

University of Szeged – Doctoral School of Literature

László Borsodi

**METAPHORICAL POETIC DISCOURSE,
ROLE-PLAY AND CYCLE FORMATION
IN ISTVÁN BAKA'S POETRY**

*The Landscape with Prayer
as a Reorganized Poetic Testament*

Doctoral Dissertation Abstract

Thesis supervisor:
Dr. habil. Attila Bombitz

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1. Topic and Objectives of the Doctoral Dissertation

My thesis is the reception aesthetics based interpretation of István Baka's volume entitled *Tájkép fohással* [*Landscape with Prayer*] (Jelenkor, Pécs, 1996), displaying the life work as complete and definitive through the authorial canonizing gesture, thus regarded as a poetic testament, as the source of the life work edition.

The specific poetic character of Baka's poetry is provided by the lyrical principle¹ that manifests in the confinement of the metaphorical poetic language created through the specific interaction of the topoi and motifs, in the role variants, masks and alter egos of the poems functioning in inter- and intratextual relation, graspable in displacements and reinterpretations, forming cycles, its basis being provided by the late modern world and language conception. Baka's poetry confronts us with the experience of the dominance and

¹ In the introduction of my paper – mainly referring to László FÜZI's study entitled *A mai magyar költészet és a társadalom* [*Contemporary Hungarian Poetry and Society*] (Tiszatáj, 1995/12., 43–64.) – I also touch upon the poetic factors as well as the factors related to the changes of society that led István Baka to the ars poetica which regards the artwork as an exclusively linguistic construct.

precedence of language. Baka's poetics is role poetry in which, through the intertextual procedures, an interpretation of (textual) tradition and culture as well as world creation through language takes place. The self of the texts is created by language. Thus language is not subordinated to the self, conversely, the self is the product of language.² Everything can be read in function of this late modern concept of language and identity³ and ideal of creation: the world (of metaphor) as linguistic universe, God as metaphor and the various masks as the figurations of the possibility of interpreting tradition. This is why contrary to the majority of the part-studies dealing with particular volumes and the synthesis type studies analysing the whole poetic oeuvre, I do not separate the metaphorical poetic language of Baka's

² Cf. KULCSÁR-SZABÓ Zoltán: „Én” és hang a líra peremvidékén [“Self” and Voice on the Boundary of Lyrics], in: KULCSÁR-SZABÓ Zoltán: *Metapoétika. Önreprezentáció és nyelvszemlélet a modern költészetben* [Metapoetics. Self-Representation and Language Concept in Modern Poetry], Kalligram, n. p., 2007, 80–143., here: 83.

³ Zoltán KULCSÁR-SZABÓ regards that in late modernism the concept of the self is shaken in its privileged relation with language, as it is confronted with the dimensions of its own conditionedness/contingency. Cf. *Poétika és poetológia (Gottfried Benn)* [Poetics and Poetology (Gottfried Benn)], in: KULCSÁR-SZABÓ Zoltán: *Metapoétika* [Metapoetics], 295–366., here: 311.

poetry from the issue of role-play, what is more, I extend the latter to his early poetry as well, which is also unusual in the discourse so far.

Based on the late modern language concept assimilating the foreign to the own and folding the own onto the other, thus making the poetic language polyphonic, on the role-play and mask-wearing as interpretation of tradition, as well as on the thus created multilayered metaphoric poetic universe displaying an apocalyptic world concept, I speak about István Baka's *poetries* rather than about his poetry. The plural form is also justified by the effect of the role-players that can be traced back to Baka's literary translations, to the interpretation of the Russian, Lithuanian, Latvian, Swedish, Bulgarian and several other codes (cultures, languages and traditions) as well as the universe of their imagery which create a reception aesthetics based dialogue among the distinct layers of Baka's poetry qualified as "original" and "translation". I neither discuss the cycle formation as a procedure separated from language, imposed upon the poems from the outside, but rather as part of the metaphorical language, since the cycles as linguistic formations constitute the framework of the role-players as metaphorical figurations interpreting tradition and culture. Thus in my thesis the interpretation of the metaphorical and role-playing poetic

language is connected with the examination of the poetic concept which also reveals the reason for the cycle changes and the role changes often related to these.

