

The German, Romanian and Hungarian metric translations of the Latin hexameters each have their own notes system. The annotations are justified for multiple reasons: in all three languages, on account of preserving the metric verse, the translators often had to find or even create words more suitable than the ones that translate most closely the meaning of the original Latin words, or in some cases they had to change the order of the lists. These are perhaps the most interesting parts of the translations: observing how the translators find brilliant solutions to render the content, the information contained in the text constrained by the strict metric form. Such reversals or word replacements were signalled each time in the notes. Detailed notes accompany the subjects of mythology and the culture of the antiquity, assisting the reader of today in accessing a field that was widely known in the time of humanism.

Gernot Nussbächer offered much help for the edition of this volume, he also compiled the bibliography of the editions of *Rudimenta* between 1530 and 1692. He took account of the preliminaries of the 1542 edition from Braşov and Cracow, as well as partial or full reprints of the 1542 edition. He is also the author of the table of Honterus's bio-bibliography. At the end of the volume, the modern editions of Honterus and the bibliography of these editions are also listed.

The high quality of the book as an object, the reproduction of the maps and other illustrations do not only stand as evidence for the state of scholarship in Honterus's time, but also offer aesthetic pleasure even for those who are not researchers of this age.

Undoubtedly, this extraordinary endeavour will contribute to a wider knowledge of Transylvanian humanism and early Reformation in the history of Transylvania. The editors' decision to publish this book on the territory of Transylvania – the Honterus typography in Sibiu – and in the language of the ethnic communities living here is all the more worthy of praise, its greatness and uniqueness lies precisely in this aspect. It is also unique how they could mobilize institutions and experts from four countries – Romania, Germany, Hungary, Austria – and coordinate their common work.

KATALIN LUFFY

[katalin.luffy@bcucluj.ro](mailto:katalin.luffy@bcucluj.ro)

ERIKA BENCE: *Virtuális irodalomtörténet* (Virtual History of Literature). (Veszprém: Iskolakultúra, 2015).

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The scientific approach and the horizon of interpretation adopted in the 18 essays gathered in Erika Bence's volume *Virtuális irodalomtörténet* (Virtual History of Literature) place the literary works analysed in a broader, interdisciplinary, cultural-historical and anthropological context. The textual analysis of the pieces of literature investigated in the volume intermingles with the

socio-literary interpretation of the writings, the two levels of analysis mutually interpreting each other. Based on a number of Hungarian literary texts written in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, the essays focus on different possibilities of referential reading.

In the studies contained by the chapter *“References in Literature and Public Life”*, the classical literary-historical approach is enriched with additional explanations provided by auxiliary sciences. For example, based on a folkloric motif taken from József Katona’s *Bánk bán* (a 19<sup>th</sup> century drama written during the Hungarian Reform Era), the author investigates folk beliefs about twin birth (*“Problems Regarding the Bánk Bán and the Mic-Bán Legends”*). Erika Bence also demonstrates the key role of this side episode in creating the atmosphere of tragic irony in the “transcendental space” of the drama. The birth of septuplets must have had a mythical meaning in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, while in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian drama it may have referred to a second conquest of the Carpathian Basin, promising the rise of a family at the very moment of its tragic fall.

Analysing the referential aspects of Károly Kisfaludy’s novelette *Tihamér* written in 1825, the author reveals the influences of the European chivalric romance, the romantic turning to the past and of the exotic geographical and cultural spaces on this early historical novel.

The essay on Kálmán Mikszáth’s writings draws the readers’ attention to the role played by the anecdotes narrated by the people gathered around a table in the shaping of the plot. The author also highlights a number of elements that link the writer from Upper Hungary with his native land, dedicating a whole subchapter to the presentation of the Vojvodinian references that appear in Mikszáth’s works. The analysis of Imre Balogh’s historical novel entitled *A paplak története* (The History of the Vicarage) and of the system of motives that appear in Dániel Papp’s short stories trigger a redefinition of both the concept of the homeland and the Bácska-feeling.

The reinterpretation of the works written by the classics of Hungarian literature such as Kálmán Mikszáth or Dezső Kosztolányi results in a number of new elements that facilitate the understanding of these works. Born in the Vojvodinian town of Subotica, in his 1925 novel *Aranysárcány* (The Golden Kite) Kosztolányi recreates the atmosphere of his birthplace. Analysing the symbols which appear in the novel, Erika Bence proposes a new genre into which this work should be categorised, claiming that the tragic story of secondary school teacher Antal Novák is actually an *anti-bildungsroman*, a *novel of (d)evolution*. Arguing for the uselessness of the version abridged for young readers, the author draws the attention to a thematic link between Kosztolányi’s novel and an earlier piece of Hungarian literature (an aspect which had only been mentioned in an essay written by Emese Egyed), considering Vili Liszner’s figure (the student that beats up his teacher) as the alter ego of Lúdas Matyi [Mattie the goose-boy], the protagonist of the epic poem written by Mihály Fazekas at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The analysis of the motives which appear in the novel such as *the secret, the boggy, the mud, the dust, the kite, the gunshot, the chest, the sparrows, the snake or the wolf* lead the author to the conclusion that Antal Novák - the protagonist - ends up finding himself in a crisis of values, and, realizing the failure of his own ideals on education, commits suicide.

