

**Theses of PhD Dissertation**

**Images of Women and Ways of Becoming a Female  
Writer during the Hungarian Enlightenment**

Balog Edit Otilia

Supervisor: Dr. Bódi Katalin



UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN  
Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies

Debrecen, 2021

## **a. The aim of the dissertation, delineation of the subject**

In my dissertation I deal with the represented images of women and the oeuvre of female writers publishing in Hungarian at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This analytical perspective places writing women from the background into the foreground, making them from side characters to main characters. My choice of topic was mostly justified by the fact that despite the growing number of women's study researches, the Hungarian female authors of the chosen period have not been comprehensively examined. I approach the image of women basically through the literary texts of the age. On the other hand, I can not ignore the historical, philosophical, social and cultural background in which these items were written. Women's role opportunities are interpreted in texts written by and about women.

The overall aim of the dissertation is to contribute to nuancing the existing picture of the era's literature and to expand knowledge about women writers. In the chapters I highlight that there were women who dealt with literature in the emerging system of the Hungarian literary institutions of this period, not only passively, as muses, patrons or audience, but also actively, as creators writing in Hungarian. Women's role opportunities are interpreted in texts written by and about women.

In the thesis I analyze texts written in Hungarian in the period which – with one exception – appeared in print in an independent volume or in a journal, in other words I research the manifestations of written communication that became public through printing. The earliest composed and dated piece of the chosen texts – an epistle sent by Borbála Molnár to Gergely Édes – was written in 1791. The latest text in time - Judit Dukai Takách's earlier poem, *Malvina keserve* [*Malvina's Bitter*], was published in 1826. Most of the works in the paper were written in the 1790s.

The starting point of the dissertation (Chapter 2) is the image of women depicted in the journal *Uránia* (1794–1795). The subjects of the further analytical chapters of the paper are four female authors of the era: Judit Dukai Takách (1795–1836), Julianna Fábián (1765–1810), Borbála Molnár (1760–1825) and Krisztina Újfalvy (1761–1818). In terms of extent, I deal with Molnár the longest, as I examine both her independently published volumes and her correspondence.

In my work, the women writers' preferred genres are highly occupied. The analysed texts are characterized by heterogeneity from a genre point of view; the connection among them is created, on the one hand, by the female role opportunities presented in them and by the female nature of the authors, on the other hand. The cohesive analytical aspects of the

chapters are strengthened by the observation of the virtue's discourse, since this theme is also covered in each main part.

### **b, Delineation of the applied methods**

While processing the literature available in Hungarian related to the topic and doing research in connection with the female writers of the era, I became aware of three basic features of this literature: repeated tendencies in the previous literature (Károly Zilahy's, Mariska Fáylné Hentaller's and Jób Bánhegyi's monographs, József Szinnyei's encyclopedia, the lack of reprint editions of texts and a relatively low level of recent research on women writers of the era can be observed. The new results are mainly due to the works of Ferenc Bíró, Anna Fábri, Katalin Hász-Fehér and Borbála Zsófia Nagy.

The process of finding, digitalizing and interpreting the volumes of the selected authors took place in several stages. During my work I focused on one author and volume per phase, then after the implementation of conference presentations and the publication of the results, I moved on to the next chosen author, text unit and topic. The dynamics of the research was ensured by the analysis of texts, the method of which was contextualizing reading. On the one hand, the characteristic of the interpretations is determined by the fact that I have mostly included rarely or so far never analyzed texts in the study, and on the other hand, the (philosophical) contexts related to the texts are present as novelty.

One of the markedly applied contexts is moral refinement, which enabled me to detect what kinds of images of women are considered ideal in the texts and to notice the qualities prescribed for women. During this process (sometimes supplemented by researches on women's education), I examined traditional female roles, characters (girl, bride, wife, mother, widow) and their attempts to cross the line of imposed social gender roles.

The interpreting contexts of the epistles were mostly provided by their functions in community formation, (self-)representation and legitimization. During the process of presenting the oeuvres I did not seek to analyze the entire corpus of the author. I concentrated on how the different types of texts depicted women's roles.

## **c, List of results**

Chapter I: The first unit of the dissertation identifies the subject and time frame, and then states the questions the topic covers. In addition to and in connection with what has been mentioned in the thesis booklet so far, these questions concentrate on the motivational base of the female writers and their role in the process of secularization. In the *Introduction* I point out that the chosen writers were followers of the already existing female literary tradition. However, the facts that they were members of the lower class nobility, lacked institutionalized education and some of them even had to earn their living separate them from the previously active educated noble female artists. Their appearance was helped by the emerging system of literary institutions with the spread of the Hungarian language and the gesture of acceptance, since at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the finished literary work itself was more important than the level of elaboration of the text or its high literary status.

