

THE LEXICON OF HUNGARIAN LITERATURE IN ROMANIA

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Although every word of the title expresses clear, understandable notions, because of the circumstances of the edition of this lexicon it requires a special definition, on account of our historical situation. It must be specific, so that the unique profile of this lexicon can be defined.

Before we go into details, let me present the lexicon as it is now and as it will hopefully be in the near future.

The first proof of the initiation of this enterprise is an invitation to the 21 October 1968 editorial board meeting and the minutes of this meeting which had the "devising of the work plan and suggestions for contracts" on the agenda. Thus the first steps were taken in 1968, shortly after the 200th anniversary of the publication of *Magyar Athenas* (1766) which was considered a model by the editorial board.

However, the first volume (containing letters A to F) was launched only in 1982, the second one (letters G-Ke) in 1991 and the third volume (letters Kh-M) in 1994. The fourth volume (N-R) is ready for editing, and after the publication of the fifth volume (S-Z) there will be a sixth volume, summing up and making accessible the events of Hungarian literature in Romania in the 25 plus year period passed since the finishing of the first volume (1980) and the headwords of authors and titles banned by censure.

Thirty years have passed since the commencement of this enterprise amounting to 40 authors' sheets. Three members are still alive of the eleven who initiated the lexicon. However, this is not amazing with such a long-term scientific work. It is perhaps due to changing times that the number of those who live outside the country is 3 (from the 23 editors, 6 have died), 1 (from the 10 local editors, 3 have died) and 13 (from the 71 collaborators, 18 have died.)

The problem is that the number of the remaining collaborators is decreasing in direct proportion to them: with each volume there are less and less new collaborators to replace the departed. Indeed: 30 years is a long time. There are only a few people who remain loyal to such a long-term enterprise.

However, the *Lexicon of Hungarian Literature in Romania* is a unique enterprise.

At the beginning I said that we must specify the meaning of each word in

the title.

"In Romania" refers to that segment of Hungarian literature which is geographically linked to the present territory of Romania. In temporal terms this means more than seventy-five years after 1918.

On account of the collapse after World War I and the annexation of Transylvania to Romania as a consequence of the Alba Iulia Proclamation confirmed by the Treaty of Trianon (11 June 1920), the year 1918 opened a new chapter in the history of Hungarian literature in Transylvania. History defined the inner aspect of this new chapter: it created new conditions of being within a new state for the Hungarian spirituality of Transylvania with its century-old traditions and rich inheritance. The *LHLR* wished to be the receptacle and record of the literature born, developed and changed within these new circumstances. Naturally, it could not deny the antecedents of this literature and it could not neglect the fact that this "new" literature was still closely linked to the whole living body of Hungarian literature.

Although the *LHLR* conformed itself to the 1918 state borders in presenting writer's activity and institutional literary life, that is, it did not deal with the activity of "Romanian" authors before 1918 or their activity outside the territory of Romania, it could not completely neglect it: it had to deal with their life, role and importance when studying the life-work of an author, a literary institution or phenomenon. Another consequence was that we had to try (and we tried indeed) to signal the often century-old antecedents before 1918 and the connections, even if we could not present them in a detailed fashion (the title of the lexicon indicates the requirements of censure - I will deal with it later - which made this impossible from the first and always impeded it on the way). These antecedents and connections were signalled in the comprehensive headwords of the lexicon presenting literary trends, styles, genres, literary institutions and the "literary history" of the most important Hungarian spiritual centres in Romania.

"Hungarian" literary lexicon - perhaps there is no need to define this concept. However, the relation with the whole of Hungarian literature and the Hungarian literary inheritance had sometimes a defining role in the evolution of the Hungarian literature in Romania, especially between the two world wars, but in a different context in the 1944-1989 period and the period after 1990. Beginning with the *Nyugat*, a periodical which reformed Hungarian literature at the beginning of the 20th century (Aladár Kuncz, the first theorist of Hungarian literature in Romania brought with him its spirituality when he returned to Transylvania in 1923), to the neo-avantgarde of the 1980s and postmodernism, the evolution of Hungarian literature in Romania cannot be separated from that which is going on in the whole of Hungarian literature. The headings which recorded on the one hand the survival of the classical inheritance in Transylvania after 1918, and, on the other hand, the presence of the important personalities in contemporary Hungarian

literature in the developing consciousness of Hungarian literature in Romania (the publication of their works, personal relations, the echo of their works in Hungarian literature in Romania) were born from this recognition.