In the interpretation of the connections between the metaphorical poetic language, role-play and cycle formation extended to the whole poetics I examine, on the one hand, how the poetic image works as a world constructing procedure and, on the other hand, how in this metaphorical view⁴ the creation of images is subordinated to a “world creating gesture and the narrative principle inherent in it”⁵ in the role poems, how the image becomes the basis of the constitution of mask-wearing, thus of understanding, through intertextual procedures, culture and the world as well as the basis of the reinterpretation of various traditions; and vice versa: how the role-players of language create the imagery of this poetics, i.e. its cultural-poetical time and space. I also

⁴ Cf. SZIGETI Lajos Sándor: „*Metaforákkal tele, megjelenik a líra szelleme*”. *A palackba zárt szonett szabadulása* [“*Full of metaphors, the spirit of lyrics appears*”. *The Escape of the Sonnet Closed into a Bottle*], Tiszatáj, 1996/9., 107–114., here: 113.

⁵ PAPP Ágnes Klára: *Szépség és harmónia hermeneutikája. Baka István Tájkép fohással című kötetéről* [*Hermeneutics of Beauty and Harmony. On István Baka's Volume Entitled Landscape with Prayer*], Nappali Ház, 1996/4., 75–79., here: 76.

interpret according to this concept the self-reflexive feature of the poetic language (r)evaluating itself and culture thus taking possession of the world, reflecting on its own materiality and on the process of creation,⁶ which also raises the issue of the relationship between the lyrical I and the role, that of identity and self-understanding.

The aim of my thesis is to shed light upon István Baka's poems and cycles as artworks constructing various roles, masks, alter egos and discourses, setting cultures and languages in motion, being themselves constructed through these, being continuously created and shaped in the infinite process of reception, in which the relationship between the role and the (lyrical) I can be conceived in their interdependence,⁷ and upon the fact that the self-understanding of both the alter egos creating worlds (being created themselves) and the receiver interpreting thus twice fictionalized textual universes has a projection-like character, "taking place in the state of being of continuous detachment

⁶ Cf. NAGY Gábor: *A lírai önértelmezés Baka István költészetében* [*Lyrical Self-Interpretation in István Baka's Poetry*], Hittel, 1995/7., 87–94., here: 87–88.

⁷ Cf. KULCSÁR-SZABÓ Zoltán: „Én” és hang a líra peremvidékén [*“Self” and Voice on the Boundary of Lyrics*], 85.

from itself”.⁸ This projection-like character, the detachment from the self, the multitude of roles question the possible unity of the world(s) and self/selves. In this case, however, subjectivity is no longer subjectivity, and there is no *single* coherent (lyrical) I that the speakers point at and mark off its textual position. Consequently, in Baka’s poems the self can be grasped in its incessant dynamism, in its masks, in its gestures of identifying and distancing from the roles. This is the way in which these poems become, thanks to the modern poet’s procedure of creating (re-creating) myths, the indicators of individualized myths of the self,⁹ which manifests in the polyphonic character¹⁰ of the cycles resulting from each other, talking back to or reinterpreting each other, constructed with poetic consistency, as well as in the complexity of its role-players.

⁸ EISEMANN György: *Elsajátított idegenség és elidegenített azonosság, A modern lírai alany önértelmezésének történetiségéhez* [*Acquired Foreignness and Estranged Identity, To the Historicity of the Self-Interpretation of the Modern Lyrical Self*], in: Gábor Bednancies – Zoltán Kékesi – Ernő Kulcsár Szabó (eds.): *Identitás és kulturális idegenség* [*Identity and Cultural Foreignness*], Osiris, Budapest, 2003, 56–66., here: 56. See also: PAPP, 78.

⁹ Cf. KULCSÁR-SZABÓ Zoltán: „Én” és hang a líra peremvidékén [*“Self” and Voice on the Boundary of Lyrics*], 126.

¹⁰ Cf. PAPP, 78.

