

The rhetoric of defence. Ways of text organisation in Unitarian polemics of the mid-18th century

1. Research goal and the background of the research topic

The topic of the dissertation is exploring and presenting the text organising methods of Unitarian polemical literature of the 18th century. It analyses manuscripts from a field which is barely known to the current inland research. The treatment of this yet almost unexplored area has seemed promising – in spite of the common opinion that the relationship of 18th-century Transylvanian cultural and literary history are still lesser known than that of the previous and following periods –, because current research contributed to putting into context the results of work conducted in this field.

The dissertation focuses on Unitarian polemical literature. The cooperation of researchers from Kolozsvár and Szeged with research groups has made it possible to extend the scope of the study to periods earlier than the 16th-17th centuries. As the members of the Unitarian denomination only rarely printed their works from the end of the 16th century to the end of the 18th century, substantial preparatory work had to be done to gain basic insights into this written body of literature, which mostly existed in manuscript form only and had sunken into oblivion.

II. Exploration of sources, research methods

It is of great importance that, in the decades after the political changes in Rumania, scientific research became possible in the manuscript collection of the two Transylvanian libraries in which the most significant monuments of this body of literature were preserved. One of them is the Manuscript Archives of the Unitarian College, the collection of which is to be found in the library of the Kolozsvár office of the Rumanian Academy of Sciences; the other one is the material of the Unitarian College of Székelykeresztúr, which is kept presently at the ‘Teleki Téka’ (Teleki-Bolyai Library). The catalogue of the considerably larger collection at Kolozsvár available on site was assembled by decades of comprehensive work by Elemér Lakó, the revised and corrected English version of which was published in 1997 by the research group led by Bálint Keserű; whereas the catalogue of the Unitarian material of the ‘Teleki Téka’ compiled by the library’s staff and completed with the corrections of

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It is considered to be an important development and great help that the processing of the manuscriptal church history written in the 18th century advances effectively, the first two volumes of which originate from János Kénosi Tózsér and István Uzoni Fosztó, and whose third volume, which is especially important to us, can be linked to Mihály Kozma Snr, together with János and Mihály Kozma. First, the Latin original of the two volumes came out, then the translation of the first two volumes by Albert Márkus was published, while the publication of the Hungarian translation by the same author is also in preparation, which I had the pleasure to use by favour of the research group. Apart from these, I was supported by the catalogues of the manuscript archives of the National Széchényi Library, which is to be regarded as the most important collection in present-day Hungary from the point of view of Unitarianism.

III. The major results of the dissertation

With the help of the aforementioned team and my supervisor, the texts suitable for rhetorical-poetical analysis were chosen. The genres and selected literary works which seemed appropriate for rhetorical-poetical analysis were sorted out through restricting the number of corpora reviewed on the basis of their title or record. The Unitarian texts preserved in 18th-century copies are of a great diversity, the restriction of printing had the result that the texts used in everyday church life could also be spread in manuscript form only. The composite volumes that came into being this way contain texts which were in actual use in the church life of the 18th century (theological tractates, sermons, catechisms, contemplations, prayers, congregational songs), and a set particularly suitable for rhetorical-poetical analysis could be successfully singled out from these.

The dialogue entitled „*The discourse of two children of different religions*” (*Különböző vallású két gyermeknek egymás között való beszélgetések*) can be regarded as the starting point, as this text was dealt with by the author in her earlier studies. The main aim was to prove – primarily through rhetorical-poetical analysis – that the positive features apparent in the composition of this dialogue were not independent from the fact that diverse traditions of this genre could be detected in 16th-18th-century Unitarian literature. Although the dissertation is centred on the rhetorical-poetical analysis, it does not fail to outline the theological message either. In the course of it, it preferred topics that directly concerned the

functioning of institutes of cultural historical importance in the 18th century. This way, a subsection has been devoted to the different characteristics of Catholic and Unitarian churches and schools. In the former case, the disputation about cult and devotion of church images has been analysed most thoroughly. The analysis ventures here to set the participants' arguments in the context of the Hungarian and Transylvanian disputes about the issue. In presenting the argument about the operation of schools, the frequently opposing educational ideals and methods are sketched. In the course of the related rhetoric analysis, the above mentioned early 18th-century text has been acknowledged as a late piece of the genre *reformation dialogue*, which preserved traits from the positive features developed in the 16th century.

Further chapters of the dissertation undertake – in other genres of Unitarian polemical literature (prophetic treatises, treatises featuring dreams and visions, polemical letters) – the task of presenting the genre-historically productive texts of the unique situation of 18th-century Unitarianism, which were mostly forced to remain in manuscript form through restrictions.

In András Losonczy's treatise entitled *The weapon of our valour (Vitézségünknek fegyvere)*, a certain trait appears which has obvious connections with world literature: the author, a former member of the Reformed church who converted to Unitarianism, tells the story of his conversion with allusions to the most famous chapter of St. Augustine's *Confessions*. A vividly descriptive vision is also brought up as the reason for the composition of the text in the conclusion; therefore a well-grounded recommendation can be made to rate this unacknowledged work as a distinguished writing from a rhetorical-poetical perspective. Although contrasting it with one of the most significant Latin source, Hermann Röell's outstanding treatise, could not be brought about, it was nevertheless possible to establish that this piece of literature is also significant from the point of view of intellectual history. It is also interesting from the perspective of the history of Bible translations that the Unitarian author expresses criticism about the Hungarian translation of three parts in Gáspár Károli's version of the Bible. On the one hand, this fact serves as another piece of evidence that the Unitarians lacking an own translation used the Bible of Vizsoly, in which they strictly revised the substantial parts from the point of view of Trinitarianism. On the other hand, it proves the validity of Losonczy's corrections that the variants proposed by the Unitarian polemicist made their way into the final text in the course of later corrections of Bible passages.