The interpretation of Vojvodinian literary texts (Ferenc Herczeg's novels, József Gulyás's early poems, Nándor Giró's fiction) cannot be carried out successfully without making reference to the Hungarian literary traditions. Erika Bence rightly points out that Ferenc Herczeg, a Vojvodinian writer of national stature, had to face particular challenges when he decided to revive Mór Jókai's literary traditions in a multicultural environment.

The second part entitled "*The Possibilities of Referential Reading*" is also dedicated to studies that provide interpretations of literary works written about Vojvodina. The author claims to have identified a new genre determined by a certain 'spatial code': "three major movements can be identified in the Vojvodinian fiction characteristic to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: the *channel*, the *town* and the *border novels*." – writes Erika Bence in her essay entitled *Műfaj(típus) konstruáló fogalmak a vajdasági magyar irodalomban*<sup>1</sup> (Concepts Constructing Genre-(types) in the Hungarian literature of Vojvodina). Although the works cited present events of great historical and social significance, the main emphasis is laid on the influence that the macro-events unfolding in the background have on private lives: "stories gravitating around personal ways of life prevail over mass experience, intellectual movements, ideas and intellectual contents gain more importance than ostentatious deeds."<sup>2</sup> Interpreting the three Hungarian novels written in Vojvodina in the 1930s, which gravitate around the traumatic experience of the First World War, Erika Bence reaches the conclusion that, as a common denominator, all the three novels focus on the strengthening of the social approach and on the appearance of grotesque elements: "the three novels view the illusory picture of the 'just war' and that of the 'good soldier' through a distorting mirror" (*Az első világháború tematizációja az 1930-as évek vajdasági magyar irodalmában*<sup>3</sup> (The Thematisation of the First World War in the Vojvodinian Hungarian Literature of the 1930s),). In the study entitled *Átszállások a vajdasági magyar irodalomban* (Transitions in the Hungarian Literature from Vojvodina) the metaphors of *journey*, *railway*, *change* and *arrival* are examined. An interesting feature of this essay is that it highlights Kosztolányi's influence on Danilo Kiš's novels, and follows the way the elements of the Serbian writer's prose-poetics can be traced in Péter Esterházy's works.

The work entitled "*A multikulturalitás és a többnyelvűség balkáni mítoszai*" [*The Balkan Myths of Multiculturalism and Multilingualism*] analyses the metaphors of the *Monarchy*, of *nostalgia* and *outcastedness*, as well as the attempts on the *spiritual reconstruction of the multicultural homeland* as they appear in works written at the turn of the millennium mirroring the trauma caused by the collapse of the multi-ethnic Yugoslavia.

Regarding the various aspects of contemporary literature, the author is particularly interested in the ones dealing with situations in which the whole community is involved, for example the biblical hypertext in Nándor Gion's novel, the meanings of the *limes* in Károly Jung's poetry or the meanings of the *barbarian* in Attila Balázs's novels, Ottó Fenyvesi's self-reflexive

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 92.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 111.

metaphors of Vojvodina or the feasts described in László Végel's *Novi Sad novel* entitled *Neoplanta*.

It has been known since Aristotle that the receiver can experience the joy of recognition even if the thing described is not to their liking. Thus, even if we are not familiar with all the texts analysed by Erika Bence, we can experience the joy of recognition when, investigating the metaphors and context analyses that appear in the works presenting different dimensions of minority life, we can spot a number of similarities hidden under the existing discrepancies.

The writings included in the volume provide a comprehensive insight into a modern researcher's attitude towards her field of study. The methodological precision and scientific accuracy adopted in the studies help readers become initiated in the analysed phenomena and to have a more extensive understanding of literature. Thorough preparation and background work together with a well-established theoretical framework serve as prerequisites to accurate observations. One of the strengths of Erika Bence's writings reside in the fact that, relying on the most up-to-date theories, classical texts are approached from a peculiar point of view, enriching our possibilities of text interpretation with new methods. Analysing Ferenc Kontra's unconventional writing *Angyalok regénye* (Angels' Novel), the author of the essay carries out an interesting interdisciplinary experiment by adopting the Fibonacci sequence and the golden section as structuring principles of the work.

The Balkan myths of multiculturalism and multilingualism, the way they appear in the Hungarian literature in Vojvodina are, in all probability, familiar to Central and Eastern European readers. Approached from Erika Bence's perspective, the virtual Hungarian literature from Vojvodina can be equally regarded as genuinely Hungarian or as genuinely European.

TAPODI ZSUZSANNA  
[tapodizsu@yahoo.com](mailto:tapodizsu@yahoo.com)