With this opinionated spirit the editors of *LHLR* ended in trouble with the Board of censure. The party policy which aimed at directing literature was more and more determined to separate and isolate Hungarian literature in Romania from the whole of Hungarian spirituality. At the beginning only writers such as Gyula Illyés who spoke up for the unity of Hungarian literature in the 1970s were "problematic"; then everybody who was born or lived outside the present borders of the country, not to mention those who emigrated, became "problematic". The first step of the notorious "homogenisation" was the forced, artificial machination that Hungarian literature in Romania is 'Romanian literature written in Hungarian language', just as the aberration of the Soviet politics of culture, where Romanians in the former Soviet-Moldavia did not speak Romanian but 'Moldavian'. Writers who were born or lived outside Great Moldavia (from the Dnester to the Carpathians) were not included in literary history textbooks. According to this conception, Petőfi was included in Transylvanian literature textbooks only because he died at the Fehéregyháza Battle, János Arany because he was born at Nagyszalonta and Mihály Csokonai Vitéz was excluded from the editorial plan in the last year of the dictatorship because he was 'not Transylvanian'. As we will see, the reason for which the *LHLR* was not rewritten according to such a conception was that censure refused the second volume which was ready for printing in 1983, in its entirety.

"*Literary*". If we look through the volumes of *LHLR* we can easily see that the concept of literature is not used in its conventional meaning. It refers to all forms of written literature: besides literature it comprises writings in the field of humanities and science, and the activities linked to this new concept of "literature" and other branches of art (fine arts, music, theatre and performing arts) and the institutions related to them. Painters, sculptors, graphic artists, textile artists, composers, artists, stage directors were included in the successive volumes of the *LHLR* if their activity had some connections with literature (in its restricted sense): if they dealt with writers, poets, literary themes and presented poems or prose. Consequently, this lexicon is more than the inventory of 'Hungarian written literature in Romania'.

The concept of "literature" has a qualitative criterion: the lastingness of the work. Lexicons also express the values by the length of headwords and by setting a limit to presentations. There are irregularities in the lexicon in this respect too.

The criterion of including somebody in the lexicon was that he had at least one independent published work. Naturally, this implied that very many "unimportant" authors were included in the lexicon, regarding the number of names. However, we had to take into account the special situation of Hungarian

written literature in Romania, the fact that the minority situation limited the possibilities for publication and there was a great number of people who had only one independent published work, moreover, there were important personalities who did not have any published works, in spite of their presence in journalism.

Beside the headwords referring to the "most famous" which can be found in every lexicon, the presence of "minor" authors and reliable data referring to them makes such a lexicon valuable. This seemingly quantitative perspective had to be defended "inside", within the circle of collaborators, but mostly "outside", from censure, more precisely, the culture-policy of the party which considered such literature 'too much' and tried to reduce the number of authors presented in the *LHLR* (the "less significant", mostly) by its observations to Volume I.

"*Lexicon*". Perhaps this term does not need an explanation. This genre is quite well-defined in special literature. It is the method of data processing and the application of selection which must be specified from time to time.

However, the *LHLR* broke with the lexicon tradition, when it defined the criterion of "readableness". The Editor-in-Chief, Edgár Balogh, demanded that the *LHLR* be readable and enjoyable besides containing data about the author in question or the phenomenon (generally, the subject indicated in the headword). Consequently, stress was laid on the sometimes even essay-like presentation of data, especially in the case of comprehensive, summarising headwords or those dealing with greater life-works. The author of such headwords did not only indicate the bibliography of the subject (author and his works), but also built in the message of these works.

The *Guide to Using the Dictionary* written in 1969 specifies the content and form of the *LHLR*. Therefore we thought it useful to include. (See: Appendix).