The dissertation goes on to analyse the debate between István Daniel and Mihály Kozma Snr. Daniel's opposite conversion became widely known not only in its age, but it is never failed to be mentioned in scientific summaries dealing with the 18th century. At the

same time, no one ventured its detailed presentation in the literature, only a study about his biography was published. The analysis confirmed some of its important observations, but the detailed presentation of the context threw new light even on them. It has become clear that the piece of writing itself had been composed in a polemical situation, the exploration of which made the apologetic description of the substantial biographical episodes more understandable.

In the course of work, it became apparent that Daniel's opponent, Mihály Kozma Snr, played a key role in the establishment of the Unitarians' defensive strategy in the middle of the century. Many contemporary writings of importance (as András Losonczi's text) have been preserved in his translation, and there a great number of copies that contain the texts by representatives of contemporary European heterodox streams. Thus, it cannot be accidental that it is exactly him who engages himself in the polemical battle against the reformed baron, and its analysis entirely missing from research publications up to now enriched our knowledge about the confessional relations in 18th-century Transylvania with many novel elements. Of course, it has become the focus of attention how Kozma destroys the self-portrait Daniel created of himself. By analysing his works it could be demonstrated that he does not stop here but by developing the metaphor of the *road* in detail, he creates an impressive and well-structured text in his most voluminous work. *The Guide (Útmutató)* can be regarded as the best written Unitarian piece of the long-standing polemics. Notwithstanding, it had to be stated that his later works written against Daniel Kozma did not reach similar high standards. The occasionally drastic, direct exhibition of his desperate imprecations, his gloat over the hardships his opponent faced did not favour the more abstract, literary language. In analysing the theological message, it can be demonstrated on the basis of Mihály Szentábrahádi Lombard's great theological taxonomy that Kozma followed the dogmatic guideline evolved in his bishop's milieu in all respects. Here, it can be supported by important quotations that the non-adorantism which he knew about on the basis of a 16th-century work written in the defence of Ferenc Dávid, was not acceptable even for Kozma, as a significant citation demonstrates.

The points of departure in the last chapter of the dissertation are the letters which again were written a few years later by Mihály Kozma to Ferenc Gálfalvi, who was abandoning the Unitarian faith. As the text has been preserved in several copies, one of which contains Kozma's later marginalia, we can conclude that this exchange of letters served as an example of perseverance and persistence to the confession later in the Unitarian community. This assumption demanded more throughout orientation in Unitarian practice and in the question what precursors this genre had in the earlier periods of polemics. The overview going back to

Martin Luther attempts to demonstrate that quite many uses of the genre *epistle* can be attested in the Hungarian literature of earlier periods, and that taking this context into consideration may shed light on novel features in the reviewed 18th-century Unitarian epistles.

IV. The possibilities of utilising the results

Although the dissertation looks upon the explored texts as pieces of literary fiction, i.e. it is not concerned about their historical accuracy, the outlining of the historical situation in which they were composed is essential for their literary analysis. For this reason, the present work begins with a chapter that deals with the question what can be known about the 18th-century situation of the community according to the most recent findings of historical research. Nevertheless, the main aim of the dissertation is to draw conclusions about the history of the genre. One of these conclusions is that necessity, discrimination and restraint, isolation forced on a community can lead to interesting literary results. Moreover, it can be instructive with respect to other historical periods that this kind of forced confinement in traditions could have contributed to their more intensive preservation than usual. Yet unexplored periods of several genres (dialogue, epistle, contemplative treatise) are presented in the dissertation. As these are present in Hungarian literature before and after the discussed period, the dissertation contributes to a better understanding of their history. From this point of view, it is of significance that the Appendix publishes texts for the first time that have been hardly accessible even for researchers, in a way readable for the public but with academic undertaking. These can be possibly put to use in higher education in the future.

V. Publications related to the topic of the dissertation

Egy ismeretlen XVIII. századi dialógusról (In: Irodalmi, stilisztikai és ének-zenei tanulmányok. Hangay Zoltán (ed.). A Budapesti Tanítóképző Főiskola Tudományos Közleményei, BTF, Budapest, 1997. 11-34.)

Ariadné fonala. A mesereprodukció formái. (In: Művészeti nevelés kora gyermekkorban. Módszertani kaleidoszkóp, Podráczky Judit (ed.). Budapest, 2013. 73-81.)

Egy 18. századi unitárius dialógus a képek imadásáról, *Keresztény Magvető*, No. 2013/3., 295-310.

Szemléletváltás az óvodai és iskolai nyelvi hátrány leküzdésében, part I, *Óvodai Nevelés*, Vol. 2008/11.

Szemléletváltás az óvodai és iskolai nyelvi hátrány leküzdésében, part II, *Óvodai Nevelés*, Vol. 2009/1.

On an unknown discourse – The cultural historical background of a work on religious polemics titled „The discourse of two children of different religions” (In: School and theatre in the Past and Nowadays – Az iskolai színhátság múltja és jelene. Technical edition: Gradiato, Miskolc, 2002)

Egy unitárius Szent Ágoston milánói kertjében. Losonczy B. András megtérése
(To appear in the journal *Keresztény Magvető*, Vol. 2014/1)