

THE *DRAPIER'S LETTERS* IN 1950S HUNGARIAN LITERARY CRITICISM

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Abstract

In the 1720s, the debate about Wood's halfpence – a royal patent authorizing William Wood to mint copper coinage for Ireland – between the British government and the Irish was just the tip of the iceberg, signaling broader tensions. From the declarations signed by merchants, tailors, and weavers in Dublin in 1724 to the newspaper notices for editions of Dean Swift's Miscellanies in 1735 and 1736, early newspaper responses to Swift's pamphlets are essential to understanding their reception history. Equally important might be the political reaction to them two centuries later in Hungary. By examining summaries and critical approaches to Swift's Drapier's Letters, I aim to demonstrate how his pamphlets were received in Hungary during the 1950s, as reflected in contemporary newspapers and book reviews.

KEYWORDS

Jonathan Swift, *Drapier's Letters*, Hungarian reception, Hungarian translations

The controversy over the patent to mint copper money between the British government and the Irish population united the Irish nation and signaled widespread tension. The reaction to William Wood's debased half-pence was so profound that the pamphlets, broadsides, letters, and poems during the coinage controversy constituted "the largest body of ephemeral literature ever published until that time over a single issue".¹ The Drapier's print campaign not only mobilized a nation but also had another important effect: for perhaps

¹ Sabine Baltes: *The Pamphlet Controversy about Wood's Halfpence, (1722–1725) and the Tradition of Irish Constitutional Nationalism*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2003, xv.

the first time, print was seen as a “medium of national unity”.² Moreover, the published letters were highly self-reflexive. As Valerie Rumbold remarks, “There is, in short, an enormous amount of talk about print in the Drapier’s letters...”³

Beginning with the declarations signed by merchants, tailors, and weavers in Dublin in 1724, and continuing with proposals, and newspaper notices for the first collected edition of the letters in *Fraud Detected: or, The Hibernian Patriot* by George Faulkner in 1725, the early newspaper response to Swift’s pamphlets is crucial for understanding their reception history. Swift himself recognized the importance of advertising his pamphlets. In the Drapier’s second letter, addressed to John Harding the printer, he requests the widest possible publicity: “Pray Advertise both in every News-Paper, and let it not be YOUR Fault or MINE, if our Country-Men will not take Warning. I desire you likewise to Sell them as Cheap as you can.”⁴ Examining reported news, brief notices, and contemporary advertisements for the printing of Swift’s *Drapier’s Letters* may provide insights into how the Drapier’s campaign reached its readers. By presenting a few examples, we can receive information on how Swift’s letters were perceived in contemporary British and Irish newspapers, and how, after the conclusion of the Drapier affair, Swift showed a growing preference for being published in London. Equally important is the political reaction to Swift’s writings more than two centuries later, during the Communist rule. Through an analysis of summaries and critical approaches, I aim to demonstrate, first, how Swift’s pamphlets were received, and discussed in England, and second, how they appeared in Hungary in the 1950s, as reflected in contemporary newspapers.

John Harding is credited as the printer of the first four *Drapier’s Letters*, published between March and December 1724 in Dublin; he was arrested after printing the fourth. When examining the publicity surrounding the letters, it is important to heed Swift’s own observation in his fourth letter: “no London Printer dare publish any Paper written in Favour of Ireland, and here no body hath yet been so bold as to Publish any thing in Favour of him [Wood]”.⁵ Swift implies that the press was divided during the controversy: Irish newspapers refused to defend Wood’s halfpence, while the newspapers in London, and the countryside avoided taking the Drapier’s side.

After John Harding’s death, George Faulkner took over the publication of Swift’s works. He established his shop in Dublin in 1724, launched the *Dublin Journal* where his proposals for publishing Swift’s works appeared, and published

² Valerie Rumbold: *Swift in Print. Published Texts in Dublin and London, 1691–1765*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020, 147, 157, 172.

³ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴ Herbert Davis (ed.), *The Drapier’s Letters and Other Works 1724–1725*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1965, 24; also quoted in Rumbold: *Swift in Print*, 167.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 64; also quoted in Rumbold, *Swift in Print*, 167.

the collected Drapier's letters in 1725, titled *Fraud Detected: Or, The Hibernian Patriot* (Dublin, 1725).⁶ The same collection was published as *The Hibernian Patriot* by William Bowyer in London five years later,⁷ marking a transition not only in the publication but also in the reading audience.⁸ The following decade marked the beginning of the publication of Swift's collected works. Faulkner played a significant role in cementing Swift's Irish reputation by publishing his collected works in Dublin. His *Dublin Journal*, which launched around the same time as the Drapier's first letters, also contributed to promoting Swift.⁹

NEWS FROM DUBLIN

In August 1724, the report of the English Privy Council found Wood innocent of fraud. To abate the conflict, Wood proposed that his coinage be limited to 40,000 pounds.¹⁰ Excerpts from this report were published in the *Dublin Intelligence*, and the Irish people now recognized that the danger posed by Wood's copper money suddenly felt more immediate than ever.¹¹ In response, the Irish Government refused to accept Wood's copper coinage, and use it for payments to the army.¹²