An undertaking of such scale can generally be accomplished within institutional frames, in groups with a great number of researchers. This was missing in our case. Institutional work in the field of Hungarian history of literature was done at the Hungarian Literature Department of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University, in the Language and Literature Institute of the Romanian Academy in Cluj and ethnographic research in the Cluj Folklore Institute of the Romanian Academy in 1968. There was no possibility of creating a work-group for compiling lexicons in either of these institutions. However, some members of the scientific or research personnel took part, besides their institutional tasks, in the workings of the *LHLR*. At the beginning, 6 members of the editorial board, 12 of the 23 editors and 16 out of 71 contributors were employed at the university or at research institutions. (We want to signal only that the quantity of the work done by them is much smaller than the number of these contributors might suggest.)

In these circumstances the Korunk editorial board took the initiative, as is mentioned in the General Guide: it provided a place for the regular meeting of the contributors. The Literary Publishing House and then, after its winding up, the

Kriterion Publishing House financed the publication of the lexicon. This financial support consisted of an editorial contract (advance was paid only after the "acceptance" of the work) and the covering of daily expenses (correspondence, printing questionnaires). The preparatory work necessary for the edition of a lexicon was done free by the contributors: they distributed and collected questionnaires, compiled bibliographies and repertories, purchased source material and handbooks; they often covered expenses.

Nevertheless it was not this that tried the persistence of contributors but the wrangling around the publication of the first volume which was due to the authorities.

Let us present some details.

The editorial board of the *LHLR* considers 30 November 1968 the date of its foundation. On 11 August 1969 the Literary Publishing House signed the contract for the "coordination" of the manuscript, but only with Edgár Balogh, the Editor-in-Chief. He presented the sample (for the letter A) to the *Igaz Szó* periodical in March 1970; this appeared in the 1970 June number, whereas the sample headwords for letter B appeared in the *Korunk* yearbook. In March 1974 the whole manuscript was ready for publishing. The revised edition, completed according to the observations of the editor's readers was submitted on 1 March 1975. Three years later, in a report dated 27 March 1977 the Editor-in-Chief was complaining about the delay of the answer, while some of the founding editors were already dead by then; others, discouraged, had quitted working.

The remaining records suggest that events around the *LHLR* accelerated in 1980 (the volume which had been included in the 1974, 1975, 1976 editorial project disappeared from the project by then.) This is proved by a lengthy report which was followed, after further corrections and wranglings by the "final version" at the end of August 1981, devised with the participation of the censor and Tamara Dobrin, Head of the Cultural Committee. The editor of the publishing house recorded this and further developments immediately after the publication of the volume, a key to modifications in the proof. This "finalisation" was done when the first volume of *LHLR* was in the stage of publication, half a year after the "directorate of the publishing house gave permission for publication. This "acceleration" also meant that censorial observations became more and more frequent: the new version was sent on 2 October 1981 and another discussion (and modifications) followed two weeks later (on 16 October) and then a "trick": a delegate of the editorial directorate arrived to Oradea on 26 October to "check the execution of modifications" which implied further modifications. Moreover, they issued orders by phone to other corrections on 6 November; then they asked for the whole proof and finally gave permission for publication on 13 December 1981.

The first volume of *LHLR* appeared on 18 February 1982, though 1981 was specified as its date of publication.

During these final delays we often imagined the censor frightened by his superiors holding the lexicon under his pillow and, startled out of his sleep, rereading a few suspicious passages and suggesting modifications the next morning.

What were these modifications?

First of all, "ideologically unwanted people" (ecclesiastical writers, mostly) were excluded, although the editors used self-censure from the first: they wrote comprehensive entries about Evangelical, Catholic, Protestant and Unitarian ecclesiastical literature and mentioned only those works which were not ecclesiastic or religious. During the delays the "Evangelic ecclesiastic literature" entry which was part of the first volume became "Lutheran ecclesiastic literature" and therefore part of the planned third volume; the Catholic ecclesiastic literature" entry became "Roman Catholic ecclesiastic literature" and part of the fourth volume (instead of the second). However, many more entries about "ecclesiastic" authors had to be discarded or "shortened" as a result of the observations of the directorate. Thus György Balanyi, historian (Roman catholic priest and monk) and István Benedek, Professor of Psychology were omitted, both of them Professors of the Bolyai University until 1948; Bertalan Bagossy and Vilmos Bálint (also Roman Catholic priests) and Béla Baráth (Dean and priest at Cluj, author of excellent studies in the history of art) were also omitted, to mention just a few examples from letters A-B. The "dissimulation" entry was also discarded because it propagated a "superstitious-mystic" spirit.

