

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

*Analysis of the Contextual System of the Polemics of Upper
Hungary*

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I. Analytical task

Polemics played a very important role in the history of European literature in the 16th and 17th century. In the course of Reformation and the development of Protestant churches and Catholic renewal, a very extensive polemical literature developed in the 16th century that reconsidered and transformed Christian tradition and was valid in all of Europe. Naturally, this became an organic part of the typically religious-ecclesiastic literature of the time, while at the same time it created a special discourse typical of the genre. The intellectual demand that characterized the people of the Early New Age, who wished for a spiritual renewal, appeared in the polemics. The genre also directed and used those technical novelties and media which emerged in the wake of printing and were transforming European culture from the 16th century. It was the voice of a confessional Europe loud from religious fights, and by the end of the 17th century, as the sects have become solid and religiousness less significant, polemics lost their validity and significance, too.

During the 16th and 17th centuries in Hungary, a country torn into three areas and divided both by religion and politics, polemics played an exceptionally important role. The 1610s and 1620s can be considered the peak of the Protestant-Catholic fights in Hungary; Péter Pázmány, the leader of Catholic renewal, was active that time. As opposed to the former spread of Protestantism, when the majority of Hungary's inhabitants together with the major part of Hungarian nobility had become Protestant, the period marked by Péter Pázmány's name brought about a true turning point. Naturally, the true results of his polemical and missionary work have only been realized much later, after Pázmány's death, as the processes he had launched continued in the second half of the 17th century as well. However, following the 30-year-long war, in the 1650s polemical literature had less and less significance in church politics and religion. This is exactly why it is an outstanding phenomenon, which is worth to examine, that polemics in the Hungarian Kingdom exhilarated again after 1657. In the background of this phenomenon there were primarily those political changes which upset the relative balance of the Hungarian Catholic and Protestant orders in the middle of the century. The effect of the weakening of the state of Transylvania, which followed the unsuccessful military campaign in Poland in 1657, and the strengthening of Catholicism in a "buffer zone" could be primarily felt in the region of Upper Hungary that had been mostly Protestant before. The recatholicism of the widow princess Zsófia Báthori and the Catholic conversion of her son, Ferenc I Rákóczi brought

about significant changes in the region, evoking the land owners' Counter-Reformation that supported the Jesuit mission. As a result, the representatives of the opposing churches started to publish polemic texts once again.

However, the polemical literature evolving by the 1660s and counting about 13 polemics and more than 100 polemical writings showed numerous characteristics that were only typical of the given period: during the polemical debates related to the Košice-Sárospatak-Presšov axis an internal literary life developed, which was strongly connected to the existing institutions of the sects. At this time, both the Jesuits and the Protestants had schools in the region while Košice and Sárospatak even had printing houses. This all was a basic requirement for the debaters to create colourful and quite often personal polemic writings that could show their literary talent and even seemed to be intellectual fights.

The polemics of Upper Hungary going on between 1663 and 1672 and examined in my thesis paper can be considered the most significant and most complex text corpus of the polemical literature evolving in that period. Both the Catholic and the Calvinist participants of the polemics were determining figures of the ecclesiastic, scholastic and public life of the region. The provoker and initiator of the debate was the leader of the Jesuit mission, Mátyás Sámbar, who worked in the Jesuit college of Győr in 1661 and published his tractate titled *Three Questions on Salvation (Három üdvösséges kérdés)* in the press of Nagyszombat, which later he propagated among the Calvinist inhabitants of the region during the missionary work started in 1663 in Sárospatak. His most important opposers in the Hungarian-language debates were János Pósaaházi, a teacher from Sárospatak, István Matkó, a preacher from Felsőbánya, and István Czeglédi, a preacher from Košice. *The polemics of Upper Hungary* were Catholic-Calvinist polemics that included various exchanges of writings and lasted nearly for a decade.

Together with the lost, translated and republished pieces, the polemics of Upper Hungary consisted of 7-18 writings: as a result it is the polemics having the highest number of elements not only in that period but in the complete Hungarian polemical literature. This mere philologic fact also shows what a dominant role this text corpus could play in the literature of the 1660s – a corpus which has been forgotten for a long time and has not been examined in its particulars and correlations so far.

