

Tasi Réka

„Cannot be voiced by nor angelic, nor human language”

The rhetoric of popular baroque sermons as the experience of linguistic deficiency

PhD dissertation

Theses

The dissertation is studying Hungarian catholic sermon books from the turn of 17th and 18th centuries. This part of the Hungarian literary history was not given enough attention until recently. This study focuses on the Hungarian works of Zsigmond Csúzy, András Illyés, István Illyés, Didák Kelemen and István Landovics who were popular preachers at their times, and the literary tradition treats them so.

Thanks to the research, a kind of contradiction reveals in this corpus, mostly in reference to one preacher, Zsigmond Csúzy, a monk of the Order of the Pauliner. The study is not able to treat the fact that Csúzy produces ornate sermons for the illiterate. Besides declaring popularity in preeliminars, his sermons show rhetorical characteristics that are not compatible with the idea of popular preaching. This tendency can also be observed in other authors' works.

The dissertation reviews the possible approaches and methods that are given by the concept „popular”. The literary sociology, history of rhetoric and other possibilities always need or create a code that can be written back into the interpretation. But using this code definitely reduces the very rich potential of meanings. The code treats understanding as a discursive logical problem and there is nothing it can do about the tension that followed the millennial history of Christianity, namely the discrepancy of desire of getting closer to the Divine and the deficiency of human language and thought. This experience could be the biggest challenge or difficulty for the preacher. As he is facing God he's getting numb but he must speak. But the question of popularity makes the approach impossible that is aware of this ontological difficulties of preaching.

The aim of the dissertation is to understand the rhetorical language of these sermons as an alternative for the representation recognizing itself as deficient. As a first step it specifies the shapes which can be described with rhetoric terms and which are – while the problem of signification comes into the foreground – able to make changes in the signification process: speech that moves emotions, plain or plastic representation that moves the visual phantasy, *copia verborum* – a kind of verbal volubility and metaphor and other kinds of tropes.

The inquiry uses the experiences of linguistic deficiency as a device so its thematisation allows the question of its textualisation, the possibility to catch its rhetorical consequences. The functioning of these characteristics are highlighted with the help of several case studies that constitute the main part of the work.

The dissertation interprets all these features with the concept of „illusion” – they serve as alternatives for the insufficient language: as the illusion of extralinguistic or the excessive language. The representation which means that words are not so strongly connected to „things” determines the carrier of illusion, so „illusion” can be interpreted as an epistemological question. Scientific literature has already shown that some characteristics of the baroque *praeceptum*-literature mean changing in the epistemological tradition. The dissertation studies these rhetorical characteristics in their functioning to conclude: all of them make different kinds of illusions when crossing the border-line of language. The aesthetic experiences can change into a special existential experience that is to say the *magnitudo* manifests itself in this border-crossing.