

**Fazekas Sándor: „The multilingual Interpreter”. The Sources, Genres and the Historical Aspects of „Sebes agynak késő sisak” („Late Helmet for a Wounded Brain.”)  
– Summary–**

The cycle of poems entitled “*Sebes agynak késő sisak*” is remarkable among the poetical sources of the history of the Thirty Years’ War, however, in spite of this attention some questions are yet to be answered. The collection which shows the most important persons and countries of this European war was analysed by Tibor Komlovszki, who considered this work to be an example of the Hungarian mannerism—the theory of which was created by Tibor Klaniczay—as a protestant and neostoical piece of poetry of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Komlovszki published the critical edition of this work in the series of the RMKT (Collection of the Old Hungarian Poets), linking it to Andras Pragai’s poems. The cycle aroused several other researchers’ interest – for example Bálint Keserű’s and Sándor Bene’s –, but the further analysis has been narrowed down strictly by the missing original text, which is mentioned in the subtitle of the collection; and about which there are only different hypotheses. Some of the scientists suspected a political art gallery in the background of this work. I began the research together with my colleague, Levente Juhász,<sup>1</sup> and finally, I was the lucky one to identify the source of the poems beyond any doubt. It can be found in the collection of Sándor Apponyi in the National Library of Hungary, its signature is App. Hung. 2024. The source is a late humanist richly engraved poem-collection: *Elegidia et poematia epidictica...*<sup>2</sup> created by Johann Joachim Rusdorf, published in 1631, with the fictive location of printing: Uppsala (in fact in Frankfurt am Main), without the name of the author. According to the Rusdorf-copies of 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Evangelical Archive of Hungary, the attribution was well-known in that age too. However, the fictive printing place was revealed by the Antiquarian Booksellers Association and Löwendahl Rare Books, and was approved by the inscription in the volume which can be found in the University Library in Uppsala.<sup>3</sup> According to all the information mentioned above, the printer was Friedrich Hulsius. On the other hand, the British Library Catalogue identifies the engraver, Crispijn van de Passe the younger, and mentions Paris as the location of the printing referring to his contemporaneous residence. I think that the real question is not about the correct place of printing, but about the reason why the print wants to identify itself as a book which was printed in Uppsala. The answer may be in connection with the Swedish offense at that time, the aim of which was to free the protestant German lands from the Catholic despotism. After summarizing the philological, historical and cultural historical aspects of the poems the paper attempts to answer why the Hungarian translation has such heterogeneous contents and how it is possible that can a work like this has so much different aspects. The reason why it is so is complicated, too: on one hand, we can find it in the historical and cultural circumstances, on the other hand, in the work itself. The former components are well-known: the age of the translation is the age of the last flourishing period of Transylvania, and it has not only political and economical, but also cultural aspects. The translator of the poems came from the intellectual community called the “Heidelbergian peregrinators” already by the contemporaries, which was one of the most educated intellectual groups in the intellectual life of that age in the Hungarian language-area. In addition, the

---

<sup>1</sup> We also made together the joint edition of the latin text, the engravings and the emendated Hungarian text.

<sup>2</sup> The whole title on the first, engraved titlepage is the following: *ELEGIDIA ET POEMATIA epidictica unâ Cum ad vivum expressis Personarum iconibus*. Impressa Uppsaliae. (*Praising Elegies and Poems with the lively-expressed portraits of persons. Printed in Uppsala*). On the inner titlepage: *ELEGIDIA ET POEMATIA EPIDICTICA praecipuas praecipuorum & maxime clarorum virorum, qui hoc tempore in primis vixerunt & innotuerunt. Virtutes & actiones ac totius Europae praesentem & futurum statum instantia; Anno MDCXXXI. (Praising Elegies and Poems introducing the most excellent and famous, living and well-known gentlemen. Virtues and actions, and the present and future condition of the whole Europe. Anno 1631).*

<sup>3</sup> For this information I would like to thank Jürgen Beyer.

original Latin version was created by an unfairly forgotten figure of that era, who can be classified as an important eyewitness of the war because of his rich juristic-humanist erudition and the involvement in the contemporary historical events and his objective point of view is not distorted by the very deep national, religious and social conflicts of that age. It is an exciting historical period of ideas, because the era of 'non-renaissance hermetism', 'enthusiasts' (using the terms of Bálint Keserű) and prophecies brought a massive intellectual fermentation both in the religious and the secular culture. At the same time the power of the religious orthodoxy was also rising, indicating a further intellectual evolution: for instance, the counter-reformation of Jesuits brought along not only confessional conflicts but also a new concept of culture and a very effective educational system; and it can be said of the Protestant orthodoxy (the Calvinist and the Lutheran), too. The incredibly rich and complicated historical events, literary and subliterate production of the Thirty Years' War is added to form the complicated network of motifs and manners of speech; most of which are reflected in the translation. It is because the literary genre of the original couldn't have been transcribed into Hungarian without alteration, as that was an unfamiliar Neolatin structure and partly unconventional in the contemporary Hungarian literature. The interpreter filled this strange structure with the contemporary patterns and genres of the Hungarian tradition, he didn't translate it in a servile way, but, as it will be shown in the paper, changed and adopted the Latin poems to the taste of the Hungarian readers. At first, I summarize the most important information about the author of the Latin original, and introduce the oeuvre which contains this cycle of poems. Afterwards, I analyze the differences between the different versions of the Latin text, and the domestic elements of the collection, which has been adopted successfully to the Hungarian literary tradition by the interpreter. With this analysis my paper thinks over the attribution of the text to reach a more convincing result about the author of the text with further arguments. This way the doctoral thesis would like to follow the transmutation of the Neolatin traditions into a specific version of vernacular propaganda at the age of the Thirty Years' War, and what is more exciting, the way how the Hungarian poems preserve some of the properties of the Neolatin original. My method is a comparative philological one, but can't miss the historic, poetic or rhetorical aspects, either.