Examining the writings of the polemics, my dissertation intends to give an insight into the textual world of the polemical literature of the period. I suppose that by analyzing the system of the textual connections and internal intertextual relations of these polemical writings, which were born in a late, closing period of Hungarian polemical literature, and by enforcing the

approaches of modern literary theory, we can have a more complete picture of the mechanisms of literary creation and the literary thinking of the Baroque time. Enforcing a substantive analytical viewpoint in each chapter of my dissertation, I intend to reveal the system of the internal textual relations of the texts of the polemics; its ironic, parodistic language that mocks at the theological textuality of the debate; and its stylistic structure. The medial characteristics of the writings, and the relations between the figurative elements and the texts of the debate, and their significance in theology and church politics are discussed in a separate subchapter. In that period, polemical writing as a religious text was an important tool for expressing one's identity. On the basis of the examined works, we can describe that confessional, urban, civic identity which developed in Upper Hungary in the second half of the 17th century and was conveyed and formed by these texts, too. This identity has not been deeply examined so far. Besides, my dissertation also deals with the reception historical relations of the works and their mentality articulating effect.

II. Completed task, sources, methods

As a first step, I reviewed the process of the debate on the basis of the bibliographic literature and the printings, and I outlined the actual political situation and historical context of the 1660s. Then in the chapter titled *The political and idea historical relations of "the first sowing"*, I discussed the political stake of the polemics launched by Sámbar and that of the Jesuits' missions in Sárospatak and Košice, and examined what idea historical concept – developing in the wake of Pázmány – the author of the Jesuit tractate used as the basis of the historical and ecclesiological argumentation of the first chapter. Furthermore, I aimed at showing how the representatives of the Calvinist sect positioned themselves in the transformed political situation.

In the next major chapter of my paper (*Catholic ecclesiology through a Protestant "mocking glass": ecclesiology and metatextuality*), I examined the second chapter of Sámbar's *Three Questions on Salvation*, which deals with issues of ecclesiology. I compared the text with the ecclesiological reasoning in Pázmány's *Guide* and his short writing titled *Two Short Booklets*. The traceable textual relationship and the new parts of Sámbar's work, which are different to that of Pázmány's, could give us a picture of the strategy of the Jesuit mission applied during the Upper Hungarian proselytization. The Protestant authors who protested against the ecclesiological image used by Sámbar (the Catholic church as the Mountain of the

Lord's house) aimed at mocking the ecclesiological attributes of the Jesuit's text; and as a result they created such parodistic-allegorical images that were based on Sámbar's text, but in the sequence of writings replying to one another the fiction, which was mocking the text and the Jesuit author, have overwritten the phrasing of the theological debate. Thus the writings that exceeded the phrasing of a traditional dogmatic debate demanded that the authors take up new roles, too. In this part of my paper, I discussed the debaters's relation to Hungarian polemical text tradition and their ways of forming roles which were relatively new compared to Baroque literary standards. I also analyzed the Protestant mocking poems written in Hungarian that were issued as annexes of the disputes, and the prayers published at the end of the Catholic texts, together with the relationship of Sámbar's certain texts to other, significant ecclesiastical writings of that time (Ferenc Gorup's work). At the end of the chapter, I dealt with the "debate of images" developing on the pages of the dispute, which well reflected the differing medial approach of the representatives of the sects.