The minority question was another "taboo": entries about minority authors (Arthur Balogh, István Balogh for example) were either censured or discarded altogether (András Balázs for example, who was the author of leaflets about educational affairs or Endre Barabás who evaluated in 1929 the situation of Hungarian education in Romania between 1918-1928).

Entries regarding the community-preserving role of our institution were radically censured; therefore the entries about the National Hungarian Theatre in Cluj, the Barabás Miklós Céh (the organisation of Hungarian artists in Romania in the interwar period) or the Puppet Theatre were "shortened".

Entries which dealt with the past (the period before 1918) in presenting a literary phenomenon, institution or Hungarian classical author were also suspicious. The János Apáczai Csere, György Aranka and Béla Bartók entries could be preserved with lesser and insignificant modifications. However, the Miklós Bánffy entry was very much shortened, with reference to the criterion of "Romanianness": the part which referred to the fact that he was Foreign Minister after 1918 was discarded. The "Csango literature" entry was drastically cut; the whole literature concerning the Csangos (Hungarian-speaking natives of Moldavia) before 1918 was cut, including the Codex Bandinus published by V.A. Urechia in the last century and the Finnish Yrjö Wichmann's German Csango dictionary.

Marianna Ágopcsai, Gábor Ajtay, Sándor Asztalos, Imre Balázs and Sándor Bechnitz were discarded in the spirit of the fight against the "unimportant". We had to convince them not to discard Imre Antal, the local editor of *LHLR* in Miercurea Ciuc, Károly Áros who had already three independent popular works, Pál Baróti, Editor of the periodical *A Héj*, and Artúr Bárdos B., who "left Romania".

A future volume should correct all these censorial interventions, not to mention these authors (István Apáthy for example) who were not even included by the editors because it would have been pointless.

The publication of the first volume created a great stir in spite (or because) of more than a decade of travail. Critics mainly celebrated the event; critical observations which were blunt, adjusted to the celebration. The team of contributors came together again very soon; the second volume was ready in 1984. (It was concluded on 31 December 1983). Its "reading" by the directorate took place in a completely different political climate. The "Dulea-epoch" of Romanian culture followed, which began with the ideological-political investigation of the Kriterion Publishing House; they began to restrict our activity in the spirit of the conclusions of this investigation which were never written, just made aware of. They stifled a series of important initiatives. The reader of the directorate sent the list of observations in a letter on 2 April 1985. Arguments against them were useless.

In 1986 we made another attempt to move the *LHLR* from its standstill. We thought of publishing a lexicon of authors, including the material of the first volume as well, postponing the continuation with the original conception. However, we ourselves did not believe in the possibility of it. The second volume was put aside and only taken up in 1990.

During the changes which implied the cessation of censure the editorial board of *LHLR* realised that due to the diminished team of contributors (two of the editors passed away, three of them left the country; four additional members died and six left Romania from the remaining 48) and the manifold tasks raised by the new historical situation made it impossible to revise and "update" the second volume bearing the marks of the spirituality of the 1980s, up to 1990. This is why the publishing house decided to publish this volume without changes, in its original form, taking into account the deaths occurred during the period. With full knowledge of the former censorial observations we comforted ourselves that had the volume been published then, this would have resulted in an even worse version. This is how the second volume appeared in 1991, 20,000 copies, which was due to tight budgets of book publishing rather than readers' lack of interest. The badge of the lexicon bearing the inscription Forbidden Books Free marked its adventurous fate.

Celebrations were more restrained this time and critical observations

sharper. The editors knew too well that the text of the second volume of the lexicon was much more objectionable than criticism claimed it. We assumed responsibility for negative aspects in the hope of a future upswing.

Part of the second volume was already completed by 1983. However, the letter K had to be divided, not just because of its size but because of its content: it contained the Kós Károly entry and at the time of the finalisation of the manuscript there was a political campaign against him so that his name could not even be mentioned in the press on his birthday. Therefore the reason of size came just at the right moment. And then, at the beginning of the third volume it came in very handy that the second part of letter K was almost ready, especially because the number of contributors had decreased even more. Reading the lexicon one does not realise this because the names of 27 editors, 14 local editors and 43 contributors can be found on page 4. However, ten of them wrote 70% of the whole text and 74 the remaining 30%.