2. The Applied Method

The theoretical background of my reception aesthetics based interpretation is provided by Hans Robert Jauss's argumentation;¹¹ as regards the approach of the late modern character of the discussed poetics, I primarily rely on Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó's volume of studies entitled *Metapoétika* [*Metapoetics*] and István Fried's volume of studies entitled *Árnyak közt mulandó árny* [*Transient Shade among Shades*].¹²

As my thesis proposes to be the interpretation and re-reading of the poetical testament entitled *Tájkép fohással* [*Landscape with Prayer*] in a critical horizon, it carries out the interpretation as an organic whole of the textual universes (as poems and as cycles) reflecting upon one another, creating passages among one another through inter- and intratextual references in a way that in the meantime it engages in a

¹¹ Cf. JAUSS, Hans Robert: *Irodalomtörténet mint az irodalomtudomány provokációja* [*History of Literature as the Provocation of Literary Theory*], in: JAUSS, Hans Robert: *Recepció – esztétikai tapasztalat – irodalmi hermeneutika* [*Reception – Aesthetic Experience – Literary Hermeneutics*], Osiris, Budapest, 1999, 36–86.

¹² KULCSÁR-SZABÓ Zoltán, Kalligram, 2007; FRIED István, Tiszatáj Books, Szeged, 1999. Besides the mentioned ones, I also resort to several studies by Ernő KULCSÁR Szabó (see *Specialist Literature*).

dialogue with the major critical discourses of the reception of the works. This is why the method determining the interpretation of the volume and of István Baka's poetry is the dialogue, the polemics initiated with other interpretations, having in view that the starting point of the dialogue is the text of the poem always open towards the receiver as the origin of the receiver's addressedness, being aware of the fact that "reading can never unify meaning and understanding into a great unit",¹³ as the dialogical interrelatedness between the artwork and the receiver is "the need of interpreting the open and unfinished meaning which related this unfinishedness to the dialogical structure of speech, language, artistic experience and in the main, consciousness".¹⁴

At the same time, in this dialogical process of co-creation the consideration highlighted by Zoltán Zsávolya gets a prominent role. Accordingly, the "textual map [of the

¹³ KULCSÁR SZABÓ Ernő: *A „befejezett” műalkotás – a befogadás illúziója és az olvasás retorikája között (Az esztétikai tapasztalat nyelviségének kérdéséhez)* [*The “Completed” Artwork – between the Illusion of Reception and the Rhetoric of Reading (To The Question of the Linguistic Character of Aesthetic Experience)*], in: KULCSÁR SZABÓ Ernő: *Irodalom és hermeneutika [Literature and Hermeneutics]*, Akadémiai Publishing House, Budapest, n. y., 224–233., here: 231.

¹⁴ *Idem*, 227–228.

Landscape with Prayer] is crucial regarding what we have to precisely (and mostly) *respect* as István Baka's poetry, in other words, the history of the cycle forming orientedness is exposed to the mirror of the single, finite cycle building".¹⁵ Thus in the course of interpreting the metaphorical and self-reflexive poetic discourse, role-play and cycle formation I had to pay attention not only to the dialogical character of the critical discourse but, by applying the comparative method, also to the way in which the *Landscape with Prayer*, as a canonized and completed testament according to the poet's intention, assimilates and re-interprets those poems, cycles and roles that constitute earlier stages of Baka's poetry, at the same time the antecedents of this volume.¹⁶ I had to have in view what kind of textual modifications, perhaps new roles, cycles and parts the *Landscape with Prayer* brought as compared to its poetic antecedents, while the reader's receptive attitude viewing this poetics as a single organic

¹⁵ ZSÁVOLYA Zoltán: *Az iszonyat romantikája. Baka István költészetéről* [*The Romantics of Horror. On István Baka's Poetry*], Műhely, 1997/4., 30–34., here: 31.

