

Histories and songs

Each chapter of the dissertation discusses one particular formal-generic question of 16th century poetry. The topic of the first three chapters is the genre of *históriás ének* (»historical songs«) and the transference of this song group. The fourth chapter is devoted to the genre of denominational songs, with predominant focus on the trends related to the sixteenth century material. The fifth chapter explores the relationship between the apocalyptic poetry rooted in the Old Testament and the *históriás ének*. Through Miklós Bogáti Fazakas's Psalm translation, the sixth chapter investigates an important formal feature of sixteenth century poetry, the acrostic. The seventh chapter offers a comparison between works by well-known authors and the genre of denominational song. The final chapter argues that Sebestyén Tinódi, generally considered as the most characteristic author of historical songs, far from being the most typical among such authors, produced an oeuvre completely unparalleled in the sixteenth century.

The first chapter provides a detailed overview of scholarly opinions and classifications of the *históriás ének*, from the literary histories of Ferenc Toldy to recent times. Toldy examines the genre of historical songs in his two important literary histories (*A magyar nemzeti irodalom története*, *A magyar költészet története*). These works are often considered as the foundation for the thematic classification of the genre:

históriák (histories)		
széphistóriák (bella istoria)	históriás énekek (historical songs)	bibliai históriák (biblical histories)

It is, however, not always appropriate to point to Toldy's opinion as the root of this system. For it is obvious that the appearance of the phrases in the two great synthesising works is incidental. Therefore, it is not Toldy who is responsible for the use of *széphistória* as a term of generic history, but the 19th-20th century readers of Toldy. And this is also valid for the terms *históriás ének* and *bibliai história*. In fact, Toldy's account of literary history does not operate with systematic categories; it is more like a preliminary description before a more accurate settling down of the terminology. Nonetheless, it became the basis of a later, categorised system, which was built upon inaccurate terminology. Many other important studies have been completed later, and without exception they approach the topic independently from each other. Rarely ever does one encounter a common conceptual system in these. Although it

seems that Pál Erdélyi had read Toldy's previous works, he fails to take them into account as he is putting down his often rather hypothetical ideas. Frigyes Riedl discusses the genre for fifty pages without ever using the term *história*, using *epika* (epic) and *eposz* (epopee) instead. In Jenő Pintér's eyes, only those texts are regarded as *históriás ének* which have some direct bearing to Hungarian cultural history, a category which only covers Tinódi's texts about contemporary conditions. The way Bence Szabolcsi uses the term *históriás ének* is so hard to grasp that even his editor finds it necessary to add an explanation about the usage of the term. The academic literary history, being a monograph on the whole period, does not discuss the genre individually, but even these occasional mentions lack consistency. The monograph on Renaissance by one of the authors of this literary history, Béla Varjas is radically new. As he engages in a debate with the system of Ferenc Toldy, he in effect gives rise to it, and at once refines it, too. He further segments the triadic system of Toldy with many subcategories based on thematic aspects, and makes a distinction between 16th century epic, and the *históriás ének* so characteristic of the 16th century. This is a very delicate and important distinction, with only one flaw: while many texts are sorted under the label of *históriás ének*, no text whatsoever is included in the generic category of 16th century epic. Another breakthrough in the topic is Antal Pirnát's essay, which suggests an opposition between the fictitious fable and the *história*, which is about "lött dolgok," that is, actual historical events. The *Repertoire de la poésie hongroise ancienne* depicts the whole of 16th century verse material in a model independent from all previous systems, and this is the case with *história*, too. However, this tree-structured system puts too much emphasis on some allegedly genre-constituting features which are not necessarily so relevant. There are two authors in the volume *A Magyar Irodalom Története* who reflect on the *históriás ének*. Géza Orlovsky underscores the way the genre intertwines with printing. István Vadai offers a meticulous study of the genre's relation to reality, resulting in the most accurate account of the genre so far.

After the lengthy introduction of the first chapter, the dissertation makes an attempt at establishing a concept of *história* that surpasses previous ones in terms of accuracy. The result is a system in which not fable, but *ének* (song) is opposed to the genre of *história*. In this system, *ének* is a genre which, in contrast to *história*, has a source (be it written source of reality as experience) containing direct authorial fiction. In this vein, a new reading approach is recommended in the case of the *Cantio de militibus pulchra*, an approach that is less referential than previous readings.

The third chapter is philological in nature. It deals with a particularly important source from the 16th century, the Hoffgreff-songbook. But before addressing the biggest problem with the volume (to wit, that the volume is fragmentary), it makes important excursions. On one hand, with respect to the verse corpus extant from the 16th century, it tries to recognise that it is basically written in nature not only during its phase of circulation, but already at its moment of origin. On the other hand, an overview of the transference of this predominantly written material is provided for each generic group. After these transference models have been established, and they have proved that even those verses which are only known from manuscript have originally appeared in print, the fragmentary nature of the Hoffgreff-songbook is discussed. The Hoffgreff-songbook contains biblical histories in an order more or less conforming to the order of the books of the Bible. Therefore, we can make an estimate about the content of the volume, which is fragmentary at its beginning, and occasionally elsewhere too: the verses missing from the beginning of the volume must be linked to the beginning of the biblical story. In the 16th century verse material, we are aware of verses which are extant only in such manuscripts that show overlaps with the Hoffgreff-songbook in the case of other texts as well. So these might well be the verses at the beginning of the volume. Since other length-related and philological arguments also support this relationship, the content of the songbook can be replenished with great certainty. This process, however, also modifies the already rather doubtful dating of the volume.

The fourth chapter considers the texts of the songbook published in 1582 in Detrekő, edited by Péter Bornemissza. Through a micro-philological examination of certain texts that are maintained by a particularly rare web of sources, it tries to re-evaluate the transmission of the verse material of the volume, in opposition to previous stemmas.

The fifth chapter offers an analysis of apocalyptic poetry based on the Old Testament. András Farkas's relatively early poem, which elaborates on the Jewish-Hungarian parallel, is juxtaposed with Gáspár Károlyi's *Két könyv*, and read as an apocalyptic text, where the melancholy conclusion would be an analogy drawn between the destruction of Jerusalem and the fulfilment of the Turkish threat, if Hungarians, like the Jews, failed to accept the God of Christians. One poem by András Batizi and one by András Dézsi turn back to the Hoffgreff problem: the subchapter seeks an explanation for the fact that Batizi's well-structured poem is split into two in the mentioned volume.

The seventh chapter is mostly devoted to Gergely Szegedi, and the texts attributed to him. It provides the reading of several texts connected to Szegedi, and in many cases argues that certain poems are to be read as the interpretation of images (something like an emblem),

whereas some other poems are to be read as denominational songs. Concerning the latter, it tries to prove that there is a striking similarity between Szegedi's paraphrase of the 10th Psalm and the first piece of Balassi's *Three Hymns to the Holy Trinity*, arguing that Balassi's text is not a stand-alone work, but a not too loose paraphrase of the tenth Psalm. Therefore, the role of the vates attributed to Balassi originates not from him, but from the Psalm text, and it is articulated in Szegedi as well. Attribution is called in doubt in the case of Mihály Kecskeméti Vég's 55th Psalm, and an attempt is made at the theological interpretation of the poem *Ferendum et sperandum*.

The last chapter sheds light upon the compositional techniques employed by Tinódi while constructing the *Cronica* in 1554. This is achieved through the interpretation of two texts by Tinódi. It argues that the tone of Tinódi's texts had been much different before coming out in print, and because of these editorial features, Tinódi cannot be regarded as a representative author of the 16th century.