In September 1724, during the peak of the campaign in Ireland against Wood's money, and before the publication of the fourth Drapier letter, the *Newcastle Courant*, the most important newspaper in the Northern region at the time alongside the *Newcastle Gazette*, showed a particular interest in Wood's halfpence throughout September and December. At the beginning of September, it reported news from the *Dublin Gazette* about two Declarations. The first was "sign'd by 360 Merchants, and Tradesmen", and the second by "about 109 Weavers of the City of Dublin", both opposing the "receiving any of the said Wood's Half-Pence or Farthings", as they were not legally obligated

⁶ See, H. Teerink: *A Bibliography of the Writings of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Arthur H. Scouten, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963, 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸ See, James McLaverty: George Faulkner and Swift's collected works, in Paddy Bullard – James McLaverty (eds.): *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, 157.

⁹ Robert Mahony: *Jonathan Swift. The Irish Identity*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995, 1–7.

¹⁰ This was reported in several London newspapers during August, in the *Daily Courant* (8 August), *Daily Journal* (19 August), *Parker's London News* (21 August), or the *Universal Journal* (22 August).

¹¹ Davis: *Drapier's Letters*, xix.

¹² *Ibid.*, xxix.

to do so.¹³ A week later, another report stated, “In the *Dublin Gazette* dated the 25th, is inserted a Declaration of the Freeholders, and Inhabitants of the Burrough of Swords in the County of Dublin, against the receiving or uttering Mr. Wood’s Copper Half-Pence, and Farthings, as being destructive to common rights, and an unprecedented Invasion on his Majesty’s loyal Subjects.”¹⁴ The 19 September issue continued to report on events in Dublin, also commenting on the frequent news about Wood’s halfpence in Dublin, and citing a letter from London: “There’s scarce a Mail arrives from Ireland, but some accounts are given us, shewing the Aversion of those People to the receiving of Mr. Wood’s Half-pence, and Farthings.” An example is given of a person who tried to pay with Wood’s money on the market, but the butcher refused to accept it. The letter concludes, “How these Proceedings will terminate, we don’t pretend to say; but some think they seem to clash with an Order issued from above, in Relation to the said Mr. Wood’s Coinage.” On page 9 of the same issue, the decision regarding the declaration against Wood’s halfpence is reported: “on Thursday Night before the Date, the High Sheriff and Justices of the Peace of the County of Dublin, met at Kilmanham on an Adjournment of the Session, and agreed upon a Declaration against Mr. Wood’s Half-pence and Farthings, which they order’d to be engross’d, in order to be sign’d and speedily printed...”¹⁵ England’s response to this opposition was to send the Lord Lieutenant to Ireland, which further heightened fear, and resistance among Irish tradesmen. With its weekly reports, the *Newcastle Courant* turned the sequel of events in Dublin into a sensation for its readers, who eagerly awaited the continuation of the story. On 26 September, Lord Carteret’s forthcoming journey to Ireland was reported, twice, on two separate pages: “Some People are not a little impatient to know how the Affair relating to Mr. Wood’s Coinage of Half-Pence and Farthings will terminate. Mean Time, ‘tis remarked, he has good Friends here, and been at some Expences. We hear the Lord Carteret will be going in a few Weeks for Ireland...”¹⁶ A few pages later, a regular letter from London (by “Mr. W-----”) is cited:

¹³ See, *Newcastle Courant*, 5 Sept., 1724, 7, “News.” *Newcastle Courant* [1724], 5 Sept. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000987398/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 22 August 2024).

¹⁴ See, *Newcastle Courant*, 12 Sept., 1724, 3, “News.” *Newcastle Courant* [1724], 12 Sept. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000987402/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 22 August 2024).

¹⁵ See, *Newcastle Courant*, 19 Sept., 1724, 9, “News.” *Newcastle Courant* [1724], 19 Sept. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000987407/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 22 August 2024).

¹⁶ See, *Newcastle Courant*, 26 Sept 1724, 3, “News.” *Newcastle Courant* [1724], 26 Sept. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000987411/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 13 October 2024).

It is the general Opinion that his Lordship [Lord Carteret] will go in a very few Weeks for Ireland, as Lord Lieutenant of the Kingdom, where Things are come to a great Height... which is very surprizing to many People here; because they cannot think this Affair to be of such Importance, as should occasion such a general Discontent and Uneasiness in that Kingdom, and so many gross Reflections, as not to be mentioned: 'Tis inserted in the Flying Post, of this Day, that most of the Papists in the City of Dublin have entered into an Association to refuse Mr. Wood's Copper Money.¹⁷

This must be the accusation which elicited Swift's response on the Catholics in the Drapier's fourth letter. Remarks on readers' views about the situation in Dublin clearly illustrate how significantly the average English reader underestimated the gravity of the events – and how distant these events seemed.