The “mesterkedő” poetry is mentioned as a key concept of the paper since from among the authors, István Csizi (1728–1805), Gergely Édes (1763–1847), Julianna Fábián, József Gvadányi (1725–1801) and Borbála Molnár can be related to the basics of János Arany’s study *Irányok* [*Directions*]. Arany calls a poet “mesterkedő” if he or she was active in the vicinity of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz’s poetic years and was not connected to any poetic schools. In recent research results, mostly in Gábor Vaderna’s monograph, *A költészet születése* (2017) [*The birth of poetry*] the movement is linked to a change in the function of the social role of poetry. Recognizing their poetic self-consciousness, these poets as opposed to inspired poets, perform poetry acquisition as a learned craft.

The chapter briefly summarizes the international system of relations in the history of ideas that fundamentally changed women’s role opportunities in the era (mainly as a result of the French Revolution).

Chapter II: In the first analytical chapter I examine the image of women in the journal *Uránia*. After pointing out that the female roles appear in very diverse and complex ways in the issues of the journal I deal with the desired and real target audience of *Uránia*, highlighting that the ideally imagined and actual reading habits differed. Then I interpret texts (*A’ Nemzetek’ külömb-féle Szokásai a’ Házasodáskor*, *A’ Módi*, *Egy Újj-házas’ Levelei Barátjához*) [*The Nations’ Different Habits of Marriage, The “Módi”, A Newly-Married’s Letters to a Friend*] in which the wife’s role is emphasized. As a summary, I state that they intend to depict, prescribe and record how women should ideally behave according to the era’s way of

thinking. While analyzing the text about various nations' marriage habits I highlight one West African example from the series of habits described. I point out that the text can be linked to Mungo Park's *Travels in the Interior of Africa*, as both texts feature the costume figure of Mumbo Jumbo, who incites wives to obedience as well as verifies the husband's power. The other two texts are interpreted consecutively because they show an example and a counter-example for the ideal wife's image. The wife's behavior in *A' Módi* is offending, her actions – such as maternal negligence, reading novels – portray her figure as an inverse of the roles expected of women. The represented woman image in the *Egy Újj-házasság Levelei Barátjához* shows the ideal wife's model.

In addition to this, I interpret how the gender roles are depicted in *Fanni hagyományai* [*Fanni's remains*]. I generate a new context around the text using Ferenc Bíró's, Attila Debreczeni's and Gábor Vaderna's virtue concepts stating that remarks aimed at refining morality can be found in the text. I support that the text goes beyond the intention of moral refining and I confirm the view that Fanni's figure can be interpreted as a counterexample, as she is unable to integrate into society, since the daughter's role is not followed by the realization of the wife's role. I raise the possibility that Fanni's story hides a duality, in the first two issues the cult of the sensitive heroine is depicted, while the third issue illustrates the moral counterexample of a girl who becomes victim to her passions.

Chapter III: This chapter focuses on the figure of Borbála Molnár. In my thesis I attempt to present the cross section of the oeuvre. I elaborate on Molnár's social status, education and motivation; her position in the canon, as well as the genres she employs. My starting point is the description of Borbála Molnár's reception history, after this I analyze her autobiography, *Molnár Borbála Életének Tüköre* (1794) [*The Mirror of Molnár Borbála's Life*], which was published in her second volume. During the interpretative work I explore how the autobiography composed by Molnár relates to the biographies written about her. I also paid attention to how Molnár's self-represented image appears in the autobiography, in which she uses the defining elements of her era's thinking: Greek mythology, and especially the figure of Büblisz, who appears as a kind of alter ego in the texts. I also mention the presence of religiosity due to the protracted process of secularization. I consider it notable that the issue of genre is presented in a complex way in the autobiography, which, due to its connection to the religious tradition, uses the genre patterns and traditions of the parable, prayer, psalm, and is also related to the novel of the era. At the heart of the work one can find a chain of female roles, namely the process how she changed from a girl to a bride. However, it cannot be

ignored that her marriage is not included in the text. If the meaning of the mirror in the title can be defined as example, then Molnár's text can also be read as the example of the girl's obedience, for whom the only solace is her faith in God. The dissertation raises the possibility that Molnár desired to exceed her literary place, but at the same time it states that her figure can be understood from the baroque's point of view rather than in relation to the emerging modernity.

