

secularization, and all the inherent aspects of this phenomenon, are perceived as a “painful reality”. Another decisive factor in shaping the framework of the analysis is the mutual influence of religion and politics within the Romanian society. This influence affected the decisions of the Romanian parliament regarding the legislation related to electronic passports.

This dispute is just one example of the presence of the religious discourse within the public space and of the religious influence on politics. Moreover, it demonstrates once more the importance of bioethics centres in managing the conflicting relationship between religion and the effects of scientific and technological development in modern society. The authors state that the discourse of the Romanian centres of bioethics is generally a theological one, and it fails to create a neutral space for debate, a space favourable for the development of critical thinking, dialogue and tolerance.¹

In fact, the entire range of the themes addressed in the volume emphasizes the importance of the ethical discourse in capturing the nuances and complexities of the approached cases, but also the fact that the ethical discourse and expertise coming from a philosophical background constitute an indispensable perspective for the investigation of issues related to bioethics and constitute “the theoretical basis of an informed and applied approach, from the viewpoint of applied ethics to all these recent subdomains of bioethics.”

Reconsideration of literary accents*

– Review –

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Keywords: the 18th century, *historia litteraria*, correspondence, pietism, Enlightenment, science organisation

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This review focuses on László Szelestei N.’s book about some unknown faces of the 18th century. The volume is apparently a collection of studies, dealing with ideas and personalities connected to the selected period of time. However, Szelestei’s literary historical work not only fills gaps in the Hungarian image of that age, but it modifies the accents of it. As he creates occasions to get acquainted with a personal destiny or career, the ideological background unfolds in an authentic, experience-like representation. The reader can get detailed pictures about figures

¹ Ibid., 245.

* Szelestei N. László: *Eszmék és arcok a 18. századi Magyarországról* (László Szelestei N., *Ideas and faces from the 18th century Hungary*) (Budapest: Universitas, 2010), 233 p., ISBN 978-963-9671-33-1, ISSN 1219-8552

like Mátyás Bél, János Sartoris, István Weszprémi, György Szeniczai Bárány, János Dániel Perliczi or Ludovico Antonio Muratori. It is also typical that the studies follow the logical line of a literary detection or debate.

The volume is apparently a collection of studies, dealing with ideas and personalities connected to the selected period of time. However, Szelestei's literary historical work not only fills gaps in the Hungarian image of the 18th century, but it modifies the accents of it.

As the writer emphasizes it in his Preface: literary historiography has been dealing rather unkindly with the decades after 1711, and – as a result – personalities and tendencies have been crowded out of the literary viewpoints.

The author, László Szelestei N.¹, has been interested in the history of the 18th century literature and civilization for 30 years. He is the editor of manuscript catalogues, correspondence volumes of erudite people, and he has analyzed their inheritance, too – considering the literary and science organizing intentions. He has also studied the most popular genre of the period, the calendar. As the elaborator of analytical processings about civil and nobiliary libraries, he has been concerned in the renewing aspirations of the Protestants and Catholics, also being attentive to the beginnings of historiography, the history of publishing and censorship, too. He paid particular attention to the process in which the *historia litteraria* of Hungary narrowed to Hungarian literary history writing. His ideal is the humanist philologist: he would like to realize a better understanding of events, personalities by the exact reading of old texts. Among his goals he mentions the ambition for clear phrasing, public intelligibility, giving a review of facts and conclusions. Szelestei admits that during his presentation of sources he sometimes sees or evaluates processions or personalities differently from the former literature. Focusing on the following main issues, the writer of the book sorts his studies in two categories: 1. the effect of the religious renewing movements on civilization, literature and national language in Hungary before 1770; 2. the question: what kind of factors did influence the consideration of literary memory in that age? The structure of the volume follows this pattern; there are two main chapters: the first one is about *Religious Renewing Movements*, and the second one is a *Consideration of the Past*. The former heading contains ten, the latter contains four subsections. The book also owns a separate (bibliographic) abbreviation register, an index of names and places, and information about the locations where the studies originally appeared.

When discussing the relation between pietism and Hungarian language, Szelestei talks about evangelic pietism in the first part of the century, but does not involve antecedents, similar movements or the connection with Enlightenment. He analyzes the activity of the conscious Hungarian followers of the pietism of Halle. He integrates new data from the correspondence of Mátyás Bél, Dániel Krmann, Márton Regis and others, and from the printed matters published by the pietists. The researcher throws new light upon the relation between Mátyás Bél and Dániel

¹ Owing the PhD and DSc degrees, Szelestei is a university professor and researcher of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University. He is the member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, as well.

Krmann, and states the fact that – despite earlier assumptions – they were almost friends. He interprets the pietism of Halle with the help of the scientific connection system of that age, and considers the former register of pietist works disputable. There is a separate part of the study dedicated to György Szeniczai Bárány, his theologic-pedagogic-scientific work, and some of the personalities mentioned here get independent studies, as well.

