

The character is in the deed

**Peculiar initiatives of the Hungarian literature in Transcarpathia in the second half of
the XXth century**

Penckófer János's dissertation

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Theses

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1. The tasks of the research and the structure of the dissertation

The theme of my dissertation is the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature. The use of this very concept indicates the problem of unity and brokenness. This problem created some basic attitudinal and autognostic peculiarities in the development of the XXth century Hungarian literature. The disclosure of all such characteristic features may guarantee the continuance of sound and unified national self-knowledge. In this way, confronting with the formation and state of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature is an important part of both the theory of literature and Hungarology.

The recognition of the Transcarpathian peculiarities of the Hungarian literature does not cause any particular problems. Anyway, Görömbei András's decisive study (*The main peculiarities of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature*) has described the basic characteristic features. A greater problem is caused by the apprehension and demonstration of these features. Therefore, the arrangement of the gathered material needed similarly specific duality: it

seemed more expedient to overview the peculiarities chronologically and according to life-work and poetics of authors.

The creation, and later the elaboration of this duality could solve the essential problem of my theme in a satisfactory way. For the estimation of local and all-Hungarian interests of the separate works of authors needs great circumspection. One of the main tasks of my work was the segregation of these values. In this way, the chronological overview — Part *A* of my dissertation — and the discussion of poetical peculiarities of separate authors — Part *B* — helping each other, can explain and prove the selection of values.

Besides such a relatedness between Part *A* and Part *B*, the chapter under the title *Appendix* is no less important, because biographical data also belong to the scientific field of literary history writing. Kenyeres Zoltán warns us: every piece of his series introducing our classics is being prepared with this conviction. But each paper, introducing a minority nationality Hungarian literature needs this attitudinal extension more than anything else. My *Appendix* rounds the peculiarities depicted in Part *A* and Part *B* off, makes them more precise and completes them.

The schematic and marked consideration of the literary activity of other Transcarpathian authors in the *Appendix* is as important as the introduction of the biographical data of authors in Part *B*. Only together with these creators is that certain Transcarpathian peculiarity complete, which is worth the attention of all-Hungarians.

The chronological overview of the dissertation — Part *A* — and the poetical peculiarities of authors — Part *B* — are lined by the task-setting chapter of the *Prologue* and the summarising chapter of the *Epilogue*, and these are completed by the *Appendix*.

The dissertation sought answers for the following main questions:

- * What historical and social necessities, intentions and ideas created the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature?
- * What components of the aesthetic value form the Transcarpathian peculiarity?
- * What organises this minority literature without processes and traditions, having mainly individual initiatives, into literary history?
- * Can the problems of the close and the beginning of the century of the Hungarian literature be recognised when discussing the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature, or do these problems organise the trends of analysis?
- * Where can a limit be set: whose life-work and which works can be considered Transcarpathian?

2. Trends in the process of data collection

To solve the problems arising from the above questions, I carried out bi-directional data collection.

The first was characterised by striving for completeness: I had to acquaint myself with all the works of all the Transcarpathian authors. But besides the works that have obviously enduring aesthetic value, I extended the scope of investigation to other works also produced with literary demands. And such writings that were related to the minority's fate experience resulted in the appearance of some other works among the data collected. In such a way, I began to study intellectual products being part of the Transcarpathian Hungarian culture, which were destined for serving the socialist-communist ideology. I also reviewed publications proclaiming atheism and mocking at religiousness; articles notifying about the existence of people of the new society with new qualities — the Soviet-Hungarians; school textbooks with ideas distorting history, society, reality. These Hungarian publications are considered to be the intellectual disgrace of the Transcarpathian Hungarians. They reveal primitive existential experience, ruining man, community and nation. I state all this confronting it with my own existential experience.

Thus, this was one direction of my data collection. This created the possibility for contemplation and investigation covering more minor details.

