt fontos]. S olyanok vagyunk, mint a mese szereplője, akinek egy varázslónő, ebbeli kívánságára, elébe vetíti, természetfeletti

fényességben [*clarté* – világosságban; az értelemre is használjuk e szót, s ez is fontos itt], nagyanyját vagy menyasszonyát, mikor olvas vagy sír [*de feuilleter un livre, de verser des larmes* – miközben egy könyvet lapozgat, könnyeket töltöget; mindkét szerekezet fontos itt, az első a nagymama látványa miatt, mely a hazaérkező Marcel számára feltárul (erről később), a másik a danaidák szerepe felől, amire e telefonos kisasszonyoknál rögvest rátérünk], vagy virágot szed, a szemlélőhöz egészen közel és mégis igen messzire, ott, ahol valóban tartózkodik. (155-156.)

The phonecall appears as the connection of different but synchronically existing space-times (time is never independent from space while sound as purely temporal exemplifies this possible independence, more precisely, the unavoidable yet arbitrary nature of the connection of space and time), hence the narrator speaks about it in similes emphasising visuality, this way not separating sound and its seeming spatial origin – as it lacks exactly this –, namely the caller from his surroundings. The phone doubles space, it divides it into a there and a here which are similar and different at the same time, and which are in a metaphoric and metonymic relation with each other, and all this also may disclose the dividedness, the original duplication of pictorial representation as presence – inaccessible as presence. By means of the diffusion of sound the phone-call means different spaces but the same, synchronic time while we can immediately observe that in this synchronicity of time the narrator detects momentums of spatiality of time that exemplify mourning and testamentality, so the unbridgeable asynchrony between personal times, the contratemporality of subjective times which always touch with space. The momentum of projection also refers back to the narration of the childhood experience with *lanterna magica* which at the same time as a sequence of moving picture advances to be the self-interpreting figure of remembrance, reading and the novel itself several times. Similarly to transport and travelling the train as well, the latter as a magic cabin – like the roo as a magic armchair – is able to transport us suddenly with practicably eliminating the dimension of time and waiting from one place to another – as it is written about the evoking work of name in the chapter on the name. The other, with whom we speak on the phone appears beside us, next to our ear, invisibly, unrepresented in his invisible voice, and this possibility of the diffusion of sound, ensured by the non-spatiality, somewhat offsets the „illusion” of the substantial interconnection of sound and personality. Sound conquers distance in the medium of the phone, and connects people in remote spaces by means of their voices, however, it cannot mediate their picture (yet). We learn about their activities from their speech which through the presence of sound it is surprising and novel due to the presence of the narration and the illusion of the synchronicity of its object, while the difference between the mute picture imagined following the words and the non-visible real picture is unbridgeable.

While for the deaf-and-dumb the world narrows to the sight just befogható because without sound they have no clue what happens behind their back, so their sense of space is impaired, the caller who only hears the voice and has no sensual experience about the space-time of this sound finds themselves in the „night full of meanings”, namely they cannot make the sound independent of its *imagined* phenomenal origin, more precisely they hear the sound together with its figurative, inaccessible origin, accessible only in imagination. The sound which is simultaneously invisible and present. While to the sound we certainly need to assign a picture with which the

sound makes this movement and also itself natural by reporting of some spatial movement makes, this – as we have seen – is not true the other way round, meaning that the picture exists without the sound, it merely loses its familiar, natural character. The path of the sound mediated in the phone is invisible as well and – for the amateur at least – this disturbing unbeknown is in need of explanation, the supernatural and antropomorphising explanation of the imagination. So the allegoric description of the incomprehensible wonder of the medium of the telephone – which does not stick with the notion of transportation – refers to the mediating and creating work of women displaid essentially as mythological gods, the work of the telephonist ladies doing all transfers at that time and for long after it. And it is not irrelevant at all, moreover, it is of great importance, what images are orderd to the telephone this way, and how these re-interpret the human voice itself by describing the diffusion of its mechanical but invisible, and what role they play in the staging of sound and picture followed till now.

Hogy ez a csoda megtörténjék, csak az ajkunkat kell közelítenünk a varázslatos készülékhez [*planchette magique – planchette* 'deszkát' is jelent, ami megintcsak visszautal a tűzre, sőt még Berma hangjára is, ami « brûle les planches »], s hívni – igaz, némelykor kissé sokáig – azokat a Szorgos Szüzeket [*Vierges Vigilantes* – a vesztaszüzekről van itt szó, kik Proustnál inkább éberek, semmint szorgosak, mely utóbbi jelző pusztán az alliterációt szem előtt tartva azt is eltéveszti, hogy tevékenységük, a tűz őrzése inkább passzív, mint aktív], akiknek naponta halljuk a hangját, bár sose látjuk az arcukat, s akik a mi őrangyalaink ebben a szédítő homályban [*ténèbres* – a szó a halál sötét birodalmát is felidézi, elég Baudelaire *Les chats* című közismert versére gondolni, ahol a *funèbre* (gyászos) jelzővel rímel össze], amelynek féltékenyen őrzik a bejáratát; ők azok a Mindenhatók, akik a távollévőket odahozzák közelünkbe [*par qui les absents surgissent à notre côté – a surgissent* inkább azt jelenti 'felbukkan', vagyis mozzanatos, pillanatnyi eseményre utal, ráadásul a mondat alanyai nem a mindenhatóknak nevezett nők, hanem a távollévők], de őket nem szabad meglátnunk; a láthatatlan világ Danaidái, akik egyre ürítik, telítik és egymásnak adják a hangoknak urnáit [*les urnes des sons* – a hang itt nem feltétlenül emberi hangot jelent, sőt jelentéses, hogy a telefonból jövő hang már nem emberi, hanem mechanikus, mint a hangszereké vagy mondjuk a vonat füttye, s ez a mechanikus hang az emberinek a hamuja]; az ironikus Fúriák, akik abban a pillanatban, mikor egy titkot suttogunk barátnőnknek, abban a reményben, hogy senki se hall bennünket, kegyetlenül odakiáltják: „Itt vagyok, hallgatom”; a titok [*Mystère* – misztérium és nem „secret”, vagyis titok] mindig ideges [*irritées*] szolgálói, a Láthatatlanság kártékony [*ombrageuses* – nyugtalan, gyanakvó, félnék jelentésben, mely az *ombre* (árnyék) szó származéka, melynek itt, a láthatatlanság és a mitologikusan bevilágított s egyben beárnyékolt médium leírásában fokozott jelentősége van] papnői, a Telefonos Kisasszonyok. (156.)

An extremely rich, hardly exhaustable passage, so first of all here we evoke the mythological references, in relation to the motifs taken on earlier. Vestal virgins are those young girls who kept the warmth of home, the fire of the goddess of home, Vesta or Hestia in Rome. Essentially they can be comprehended as the keepers of identity, the guardian angels of the familiar, the personal, and the connection can hardly be mistaken between the fire described in the room of Saint-Loup, the sound of the fireplace, from which the narration proceeds and between these keepers of

sound as fire. There is no space here for distant references, to detail the connections between distant passages of text but what we must state is that the act of reading in his famous essay on reading Proust interprets as the occupation of an unfamiliar room with which we close in ourselves a strange life in its absence.¹⁰¹

So exactly the way he finds himself in the room of his friend. At the same time the room appears in numerous passages of *Recherche* as a frame, or more precisely as a container which is far from being identical with the person who inhabits it, with its content, and since it is both in a synecdochic and contact relation with its surroundings, it is the symbol and contingents space of its inhabitants at the same time. The objects of the room are the testamental signs of our now dead beloved once living there. The parallel of the room and reading implies the parallels of room and language, room and writing as well which if considering the room as a crypt may hint at the strange composition of the „urns of sounds”, where telephonist ladies appear not as keepers of life, fire and home but as murderous women killing their husbands, as Danaids, and they get connected to death. Fire, as the interpretant of sound after tenderness is associated with destruction again. It is well-known that the Danaids were doomed to eternally fill water in a bottomless lake, and the water, the element antithetical with fire here is substituted with ash, while the barrel, the always emptying container with the urn. We may remember a similar combination of fire and water both from the eyes of the mythologised aristocrats and from the description of Berma's voice. The sound which has no spatial extension, has no place, is a purely temporal entity which – just like time – eliminates, burns up itself already at the moment of formation, it can only be prolonged as ash, as the testament of its own burning, and can enter the artificial medium, here the medium of the telephone. The sound turning into ash is not other but the metaphor which spatialises the unphenomenalisable, that which cannot be made spatial – but as inconsistent ash lacking substance –, which, of course, continues the recently observed analogy of light and sound associating understanding and irradiation. And which illuminates the described invisible phenomenon in a way so that it also draws it into a shadow, covering it, and unveiling its invisibility and is covering. The expression „se transmettent” might also be interesting in this context because the transmission of the urn to each other presupposes that the the pot of this ash, the crypt of the constantly changing testament is interchangeable, while the material of ash is not unique either – since ash is not at all what the fetishising act of the mourning persons make it – but still changes, alternates constantly, and it is this irreversible temporality that makes it event-like and irreplaceable. Nevertheless the urn here is a medium here which – like the water of Lethe the barrel – is filled with the ash of sound then is immediately emptied from it. Vestas and Danaids, the keepers of fire and fillers of ash can actually be comprehended as the two aspects of the same phenomenon, the living, burning sound and the gone out sound turned to ash are the antithetical but cohesive viewpoint of the same entity. All this cannot be separated either from the relation of sound and letter, meant and meaning as contained and containing, or from the self-interpreting figures of the text.

The Furies or the Erynes warn the caller that the sound functioning as the agent of the medium which is not identical with the living sound is at the mercy of nature ki van szolgáltatva a külsődlegesség és a nyilvánosság minden sajátot, minden privátot a közös terébe vonó, s ezzel leromboló természetének. Transmitting the whispering,

¹⁰¹ See: Marcel PROUST: *Sur la lecture*. In.: *Écrits sur l'art*. Paris, 1999. 195.

the secret, the private sphere, the human voice and the message „carried” by it unheard by strangers which utilises the closeness of the mouth and the ear of the other, the closeness of breath and the auditroy duct and bodily closeness, cannot be reproduced on the phone. Closeness, the illusion of someone distant brought close is a deceiving appearance, as the voice can be heard not exclusively by its addressee. As the Erynes saw every sin, even the ones committed in the biggest secret and punished it with death, so the telephonist ladies warn to the death as survival of the unique, unmistakable voice, one’s own voice that they sound the stealing and appropriation of the secret carried by it. That which is present as a possibility already in the sound formed not mechanically but by the natural sound-producing organ of the human being, since on the one hand as the medium of communication it is directed to the other, outside of the self, and is originally external, and through its fast spreading it can be heard by others, on the other hand it is comprehensible, readable, namely articulated, so ordered to pictures it is rhythmically and phonetically articulated, spatialised through which it is also repeatable. This tendency for dispossession is, of course, not so much of stealing but rather the ironic cracking and ruption of the continuity and the mutuality embodied in the voice, which displays the fragility of the continuity of the illusion created on the one hand by the voice, on the other by the communication connection, the medium.

Repeatability, the gradual independency of the voice, its separation from its origin, as from a one-time temporal event and also as from the speaker, makes its archivation possible as well, and this is what while making the voice readable also deprives it from its immaterial materiality. All this presupposes the spatialisation of the voice, its spatialisation preceding everything, that which at the same time undercuts the pure temporality of the voice. On the other hand, however, the result of exactly this disparateness, that the voice has no localisable origin and phenomenal extension, is that the voice can materially be recorded. Bringing the distant close, the voice mediated artificially and at the same time created exemplifies the distance of the close for the narrator by means of the reversal, and reminds Marcel of the mourning of the beloved other, of the mourning which is working already when the other is still alive. The sound already separates from the other – for instance from the grandmother, from her body – already when the other is still close, beside Marcel preparing to leave, he can touch her little body, and the origin of this sound is going to be not her, not the beloved other but as non-localisable it is coming from the non-being, from the depth of nothing.

Ő az, a hangja, amely nekünk szól, amely jelen van. De ő maga milyen messzire! Hányszor nem tudtam szorongás nélkül hallgatni azt – mint mikor csak az utazás hosszú órái után láttam viszont őt [*comme si devant cette impossibilité de voir, avant de longues heures de voyages* – a látás ezen lehetetlensége előtt, hosszú órákig tartó utazás előtt állva, vagyis az elutazás jövője utal előre a távollétre a jelenlétből, s nem fordítva, miként az a jelenlétből megértett távollét folytatódó soraiból egyenesen következik is] –, akinek a hangja most oly közel volt a fülemhez, mintha csak jobban érezném, mily csalóka a legkedvesebb közelség látszata, és hogy mily nagy távolságra lehetünk azoktól, akiket szeretünk, amikor az a látszat, hogy csak ki kell nyújtani a kezünk, hogy megfoghassuk. Valóságos jelenlét ez az olyan közeli hang – a valóságos távolságban [*dans la séparation effective*]! De egyben előjátéka a végleges távozásnak [*Mais anticipation aussi d’une séparation éternelle*]! Gyakran, mikor hallgattam, anélkül, hogy láttam volna, aki oly messziről szólt hozzám, úgy

éreztem, hogy ez a hang azokból a mélységekből hangzik, ahonnan senki sem jön vissza [*cette voix clamait des profondeurs d'où l'on ne remonte pas*], s megismertem a szorongást, amely elfogott egy nap [*l'anxiété qui allait m'étreindre un jour* – megmarkol, megfog, a testi érintés, a megragadás értelmében ; láttuk, a hangokat, éppúgy, ahogy belső jelöletüket, az érzelmeket, nem lehet megragadni, sőt ezek a megragadhatatlanok ragadnak meg – metaforikusan – bennünket ; az « étreindre » ige erős hangzási kapcsolatban van, összehangzik az « éteindre » igével, aminek jelentése : elolt, kihunyásra készítet], mikor egy hang visszatér (egyedül, nem a testével együtt, amelyet sose láthattam többé [*et ne tenant plus à un corps que je ne devais jamais revoir*]), s fülemben oly szavakat [*paroles*] mormol, melyeket szerettem volna csak futólag megcsókolni a véglegesen porrá vált ajkon [*j'aurais voulu embrasser au passage sur des lèvres à jamais en poussière* – az « embrasser » szó szerint ölelni, átkarolni (*bras*-kar) jelent, az « embraser » viszont azt jelenti felgyújt, lángba borít]. (156-157.)

While the sound appears to be coming from death, exactly its is that may survive its possessor as an archive, who is not really its possessor but is rather the possessed by their own but still strange voice, strane because it is separated from them and survives them. The voice announces the death of the speaker, works as a kind of testamental sign while this survival can only eventuate in the death, the abstraction of the sound, and in so far it is very much parallel with the death of the body. However, the dead (heard) voice may return, while the dead body may not, exactly because the voice has no body, it is unembodied, phantom-like, while it can be archived as an invisible spatialisation. Its metaphoric turning into dust, its burning to ashes still relates it to the body, inasmuch as it marks it as organic, as live burning, and inasmuch as this burning, this passing is essentially the other metaphoric name of formation. With its phantasmal nature and pure temporality the voice already refers to that the body is also a formation cast into time which is ultimately presupposed by its own non-existence. However, on the other hand, the voice is the medium of understanding, and means a possibility for survival in archivation which, however, as a kind of artificial spatialisation is never again identical with whom the phantom it brings back. Voice with its immateriality is the authentic medium of spirits which therefore on the one hand presupposes mourning but which exactly with the compensation, moreover, the forgetting of the body of the other as dead weight („poids mort”) (touching) and as picture does it make the affective harmony and communicational exchange processes possible. In the famous passage of the first volume on reading immateriality is understood as the unrivalled advantage, capability of the text and literature, inasmuch as the immateriality of the characters and abstract language of a novel makes the readerly identification possible with them. Similarly to identify with the grandmother – as we shall see – is also made possible by the bodily distance from her, by the clearly heard voice. All this is again not independent of mourning, neither from the testamentality of experience for which the grandmother can be a revelatory example again with whom Marcel identifies the most when by means of her illness her mortality, the temporality of their relationship, the phantasmal character of the other becomes conscious to him. While in the formation of the relationship with Princess Guermantes the picture, the sight seen as present being within reach signalled the closeness in distance, and the missing voice and speech –

as a by-pass road – carried the promise of real closeness and friendship¹⁰², in case of the voice heard over promise the presence of the other. The verb „étendre” used for the stretching of the hand is derived from the Latin verb „tendere” which can also be found in „entendre” meaning something directed to the other. The embrace closing the passage evokes the subtext of the motherly kiss interlacing the whole novel, while the text also stages the interlocking oppositions of closeness and distance, presence and lack, life and death with the similarities of linguistic sounding. Hearing, more precisely, the reading of these reverberations presupposes the spatialisation of sound, the ruption of the perceptual continuity of reading. Homophonic and anagrammatic plays, which will become even stronger, are only possible in case of re-hearing, re-reading of the text, so in case of its repeatability, which can be ensured through a kind of material recordedness, the spatialisation of the voice, so through its becoming independent from the sounding voice. While the homophones of „embrasser” and „embraser” and of „étreindre” and „éteindre” as efficient aesthetic effects carry out the process of mutually writing into each other which is strengthened also on the meaning level of distance and closeness, life and death, namely, they function in terms of the equivalence of sound and picture, they also exemplify the power of sounding becoming self-dependent in the game of meaning which is not continuous with the scene. Azt, hogy a hang független a képtől, s a hangok hasonlósága ellentétes képek között önkényesen teremt kapcsolatot, valamint hogy a hangnak így egyfajta materiális, de sem a betű, sem a tisztán artikulálódó, fonetikai egységként felfogott hang fenoménjével nem azonosítható, visszhangszerű eredet tulajdonítható, melynek véletlenszerűsége akár a kittleri morajlás metaforáját is felidézheti.¹⁰³

The embrace, touching the body of the other, the identification with the beloved other, the joy of possessing the other, while the sense of touching which ensures a closeness overwriting the voice – a chiasmus-like interlocking, interchange – signals an identification with the other, it is heterogenous not only with the sense of picture but also the sense of sound. Touching, on the other hand means a metonymic, contingent relation based on *contact*, so it calls attention to the irreducible difference of the bodies (which are equal neither with their name, nor with their picture, but are equal with both, and also form the boundary of the self). Earlier we have seen that the sense of touching was the condition of the formation of both picture (the mental photograph, print about the narrator of the maids, and through them of himself) and sound (engraving the voice into the wax plate of the gramophone, or earlier the phonograph), and with it of the artificial, mechanic archivation pervading natural sensation as well. The recording of the voice and the picture in the text print, carried out by the text of Proust – the allegory of which is the writing on the gramophone or

¹⁰² Determining the travel to Doncières may get a meaning from the relation of voice and picture, inasmuch as Marcel sees – that by means of seeing, however close the seen is to us, and be it mutual – that he will not be able to defeat the distance modelled also by social differences which separates him from the princess. It is not accidental that before his travel he contemplates that visual mediation, the medium of the eye can get not only his emotions but also his thoughts to Mme de Guermantes, and that following from the character of the sense of seeing he will not be able to get close to her with the help of seeing. So he separates from the princess and travels to her nephew in order to get much closer to her, by means of speaking, which, namely the voice does not appear here as something that is able to conquer bigger distances alone, but rather as is a much more adequate, intersubjective mediator than picture. And which, at the same time marking a by-pass road, delay, namely a difference proves to be more direct than sight, in which in its seeming directness unveils distance and difference.

¹⁰³ Cf. Friedrich A. KITTLER, *Discours networks 1800/1900*, Stanford, California, 187.

the phonograph – is dependent on the meaningless materiality of the letter, the sign-recording mechanism of which – the ink is a saturated trace, engraving on the paper – is in a heterogeneous relation with the letter, the smallest articulated unit of text, just like the voice only touches speech sounds, while it „seems” to completely dissolve in the articulatedness of these. The allegory of the telephone should picture the heterogeneity of these two, and at the same time means the heterogeneity of picture and sound which – from the point of picture – is staged by the (interpretant of the) photo camera.