Such an example is Mátyás Bél, who – according to Szelestei's opinion – is the scholar having the largest influence in Hungary in the 18th century. Bél was known and mentioned in his own age as "rector et instaurator scholarum Posoniensium", "magnum decus Hungariae" – titles deserved through his pedagogic and scientific activity. Although Bél has been respected in Hungarian and Slovak scientific circles until the present, the total exploration of his work has not happened yet. One can agree with Szelestei: some characteristics of Bél's personality and scientific results would support the urgent examination of his work. The facts that he helped young students coming from different cultures and language areas and that he created a scientific community out of them, could give Bél a symbolic value in the history of the 21st century. His work written in Hungarian, Slovak, German and Latin languages is well worth examining for one who wants to understand the special, multicultural history of the area. The writer of the study examines Bél's correspondence, as well. This analysis also offers some new directions for the researcher. He emphasizes the good relation between Bél and Krmann: their common translation of the Bible, their scientific cooperation, the letters written to each other can prove the deepness and seriousness of this fellowship.

But the study mentioned above is not the only text dealing with Mátyás Bél – there is a whole presentation of his edition of the New Testament. This is a New Testament "cleared from Calvinisms" presumably from 1727, and János Sartoris, one of Bél's favourite students also participated in the translation. The researcher presents two editions of it, and examines them with a comparative method.

Szelestei states in the Preface of the volume that the book can be interpreted as a logical order of studies. The reader can agree with this, however, one cannot deny the fact that the whole of the texts is much more than that, being in fact a special type of age-monograph. A representative example of links between studies is the figure of János Sartoris. He appears for the first time as Mátyás Bél's student, helping him in the translation of the New Testament. But his activity and work deserves a more detailed treatment: he is presented in an eleven pages long study. First of all, the writer of the book has to make order among the people having the names János Sartoris or Sartorius. The one he firstly deals with is the priest of Nemescsó, who was an outstanding translator and publisher. Szelestei's method of context-making has an unexpected profit this time. Discovering that Sartoris is an outstanding member of the pietist circle, and revealing the circle's activity (with the help of different letters, documents, printed matters), he can state that this association has a much weightier importance than it was known in the literature before. He also pronounces the demand that the overviews of the cultural history should complete the image of it.



Irina Dumitrașcu, *Untitled Nature 23*,
Photography – Cprint, ø 40 cm, 2008
Website: www.bavardestudio.ro

As order has been made, the writer of the book discusses another, similar-named figure of the age, János Sartorius M., too. Although his contemporaries call him "fanatic priest", and he is often mentioned as "restless", as well, Szelestei cannot reassuringly reveal the exact meaning of these attributes. Otherwise, he paints a detailed portrayal of the scholar, which, as a result, generates lots of literary and cultural questions.

It is quite typical at the study-writer that his view focuses not only on literature in a narrow sense of it. He is interested in the destiny of all the intellectuals, even of those who do not choose an ecclesiastical career. It is not a coincidence: the physicians coming home from German universities played important roles in cultivating the Hungarian enlightening literature and forming the national consciousness. János Dániel Perliczi's career distinguishes itself in this sense: his life and work was exemplary for his contemporaries, but he is a

remarkable figure of medical and literary history up to the present day. Szelestei, in his research, reveals his life and intellectual career in a detailed way, using letters and printed matters to prove his statements. The works highlighted this way can become the common property of the history of science. At the same time, Szelestei shares with his readers an index containing the titles of Perliczi's works, in 40 points.

György Kalmár is another representative "face", called by the writer the "lover of Hungarian language" and showing an interesting facade of the 18th century. The extreme judgement of his activity aroused the interest of Szelestei. He displays a representative picture of data revealed during the last decade. In the mirror of official documents, personal letters and the works of Kalmár, important aspects get shape: the journeys of the "great peregrinator", the known part of his library, his neologist and purist activities, his contemporaries' opinions. We can get a lifelike picture about the international traffic of books, the function of revision, the content of a library, the difficulties a press-founding had to face in the 18th century. Reviewing the contemporary relations leads to values of the political and social history, but – again – re-organizing the accents of literary history writing, too.

But Szelestei is not just a presenter of the facts, he does not only complete or add information, but he undertakes analyzing tendencies and situations in a considerable part of the studies. He does so with the instrument of revealing, the examination of human relations, of traceable connection systems. The text about Gerhard Cornelius Driesch, Mátyás Bél and the primate Imre Esterházy – for example – wants to walk around the inexplicable situation how an evangelic priest could become a supported science organizer, the Hungarian scientist with the greatest influence in the century. The study-writer, with an analysis based on source-examining, proves that the Driesch–Bél–Esterházy spiritual relationship can be an explanation for the quick and apparently incomprehensible rising of Bél's career.

The study dealing with Ludovico Antonio Muratori's (1672-1750) works gives a completion about the author's influence on the Catholic Church and civilization of Hungary in the 18th century. He provides again new data for the literature of the period. This text is also a good example of how Szelestei quotes, makes references or summarizes – and he does not break the unity of the study. As a consequence, we get a well-documented but exciting reading. The main accent is now on Muratori's Latin works which were published or distributed in Hungary – and on their translated, manuscript or printed versions. Muratori's work, functioning against the Catholic Church's baroque embedment and urging the general renewal, played an important role in Hungary. He was appreciated as a historian by the Protestants. His texts of religious morality made his views known by a larger reading public. Separation from baroque formalities, but accentuating social sensibility and the importance of the mother tongue were the main topics to mediate towards the public of the age.