Editing the manuscript of the third volume posed other problems: we had to present the spiritual product of a decade, up to 1992, even if only up to two letters and a half. The last three years of this period - after the changes in December 1989 - were extremely diverse, chaotic on the level of bibliographic data. Nevertheless this volume appeared in 1994, thanks to the hard work of Edgár Balogh, the former Editor-in-Chief who “retired” to become “Executive Editor”. It appeared in 10.000 copies, signalling the growing difficulties in book-publishing, on the 25th anniversary of the Kriterion Publishing House.

The novelty of this volume was more than the lack of censure. Editors and contributors were faced with the possibility of taking into consideration the whole of Hungarian culture in Romania, without restrictions and self-restrictions. Ecclesiastical authors were no longer excluded (therefore the number of entries increased), political-ideological taboos could be ignored (this meant that lots of new entries could and had to be written). At the same time modern values had to be promoted: a politically censored and political evaluation had to be replaced by an authentic evaluation based on the artistic value of works. The first half of the 1990s coincided with a radical change of values in Hungarian spiritual life in Romania. This meant the promotion of new approaches and new trends in literature. It should have meant, that is, but none of the literary critics engaged in this new trend became a contributor to the lexicon. Therefore the third volume mirrors the years in which the lexicon was born, just like the previous volumes.

By the time this history of the lexicon has been written, the fourth volume of *LHLR* will be almost ready for publication. One or two months' work is required on the part of those few who are engaged in finishing it. Balogh Edgár, the “Executive Editor” did not live to see this volume, though he did the bulk of preparing the manuscript.

The number of contributors is now much smaller but it is encouraging that

there are new people who, learning from our experience and mistakes mainly, are already working on the material of the fifth volume.

Our aim is to publish the fourth volume in 1997, the fifth in 1999 and the supplementary volume in 2000.

Let's hope we succeed!

APPENDIX

GENERAL GUIDE

The Entries of the *Lexicon of the Hungarian Literature in Romania*

The *LHLR* deals with literature, journalism and the main events of scientific literature in the 1919-1969 period.

Collective entries give a short presentation and evaluation of the history of literature, press and science (for example, *The History of the Hungarian Press in Romania*), and deal with the most important concepts linked to these (literary press, for example).

Conceptual entries analyse typical theoretical concepts of the Hungarian history of literature and culture in Romania (e.g. Transylvanianism) or describe the history of the local connections of universal concepts (e.g. the *Avantgarde* entry contains only the history of Hungarian avantgarde in Romania; it does not deal with theoretical-aesthetic issues of these trends).

Personal entries offer data of the life and work of writers, journalists and scientists as well as their evaluation, regarding their importance. We must stress that the *LHLR* is a literary lexicon, therefore it tries to be exhaustive in the field of literary phenomena only.

Local history entries deal in fact with one aspect of local history, namely, the literary past and present literary life of important cultural centres.

Institutional history entries present the role and history of institutions which provide the framework for literature (e.g. literary societies, publishing houses, cultural organisations).

Press history entries stress the *literary* role of Hungarian newspapers and periodicals in Romania.

The entries of the lexicon are of a given length. Length criteria are as follows:

1. In the case of **collective entries** the length of the presentation of a discipline, a phenomenon of the history of press or culture depends on the richness of material and the importance of the issue. As there are few such entries in the lexicon the authors are not restrained by length criteria. However, the editorial board of the lexicon and the authors decide together the amount of data and

evaluative observations included.

2. This holds good for **conceptual entries** as well. Their length depends on the importance of the phenomenon in question and the amount of information necessary for the explanation. It is again the right of the editorial board to decide on the proportion of entries and eventually ask the authors to shorten their entries.