In the last chapter of my paper (*The "story" of the Three Questions and the power of the letter (reception history and identity formation)*), I examined two basic questions. Firstly, I discussed how the Jesuit author changed the text of *Three Questions on Salvation*, the writing that had launched the dispute, which showed how he actually evaluated the debate and his own polemical text. During the polemics of Upper Hungary, Mátyás Sámbar published his own initiating work three times (1661, 1665, 1672), and I presented the differences of the texts by comparing the text of these three issues. Similarly to the publications of Pázmány's *Five Fair Letters*, we can observe very conscious modifications (additions/deletions) in Sámbar's writing, too, which reflect to the complete dispute. By analyzing them, I could also examine the Jesuit monk's development as a writer and the strategy of text creation that he applied during the debate. A significant difference between the first edition in 1661 and the modified version of 1672 is that Sámbar put altering paratexts in front of his disputing text. While the dedication of the first text, written to county magistrate Ferenc Nádasdy, targeted the Maecenas who supported the Upper Hungarian Jesuit proselytization from position power, the writing in the transformed political and ecclesiastical situation of 1672 contained a dedication connected to the literary Maecenasship and propagandistic aims of Ferenc Szegedi, bishop of Eger. In my analysis, I textually examined which points of the theological debate were modified by the author and how these alterations were connected to the Protestant texts born during the polemics. Sámbar typically changed his text at those points that were the most intensely attacked and confuted by his opposers (Matkó, Pósaázi, Czeglédi).

The other basic question of my last chapter was how the receivers and readers evaluated the debate. In order to answer this, I aimed at examining various sources. I discussed the deletions made by a reader in one of the samples of the 1672 edition of *Three Questions on Salvation* in a separate subchapter, together with the handwritten mocking poem on its endpaper, which reflected the identity-performance of the Calvinist reader of the age and contributed to the reception historical evaluation of the polemics, too. I also discussed in a separate subchapter the work of the Calvinist preacher, János Zilahi, titled *A Clear Mirror of True Religion*, published in 1672. This writing, not researched so far, also reflected on Sámbar's work and the polemics of Upper Hungary that was famous for its rude, gross language among the contemporaries. Zilahi's work well reflects the interpretation and criticism of the whole polemics from a Calvinist viewpoint, and it is an important element of the reception history of the debate. As part of the reception history, I reviewed – in a separate subchapter – the 18th-century editions of the *Three Questions on Salvation*, on the basis of which I can assume that falling out from the literary context of the polemics, the text that had launched the dispute went through a significant change of functions until it became a scholastic reference book in the 18th century.

I suppose that the polemics examined in my thesis paper together with the other works strongly connected to the polemical writings highlight the literary life that the polemizers created in Košice, Sárospatak and the Upper Hungarian region. The printings born in the short decade of the second half of the 17th century tell of a relatively free intellectual atmosphere; to more thoroughly reveal the period it would be inevitable in the future to expand the research on the debates and polemical printings not examined in this paper.

III. Results, Usability

The most important goal of my thesis paper was to point out the church historical, literary and political relations and significance of the late 17th-century polemical literature by analysing a so far less examined source of Hungarian literary history. Besides enforcing the modern theoretical approaches, I personally aimed at interpreting the research results in a way that is perceivable both by professionals and the wider public, too. Having finished the dissertation – depending on my possibilities – I would like to make a book out of my paper so that my results can be used both in university education and in the process of satisfying the needs of readers who are interested in old Hungarian literature, history and civilization history. The

literary material unrevealed so far is such a "common treasure" for us that may form and enrich our picture of the Hungarian past together with our ideas of the future. I suppose that the polemics I have studied show such a linguistic richness that can make these texts an exceptional source for the researchers of the age, thus a popularizing text edition is also part of my dissertation. During my work, I created the modernized text edition of one of the most important writings of the polemics of Upper Hungary, that is Mátyás Sámbar's *Three Questions on Salvation*.

IV. List of Publications

Presentations

- 1.) 5 November 2009, Miskolc: Panel Discussion of Doctoral Students, University of Miskolc. Title of the presentation: *"Debate of Images" in the Polemics of Upper Hungary: Tipography, Illustration, Mediality*.
- 2.) 11-12 November 2009, Budapest: Protestantism and Mediality – the Medial Revolution of Reformation: *"Debate of Images" in the Polemics of Upper Hungary: Tipography, Illustration, Mediality*.
- 3.) 27 August 2010, Cluj-Napoca: Crossing Borders – 3rd International Conference of Doctoral Schools. Organized by the International Association for Hungarian Studies and the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. Title of the presentation: *Polemics, or Who is the Cheating Spirit? On the Argumentations of the Polemics of Upper Hungary*.
- 4.) 10 November 2010, Miskolc: Panel Discussion of Doctoral Students, University of Miskolc. Title of the presentation: *Text Authority and Aristocratic Representation in Three Questions on Salvation*.
- 5.) 25-28 May 2011, Miskolc: Philology and Textology in Old Hungarian Literature. Conference organized by the Renaissance Section of the Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Institute for Hungarian Linguistic and Literary Studies and the Doctoral School of the Department of Humanities of the University of Miskolc, the Committee for Linguistic and Literary Studies of the Miskolc Regional Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the Committee for Textology of the 1st Section of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Title of the presentation: *Metatextuality in the Polemics of Upper Hungary*.
- 6.) 8 November 2011, Miskolc: Panel Discussion of Doctoral Students, University of Miskolc. Title of the presentation: *A Reader's Notes in Mátyás Sámbar's Three Questions on Salvation Published in 1672*.