¹⁶ Cf. BOMBITZ Attila: *Sztyepan Pehotnij feltámadása. Kommentárok és jegyzetek Baka István életműkiadásához* [*Sztyepan Pehotnij's Resurrection. Commentaries and Notes to István Baka's Life Work Edition*], Forrás, 2009/12., 50–64., here: 52.

unity aimed at the poetic-aesthetic connection between the cycles, at the mode of their resulting from and building upon one another all the time, which also meant an interpretive endeavour conveying the formation of the particular poetic periods and their relation to one another. Certainly, in the reception aesthetics based approach it is a task inseparable from the above to reflect on how the critical discourse gets in a new horizon, how particular critical observations or canon-shaping intentions lose their validity in the (new) reception of the (renewed) poetics; what remains valid, beyond the compositional issue of earlier, autonomous volumes, from the statements dealing with the wider poetical context with reference to the poetic legacy composed into one single volume.

In my thesis the revaluative critical discourse focusing on the shifts is particularly valid to Gábor Nagy's procedure carrying out the periodization of the entire poetics based on the grouping of the particular volumes, also meant to indicate the division of the poetics already based on cycles. The author regards the *Magdolna-zápor* [*Magdalene-Shower*], representing the "existential issues of the nation and community as visions projected into the natural landscape" and giving voice to the "flower songs of love of repressed passion", as well as the *Tűzbe vetett evangélium* [*Gospel*

Thrown into Fire], completing the metaphorical universe imitating the landscape poem with the objects of the city, as constituting the first period of Baka's poetics, which is completed by the *Döbling* with its strict poetic principle of the poem based on one single central metaphor. He connects the beginning of the second period to the new poems of the volume of collected poems entitled *Égtájak célkeresztjén* [*On the Crosshair of Cardinal Points*] and to the *Farkasok órája* [*Hour of the Wolf*], which loosens the strict system of metaphors, the grotesque and irony get more emphasized and the longer and distraught sentences become dominant. The transformation of Baka's mask poetry is a significant change, namely that instead of singular mask poems there appear role-play cycles revealing the entire human destiny. The cycle entitled *Liszt Ferenc éjszakái* [*Franz Liszt's Nights*] still marks a transition from the early to the new role poems; in the volumes constituting the third, last period of Baka's poetry, entitled *Sztyepan Pehotnij testamentuma* [*Sztyepan Pehotnij's Testament*] and *November angyalához* [*To November's Angel*], besides the continuity of the metaphorical poetic discourse, the apocalyptic voice will be amplified and the awareness of death, the character of synthesis and the

contention with God will prevail.¹⁷ The outlined periodization is re-interpreted to the extent that the statements referring to the particular earlier volumes and to the poetic-aesthetic connections between them will be revalued or abrogated by the modifications of the volume consisting of cycles entitled *Landscape with Prayer*, the poetic testament reorganized by the poet and thus regarded as complete and definitive.

3. Presentation of Results

Starting from the aesthetic experience of late modernism based on the dialogical reciprocity between literary work and receiver,¹⁸ the synthesis of István Baka's poetry cannot create *definitive meanings*, so in my dissertation I tried to explore those linguistic, cultural and poetic experiences which point toward the possibility of reading Baka's works in the horizon of late modernism. At the same time I also paid attention to how the romantic poet's role and

¹⁷ Cf. NAGY Gábor: „...legyek versedben asszonánc”. *Baka István költészete* [“...let me be an assonance in your poem”. *István Baka's Poetry*], Kossuth University Press, Debrecen, 2001, 13–14.

¹⁸ Cf. KULCSÁR-Szabó Ernő: *A „befejezett” műalkotás – a befogadás illúziója és az olvasás retorikája között* [The “Completed” Artwork – between the Illusion of Reception and the Rhetoric of Reading], 227–228.

tradition of imagery as well as the principle of wholeness of classical modernism is reinterpreted in the metaphorical universe of Baka's role-playing poetry according to the late modern concept of language in a way that "we do not only appreciate the »world literature« created by [the poet] himself as the background material of his poetry, but also as the textual universe constructed from pre-texts reacting upon one another".¹⁹

As, on the one hand, István Baka's poetics is role poetry, in which, through the intertextual-intercultural procedures, an interpretation of (textual) tradition and culture as well as world creation through language takes place, which implies that the self of the texts is created by language, and as, on the other hand, this poetic language is characterized by a metaphorical view, which means that the self-interpretation and world comprehension of the lyrical I, the issue of the communicability of the self and of self-reflexivity are inseparable from the issue of role-play and metaphorical poetic discourse,²⁰ I came to the conclusion that in Baka's

¹⁹ FRIED István: *Árnyak közt mulandó árny. Baka István verse Caspar Hauserről* [Transient Shade among Shades. István Baka's Poem on Caspar Hauser], in: FRIED István: *Árnyak közt mulandó árny* [Transient Shade among Shades], 42–62., here: 45.