The fourth letter of the Drapier, *A Letter to the Whole People of Ireland*, was published on 21 October, just one day before Lord Carteret arrived in Dublin.¹⁸ Swift wrote it to bolster the opposition. Six days later, a proclamation by the Lord Lieutenant, and the Council of Ireland was issued against the Drapier's letter.¹⁹ On 6 November, the *Daily Courant* in London published the proclamation on its front page, calling the Drapier's letter scandalous, and seditious, and accusing it of alienating England from Ireland. A bounty of 300 pounds was offered to anyone who would "discover the Author of the said Pamphlet so as he be apprehended and convicted thereof".²⁰

Five weeks later, however, events took a different turn. On 28 November, the new Grand Jury officially ruled against Wood's copper coins, offering "a grateful acknowledgment of the services of all those patriots who have been zealous against Wood".²¹ Two weeks later, the *Newcastle Courant* reported: "They write from Dublin, That on the 28th past, the Grand Jury of that City presented all such as shall, or do endeavour by Fraud to promote the Currency of Mr. Wood's Half-Pence, as Enemies to his Majesty's Government and Peace of their Country..."²² On its last page, the newspaper cites the following description from its London correspondent, dated 15 December: "Things are come to a considerable Height in Ireland, in Relation to Wood's Half-Pence;

¹⁷ See, *Newcastle Courant*, 26 Sept 1724, 6, "News." *Newcastle Courant* [1724], 26 Sept. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000987411/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 13 October 2024).

¹⁸ Davis: *Drapier's Letters*, xxxiv.

¹⁹ Also see, Baltes: *Pamphlet Controversy*, xxxvii.

²⁰ See, *The Daily Courant*, 6 November, 1724, 1, "News." *Daily Courant*, 6 Nov. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000207279/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 13 October 2024).

²¹ Davis: *Drapier's Letters*, xxiii.

²² See, *Newcastle Courant*, 12 Dec 1724, 9, "News." *Newcastle Courant* [1724], 12 Dec. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000987470/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 13 October 2024).

but we hope are not so great, as some Accounts insinuate, to give Occasion for recruiting the Forces there.”²³ Given this concluding remark, readers may have feared that a revolution was about to break out in Dublin. As a result of the Drapier’s fourth letter, Lord Carteret proposed prosecuting the printer, and Swift, as Davis expresses, “crossed the narrow line that distinguished opposition from sedition”.²⁴

The Drapier’s sixth letter is dated 26 October 1724. Swift composed it, admitting authorship, in response to the proclamation against the Drapier but withheld it from publication after Harding’s arrest on 7 November.²⁵ Three days before its printing, the *Daily Post* (London) reported on the conclusion of the affair of Wood’s halfpence: “We hear that the Affair of Mr. Wood’s Patent for coining Copper Half Pence and Farthings for Ireland, is as good as accomodated, to the Satisfaction of all Parties; a Stop being already put to the Coinage, and Mr. Wood order’d to give in an Account of his Expences &c.”²⁶ With the relaxation of the political conflict, the years to come for Swift would involve balancing publication between his editors in Dublin, and London. The published letters of the Drapier established Swift as the Hibernian Patriot. However, as Rounce notes: “the *Drapier’s Letters* had a lack of immediate relevance to London, and this, rather than quality of printing, was of importance”.²⁷

Lord Carteret announced “the full surrender of Wood’s Patent” on 21 September 1725 in Parliament in Dublin.²⁸ The Archbishop of Dublin suggested that “his Majesty’s great wisdom” should be acknowledged in an Address of thanks. The debate over the use of the word wisdom became the focus of the piece *On Wisdom’s Defeat in a Learned Debate*.²⁹ As a result of its publication, the *Daily Courant* (along with other newspapers) reported on 12 October that the printer, John Harding’s widow, was being prosecuted, and the incriminated piece burnt: “Upon Complaint made this Day in the House of Peers of a scurrilous Pamphlet, printed, and published by Sarah Harding, intituled, Wisdom’s Defeat; it was read. Ordered, That the said Sarah Harding

²³ See, *Newcastle Courant*, 19 Dec 1724, 12, “News.” *Newcastle Courant* [1724], 12 Dec. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000987470/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 13 October 2024).

²⁴ Davies: *Drapier’s Letters*, xxxvi.

²⁵ Rumbold: *Swift in Print*, 175.

²⁶ See, *Daily Post*, 28 Dec 1724, 1, “News.” *Daily Post*, 28 Dec. 1724, 17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000267545/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 22 August 2024).

²⁷ Adam Rounce: Swift’s texts between Dublin and London, in Paddy Bullard – James McLaverty (eds.): *Jonathan Swift and the Eighteenth-Century Book*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 201.

²⁸ Davies: *Drapier’s Letters*, xxviii.