The other direction for me was set by the historical, intellectual, cultural indivisibility of the Hungarians. It is not my intention here to touch upon previous aesthetic and intellectual experiences, I restrict myself to naming the essential, decisive works emerging during the process of data collection that focused on the dissertation proper. These works came forth mainly from that intellectual discourse the appearance of which relates to the problem of the whole and part, unity and brokenness. By the end of the last century it has been suggested by the representatives of a minority, nationality Hungarian literature to what extent the parts — colours — of the universal Hungarian literature, becoming distinct in a mosaic-like way, can be considered independent. May anything be divided at all, if it is indivisible? Thus, the discussion of the question of the non-existent Slovakian, Transylvanian, Voivodinian etc. Hungarian literature by Tózsér Árpád, Grendel Lajos, Cs. Gyimesi Éva and others persuaded me

that the reasoning for universal, ‘world-Hungarian’ literature rather restricts the house of Hungarian existence than points out its real spaciousness.

The publication under the title *Nationality Hungarian literatures at the end of the millennium* played a great role in the strengthening of my conviction. Its two introductory studies by Görömbei András and Szirák Péter, respectively, directly facilitated the creating of the final version of my chronological overview.

I searched for the works of literary historians and authors who followed the development of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature from the very beginning. I could also use Németh László’s thoughts about the Transylvanian Hungarian literature, because they relate to the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature, too. Then, besides the truths of the ‘local’ Tamás Mihály that are still valid nowadays, the results of the works of Czine Mihály, Kiss Ferenc, Ilia Mihály, Görömbei András, Varga Lajos Márton, Szakolczai Lajos and others also infiltrated my dissertation.

Besides the profitable achievements of our scientists on the literary problem of part and whole, I was delighted at Northrop Frye’s (*In the fascination of the Bible*) statements about the relatedness of the individual and the community, as well as at the statements of Hans Blumenberg (*The periods of the notion of era*) about the problem of periodization.

The comprehensive and detailed essays of Márkus Béla, Bertha Zoltán, Elek Tibor, N. Pál József, Pécsi Györgyi were of great use when putting together Part *B* of my thesis.

This is not an enumeration, just a selection. Kulcsár Szabó Ernő’s literary history from 1993 must also be emphasised, as well as the essays on literature of Csoóri Sándor, Nemes Nagy Ágnes, Illyés Gyula, Márai Sándor, Németh László and others. The theoretical works of Wolfgang Iser, Hans Robert Jauss, filtered through the works mentioned above were made good use of. And all this together, this direction of my data collection created that prospect in which some minor details indicating the peculiarities of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature, the particularities of the literature meaning the home world and survival, became comprehensible and could be utilised.

In drawing the main conclusions of my dissertation I was helped by two essential works: Kulcsár Szabó Ernő’s *The (national)culture as the metaphor of changing messages* and Görömbei András’s *Ways searching of hungarology*.

3. Summary of the results of the investigation

The long-range results touch upon the formation of the literary value and at the same time, on one of the essential questions of hungarology. For, the so far most beautiful and enduring peculiarities of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature were formed during the discourse with foreignness or antipathy. The declaration of self-identity was influenced by the increased and forced foreign impact.

Part *A* of my dissertation, the chronological overview — **The formation of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature** — was defined by the obvious literature-creating intention which got its final shape in the discourse with the Soviet antipathy. Two world views completely different from each other were formed.

The first one manifested itself in its commitment connected to its historical truth. This interpretation of existence also formed its self-identity in the Soviet alienation, but did it with the comparison of the millennial Hungarian history and tradition. This intellectual outburst reached its culminating point at the middle of the 1960s, it is mainly connected to Kovács Vilmos and the Forrás Studio, the grouping gathered round it, in the accomplishment of which Fodó Sándor played a major role.

The other world view lies in the striving that claimed the perfect acceptance of the Soviet foreignness or antipathy. Its self-identity was seen realising through the ideology of marxism-leninism, the Soviet social order, atheism, and rejecting the whole Hungarian historical tradition. This idea was being strengthened since the beginning of the 1970s and is represented by the work of Balla László and the József Attila Studio.