²⁰ My approach is also grounded by FRIED's study. Cf. *idem*, 45–46.

poetics the externalization of the self, its identity grasped in metaphoric transpositions manifests through “the allegorical model of language”,²¹ and the subject of allegory can only manifest as a grammatical self. “The late modern concept of the subject becomes especially sensitive to the allegorical-rhetorical performance [of language].”²² The self of the poems is inscribed into the late modern concept of the subject through the fact that the grammatical self as the performance of language creates itself in the possibility of addressing other linguistic figurations, thus cannot dominate the language as a linguistic entity but is subordinated to language.²³ This can be

²¹ KULCSÁR Szabó Ernő: „Szétterült ütem hálója”. *Hang és szöveg poétikája: a későmodern korszakküszöb József Attila költészetében* [“*The Web of Extended Rhythm*”. *The Poetics of Voice and Text: The Late Modern Age Boundary in Attila József’s Poetry*], in: KULCSÁR Szabó Ernő: *Irodalom és hermeneutika* [*Literature and Hermeneutics*], 169–198., here: 184.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ According to Ernő KULCSÁR Szabó, in the late stage of modernism “the hermeneutical status of the self understanding itself in terms of subjectivity [is shaken], the individual »dwelling« in language no longer regards itself as dominating things and ultimately, existence.” In: *A fragmentum néhány kérdése a nyelviség horizontváltásában (Fejezet a későmodern irodalmi töredék előtörténetéből)* [*A Few Aspects of the Fragment in the Horizon Shift of Language (A Chapter from the Prehistory of the Late Modern Literary Fragment)*], in: KULCSÁR Szabó Ernő: *Irodalom és hermeneutika*

observed in the poetical procedure in which the other addressed by the lyrical I, God, for instance, is created by naming the speaker as a metaphor and respectively, the lyrical I is also constructed in the addressedness of the *interlocutor*. This is the way they both become metaphors. The self as the linguistic self-reference of metaphor and the late modern concept of language pointing at the linguistic nature of the self through the destabilization of the self of the text²⁴ can be detected, among others, in the self-reflexive poems entitled *Gospel Thrown into Fire* or *Landscape with Prayer*. The “I no longer inscribe / God’s name upon you ever” [„Isten nevét nem / írom reád többé soha”] (*Gospel Thrown into Fire*) does not imply the distinct position of the self. The decision of the lyrical I as creator that he does not write down the name of God existing in language as the metaphor of the sense of creation means the failure of creation, the fact that the self does not dominate language, the entrance into divine language is inaccessible. The fact that God continuously *makes its*

[*Literature and Hermeneutics*], 233–255., here: 238. See also: KULCSÁR-SZABÓ Zoltán: *Poétika és poetológia [Poetics and Poetology]*, 330.

²⁴ Cf. KULCSÁR Szabó Ernő: „*Szétterült ütem hálója*” [“*The Web of Extended Rhythm*”], 181.

presence felt in the self-reflexive poems²⁵ shows that the tradition that determines the coming into being of the self cannot eliminate God from confronting itself. Thus the self-reflexive moment gives voice to the idea of lack of God and also becomes the confrontation with poetry and language in István Baka's poetry. This is why the creative gestures of poetry are emphasized. The language constructing the self and the poetic universe transmits experiences as the medium of all preliminary understanding "– performing the prevailing new understanding – through the memory of previous meanings."²⁶ Thus in István Baka's poetry, as a consequence of the role-play inseparable from the performativity of the language, the utterance is realized through the reinterpretation of tradition and literature, through the re-hierarchization of various cultures and attitudes.²⁷ The role-plays of the visual universe

²⁵ Cf. NAGY Gábor: *A lírai önértelmezés Baka István költészetében* [*Lyrical Self-Interpretation in István Baka's Poetry*], 91–92.