²⁹ See, Davis: *Drapier’s Letters*, xxix-xxx; James Woolley: Sarah Harding as Swift’s Printer, in Christopher Fox – Brenda Tooley (eds.): *Walking Naboth’s Vineyard: New Studies of Swift*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1995, 164.

be taken into Custody by the Gentleman-Usher of the Black Rod. Resolved, That the said Pamphlet is base, scandalous, and malicious, highly reflecting upon the Honour of this House, and the Peerage of this Kingdom. Ordered, That the same be burnt To-morrow Morning by the Hands of the Common Hangman, before the Parliament-House, and the Tholsel of the City of Dublin.”³⁰ Sarah Harding, who continued her husband's printing business, had two more commissions for printing from Swift, *A short view of the present state of Ireland*, and *A Modest Proposal*, before Swift turned to George Faulkner.

NEWS FROM HUNGARY

In Hungary, the reception of Swift's works arrived late. Hungarian translations of his prose only began to appear in the early twentieth century. In 1921, a collection of his pamphlets on Irish affairs was published as *Jonathan Swift: Pamfletek* [Pamphlets], in the *Tevan-könyvtár* [Tevan's Library] series. Edited by Andor Tevan, the series aimed to rival *Nyugat*, the most prestigious literary forum of the time, by publishing both Hungarian and foreign masterpieces. Béla László (1909–1980), a Transylvanian poet and journalist, selected for this edition “A Modest Proposal”, “An Answer to the Craftsman”, “Causes of the Wretched Condition of Ireland”, and a pamphlet concerning the Irish National Bank; together, these texts were evidently picked to demonstrate both Swift's political activity and his polemical voice. Thinking that it was a sermon, the translator's reasoning of his choice of “Causes” is given in a footnote:

[Swift] admitted that he used the pulpit as a political weapon: “I could only preach political pamphlets.” The sermon which I have chosen for translation might be less significant from a literary point of view but, as a psychological document, it is more interesting than the rest. Although it does not reveal more about Swift's political activity than we already know from his polemical writings, it sheds a more vivid light on the relationship between Swift and the Irish people. Moreover, it illustrates Swift's insolent and coarse style, and, above all, his practical and dry sobriety.³¹

³⁰ See, *Daily Courant*, 12 October 1725, 1, “News.” *Daily Courant*, 12 Oct. 1725, *17th and 18th Century Burney Newspapers Collection*, link.gale.com/apps/doc/Z2000208695/BBCN?u=wellcome&sid=bookmark-BBCN, (accessed 18 September 2024).

³¹ Béla László (trans.): *Jonathan Swift. Pamfletek*, Békéscsaba, Tevan, 1921, 39. Also see, Gabriella Hartvig: The Dean in Hungary, in *The Critical and Creative Reception of Eighteenth-Century British and Anglo-Irish Authors in Hungary: Essays in Intercultural Literary Exchange*, Pécs, University of Pécs, Institute of English Studies, 2013, 25. Translations from the Hungarian are mine.

Swift appears as the true-born Englishman, a “relentless and berserk person, a dialectician” who nevertheless understands the Irish cause, even while he personally rejected an Irish identity, writes László.³²

During the era spanning the two world wars, translations and adaptations of *Gulliver’s Travels* were shaped strongly by contemporary political circumstances. After producing the first complete Hungarian translation of Swift’s novel in 1914, Frigyes Karinthy went on to write two imaginative continuations of the story – *Voyage to Faramido* (1916, English translation 1965) and *Capillaria* (1921, English translation 1965). Sándor Szathmári likewise created his own reinterpretation of the Gulliver narrative, publishing another sequel, *Gulliver utazása Kazohiniában* (1941, English translation 1975).

LITERARY CRITICISM AND SWIFT SCHOLARSHIP IN THE 1950S

As Zsófia Gombár argues, Hungary’s weak democratic traditions prior to the Communist rule and the frequent suppression of free speech contributed to society’s largely passive acceptance of Soviet military control following World War II. Stalinist leader Mátyás Rákosi aimed to replicate the Soviet totalitarian model and restructure Hungarian society according to Stalinist principles.³³ The mid-twentieth century phase of Swift’s Hungarian reception can be traced back to 1952, when Miklós Szentkuthy published what has become the authoritative Hungarian translation of *Gulliver’s Travels*. Two years later, Tibor Lutter released a monograph on Swift, appearing at the same time as the second, revised edition of Szentkuthy’s *Gulliver*, marking a significant moment in this period’s critical engagement with Swift. Once complete translations of *Gulliver’s Travels* and its various adaptations were available, Swift studies began to take firm shape in the decades that followed the major restructuring of Hungary’s literary sphere.³⁴ During this period, research on Swift flourished: few other English authors saw three separate books devoted to them or had their major works translated into four distinct Hungarian versions, as happened with *Gulliver*. This was an era that prioritized critical realism, so Swift’s other works besides his imaginary voyage got translated and commented on as well such as *A Tale of a Tub* [*Hordómese*, 1958] by László Kéry. Hungarian literary criticism was indebted to Soviet Swift scholarship.