The above mentioned first explanation of existence grew out of the literary-aesthetic demand of foreign self-identity. Concerning its impact, it can be compared to that "common inspiration" which resulted in the uprising of the Hungarians: in 1848 and 1956. I do not use the words revolution and war of independence, but intellectual solemnity and community disposition, in which the Transcarpathian Hungarians recognised themselves. And due to its suppression, as its alternative, another self-identity creation began its work which protected its power and literary autocracy until the fall of the Soviet system.

At the beginning of the 1990s the intellectual power, being forced to keep silence from the 1970s, became distinct. It yielded not only literary-aesthetic self-identity, but it also provided a possibility for perfection of all the Transcarpathian Hungarians.

The conflict of these two different intellectual impacts provide the most characteristic feature of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature, the peculiarities of poetical qualities.

In Part *B* of the dissertation these particular qualities get a larger scope: this part contains the life-works of seven authors and poetic initiatives, respectively. The titles of all the seven chapters indicate the most characteristic criteria of a given author's world view. The first chapter under the title **The relatedness of literary career and world view in the life/work of Kovács Vilmos** discusses one of the most peculiar and most valuable life-work of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature. The peaks of this life-work are the novel *We will also live tomorrow* and the volume of poetry *At the light of a star*. Kovács Vilmos impressed the Transcarpathian intellectual life not only with his talent and works of aesthetic quality, but his personal, individual espousal soon became an all-Transcarpathian Hungarian affair. He suggested a problem that appeared in the literature which at once gained political and historical prospect. Kovács Vilmos altered the problem of literature into a battle-field, into the arena of the struggle for the Transcarpathian Hungarian survival.

His personal fate led him to such realizations that were contrary to his family obligations. In this way from the truth of left-wing ideas he got to the nation's millennial historical undertaking of its fate; from the works bearing publicistic features to the folk-poetic-surreal quality of the aesthetic value. The shaping of the creative activity and the formation of world concept is a peculiar exemplary direction in the Hungarian literature. It reminds one of the realization that Csoóri Sándor feels to be the unity of magic and dialectics in József Attila's poem *The seventh*.

This part of my dissertation — Part *B* — is built on this dialectics. Kovács Vilmos's life-work is a parable and a starting point at the same time; and the particular initiative that best accomplishes the truth of "you yourself be the seventh", of course, can be found in the seventh rank. But let us consider the intermediate stations, those peculiar initiatives that make this "developmental" line distinct.

Fodor Géza's poetic peculiarities and interpretation of existence are developing **In the attraction of natural sciences**. This poetic view is very peculiar, this versification is particularly rough and Hungarian. The technical terms of natural sciences are built in the poems in such a way that they can become organic with the most general standard language expressions or with words accepted to be the most beautiful in our poetic language. The enlargement of poetry in this direction does not mean self-existent experimenting for him: in his world of poetry the minority being is strongly determined. He is strongly linked to the concept of being Hungarian, the most beautiful parts of which can be marked with the names of Nagy László and Csoóri Sándor.

Despite the small number of his poems he is a determining patch of colour of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature.

Folk poetry and community fate characterise the formation of Füzési Magda's poetry. At the start of her literary activity she mixed the clear sound and picture world of folk-poetry with the modern poetic strivings of the beginning of the century. Her lyric voice forms a personality who sympathises with her community and shares its fate. This view characterises her poetry in the 1970s and it lasts till the middle of the 1980s. In the years after the fall of the Soviet Union, at the time of boom of self-organisation of the Transcarpathian Hungarians, and in the years following this prosperity, a more tragic voice appears in her poems. The feelings of disappointment, fear and loneliness are strengthened, while the lyric personality does not feel the uniting power of community any more.

The literature of an altered existential view. This is the title of the chapter about the literary activity of Balla László.

One of the most faithful Hungarian representatives of the Soviet era beginning with the removal of Transcarpathian Hungarian men by force, a former determining figure of the region's literary life appears as a new person, with a new view, new faith and new literary ambitions after the fall of the Soviet power.