I interpreted *Mesés Történetek* (1795) [*Fabulous Stories*] which was published in Molnár's *Negyedik Darab* [*Fourth Piece*] in terms of genre, the exemplary nature of female roles and moral refinement. In the case of the latter, I explored some elements related to *Fanni hagyományai*. I think this text can also be construed as an example(,) in which one of the two female characters embodies the ideal wife, while the other reaches this position after committing debauchery. The parable also highlights good marriage and the docile nature of women.

Chapter IV: The subject of this chapter is the epistolary poetry of the “kismesterek”. Through its examination the emerging system of the literary institutions' stratification as well as the structure of publicity can be revealed. The central figure is Borbála Molnár. I study four volumes in which her poetic correspondences were included. I review the epistles in chronological order and I examine her joint correspondence with Gergely Édes (1763–1847), István Csizi (1728–1805), József Gvadányi (1725–1801) and Krisztina Újfalvy. In the course of my work, I take into account the topics and language characteristic of the correspondence partners of different ranks and ages. The correspondence between Édes and Molnár mostly reflects on the joy of meeting a like-minded person. In their linguistic set the predominant elements are courtesy and praise. They touch on few topics and seek forms of appropriate addressing and writing. The epistles also reflect on the interoperability of the space between private and public discourses.

From Molnár and Csizi's correspondence volumes, I analyze the 1797 edition (*Főstrázsamester Csizi Istvánnak nemes Molnár Borbálával az erkölts pallérozását, és a szív megjobbítását tárgyazó verses levelezései*) [*Major István Csizi's Poetic Correspondence with the Noble Borbála Molnár Concerning Moralization and the Enhancement of the Heart*] in a detailed way. In doing so I pay attention to the realization of community building and the way moral refinement is displayed. Csizi introduces Molnár to the readers in the *Preface*, thus portraying himself as the female author's legitimizer. Conversation and community building can be related to the two authors in the narrower sense, and can be linked to József Gvadányi

and his circle in a broader sense. Its members were able to publish their works with the help of the Count, thus creating a larger readers' community and transferring the ideas conveyed in the volumes to these readers. Molnár cites Gvadányi as an example for a person with ideal virtue, stating that he can be the person whom the wished reader should follow.

In the correspondence between József Gvadányi and István Csizi I elaborate on how Molnár is formed and initiated as a poet, so how her figure is legitimized. In the texts of Gvadányi and Molnár, I also analyze how the construction of the female author's figure is realized and I review the way how the different ranks appear in the epistles.

The novelty of Molnár and Újfalvy's volume (*Barátsági vetélkedés...*, 1804) [*Delicate Competition between Friends*] is that a female author acts in a legitimizing role, as Újfalvy is symbolically led into the public space by Molnár. In my subchapter I deal with the representation of women's education and moral refinement. I state that the image of women in Molnár's lines seem to match the wishes of men. Újfalvy, referring to the lack of (role) possibilities, conveys a more modern conception. I relate the volume to a contemporary ethics, thus showing the connections between the different genres.

Chapter V: In this chapter I focus on Julianna Fábián's figure and her epistolary volume (*Verses levelezés, a' mellyet folytatott gróf Gvadányi József Magyar Lovas Generális Nemes Fábián Juliannával*, 1798) [*Poetic correspondence between Count József Gvadányi, Hungarian Equestrian General and Noble Julianna Fábián*] containing the letters exchanged with József Gvadányi. I examine what the correspondence reveals about Fábián Julianna's personality, what she communicates about herself, and how Gvadányi relates to it. I attempt to describe how the linguistic process of self-representation takes place and how the epistles relate to the available biographical data. In my analysis I point out that the volume offers the interpretative possibility according to which in the volume the certification of Fábian's poetess role and the glorification of Gvadányi's mentoring role are realized in parallel. I point out that Gvadányi also wants to create a reading audience with the volume. I state that Fabian's autobiography captures a typical female life path: her role as a wife and as a mother is more emphasized than her personality. However, there are no typically feminine topics in the epistles, which are markedly presented in the volume of Molnár and Újfalvy. The topic of Fabian's masterpiece, the recording of the earthquake of 1763 in Komárom, is also an atypical female theme. During the interpretation I highlight how Gvadányi realizes his role as a mentor by showing how the boot maker's wife becomes a poetess. I also pay attention to an important philosophical problem of the era, which (after the Lisbon earthquake of 1755) allowed space

for scientific thinking instead of a world interpretation based on divine revelation. Furthermore, I write about the genre complexity of this masterpiece.

