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## THE “GAPS” OF THE WESTERN MIND AND MODERN POETICS

As early as at the beginning of the nineteenth century western philosophy in general and the work of Schopenhauer in particular indicated the need to assimilate the results of eastern thinking into western philosophy. Although the most important philosophers of the first half of the twentieth century did not choose to continue to proceed accordingly, the representatives of natural sciences and poetry were all the more eager to elaborate on the new insight. Among them the physicist Erwin Schrödinger engaged in a systematic assessment of the European philosophical traditions and realised that there are “gaps” (“die Lücken, welche die Verständlichkeitsannahme lässt“) in the causal, i.e., cause and effect patterns of the European mind. He experienced this as a crisis of the western thinking and its attempted objectivity, and stressed the need for a “Blutmischung mit dem Osten”. Schrödinger undertook the exploration of the above problem not as a philosopher or a philologist, but as an assessor of the consequences of the scientific findings of his age. His aim was to call attention to the antinomies underlying the history of the European mind. Regarding poetics, the question arises how define the poet’s space in this system, and where is the creator within creation? Not only did a physicist meditate on this complex subject but contemporary poets were also challenged by its implications, and my paper aims to inquire into their efforts. In my view the forms evolving in 19–20<sup>th</sup> century *modernity* mark the stages of becoming conscious of the “gaps” discovered in the western mind. Departing from Schrödinger’s idea, in the following I attempt to identify poetic resolutions which be compared to the question the physicist raised. They will mark borderline situations, since through the *dialogical* quality of modernity they point toward the evolution of the *synthetic mode*.

### THE “GAPS” APPEARING IN CAUSAL THINKING

As early as at the beginning of the nineteenth century western philosophy in general and the work of Schopenhauer in particular indicated the need to assimilate the results of eastern thinking into western philosophy. Although the most important philosophers of the first half of the twentieth century did not choose to continue to proceed

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accordingly,<sup>1</sup> the representatives of natural sciences and poetry were all the more eager to elaborate on the new insight. Among them the physicist Erwin Schrödinger engages in a systematic assessment of the European philosophical traditions and realizes that there are “gaps”<sup>2</sup> in the causal (cause and effect) patterns of the European mind. He experiences this as the crisis of western thinking and its attempted objectivity, and stresses the need for a “Blutmischung mit dem Osten”.<sup>3</sup>

Schrödinger undertook the exploration of the above problem not as a philosopher or a philologist, but as an assessor of the consequences of the scientific findings of his age, and pointed to the nature of everyday occurrences. His aim was to call attention to the antinomies underlying the history of the European mind.<sup>4</sup> He starts from Heraclitus and reaches Eddington’s Gifford Lectures<sup>5</sup> (which documentary book was one of the seminal readings of Hungarian writers and poets between the two world wars):

“In the world of physics we watch a shadowgraph performance of the drama of familiar life. The shadow of my elbow rests on the shadow table as the shadow ink flows over the shadow paper... The frank realisation that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances.”<sup>6</sup>

In the twentieth century all this is not the phantasmagoria of philosophers but popular scientific knowledge deriving from physicists who seek response to Bohr’s observation of what Heisenberg reformulated by stressing that the observer is part of the thing under scrutiny. According to Schrödinger, the physiologist Charles Sherrington’s Gifford Lectures<sup>7</sup> may be an important milestone in the history of thinking he outlined. Sherrington writes:

<sup>1</sup> Here we do not consider the interest Heidegger takes in eastern philosophies after World War II, nor the fact that he raised consciousness of the presence of a gap in western thinking and the wish to restore the wholeness of the world (Aus einem Gespräch von der Sprache zwischen einem Japaner und einem Fragenden).

<sup>2</sup> “die Lücken, welche die Verständlichkeitsannahme lässt”. Erwin, Schrödinger: Die Besonderheit des Weltbilds der Naturwissenschaft [published in his volume *Was ist ein Naturgesetz? Beiträge zum naturwissenschaftlichen Weltbild*, R. Oldenbourg Verlag, München–Wien, 1962; The quotations are from the 5th edition, München, 1997, pp. 27–85], and the volume *What is real?* [published in English in 1960 as Erwin Schrödinger: *My view of the World*. Translated from the German by Cecily Hastings. Cambridge University Press, 1964, pp. 61–110].