His series of novels *They will meet in endlessness* and his anthology *Ikebana* cover an author who does not remind one of the former Balla László, who is completely different from him. The ex-proclaimer of the Soviet Hungarian identity, the atheist writer now wants to share the historical fate of the Hungarians, now he speaks in a god-fearing, Christian voice.

Under the Soviet regime Balla László saw the self-identity of the Transcarpathian Hungarians in the complete dissolution in foreignness. His new books overwrite all his previous works.

Changeable literature view characterises the activity of Balla D. Károly, too. He starts his activity in his father's literary system guaranteed by the Soviet power, so already at the beginning of his career he is one of the most eminent authors and literary organisers. After the fall of the Soviet Union his view changes, too. It becomes clear from his book *The metaphors of exile* that his viewpoint that formerly was contrary to his father's in the literary view, was actually an aesthetic-poetic error during his literary activity. In the book mentioned above he explains that the showing of community problems, the serving character of the creative role is only the preventive of artistic accomplishment. The Transcarpathian Hungarians' self-organization in the 1990s rather depresses him than inspires him. He begins to proclaim text

principality but objects to the work of the young Transcarpathian Hungarian institutional system. He is the second most productive author after Balla László. He has done a lot of experimenting and reforming; he encourages the accomplishment of local Hungarian literature. His literary organising activity is a real value.

Nagy Zoltán Mihály's writer's view is shaping in the modifications of mental signs of value. According to his interpretation of existence, these modifications are insignificant, his short stories written recently show complete poetical uncertainty.

The most significant work of his literary activity is the novelette *The Satan's bastard*. It was awarded the prize "The novel of the year" in 2000. In this short novel the author uses a story telling technique by which the main heroine, Tóth Eszter, becomes one of the heroines of the best Hungarian novels of consciousness. The work gives an account of the horror and terror that the Transcarpathian Hungarians experienced in the years after World War II.

You yourself be the seventh. The chapter under the title **National community disposition and the idea of freedom in Vári Fábrián László's poetic world** can only take this place. This poetical existential explanation is one of the nicest examples of indication of the Transcarpathian Hungarian self-identity. The author turns to the Hungarian historical past with natural human and creative demand. It means power, safety, home world for him. His poetical accomplishment can be connected to the intellectual and poetical world view of Nagy László, József Attila, Kormos István, Csoóri Sándor. His peculiar voice can be recognised in the regular metrical structure and the free forms as well. He is an unconfusably Transcarpathian patch of colour of the Hungarian literature.

The certain poetical peculiarities and some other characteristic features creating the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature attract one's attention to those aesthetic qualities that the idea of truth felt together with self-identity is very important. In the *Epilogue* of my dissertation one can find such conclusions that the values of the Transcarpathian Hungarian literature can contribute to the present reforming experiments of hungarology. These values developing in extreme circumstances prove that keeping one's self-identity is more important for the sake of survival than anything else. But the recognition of the peculiarity can only be determined through continuous alienation: through that bi-directional interest which gets into discourse with foreignness during the continuous recalling of national historical past and tradition.

This idea holds my work together. This thought helped me in answering the above mentioned questions.

4. My publications on the topic

1 [Vári Fábián László's poetry]

The expanded version appeared in:

2 [The peculiarities of Fodor Géza's life work]

The expanded version appeared in :

3 [About the literary activity of Balla D. Károly]

4 [Balla D. Károly: *On the edge of a ditch*]

Adaptation for republication:

5 [The formation of Füzesi Magda's poetry]

6 [Kovács Vilmos's literary career]

Adaptation for republication:

ugyanott — ibid

7 [The question of genre and sentence in Nagy Zoltán Mihály's lyric narration]

Adaptation for republication:

8 [Bagu László's two collections of poetry]

9 [About the development of Balla László's culture creating literary career]

10 [Thoughts about Nagy Zoltán Mihály's work *The twilight of oaks*]

11 [Vári Fábián László's anthology *A star without light*]

Adaptation for republication:

12 [Analysis of Bagu László's poem]

13 [Faludi Ádám: Playing back]