Chapter VI: The sixth unit of the dissertation contains the female image and interpretation possibilities of the sensitive play translation, *A máriavári hajadon* (1799) [*The Maiden of Máriavár*], which has survived under the name of Krisztina Újfalvy. After the presentation of the manuscript and the original German work on which it is based, I elaborate on the contemporary situation of the Hungarian drama and theatre. In connection with the characters, I define that based on the literature, Péter can be identified with Tsar Peter I the Great (1672–1725). I also define that the heroine, Katinka can be identified with the Russian Empress Catherine I (1684–1727), who is Peter I's lover, then his wife and, after his death, his follower on the throne.

Regarding the structure of the text I note that the unfolding conflict (the search for Katinka and the relationship between the tsar and Katinka) is more related to the territory of private life, but it is not without its public character. I interpret the detail, in which Katinka imagines herself as a ruler, as a key scene. The ending (the fulfillment of Katinka and Péter's love) conforms to the conventions of the sensitive play, the closing does not involve impairment, virtue wins its reward. In analyzing Katinka's character, I explore how determination, helpfulness and actions against injustice define her figure. In my view, the play traditionally depicts her as if she was in possession of male virtues, so she goes beyond the traditional female features.

Chapter VII: In the final analytical chapter I deal with the poems of Judit Dukai Takách, which were published in journals (*Erdélyi Múzeum, Aurora, Hébé, az Aspasia*). I think the poems depict the poet's diverse themes which are connected by her imitation of the patterns of the poetic tendencies of her age and they are characterized by the features of educated conversation. Concerning the applied themes and genres I write that one can find very personal poems (*Juliskám halálára, Wesselényi, Döbrentei*) [*On my Juliska's Death, Wesselényi, Döbrentei*] as well as texts about the homeland and glorification poems. (*Békességgkívánás, A hazához*) [*Wishing for peace, To my Homeland*]. Like other women writers, Dukai Takách could only publish with male legitimizing help, but her special role is clearly indicated by the fact that she published together with the most acclaimed contemporary artists, and that she was invited to Count György Festetics' Keszthely Helikon Festival as the only woman. She is separated from the other female writers discussed in the



dissertation by several factors (descent, upbringing, literary relations). Her character is an example that – as a result of a lucky interplay – at the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century she already had the opportunity to appear in the literary publicity among male authors, and compose in the elite literary genres of the era.

Conclusion: The dissertation – through the interpretation of texts written by and about women – points out the characteristic features of women images and female roles at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The included women writers' (Judit Dukai Takách, Julianna Fábián, Borbála Molnár, Krisztina Újfalvy) oeuvres (re)discovery can only be fulfilled if their texts are examined regularly.

I hope and wish to be able to contribute to this work with my dissertation.



Nyilvántartási szám: DEENK/103/2021.PL  
Tárgy: PhD Publikációs Lista

Jelölt: Balog Edit Otilia  
Doktori Iskola: Irodalom- és Kultúratudományok Doktori Iskola  
MTMT azonosító: 10077211

### **A PhD értekezés alapjául szolgáló közlemények**

#### Magyar nyelvű könyvrészletek (6)

1. **Balog, E. O.:** A virtus diadala: Újfalvy Krisztina A' Máriavári Hajadon című, kéziratban maradt érzékenyjáték-fordításának értelmezési lehetőségei.  
In: "Közöttünk a Mester": Tanítványi Köszöntőkötet a 60 éves Debreczeni Attila tiszteletére.  
Szerk.: Bódi Katalin, Bodrogi Ferenc Máté, Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, Debrecen, 151-162, 2019. ISBN: 9789633181188
2. **Balog, E. O.:** Episztolák a társalgás, a közösségteremtés és az erkölcsnemesítés jegyében: Csizi István és Molnár Borbála verses levelezése.  
In: Kor/társ : Kapcsolat, háló(zat) és közösség az 1800 előtti Európában : Fialatok Konferenciája 2018. Szerk.: Erdődi Alexandra Anita, Finta Mária Anna, Molnár Annamária, Virág Csilla, Vrabély Márk, Reciti, Budapest, 9-21, 2019. ISBN: 9786155478802
3. **Balog, E. O.:** A két nagyságos elme (ön)reprezentációja.  
In: Az ember - kultúrtörténeti és poétikai megközelítésben : Fialatok Konferenciája 2016.  
Szerk.: Déri Eszter, Dóbék Ágnes, Görög Dániel, Markó Anita, Maróthy Szilvia, Reciti, Budapest, 193-204, 2017. ISBN: 9786155478321
4. **Balog, E. O.:** Az Uránia célközönsége: szándék és valóság.  
In: Szöveg, hordozó, közösség: Olvasóközönség és közösségi olvasmányok a régi magyar irodalomban : Fialatok Konferenciája 2015. Szerk.: Gesztelyi Hermina, Görög Dániel, Maróthy Szilvia, Reciti, Budapest, 11-20, 2016. ISBN: 9786155478246
5. **Balog, E. O.:** Az önkonstruálás a(z ön)reprezentáció és a költőnévé válás alakzatai Fábíán Julianna és Gvadányi József levelezésében.  
In: Filológia és irodalom : tanulmányok a Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem Irodalomtudományi Doktori Iskolájának Kárpát-medencei irodalmi MA- és PhD-hallgatók számára rendezett Filológia és irodalom című konferenciáján elhangzott előadásokból.  
Szerk.: Tompa Zsófia, Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, Budapest, 205-233, 2013, (Pázmány irodalmi műhely. Opuscula litteraria, ISSN 1589-9446 ; 4) ISBN: 9789633081471