3. Most of the entries are **personal entries**. Their length varies according to the proportions and value of the writer's work. These entries are grouped in five length categories:

The **1st category** is 100 typewritten lines. This text-type contains the following data (in the given order): Name (literary name, family name, pseudonyms, signatures) - Birth and death (place, year, month, day) - The nature of activity (writer, poet, dramatist, publicist, etc.) - Qualifications - Occupation - Career (working places, the main events of their curriculum vitae, the role played in literature and public life, titles, awards, etc.) - Literary career (from the first publication to the last works) - Evaluation from a Literary History perspective - A bibliography containing a.) *first* editions of the writer, in case of revisions or changing titles the new editions too b.) republications in collections c.) bibliography about the writer.

The **2nd category** consists of 50-60 lines. Content: Name (literary name, family name, pseudonyms, signatures) - Birth and death (place, year, month, day) - The nature of activity - Career (qualifications, occupation, main working places, a list of titles and awards, a *one-sentence* evaluation of his role in public life) - Brief presentation of literary career; appreciation of works with exceptional success and considerable critical acclaim - Literary History evaluation, not a detailed one but containing two types of information: a.) the most important work(s) of the writer b.) his literary history value and nature (e.g. pioneer of a trend, genre or spiritual tendency; stylist, etc.), mentioning the critical reservations regarding his works - Bibliography (the same as the bibliography in the first category.)

The **3rd category**: 25-30 lines. Content: Name (literary name, family name, pseudonyms, signatures) - Birth and death (place, year, month, day) - The nature of activity - Career (qualifications, occupation, working places and public roles) *in a sentence* - literary career, mentioning valuable works only - Marking the writer's role in literary history - Bibliography (the same as in the first category).

The **4th category**: approx. 10 lines. Content: Name (literary name, family name, pseudonyms, signatures) - Birth and death (place, year, month, day) - The nature of activity - Qualifications and occupation; working places which implied a role in literary history (e.g. editor-in-chief of an important periodical, founder of a publishing house, president of a literary society) - Title, genre and a one-sentence evaluation of major work(s) - Bibliography (the same as in the first category).

The **5th category**: minimal length, depending on the amount of data

presented. Content: Name (literary name, family name, pseudonyms, signatures) - Birth and death (place, year, month, day) - The nature of activity (with a laconic evaluation, using restrictive attributes, e.g. pop-writer, Ady-imitating poet) - Roles which have a literary history importance (see the 4th category) - Bibliography (the same as in the first category).

Note: The bibliography must not be included in the given number of lines.

4. The length of **local history entries** and **institutional history entries** is not defined.

5. **Press history entries** are of two types:

General press history entries contain 100 lines (the 1st category), 50 lines (the 2nd category) or 20 typewritten lines (the 3rd category.) Their content is: General definition - Presentation of the trend, its nature and scope of duties - The history of publications (foundation, stages of growth, ceasing) - Literary aspects.

Specific press history entries contain 50 lines (1st category), 20 lines (2nd category) or 10 typewritten lines (3rd category). Their content is: Title of the publication (title changes as well) - The nature and periodicity of the publication (e.g. literary weekly, daily political) - Date and place of founding and publication - The tendency of the periodical and its owner (e.g. illegal communist newspaper, Journal of the National Hungariam Party) - Editor-in-Chief, literary columnists, major contributors - The literary importance of the periodical - Monographic literature on the periodical.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

1. Contributors must not use abbreviations; the final system of abbreviations will be devised by the editorial board before printing.

2. The data of the bibliography: title of the work, genre, place and date (year) of publication, publishing house, number of copies. If a work appeared without the name of the author or under his pseudonym, this should be mentioned, the name of co-authors too.

3. Contributors are asked to specify in the addenda what illustrations they recommend. (The lexicon does not publish photos of living writers.)

4. Contributors should specify their whole name on the manuscript to ensure the undisturbed recording of data.

5. Personal entries, conceptual and collective entries as well as local history entries from the first category appear with a *signature*; therefore in the case of modifications in the text the editorial board asks for the consent of the author.

6. The bibliographic service of the lexicon provides contributors with the personal bibliography of the author (if they ask for it). Regarding authors' fee, the bibliography is not part of the contributor's text in the case of entries belonging to categories 2-4.

7. In the case of personal entries from the first category and other signed entries the *author* is responsible for the correctness and completeness of data, therefore it is his duty to check and even complete the bibliography which is considered part of the author's text.

Cluj, 9 December 1969

The Editorial Board of the *LHLR*