The telephone and the description of the telephone alternates the symbols and allegories that turn the inexplicable wonder to familiar with descriptions that keep the literal, sheer sight of phenomenon in the foreground, as listening to the voice also alternates with considering its instrumentalisation and medial circumstances. Telephony is introduced by the light, abstract noise of the telephone receiver (*récepteur*) which is the basic noise of the device as medium, and which warns us that the machine or the transformational system does not function on the basis of the human ear, namely does not recognise the articulatedness or configuration of the voice but transmits voice in its pure materiality, hearing it as sheer noise.¹⁰⁴ The device gives out abstract noise, namely, it reveals its own factitious, mechanic operation while with making the noise external, mechanically transmittable at the same time points back to the hidden possibility in it, it makes visible an already existing but not yet observed aspect of the human voice, and hearing itself. The medium of the telephone, of course, does not record the sounding voice as noise but already materialises a kind of abstraction of it which can be done because as an immaterial materiality voice automatically devotes itself for this abstraction. For that abstraction which seems to be very much antithetical with the linguistic abstraction of voice, since the medium of the telephone recognises the voice in its non-articulated aspect, while the human ear is a device sensitive to forms and articulation which – posing itself as natural – suppresses its own medial noise. The narrator calls the abstract noise of the telephone receiver the noise of abolished distance („*bruit de la distance supprimée*”) with which not only distance is defeated but – since the telephone voice works as the interpretative of the heard voice in the closeness, presence of the other – usually also the separatedness manifesting in the mute picture, in seeing. That muteness which supervening suddenly before and after the conversation warns to the insurmountable distance and difference of the other, and this way to its original mourning. To the mourning which was excluded by the picture seen without sound by the deaf and represented as impossible. Proust’s text, faithfully to the direction of meaning so far, presents the abstract noise of the telephone as a key element in the semiotic movement which constantly re-draws the order of relationship of picture and sound, idea and sound, signified and signifier, and with this it integrates the technical questions into a linguistic-aesthetic horizon of meaning.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ „S mihelyt felhangzik a hívásom, abban a jelenésekkel teli éjben, amelyre csak füleink nyílnak meg, egy könnyű zaj – egy elvont zaj – a megszüntetett távolságé – s a kedves lény hangja hozzánk szól.”(156.)

¹⁰⁵ The telephone in Kosztolányi’s novel on the one hand is the exemplary medium of the accelerating spreading of voice separating from its origin, of the a szóbeszéd aláírás nélküli, a szerzői eredetet mintegy felfüggesztő vagy eltörő diffúziójának mintaszerű médiuma. Hearsay becomes circular, namely Anna’s fame, her legend runs a circle, and after a time – among others on the phone, so by means of a technically externalised and increasingly delocalised voice, whose most important feature here is that it separates the voice from its spatial, phenomenal origin, from the bodily presence and sight of the speaker – gets back to the ears of the

The phonecall with the grandmother is introduced by the testimony of a strayed call, an unfamiliar voice comes from the receiver whose speech Marcel does not listen to, so he hears it as inarticulated sound, deprived of the reason of the said, as unintelligible but still as human speech. Since it does not turn out from the text, it cannot be known, whether Marcel already hears the voice of his grandmother which – deprived of the sense of speech – he does not recognise or does he really hear the voice of a stranger, and the lack of scenery or interpretation does not even exclude the possibility of the former. As suddenly as this conversation comes into existence (already on the border of the relinquishment of the narrated self) as suddenly does it break, and this break on the one hand illuminates the technical illusion of the successful relation and of the heard voice, on the other it gets into a relationship with the fragility of the grandmother's voice.

Ezen a napon Doncières-ben a várt csoda nem történt meg. Amikor megérkeztem a postára, nagyanyám már felhívott; beléptem a kabinba, a vonal már foglalt volt, valaki beszélt, s bizonyosan nem tudhatta, hogy senki se volt ott, aki feleljen neki, mert mikor felvettem a kagylót [*récepteur*], ez a fadarab [*ce morceau de bois* – láttuk, korábban : *planchette*, vagyis deszka volt] beszélni kezdett, mint Polichinelle [a *comédie dell'arte* darabok tipikus figurája, a gyorsan, érthetetlenül beszélő, hadaró szolgál] elhallgattattam, mint a cirkuszban [*au guignol* – ez a szó nem cirkuszt, de bábszínházat, marionettszínházat jelent, s ez szempontunkból egyáltalán nem mindegy], de mihelyt fülemhez közelítettem, megint csak rákezdett a fecsegésre. A végén, kétségbeesésemben, végleg visszaakasztottam a kagylót [*récepteur*], hogy elhallgattassam a görcsösen zengő csonkot, amely utolsó percig hadart [*par étouffer les convulsions de ce tronçon sonore qui jacassa jusqu'à la dernière seconde* – az eufonikus effektusok itt alapos gyanút adnak a beszélő, a fülünkkel megszólaltatott, s amúgy szintén fából való papír és a beszélő fadarab párhuzamára], s szóltam a hivatalnoknak, aki azt mondta, várjak egy percig; [...] (157.)

Vizys. „Miután a hír megfutotta körpályáját, visszaérkezett hozzájuk. / Vizynél a minisztériumban egyszer telefonon érdeklődött egyik barátja, vajon nincs-e Annának húga van néneje, mert szüksége volna egy megbízható cselédre.”(92.) After a while we confuse the voice of Anna with that of Mrs. Vizy on the phone. Bantering on the phone is spreading in this era, and this characteristics of this phenomenon, namely, for instance the possibility of separating the bodily presence of the speaker and the spatial medium of speaking situation as the institutional certifying momentum of (the origin of) voice, of speech. But this was only half successful. They called upon a common friend. He was not at home, so they could only inform his widow mother that at eight o'clock tomorrow in the morning her son should Az nem volt otthon, ennél fogva csak özvegy édesanyjával közölhették, hogy fia holnap reggel nyolc órakor, saját érdekében jelentkezék a politikai nyomozóhatóságnál.”(121.) Beyond this more miniature examples can be brought to exemplify the consequences of the absolutisation of the visible and the losing sight of the invisible, among which one connects directly to the telephone. The Romanian troops marched into the captial city, who themselves marvel at (the occupation) what they are doing, bewildered by their untrammelled desires „az értéktelen, mutatós holmit választották az értékes helyett. Mindenekelőtt leszereltették a magánlakások telefonjait. Két hadiszekér megtetejezve telefonkészülékekkel, elszakított drótokkal végigdöcögött a Krisztina-körúton.”(33-34.) The value of the devices, as the value in general, is relational and consensus-like, that is why it is invisible, however, the hinterland of the network and the flashing picture of the devices torn out from it becomes the example not only of this but also that of the invisible relations between inter-personal relations and souls. Invisible bonds are more valuable than visible ones and they cannot be torn out – neither the telephone network – from their place without place, while the immovable telephone is actly the technical medium of delocalisation. To the external and internal analogy of telephone and soul (consciousness) the description of the telephone directory from the tárcaentitled „The Telephone Girl”

At the beginning of the passage the narrator approaches the phenomenon of the telephone from its literality, in a way as if he were somebody who did not know the phone, who is not conscious of the idea of the telephone, and who makes the origin of the voice the seen telephone-receiver and not the owner of the voice coming from it. This interlocking of the seen and the heard which means the cancellation of the imaginative, conscious or internal picture, of imagination and the literality of the sensed things, at the same moment it is already interpreted as ironic antropomorphisation, as a kind of theatrical, tale-like speech. The speaking phone – which this way is a metaphor which is not really in a metaphoric but in a metonymic relationship with the voice of the grandmother – becomes similar to a puppet, who is moved unpercieved, and whose voice is lent which reveals the illusioniness of the movement of the face and the mouth made to be the origin of the voice, the factitious, conventional character of the interlocking of face and voice based on contact. It is important that the marionette theatre scene of evoked puppet and shadowplay worked in a similar way in case of seeing deprived of deaf voice which contributed to this picture's enhancing not eliminating the disturbing quality of reality and literality. The narrator not only separates the seeing of the telephone from its idea but parallelly the voice as well, inasmuch as not the meaning of the speech but only its meaning surface does get to his consciousness, which this way resembles a meaningless murmur. Such a murmur, of course, which does not mean a sequence or chaos of sheer voices but the hearing of senseless speech, as Heidegger also notices about this well-known experience: „Mindenek előtt *nem* a hangokat halljuk, amelyeket a másik kiejt. Még ott is, ahol a beszéd elmosódott vagy a nyelv idegen, mindenekelőtt *értelmetlen* szavakat, nem pedig hangelemek sokféleségét halljuk.”¹⁰⁶ Considering it from this point it might be interesting that a semantically, grammatically, syntactically correct, not agrammatic text by means of sound symbolism, exemplifying its own senselessness exploits the equivalence of sounding and meaning, semantics and acoustics: „les convulsions de ce tronçon sonore qui jacassa jusqu'à la dernière seconde”. If in this sentence, according to sound symbolism, we accentuate „s” sounds (French pronunciation: „sz”), the strong sonority might oppress the meaning, while cuts the words into senseless elements, and the semantic image of cramps and the stump affirms this disarticulation and slicing. The structure exemplifies that although meaning cannot be separated from the signifier, sounding and sense, voice and picture not only intensify but at the same time they exclude each other, and this supports the text not only from the side of sounding but also from the side meaning. Sounding and meaning, picture and sound join in terms of their irreducible difference and discontinuity, and by justifying this joining they exclude each other, this way making the narrative continuity of reading based on voice, its pure temporality impossible.¹⁰⁷ The picture of the spastically

¹⁰⁶ Martin HEIDEGGER, *Lét és idő*, Budapest, 1989, 310.

¹⁰⁷ It would be worthwhile to compare the antinomic function of sounding revealing itself here with the above analysed film-like excerpt in which Édes Anna cleans up, where, as we have seen it, the movement of sound-symbolism, work and pictorial narration (and its reading) govern the oscillation between sound and pictorial reference in an integer relation with each other, which may be

Érdemes lenne összevetni a hangzásnak az itt feltáruló ellentmondásos funkcióját Édes Anna takarításának fentebb elemzett filmszerű részletével, ahol, mint láttuk, a hangszimbolika, a munka és a képszerű elbeszélés (és olvasásának) mozgása egymással integer viszonyban maradván irányították az olvasás oszcillációját hang és képi referencia között, amely bármily kifinomult nyelvi eljárás legyen egy elbeszélő prózai szövegben

writhing body part also foreshadows all the anxieties – the narrator a little later also mention the cut-off, speaking head of Orpheus – which accompany the voice of the grandmother along the voice and mourning, the voice and the testamentality. The cut off conversation and also the telephone-scene at the end, as Marcel in front of the device alone calls out for the suddenly vanishing, lost shadow, and desperately repeats: „grand-mère, grand-mère” but no answer is coming for his words, similarly as he does not answer the strange voice when entering the phone-box.

[...] aztán megszólaltam, s pár percnyi hallgatás után hirtelen meghallottam azt a hangot, amelyről tévesen azt hittem, jól ismerem, mert mindaddig, ahányszor nagyanyám beszélgetett velem, amit mondott, csak arca nyílt kottáján szoktam követni, amelyben szempárja nagy szerepet játszott [*je l'avais toujours suivi sur la partition ouverte de son visage où les yeux tenaient beaucoup de places*]; de magát a hangját ma hallgattam a legelső alkalommal. S mivel e hang mintha arányaiban megváltozott volna, mihelyt egyetlen egészet formált, és csak így egyedül érkezett hozzám, az arcvonások kísérete nélkül, felfedeztem, milyen szelíd ez a hang [*combien cette voix était douce* – kedves, kellemes, halk, lágy, finom, a „combien” pedig mennyiségi és nem minőségi értelemre utal, lásd rezgő részecskék mennyisége; fontos, hogy ez a kijelentés a nagymama hangjának leírását itt, miként korábban a Bermáét, azáltal is hozzárendeli a racine-i tragédiához és a színházi előadáshoz, hogy egy tökéletes alexandrinuszba illeszti¹⁰⁸]; lehet, hogy ennyire sose volt ilyen, mert nagyanyám érezve, hogy a távolban boldogtalan vagyok, azt hitte, átengedheti magát annak az áradó gyengédségnek [*s'abandonner à l'effusion d'une tendresse*], amelyet nevelési „elvek” miatt általában fékezett [*contenait* – azaz tartalmazott, magában tartott] és titkolt [*cachait* - elrejtett]. Szelíd volt, amellet szomorú is, főképp a szelídsége miatt, amely szinte teljesen tiszta [*décantée*] volt, tisztább, mint bármely emberi hang, mentes minden keménységtől, minden ellenállástól, minden önzéstől [*plus que peu de voix humaines ont jamais dû l'être, de toute dureté, de tout élément de résistance aux autres, de tout égoïsme* – mint kevés emberi hang lehetett valaha is!]. Finom a törékenységig, úgy látszott, hogy minden percben megcsuklik [*à se briser* – összetörik, széttörik, mint az urna vagy a korsó], tiszta könnyárban hal el; s most, hogy a közelemben volt, s hogy az arc formája nélkül láttam [*vu sans le masque du visage*], észrevettem, először életemben, hogy az élet folyamán [*au cours de la vie*] a bánatuktól repedt [*félée*] így meg. (157-158.)

The voice of the grandmother is familiar and unfamiliar at the same time, recognised and unrecognised, a voice heard for many times and for the first time, and for both aspects its unmistakable uniqueness is responsible. Inasmuch as, at least, this makes the voice separated from the face recognisable, while at the same time its unfamiliarity and its character withstanding the habitual can be traced back to this. For the sounding speech the face functions as a kind of score in which the warrant of the eye, seeing and being seen contributes the most, and articulates speech to its elements, almost driving the understanding of the things said. The lack of the face as the pictorial origin of the voice – more precisely the abstractio of it is also parallel with

(nagyon is az!), alapvetően különbözik az itt kommentált Proust-passzustól, ahol hang és kép ellentmondásos korrelációinak hallatlanul szubtilis, önfelszámoló bonyolítása figyelhető meg. Mindez a különbség aligha független a narratívának és a filmszerűségnek a Kosztolányi-regényben betöltött szerepétől.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Olivier LEPLATRE, *L'aura de la voix. la scène téléphonique dans A la recherche du temps perdu*. Poétique, 2003. november (136.sz.), 411.

the movement of the picture as an outside reference separating from the voice. As the person on the other side of the telephone line, we remember, reports with her own voice about what she is doing at the moment. As the voice – as we will see – involuntarily diverts attention from the seen picture, so does the picture function similarly regarding the heard voice, the interplay of the two senses giving the familiar voice here in this sense also means the impossibility of their individual fulfilment, the partial oblivion of each other. The face appears here as the mask of the voice which covers its original placelessness, and diverts attention from the acoustic entirety of the voice, just like the pure visuality of the pictures about Princess Guermantes was altered by the voice. All these affirm the anthropological compulsion of the equivalence of voice and picture, in terms of which the speaking puppet can act as if it were talking, not a voice *beside* it. Which voice is identified as the voice of the puppeteer while the example of the puppet directs attention exactly to the unestablished nature of this identification. To the identification which leads the narrator to seeing the testamentality of voice, the realisation that the unmistakably unique voice of the grandmother does not come from the grandmother, or her sight, but it only touches it, as the senses of hearing and seeing are also only co-ordinated. And all this, the voice miming speech but in fact ascribed to the mute puppet models the act of reading itself, in which giving voice and giving face interrelate, and in which metaphoric relations seem to illusiory overwrite the figures of metonymy relying on contingency and contact.

In the text the narrator gives voice to the speech of the grandmother, while to the narrator the all-time reader, we assign the mute text to ourselves. All this in a way, however, as Marcel the voice of the grandmother, the reader must sound the voice of the author acknowledging its irreplaceable singularity, namely, this expressing must be preceded by the hearing of the sound, which also emphasises the to-and-fro movement of hearing and speaking in its constative and performative undecidedness. The voice is especially appropriate medium of this antinomic movement, inasmuch as it is the medium of understanding, the changing and mutuality of ideas meanwhile it also resists reading as a voice separating from meaning and heterogenous with pictures and ideas. The face as the lack of picture consumates, fulfils the voice, and lets represents an „aspect” of its changed rate never heard before, which primarily means the mildness of the voice never sensed before. This mildness or tenderliness is the absolute lack of resistance of the voice – also as the other, which has been circumscribed by the considerations, so to speak force or despotism of upbringing which made it strong, resistant and selfish. This mildness, at the same time, endangers the existence of the voice, threatens with its destruction.

The mild voice of the grandmother is compared to water, to water cleared of its drift, „décantée” at the same time means the temporal clearing of thoughts, namely it is about the transparency of ideas similar to the case of Berma’s voice, which is compared not only to fire but also to living water. A jelentettet jelenlévővé tevő, az ideákban feloldódó hanggal szemben a hallásként elgondolt megértés affektív átlátszóságában megszűnik minden ellenállás, s a hang a szelídség ideájához tapadva a kölcsönös megértés közege is. The mildness of the grandmother’s voice, its being lacking any kind of resistance individualises the grandmother in a way that it simultaneously deprives her of her unmistakable individuality, inasmuch as it dissolves listener and speaker not only in the ideas of understanding but in the feeling of mutual mildness as well. This limitless mildness, however, threatens the

integrity and articulatedness of the voice supported by sadness which is represented not by the image of the living water implying continuity and temporal succession but by the image of a fragile vessel containing liquid. We may remember the container of the actress's voice hiding flame, which has also been suggestively depicted by the chiasmuses of contained and container. The association of the cracked, the broken voice and the tear and voice may refer back to the Danaids, to the constantly filling and emptying urn or barrel¹⁰⁹ as well, which itself was not self-eliminating but only the voice running through it as ash. The fragility of the medium, the mediating work of the telephona and the voice of the grandmother – as well as container and contained – are not only parallel with each other, what is more, interchangeable but also with the fragility of the voice constituting the meaning process and the meaning sounding. Fragmentation means the offsetting of temporality, and in it continuity and irreversibility, and the spatialisation of speech, while the container, which as a medium can easily be mistaken for the contained, does not fall to pieces, only cracks: „fêlée” the shards of the vessel are still together, they take the shape of unity while they have already parted with each other. Voice simultaneously keeps a kind of continuity, shape, and is at the same time broken to pieces. All these may be especially interesting because the voice is not the medium of fragmentation but rather the medium of homogenisation, of the harmonious reconciliation of oppositions not only in the interpretation of Berma's voice but also in the equivalence-principle of the poetic function where the similarity of sounding entails the similarity or difference of meaning. It can be said that in the voice of the grandmother intermission is the condition of continuity, disharmony of harmony, as the abstract noise of the articulated voice also manifesting in the background noise of the phone refers back to the materiality of sound. It is interesting that the fragmentation of voice, its independence of meaning, which has been exemplified by the words echoing in each other, here may also produce a meaning effect, inasmuch as in this context of the puppet and the speaking Orpheus head – which according to the Vergilian narration cried the name of Eurydice even when parting from its body – and the cracked, broken vase it is not fully unsubstantiated to hear in „décantée”, the voice meaning clear the evocation of „décapitée”, which literally means decapitated. The clear, stream-like voice transparent of ideas leaves the speaking head as drift, which at the same time it transforms or deforms into a spasmodic stump, which still tempts it as the amely a szavak visszhangjának dezartikulált, véletlen, eredet nélküli eredeteként, zajos hordalékként mégiscsak megkísérti, hiszen másfelől nagyon is feltétele ennek a tisztaságnak. As the figurative, pictorial origin of the voice, the visual projection of the naturalising act of hearing or reading the spasmodic stump makes the sound disturbing in a way that meanwhile it also makes it familiar as functioning as some kind of a score of it. The face of the grandmother and the linguistic abstraction, the name of the grandmother, its jelölet and the letters (*gramma*) interlock inextricably, and while they presuppose, they also dismember each other the same time, they forget each other, and about this the homophones of „grand-mère” and „grammaire” may come into our mind.

The intricately threads of acoustic signifier and optical signified written into each other are overwritten by the sequel of the text into further patterns, when along the

¹⁰⁹ This excerpt, by the way, by the chiasmus of container and contained also evokes the sight of the sight of the jugs dipped into Vivonne and its commentary in the first chapter of the novel entitled “Swann”, during the first walk to the Guermantes side, namely, to Méséglise.

opposition of the loosing, freeing mildness of sound and the imperious voice it points to the mutually exclusive, exclusively presupposing working of semantics and voice. The grandmother, whose object of speech or its semantics has not been mentioned by the narrator, he only focused on the description of her voice, she tells Marcel on this mild voice attesting no resistance that he must stay in Doncière, he must prolong his absence as long as possible.

Az ajánlások vagy tilalmak, amelyeket rendszeren minden percben hozzám intézett, a szófogadás unalma vagy az ellenkezés láza, amelyek semlegesítették az iránta érzett gyengédséget, megszűntek ebben a pillanatban s megszűnhettek a jövőben is (mivel nagyanyám nem kívánta többé, hogy mellette, az ő törvénye alatt legyek, sőt azt a reményét fejezte ki, hogy Doncière-ben maradhatok egészen, vagy legalább oly hosszan, amíg lehet, tekintettel arra, hogy ez jót tesz munkámnak és egészségemnek; épp azért ami a kis harang alatt volt, egészen közel a fülemhez [*petite cloche approchée de mon oreille*], nem volt más, mint a mi kölcsönös és ellenállhatatlan gyöngédségünk [*mutuelle tendresse*], szabadulva azoktól az egymással szemben álló erőktől [*des pressions opposées*], amelyeknek nyomása minden nap ellensúlyozta ezt a gyengédséget. Nagyanyám, mivel azt mondta, maradjak, a hazatérés szorongó és örült szükségét keltette bennem. (oldalszám?????)