³² See, László: *Jonathan Swift*, 3–9.

³³ See, Zsófia Gombár: *Communist Censorship in Hungary and Beyond 1*, in Denis Merkle and Brian James Baer (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Censorship*, London, Routledge, 2024, 207–221.

³⁴ Also see, Gabriella Hartvig: *Hungarian Swift Scholarship in the Period of Censorship*, in Kirsten Juhas – Hermann J. Real – Sandra Simon (eds.): *Reading Swift: Papers from The Sixth Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, Munich, Wilhelm Fink, 2013, 633–645.

In the 1950s, the dominant interpretive framework for Swift in the Soviet Union was shaped by Anatoly Lunacharskii, People's Commissioner for Education, together with the Soviet Swift scholar Mikhail Davidovich Zabludovskii – a position that Hungarian literary policy later adopted, as well. As Michael Düring notes, Lunacharskii did more than simply urge Swift's inclusion in the canon of world literature; he also initiated the now-influential portrayal of "Swift as an atheist".³⁵ This ideological framing was further reinforced when Maxim Gorky, at the First Writers' Congress in 1934, celebrated Swift as the leading anti-bourgeois and atheistic figure. Following this development, and particularly after Socialist Realism was declared the official artistic doctrine in 1934, Düring argues, "Soviet critics aligned with the orthodox position – among them Zabludovskii – and began to reinterpret Swift through a socialist-realist lens, as seen in Zabludovskii's 1936 study, *Satira i realizm Svifta* [*Satire and Swift's Realism*]".³⁶ Similar thoughts can be found in Tibor Lutter's book on *Swift* (1954). For many decades, it was Zabludovskii's reading of Swift that shaped critical and scholarly assessments of Swift's work, a model that extended beyond the Soviet Union and influenced Hungarian criticism, as well. Although Zabludovskii adopted Swift in the socialist realist tradition, he simultaneously emphasized a central limitation: Swift, in his view, could expose and mock social injustice through satire, but he was ultimately unable to offer any concrete remedy for the conditions he condemned.³⁷ In 1954, the Hungarian journal *Irodalomtudományi Értesítő* printed an extensive essay on Cervantes, Swift, and Fielding, written by Miklós Szenczi in the thematic issue on "Chapters from the History of Realist Prose". As is noted in the introduction, Szenczi partially translated Zabludovskii's chapter on Swift from the three-volume *History of English Literature* issued by the Scientific Academy of the Soviet Union in 1945.³⁸ In that account, Zabludovskii presents Swift the satirist who relentlessly attacks the moral failings of his era, arguing that Swift's use of fantasy and allegory highlights the broader, structural nature of the targets of his ridicule, while stripping away incidental, short-lived, or superficial details. His continuing popularity as a satirical writer was thus attributed to the power of his irony and his socially critical perspective, elements that resonated strongly with the socialist realistic climate of the 1950s. Lutter's book on Swift also received numerous reviews. His former colleague, László Kéry, praises Lutter who presents Swift as a satirist with socialist leanings. He describes Lutter's study as an adequate

³⁵ Michael Düring: From Russian "Swiftovedenie" to the Soviet School of Swift Criticism: The Dean's Fate in Russia, in Hermann J. Real (ed.): *The Reception of Jonathan Swift on the Continent of Europe*, London, New York, Continuum, 2005, 186.

³⁶ Düring: From Russian "Swiftovedenie", 186.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 186–187.

³⁸ See, Miklós Szenczi: M.D. Zabludovszkij: Swift, *Irodalomtudományi Értesítő* 4 (1954), 731–740.

Marxist interpretation, one that focuses on the underlying social conflicts of the period. In Lutter's interpretation, *A Tale of a Tub* becomes "one of the most destructive anti-church satires of the era and of all time".³⁹

In 1951, the most important literary and political journal of Hungarian émigrés, *Látóhatár* – published in Paris that year – published an excerpt, translated by Zoltán Szabó, of *Gulliver's Travels* entitled "Gulliver's Advice to Moscow". The translator also cites his source, translating part of the sixth chapter of Gulliver's third journey, "A Voyage to Laputa", from Benjamin Motte's first edition in London. The translation is faithful to the original, but is preceded by a short "recommendation" by the translator: "What perfected methods Swift recommends to the communist political police in his book, published in 1726, which contains Captain Lemuel Gulliver's account of his travels in 'some remote countries'."⁴⁰ In the excerpt, Gulliver encounters a professor at Lagado Academy who claims he can uncover political conspiracies by analyzing the suspects' diets and bodily excretions, believing that physical waste can reveal their thoughts and intentions. The excerpt invites comparison with surveillance mechanisms associated with Rákosi's regime.

This publication was succeeded by another volume of Swift's works entitled *Szatírák és röpiratok* [*Satires and Pamphlets*, 1961], translated and provided with notes by László Kéry (1920-1992). He produced an annotated Hungarian translation of Swift's second and most renowned work, *A Tale of a Tub* [*Hordómese*, 1958]. In preparing his translations of the pamphlets, Kéry relied on the most authoritative scholarly source available, Herbert Davis's Oxford edition of *The Drapier's Letters and Other Works 1724-1725*.