<sup>3</sup> Erwin, Schrödinger: Die Besonderheit des Weltbilds der Naturwissenschaft, *op. cit.* pp. 74, 73.

<sup>4</sup> “Es sind altbekannte Antinomien, welche, sooft man daran erinnert wird, aufs Neue Verlegenheit, Befremden, Unbehagen erzeugen” Schrödinger, *op. cit.* p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> *The Nature of the Physical World*, Cambridge University Press, 1928.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Schrödinger, *op. cit.* pp. 66–67.

<sup>7</sup> Charles, Sherrington, *Man on His Nature*. Cambridge University Press, 1940. p. 357. Cited by Schrödinger in: Die Besonderheit des Weltbilds der Naturwissenschaft, *op. cit.* p. 67.

“Mind, for anything perception can compass, goes therefore in our spatial world more ghostly than a ghost. Invisible, intangible, it is a thing not even of outline; it is not a ‘thing’. It remains without sensual confirmation, and remains without it for ever.”<sup>8</sup>

This insight evokes the “gap deriving from objectivity”, the borderline case of causality serving as the basis of objective approaches. Cause-and-effect reasoning has reached its limit, where science and poetics may construct their own particular worlds according to their respective laws and rules. Regarding poetics, the question arises how to define the poet’s space in this system, where is the creator within creation? Not only did a physicist meditate on this complex subject but contemporary poets were also challenged by its implications, and my paper aims to inquire into their efforts. Schrödinger’s ideas about the place of man is paralleled in the work of Hungarian poet Attila József (1905–1937), Schrödinger’s contemporary, whose poem *Téli éjszaka* (*Winter Night*) from December 1932 contains lines that place the creator within creation:

Where a rusty-leafed tree  
Leans out of the dark,  
Like an owner  
His property  
I measure the winter night.<sup>9</sup>

Later, Attila József develops a sense of the “gap deriving from objectivity”, an awareness of the limits of causality when writing his philosophical poem titled *Consciousness* (*Eszmélet*), completed in early 1934. In this poem aesthetic creation is presented as an opportunity for inquiring into *how* man exists in the world. Like the scientist in his own field, also the poet, though independently from the former, reaches the limits of European thinking:

I looked up in the night  
at the cogwheels of the stars:  
from sparkling threads of chance  
the loom of the past wove laws.  
Then, in my steaming dream  
I looked at the sky again:  
somehow the fabric of the law  
always had a missing stitch, a flaw.<sup>10</sup>

One kind of response to this challenge is to postulate the unity of the mind, and consider multiplicity only a surface phenomenon. The mystic experience of metaphysical unity results in this idea, as a rule, when it is not prevented by strong prejudice. It means that it happened easier in the East than in the West. Schrödinger quotes from a

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Schrödinger, *op. cit.* p. 67.

<sup>9</sup> *Winter Night – Selected Poems of Attila József*. Trans. John Bátki. Corvina, Budapest, 1997, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

text characteristic of this mystical metaphysics, written by Aziz Nasafi, a thirteenth century Persian-Islamic mystic:

“Beim Tod jedes Lebewesens kehrt der Geist in die Geisterwelt und der Körper in die Körperwelt zurück. Dabei verändern sich aber immer nur die Körper. Die Geisterwelt ist ein einziger Geist, der wie ein Licht hinter der Körperwelt steht und durch jedes entstehende Einzelwesen wie durch ein Fenster hindurchscheint. Je nach der Art und Größe des Fensters dringt mehr oder weniger Licht in die Welt. Das Licht aber bleibt unverändert.”<sup>11</sup>

What another Hungarian poet, Sándor Weöres (1913–1989) writes in the closing piece of his cycle called *The Song of Stairs* (*Grádicsok éneke*) may suggest some rather similar ideas. The poem demonstrates equal consciousness of both the “Körperwelt”:

Or do I have to live  
to crave its mood  
from far away, dying, wrenched off,  
watching, toppling in a swirl,  
in what triumphal procession  
it marches, not growing-dwindling, not moving!

and “Geisterwelt”:

Extending ceaselessly  
over a changing world  
I’m bathing in so perfect a harmony  
that artistic dream  
cannot fix in words,  
there are only a few shatters in the poem.