The exceptional moment of mutual tenderness, the elimination of oppositions and differences is pictured in a total acoustic harmony by the narration in a way that it puts it into contrast with such oppositions and tensions which activate that military lexis which has also been used by this paper at the beginning when discussing the example of the maid and the landlord. The text builds its own syntax in a way that it alternately talks about harmony and irreconcilable tension, while it states that these as two aspects of the voice – among which the former is the presence in the distance, the latter distance in presence – mutually exclude and abolish each other. Resistance forgets about tenderness, while tenderness eliminates resistance. This alternation, this to and fro movement, following the grammatics of the argumentation and the rhythm of the sentence culminates with the help of oppositions in the strong affirmation and tender sounding of sentence-closing of mutual tenderness and harmony. Until, after a breathing space, a caesura, in the next short sentence harmony tilts back to its own opposition, inasmuch as the total lack of command is interpreted as the command of the tender voice. The words of the grandmother achieve an antithetical effect, inasmuch as they do not motivate Marcel to stay but make him to resist, to confront the things said. The mild, permissive voice becomes commanding and despotic exactly due to its tenderness, and through this it writes into each other, and shows inseparable that which is heterogeneous and incompatible. The said thing and the mode of telling in this case semantics and acoustics inseparably join, while as cognitive and performative momentums of language they mutually exclude each other. All this is staged here as the correlation of the self's the all-time dependency on the other, and at the same time its insuperable separatedness, which simultaneously exemplifies the impossibility of mourning and the unavoidability of the mourning of the living other. The suddenly broken relation, as rupture, as fraction, as the unveiling of an illusion is interpreted not only as spatial distance but also as the sign of ordinary separatedness, irreducible difference or otherness. This, of course, can be related to the act of evoking the grandmother

which the read text also performs, which gives voice and through this face to the grandmother, while it is exactly the voice that makes the face vulnerable to voice irrecognisable. That voice which additionally does not belong to Marcel but is lent by the reader while reading, more precisely, by reading. The voice of the grandmother as a recurring phantom, and the voice of Marcel, with which he uselessly calls out for the grandmother become each others's „reflections”, while – as we have seen it – they also model the acts of narration and reading. Testamentality is also supported by the image of the telephone as a bell, which, of course, may evoke many descriptions about churches, among others, the famous scene of the Martineville bells, which is a well-known episode of „mémoire involontaire” in the book. The sound of the bell is not only not a human voice but – similarly to the ticking of the clock – is a desanthropomorph noise creating rhythmic recurrences, which is the sign of an event or the recurrent, cyclic time. Proximity, relatedness (*proche, approche*) and the bell (*cloche*) – as container and contained – sound together as well, while their assonance, their to-and-fro play in the echo of sound stage the tense movements of meaning and sounding, proximity and distance, picture and sound.

This to-and-fro movement, which is not the narrative unloosening of a non-temporal aporetic structure forced by the succession of perception, it extends to the syntax of the story too, just like to its meaning games, and as we have observed, as the self-eliminating, impossible model of reading itself it defines and pervades numerous aspects of *Recherche*. In this essay, which is lengthy already, before the rough-hewn commentary of the last passage as a closure of the argumentation, two more examples must be mentioned from near by the phone to demonstrate this extreme complexity pervading the layers. After Marcel, after the broken phonecall with his grandmother, sadly and deciding on his homecoming returns to Saint-Loup and his freinds into the hotel, he is called to the telephone, which proves to be a wrong number, and the cause of the mistake is not else but the similarity of the name of the called person and that of Marcel, which – reinforcing its significance as the inconvenience of practical life, as a negative consequence – is again stages the sounding and cognition, sounding and pointing of the picture – as the unique signifier of name – conceived as irreducible heterogeneity. The other example for the shifting game of picture and voice may be the illness of the grandmother, who suffers from uremia in the last days of her life, she first loses her sightas the concomitant sign of this disease, then re-gains her sight, along with which, however, she becomes deaf, so alternately in time seeing and hearing necessarily separate for her, which separation and also the movement of their impossibility we tried attempted to follow in the text.¹¹⁰

Marcel, who travelled to Doncière seeing exactly the character of seeing unable to bridge inter-personal distances, now forgetting this realisation and the impersonality of the picture wants to defeat the separatedness from the grandmother with her spatial proximity, therefore he immediately travels home to Paris. The description of

¹¹⁰ It is hardly accidental that at a place the title hero, whose prediscursive perspective reduced to senses can also be regarded as the self-mirroring model of the topology of the senses, alternately loses her sight and her hearing, namely, at first she becomes blind, then, regaining her sight, becomes deaf. All this happens after the day she takes the white powder got from Jancsi Patikárius. „Anna valami irtózatoss félelemmel kaparászott maga körül, aztán szemét a kezére szorította. Nem látott semmit. Körös-körül fekete volt a világ: megvakult.”(127.) „Anna már látott mindent, de hogy mit beszélnek, azt nem hallotta. Csak a szájak mozgottak körülötte.”(127.) It cannot be decided whether it is a coincidence or there is a similarity referring to conscious editing in this respect between Proust's novel and *Édes Anna*.

the homecoming shows the heterogeneity exactly the other way round compared to the telephone, inasmuch as in the movement of alternating primariness of picture and voice now the leading part is given to the picture again.¹¹¹ During the phone call the voice suddenly ran before the picture, separated from it, seeing practically got fully subordinated to the sense of hearing, in the very suggestive narration of the moment of homecoming, however, it is seeing – in the impatience of reunion – which foreruns hearing. The eye as a photo camera shows an aspect of perception which is covered by the familiar picture, accompanied by voice, and this seeing made external and objective by the camera, the seeing which unveils the materiality of recording and inscription is called unconscious seeing by Benjamin.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Immediately before Jancsi Patikárius arrives to the Vizys, the narrator in a by-pass shortly initiates the reader into the past of the character, namely, he prepares the eye of the reader to the arrival of the newcomer. The narration emphasises that there is a difference between the awaiting (the promised arrival of the character) and the eventuated event of arrival. The narrator describes the appearance of master Jancsi following the look of Mrs. Vizi, and before it calls attention to that the condition of this character look as an observing attention is the unfolding from the embrace hogy e szereplői tekintetnek mint megfigyelő figyelemnek távolság, a kéz öleléséből való kibontakozás, a tudatosításnak a cselekvés felfüggesztése a feltétele. The woman is suddenly forced to “see” the difference between the afterimage and the present sight of her nephew, between spiritual and sensing seeing which is commented by the narrator in a longer, generalising passage: „Évek múltán az ilyen találkozások kissé mehökkentőek. Távollevő ismerőseinket szeretjük megrögzíteni egy ponton, egy határozott helyzetben, akár a halottakat, megállítjuk fölöttük az időt, jámbor öncsalással elhitetjük magunkkal, hogy képzeletünknek az az önkénye, mely őket fotográfiákká merevítette, reánk is érvényes, s azóta mi magunk sem haladtunk előre a megsemmisülés felé vivő úton. Ilyenkor azonban tudatára ocsúdunk annak, hogy becsaptuk magunkat, és zavarunkban mosolygunk, mintha bizony valami kellemeset látnánk, s nem a legkellemetlenebbet.” (97.) The difference of sensing and consciousness, the thing seen sensually and mentally displays seeing as a kind of mourning, which is the pictorial print of the seen in the remembrance, therefore it works against the irreversible time by means of the other as the forgetting of the other – so by means of a temporal momentum. All this, however, is true the other way round as well, namely, seeing is capable of forgetting the afterimage, inasmuch as “a világossággal rokon szem csak saját jelenét viseli el”, namely it is capable of manifesting the event in its accustomed suspension, of „minden pillanatban úgy nyíljon fel, mintha először nyílna.” In terms of the mirror-like character of seeing the unnoticed mourning of the other at the same time becomes the unconscious mourning of the self, which may be made conscious by the event breaking the continuity of time, the re-appearance of the other, that which off-centres the illusiory continuity of remembrance and perception, past and present. Love projects a kind of narrative on the picture, more precisely the narrative itself, the sequence of past pictures gives familiarity, intimacy to the look which on the one hand maims sensual sight, its surface as an other, by means of the projection of a deepness, on the other hand – as we have said in the precious chapter – makes it more true, inasmuch as by means of making temporality conscious it reminds to the inevitable, unrepeatable uniqueness of the other. The narrator does not remain behind the look of the Vizys directed at Jancsi Patikárius all along, instead sounding the difference of this look and a strange look it suggests that the look of the stranger (which is also taken by the narrator) sees the character more “objectively” than his relative. The narrator, concerning the master, identifies neither fully with the eye of the lady, nor with the evoked look of the stranger, instead in terms of the self-representation of the mirror-room, exposes the character to the constant movement of perspectives, where the somehow familiar always appears from a new aspect, and reading is defined by the alternating game of identification and difference, which can never fully be dominated.

¹¹² „Más természet jelenik meg a fényképezőgép s más az emberi szem előtt; elsősorban mert az ember által tudatosan áthatott tér helyébe tudattalanul áthatott tér kerül. Ha például valaki, s akár csak nagyjából, számot akar vetni az emberek járásával, abban a másodperctörédekben, amikor *kilép* a sorból, biztos nem tudja a többiek magatartását szemmel követni. A fényképezés és különböző segédeszközei: a kimerevítések és nagyítások ezt tárják fel a számára. Ahogy a pszichoanalízis segítségével az ösztönös-tudattalant, úgy ismerjük meg a fényképezés révén az optikai-tudattalant. Minden, amivel a technika és az orvostudomány dolgozik, a szerkezeti sajátosságok, a sejtszövetek eredetileg sokkal közelebb állnak a fényképezőgéphez, mint a hangulatos tájkép vagy a kifejező arckép.” Walter BENJAMIN, *A fényképezés rövid története*. = Uő, „*Angelus Novus*” Szerk. RADNÓTI Sándor, Budapest, 1980, 693.

The eye perceives sooner than the ear, the sight foreruns not only external but internal voices as well, and with that this scene functions as a kind of pedant for the passage describing the effects of the ear-plug and deafness, just like for the sequence of pictures about Mrs Guermantes. Running to the voices at the same time also means running in the direction of reason, of concepts, to forerun the taming, the expropriation of picture, of sight by ideas. The strangeness of the grandmother, caused by the independence of her sound, should be conquered by the proximity, the sight and touch of the grandmother, her embrace, the picture drawn following the voice of the unfamiliar grandmother should be overwritten by the familiar one. This is why Marcel goes home, and recounts his entrance in the familiar room where her grandmother is reading this way – and now we have a long quotation but we do not provide an extensive commentary in the light of the above said, but instead we let the text speak, speak on its „own” voice:

Ott voltam, azaz még nem voltam ott, mivel ő ezt nem tudta, s mint az a hölgy, akit éppen munka közben találunk, s aki hogyha belépünk hozzá, elrejtí a munkáját, oly gondolatokba merült el, aminőket sohasem mutatott még énelőttem. Belőlem – ama kiváltság árán, amely nem sokáig tart, addig, amíg hazatérésünk rövid pillanatában képesek vagyunk hirtelen tanúi lenni tulajdon távollétünknek – csak a tanú volt ott, a megfigyelő, kalapban és útiköpenyben, az idegen, aki nem a házból való, a fotográfus, aki felvételt készít azokról a helyekről, ahová nem tér vissza. Ezt tette az én szemem, gépiesen, abban a percben, fényképezett, amikor megláttam a nagymamámat. Akiket szeretünk, sose látjuk másként, csak szüntelen gyengédségünk eleven rendszerében, örök mozgásában, amely, mielőtt hozzánk engedí az arcukat ábrázoló képeket, körforgataggá alakítja, s arra az ideára borítja őket, amelyet kezdettől fogva formálunk róluk, odatapasztja hozzájuk, azonosítja őket vele. Mivel nagyanyám homloka, arca mindig azt jelentette nekem, ami a legfontosabb s a legállandóbb volt a szellemében, mivel minden szokásos tekintet valóságos lélekidézés, s minden olyan arc, amelyet szeretünk, mintegy a múlt tükörképe is, hogy is ne szorítottam volna félre mindazt, ami lomhább lett nála és megváltozott, mikor még az életnek legközönségesebb látványaiban, szemünk, terhelve gondolattal, elhanyagolja, mint egy klasszikus tragédia, mindazokat a képeket, amelyek nem segítik elő a cselekményt, s csak azokat tartja meg, amelyek érthetőbbé teszik az egészet. De ha saját szemünk helyett egy tisztán anyagi tárgy, egy fényképlemez nézett valamit, akkor az, amit látunk, például az Akadémia udvarán egy távozó akadémikus helyett, aki egy fiákert akar kérni, az ingadozása lesz látható, apró óvatosságai, hogy valahogy ne essék hátra, esésének parabolája, minthogyha csak részeg volna, vagy hogy a talaj jégburkos. Ugyanígy van, ha a sors valami kegyetlen cselvetése megakadályozza értelmes és aggályos gyengédségünket abban, hogy időben odaszaladjon, csak hogy elrejtse szemünk elől, amit sose szabad látniuk, mikor ezt a gyengédséget megelőzi szemünk, amely elsőnek érkezve a helyre és magára hagyatva oly gépiesen működik, mint a fényképlemez, s minékünk, a szeretett lény helyett, aki már régóta nem létezik – de akinek ez a gyengédség sohasem akarta felfedni előttünk a halálát -, egy új lényt mutat, akit ez a gyengédség naponta százszor kedves és hazug hasonlósággal ruházott fel. És (...) először láttam, s csak egy pillanatig – mert eltűnt egykettőre – ott a kanapén, a lámpa alatt, pirosan, nehézkesen, egyszerűen, betegen, álmódzva s kissé őrült tekintettel egy könyv felett, ezt az öreg, összeesett asszonyt, akit addig nem ismertem. (164-165.)

Heart-breakingly beautiful, tender, sensual, at the same time incredibly intelligent, rich and complicated text, which could be analysed on the bases of the view-point operated so far, however, we do not have any more time or space for this, I only would like to call attention to the testamentality of seeing, of sight, and in relation to this, to the mirroring structure of mourning. To the fact that the picture without voice which modelled the insurmountable separatedness from the other, here also alienates the picture of one's own body, the sight of the self as a traveller. At the same time it may be important that according to the quotation the traveller has also seen his absence, he witnessed that which – also due to its mimetic impossibility – may refer to the inseparability of picture and language, and to their difference too.¹¹³ The photograph is the allegory of a moment which on the basis of the model of „mémoire involontaire” is also an involuntary and unexpected event, and which offsets habituation s amely az idő egyetlen momentumát, mely saját testamentuma is egyben, a múlt előzményétől és a jövő következményétől mint kontinuitástól elválasztva billenti ki a megszokást. The image of the spinning of picture and voice shows the idea to be inseparable from the autoaffective and turbulent performativity of hearing and speaking, and at the same time the photograph works as the ruption of the movement induced by this sound, heterogenously with it, as the alienating power of an inhuman immobility.

So the eye foreruns the voice which is not the unfamiliar, strange, self-sufficient voice but the familiar one which appears in the role that creates the communion and the idealisation and abstraction of the picture, namely in the role developing habituation, and the alienating work of voice separated from its figurative origin is not compensated but intensified by seeing, the seeing independent of internal and external voice forerunning this. The eye, the medium of seeing, as a photographic technique – parallel with the medium of hearing and voice as a technical product which we could see from the telephone – alienates sight, deprives it for a moment from its familiarity and habituality, and makes it an allegory of the original separatedness from the beloved creature similarly to mourning and testamentality, just like the telephone did it to the voice.

¹¹³ Cf. Angela COZEA, *Proustian Aesthetics: Photography, Engraving, and Historiography*. Comparative Literature, 1993. november (45.sz.), 222.

Péter Fodor and Péter L. Varga

Postmodern Biographies

Bret Easton Ellis through Péter Esterházy

Let us start with the characters of the authors whose names can be seen in the title. On the surface there seem to be no other writers who are more different from each other in terms of creative attitude, disposition and relationship to the literary and cultural public sphere than Péter Esterházy, a holder of several international prizes, considered to be one of the most prominent figures of Hungarian postmodern fiction, and Bret Easton Ellis, the American literary star, who is also well-known in Hungary and was awarded with the Grand Prize of the International Book Festival Budapest in 2008. The former one is a highly acknowledged writer in both his mother country and Europe, whose writings provide the basis of the so called high-brow literature and serve as constant reference points in works of literary history and theory. Furthermore, his present oeuvre has already become the subject matter of more than one thorough monograph and collection of essays.ⁱ The latter one can be interesting for both the high-brow canon and a wider group of readers precisely because of the way the authorial figure has been transformed into a celebrityⁱⁱ and due to the highly complex reflections on high and popular culture in his texts.ⁱⁱⁱ Ellis's career has been surely marked by events meeting with a strong response even beyond the literary public sphere, but it is also a fact that from the 2010s on his novels – that often appear on reading lists for university courses, too – have become the topics of several scholarly books with a literary historical approach.^{iv} We will compare and contrast two significant works by the authors – Esterházy's monumental *Celestial Harmonies* from 2001 and Ellis's 2005 novel entitled *Lunar Park* – from the following aspects: 1. how do the two works relate to the narrative and fictional world created by language? 2. how and why do the father figures gain crucial importance? 3. what kind of role does the political-literary public sphere play in the reception of the books? In the case of the third question we will also touch upon *Imperial Bedrooms*, Ellis's latest book so far, as well as upon *Javított kiadás* that followed *Celestial Harmonies* and functions as its appendix. The comparison of two seemingly very different oeuvres will hopefully result in the enrichment of their reception history.

LANGUAGE, FICTION, NARRATIVE

Lunar Park, Ellis's fifth novel was published after the loud and not entirely scandal-less success of *American Psycho* (1991) and *Glamorama* (1998) in 2005. It seems to create a fictional world that as an autofiction aims at the construction of the author's own autobiography. The name of the protagonist-narrator is identical with the name of the real author seen on the book cover, and the first chapter begins with five quotations, each of them being the first sentence of one of the books that Ellis has published so far. *Lunar Park's* first chapter begins with a sentence ("You do an awfully good impression of yourself") that is an opening sentence in the sense of its

location, however, being a citation, it is only an imitation, a replica of an already existing text and definitely not the origin(al). The novel begins with this sentence in such a way that the novel – from which it is quoted – has already begun. The plural ending in the chapter's title (“the beginnings”) does not only imply that the quasi-autobiographical narrator reuses the openings of Ellis' previous works but also suggests that *Lunar Parks* begins at least twice. The first chapter can be read as a text about the way that led to the writing of *Lunar Park*: in this case the second chapter begins with the real first sentence, giving the impression that we have just returned to the origin. Hence *Lunar Park* becomes a novel that contains itself. While the second chapter's opening sentence belongs to the fictive reality (it is the wife's utterance), the first sentence of the first chapter is followed by a quasi-authorial explanation that interprets it as a written, literary text. What is more, in both cases, the sentence appears in the context of the interrelatedness of the original, the double, the replica and the masque; motives that are well-known from Ellis' previous works. The play with the intros doubles the fictional horizon and endows those textual elements with a poetic function that otherwise create reality effects. (All this was enhanced by the new website of the author that became public by the time of the book's publication. It introduces the two Ellises on a split screen: we can see the real figure with his personal data on the one side and the fictive one on the other.) *Lunar Park* simultaneously veils and uncovers the fictive reality of literature, while its poetical-rhetorical construction maintains the authenticity of the supposed portrayal of the authorial career through its reality effects. At the same time, the figure of the self-inventing author emerges in the autofictional and autographical reading of the text, who is in the process of writing a new novel that brings Ellis' previous works into play. Thus the novel's origin appears as the result of several intertextual procedures that are suggestive of the permeability of fictional worlds and evoke Ellis's previous novels. Furthermore, they ironically transform the author – who often appears in the literary public sphere as a negative figure – together with his comically presented career into a literary character. However, just as the Ellis-quotations are inscribed into *Lunar Park* as the linguistic repetitions of fictive worlds, the author (who appears as a rather awkward figure in the literary sphere that is mocked by the text) can be identical only with the letters and their connotations that signify him: “But I was just being »rambunctious.« I was just being a »prankster.« I was just being »Bret.«” (24.)

Consequently, Ellis's *Lunar Park* turns the questions of self-definition and identity into the central problem of fiction, autofiction and intertextuality, or, in a wider sense, that of the creative force of language. If the reader expects a life story from the text, s/he will encounter only its exaggerated and parodied version distorted by textual plays. Although due to the reality effects these textual procedures maintain the illusion of a referential world and a career story that can be narrated linearly, the demonstrated realia relativize the meanings unified by the signifier “Bret Easton Ellis”, since the duplication of the name happens in the moment of its inscription. Therefore the literary historical significance of the brand name-like figure and his work is increased but at the same time ironically treated by the novel. By means of textual and intermedial references the book also becomes a kind of *archive* of the discourse on (and by) Ellis, along with certain narrative genres (diary, autobiography, memoir, horror story, family novel, Bildungs- und Kunstroman.). Thus *Lunar Park* stages the dichotomies of fiction and reality, story and narrative, public and private sphere in a highly complex way. The chapters' chronological structure is also based on contrast.

