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**The change of perspective in Hungarian literature of the  
Upland**

**Authorships in the horizon of Iródia and *Próbaút***

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## I. The aim of the dissertation, delimiting the theme

The group of writers called Iródia started its functioning in the Hungarian literature in Slovakia in the 1980s. The members of this group published their works of art in Iródia-booklets and in Holnap column of Irodalmi Szemle. *Próbaút* anthology brought their public debut in 1986. Their literary and organizational activities resulted in change of perspectives in Hungarian literature of the Upland in the 1980s.

Although primary subject of this thesis is outlining the careers of four highlighted authors (Zoltán Hízsnyai, Gábor Farnbauer, József R. Juhász and Alfonz Talamon), I will touch upon the history and context of the Iródia-group and *Próbaút* anthology. This was undoubtedly necessary for delineating the group members' efforts and achievements, examining the most outstanding authors' works, evaluating their then and subsequent accomplishment from aesthetic point of view, introducing their influence, their after-life.

This work considers its duty to interpret the representative or significant works of art related to Iródia or *Próbaút* and the all-time oeuvre of highlighted authors', who can become subjects of two correlated questions in the future: 1. Was their life-work representative, significant or unavoidable in a particular phase of the Hungarian literature in Slovakia? 2. Was their life-work representative, significant or unavoidable from the Hungarian literary history perspective? The first question can be affirmed even today. First of all I will attempt to prove this positive answer. To answer the second question – which is not the aim of this thesis – more detailed, elaborated textual studies will be necessary as well as on the basis of these studies putting the works of art or life-works into wider context, evaluating them more thoroughly. I would like to enrich this process – which will presumably take its time because of the continuous formation of most artistic careers – with my own observations.

## II. The applied methods

I attempt to define the aesthetic attributes and importance of the then and subsequent works of the most prominent authors of Iródia and *Próbaút* in a narrower context, in the reflection of their reception, sometimes with the help of comparisons. I will start my thesis with outlining the contexts, such as, for example the question of togetherness of the generation, the group members; the relation to the minority locution of Hungarian literature in Slovakia; the literary(political) intentions of the group, etc. From the viewpoint of perspective change it proved to be basic to introduce the then processes and state of Hungarian literature in Slovakia as well as place Iródia primarily in context of Hungarian literature in Slovakia and as

far as possible to place it in context of the universal Hungarian literature.

After briefly delineating the history of Iródia, I will deal in more details with four most significant members of the group. I will draw their career in the horizon of Iródia-booklets and *Próbaút* anthology together with interpretation of their volumes. I chose to read and examine certain life-works chronologically because I found this way suitable not only in recapitulation of the achieved outcomes (at the end of the portraits), but it proved to be appropriate to bring forward the authors' professional progress, processes of changes and setting apart of certain career phases. I complemented the portraits with the interpretations of the texts from the booklets and anthology together with readings of further important authors' texts. In addition to literary history viewpoints I applied critical and comparative aspects as well. I explore the way of perspective change in these texts. Finally, according to the accomplished textual studies as well as observing the literary and social processes I will try to define the importance of the group and its authors and to prove the fact of the perspective change.

### III. Results of processing

The most significant outcome of my work is to give a literary historical characterization and overview on the artistic career of four outstanding members of *Próbaút* generation.

At the end of the first period of Hizsnyai Zoltán's career lasting until the edition of his first volume of poems, there can already be found those features which during his authorship development tried to gain dominance or might be important when considering the following phases. Hizsnyai cannot be regarded as a postmodern poet (yet), but postmodern effects can be detected in his works. The paradox of the era, the language coming to the front, pushing the limits of civilization, wording the obscurity and disappointment, distrusting the so far definite – all the phenomena (also) referring to postmodernism. Besides we cannot neglect the effect of problems of existentialistic thinking (existence, present time, responsibility for ourselves, suicide, etc.) though Hizsnyai does not totally submit himself to any literary or philosophical movement. His logical oppositions are not attitudinizing but are products of philosophical-historical-cultural awareness. Among his contemporaries he is the only one who takes in the Hungarian romantic literary tradition. His second volume *Tolatás* differs from the previous as well as from following volumes in its modernist approach and style (or more precisely an approach and style feeding on Nyugat tradition). However, the changes of

identity become more dominant. One of the most distinctive characteristics of *Tolatás* is the „textual proliferation”. The eclecticism and heterogeneity turn into authorial programme in *A stigma krátere* and *Bárka és ladik* volumes. The avantgarde, the modern and postmodern elements do not form sharply limited groups, they do not „deny” one another as for example in Tőzsér Árpád’s or Z. Németh István’s, Tóth László’s art but they harmoniously exist together; if they overwrite each other they do so in terms of irony. The basic philosophical questions of existence get a stable place in Hizsnyai’s poetry as well as problems of self-identity and during their examination he utilizes the potential of intertextualism, role-playing games and identity peregrination.