²⁶ KULCSÁR Szabó Ernő: „Széttérült ütem hálójá” [“*The Web of Extended Rhythm*”], 195.

²⁷ Cf. BAKA István: „*Fehér és barna szárnyak*” [“*White and Brown Wings*”]. Interviewer: Gacsályi József, in: *Baka István művei. Publicisztikák, beszélgetések* [*István Baka's Works. Publicistic Writings, Interviews*], Tiszatáj Books, Szeged, 2006, 266–280., here: 271–272.; FRIED István: *Baka István „Számadása”* [*István Baka's "Reckoning"*], in: FRIED István: *Árnyak közt mulandó árny. Tanulmányok Baka István*

created by language make possible the multiplication of the self, the definition of identity through roles (Petőfi, Vörösmarty, Ady, Széchenyi, Yorick, János Hány, Szttyepan Pehotnij, *István Baka*, etc.), the indirectness of the lyrical discourse as well as the interpretation of the narrated lyrical worlds as cultural world-spaces interiorized by the self. Hence the Protean character of this poetics.

The organization into cycles of the volume of collected poems entitled *Landscape with Prayer* as a poetic legacy points at this very Protean character: at the fact that the *lyrical story* of the self is the narrative-mosaic of the changes of modes, identities and masks of the self that can never be grasped as an ultimate oneness and that these mosaics, in spite of the recognizable basic tone of the self striving for unity, constitute the self as a non-self in their differences from one another. The order of the organically interconnected cycles and small cycles being in a cause and effect relation makes it obvious that the authenticity of the particular poems and cycles as well as that of the parts of the role-players cannot be primarily interpreted in itself; instead, the particular poems become interpretable in their relation to the other poems

lírjáról [*Transient Shade among Shades. Studies on István Baka's Poetry*], Tiszatáj Books, Szeged, 1999, 149–186.; here: 152.

within the respective cycle and the cycles become interpretable in their relation to the utterance modes of other role-players at several planes.²⁸ This carnevalesque character is the specificity of the late modern conviction which, in spite of the uncertainty of the constitution of existence in roles, in the interaction of various references and topoi, conceives of existence as the basic form of constitutedness through language, and regards literature as the only possibility of authentic existence. This constant attempt of re-definition explains the cycle change inseparable from the frequent role change as well as the exploration of the visuality-materiality and self-reflexive capacity of poetic language, the frequent moment that in István Baka's poetry the poem repeatedly performs the analysis of the poetic word. (An example for this is the poem entitled *Csak a szavak (Only the Words)*, which is the self-reflexion of Baka's entire poetics.)

²⁸ My opinion is also justified by István FRIED's study on the poem cycle in the light of the transformation taking place in the poetry of the 1990s. Cf. *Líra, irodalomértelmezés, (vers)kötet. Magyar költők, magyar költészet az 1990-es évtizedben [Poetry, Interpretation of Literature, Volume (of Poems). Hungarian Poets, Hungarian Poetry in the 1990s]*, in: FRIED István: *Árnyak közt mulandó árny [Transient Shade among Shades]*, 7–42., here: 26–27.

The fact that this poetry believes in language, in the word as authentic world, connects Baka's poetics to late modernism, and this is what distinguishes it from postmodernism. It is the choice of form, "the mode of constructedness, a language game distinct from the postmodernists that separate him, and perhaps also the fact that as regards external form, he often employs seemingly traditional figurations, (...) he seems to believe in a meaningful (poetic) universe."²⁹ He restructured the words, motifs, topoi and roles revalued, re-hierarchized from cultural memory into a strict order,³⁰ which creates the priority of the belief in poetry, in word-existence, since, "as a result of the careful composition the closed cycles (and volumes) create the impression of the wholeness of a determined poetic domain. The poet achieves this through the strict composition and the specific use of motifs, for he uses relatively few motifs, but these are structured into a consistently built system."³¹ Whereas in postmodern texts the primary

²⁹ FRIED István: *Baka István „benső világtere”* [István Baka's "Intrinsic World Space"], in: FRIED István: *Árnyak közt mulandó árny* [Transient Shade among Shades], 109–139., here: 116.