SATIRES AND PAMPHLETS

In 1956, Európa Kiadó introduced the *Világirodalmi Kiskönyvtár* (*World Literature Mini Library*) series, followed a year later by the *Modern Könyvtár* (*Modern Library*) collection. Each volume included an afterword that offered readers context about the work as well as insights about the author's life and career. In 1959, the educational journal *Köznevelés* released an article about the series. It examined the collection closely and clarified its mission. The primary objective of the editorial board was, Attila Szilassy writes, "the cultural

³⁹ László Kéry: Lutter Tibor: Jonathan Swift, *Irodalomtörténet* 42 (1954), 528: "Lutter Tibor helyesen mutat rá a swifti bírálat teljes egyházellenességére."

⁴⁰ Zoltán Szabó: Gulliver tanácsai Moszkvának, *Látóhatár* 2 (1951), 44: "Milyen tökéletesített módszereket javasol Swift a kommunista politikai rendőrségnek az 1726-ban megjelent könyvében, amely Lemuel Gulliver kapitány 'némely félreeső országokban tett utazásainak' leírását tartalmazza."

education of the broad working masses".⁴¹ The launch of the series was part of the paradigm shift in Hungarian literary policy, and it helped impose order on the entire realm of book publishing: "Once harmful popular fiction had been eliminated, a range of affordable, high-quality volumes began to appear... Today, we can confidently say that these books, sold for 5 to 10 forints, represent some of the final accomplishments of our socialist culture."⁴² How did Swift's pamphlets end up in the series?

Issued as part of the earlier mentioned *Világirodalmi kiskönyvtár* series, *Szatírák és röpiratok* [*Satires and Pamphlets*, 1961] includes the *Battle of the Books*, "Bickerstaff's Predictions for the Year 1708," and four of the *Drapier's Letters*. As previously noted, a few years earlier, Kéry had already translated Swift's experimental piece, *A Tale of a Tub* [*Hordómese*, 1958], a job he liked very much. In the autumn of 1944, he recalled, he was invited to prepare a short sample of the book. By the end of the decade, he had completed the full translation. It was originally to be published by Franklin, then Hungária Publishing House, but the publisher later altered its plans, and the work never appeared in print. Throughout the 1950s, he frequently revised the text. As he says in the interview: "It was Swift who I translated with the greatest enthusiasm... I was inspired by the fact that this satire was completely unknown in Hungary and I felt it was important to bring it to Hungarian readers. (Later, I felt it was important to compile a collection of Swift's other satires and pamphlets). After these vicissitudes, *A Tale of a Tub* was published by Európa in 1958."⁴³

In the Translator's Afterword to the collected pieces, Kéry provides an overview of Swift's life and literary career. His principle of selection is, he writes, to explore those dimensions of Swift's oeuvre that connect with and surround *Gulliver's Travels*, familiar to Hungarian readers, and *A Tale of a Tub*, now also published in Hungarian translation. What distinguished Swift in English literature for Soviet literary critics is also evident here: while Defoe was seen as a supporter of the bourgeois order in his writings, Swift "always opposed

⁴¹ Attila Szilassy: A Világirodalmi Kiskönyvtár sorozatról, *Köznevelés* 15 (1959), 520: "A Világirodalmi Kiskönyvtár szerkesztősége első és legfontosabb céljaul a dolgozók széles tömegeinek kulturális nevelését tűzte ki."

⁴² Ibid.: "A mérgező hatású ponyvák likvidálása után, sorra jelentek meg az olcsón megvásárolható, nívós tartalmú könyvsorozatok... *Ma már nyugodtan állíthatjuk, hogy ezek az 5 - 10 forintos könyvek szocialista kultúránk legnagyobb fegyvertényei közé tartoznak.*"

⁴³ Júlia Szekrényesy: Írók műhelyében: Kéry Lászlónál, *Élet és irodalom* 18 (1974), 7: "A legnagyobb becsvággyal Swiftet fordítottam... Lelkesített a munkában az is, hogy ez a satíra nálunk teljesen ismeretlen volt, s fontosnak éreztem, hogy eljuttassam a magyar olvasókhöz. (Amint később fontosnak éreztem, hogy gyűjteményt állítsak össze Swift további satíráiból és röpirataiból.) A *Hordómese* illetén viszontagságok után 1958-ban jelent meg az Európánál."

the most sacred aspirations of the class-based order”.⁴⁴ The *Drapier's Letters* are closely connected to Swift's life in Ireland. As Kéry explains, his position became controversial with the fall of the Tories, and he then took up the Irish cause: “his sentiments increasingly merged with those of the Irish patriots demanding equal rights from England, and with the Irish people, who were groaning under the burden of national and class oppression and unimaginable misery”.⁴⁵ Kéry also gives an account of the historical background of the *Drapier's Letters* of which he selected the first four for his volume.