*Farnbauer Gábor*’s ethos is based on a relationship tightened between scientific explanations and philosophical questions. For him the world is a jigsaw puzzle which must be reinterpreted from time to time because the parts of reality are rearranged creating new structures. The author’s first, more dynamically evolving artistic period lasts till the anthology after which his works are relatively balanced, homogenous without spectacular deflections, crisis, his style goes through a roughly even development until the outstanding station of his writing career, the „book of thoughts” with the title *Az ibolya illata*. His second volume *A magány illemtana* closely relates to his first book *A hiány szorítása*. Farnbauer’s first and second book could be one since there is not a radical change in his thoughts, but – mainly in the second volume – these thoughts deepen, exhaust themselves, they are variations on Farnbauer’s mental and psychic state. The second volume already contains almost all of the contextual, conceptual, formal, lexical, pictorial and compositional elements of the Farnbauer poetry. The author’s attention thematically broadens, his locution does not avoid completely the confessional character and the postmodern effects are more traceable. These show up with the retreating neoavantgarde. The *Az Ibolya illata* is the result of such a unique diction which has not been produced ever since in Hungarian literature in Slovakia. The poet does not move substantially from his existing methods, does not rearrange his poetry radically. He is interested in possibilities of wholeness, universality. The construction of creation is formed by a combinatory model which enables the alinear reading. The urge for development and change are the principal motives of a Farnbauer work.

*Juhász R. József*, poet and performer whose artistic development from his first volume *Korszerű szendvics* does not have sharply separated, sterile stops belonging to exclusively one art branch. Visuality and complex way of creation spanning through genres and art branches or at least such efforts prove that Juhász is not simply a poet. His metaphors are saturated with such verbs, activities and momentums that are able to keep the dynamism of the text

metaforizing the constant change. His artistic manifestations and performances beyond literature or rather spanning over it (but never denying rather exploiting it), their computerized or film/video recorded, even restated cases apply the technique where movements are metaforized, transformed into images. Other features of Juhász's works of art are grotesque, irony, skepsis, playfulness, language humour, montage technique including more thematic centres and variability. Although the trails of visual poetry in Slovakian literature might be found in works of Tőzsér Árpád, Cselényi László, Tóth László etc., it is rather Juhász R. József and artists of Stúdió érté who take advantage of visual poetry. His collection volume (*Képben vagy? Vizuális költemények 1986–2006*) follows the editor's H. Nagy Péter's classifying principles. Its ten cycles are made up according to formal (that of genre, application of medium, treatment of tradition) as well as thematic viewpoints. According to content these works range from pun (*one gogh*), parody, conceptual and visual poetry to photodocumentation. Juhász R. József's visual poetry features sign and cry type characteristics of neoavantgarde and lettrism however, those types of works are quite rare where the author intervenes in the text/ a completed text so that it becomes unreadable. The intervention does not aim at revoking the meaning of a/the text in the first place. Juhász mostly builds in words, phrases, occasionally sentences into his works. He places already reinterpreted textual fragments „on the picture” or more precisely into a new picture that should be understood as a visual text. The written text or its elements – where they appear at all – are equal to colours, images, icons, photos, forms etc. They jointly make up the visual text, these are not texts written on the pictures or pictures placed on the text. The visual and textual form of communication unites. The aim of interfering into the text is not to draw away from it in the first place. It might be a game or the attempt to understand it. The deterioration of the written text means metamorphosis at the same time. Narrowing the poetic and primal meaning results in widening the visual element on the other, picture side thus widens the meaning. Juhász R. József's neoavantgarde project stretches its borders towards postmodernism which can be said on the basis of his visual works as well as textual poems and performances. It seems to be supported by the fact that the ironic approach which works against conventions in poetic language is present in Juhász's entire life-work and instead of avantgarde absolutizing the verbatim it depoetises. Modes of parody play a very important part in Juhász R. József's oeuvre. Their study in spite of their relatively small amount is unavoidable due to constantly altered and altering meanings in his poems, visual works and performances and interactivity between works as well as the receiver and author/work. His second book *Van még szalámi! (intermediális szakácskönyv)* with a subtitle/ genre