The first chapter (which is a little bit longer than the others) handles not only Ellis's career retrospectively but also the narrative that follows it:

The title Lunar Park is not intended as a take on Luna Park (as it mistakenly appeared on the initial Knopf contracts). The title means something only to my son. These are the last two words of this book, and by then, I hope they will be self-explanatory to the reader as well.

Regardless of how horrible the events described here might seem, there's one thing you must remember as you hold this book in your hands: all of it really happened, every word is true.

The thing that haunted me the most? Since no one knew what was happening in that house, no one was scared for us.

And now it's time to go back into the past. (40.)

The autography following the last, retrospective passage of *the beginnings* is the narrative the first chapter referred to, namely, the novel called *Lunar Park* itself. The words "lunar park" are several times inscribed in its text, also as its last words. This means that within the seemingly hierarchic order of the chapters there is a caesura, a demarcation line between the first one and the rest, duplicating the retrospective narrative modality. The family story with the antecedents follows the comical-ironic staging of the authorial figure ("Bret"), who is marked out by citations and who is distributed in the visual and textual discourse of the public sphere. Although the protagonist narrator of the family saga promises his readers an authentic story that is true in the sense of the *autobiographic pact*, as a linguistic-textual reminiscence, he, too, becomes a fictive construct of the text.

Ellis, who textualizes and intertextualises his own story and – according to *Lunar Park* – his family's story, especially his relationship with his father, can be compared to Esterházy on the basis of the aforementioned narrato-poetic features, even if the cultural contexts evoked by the Hungarian author seem to be very distant at the first glance. *Celestial Harmonies* is divided into two parts in a more obvious way than Ellis' work: the first one consisting of numbered sentences and passages is entitled *Numbered Sentences from the Lives of the Esterházy Family*, while the second one bears the title *Confessions of an Esterházy Family*, connecting the story of an Esterházy family to the promise of a confessional (and potentially true) discourse. Thus the reader's relationship to the family story is first shaped by the definite article and then by the indefinite one. In the first half of the novel the numbered vignettes are written and arranged so that they demonstrate the end of the grand narratives. Numerous pieces of the Hungarian history are dispersed on the pages of the book, partly owing to the disseminative use of the name Esterházy, which brings all kinds of different genres and discursive modes (anecdote, memoir, inventory, and joke) into play.^v These distinct units are often re-shaped and re-arranged borrowings from a great variety of other texts, sometimes being only a word, other times being several pages long quotations. Esterházy's novel presents a lot of father figures ("my father") who belong to various historical periods, such as the baroque, the epoch of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, or the near past. Although they are *numbered*, they are heading for the infinite, containing several different identities. The most important

figure of reading for such a textual functioning is irony.^{vi} Hence the text can lead to radical changes in the experience of reading. “It is also the unmarked quotation, or, more precisely, the erasure of the distinction between »original« and »borrowed« texts that causes the inability to decide when a statement is to be taken seriously. (...) Quoting endows the utterance with a figurative sense and opens up possibilities of meaning. It distances and results in indeterminability.” (Szegedy-Maszák 2003: 112, 113) However, considering the authorial copy rights, foreign editions of the book contain a bibliography with the original sources of the borrowed passages (especially, when they are available in the given language.) Moreover, *Celestial Harmonies* has an epilogue that states the following in connection to the linguistic nature of intertextuality:

When you're working with sentences, you're in need of sentences. Sentences can come from a variety of places – some I overheard on the street, others were whispered in my ear, still others I read; you'll even find some that I made up by myself. These have a different status only at first glance. A sentence never stands in isolation; it is always intertextual. If I write down a yes, that is always just a bit the last word of Joyce's *Ulysses* as well. These borrowed words are interwoven into this text not for lack of my own but to show that literature is a commentary on our shared human experience. (Esterházy 2005: 843)

Esterházy argues that literary texts are by definition intertextual – a word is always preceded by another one – which posits a relation between literary tradition and text, text and reader that is more complicated than the opposition between art and reality. Ellis's fiction, just as Esterházy's one, can be read from the viewpoint of self-thematization, intertextuality, parallel biographies and the constitutive role of the father figures. Both oeuvres prove that memory is a storage system and a medium by whose staging the literary-cultural memory and the *material* of language contributes to. This contribution is restrictive – because language is not a universal medium either – but at the same time creates a world permeated with inexhaustible meaning potentials. It is the task of philology to show how Esterházy's and Ellis's seemingly distant textual universes can mutually illuminate each other. A part of this task is to explore the potentials of the texts and meanings appearing in the cultural public sphere and to reveal how their presentability depends on different media conditions.

One level of the aesthetic experience offered by *Celestial Harmonies* is the intertextual playfulness, similarly to the opening chapter of *Lunar Park*. But it also creates a retrospective horizon through which the first part presents the story of the aristocratic family as fiction, as a collection of fragments dispersed throughout the Hungarian history. Meanwhile, the second part focuses on the near past, re-creating it as *something* in a more traditional narrative form. This is why the first part is mainly built upon intertexts that prefigure several stories of “my father” and “my father's son”. Although being more traditional in terms of narration (it resembles a memoir or a diary), the second part also has daring ways of textual borrowing; it relativizes the referentiability of the Esterházy-family by the never identifiable and stabilizable story of *an* Esterházy family. This means that Esterházy's fiction can be understood from the horizon of the *linguistic turn*. (Kulcsár Szabó 1996) The novel posed the biggest challenge for its interpretators from this aspect:

Both parts of *Celestial Harmonies* bring the contexts of family and autobiographical novel into play, that is, such fashions of presenting the successive generations and the own life story that create an illusion of reality. Nevertheless, the codes and norms of these genres are destabilised in different ways and measures in each part. It is not surprising that the first book puts the reader in a more awkward position, since its poetic (narrative and discursive) shape undermines the figures of reading offered by the (auto)biographical and the family novel (or just the novel as such) more radically. The collection of “numbered sentences” deprive the reader from the possibility of construing a narrative identity and a coherent story, because it does not only hinder the identification of the author with the protagonist narrator but it even makes it impossible to identify the narrator. (Szirák 2003: 137)

As it has been mentioned before, Ellis’s novel attempts to guarantee the truth of its fiction through the autobiographic pact (“all of it really happened, every word is true”). The second part of Esterházy’s novel is supposed to reach the criteria of its truth by means of its confessional mode; however “it relies on a suspicious and playful poetic tradition (...) due to the change of the general narrative tone the modus of remembering transforms into something personal and intimate.” (Balassa 2003: 35) *Confession of an Esterházy family* warns the reader already through the motto: “The characters of this adventurous biography are creatures of the imagination. They are authentic only within the context of this book. They are not living characters, nor were they ever.” (Esterházy 2005: 395) Meanwhile, the first sentence of the first book starts out so: “It is deucedly difficult to tell a lie when you don’t know the truth.” (Esterházy 2005: 5) Esterházy’s works from the 70’s and 80’s are considered by Hungarian literary historians to be among the landmarks of a postmodern turn that situates the referentiality of the fictional-linguistic world in the chain and interplay of signifiers and intertexts. We can come to the conclusion that after Ellis’s withdrawal from minimalism the same attitude created the poetical and rhetorical basis of *American Psycho*, *Glamorama*, or *Lunar Park*.^{vii} The medium of memory archives and mediates fragments of the literary and cultural tradition along with self-quotations, while the genre codes being evoked – father novel, family novel, Bildungsroman, Künstlerroman, diary, memoir – are exposed to the impact of the deconstructed narrative. The playful confessional tone functions in both Ellis’s and Esterházy’s work so that it calls attention to the irreconcilability of historical reality (or personal autobiography) and the perspectivity of narration. In the latter case this effect is achieved (partly) through the testimonial gestures of silence, public confession and self-denunciation, which can be understood in the political context of the recent past:

Like a Lego castle or a dress-up doll, I took my life apart into little pieces with relish, flinging the bits about helter-skelter, aggrandizing some, reducing others, making still others disappear, mixing the real with the imaginary, treating the imaginary as real and the real as imaginary, and vice versa; I embedded sincere confessions inside wholly falacious frames, and padded white lies with events anyone could safely confirm. (Esterházy 2005: 744)

THE FATHER AS THE (TEXTUAL) ORIGIN

In the Hungarian literature of the past fifteen years the father has been one of the most significant subject matters. The reason for the popularity of the so-called father novels and the theme of the father lies probably in the fact that facing and remembering the recent past have become possible in post-1989 literature due to the figure of the father that metaphorizes both the continuity *and* the lack of historical time.^{viii} *Celestial Harmonies*, Esterházy's epoch-making opus from the turn of the millennium is among the first works – and maybe it is poetically the most radical one – that turn towards the memory of the father and the son; a memory that, as a medial archive, lets the rhizomatic layers of historical time speak in the form a textual tradition.^{ix}

The father image coming into existence in the co-ordination of several father figures belongs to the son's image of the past. This is an image that makes his existence as a son (namely, the definition of his selfhood) possible in the simultaneous presence of the father figures encompassing hundreds of years. (McGonigle 2004) *Celestial Harmonies* becomes an antiquarian collection of the fathers, and a past that cannot be grasped in a panorama-like way, since it only reveals itself in the form of fragments, objects and inherited texts. Due to the intertextual references the book "reveals what has been lost, what is the potential meaning and significance of possession and property from the owner's point of view, therefore, it lets the duty of dignity, moral firmness and adherence to the family model manifest itself." (Balassa 2003: 34). This aspect of the family story culminates in the definition-like linguistic event of the (entering into) possession. It presents itself in the resistance to writing and, at the same time, in the act of making the father figure his own by means of writing:

My father's son does not want to write about my father. He doesn't feel like it. He'd like to keep my father, my father's person, at a certain remove from this circus. This much, he feels, he owes him. My father was the best father in the world, the best he could ever imagine, then and now, because my father, as the possessive pronominal indicates, is his, he is a father of his, and this „his” is irrevocable and unique. Furthermore, not only does he not want to, he can't. The words keep slipping out of his grasp. Or possibly, the thing that is my father, his essence, keeps slipping out of the grasp of the competence of his words. And all the while, there isn't a single word that goes untouched by this „his”. Mine. (Esterházy 2005: 379)

In Ellis's *Lunar Park* the protagonist narrator's interest in the father figure is the result of partly psychoanalytic meditations rather than the rhizomatic historical memory. "Bret", the narrator has to come to terms with his father's death so that the almost forgotten childhood will not come into life like a horror story in the particular space and time of the fictional world. On the one hand, coming to terms with the past is disguised as a parody of the vulgar Freudian worldview in the novel (see the comical dream reports, the couples therapy scenes, or the draft of the new novel Bret is working on).^x On the other hand, it becomes possible due to the interference of

certain archiving techniques that make the father's heritage visible by their functioning, suggesting that it belongs to the material framework of the fiction. For example, the autographical author makes the more and more sinister presence of the paternal ghost palpable through the evocation of the fictive world of *American Psycho*. The Hamletian moment of the erasure and re-activation of the memory – it is no accident that the novel begins with a motto from a Shakespeare-drama – is endowed with newer and newer layers of meaning and significance due to the repetition of the 1991 novel's plot, the allusions to genre movies and the metaleptic disentanglement of the text that is currently being written. Therefore the father is both a fearsome figure creeping out of textual memories and a character, whose death is watched by the son on a snuff video that exists in spite of the fact that it has never ever been made by anybody. The voyeuristic spying on the death of the father can indicate the reason why the son's writing reflects on both the narrated story and the process of writing itself but at the same time differentiates between the implicit author's family role and his writer self. Just as *Lunar Park* turns into the material-physical space that makes the media and memory systems that are collapsing into each other visible, the two father-son doubles (Ellis's father and Ellis; Ellis and his son, Robby) appear within the literally (i.e. by words) regulated framework of the self-creating family story (see the anagrammatic word plays in the novel) so that they become distant and foreign in the end. The interchangeability of the ashes of the father and the grey dust of the Moon creates a parallel between the paternal trace left in the boy's world and the trace left by the text.

The ashes were collapsing into everything and following echoes. They sifted over the graves of his parents and finally entered the cold, lit world of the dead where they wept across the children standing in the cemetery and then somewhere out at the end of the Pacific – after they rustled across the pages of this book, scattering themselves over words and creating new ones – they began exiting the text, losing themselves somewhere beyond my reach, and then vanished, and the sun sifted its position and the world swayed and then moved on, and though it was all over, something new was conceived. The sea reached to the land's edge where a family, in silhouette, stood watching us until the fog concealed them. From those of us who are left behind: you will be remembered, you were the one I needed, I loved you in my dreams.

So, if you should see my son, tell him I say hello, be good, that I am thinking of him and that I know he's watching over me somewhere, and not to worry: that he can always find me here, whenever he wants, right here, my arms held out and waiting, in the pages, behind the covers, at the end of *Lunar Park*. (Ellis 2006: 400)

The duplicated figures of the author, father and son hide behind the material boundaries of *Lunar Park*; they can be *true* or identical only within the fictional world. Similarly, Esterházy's father figures can be found in the space of a collection, of an archive, as "untranslatable", only indirectly mediatable phenomena, which are exposed to the power of grammar and rhetoric. The property, that, what is *own* (story, family, father) can be left behind in the historical horizons of this archive or collection as the recorded and readable requisite of a linguistic event. Nevertheless, it remains a medium of reminiscences and rewritings, whose origin is uncertain. The father's statement concerning his son in the end of *Lunar Park* („he can always find me here

[...] in the pages, behind the covers, and the end of *Lunar Park*”) guarantees the presence and the re-creatability of his figure. It marks the boundaries of the always fictional world by means of a book that is an actual object in the reality. The reading of Esterházy’s novel leads to a similar experience. The fact that the medial archive of fiction is inseparable from its material storage medium manifests itself in the realisation that the notes and historical figures of uncertain origin come from literary and non-literary texts as whose collection *Celestial Harmonies* presents itself.

Of course, this does not restrict the potential interpretations of the historical role of the fathers and sons. The intertwinement of the father and son figures in Ellis’s novel is the result of a kind of writing therapy, as well as that of a diverse discursive-intertextual play. This is precisely why it can illuminate the modality of Esterházy’s work, too. Esterházy’s father figures inscenate the unrealisable and divergent processes of the reconstruction and coming to terms with the past, whose moral, subjective aspects force the narrators(s) to speak instead of their father(s).^{xi} Substitution and interchangeability are necessary also because the father always appears as a character already being unable to re-present his own figure and story. Hence it is the duty of the son – with Esterházy’s always recurring words: “my father’s son” – to tell the story, not without taking into consideration the relation between memory and history, even if this is the story of a family (that is, something optional, albeit signified by a name). In order to see what follows from here, we have to touch upon the ways Ellis’s and Esterházy’s poetics relate to the politics of memory and literature.

THE WORK FROM THE VINTAGE POINT OF THE LITERARY AND CULTURAL PUBLIC SPHERE

If we regard Esterházy’s work as a rhizomatic historical and literary archive linked to memory politics, we should raise the question of where the limits of this archive are and who have it at their disposal. Yet another, even more important question is that what kind of logic organizes the knowledge bringing the archive itself into existence. According to Groys, these issues are inseparable from the structure of power that determines most decisions concerning what is relevant, significant, worthy of being archived, and what is irrelevant, therefore omittable. (Groys 2000: 7–26) Like in the case of most Eastern-European literatures, Hungarian fiction also has to live up a serious expectation: it is expected to represent the reality of “true” history. According to this logic, literary treatments of such events of the recent past as 1956 or 1989 are highly needed. In the last twenty years contemporary Hungarian fiction has dealt with the above mentioned historical events and their experiences mainly from a subjective, micro-historical perspective. Earlier literary texts had been dominated by figures of silence, then – around the turn of the eighties – the role of ironical allusions became central. The most brilliant and by far the most significant example of this tendency is precisely Esterházy’s *Termelési regény*. However, the expectation towards literature that views the essence of literature as the artistic presentation of the *universally true* history still lives on. The genre of the historical novel came into existence in the middle of the 19th century in Hungary. In the romantic period *narrative* art was considered to be the most perfect medium of national memory. The

readers' expectations towards *Celestial Harmonies* are partly shaped by this tradition. The novel as an archive demonstrates that its contents are the result of selective operations but at the same time they form very intricate and unpredictable relations. Esterházy's work therefore relativizes the positions offered by memory politics but it has also made the overwhelming historical and paternal burden into a subject of discussion in a way that can again create a tradition.^{xii}

From this viewpoint we can understand the poetics of Ellis, too. *American Psycho*, which already reaches beyond minimalist lifestyle fiction, can only give a picture of the eighties if the worlds and worldviews presented by it are connected to non-human (and "inhuman") medial effects. (Of course, this is also true for the 90's in the case of *Glamorama* or for the uncertain post 9/11 period in *Lunar Park*.) These texts underpin the media theory thesis that "we knew nothing about our senses until media provided models and metaphors" (Kittler 2010: 3) Ellis's archives of consumer society demonstrate a lack of centre, but the individual pieces of the archive are surrounded by moral and ideological contexts, just as in the case of Esterházy. In the reception of *Lunar Park* it is often emphasised that the post 9/11 plot functions as the literary representation of the paranoia and dread following the events of September 11. The psychosocial dramas based on the contrast between the metropolitan and suburban environment become meaningful in the light of violence, terror and authorial self-censorship.^{xiii} Of course, questions on the responsibility of such political-ideological readings can come up. What are the implications of an interpretation in which the "unequivocal reference" of the mysterious wind perceived by "Bret" is the northern wind that brings about Hamlet's madness (let us not forget the motto of *Lunar Park*); in which the visible destruction and decay of the environment is a portrayal of 9/11; which decodes the allusion to Steven Spielberg's *1941* as a parallel between the panic following Pearl Harbour and the fear created by September 11; and which considers the son-father relationship as the hunting ghost of 9/11 and the Iraqi wars started by George Bush Sr. and George Bush Jr. (1990 and 2003)? (Colby 2011: 151–154, 157)^{xiv} This reading may have a *raison d'être* in a certain cultural discourse, but it rather empties out the otherwise potentially inexhaustible meanings of the text. Esterházy's works have also illustrated that literary works can be interpreted in terms of culture and the political discourses surrounding it, although this way of considering the relationship between art and reality does not include the concept of intertextuality as literature's "internal affairs", in other words, intertextuality as the text's *modus of existence*.^{xv} In this case, the point is rather that intertexts are supposed to be components with some kind of value and modality on their own, serving in Esterházy's fictional sphere – even if they are not in their original context – as points of references related to the relationship between art and reality. One typical symptom of this reading strategy was the debate started by Zsuzsa Forgács in a Hungarian political-cultural weekly magazine. According to her, Esterházy is a charming fraud who robs other authors of their intellectual properties so that he could use them later in works that he calls his own. (Forgács 2007.) Her article was followed by an endless comment war on *litera.hu* (the country's biggest literary website), where the majority supported Forgács's arguments, and only a few commenters pointed out that the texts used by Esterházy undergo a radical functional change in *Celestial Harmonies*.^{xvi} As Esterházy's monographer pointed out in probably the only really well-argued contribution to the debate, the text "does not steal emotions". According to him, whereas copy right questions are to be taken seriously, the three main

aspects of literature in the modern age (fiction, innovation, originality) „remained valid until the end of the classical modern episteme (which is usually symbolically marked by Paul Celan’s death year), but the process called *postmodernism* has seriously questioned the relevance of two them – seriously, because it has done so under the influence of works that are equivalent with the classical modern ones.” (Kulcsár Szabó 2007)^{xvii} Of course, it is also understandable that the German and English editions of *Celestial Harmonies* include a list of the (non-Hungarian) texts quoted by Esterházy, together with the author’s short essay about the practice of textual borrowing.

In 2002, after it turned out that his father had been a state security agent in the communist dictatorship, Esterházy published a now book with the title *Javított kiadás: Melléklet a Celestial Harmonies* (“*Corrected Edition: Appendix to Celestial Harmonies*”). Its publication became an unusual event because it contains reports obtained from the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security revealing the secret activity of the father, who was held in great respect partly because of his origins (his father, the writer’s grandfather was Hungary’s Prime Minister in 1917). In the book the reports are completed with Esterházy’s staggered reflections. In Hungary agent files have not been made public so far, although in Parliament debates it is almost always a subject of discussion. Every time a case is brought to the open – especially if it concern politicians – it raises the question whether it is possible to come to terms with the past in the sense of memory politics if its written documentations are not available. In terms of textual *use* and *function* *Javított kiadás*’s images of the father and the history, as well as its narrato-poetic form,^{xviii} are different from *Celestial Harmonies*^{xix}. Its productive understanding must focus on the “real” act of bearing witness. (Lőrincz 2012.) A further aspect of bearing witness is that it makes the violence of archiving (embodied by the agent files) visible. Causing an uncomfortable and uncanny effect, it results in the “desubjectivation of the personal, individual subject.” (Lőrincz 2012.) The interpretative, sometimes aesthetic comments on the reports quoted by Esterházy make up a “philological fiction”, which “in a sense referentially corrects the novel”^{xx} (namely, *Celestial Harmonies*.) Its complex reception history manifests itself in “referential, textual and performative conjunctions”^{xxi}, whose reading does not eliminate the radical reading experience offered by *Celestial Harmonies* but offers new interpretative aspects: the power structure of literature’s political-ideological reading, and the potential of the public sphere. Especially, because the historical and grammatical-rhetorical relation to *the own*, to the *property* transforms into a discourse that characterizes the spheres of archive and violence, and that is typical of political events also because of the role silence and exposure plays in it.