TRANSLATING THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS

Kéry's source text was the best contemporary scholarly edition available at the time: Herbert Davis's Oxford edition from 1935. The word “drapier” in the title sounds somewhat dated in Hungarian (*rőfös*). With some exceptions, Kéry provided a largely faithful translation of four letters, presenting the third and fourth only in excerpt form and leaving out the second entirely.

The translation of the original cover pages – where Swift provides a more detailed and informative title along with a brief description of each letter's contents – are mostly omitted. The rendering is faithful and includes some, not as many as in the original, scholarly annotation, in the form of endnotes. There are, however, minor errors that cannot be attributed to the translator's lack of linguistic competence. Mr. Wood was given the patent to “coin FOURSCORE AND TEN THOUSAND pounds in copper for this Kingdom” (4). In a footnote, Davis explains that it equals “108000 l.”, yet in Kéry's translation it becomes 90,000 pounds, for reasons that remain unclear.⁴⁶

Kéry decided to leave out entirely the second letter, *A Letter to Mr. Harding the Printer*, and translate only parts of the third letter, *Some Observations Upon a Paper, Call'd The Report of the Committee...* The second letter responds to a part of Harding's report of the news and accuses Wood of forcing the Irish people to accept his minted coins.

The excerpt from the third pamphlet is taken from the middle of the letter and consists of approximately one page, comprising a single long paragraph, whose ending, however, is omitted. Kéry translates imaginary cases illustrating

⁴⁴ László Kéry: *Swift: szatírák és röpiratok*, Budapest, Európa, 1961, 174: “az osztályuralmi berendezkedésén buzgólkodó polgárság legszentebb törekvéseivel... lényegileg mindig szemben állt”.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 178: “érületben egyre inkább összeolvad az ír hazafiakkal, akik egyenlő jogokat követelnek Angliától, s az ír néppel, amely a nemzeti és osztályelnomás, a minden képzeletet meghaladó nyomor terhe alatt roskadozik”.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 112: “bizonyos Wood, nagypecsétes engedélyt kapott öfelségétől, hogy kilencvenezer font értékű rézpenzt veressen ennek az országnak a céljaira”.

what might happen if a “fierce captain” decided to pay for clothes with Wood’s coins, or if a “common soldier” first drank his beer and then paid the landlady in Wood’s copper money: in both cases, the shopkeeper and the landlady would be placed in difficulty.⁴⁷

The next translated pamphlet, *A Letter to the Whole People of Ireland*, is likewise presented only as an excerpt from the original text. Kéry again reduces the thirty pages to thirteen, omitting essential sections. This is the final, originally published letter which was printed by John Harding and for which he was cast into prison, before, the entire Wood’s halfpence affair ended in a victory for Ireland and, indeed, a victory for Swift, who emerged as the Irish patriot. The translation begins with the second paragraph of the original source text. The omitted opening section offers a conclusion to the first three letters and ends with a biblical reference (Gen. 25.29–34): “And when Esau came fainting from the Field at the Point to Die, it is no wonder that he Sold his Birth-Right for a Mess of Pottage.”⁴⁸ This reference parallels the exhaustion of the Irish nation during Wood’s halfpence affair, as the preceding sentence makes clear: “A people long used to Hardships, lose by Degrees the very Notions of Liberty, they look upon themselves as creatures of Mercy, and that all Impositions laid on them by a stronger Hand...”⁴⁹ There may be several reasons why Kéry decided to omit this passage: given that he had already omitted the second pamphlet, he may have wished to avoid confusing his readers. Alternatively, he may have thought to prevent his book from being banned or suppressed because of the overt political implications and biblical references in the omitted section, and to avoid censure for its explicit political parallels.

The translated section ends with a reference to newspapers in London and in Dublin: “no London Printer dare publish any Paper written in Favour of Ireland, and here no body hath yet been so bold as to Publish any thing in Favour of him [Wood]”.⁵⁰ This passage refers to the divided nature of the press and illustrates how news can be distorted or misrepresented when it is distant – both geographically and in terms of readerly interest – from the site of the original event. Kéry stops where a new topic begins in the source text: “There was a few Days ago a Pamphlet sent me of near 50 Pages Written in Favour of Mr. Wood and his Coynage, Printed in London, it is not worth answering, because probably it will never be published here...”⁵¹

The fifth pamphlet, *A Letter To the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Molesworth*, was translated by Kéry in its entirety. The letter sums up the history of the entire controversy and provides comprehensive information about the

⁴⁷ Kéry: *Swift*, 123–124.

⁴⁸ Davis: *Drapier's Letters* (1935), 67.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 64; also quoted in Rumbold: *Swift in Print*, 167.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

drapier. It emphasizes that the Irish nation's resistance to Wood's coinage was lawful and did not imply disloyalty to the king. Although the fourth letter is more significant and might therefore have merited full translation, the fifth letter nonetheless serves as an apt conclusion to the Drapier affair, and Kéry may have just been justified in choosing to publish it in full. The next and last pamphlet in the collection *Satires and pamphlets* is *A Modest Proposal*.