(intermedial cookbook) is not a book in its classical meaning. It incorporates a removable, unfolding, 24x36 cm colourful poster and an also removable „supplement” which is an independent stitched booklet. Its title is *FINISH Concerto for concrete*; „Juhász R. József & STÚDIÓ ERTÉ” is its author and performer. Beyond questioning the book character of this volume, the belles’ lettre nature of literature and its verbal character become obscure. It is firstly, due to fragmentation of texts in a considerable extent, wallowing in various typographic solutions secondly, numerous presence of non-verbal signs. Many smaller pictures, graphics, black and white or colourful photos, videophotos, collage of letters and visual poems, even a brief biography and the list of the author’s exhibitions and pictures are built in the text which after this cannot exclusively communicate with verbal signs but creates a more complex set of signs, a new, alternative „language” which rewrites, questions or illustrates, strenghtens its own (that is to say each other’s) signs. Signs from different registers are just as equally parts of this all as verbal signs.

*Talamon Alfonz* is one of the most matured, professionally most appreciated authors of *Próbaút* anthology whose texts are one of the most problematic to interpret. His posthumous fragmental novel *Samuel Borkopf: Barátaimnak, egy Trianon előtti kocsmából* differs from his first three books (*A képzelet szertartásai*, *Gályák Imbrium tengerén*, *Az álomkereskedő utazásai*) in its narrative technique, strenghtening of anecdotes and the principle of the story. Main characteristics of Talamon’s art: the peculiar monologic way of speaking, the magical, mythical elements, symbols, the absurd and grotesque, satirical elements, references to holy text and other works, obscuring the concrete time, verbal and pictural richness, the author’s presence in the text. Talamon strongly exploits the atmospheric effects and detailed depiction of the protagonists’ condition „absorbs” the reader who might feel to be present on the scenes or even to be there as one of the characters. This authorial set of instruments evoking, provoking and facilitating enormous emotional empathy might be the key to unraveling the effect of the Talamon prose. Long before the conscious understanding the primal emotional impression is formed in the reader with an overwhelming force which is then automatically projected onto the interpretation. Talamon’s works are open to more types of reading. It is clearly reflected in the critical reception. By arranging his texts into four groups (following the tradition, projective, anecdotal-ironical, storylike) Zoltán Németh pointed out that Talamon’s life-work is moved by more poetics and methods thus making it incessantly re-readable and canon-proof in many respects. Talamon is considered to be a member of Iródia-group, but his works relate to that type of prose poetics which is usually highlighted with the name of Grendel in Slovakia.

Although Talamon Alfonz's life-work is considered to be concluded its lively Slovakian and Hungarian critical reception indicates that besides Lajos Grendel he is that Hungarian writer from the „Upland” who realized the perspective change and in the current context of universal Hungarian literature can lay claim to get readers' interest.

Iródia as loosely organized movement can be counted as significant mostly from the literary sociology viewpoint. It made a way through „literary regime turnout”, gave rise to changes in monopolized publisher practice etc. Probably its biggest achievement is that it gave publication scope for many personalities. The above-mentioned artists turned away from the domestic neorealistic and folk traditions and turned towards the neoavantgarde, postmodernism and minimalism more spectacularly and radically than the previous generation. Iródia did not commit itself squarely to minority existence, did not form its own ideology. According to its conception literature is art in the first place and not an „instrument” of living and shaping minority existence. The question of minority, borders and states appears only marginally, at times ironically in the most known authors' works. Although there were other ambitions similar to Iródia and *Próbaút* in aesthetics and ideology but they were only singular attempts, the system excluded the political resisters from literature; they could not influence it at all. However, Iródia supported the direction of its endeavour with its size and committed to get out of control of ideologically determined aesthetics. The group could endanger the forced unity, the mental-ideological and phraseological obliged-homogeneity, farfetched oneness and decolorization exclusively out of its existence; even it could threaten the existence of existing, only beatific, more or less collaborative subsistent strategies. Iródia partly started and undoubtedly accelerated the changing process, potentially the generation changing process.