This endless experience  
detaches me from Earth,  
I dig my head in the beyond-the-blue sky  
not hoping any longer  
for food from the cob  
my happy confession has become a dismal alien.

Not to augment any longer,  
not to live, there I want  
from where my love escorts me faithfully,  
to melt glowing in her  
to gain freedom from what  
is me and not her image in me.

(translated by Bálint Szele)

<sup>11</sup> Erwin Schrödinger: Die Besonderheit des Weltbilds der Naturwissenschaft, *op. cit.* p. 73. The citation is from: Fritz Meyer: *Eranos-Jahrbuch 1946*. Rheinverlag, Zürich, 1947, p. 190.

Here the poetically evoked plurality is the touchstone of not only the individual's free will but manifests also a sense of the appropriately ordered and secure personal existence.

If, following Schrödinger's suggestion, I transpose this to the "gaps" ("die Lücken") which appear in poetics as well, I can demonstrate what Goethe used to observe in his own practice and in the domain of what he called "world literature". At the same time it reveals tendencies constituting elements of ecumenical religiosity in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Concurrently with the appearance of "gaps", Hungarian poetic practice begins to adopt the eastern way of thinking, what is more, on the level of high quality poetry: beside Attila József and Sándor Weöres, mentioned above, in the oeuvre of Lőrinc Szabó (1900–1957). On the other hand, in the field of prose Miklós Szentkuthy (1908–1988) finds his way to the eastern mind. His life-long series of essay volumes, *The Breviary of Saint Orpheus (Szent Orpheus Breviariuma)* contains a piece, ironically titled *Europa Minor*, which he devoted to the assimilation of the eastern cultural heritage. I think it was not merely a literary vogue, or perhaps a kind of thematic-decorative addition, surrogate subject matter or mush, rather the rise of a poetically relevant need evoked by the trajectory of European thinking.

In my view the forms evolving in 19–20<sup>th</sup> century *modernity* mark the stages of becoming conscious of the "gaps" discovered in the western mind. 1. The *monological* character appears along with the wish that the text unequivocally form one piece in a well shaped composition; a description of the crisis experienced in understanding man and his world by means of the traditional methods of European causal thinking. (To give a Hungarian example: Mihály Babits [1883–1941], poet and essayist, although taking Goethe's concept of world literature as his vantage point, calls his own work of world literature by the consciously narrow title *The History of European Literature (Az európai irodalom története)*. 2. The *dialogical* mode, which had been present in most texts in the history of literature, becomes a preferred mode of writing. Authors tend to set grammatical and causal logics against each other. Thereby the text, formed according to grammatical rules, questions its own operation as statement. *Ad absurdum*, within the same text something is stated as well as taken into doubt. This can be seen corresponding to the borderline situation Schrödinger described as "gap": the awareness of the fact that the traditional European thinking is incapable of resolving certain problems, which is discovered in both scientific and poetic modes of thought. To cite Samuel Beckett's title as metaphor of the situation, it is a case of *Fin de partie*. 3. To transcend the problem there appear various poetic ambitions to create a *synthesis*. The aim is to effect moving away from the "dialogical" borderline of thinking, to devise modes that might fill the "gasps". Poets explore the potential of the impersonal in poetic representation as opposed to articulating the crisis of the personal which seems to be unresolvable. Opposing the tragic they create elegiac structures. The duality of the *dialogical* and the *synthetic* can be characterised by revealing the differences between the poetry of Gottfried Benn and T. S. Eliot.

Although the above given three features can be further elaborated theoretically and, respectively, they cannot be separated from each other and considered as shaping

forces of independent periods in literary history. I should note, however, that they appear as mutually and irreversibly co-dependent categories in the history of 19–20<sup>th</sup> century modernity.