Although it was a small-size little book, Kéry's scholarly edition, with its afterword and critical apparatus, together with his edition of *A Tale of a Tub*, broadened the scope of Hungarian Swift scholarship. As a result, Swift was no longer known merely as the author of *Gulliver's Travels* but was more fully recognized as the author of other major satirical works as well. *A Modest Proposal* became set reading in secondary schools during the 1970s and 1980s.

As Zoltán Kenyeres sums up in his review of Kéry's collection: "László Kéry has compiled the best of Swift's satires and political pamphlets in this small volume thereby bringing the author of Gulliver closer to Hungarian readers. With the addition of *A Tale of a Tub* and Tibor Lutter's critical monograph, the picture is now almost complete."⁵²

Beyond translations, book reviews, and newspaper articles, a range of additional documents offer valuable insight into the official, centralized understanding of world literature under Communism.⁵³ When Európa Publishing House was established, it solicited expert opinions in the form of reader's reports assessing whether certain masterpieces of literature should be translated and published. Those reports were stored in the Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest,⁵⁴ where we can also find assessments of Swift's works, and, in some cases, objections to certain pieces of his prose. The Museum stored some five reports on Swift's works. Three are on Miklós Szentkuthy's translation of *Gulliver's Travels* and the Preface to the 1952 and 1954 editions, and two on other works by Swift.⁵⁵ In the report on "The Anti-Religious and Anti-Clerical Writings of Jonathan Swift" in 1951, the blind reviewer declares that *A Tale of a Tub* is Swift's satire on the clergy's cruel practices. In this piece, Swift anticipates Marx by expressing in unmistakable terms that religion serves as the opiate of the people.⁵⁶ The

⁵² Zoltán Kenyeres: Szatírák és röpiratok. Válogatás Swift írásaiból, *Élet és Irodalom* 5 (1961), 6: "Kéry László Swift szatíráinak és politikai röpiratainak legjavát válogatta össze ebben a kis kötetben és ezzel öröndetesen közelebb hozta a magyar olvasóhoz a Gulliver íróját. A *Hordómesét* és Lutter Tibor elemző monográfiáját is hozzászámítva már csaknem teljes a kép."

⁵³ Zsófia Gombár: Dictatorial Regimes and the Reception of English-Language Authors in Hungary and Portugal, in Catherine O'Leary – Alberto Lázaro (eds.): *Censorship across Borders: The Reception of English Literature in Twentieth-Century Europe*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011, 105–128.

⁵⁴ Zsolt Czigányik: Readers' Responsibility: literature and censorship in the Kádár era, in Hungary, in Bálint Gárdos – Ágnes Péter et al. (eds.): *Confrontations and Interactions: Essays on Cultural Memory*, Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2011, 221–232.

⁵⁵ Hartvig: Hungarian Swift Scholarship, 639.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 643.

reviewer seems to have had a knowledge of Kéry's translation in the making: he notes that, to the best of his knowledge, Kéry had already translated *A Tale of a Tub*, which Franklin Publishing House had intended to publish but never did. He also suggests including a brief study at the beginning of the volume to introduce readers to the lesser-known Swift, along with an account of his life.⁵⁷ Another report on the *Journal to Stella* did not recommend the work for translation and publication, partly because of the hardships caused by the challenging inner references and the language of the text, partly because of the troubled love life of Swift.⁵⁸

From these documents we can see that Swift and his works were appreciated in Communist Hungary, probably following the advice from Moscow. Both Szentkuthy's and Kéry's translations of the Dean's works were excellent, running in large print numbers and their reception was favourable as well. On the other hand, one cannot but feel that Swift was exploited by the Communists to further their agenda, namely, Soviet critical realism.

CONCLUSION

The two early phases in the publication of the *Drapier's Letters* reflect distinct contexts of reception. The political and literary circumstances surrounding the printing and circulation of individual letters were represented in markedly different ways by the Irish and English press. For English readers, the Drapier controversy may have appeared remote, resembling sensational news from Dublin – an act of apparent disobedience without a clear cause, ultimately resolved through the wisdom of the monarch. For the Irish, and especially for Swift, it was an event in which resistance united the whole nation and defeated Wood's fraudulent scheme while remaining loyal to the king. Later twentieth-century Hungarian reception seems to likewise "misinterpret" Swift's political pamphlets, especially the *Drapier's Letters*. Davis's scholarly edition provides the best source text to Hungarian Swift scholars, not merely to Kéry and Lutter, but also to Zoltán Abádi-Nagy whose excellent book *Swift, a szatirikus és a tervező* (*Swift the satirist and projector*, 1973) examines mock projects such as *A Tale of a Tub* and serious projects as some of the political writings of Swift.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 644.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 644.

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