Postmodernism which came forward with a phase delay even in Hungary has not become strong enough to give an exclusive or distinctive character of an author's life-work in Hungarian literature in Slovakia even today, but a new approach gained ground more and more in our literature. It uses certain implements of postmodernism. Content characteristics are apocalypse, civilisational crisis, industriality (for example the breakdown of socialism), making one insecure, the ego losing and searching its identity, disillusionment, deepening and coexisting conflicts. Its approach could be characterised with irony, self-irony, grotesque and plays on language, heterogenous elements and its capability to multiply interpretation. These peculiarities however became primary neither at Iródia-members nor at Egyszemű-members.

In the history of Hungarian literature in Slovakia the change of perspective is usually related to the presence and subsequent work of the artists of Iródia and *Próbaút* but it took

place also by favour of several writers belonging to a previous group in the last decades.

If there is a quality shift as compared to a former period in Hungarian literature in Slovakia then it is the great contribution of people outgrowing from Iródia and their works published in the last 15 years. It is apparent today that one of the most important segments producing quality literature of the formation known as Hungarian literature in Slovakia is made up by authors outgrowing from Iródia who might be related to its successor, FÍK or to two anthologies (*Piknik a Szaharában*, *Nyugtalan indák*) introducing FÍK members as well as other younger authors.

#### IV. Publications on the theme by the writer of this dissertation

1. A szlovákiai magyar irodalom létének kérdéséről. *Hitel*, 2006/4. 103–113.
2. A szlovákiai magyar irodalom létéről. In Ardamica, Zorán: *Diszharmónia harcmezején*. Pozsony, 2007, AB-ART. 106–123.
3. „Ennyiben a tudomány is poézis”. *Új Forrás*, 2005/7. 53–58. and In Ardamica, Zorán: *Diszharmónia harcmezején*. Pozsony, 2007, AB-ART. 80–86.
4. Gondolat mint beszéd mód (Farnbauer Gábor életművéről). *Szörös Kő*, 2005/5. 54–73.
5. Komparációs komplikációk, avagy a konszolidáció(k) nemzedéke(i). In Ardamica, Zorán: *Diszharmónia harcmezején*. Pozsony, 2007, AB-ART. 87–98.
6. *Labirintus* (Talamon Alfonz Gályák Imbrium tengerén c. regényéről) Pozsony, 2006, on the web page of the Szlovákiai Magyar Írók Társasága: <http://www.szmit.sk/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=72>
7. Magánbirodalmak irodalma egy (b)irodalom mezsgyéjén (Kísérlet az Iródia és a Próbaút jelen[tő]ségének általános felvázolására) In Ardamica, Zorán: *Diszharmónia harcmezején*. Pozsony, 2007, AB-ART. 99–105.
8. Ötven ostorcsapás után. *Helikon* (Romania), 2005/13. 9.
9. „Sokkal több a gyáva, mint a hőstettekre kész...” (Barak László *Retúr a pokolba* c. kötetéről) *Szörös Kő*, 2006/4. 68–70. and In Ardamica, Zorán: *Diszharmónia harcmezején*. Pozsony, 2007, AB-ART. 73–79.
10. Szempontok az Iródia és a Próbaút jelentőségének megközelítéséhez. In *Irodalmi és nyelvi kölcsönhatások az integráció folyamatában* (Literárne a jazykové interakcie v procese integrácie). Banská Bystrica, 2005, UMB. 59–68.
11. Újabb adalék egy lírai életmű korpuszához – belülről (Barak László: *Miféle szerzet vagy te?* című kötetéről) *Könyvjelző*, 2004/8. 8.

#### Approved manuscripts from the subject of the dissertation (forthcoming):

1. A komparáció komplikáció(i), avagy a konszolidáció(k) nemzedéke(i). In *Kontextus – Filológia – Kultúra*. Banská Bystrica–Eger, 2006–2007, UMB–EKTF.
2. Juhász R. József. *Szörös Kő*, 2007/ 2.
3. *Labirintus*. Talamon Alfonz: Gályák Imbrium tengerén. *Katedra*, 2007/5.
4. *Vizuális költészet és paródia* (Juhász R. József alkotásairól). In *Semiotica Agriensis 4. Tipológiai ismeretek és alkalmazásuk a komplex jelek létrehozásában és befogadásában*. Magyar szemiotikai tanulmányok. Budapest–Eger, 2007, Magyar Szemiotikai Társaság–Líceum Kiadó.