After the autofiction of *Lunar Park* – that ironically reflects on the attacks culminating in serious life threats against the author before and after the publication of *American Psycho* – Ellis published *Imperial Bedrooms* as a closure of his oeuvre till then. In the sequel of *Less Than Zero* the characters of the one-time novel touch upon its public response and the aesthetic and economic features of the movie it was made into.

In the book everything about me had happened. The book was something I simply couldn’t disavow. The book was blunt and had an honesty about it, whereas the movie was just a beautiful lie. (It was also a bummer: very colorful

and busy but also grim and expensive, and it didn't recoup its cost when released that November.) In the movie I was played by an actor who actually looked more like me than the character the author portrayed in the book: I wasn't blond, I wasn't tan, and neither was the actor. (...) The reason the movie dropped everything that made the novel real was because there was no way the parents who ran the studio would ever expose their children in the same black light the book did. The movie was begging for our sympathy whereas the book didn't give a shit. And attitudes about drugs and sex had shifted quickly from 1985 to 1987 (and a regime change at the studio didn't help) so the source material—surprisingly conservative despite its surface immorality—had to be reshaped. (Ellis 2010: 7, 8)

The narrator's retrospective view on the non-fictional contexts of *Less Than Zero* – or even those of the later works such as *Lunar Park* – casts light on the literary work's reception history in terms of entertainment industry, its economy, and their relationship to the historical reality. Consequently, every reading focusing on the relationship between art and reality can be false, a result of misinterpretation, or intended by a power system. However, if the retrospective narrator is a creature who complains about being misunderstood and unfairly treated in the actual reality, but he does so in the fictional world created by a book whose author bears the name "Bret Easton Ellis", then the stake of the play with the texts becomes even higher. Namely, the reader is forced to re-interpret what has been thought about the relationship between art and reality so far. Péter Esterházy's *Celestial Harmonies* and *Javított kiadás* are the outstanding results of the same experiment.

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III. Crossing Genres

Ábel Tamás

The Reading Fails

Horace through Zsigmond Móricz*

As it is consensual among interpreters, Zsigmond Móricz's early novel *Behind God's Back* (*Az Isten háta mögött*, 1911),¹¹⁴ both on the level of the fictional universe and the poetic structures, is a perfect narrative realization of (say) what the poet Endre Ady has pictured in his lyric poem *The magyar fallow* (*A magyar ugaron*, 1906).¹¹⁵ the provincial world of Hungary, full of mythic demons, without any ability to be described in terms of Western modernity, or with more general terms: a world where nothing happens. In Móricz's novel, which represents the life of a small town in the Hungarian boondocks, this 'nothing happens', paradoxically, changes into the leitmotif of the story and the narrative itself, whereby, as interpreters agree, both the events and the way how they are being narrated—or more precisely, constructed as a story—get the character of 'almost-but-finally-not-happening'.¹¹⁶ At the same time, as in Ady's poems, it is also the case in Móricz's novel, that the lack of modernity is being represented in the terms of literary modernism: as László Németh, another central figure of 20th century Hungarian literature, has characterized it, *Behind God's Back* is 'the most "Western European" work of Zsigmond Móricz'.¹¹⁷ Not independently from that, the novel, as the title of its second edition *Mr. Bovary* (*Bovary úr*, 1917) strongly suggests—interestingly, the title has been preserved only in some translations (cf. e.g. the German edition: *Herr Bovary*)—, is based on a significant intertextual connection with Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*, in the following way.

Móricz's novel, as it is also consensual, creates or represents its provincial world, the world of the small town Ilosva, as being unable to function as a stage even for a Flaubertian scenario. In the fictional universe of the novel, Mrs. Veres, the wife of the school-teacher Mr. Veres, is not able to play the role of Emma Bovary: although being the universal object of male desire permanently, she does not have a sexual act through the plot of the novel with anybody at all. As interpreters of this 'contrastive intertextuality'¹¹⁸ have lucidly shown, the Flaubertian scene of Emma seeing herself in the mirror after having had sex is in the novel of Móricz replaced with a scene where Mrs. Veres, after not having had sex, realizes that 'novel is over'

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¹¹⁴ The English title of the novel I use in this paper comes from Lóránt Czigány's *A History of Hungarian Literature*, though the novel itself has never been translated into English.

¹¹⁵ The English translation of the poem by Anton N. Nyerges is easy to find in *Babel Web Anthology* (www.babelmatrix.org).

¹¹⁶ 'poetologically, the story level is characterized by the fact that *events do not occur*' ('az eseményszintet poétikailag a történések *bekövetkezésének hiánya* jellemzi', KULCSÁR SZABÓ [1993], p. 29); 'the plot is organized by events that have not occurred' ('a cselekményt a meg nem történt események szervezik', BALASSA [2004], p. 33).

¹¹⁷ Cited by KULCSÁR SZABÓ (1993), p. 50.

¹¹⁸ See KULCSÁR SZABÓ (1993), p. 47 ('ellentételező intertextualitás').

(i.e., the chance of a Romantic interpretation / narrative realization of events is over),¹¹⁹ or, very similarly, the suicide of Emma is replaced here with Mrs. Veres's banal fall on her bottom.¹²⁰ As for the marking of the intertextual relation, there is a 'reflector-character' in the novel, the deputy judge, who tries to interpret the events in explicitly Flaubertian terms—for example, it is he who calls Mr. Veres 'Mr. Bovary' in the story itself—, but his interpretation of the French novel, as well as his knowledge of the events themselves, seems to be highly limited.¹²¹ Thus, Móricz enacts the problem of *mœurs de province* in an extremely complex way, which concerns the problem of reading/interpreting itself: while Móricz's 'Eastern' characters, behind God's back, seem to be unable to play their 'Western' roles, it is also problematized whether the chosen perspective is appropriate at all.

As it follows from the significance of 'non-occurring-events', the novel can be read as a *tour de force* of narrative perspective, where not the events themselves, but their rivalizing narrativizations, i.e. the different narratives—fabricated both by the authorial narrator and the characters of the novel—are at stake. Consequently, the question of focalization or narrative point of view has an outstanding significance in the interpretation, especially considering that 'perspective', together with its visual connotations seems to be a leitmotif of the text itself. In this light, Móricz's work—formerly interpreted in terms such as 'realism', 'naturalism' etc.—proves to be a text which, as an example of a modernist 'perspectivism', bases its narrative technique on continuous use of free indirect speech and shifting focalization.¹²² According to this stream of interpretation, the uniqueness of this novel among the work of Zsigmond Móricz is due to its continuous changes of (highly limited) perspective that make the reader experience a world where it is, in fact, impossible to have an authentic access to 'reality'. There is no place in Ilosva or in the mind of the people of Ilosva from where you could see the outside or even the inside world: this is what the continuous interpretive intervention of the authorial narrator into the streams of consciousness of his characters suggests. 'Perspective', furthermore, is a central trope of the novel itself, especially considering the great dinner episode where Mrs. Veres is permanently being gazed at by her admirers contesting for her glimpses.¹²³ Before I turn to my particular topic, I would like to draw attention to a passage in which the narrator exploits the metaphorical possibilities implied in the world 'prospect': '... the guard on the church-tower had some lodgings under the bells, and a balcony around the tower, but it was built so low that if one wanted to have a look around one could not see very far. [...] The church, the house of god, was sad like an orphan without a guardian, like this town, like the people in it, and the life they lived.'¹²⁴ As it is obvious from this passage, the lack of perspective as a central trope of the novel is here understood not only in the epistemological, but also in an existential, social and

¹¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.* 48. Cf. SZILÁGYI (2008), pp. 328ff. with a closer analysis of the relationship between the figures of Emma Bovary and Mrs. Veres. As for the intertextual relationship in general, see also UTASI (1998); ZABÁN (2004); GINTLI (2005); KELEMEN (2010).

¹²⁰ Cf. KULCSÁR SZABÓ (1993), p. 49.

¹²¹ Cf. GINTLI (2005), pp. 76-79.

¹²² For this stream of interpretation, see KULCSÁR SZABÓ (1993); SZIRÁK (2001), pp. 233ff.; and (a recent interpretation in German, with focus on 'perspectivism') LÓRINCZ (2013), pp. 351-353. For the perspective as a central trope of the novel itself, see BENYOVSZKY (2003). Cf. STRIBIK (2001), pp. 200f., on the role of eyes, glimpses, gazes etc.

¹²³ For a detailed analysis, see BENYOVSZKY (2003).

¹²⁴ See in Hungarian: MÓRICZ (1984) p. 83.

political sense of the word. The people of Ilosva seem to have no ‘perspective’ or ‘prospect’ at all.

In the following, I would like to spotlight another intertextual relationship of the novel—and also a ‘contrastive’ one—with another literary work from the Western canon, namely with Horace’s *Odes* 1.14 (*O navis referent*, i.e. the Horatian ship allegory), which has been mainly ignored in the criticism, with very few exceptions.¹²⁵ On the one hand, it can be read as a parallel of the much discussed intertextual connection with *Madame Bovary*, inasmuch as it also concerns the problem of misreading. On the other hand, we can see it as a highly complex reflection of the trope of ‘perspective’, as long as the Horatian poem (which is quoted explicitly in Móricz’s text) directly addresses the question: how is it possible to see our dangerous situation from an inside or outside perspective? Consequently, the episode(s) where the Horatian intertextuality emerges, can be interpreted, in a manner of speaking, as *mise en abyme* scene(s) of *Behind God’s Back*, where the leitmotifs of the novel are reflected in a condensed manner, in the form of a reading—or more exactly, as we will see, a non-reading—scene. Additionally, this intertextual dimension sheds light on the connection of this novel (first published in 1911) with a robust tendency of the *fin de siècle* literature, where schools, teachers and institutional education in general are described as symbols or instruments of intellectual, emotional, sexual or political repression, best exemplified by Robert Musil’s *The Confusions of Young Törless* (1906). Móricz, in fact, connects his novel to a particular branch of this tradition,¹²⁶ where the educational repression is manifested especially through the teaching of Greek and Latin classics. For example, and perhaps it is a bit more than an accidental parallel, in Thomas Mann’s *Buddenbrooks* (1901), the pupils are tortured by the Latin teacher with Ovid, moreover with the ‘Golden Age’ passage of the *Metamorphoses*—with special emphasis on the absence of ‘discipline and punish’ in the primordial times of mankind—, serving here, ironically, as an instrument of disciplining and punishing the schoolboys.¹²⁷

If we read the scene of Móricz in question, we can detect similar intertextual ironies. It is also the reading of a classical text—this time, Horace—which has some symbolic significance in the life of the Hungarian pupil, Laci Veres, and the inversion of the meaning of the classical text is also spotlighted. As it will be not in any way surprising, the reading, as anything else in this world, fails. Laci cannot read the

¹²⁵ See BORI (1982/3), p. 54; STRIBIK (2001), pp. 204f.; EISEMANN (2005), pp. 61-62. The latter gives us an excellent interpretation of the reading scene, focusing on ‘materialities of literary communication’.

¹²⁶ Cf. STRIBIK (2001), pp. 205ff.

¹²⁷ ‘Hanno gazed down upon it and began to read. With trembling voice, his face working, he read of the Golden Age when truth and justice flourished of their own free will, without laws or compulsions. “Punishment and fear did not exist,” he said, in Latin. “No threats were graven upon the bronze tablets, nor did those who came to petition fear the countenance of the judges. ...” He read in fear and trembling, read with design badly and disjointedly, purposely omitted some of the elisions that were marked with pencils in Kilian’s book, made mistakes in the lines, progressed with apparent difficulty, and constantly expected the master to discover the fraud and pounce upon him. [...] “Oh, Buddenbrook! *Si tacuisses!* You will permit me the classical thou, for this once. Do you know what you have done? You have conducted yourself like a vandal, a barbarian. You are a humorist [*ein amusisches Geschöpf*], Buddenbrook; I can see that by your face.”’ (MANN [1952] 571f.) The Ovidian lines are from *Met.* 1.91ff.

poem in the ordinary sense of the word, while the details of this non-reading are of much interest. I quote the first part of the passage:

When the student entered his room with the lamp lit for no reason, he saw at once he had no wish to do any work that evening. The book of Horace lay open on the table, and he began to read the ode next in line:

*O navis, referent in mare te novi
fluctus, o quid agis? fortiter occupa
portum! nonne vides...*

Then, impatiently, he read the crib instead, without even glancing through the original...: 'O ship, new waves will bear you back again to sea. O what are you doing? Bravely seize the port. Do you not perceive, that your sides are destitute of oars, and your mast wounded by the violent south wind, and your main-yards groan, and your keel can scarcely support the impetuosity of the waves without the help of cordage? You have not entire sails; nor gods, whom you may again invoke, pressed with distress: notwithstanding you are made of the pines of Pontus, and as the daughter of an illustrious wood, boast your race, and a fame now of no service to you. The timorous sailor has no dependence on a painted stern. Look to yourself, unless you are destined to be the sport of the winds. O thou, so lately my trouble and fatigue, but now an object of tenderness and solicitude, mayest thou escape those dangerous seas which flow among the shining Cyclades.'¹²⁸

He turned the page, having assumed that was the end of the ode. He looked into the Latin text, trying to locate a word by which he could determine that the ode had indeed come to an end. The last word was 'Cycladas,' in the crib it was 'Cyclades.' ... The end.¹²⁹

Above all, we have to keep in mind that Laci Veres, the nephew of the school-teacher Mr. Veres, is here erotically excited. After having drunk wine and still desiring Mrs. Veres, he had to leave the company of the adults and go to his own room. Now, he is alone and is obliged to learn for his matriculation. In the moment of 'meeting' the classical text, his negative attitude towards the text is perfectly constructed: in the eyes of Laci, Horace means now everything what is in diametrical opposition to freedom, i. e., satisfaction of desires. (This identification, namely that of freedom with satisfaction, fits Laci's feeling in this moment, even if earlier, participating silently in the conversation of the adults, he has heard the following sentence of Mrs. Veres, addressed to the chaplain, the guest of the house, who has also fallen in love with her: 'A young man has to study hard so as to be able to mingle with the upper classes to which it is good to belong. Without learning Greek and Latin, how could one hope to pay court to a lady?'¹³⁰) Conditioned like that, he tries to read Horace's *Odes* 1.14. To be more precise, he begins to read the Latin text of the poem, but after having 'read'—of course, without understanding—almost three verses, he gives

¹²⁸ Móricz gives us here a 'literal translation' of the ode imitating the style of printed cribs, that have been written mainly in the style of 19th century translations of prosaic works. Consequently, searching for an 'English equivalent', I have chosen SMART-BUCKLEY (1869), pp. 16f., for its being a 19th century 'literal translation'. (Also available online at www.gutenberg.org). As for the Hungarian printed cribs ('Aczélpuskák') and their impact of the reading and interpretation of classics in 20th century Hungary, see HAJDU (2006).

¹²⁹ See in Hungarian: MÓRICZ (1984) p. 23.

¹³⁰ See in Hungarian: MÓRICZ (1984) p. 22.

it up and reads, or, more exactly, pretends to read the crib. While in the *Buddenbrooks*' school episode, Hanno's cheat with the Ovidian text is based on looking into the Latin schoolbook of someone else while pretending to know it by heart, here we see a printed crib, i. e. a so called 'Aczélpuska', which has been a very popular type of non-official schoolbooks, containing 'literal translations' of the school classics, in early 20th century Hungary. Laci's failed reading is thus based on this non-literary translation, which deprives the poem of all its aesthetic qualities, even as the young Hanno's prosaic recitation deprived the Ovidian text all of its beauty, as Doktor Mantelsack so indignantly brought it up, leaving the content of the hexameters—so spectacularly subversive to the situation—automatically out of consideration. (The Ovidian text tells us how good it was in the Golden Age when mankind has lived without written rules, punishment, and fear.) Thus, the Móriczian 'gun'—it is the first meaning of the Hungarian word 'puska', used here in its figurative sense 'crib', but retaining also its metaphorical possibilities—kills the Horatian text cruelly. (Cf. '[...] that the ode had indeed come to an end.' 'The end.')

This poem is, however, highly suitable for Móricz's aims. As it is confirmed by Quintilian's famous allegorical explanation,¹³¹ the traditional reading of the poem interprets the *navis* as the Ship of State, stumbling along the storms of civil wars, reminded by the anxious poet to run to the harbor of peace and concordance. No one before the 20th century ventured to question the traditional explanation. But now, we have a plenty of alternative interpretations. For example, we can interpret the *navis* as the Ship of Life,¹³² as the Ship of Love,¹³³ as the Ship of Love Poetry,¹³⁴ as well as the Ship of the Poet's Talent,¹³⁵ or as the Ship of a Love-Triangle.¹³⁶ From my point of view, the act of replacing the political allegory with another has no particular significance. But these interpreters have drawn our attention towards the multiple voices of the poem—based undeniably on the tradition of allegorical interpretation of Alcaeus' ship poems as allegories of state¹³⁷—, where the individual life as a voyage, the presence of poetic self-reflexion, or the erotic connection of the 'beloved' (the ship) and the 'lover' (the poet) are also at stake, both enriching and complicating the political allegory of Horace.¹³⁸ Furthermore, with the poem being a central example in Hans Blumenberg's *Shipwreck with Spectator*, the question is there, colored both philosophically and poetically, whether the speaker persona of the poem is on board (inside), or watches the dangerous voyage from a safe position (outside).¹³⁹ Reading Móricz's non-reading scene, one can have the feeling that all the ways of interpretation I have mentioned are, explicitly or implicitly, present in our novel. While on the micro-level of the episode, Laci's fantasy about the ship voyages will 'realize' the possible interpretation of the poem as 'Ship of Life', in close connection with

¹³¹ Quint. *Inst. or.* 8.6.44 ('navem pro re publica, fluctus et tempestates pro bellis civilibus, portum pro pace atque concordia dicit').

¹³² Cf. MENDELL (1938).

¹³³ Cf. ANDERSON (1968).

¹³⁴ Cf. ZUMWALT (1977/78).

¹³⁵ Cf. DAVIS (1989).

¹³⁶ Cf. KNORR (2006).

¹³⁷ Cf. NISBET-HUBBARD (1970), p. 180, harshly refusing the alternative explanations.

¹³⁸ For an ultimately non-allegorical interpretation, which tries not to 'identify' the ship, see SEEL (1970). Perhaps, this is the best one.

¹³⁹ See BLUMENBERG (1997) pp. 42ff., referring to SEEL (1970) appreciatively.

erotic imagination, from a few steps further away, I believe, the poem in its traditional interpretation as a political allegory, being totally ignored by its actual reader in the novel, changes into a *mise en abyme* of the novel itself. But more on that later. For now, let me cite the second part of our passage:

He let out a sigh of relief since reading that ode had always weighed on his brain like a hat made out of lead, which squeezed his brain, blotting out the world.

Suddenly he recalled how last summer they had floated on the river Sajó in a boat, under the willow trees; from the memory his head became clear as when a wind blows the fog away. He saw distinctly the big brown boat, its hoop-irons rusted red. He then imagined an ocean liner sailing to America. He often thought with longing how wonderful it would be to go and live in America. He would learn English, and get himself a comfortable tailor-made suit, the kind he had seen that Hungarian-American wear who came to the school not long ago looking for his younger brother.

The whole revery lasted but a minute. While thinking about these things his vision got blurred, he could hardly see the letters. Now his eyesight became clear again, and the Latin poem popped out sharply before him. He gazed at it in disgust, thinking of the amount of genitive partitive and gerund absolute the poem must contain. He got dizzy again, so he turned his head away. Silently, he scanned:

Ona visrefe rent! Inmare tenovi...

Although at one time they learned the ode by heart, he could remember only the first few lines. He knew the first two lines were called 'Fourth Asclepiads.'

He emitted a great sigh.

'Boy, that chaplain has it good,' he thought, 'drinking inside while ogling at my sister-in-law.'¹⁴⁰

What is actually happening? Laci has 'killed' the poem both as a literary work and as a school text. Seeing and interpreting the events from a 'subversive perspective', and trying to realize an idealizing narrative (that means, making an idealizing story out of events, that would fit his point of view),¹⁴¹ he has a perspective from where a school classic cannot have any significance. For him, Horace has no chance to be anything more than a hostile instrument of 'discipline and punish'. As a consequence, the reading of the ode—i. e. of the crib—made him unable to think and experience the world. ('He let out a sigh of relief since reading that ode had always weighed on his brain like a hat made out of lead, which squeezed his brain, blotting out the world.')