6. **Balog, E. O.:** A női és férfivirtus diskurzusa a felvilágosodás kori társadalmi nem reprezentációjában.

In: Tanulmányok a klasszikus magyar irodalom köréből. Összeáll.: Imre László, Gönczy Monika, Debreceni Egyetemi K., Debrecen, 54-70, 2010, (Studia Litteraria, ISSN 0562-2867 ; 48.) ISBN: 9789633181270

Magyar nyelvű tudományos közlemények hazai folyóiratban (1)

7. **Balog, E. O.:** Az "okos leány" (Kéri Katalin Női élet, leánynevelés az újkorban).  
*Alföld. 68 (6), 117-121, 2017. ISSN: 0401-3174.*

Magyar nyelvű konferencia közlemények (3)

8. **Balog, E. O.:** Az "ihletett szív s nyílt ész lángigéje": Dukai Takách Judit folyóiratokban publikált költeményei.

In: Tavaszi szél. Szerk.: Szabó Csaba, Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, Budapest, 509-517, 2018. ISBN: 9786155586316

9. **Balog, E. O.:** A nőnevelés kérdésköre Molnár Borbála és Újfalvy Krisztina "barátsági vetélkedésében" és a korabeli közgondolkodásban.

*Publ. Univ. Misk. Sec. Phil. 19, 24-30, 2015. ISSN: 1219-5448.*

10. **Balog, E. O.:** Adalékok a magyar felvilágosodás nőképéhez.

In: Tavaszi Szél 2014 Konferencia VI.: Spring Wind 2014. Szerk.: Csiszár Imre, Kőmíves Péter Miklós, DOSZ, Debrecen, 9-15, 2014. ISBN: 9786158004442

**További közlemények**

Egyéb folyóiratközlemények (8)

11. **Balog, E. O.:** Kötetbe zárt dalok.

*Kulter.hu 2017, [1-9], 2017.*

12. **Balog, E. O.:** A Vad Fruttk tudja milyen.

*Kulter.hu 2016, [1-9], 2016.*

13. **Balog, E. O.:** Daru mindenki: Daru én is vagyok.

*Palócföld. 61 (2), 85-88, 2015. ISSN: 0555-8867.*

14. **Balog, E. O.:** Likó Marcell, az az Egy.

*Kulter.hu. 2015, [1-7], 2015.*

15. **Balog, E. O.:** Nyelven kívüli többnyelvűség: a meg nem értettség regénye.

*Vörös Postakocsi. 2014, 116-118, 2014. ISSN: 1789-4697.*

16. **Balog, E. O.:** Szellemes társadalomkritika: meseszerű realitás.

*Vörös Postakocsi. 2013, [1-8], 2013. ISSN: 1789-4697.*





17. **Balog, E. O.:** Szerepek, esetek, vallomások.  
*Vörös Postakocsi. 2013, [1-13], 2013. ISSN: 1789-4697.*
18. **Balog, E. O.:** Hol a határ, ha nincs határ.  
*litera.hu 2007, [1], 2007.*

A DEENK a Jelölt által az IDEa Tudóstérbe feltöltött adatok bibliográfiai és tudománymetriai ellenőrzését a tudományos adatbázisok és a Journal Citation Reports Impact Factor lista alapján elvégezte.

Debrecen, 2021.03.17.