The presenting of Ferenc Faludi's autograph book of poems is a primary source review. Szelestei makes an important comparison with the poem-index of the previous researches, and realizes that the newly revealed manuscript

(*Hungarian songs*) is Faludi's earliest autograph book of poems. But the discovery of this material brings up several literary questions. The volume contains a so far unknown poem, as well.

When investigating the origin of the Hungarian literary history writing (*historia litteraria Hungara*), the researcher pays attention to lots of parallel sources. He reads simultaneously the early Jesuit historical memories, István Weszprémi's work on medical history, but following in the meantime the activity of Mátyás Bél and his circle. Naturally, Szelestei makes a difference between the 18th century and the present meaning of *historia litteraria*. He asks the basic question about the canon: why and how did certain authors and works get into the public consciousness? He expresses his hope regarding the fact that the formation of the Hungarian literary canon can be described. The historical overview is not a forced enumeration of the main "stations" of the genre, but a critical selection, which reckons continuously with the contemporary reception. The rhetorical/poetical character of the texts is the condition of being literate at Szelestei, and he does not accept any of the prejudices. Rejecting the preconceptions of all kinds, as well, he cannot adopt the principle of literary phylogeny either.

The previous results of the Janus Pannonius research state that the fame of the great poet declines in the 17–18th centuries, and we could hardly find any data about his cult. Debating first of all with Imre Bán, he denies these observations, and presents the certainties which he derives from his own investigations. His arguments seem to be convincing referring to the general reputation of Pannonius. Furthermore, Szelestei adds that we have to face a serious influence that can be traced back to the work of the poet.

Still discussing the subject of *historia litteraria*, Szelestei presents József Koller's career in a relatively short but detailed study. As an attachment there is an appendix, as well. Koller's activity can be circumscribed in the third part of the 18th century. In this period connected with the smartening of sciences, different questions can be asked. What did it mean being a scholar in Hungary in that certain period? What lifestyle did it involve? What kind of possibilities did it hide? Correspondence as the basic form of keeping in touch is accentuated again, and used as an important source in the examination of Koller's work. He urges the publishing of these letters, because the reconstruction of Koller's correspondence network could provide a better image of the scientific life of the period. While charting this "scholar network" in which Koller feels himself at home, Szelestei shares with the reader lots of curiosities from the domain of literary history. He refers back to Janus Pannonius, and declares: Koller is the first serious monographer of the Hungarian humanist.

One of the longest studies of the volume is the one about István Weszprémi's medical history work (*Succincta medicorum Hungariae et Transilvaniae biographia*). The whole study contains eight subsections, each of them dealing with a special circumstance related to the topic. A detailed picture is drawn about the background of this medical history, its writer, and one can get acquainted with the history of this work and the library of the author, too. In the appendix, Szelestei gives an exact enumeration of the known pieces of Weszprémi's correspondence. Among the writer's main credits can be mentioned

the fact that he clarifies Wespřemi's relation to Enlightenment and gives a punctual description of his personality and work in the mirror of his contemporaries.

As it has become clear, Szelestei deals with his topics in the correlation of the characteristic connection-systems of that age. He does not make prosaic, theoretical statements, but gives lifelike presentations with a critical attitude. Utilizing human relations in his analysis, he modifies the 18th century image of Hungary in certain views. As he creates occasions to get acquainted with a personal destiny or career, the ideological background unfolds in an authentic, experience-like representation. It is also typical that studies follow the logical line of a literary detection or debate, so the interest of the reader is continuously maintained.

Apart from the constant contextualizing, the historical background will help the reception, and it is expectable that Szelestei's data and discoveries will be processed in the Hungarian literary histories.

**The Reign of Spirit and the Wandering of the Wise. Observations on the
Volume *La prudence de l'homme d'esprit. L'éthique de Pierre Charron*
by Claudiu Gaiu**

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The university traditions dominant through textbooks and lectures have got us used to considering modern philosophy as beginning from Descartes. The merit of Claudiu Gaiu's work, *La prudence de l'homme d'esprit. L'éthique de Pierre Charron*¹ is that of treating a corpus of ideas using the means of the history of philosophy, while it is usually treated within the confines of literary analysis and the history of ideas, or it is attributed to the field of the anecdotic. Being a follower of the French–Italian tradition – as it is also suggested by the systematized bibliography at the end of the book – the author gathers around Pierre Charron's figure the moral ideas of Erasmus, Jean Bodin, Justus Lipsius, Jean Calvin and, of course, Montaigne. Among the Anglo-Saxon researchers, Richard H. Popkin is the

¹ Claudiu Gaiu, *La prudence de l'homme d'esprit. L'éthique de Pierre Charron*, With a Preface by Denis Kambouchner (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2010), 360 p. ISBN: 978-973-1997-83-4.