### **The comparison of the different versions of the original**

The original is known in several different text variants: the longest edition is entitled *Scena Europaea* [...], and was printed in 1628, without marking the place of the edition, and in 1631 again, in Stralsund. This variant is the only one with a preface; and this added text helps to analyse the structure of the collection. This structure on one hand applies the "all the world is a stage"-literary topos and on the other hand the state-body metaphor to introduce the different characters, to feature the contemporary kings, monarchs, generals and diplomats, at the beginning of the work and at the end of it the allegorical figures of the countries which suffered the war the most badly.

Besides, another version occurred apart from the main source, which is quite similar to the model of the Hungarian version. This variant is also called *Scena Europaea*, and contains another Hungarian figure besides Gabor Bethlen, the Prince of Transylvania, whose monologue can be found in each version. This new politician is István Bethlen, the governor of Transylvania, and brother of the prince. To put it shortly, the comparison showed that the translation is founded on the *Elegidia et poemata epidictica* [...], which was printed in 1631, with a fictive printing place, Uppsala, and it is likely to use this shorter version, too, without containing the poem about István Bethlen.

## The Analysis of the Cycles

To introduce the poems appearing both in “*Sebes agynak késő sisak*” and the *Elegidia* I summarize briefly the most important events of the characters’ life, then I also show the main differences between the two texts, and when it is necessary, I touch on the most important philological corrections on the Hungarian copy on the basis of the original. Since the genuine poems of the Hungarian version (General *Buquoi and Dampierre, Hungaria, Pope, Religio ad samaritanos Christianos*) show some notable differences compared to the translated ones from the Latin original, these five poems have to be attributed to the translator, who in that five cases can be by right called as an author. This translator had remarkable erudition, interpretational and poetical experiences, on one hand, he attempted to modulate, ornate his work, and on the other hand, to complete the original with important insertions from the religious and Hungarian point of view. These insertions had remarkable poetical wealth: the translator takes them out of not only the Greek-Roman literature and mythology but also the antique, European and of course the Hungarian history, stoical ethical wisdom, proverbs, or even fables full of moral cautions. After these remarks the question that who could be this erudite interpreter has become remarkably more important.

## The Author of the Hungarian Version

At the beginning of the research the attribution of Tibor Komlós, according to which András Pragai is the translator of the poem collection, can be falsified. The main source of Komlós’s argumentation which was the stoical motif and topos-collection came not from the translator and his other very remarkable work „*Fejedelmeknek serkentő órája*” (The Waking Clock of the Princes, printed in 1628 in Bártfa, based on the famous original written by Guevara) but the argumentation finds its origin in the Latin version itself. In spite of that the longer I analysed Pragai’s other work, the more interesting parallels came up between Pragai and the “*Sebes agynak késő sisak*”, which seem to confirm Komlós’s theory. This hidden joint components led to reveal the unclear aspects of the texts, and put both the likely author and his works into a new context. The preface of Pragai’s representative translation “*Fejedelmeknek serkentő órája*” has such kinds of sources, which can be used as an interpretational basis to the interpreter’s insertions of the “*Sebes agynak késő sisak*” about the concept of history and the ornamentation of the historical narration. From these sources (Johannes Heidfeld: *Sphinx theologico-philosophicus*, Herborn, 1600; Natale Conte: *Mythologia*, Hanau, 1605; Piero Valeriano: *Hieroglyphica*, Lyon, 1602) the effect of the last two works is detectable on the inlays of “*Sebes agynak késő sisak*”: The mythological examples embedded by the translator and the chameleon-“hieroglyph” of the Religion-poem at the end of the collection show the influence of this works, which are cited word by word in the preface of Pragai’s “*Fejedelmeknek serkentő órája*”. The argument which alludes that Pragai defended his theses under the most important theoretician of Irenism, David Pareus’s supervision, so Pragai also was a disciple of this peacemaker among the protestant confessions seems not to be decisive, since a quite attacking poem against the Jesuits by this Hungarian author is known. In addition, the preface of the “*Fejedelmeknek serkentő órája*” is even more offensive, so it shows clearly that Pragai became more radical after his peregrination under the Hungarian circumstances and under the pressure of the thirty year’s war (the Irenism did not effect the relations between the Catholics and the Protestants, only the inner relations of the Protestantism). Maybe the curious title of the collection (which means: “no use crying over spilt milk”) also becomes clear: behind the ironic title of the fight-exhortatory cycle stands the criticism against the overcautious politics of the new prince, György Rákóczi the First.