It is, thus, understandable why he feels relief when 'the ode is over' (cf. the remark of Mrs. Veres: 'the novel is over'). But afterwards, for a short time, he immerses in his thoughts.

Firstly, it is the Horatian ship which (knowingly or not) brings a memory to his mind, a peaceful memory of summer boat trip that, for a moment, makes his head clear: 'from the memory his head became clear as when a wind blows the fog away'. The narrator uses a simile that is taken from this imagination—a perfect example of

¹⁴⁰ See in Hungarian: MÓRICZ (1984) p. 24.

¹⁴¹ Cf. KULCSÁR SZABÓ (1993), p. 32, where he characterizes both Laci's 'idealizing' and Mrs. Veres's 'romantic' narrative as 'subversive'. For Laci's point of view in general, see SZILÁGYI (2008), pp. 325-339.

the stream of consciousness technique used in this novel so masterfully—which can be read as a sign that the Horatian ode is now being inscribed into the perspectives of both the authorial narrator and the character. For a short moment, Laci is imagined as a sailor. A sailor of the boat on the local river, for himself; a sailor of the ‘Ship of Life’, for the narrator. (If one reads the whole novel as a story of initiation—and one can have grounds for that, especially considering that *Bildungsroman* in itself has much to do with initiation—,¹⁴² this moment is nothing else but the first step of an initiatory process. Laci, in his ‘initiatory separation’—later, he calls his room a ‘carcer’—is having an ‘initiatory vision’, immersed in the world of fantasy. Seen from this perspective, one could see the Horatian text as serving as an ‘initiatory text’ in this episode, independently from the question whether it is used correctly or not.) It is also of much interest that the simile in question is in close connection with the problem of perception and experience. For Laci, the ode, totally independent from its content that urges seeing (*nonne vides?*, ‘do you not perceive?’), has been an obstacle of experiencing (‘squeezed his brain, blotting out the world’), but now, as an imaginary sailor, he is represented as having recovered his experiencing capabilities, even if, for now, they serve his imagination.¹⁴³ In the second step, he is imagining an ocean liner, with the childish and naïve association of emigration into the United States.¹⁴⁴ In the daydream of Laci, the image of the ship is very concrete again. But we can see now three different ships, connected to three different levels of time: a literary ship in the poem from Laci’s present, the memory of a real boat from his past, and an ocean vessel from his imagined future.

In this past-present-future configuration, the Horatian ship cannot represent anything but the disenchanting present for Laci, without the chance to have any significance on the level of the fictional world. While earlier, we have been informed that the ode was an obstacle of experiencing (‘a hat made out of lead’), which could be removed by Laci’s imagination, now we read: ‘While thinking about these things his vision got blurred, he could hardly see the letters. Now his eyesight became clear again, and the Latin poem popped out sharply before him.’ It means that his imagination, similarly to the former role the ode has played, has been a kind of obstacle between himself and the text, which now is removed. As a result, he can see the letters of the ode again—or more precisely, the cadaver of the killed ode. (Besides, Laci, when seeing the poem, feels nothing but nausea—or seasickness, as it is logical after having left an ocean liner.) Why the cadaver? I think, this text is obviously dead in that moment, at any rate for Laci, who sees in it, as it comes as a very clear visual impression to his eyes, only grammatical and metrical offals.¹⁴⁵ The classical ode, seen from his perspective, is nothing more than a textual receptacle of various grammatical and metrical phenomenons: ‘He gazed at it in disgust, thinking of the amount of genitive partitive and gerundium absolutum the poem must contain.

¹⁴² See SZILÁGYI (2008), pp. 332f. Cf. ARATÓ (2001), who reads another novel of Móricz (*Be Faithful Unto Death*), in the spirit of Northrop Frye’s archetypal criticism, as a story of initiation, compared to Sylvia Plath’s short story *Initiation*. Arató’s categories (‘initiatory separation’, ‘initiatory vision’ etc.) are very helpful also for the interpretation of our novel.

¹⁴³ As for Laci’s daydreams, see STRIBIK (2001), pp. 216f.

¹⁴⁴ Between 1871 and 1913, cca. one and a half million people have emigrated from Hungary into the USA. Cf. the sonnet cycle of Attila József from 1937, with the title *My Country (Hazám)*, Part 4, addressing even this ‘one and a half million’, who went to America.

¹⁴⁵ As for the opposition of ‘written letters’ vs. ‘spoken words’ in this scene, see EISEMANN (2005), pp. 61f.

He got dizzy again, so he turned his head away.’ Ironically, both the grammatical and metrical elements that Laci supposes to be in the poem, are results of a false diagnosis without exception: namely, there is no ‘genitive partitive’ in that poem, nor a ‘gerund absolute’—especially that the latter is a non-existent category in the Latin grammar, a hybrid of ‘gerund’ and ‘ablative absolute’—, furthermore, as far as the first lines are concerned, they cannot be called ‘Fourth Asclepiad’ at all, particularly that it is a name of a stanza, used not in this ode. (The stanza used in this poem is called ‘Third Asclepiad’, while the metrical term for the first two lines is ‘Small Asclepiad’.) This is not a good omen for the matriculation exam.

If this is not enough, after the first meeting with the ode, when he read it obviously as a prose text, this time—turning away from the text—Laci remembers how to scan the first line of the poem: ‘He got dizzy again, so he turned his head away. Silently, he scanned: *Ona visrefe rent! Inmare tenovi...*’ This kind of silent performance—that, in theory, would serve the ‘vivification’ of a ‘dead text’ through the silent liveliness of the inner voice—is correct from the school perspective, but it demonstrates in a cruel way how a classical literary work of art, being used as an instrument of ‘discipline and punish’ in the modern education system, changes into a meaningless cadaver from classical antiquity. In that moment, the pupil radically turns away from his schoolbook. Confronting the ‘dead world’ of his Latin text—and, probably unknowingly, the warning encoded in the poem, ‘bravely seize the port!’—, he starts his ship voyage on the seas of life. His idealizing perspective can be best characterized with another poem of Endre Ady (*Új vizeken járok*), in which the lyric persona presents himself as a sailor of ‘new seas’ of ‘new torments, secrets, desires’.¹⁴⁶ Consequently, Horace’s poem, if interpreted as a warning towards the Ship of Life, changes into its polar opposite: as a stimulation of the reader in the sense of ‘go to new seas’. This interpretation fits Laci’s attitude, even if he does not know that, with his adventure, he enacts a kind of reading of Horace’s text. Having left his ‘prison’ (cf. ‘initiatory separation’), he has only ‘the malicious feeling that he closed Horace, again’.¹⁴⁷

As the narrator tells us, the concrete voyage will end in the brothel—a place never named, only alluded to by the characters in the novel—,¹⁴⁸ where Laci’s ‘maturation’ is going to be completed in another sense than required. (As for that, one has to know that in Hungarian, as in Austrian German, the word for matriculation, ‘érettség’ or ‘Matura’, means verbatim ‘maturation’. This is for what Laci must prepare himself.) The official rite of initiation into adult society, i. e. the matriculation itself, is replaced with the non-official rite of initiation into adult society, i. e. the male initiation rite of losing virginity. Taking that into consideration, one could say that the erotic implications of the Horatian ode, ironically, reached Laci’s eyes, but in an inverse way: assuming that Horace, through *Odes* 1.14, is warning his lover to return to him, instead of finding new and dangerous erotic experiences, Laci inverts this warning, and, believing that he has no chances by his beloved, i.e. Mrs. Veres, he chooses a ‘sexual surrogate’, in the hope of having ‘dangerous erotic experiences’.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. BORI (1982/3), p. 54, alluding explicitly to this poem. Interestingly, there are other poems of Ady (e. g. *The Ship is for Sale* [Eladó a hajó], 1910), that stay in intertextual relationship—not with Laci’s associations, but with the Horatian poem itself. Similarly to Móricz, Ady seems to play with the ‘existentialization’ (as Ship of Life) of the Horatian ship allegory. I speak of *Zeitgeist*, of course.

¹⁴⁷ See in Hungarian: MÓRICZ (1984) p. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. STRIBIK (2001), p. 203.

(Later, his disappointment will concern even the ‘ordinariness’ of sexuality itself.) But having done the first steps on the way towards this direction, Laci, unfortunately, meets his Latin teacher, whose nickname is, characteristically, *Kopó*, meaning ‘The Bloodhound’:

He felt a hand on his shoulder.

He turned around. It was his teacher, *The Bloodhound*.

Instantly he assumed the role of the humble student.

‘Well, my boy,’ said the teacher, pushing up his pince-nez under his eyebrows, looking down with half open mouth. ‘Just where are you going? What’s the big hurry?’

‘Well, sir, Gacsal has my Horace glossary, I’m on my way to get it.’

‘So now you’re translating Horace?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘The Odes?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Very well. Which one?’

A vain hope had entered the student’s mind that the teacher won’t forget him at the final exam, so he became even more humble and obsequious.

‘The Fourteenth Ode, sir. O navisrefe-rent!’

‘Quite right. And the glossary is with Gacsal.’

‘Yes, sir. Because he too has just now been translating Horace.’

‘Just now? When?’

‘I think he is finished with it today.’

‘Right. But you have to go through the entire four years of study! To sit the final exams for your matriculation, my boy, is a serious thing. The government inspector will be there, a very strict person, you never know what he will ask. So no funny business from now on. You will really have to put your shoulder to the wheel! No more loafing, no more funny business!’

‘Please, sir...’ the student said, in a voice full of childlike innocence. Whoever can say these words in such a way would not dream of anything else but the rules of Latin syntax.

‘All right, quickly now for that glossary, and back in a jiffy! Study, study study! I’m warning you, you’re risking everything now, you have your whole future in your hands!’¹⁴⁹

An interesting rhetorical process can be registered in this passage. While in the formerly discussed passage, Laci has been confirmed—both by the authorial narrator and himself, even if unknowingly—as the ‘addressee’ of the Horatian ode, here also the anonymous speaker of the poem seems to be personified, namely as the Latin teacher, the ‘Bloodhound’. Interestingly, he is delighted to hear that the pupil has read *Odes* 1.14, and, moreover, he sees the guarantee of avoiding ‘loafing’ and ‘funny business’ in the ‘government inspector’ (i. e. of the matriculation process). In terms of the allegory, the teacher is the person who wants to ‘govern’ the ship from the sea into the safe harbor of social conventions. Consequently, in the framework of *‘Diskursive Sinnstabilisation durch Macht’*,¹⁵⁰ the poem is here being inscribed into the discourse of political power and social order by the teacher, or, more precisely,

¹⁴⁹ See in Hungarian: MÓRICZ (1984) p. 26.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. KULCSÁR SZABÓ (1993), pp. 30ff., who interprets the novel partly with the help of Kurt Röttgers’ theory of discourse.

not by him as an acting character of the novel but by his utterances that generate these rhetorical events.

Obviously, the Bloodhound's intentions (i. e., to prevent the events that threaten social order) will be not fulfilled, since Laci is going to visit the brothel. However, after having lost his virginity, i. e. on the end of his 'initiatory voyage', Laci will realize—in the form of an internal monologue about his disappointment which, however, can be taken as an obligatory element of the initiation rite—that all dreams are over: namely, he is now an 'ordinary man'. This recognition (the end phase of Laci's initiation into reality?) is accompanied by a formulation of the narrator which reminds us of Laci's fantasies around the ship ode: 'as if the wind had blown a heavy, depressing fog away' (cf. 'as when a wind blows the fog away').¹⁵¹ This allusion to the ship fantasies can be read as a sign that Laci's reflexive position ('seeing clear') is the result of his initiatory 'ship voyage', even if his reflexivity cannot result in anything else than in realizing that his 'idealizing narrative' has no chances at all. Accordingly, taking Laci's subversive attitude into consideration, the ship voyage seems to be replaced with a shipwreck. Though from the perspective of the Bloodhound, i.e. the social conventions, Laci's ship is now 'in the harbor of peace and concordance' ('in portu pacis et concordae', to use Quintilian's words).

And what is the case with the implied author of the novel? Focusing on him, I believe, one cannot leave out of consideration that the poem of Horace, at least in its institutional context, is permanently interpreted as a political allegory, similarly to the novel of Móricz, which already through its first title suggests to the reader that it is relevant to interpret it in political terms, almost as a political allegory about the 'lack of perspective' of the Hungarian society, in the sense of an already cited passage about the church-tower in Ilosva ('... the guard on the church-tower had some lodgings under the bells, and a balcony around the tower, but it was built so low that if one wanted to have a look around one could not see very far. [...] The church, the house of god, was sad like an orphan without a guardian, like this town, like the people in it, and the life they lived.') I believe, the 'Horatian passage' can be interpreted as a similar key episode of the novel, moreover a self-referential one. Compared to the church-tower allegory, this passage works differently: rather than making explicit the novel's political message through using and explicating an attractive allegory, it focuses on the question of reading, and, consequently, on the possible chances of the novel itself to have an impact on its reading public, or on society in general. For this purpose, the episode quotes a poem that can be also characterized as a political allegory, and locates it in a reading situation. It can be taken as a kind of test: 'Dear Reader, are you able to understand my work?' If we interpret Laci, the internal reader of the novel, as the representative of the external reader, the chances are not quite good. Instead of reading, we see a special kind of non-reading. Instead of understanding, we see associations. Instead of the literary work, we see a cadaver out of letters. (Cf. the interpretations that see in the Horatian poem a poetic self-reflexion.) Paradoxically, Laci will go through an initiation process, and reaches a reflexive position—falsifying the universal lack of perspective—, but his development is, on the one hand, independent from the literary work, and, on the other hand, identical with the acceptance of the real circumstances. Thus, with the help of the non-reading scene around the Horatian poem, the novel has encoded its own

¹⁵¹ See in Hungarian: MÓRICZ (1984) p. 114. For a similar formulation in the initiation scene of *Be Faithful Unto Death*, see ARATÓ (2001), pp. 142f.

'political unsuccessfulness' in itself. The society fails the 'reading test', and, thus, its symbolic 'maturation', but the text proves to be 'mature' enough. Ironically, from a literary point of view, Móricz guarantees a poetical success for his work: the leitmotif of the novel, i. e. the almost-but-finally-not-happening, incorporates the novel itself, inasmuch as its reading becomes, in a certain sense, always already 'failed'.

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Notes

ⁱ. See the monographs: Kulcsár Szabó 1996, Selyem 2004, Balassa 2005, Szántó 2005, Palkó 2007; and the collections of essays with more than one author: Balassa 1988; Böhm 2003.

ⁱⁱ. Cf. Baelo-Allué 13–21.

ⁱⁱⁱ. On the investigation of the evaluative and value-creating aspect of canons, see Kermode 1989, Altieri 1990; for the institutions of the cultivation of meaning see Assman és Assmann 1987.

4. See Baelo-Allué 2011, Colby 2011, Mandel 2011 and in Hungarian Fodor – L. Varga 2012.

5. The English reception of the book also notes “the postmodern world of Peter Esterházy”. (see e.g. Bermel 2004; Evans 2004) Others mention it as “a quintessential example of postmodern fiction”. (Harrison 2004) In this “postmodern world” nothing has a fixed place, because it resembles the Eastern-European historical reality: „There are probably many Esterházy readers who, ever since the postmodern tribulations offered by, for example, his novels *A Little Hungarian Pornography* and *She Loves Me*, have hoped he might abandon his I-say-I-say-I-say routine of self-conscious narration and write a conventional, linear novel. But existence in central Europe has not been linear for a century – history delivering life to its citizens only in fragments – and Esterházy's prose reflects that.” (Evans 2004) Actually, a self-interpretative remark by Esterházy suggests the same: „As I got more and more immersed in my family's history, I realized that there were a great many stories, practically infinite, which also meant that the family was wealthy, very wealthy. But I couldn't find a natural linear way of presenting this, not to mention the fact that it was not the relating of the family history as faithfully as possible that motivated me but the other way around; I wanted to say something universal through the family history. In short, there was this heap of stories. Then I attempted to sort them thematically, daytime stories, nighttime stories, where someone is kissed, where it's raining. But then what am I to do with the story where someone is kissed in the rain who immediately died as a result? In short, I couldn't come up with a viable choreography, I couldn't put the stories in order, because this order didn't exist inside me. So I was left with the numbering.” (Hallberg 2010)

^{vi}. See Thomka, “A történelem” 62.

^{vii}. First and foremost, the turn is symbolically marked by 1986, the year when the two grand opuses, Esterházy's *Bevezetés a szépirodalomba* and Nádás' *Emlékiratok könyve* were published. *Less Than Zero*, Ellis' first novel, which is usually considered to be minimalist was published a year before; by that time some critics in the USA already celebrated the emergence of the so-called lifestyle fiction as the victory of the returning realism over postmodernism. On the ethical horizon of realism vs. postmodern see Gardner's 1978 book

that ideologically supports the former category. For the interpretation of the turn in Hungarian literature see Kelemen – Palkó 2007.

^{viii}. Numerous works of contemporary Hungarian fiction can be read as father novels, such as *Apám könyve* (“The book of my father”) by Ádám Bodor, György Dragomán’s *The White King*, *Szaggatott vonal* (line) by Zoltán Egressy, *Halottak apja* (“Father of the dead”) by Györe Balázs, *Isten hozott* (“Welcome”) and *Mellettem elférsz* by GreCsó Krisztián, *TündérVölgy* by Kukorelly Endre and György Péter’s essay novel *Apám helyett*. The full list is even longer and books of poetry could be also mentioned here, for example Ayhan Gökhan’s *Fotelapa* or Deres Kornélia’s *Szórapa*.

⁹. Regarding fatherhood and history Esterházy says the following: „With the numbered stories I managed some sort of historical perspective. By making »my father« the main character of these stories, meaning that I turned everyone into my father, I basically destroyed the taboo of fatherhood. And so it seemed apt that once we’d come to accept this fatherless world, I should relate a Twentieth Century father-story which is very much like my own father’s story.” (Hallberg 2010)

10. Cf. “I sat down at my desk and immediately flipped open my laptop and started making up a dream to feed Dr. Kim, the diminutive Korean shrink my wife found through our couples counselor, Dr. Faheida. Dr. Kim, a strict Freudian and a big believer in how the unconscious expressed itself in dream imagery, wanted me to bring in a new dream every week so we could interpret it, but because her accent was so thick that half the time I had no idea what she was saying, and the added fact that I was no longer having dreams, these sessions were almost unbearable. But Jayne insisted on (and was paying for) them, so it was easier to endure these hours than face the hassles of not showing up. (Besides, this charade was my only means of keeping the Klonopin and Xanax prescriptions up to date—and without them I was a goner.) Meanwhile Dr. Kim was catching on—becoming more suspicious with each new made-up dream—but my assignment was to bring in one today, so while waiting for Aimee Light to arrive (and hopefully undress) I dutifully concentrated on what kind of dream would be burbling in my unconscious at this point. Glancing at my watch I saw this had to be quick. I had to make up the dream, type it up, and print it out, and then—after somehow having sex with Aimee Light—dash over to Dr. Kim’s office by three. Today: water, plane crash, being chased by . . . a lively badger (remember: animals were not my friends); I was naked on the plane, the lively badger was . . . also on the plane, and maybe its name was . . . Jayne.” (Ellis 2006: 101)

11. See also *Apám helyett*, Péter György’s earlier mentioned essay novel.

12. Of course, its staging is not without humour, parody and references to the autoreferential performativity of writing, as we can already see in the second numbered sentence of *Celestial Harmonies*: “To kick off a text with a ferocious-looking baroque grand seigneur is gratifying; a thrilling, tingling sensation thrills our bosom, our computers greet us in passing, and our cook, because why shouldn’t we have a cook (who we?) serves us – a surprise! – breaded lamb’s tail, which is like calf’s foot except it’s more savory because it’s more fragile and tender; my father, this ferocious-looking baroque grand seigneur who was in a position, nay under obligation, to raise his eyes to Emperor Leopold, raised his eyes to

Emperor Leopold, on his countenance an expression of solemnity, though his eyes, twinkling and mischievous, belied him as always, and he said, It is deucedly difficult, Sire, to tell a lie when you don't know the truth. Having said that, he leaped upon his chestnut steed, Challenger, and galloped off into the discriminating seventeenth-century landscape (or description thereof). (Esterházy 2005: 5)

13. See in the first place Colby 2011: 131–163, for example: “Ellis, in his representation of the post-9/11 culture of fear and the imposition of restraints upon the imagination of the writer, performs a critique that similarly questions the ethics of self-censorship. (...) Ellis presents a narrative of hyperbole, and the shift into the past tense signifies and criticizes a denial of the contemporary and a fear of the present. It highlights both the inability to articulate oneself in language in present time and the destructive implications of this suppression. The novel periodizes the first decade of the twenty-first century in America as an era of fear in the wake of 9/11 and, through self-parody, works to refuse it. Ellis underwrites the cultural precipitation of anxiety by both the left-liberal and Republican sectors of society through creating his unreliable narrator from the damning media portrayals of his life as a celebrity author. (134, 135)

¹⁴. On the relativization of political-ideology critical readings in the case of *Lunar Park* see Fodor – L. Varga 2012: 193–224.