7.) 10 October 2013, Szeged: Conference of Young Researchers: Prosody, Poetics, Tropics in 15-17th Century Europe (FIKON). Title of the presentation: *The Role and Function of Mocking Poems in the Polemics of Upper Hungary*.

8.) 3-5 December 2014, Bratislava: Themes of Polemical Theology Across Early Modern Literary Genres. Title of the presentation: *Catholic Ecclesiology and Protestant Parody in the Polemics of Upper Hungary*.

Studies:

1.) "Debate of Images" in the Polemics of Upper Hungary: Tipography, Illustration, Mediality in Panel Discussion of Doctoral Students, University of Miskolc, 5 November 2009: Section Publication of the Department of Humanities, ed. SZŐKE, Kornélia, Miskolc, Section of Science Organization and International Studies, University of Miskolc, 2010, 64–70.

2.) Text Authority and Aristocratic Representation in Three Questions on Salvation in Panel Discussion of Doctoral Students, University of Miskolc, 10 November 2010: Section Publication of the Department of Humanities, szerk. FEKETÉNÉ, Enikő Pál, Miskolc, Section of Science Organization and International Studies, University of Miskolc, 2011, 22–28.

3.) GARADNAI, Erika – MARTIS, Zsombor, *Country Mirror and Polemics: First Part of István Czeglédi's Book on the Impairment of Countries in Bibliotheca et Universitas: Studies in Respect of the 60-year-old János Heltai*, ed. KECSKEMÉTI, Gábor – TASI, Réka, Miskolc, Institute for Hungarian Linguistic and Literary Studies, Department of Humanities, University of Miskolc, 2011, 57–70.

4.) *Polemics, or Who is the Cheating Spirit? Nicknames and Role-playing Games of Authors in the Polemics of Upper Hungary*, Iskolakultúra, 2011/8–9, 34–41.

5.) *Polemics, or Who is the Cheating Spirit? Nicknames and Role-playing Games of Authors in the Polemics of Upper Hungary* in *Crossing Borders: 3rd International Conference of Doctoral Schools, Cluj-Napoca, 26-27 August 2010*, ed. DOBOS, István – BENE, Sándor, Budapest, International Association for Hungarian Studies, 2011, 95–101.

6.) *A Reader's Notes in Mátyás Sámbar's Three Questions on Salvation Published in 1672* in *Panel Discussion of Doctoral Students, University of Miskolc, 8 November 2011: Section Publication of the Department of Humanities*, ed. GARADNAI, Erika – PODLOVICS, Éva Livia, Miskolc, Section of Science Organization and International Studies, University of Miskolc, 2012, 21–30.

7.) *Metatextuality in the Polemics of Upper Hungary* in *Philology and Textology in Old Hungarian Literature: Scientific Conference, Miskolc, 25-28 May 2011*, ed. KECSKEMÉTI, Gábor – TASI, Réka, Miskolc, Hungarian Linguistic and Literary Studies, Department of Humanities, University of Miskolc, 2012, 315–322.

8.) *The Role and Function of Mocking Poems in the Polemics of Upper Hungary* – FIKON conference text under publication (2014).

9.) *The Voice of Wisdom: János Zilahi's Forgotten Writing in the Polemics of Upper Hungary* – Palócföld, 2014, 3, 76–83.