

Summaries

Susan Rubin SULEIMAN,

Language, Regime Change, and Individual Life: *Édes Anna*, *Édes Emma*

“In our age, there is no such thing as ‘keeping out of politics.’ All issues are political issues,” wrote George Orwell in his famous essay on “Politics and the English Language.” How is a change in political regime manifested in language, and how does that affect individual lives? I explore this question by examining Dezső Kosztolányi’s novel *Édes Anna* (1926), which focuses on the period immediately following the downfall of the Béla Kun regime in 1919, and István Szabó’s film *Édes Emma, drága Böbe* (1991), which takes place after the end of the Kádár regime, in 1990. Both works show how individual lives are imbricated in collective history and in language. They both ask, implicitly: What constitutes a community, a safe space for human development, in a time of sudden historical change when everyone feels vulnerable and seeks to act only for their own preservation? Szabó stated in an interview after his film’s release: “In my lifetime, there have been six or seven changes in regime which fundamentally transformed society [...]. Things change very quickly in this country. Here we’ve always had to start over with learning things, there are frequent windstorms, and it’s very hard for people to stand on their feet.”

Róbert GÁFRIK

The Predicament of World Literature

World literature is a term that has been discussed in literary studies for two hundred years. But only in recent decades has this concept become the subject of a broader global debate due to its popularity in Anglophone literary studies. It seems to have brought a new inspiration to the discipline of comparative literature. Indeed, the notion of world literature seems to correspond to the unprecedented extent of globalization which we experience every day in various forms. The aim of the article is to summarize the current debate on world literature, to discuss its consequences for the practice of literary studies and to reflect on its didactic and ethical implications. The author points out the asymmetrical power relations inherent in the current notion of world literature and calls for an intercultural literary approach that would not be based on the logic of dominance.

András KAPPANYOS

How many legs...?

On Our Position in *Index Translationum* and in World Literature

This essay is a methodological experiment concerning the usefulness of statistical data in the assessment of world literature as a predominantly hierarchical structure. UNESCO's half-abandoned translation database, *Index Translationum*, with its 2.3 million record items, is a unique, albeit often misleading source of quantitative data on cultural transfer. In the first round of our experiment we examine the ratio of cultural "emission" and reception in the circle of the twenty leading source and target languages. The second round is about the distribution of languages among the first hundred most-translated authors; to refine the approach we introduce a new and meaningful factor, the number of Wikipedia pages written about the "contestants". In the third round, we scrutinize the lists of the top ten writers translated *to* and *from* Hungarian. The comparison is unnerving and exhilarating at the same time: while our cultural import focuses on cheap romance and the penny dreadful, our export would satisfy the most sophisticated tastes. In conclusion, the statistical predominance of English presence on the global cultural market cannot be denied, but the main conflict of interest is not between English and other languages, but between mass-produced, ephemeral, unchallenging sub-literature (produced mostly in English) and quality culture.

Sarolta DECZKI

Annoying Compulsion of the Reality

This essay examines the question of reality in contemporary Hungarian literature, as well as the possibilities of its interpretation in the past and the present. The main dilemma is of Péter Esterházy, confronting his cancer diagnosis and the revelation that his father was an informant of the state socialist regime. As a postmodern author, he deconstructed and side-lined the notion of reality, but as a son and as a mortally ill person he had to experience its full force. This essay tries to illustrate these two positions, the postmodern-esthetical and the experimental-ethical, and their consequences.

Anita KÁLI

Sociographic Novels in Contemporary Hungarian Literature

The topic of poverty, as well as its poetics, is a recurring subject in 20th-century Hungarian narrative literature. Since the 2000s, literary representation of poverty has come to the fore. Contemporary prose made poverty a prominent topic in a

number of variations and at the same time, it created a new poetics for depicting poverty. In my analysis I try to find an answer to questions such as what prosaic modality is adapted, and what forms are used, to create an authentic representation of poverty and to solve the paradox of the literary language of poverty. My paper focuses on the definition of the texts' interpretative framework, the difficulties of the relevant academic language, the complex problems concerning realism and how literature refers to the world as well as the fictional duplication of it in novels.

Gergő MELHARDT

Alternatives of Postmodernism: Térey's Example.