³⁰ Cf. *idem*, 117.

³¹ NAGY Márta: *A huszönötödik ének. Baka István Könyörögj érettem című versciklusáról* [The Twenty-Fifth Song. On István Baka's Poem Cycle

discourses are replaced by metadiscourses,³² the allusions, the literary, musical and painterly predecessors find their place in István Baka's poetry in a recognizable manner, in a way that "they are subordinated to the will of the hidden lyrical I and are organized in a new order in the process of restoring the self."³³ The evoked poets, lyrical, dramatic or narrative figures remind of their *former* identity. The poems address the present in a way that they do not give up their role of incessantly interpreting and revaluating the tradition and the past. Contrary to the citing technique of classical modernism, the allusions of the poems are not the foreign quotations *taken over* from other texts, which the own text reflects on. In

Entitled Pray for Me], in: *A Móra Ferenc Múzeum évkönyve* (Irodalom- és művészettörténeti tanulmányok. *Studia historiae literarum et artium*, 3.) [The Almanac of the Móra Ferenc Museum (Studies on Literary and Art History. *Studia historiae literarum et artium*, 3.)], Móra Ferenc Museum, Szeged, 2001, 116–138., here: 118.

³² Cf. KULCSÁR Szabó Ernő: *Az irodalmi modernség integratív történeti értelmezhetősége* [*The Integrative Historical Interpretability of Literary Modernism*], in: KULCSÁR Szabó Ernő: *Irodalom és hermeneutika* [*Literature and Hermeneutics*], 81–96., here: 94.

³³ FRIED István: *Van Gogh szalmaszéke. Baka István új verseskötete* [*Van Gogh's Straw Chair. István Baka's New Volume of Poems*], in: FRIED István: *Árnyak közt mulandó árny* [*Transient Shade among Shades*], 81–109., here: 86.

Baka's poetics the *own text* can be outlined not against the allusions and quotations, on the contrary, these constitute the mode of existence of the texts, they can be grasped in their reinterpretation.³⁴ The thinker's attitude taking shape in the poems, the apocalyptic basic feature of Baka's poetry experiences the „»carnevalesque« character of the world as loss of values: while postmodern texts take this experience for granted in a lighthearted manner, in modernism striving for real values the same experience triggers bitterness and indignation.”³⁵ The late modern character of Baka's poetry is justified by the concept of the subject taking shape in the poems as well as by the *poetic fact* that unlike in postmodern poetry, the scepticism towards the possibility of dominating the language as value crisis does not entail giving up the search for values in Baka's poetics,³⁶ as for him the hope of existing within poetic language is the only acceptable poetic role in an age – in the last three decades of the twentieth century – when the role of literature emphasizing the social

³⁴ István FRIED undertakes to interpret this poetic specificity in the studies of his volume entitled *Árnyak közt mulandó árny* [*Transient Shade among Shades*].

³⁵ NAGY Gábor: „... *legyek versedben asszonánc*” [“...*let me be an assonance in your poem*”], 285.

³⁶ Cf. *idem*, 286.

aspect has become anachronistic, the direct political-social commitment has become outmoded, but one cannot pretend as if nothing had happened in the spiritual environment of literature, especially in the period around 1989.³⁷ Baka's poetry is close to those poetic endeavours which posit the literary work as a linguistic construct, expressing that "the age can provide the self-accomplishment of the individuality only in case of escaping into private worlds."³⁸ Baka chose a poetic role and attitude striving for shaping and settling in autonomous poetic worlds in a chaotic age "when not only the social »transposal« of the poet's action became questioned, but it also became questionable whether the verses and thoughts written down would have readers at all".³⁹

In my dissertation I came to the conclusion that the metaphorical, self-reflexive poetic language and Protean character of István Baka's poetics, of the volume *Landscape with Prayer*, represents that unmistakable poetic voice of the end of the twentieth century which, without calling in question the romantic-tragic poetic concept rooted in László

³⁷ Cf. FRIED István: *Líra, irodalomértelmezés, (vers)kötet* [Poetry, Interpretation of Literature, Volume (of Poems)], 25.