¹⁵. For the concept of literature's “internal affairs” see de Man 1979.

¹⁶. Compare with one of the most thorough analyses of the text: “As it is generally known, Esterházy admittedly uses a lot of intertexts (among others, from his own works) in this book, too. He radically re-contextualises and rewrites them into his own textual space; with the help of these actually highly original subtleties he ironically criticises the idea of an originality that considers itself to be beyond comparison, the conceited, romantic ambitions of a “divine” creativity that creates out of nothing, and the Titanism haunting even our century. This is why he is proven to be again and again a language artist conversing and competing with the best of our literature.” (Balassa 2003a: 50–51)

¹⁷. On quotation techniques in the Hungarian literature of the last thirty years, with a special emphasis on Esterházy's fiction see Kulcsár-Szabó 2011.

18. It seems that the “confession” appearing in title of the second part of *Harmonial Celesties* almost becomes a modality in *Javított kiadás*, although the text rather defines the comments on the agent files as “reports”. See Balassa 2003b: 195–196; Thomka 2003b.

^{xix}. As Gergely Angyalosi summarizes, “the real father, that is the person of Mátyás Esterházy, and (through him) the reality belonging to the fictive level of *Celestial Harmonies* came to the front in a new, altered reading situation.” (Angyalosi 2003: 173)

^{xx}. Ibid.

^{xxi}. Ibid.

Beatrix Kricsfalusi

Re-Cycling the Ring
Richard Wagner through János Térey

In 2004, when, for a short period, the Ruhrfestspiele was led by Frank Castorf, the intendant of Berlin's Volksbühne, one of the most remarkable festival events was the *Wagner-rally* organized by Christoph Schlingensiefel.^{xxi} The idea of the action came from Alexander Kluge's work, *Die Götterdämmerung in Wien*.^{xxi} According to the story, in March 1945, when Vienna was already surrounded by the Soviet army, Baldur von Schirach, who was entrusted with the leading of the city, ordered *Die Götterdämmerung*'s last, ceremonial staging so as to the radio stations, still controlled by the Third Reich, could broadcast it. Schirach played it safe, since the Nibelung-Myth, as a shining/ demonstrative example of a heroic fight to the bitter end, had been proved to be a successful propaganda tool for awakening patriotic emotions, even if in theory it is controversial. In Hermann Göring's speech, given in the 30th January 1940, two days before the defeat at Stalingrad, the total destruction of an army in dreadful circumstances is glorified as the most heroic battle in the history and – (probably) referring to the *The Song of the Nibelungs* [The Nibelungenlied] – it sets the „futurless but not senseless“^{xxi} battle of the Nibelungs' –trapped in Attila's castle and damping their thirst by drinking one another's blood – as an example to follow for all Germans. Schirach differs from the myth of total destruction only in that instead of the heroic poem, he uses Wagner's adaptation for mobilization against the enemy, which adaptation also ends with the images of the flaming Walhall, but at the same time with the musical motif of Redemption, thus it carries the hope of a possible return. The destruction of Vienna, which defines itself as the city of music, is not imaginable without musical background anyway: „Wenn schon das Reich untergeht, muß uns die Musik doch bleiben. If the Reich goes down, at least music shall remain“- Schirach believes. So, they re-opened the opera-house, collected the musicians from the field, and rehearsals began, but the night before the dress rehearsal the opera-house was burnt down in a fire caused by a bombing raid. Since giving up the project was out of question – as giving up would be equal to the performative (self-)destruction of the myth – the orchestra, divided into small groups, continued the work in different casemates around the city. To coordinate the work, the conductor used military equipment [haditechnika]. The field telephones [tábori telefonok],

which made the connection between the groups, were amplified through a speakerphone, thus all musicians could hear their sound. Thus, thanks to this solution, the spatially separated groups were connected, the communication between them was solved, the continuation and the sound-recording of the rehearsal were ensured. They intended to edit and mix the fragments together by using the tools of the radio studio, but unfortunately they had taken no account of the possibility of not being able to purify the recordings from the noises caused by battles and by the available media technology. Thus, even though they managed to rescue the material from the frontline, the radio of Salzburg refused to broadcast it because of its bad quality.

However, there happened to be 3000 meters of 35 mm, coloured film material stored in Vienna at the time by Gerd Jänicke, who had originally wanted to use it for the documentation of the city's destruction, until the moment he became aware of the gigantic enterprise, which was taking shape underground. He saw the recording of the uplifted idea of heroic persistence as a possible culmination of his propaganda activities, so he recorded the third act with five cameras, equipped with voice recorder. At first, they tried to create a unified sound for the parts played by the orchestra groups scattered in different casemates, for example by transmitting the melody – played by musicians who were not there – through a radiophone to the place where the filming was taken place, and later they tried to mix the transmitted melody under the recorded parts. But in the second and third scene of the third act the emphasis was put onto the co-ordinated relations between the fragments, viz. these scenes can be watched nine times in a row, or, to be exact, only that part of the score can be seen each time, which was played precisely in that casemate.

In spite of all precautions, the undeveloped negatives and sound-recordings fell into the enemy's hands. Through their odyssey, the negatives and recordings were taken to the store of the Sochi museum – it should be noted that Sochi is famous for its international film festival –, where one of Luigi Nono's disciples found them in 1991. The young composer got the negatives developed in a Hungarian film studio, then he had the positives transported to Venice, because he wanted to present the film in the Dome on the occasion of the 10 year anniversary of Nono's death. However when one of Jean-Luc Godard's editor assistants became aware of the records, he had the rolls taken to the film institute of Paris, and he screened them to the prominent staff of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Cinématèque*. The critics were enchanted by the film, in which they found that unique trait, that Walter Benjamin

repudiated from the mechanically reproduced works. This uniqueness was attributed to the unsatisfying lighting, the infiltrating noises of war and of the recording machine, and to the inelible storage (the recording had gotten light in some parts, therefore its colour is not proper, it is shady and resounding, in some parts it is also crumpled). In the critics congruent opinion, splicing the parts would be a mistake, because in this way the melodies would result in a bad overall sound (Gesamtklang), contrarily, in their original forms, the recordings can show the beauty of fragments with such a strength, that can easily convince us, that Richard Wagner's artworks should only be put on in fragments. We can be the eye- and earwitnesses to the deconstruction of Gesamtkunstwerk, as long as the fragments do not make up a whole, not even in material terms, and, as a matter of fact, the technologically fitted up artwork is aesthetically worse than the separate parts, although it should be more than the total of the different parts.

Christoph Schlingensief organized the *Wagner-rally*, following the nominal interpretation of the the titled French film critics. Ten teams – named after Wagner's operas and selected in previous castings – participated in the race, and toured the historically and culturally important places of the Ruhr in three days, while solving related tasks. At the same time the megaphones, fixed in the top of their cars, were constanly blasting Wagner-parts demounted in the above mentioned way (the parts can be heard in the Rallye Jukebox at the homepage).^{xxi} The Gesamtkunstwerk resolves to its elements and disperses into space, similiary to the case of the Vienna casemats, moreover it cannot be rescued from the noise of rally cars – functioning as means of transportation. Although Schlingensief is known for his shocking actions, in this case we cannot simply declare that he took the total offensive against bourgeois, in other words high culture, for which Wagner (who was an anarchist otherwise) has become a symbol during the 20th century. Even if Schlingensief brought down Wagner's music from the heights of Bayreuth, and dispersed it in the industrial cities of the Ruhr as a part of the Ruhr Festival^{xxi} – which usually defines itself as a counterculture event –, he did it in the same year, when he was entrusted with the direction of *Parsifal*, which was the opening show of the Bayreuth Festival. The action, which was put through the idea of „Wagner for everybody”,^{xxi} did not come from the provocative gesture of the nihilistic abolishment of the gigantic artwork, on the contrary, it was the result of the long and meticulous work done on *Parsifal* and on the whole oeuvre through it.

Schlingensiefel created the perfect counterpoint of the *Wagner-rally* in Bayreuth, which can rightly be called (in the beginning of the 21st century) a Gesamtkunstwerk: his *Parsifal* direction was a healthy mixture of mythical action art – associated with Joseph Beuys who called it „anthropological action art” – and a hi-tech multimedia show. The latter is especially important, because a new media technological innovation was created during the preparatory work of staging, which determines the action artist’s works ever since: while in Wagner’s case it is the film that is born from the spirit of music^{xxi}, in Schlingensiefel’s case it is the animatograph^{xxi}. The animatograph is an interactive space, which can be perambulated by players and also by spectators, a space which enables the interplay of theatre, opera, film and actionism. Its basis is a rotating stage in a darkened room which functions as an „actionist photo(disk?)” [„akcionista fotólemezként”]. The objects and people who are placed on or around the stage become a projection surface for films and light effects. The animatograph can be built in the same way in the middle of nowhere in Iceland, or in the Burgtheater of Vienna, where the auditorium and stage melt into a grandiose unity. However, what is common in these installations, which have been realized so far, is that in some way all of them rotate (literally too) around Wagner’s oeuvre.

Hopefully, the examples above reveal that the actuality of the mythical and media technological aspects of Wagner and the *Ring* is not questionable in contemporary German culture. Since its reception has been tightly linked up with *The Song of the Nibelungs*^{xxi} which is mostly – but not unproblematically – treated as the national epic, and through it with the creation of German identity, we can even say, that it has never been questionable. (Although it is widely known, that Wagner attenuated the medieval heroic poem with the Scandinavian Edda-songs, and that he did not deal with the second chapter at all, in which the Germans fight a heroic battle against the Huns, and which is very significant in terms of the national discourse.) This paper does not undertake the overview of the mentality and ideology historical aspects of the reception of *The Song of the Nibelungs*.^{xxi} However, it is worth pointing out, that from the 19th century to the present day it is clearly a „national theme”^{xxi} for everybody. Here it is enough to quote Heiner Müller’s sentence which became an adage: „the Nibelungs [...] is still the most German of all German-themes, moreover it is still a German reality/ one of the German realities.”^{xxi} According to Friedrich Hebbel, the Nibelungs personify the German virtues (loyalty, courage, defiance), therefore it is worth devoting a modern, world historical drama [világtörténeti drámát] to their story, and with the tools of

psychological realism, that motivates the characters' actions better, it is possible to make the plot of the myth clearer for contemporary readers.^{xxi} Contrarily, Heiner Müller evokes the conception of Nibelung-loyalty in a way, that is least of all affirmative, in regard to the fact that by then it was only available through the National Socialist propaganda machine. Müller stages the Göring-speech in different dramas. In *Germania 3 Ghosts at Dead Man* the German soldiers are supping one another's body parts at Stalingrad in the company of the Nibelungs, who are dressed in German uniforms and are reciting a Hebbel-text. Whereas one of the scenes in his drama, called *Germania Death In Berlin*, Gernot – surrounded by mutilated soldiers who are also eating one another – is bewailing about how much he is bored by the battle.

Hebbel, Wagner (both of them with their National Socialist contexts) and Heiner Müller have determined the possibilities of interpreting/rewriting the myth so strongly, that Moritz Rinke thought he had to liberate the Nibelungs from multiple burdens, when he was asked to write a new version within the framework of *Nibelungen-Festspiele* in 2002. „The problem of the Nibelungs is that they have not lived in freedom for ages. They are in captivity of phrases, first there was the nazi phrases, then the Wagner phrases, and, for that matter, the thousands of Germanist phrases. These phrases lie on the characters as tombstones. [...] Under the stones the Nibelungs played such an impressive theater, that I would have willingly see even daytime. However, to do this, firstly I had to sweep off Hitler, Wagner and the half of Germanistics from the tombstone.”^{xxi} Rinke follows Hebbel's hipotext as regards the plot weaving, and does not update the story, on the contrary, he tries to turn over the temporal distance of the myth from our present into positivity in terms of understanding. His drama focuses on the problem of the formation of modern nations in multiethnic Europe during the migration period, of course with the question „who is German?” in the centre. The *Nibelungs* shows the creation – through dialogic interactions – of the historical notions of own and foreign in funny scenes. For instance, when the Dutch Siegfried (the only Nibelung here) says to the Gunthers (who consider themselves Burgundian) that they are actually Germans,^{xxi} or when the gatekeeper (slow-witted as a Shakespeare character) does not understand the messenger's report that says: „The Danish and the Saxons fought against the Burgundian and the 12 Dutch men in Saxony”,^{xxi} saying that Saxons are also Germans. No doubt that thematizing the nationality issue allows us to interpret the text as a political parabola as well. For example, when Gunther calls the Saxons „Newburgundians”,^{xxi} after they joined the

union, or when Rüdiger von Bechelaren reacts to the Hungarian messenger (whose language is gibberish for him): „Interpreter! This shit Europe!”^{xxi}

It is a fair question to ask, that how and, mainly, why does Hungarian contemporary literature turn to the most German of all German theme. Reading János Térey's dramaturgy, *A Nibelung-lakópark*,^{xxi} it seems, he has chosen this topic to show that it is not exclusively a German theme. The author has managed to make the cultural separation from the myth productive, he uprooted the story from the particularity of German national discourse and he showed that the Nibelungs are not the embodiments of German virtues (and sins), but rather they are the allegories of the operating mechanism of power/authority. Since, in spite of the ancillary text [mellékszöveg], according to which the story takes place in Worms, and the fact, that – even if the real provincial town on the bank of the Rhine is not recognizable – we can identify Germany on the one hand, from obvious names^{xxi}, and on the other, from historical references^{xxi}, it cannot be said, that the dramatic plot takes place in a geographically determinable place. At the same time, the references that eliminate the German particularity of the story are equally palpable (eg. the danger of anthrax as a consequence of the „níbelung-dzsihád” and the collapse of the Nothung tower caused by a suicide bomber, which is reported by Radio Nibelung, at FM 9.11). Furthermore, the presence of Hungarian (sleng-)language,^{xxi} political^{xxi} and economical reality^{xxi} in the characters's replicates also serve this purpose, as well as the indexes of high culture – primarily late modern poetry, whether in the form of quotes or in the variety of poetic transformations. [A Nibelung-lakópark] is not the place of continuing the German national myth, but it is a world of global hi-tech capitalism, where the myth's characters degraded into brand names (Hunding beer, Fafner&Fasolt construction company, Norna Network, etc.).

This is no wonder, knowing that Térey used the *Ring* as a hypotext –as the subtitle shows: *Fantasy after Richard Wagner* [*Fantázia Richard Wagner nyomán*] –, namely *The Ring of the Nibelungs* [*A Nibelungok gyűrűjét*] , or to be exact that part, which was meant to be staged on the fourth day of the festival/ gala scenic play; the *Twilight of the Gods*. To read the *Ring* as an allegory of capitalism is not just a fashionable, outrageous updating, destruction or postmodern peremptory, because the *Ring* is actually the vision of the disappointed, anarchist (and ridden) Wagner of the end of the bourgeois – artistic and economic – world, after the defeated revolution of 1848. Térey's work is located in that tradition of critical, literary and theatrical reception, which demythicizes the *Ring* and

interprets it as a contemporary drama.^{xxi} In this context it is enough to refer to Bernard Shaw's and Adorno's – Wagner's two most valid and most influential interpreters – consonant opinion, that says that the tetralogy is not only the staging of a mythical world, but the German capitalism and the picture of Gründerzeit are also prominently outlined inside it.^{xxi} Térey's work modifies this statement so far as we cannot talk about German, only global capitalism in the beginning of the 2000s.

Contemporary critics, almost without exception, problematized the connection of *A Nibelung-lakópark* to the Wagnerian hypotext, mostly in the context of the question, whether the plot is understandable without knowing the musicdrama, which hardly can be taken granted nowadays. However, the adequate question is not whether it is possible to read [*A Nibelung-lakópark*] without knowing Wagner, but whether it is worth reading it (otherwise it is possible, but in this case the outlandish names are not helpful, but rather complicate the understanding)? Hereafter I make an attempt to strengthen László Márton's statement according to which: „Térey's work as a double hypertext, with all of its illusory disrespects, actually bears witness to the deepest understanding of and to the poetic acquirement of Wagner.”^{xxi}

Adorno convincingly showed the two reasons why Wagner's (artistic) revolutionary utopia, the Gesamtkunstwerk, failed. On the one hand, from his criticism of capitalism, the perfect capitalist artwork and, based on that, an economic enterprise, Bayreuth, were born; and on the other, it was the mechanical artwork, the film, which was born as a result of his attempt to reform the bourgeois illusion theater with the aesthetics of absolute presence and sensuality. In Adorno's reading, the musicdrama – as dreamed by Wagner and first praised then humiliated by Nietzsche –, which effects all the sensory organs and exists as a „absolutely immediate, as it were, spatial phenomenon”,^{xxi} is unveiled as a commodity-like phantasmagoria.^{xxi} Nowadays, when not only Térey's Brünnhilde has the motif of *Fire Magic* [Tűzvarázs motívum] as her ringtone, but it can be bought by anybody, it would be hard to refute the German thinker's statement, according to which the leitmotif has „alongside the aesthetic one, a commodity function, rather like that of an advertisement.”^{xxi} The Gesamtkunstwerk as a total unity hides how it has been constructed from parts and also the very fact that it is constructed, in so far it is „come close to the consumer goods of the nineteenth century which knew no greater ambition than to conceal every sign of the work that went them”.^{xxi} „The work of art” – as Adorno says – hereby „endorses the sentiment

normally denied by ideology: work is degrading.”^{xxi} Térey’s masterfully composed work, by using the different registers of low and high culture, never sounds as an illusory phantasmagoria, on the contrary, the salient quote-likeness [idézetszerűség] of the elements stresses at all points the construction traits of the work. In Nietzsche’s reading, the Wagnerian art conception, based on effecting the totality of the senses, was synonymous with the return to the roots of theatre. He called Wagner a downright dithyrambic dramatist [*ditirambikus drámaírónak*],^{xxi} who was able to create the modern man with his art. The emergence of modern man – in technical sense – is a result of the dramatic ancient phenomenon, the *metamorphoses* (Verwandlung), which plays a significant role in the Nibelung-myth.

In *The Song of the Nibelungs*^{xxi} Siegfried, in the fight with Alberich, acquires the ’tarnkappe’ besides the treasure (B 97), which is „a hood, i.e. a coat with a hood, that makes you invisible” according to the dictionary.^{xxi} In German translations ’Tarnkappe’^{xxi} and ’Tarnmantel’^{xxi} both occur, the choice depends on how the translator (who translates the text to [újfelnémet]) wants to adjust the text to the current state of language, namely whether the translator trusts or does not trust in that the reader knows the original meaning of Kappe (Kutte) besides Kapuze, which is used nowadays. It is a well documented fact, in the light of reception history [hatástörténet], that the belief in the knowledge of [középfelnémet] vocabulary is the least valid, that paved the way for translating the ’tarnkappe’ as some kind of headgear. Thus, the interpretation was born, according to which the object, that is in the possession of Siegfried, is a [süveg – hat, wizard hat?], that makes him invisible due to its witchcraft, even though *The Song of the Nibelungs* never tells that the ’tarnkappe’ has witchcraft. If we draw the text under scrutiny, it turns out that the hooded coat – as its name shows, since the meanings of ’tarnen’ are zudecken, verhüllen, verbergen – hides one from the eyes of others and makes one invisible, because it blankets the man who puts it on from head to toe. There is not even one reference in the heroic poem that this piece of clothing would be able to transform its wearer. On both occasions, when Sigfried wears the coat in order to captivate Brünhilde, it is clear from the text, that there is no transformation. The humour of the first clash comes from the duplication, that the invisible Sigefried moves the visible Gunther as a marionette: the latter does the movements, while the former pushes through the action with his enormous power (B 454). When he has to defeat Brünhilde the second time, in this case in the bedroom, in order to make her accept the king’s approach at last (and to avoid her hanging him on a nail again, as she did in the first time), the

transformation would mean the destruction of the medieval conception of 'minne'. However, we know from the description, that Sigfried just simulated that he was the king, he even payed attention to remain silent during the fight, for fear of his voice betrays him (B 667-668). Even though, as soon as the women succumbs, Sigfried gives way to Gunther in the marriage bed.