Questions of Referentiality in János Térey's Verse Novels

This paper aims to interpret two verse novels by János Térey: *Protocol* (*Protokoll*, 2010) and *The Slightest Ice Age* (*A Legkisebb Jégkorszak*, 2015). After outlining the context of North American 'post-postmodern' prose poetics and the modes of social representation in contemporary Hungarian literature, the study turns to reveal the tensions and differences between Térey's first, generally well-received verse novel, *Paulus* (2001) and the two works published a decade later. The most important differences – beyond those of verse form – are examined in two subchapters: the first on the irony of the texts' composition and of the narrator's voice, the second on the tools of referentiality, i.e. the representation of society and politics, or the allusions to philosophy of history.

By interpreting these two main texts, the study makes the claim that the most important novelty that Térey's verse novels bring about is one of both form (poetics) and content (thought) – that is, the ironical edge of language recedes in parallel with the growing importance of historical, social and political representation (which seems at times inseparable from political commitment.)

Anett SCHÄFFER

The Reality of the East-Central European Dystopia: György Dragomán:

The White King

In my paper I analyse two possible interpretations of György Dragomán's *The White King*, which is not only a renowned novel in Hungarian literature, but it has also been translated to many languages including English, German, Turkish, Italian, Swedish and Chinese. The movie adaptation of the novel is an English–German–Swedish–Hungarian coproduction, produced in English, so it was aimed at a wide international audience. The movie is clearly a dystopian rewriting of the novel. The main question of the paper concerns the possibility of a dystopian interpretation of

the novel, and the ambiguity of presenting itself both as a historical novel about the real struggles of the Ceaușescu era in Romania, and a dystopia about the terrors of totalitarian regimes in general, with only a very few equivocal references to a specific era. According to the latter interpretation *The White King*, just like its classic predecessors *1984*, *Brave New World* etc. as well as the more contemporary dystopias, is deeply connected to the real political system, but it is not clearly set in it. I found that the novel uses many dystopian features: the *everyman*-type main character, the estranged and enclosed spaces, the identity crises of the main characters, the depiction of bodies and violence, the limited possibilities of communication (topics and facts that are not to be mentioned). The two interpretations (a novel set in Romania in the 1980s and a general dystopia) are deeply interconnected and delicately interwoven in the novel, and this dichotomy can be one of the reasons why the novel could gain popularity among foreign audiences that presumably do not know a lot about the East-Central European history.

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Kiadja a BTK Irodalomtudományi Intézet
A kiadásért felel Fodor Pál főigazgató, Kecskeméti Gábor igazgató
A tördelési munkálatokat
a BTK TTI tudományos információs témacsoportja végezte
Vezető: Kovács Éva
Tördelőszerkesztő: Zsigmondné Balázs Ildikó
Nyomdai munkák: Prime Rate Kft.
Felelős vezető: Dr. Tomcsányi Péter

LITERATURA

„Kosztolányihoz hasonlóan Szabó [István] a változást a nyelvhasználat megváltozásával jelzi: nem az egyes szavak szintjén, mint ahogyan a házmester és a méltóságos úr beszélgetésében történik a regényben, hanem geopolitikai szinten, ahol különböző nemzeti nyelvek vannak játékban.”

(Susan Rubin Suleiman)

„[A] dominancia és a hatalom fogalmára épülő világirodalom-koncepció nem lehet az irodalomtudomány *telosza*. Azt gondolom, találhatunk alternatív koncepciókat is.”

(Róbert Gáfrik)

„Úgy látszik, magyar gyártmányú szórakoztató irodalomra nincs szüksége a világnak: tőlünk éppen a legjobbat várják el, amit adni tudunk – mármint amit valóban át lehet adni rendkívüli fordítói nehézségek nélkül.”

(Kappanyos András)

„Mintha valamilyen gát szakadt volna át, mint ha most jött volna el az ideje, hogy beszélni kell azon dolgokról, melyekről nem szokás, nem ildomos, vagy éppen tiltás alá esnek.”

(Deczki Sarolta)

„Ez nem premodern vagy klasszikus modern regresszió, és nem is reakció a posztmodernre, hanem annak meghaladása kíván lenni: olyan írásmód, amely akár a korszerűtlenség vadját is felvállalva kíván a társadalom jobbá tételéért erőfeszítéseket hozni.”

(Melhardt Gergő)