³⁸ FÜZI László: *A mai magyar költészet és a társadalom* [Contemporary Hungarian Poetry and Society], 52.

³⁹ *Idem*, 53.

Nagy's and Ferenc Juhász's poetry, or without avoiding Attila József's poetics relying on metaphors connecting the micro- and macrocosm, by the 1970s-1980s evolves from the ideal of the late modern objective poetry to an intellectual-synthesizing poetic language, in the framework of which there can be found not only the questions of community-historical destiny, but also the ultimate questions of existence.⁴⁰ In his poetry the issues raised by late modernism get to the fore of the confessional-tragical lyrical role conception; in his role poems, that is, in his entire poetics, the poetic conception of late modernism prevails, according to which literature is destined to outline, if not definitive answers, but at least possible acceptable ones regarding the ultimate questions of existence. In the spirit of this conception Baka "re-interprets the privileged role possibilities of Hungarian and world literature, his perception of life is intrinsically tragic and his discourse based on self-confessions conceives of literature not as a game or interaction of languages but rather in its role of

⁴⁰ Cf. NÉMETH Zoltán: *Párhuzamos líratörténetek. Baka István és Tőzsér Árpád költészetének összehasonlító vizsgálata* [Parallel Poetic Occurrences. A Comparative Analysis of István Baka's and Árpád Tőzsér's Poetry], in: Attila Bombitz (ed.): „Égtájak célkeresztjén”. *Tanulmányok Baka István műveiről* [“On the Crosshair of Cardinal Points”. *Studies on István Baka's Works*], Tiszatáj Books, Szeged, 2006, 111–125., here: 116.

interpreting itself and existence”,⁴¹ that is, on the one hand, as the tragedy of the feeling of lack and identity crisis arising from the constant loss and, on the other hand, “the existence integrated in poetry can attain its meaning in a cultural world space”.⁴²

4. The Author’s Published Articles Related to the Dissertation Topic

- „... *bennünk, emberekben van*”. *Baka István istenképéről* [“... *he is in us, people*”. *On István Baka’s Image of God*], *Forrás*, 2001/3., 63–68.
- „*Csak a szavak már nem maradt más*” (*Baka István Gecsemáné című verséről*) [“*Only the Words There Is Nothing Else Left*” (*On István Baka’s Poem Entitled Gecsemáné (Gethsemane)*)], *Tiszatáj*, 2004/3., Diákmelléklet [Student Supplement]
- „*Nem kértelek s nem kérnélek ma sem*” (*Széljegyzetek Baka István Zsoltár című verséhez*), [“*I didn’t beg you and I wouldn’t beg you today either*” (*Margin Notes to István*

⁴¹ *Idem*, 117.

⁴² FRIED István: *Baka István „benső világtere”* [*István Baka’s “Intrinsic World Space”*], 113.

Baka's Poem Entitled Zsoltár (Psalm)] Székelyföld, 2006/8., 35–45.

- „*Sátán és Isten foglya*”. *A költői képek mint világértelmező alakzatok Baka István költészetében* [“*Captive of Satan and God*”. *Poetic Images as World Interpreting Figurations in István Baka's Poetry*], Forrás, 2010/9., 68–95.
- *Baka István költészetének későmodern vonásai* [*Late Modern Features of István Baka's Poetry*], Tiszatáj, 2010/12., 65–72.
- *A költőszerep két változata Baka István költészetében* [*Two Variants of the Poet's Role in István Baka's Poetry*], Magyar Napló, 2011/1., 11–23.
- *A szerepjáték mint (vers)létmód Baka István költészetében* [*Role-Play as (Poetic) Mode of Existence in István Baka's Poetry*], Székelyföld, 2011/7. 51–82.