As a variant of 'tarnkappe', the word 'Hëlkappe' also occurs in the rarely used D-signed manuscript of *The Nibelunglied*, which, in its meaning – from the verb 'hehlen' (veil, conceal) –, also stresses the motif of masking. According to the *Grimm-dictionary* the 'hehl' word possesses – at least regionally – the meaning 'robed in cloud, cloudy' (umwölkt, bedekt), and maybe this is the reason, why we can find the 'Nebelkappe' denomination in Hebbel's *The Nibelungs*. The Wagnerian „phantasmagoria”^{xxi} already combines the elements of concealment, disappearance, and transformation and it clearly connects all of these to the Nibelungs' magical powers. In the 3rd scene of [Rajna kincse] it is Alberich, who makes Mime make the magic tool, which, according to the libretto, is an object made of metal („ein metallenes Gewirke”) – since it is from the treasure of the mermaids of the Rhine – accordingly it is called 'Tarnhelm', i.e. a metal helmet, which makes you invisible. Both the material, of which it is made, and the connotations of 'Helm' with the knight culture [lovagi kultúra] and later with warfare in general cannot be neglected during the reading of the musicdrama (probably in Wagner's case the alliteration of Hort and Helm also played a part in the choice of the name). However, Tamás Blum, in his Hungarian translation, – not so felicitously – introduced the 'magic tiara' [varázsföveg] and the 'fog hat' [ködsüveg] denominations.

Nevertheless, it does not turn out unequivocally from the text, where the magic power of the headgear comes from: from the material, namely from the treasure, or from the secret knowledge of how to make it, or from the magical power of the word: „*Er setzt das Gewirk als „Tarnhelm” auf den Kopf. Dem Haupt fügt sich der Helm: / ob sich der Zauber auch zeigt? / – „Nacht und Nebel, / Niemand gleich!” -/ Seine Gestalt verschwindet; statt ihrer gewahrt man eine Nebelsäule.*”^{xxi} When Alberich puts the fabrication on his head as a helmet for the first time, it does not work, only after he activates its hiding power with the magic spell. The Wagnerian magic helmet does not turn its wearer into someone else, but it has the power to induce metamorphoses. Ironically, it is this ability that makes it possible for Wotan and Loge to take away the treasure from Alberich by main force, who previously transformed

into a frog in front of their eyes. Presumably, the power of the helmet is not only in its materiality, but the witchcraft of the Nibelungs is also added to it. For the further actuation of the tool it is not necessary to know the spell and say it out, since just as Alberich's curse remains on the ring forever, it was enough to enchant the helmet once, endowing it with the magical power of concealment and transformation. In the *Twilight of the Gods* Siegfried takes the shape of Gunther and makes the bodily presence of the king at the conquest of his own wife unnecessary, simply by putting on the helmet: „Durch des Tarnhelms Trug / tausch' ich mir deine Gestalt.”^{xxi}

Although the theme of metamorphoses was taken over almost as a direct quotation from the *Twilight of the Gods* to the *A Nibelung-lakópark*, but in the 21st century the evocator of the metamorphoses is not the Wagnerian metaphysical power. Siegfried's transformation is enabled by a technological innovation, a „magic weapon” (101) made in the Gibichung-laboratory, which is an alkaloid – and at this point Térey benefits from Tamás Blum's bizarre translation – named „fog hat ” [ködsüveg]. It is the economic power of the Nibelungs, that lies behind it, instead of their magical power.^{xxi} És hogy mit „tud az / Az új szer?”: „Minden jót, s még azon is túl. / Öt perce van benned: már elröpített. / Jóformán föl se tűnik, otthoni / A táj; mindenki az, aki; te vagy más – / S akkor mulatsz a legjobban, mikor / Tükörbe nézel: magad vagy a vakfolt / A tükör színén, hogyha akarod; / S magad leszel az éles kép, ha tetszik. / Minden lehetsz, amit csak röpködő / Agyad talál ki, Siegfried és / Hagen, vagy fél perc múlva Gunther – / A legjobb benne az, hogy szó szerint / Belegondolhatsz önmagadba bárkit; / Fejével gondolkodhatsz – el se fáradsz; / Nevében cselekedhetsz – úgyse lesz / Nyoma a tettnek, s hogyha teljesülni / Látod: miért félnél, ez nem te vagy. – / Amúgy tükörbe túl sokat ne nézz.” (Rajnapark 101-102) The „original phenomenon of *drama*”^{xxi} – in the original meaning of „wandlung”^{xxi} – of the transformation (Verwandlung) really means that the self turns out from itself, although it does not happen as a consequence of the dionysian intoxication in the theatron, but in a nightclub, called Café Midgard, which is defined as an agora.^{xxi} Here, the party music played by DJ Volker, the rythmical movements of the bodies, and the swirling laser beams on the ceiling are not enough to create a way-out condition anymore, a syntetic drug is needed to achieve it. The transformation, strictly speaking, is an entrance to a virtual reality, which is engendered by the interplay of the brain and the brain-stimulating fog hat [ködsüveg]. In this virtual reality the player can put on any kind of identity, moreover he/she can choose whether he/she wants to face with his/her duplicated

condition, or not (to see a blind spot in the mirror, or a sharp image). The splitting of the self caused by the drug induced state of mind gains identity history perspectives [identitástörténeti távlatot] by means of the linguistic forms it is expressed [nyelvi megformáltsága révén], so far as it is articulated as one of the best known late modern poems^{xxi}, which confronts us with the self's divisibility: Siegfried and Hagen recitate the hallucinatory pictures of „losing consciousness” caused by drugs in the form of the strophes of *Eszmélet*.^{xxi}

The role of transformation in the *A Nibelung-lakópark* – also because of the more intensive presence of drugs^{xxi} – is more significant quantitatively, but qualitatively it has an entirely different function, than in the Wagnerian musicdrama. As the example above shows it, not only Siegfried and Gunther, but also Hagen is involved in the metamorphoses. Moreover, first, multiple Hagen-Siegfried transformations take place in *Rajnapark*, that, unless we can identify it as the staging [színretvitel] of the operations of the fog hat – although Gunther (a little bit later) calls it a game, which takes place in the „mind's multiplex” and is unequivocally caused by the withdrawal of drugs^{xxi} – can lead to the misunderstanding of the plot.^{xxi} In the fourth scene of the first act according to the accompanying / ancillary / side text [mellékszöveg] „Hagen, dressed like Siegfried, turns to the mirror” (44) and the talking [instancia], called HAGEN, starts to caricature Hagen's linguistic behavior on Siegfried's behalf. It is clear, that the scene has a *mise en abyme* aspect, since it comes to light from the monologue, that Hagen tries to cover his own Nibelung identity by borrowing different, complete and available (fictive or real) roles and the linguistic panels, which create them (eg. „Hagen / Vagyok és problémákat oldok / Meg”^{xxi}). For the second time, he slides into Siegfried's place, when Siegfried tells Brünnhilde – who is dissatisfied with their relationship, since she loved the „old Siegfried” (51-52) more – that his ill temper stems from the moment, when he saw the devil in a taxi, wearing a Santa cap. To Brünnhilde's statement „Úgy éreztem, nem vagy jelen.” (53) Hagen comes in and he finishes the story of the devil transformed into the driver. According to Brünnhilde, „az égvilágon senki-semmi / Nem volt az istenverte taxiban. / Főleg nem ördög.” (55), this vision can be uncovered as a „parádés paranoia” caused by drugs, but as it emerges from Siegfried's answer, „Az égvilág nem szokta észrevenni / A dérral dörzsölt álcázózsénit, / Ha bohócsipkát vesz föl.” (55), the incident can be read as a confrontation with the splitting of the self: according to both the mythical and the Wagnerian hypotext it is (the old) Siegfried himself who is the capped masking genius.

In the third scene of the second act of *Rajnapark* an inverse identity-change passes off, since the talking instancia called SIEGFRIED tells Gunther one of his dreams as Hagen. In Hagen's dream Siegfried, who practically moved in with him, is constantly organizing parties at his home. The rebuilding of the identity takes place in front of Gunther's eyes („Hagen megragadja Siegfriedet, kiteszokolja a szobából, majd elfoglalja a helyét az egyik fotelben” (79)), who justly interprets this action as a combination of dream and reality: „Így játszik veled elméd multiplexe: / Agyad keresztez gnómot és koboldot, / Ép testre így rajzol tünetsoportot / Korcs képzelet, igénybe vett idegzet; / A vászon sok túlzása így remegtet, / A kulisszák közt, a káosz-tájakon / Jársz-kelsz, mint zsidóban a fájdalom.” (79) It is obvious, that Hagen, in his fantasies/junkie visions, wants to take over Siegfried's place (for instance in Brünhilde's bed), sometimes by conflating the two identities (the gnome, namely the ugly pygmy who lives underground, which unequivocally refers to the nibelung, and the goblin, namely the nice, playful being, who has the capability of becoming invisible, which refers to Siegfried), at other times by staging the simple interchange of the roles. To his brother's proposition, that he would stroll in this virtual, projected space, as „the pain in the jew”, he respond as follows: „Hasonlatod zsidója hadd lehessen! / Legyek maga a Bolyongó; legyek / A vírushordozó [...]” (79). Thanks to the gesture, that he does not identify himself with pain, but with the jew, he willingly puts himself in one of the most disputed streams – which was also represented by Wagnerxxi – of the German reception history of the myth. This stream takes over the stereotypes of the representations of jews for the pictorial visualization of the Nibelungs (Albreich and his relatives). On the other hand, the statement, according to which he wants to be the „Wandering” does not only refer to Ahasvérus, the wandering jew, but it can evoke – in the context of the Wagnerian oeuvre – the *Flying Dutchman*'s figure as well. In this case – knowing that Siegfried, in the Nibelung myth, is the hero of Niederland, i.e. of Netherlands – the possibility to interpret Hagen's sentence as an attempt to mix his own and the desired identity opens up.

The transformation, aimed at Brühilde's conquest and taken from the myth, only eventuates after showing the formation of the Hagen-Siegfried (double) identity, through a series of disunions and combinations. The proper assay of the scene can be interesting at least from two aspects. On the one hand it can throw a light on the further aspects of the nature of transformation, and on the other it has a stressed significance in showing how Térey used Wagner's musicdrama itself, and not only its textbook as a pretext. Thus, hopefully, the

following questions, rightly asked by the critic, will become answerable: „Was it inspiration or decoration that inducted the gesture of choice? Does the writer initiate the text called into the discourse as an organic part of his production, or does he merely lean on the authority of tradition, and from its iconography does he simply reconstitute the ornament of a Potemkin-village?”^{xxi} Persze ahhoz, hogy az értelmező – főleg, ha hivatásos – jó eséllyel fogjon neki a hipotextus(ok)ból átemelt elemek és motívumok vizsgálatának, mégiscsak indokolt volna ha nem is elindulni, de legalább alaposan felkészülni a Nibelung-mítosz alakulás- és befogadástörténetének legjelentékenyebb stációit tematizáló műveltségi vetélkedőre.^{xxi}

In the *Twilight of the Gods* before Siegfried’s arrival „*este lett, a tűz fénye növekszik, Brünnhilde nyugodtan nézi a tájat*”: „Alkonyat pírja kél az égen, / újra lángol az oltalmat nyújtó parázs.” (278), and at the same time the motif of *Fire-magic* peals, which, with the crescendo of the fire and the approach of the gas-jets, turns into the motif of Loge. In the *A Nibelung-lakópark* the next scene, instead of the rock surrounded by fire, is the woman’s room with granet red brocade curtains, immediately after she dismisses Waltraut, Wotan’s emissary, with the exclamation: Egyik itt, másik ott: / Na szedd a lábad, / Na takarodj”^{xxi} (Rajnapark 120). „*Odakint beesteledett és a Park lámpái is kigyúltak*”, Brünnhilde „*az ablak előtt áll*”: „Árnyék sétány, vaksötét folt / Két ívlámpa térközén! / Vörhenyesre vált az égbolt, Loge fon gyűrűt körém.” (121) It is obvious, that Térey follows not only the text of the musicdrama, but also its music, translated into the forms of leitmotifs, which can be verbalized. In the *Rajnapark* we find the laudation of the public lighting instead of the intone of the Loge-motif, since the name of one of the most significant companies in the energy sector is Loge.^{xxi} While in Wagner’s musicdrama Siegfried’s appearance is followed by the [Kürt] and the Fire-Magic motifs, while in Térey’s case „two roaming reflectors” and the „*közeledő motorhang*” (122) signifies his approach.

However, he swallows the fog hat and – loyally to the hipotext – he contorts his voice, yet, Brünnhilde recognizes the entering Siegfried, who is in Gunther’s leather-coat: „Ég szerelmére, Siegfried: mi ez a maskarádé?” (122) Actually it seems, that as an effect of the hallucinogen, some kind of virtual reality is come into being, which is not perceived by those, who are not stoned out by the drug. Brünnhilde knows all along, that it is the drugged Siegfried, who is at her place, so she agrees to evoke the myth as an erotic roleplay, and not under the influence of magic: „De most komolyan, te fasz. Állj már meg egy pillanatra. / Elmondanád végre, hogy mi van? Most akkor gyűrűset játszunk? / Nem nagyon tudok

kiigazodni rajtad.” (124-125) The roleplay takes a tragic turn only when it comes to blows, and Brünhilde have to face with Siegfried himself taking back the ring by force, which he gave her in the past, not as a sign of his love, it was always out of the question, but as a „stamp of their concubinage”.^{xxi} The first act does not end with the words of the hero glorifying virtue and oath, while he is starting to act, but with the articulation of the female perspective: she realizes that the ongoing sexual act is her betrayal/ that she is being cheated on during the sexual act^{xxi}, thus experiences it as „gyászbaszás” (125).

So in the *A Nibelung-lakópark* the metamorphoses ceases to be a metaphysical category, in the sense of the Wagnerian myth-conception. To transform into something else is only imaginable as a combined biochemical progress, or as a simple representational schema. The tragic love square is nothing more than a Hagen-directed, staged „szerepjáték a négyzeten” (136), which has performers who are aware of „mind a négyen statisztáltak valóban / A színlelős darabban” (137). Transformation of one person to another in a ritual sense could not be possible in the 21st century fictional universe of Nibelungs, Gibichungs and Wälsungs at all, in so far as that kind of transformation presupposes the existence of identity, as a stable pole. The dramatic figures have lost their mythical character (as Siegfried, whose definitorial nature is that he is fearless, however – in the absence of the drug – he often dreads), but it is this very emptiness, that allows the exchange of roles between one another. In this context, besides the examined examples above, Brünhilde’s impact on Guturne is also to be mentioned: Guturne literally takes over Brünhilde’s role in Siegfried’s side, she speaks on Brünhilde’s “transformed, toyer” voice (159); Siegfried reproaches her for she was acting like she was Brünn: „Mindent átvettél: ruhákat, / Frizurát, hangot... Áthangolt egészen, / És föl sem tűnt hallgatóitoknak, / Hogy szoprán és szoprán közt van különbség; / Ha vega volt, hát te is vega lettél; / Ha feng shui-val hülyített, kisnyuszt / Tettél a kapcsolat-sarokba – bár / Nem jártál senkivel –; új örület jött: / Szcientológia! hát hajnalig / Tartott a fényadás, a fényevés – / ... Hogy mit szólt ehhez Loge, nem tudom. / Hogy: ’Gyorsan kinövittek, ugye lányok?’” (163) The quotation is illustrative in the light of how and from what elements is identity constituted, in an age, when the myth is present only in its tex-like form (as a story or/and as a quote), but not with a compelling force.

Besides the mapping of the dialouge with Wagner, the critical reception has been focusing on the question, whether Térey has written a book drama, or a „real”, performable drama? Beside the impossibility of the staging of the text, there are arguments such as the

drama oversteps the scope of a possible theatrical production, and, on top of that, it is full of „authorial directions”, which clearly cannot be transformed into real theatrical space, such as „Friss festékszag lengi be a termet”. It seems bizarre to bring up this question, especially while being aware of the fact, that the intervenig critics, with a few exception, had seen the play^{xxi} made from Térey’s drama, thus they had had to face with the existence of a theatrical [formanyelv], that is able to cope with the staging of this type of side/ancillary texts.

Anyhow, nobody has called in question that Kornél Mundroczó’s production – primarily by virtue of the carefully selected location and the theatrical language – gives such a strong reading of the *A Nibelung-lakópark*, which, certainly, will be inevitable in the (not only theatrical) reception history of the drama. The series of radical interpretive decisions begins with the denotation of the scene/place of the play, since the ruined, moldy, bunker- and casemate-like rooms of the Budai Sziklakórház – which, in addition, preserved its original hospital equipment – liquidates one of the most salient traits of the tetralogy: the residential complex [Lakópark] as a hi-tech milieu. The peculiar environment, the fact, that „we are on the mountain, above the city, and at the same time in the bowels of the Earth [föld gyomra], under the streets”^{xxi}, results in the feeling, that on the one hand there is no doubt, that the apocalypse [világégés] has already happened, the „catastrophe-play”^{xxi} has come to its end, and, on the other hand it imbues us with the happy consciousness of our own escape. We are almost grateful to Tilo Werner, who, in military uniform and in a long, black leatherette coat, with determined, but not harsh orders (and in bad Hungarian), guides us through the cave system, which seems dangerous, but at the same time it provides protection. During the four-hour long play the scene changes a dozen times, we are constantly on the move and we stop, in order to take a close look at the scenes, at narrow, dark and/or uncomfortable places – such as corridor, surgery, kitchen (here we get day-care tea), rest room –, after Werner neatly arranges us at every places for everyone of us could see, in spite of the circumstances, but at the same time we have to be careful, not to hit the actors accidentally or not to step on them. The continuous moving only stops, when we arrive at a big ward furnished with hospital beds, where the majority of the catastrophe-play and also its dénouement take place: we stay here circa one hour lying in beds, and unfortunately, with us the performance also “sits down” [leül]. There is no doubt, that the direction displaces the spectator from the perspectives she got used to in the bourgeois theatre, and it quasi makes impossible for the audience to become bored – which irritated Wagner so much. The lived experience of the performance, which is

not free, in traditional sense, from different factors that disturb the reception, such as physical contact between viewers in the narrow places, helping to the man next to me, who can hardly stand up from the ground, or the constant thematic presence of the biological processes of the body (there is no break, but Werner opens the door to use the rest room, which also functions as a part of the stage, however he natters to the viewers staying at their seats, that how many people went to the rest room and how much it will extend the performance, and when the “walked-out-people” come back, he draws them out if they washed their hands), although for a short period, but makes the audience, consisting of strangers, a community. The recipient, who similiary to the greek choir – though in this case literally – “follows” the happenings, necessarily goes through a transformation (Verwandlung) as a consequence of moving/walking (wandeln).

However, this transformation – as for its phenomenology – is far cry from the dionysian intoxication described by Nietzsche. Although the performance fully matches to the requirement of „sensual visualization” – which is a principal in the Wagnerian dramaturgy –, but it does not enable the viewer’s dissolution – in the sense of preoccupation. This synchronized double effect of involvment [bevonás] and distancing [elávolítás] of the direction can corellate with the technological specialites of another medium, the film. Being aware of the [filmszerűség] of the Wagnerian concept of theatre – which was not only recognized by Adorno – perhaps it is not so surprising to paraphrase Kittler here: we have to reveal that the *A Nibelung-lakópark*, as directed by Mundroczó, is actually and really a movie.^{xxi} In this case it is not about the takeover of the technologies determining movie vision, that were the radical innovations of Bayreuth, such as the scene colouring by reflectors, the virtual [automibilitás?] used at the riding of Walküers, the construction which controls the burning of Walhallala, or the rainbow projected on the circle curtain^{xxi}, which technological takeover was shown convincingly by Kittler in several of his papers.^{xxi} The film did not effect the performance as a finished, total artwork, or rather as a mediatechnological unit. The thing is, rather, that as a viewer of Mundrozó’s play – not surprisingly at all – we can hardly get rid of the feeling, that we are eyewitnesses to the creation of a film. „Our relationship to the performance is similar to the case, when someone picks at a passerby next to us on the street, we take a glimpse at the participants, the fuss interests us, but we move on, as someone who has nothing to do with them. The actors, although they are physically close to us, they are touching us, cutting across the groups to get

to the right place of the „wandering performance”, they do not notice us, they ignore us. The actions take place in our presence, but irrespectively of us.”^{xxi} It is like if we were at a film shooting, where every viewer, with his own camera-eye,^{xxi} could see well separated scenes of a work in progress film.^{xxi}

When the cracker snaps, as a sign of the end of the scene, we leave the scene, we move on. A good example for this looking-round full of mixed emotions is the anthrax episode. At the end of it we follow Tilo Werner to the next spot, while we bypass Truchs/Bánki Gergely, who is weltering on the ground in convulsion. It is baffling to pass by him just like that. Mundruczó’s direction corrects the medial conception of the Wagnerian music drama to the extent that its resemblance to the medium of film [filmszerűség] does not take a part in evolving a swindlery mechanism, which grabs the senses as a total, stunning unity. The play, just as the dramatic text which functions as its basis, does not conceal the fact that it is constituted/ conceal its preformation, contrarily, it wants to show it, the work which was necessary for its engender, and the way the elements were assembled. In the case of Térey’s and Mundruczó’s Wagner-interpretation Adorno’s statement of the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk conception, according to which the existence of the product seeks to conceal the production, is untenable.