Departing from Schrödinger’s idea, in the following I attempt to identify poetic resolutions which can be compared to the question the physicist raised. They will mark borderline situations, since through the *dialogical* quality of modernity they point toward the evolution of the *synthetic mode*. However, I assume that new ages and perspectives may reorganise vantage points any time and open up new horizons of interrogation, subsequently other kinds of trends in reading and criticism may become canonical. Borrowing the words of Lőrinc Szabó I can say that “if I view them here and now: / this is how the stars are moving!”<sup>12</sup>

#### 1. ATTILA JÓZSEF, “OUR POET AND HIS PRESENT TIME”

##### *INTRUDING THE “GAP”*

I suppose that a drastic opposition of the cause-and-effect way of thinking and the *dialogical* quality of modernity is represented by one of the last poems of Attila József, titled “Our Poet and His Present Time” (“Költőnk és kora”) (published in the October 1937 issue of the journal edited by the poet himself). It is comparable with poems that develop a *synthetic* mode to contrast and re-inscribe the *dialogical* one.

In his poem *Consciousness*, published in summer 1934, Attila József still represents the *dialogical* experience of the borderline state of causal thinking, signifying the process of observing the inner and the outer together: “During the day a moon rises within / and inside me at night the sun burns”; by the same stroke he questions the poetic validity of the experience: “but even the trickiest cat can’t catch at once / the mouse outside and the one in the house.”<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, he discovers the antinomy that reveals itself to those who follow Schrödinger’s train of thought:

“Heraklit ist sich bewußt, daß an sich zwischen den Sinneswahrnehmungen im Traum und im Wachen kein Unterschied ist. Das Kriterium der Wirklichkeit ist einzig die Gemeinsamkeit. Auf Grund desselben konstruieren wir uns die reale Außenwelt. Alle Bewußtseinssphären

<sup>12</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Among the Stars* (Csillagok közt). Published on 6th January, 1932. The upbeat beginning of this poem by Lőrinc Szabó (“Tribunal? I am that too!”) marks his conscious re-inscription of the well-known lines of Kant’s categorical imperative (“Zwei Dinge erfüllen das Gemüt mit immer neuer und zunehmenden Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht, je öfter und anhaltender sich das Nachdenken damit beschäftigt: Der bestirnte Himmel über mir, und das moralische Gesetz in mir” – cited by *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Reclam, Leipzig, 1978, 5, p. 191), the relativisation of the questions of moral and justice. Not accidentally, in the 1932 volume titled *You and the World* (Te meg a világ) it follows the poems Tao Te King and Rigveda from 1931.

<sup>13</sup> *Winter Night: Selected Poems of Attila József*. Trans. John Bátki. Corvina, Budapest, 1997, p. 78.

überlappen teilweise – nicht im ganz eigentlichen Sinn, das ist unmöglich, aber auf Grund von körperlichen Reaktionen und Mitteilungen, die wir wechselseitig verstehen gelernt haben. Die Überschneidung der Bewußtseine bildet die allen gemeinsame Welt. [...] Wer das letztere nicht anerkennt, ist [...] ein Verrückter; oder er handelt und redet wie ein Schlafender; denn im Schläfe, ja, da wendet ein jeder sich fort von der gemeinsamen Welt der Wachenden in seine private Traumwelt."<sup>14</sup>

In view of the above the following question arises. If our conscious *Self* is equal to the whole and, therefore, cannot be only a part of it, what is the explanation for there being so many conscious selves but only one world? How does the "shared part of consciousnesses" ("die Überschneidung der Bewußtseine") create "the world we all share" ("die allen gemeinsame Welt")? How is it possible that the contents of consciousnesses partly overlap and those who mix up their hallucinations and dreams with reality are considered to be mad?

This is the point where scientific thought and poetic action intersect: the communication between overlapping consciousnesses takes place through language. The issue raises the question of linguistic determinism as well:

"We started off by doubting for a moment, faced with the inexorable separateness of spheres of consciousness, and their total and impenetrable exclusion of each other, whether we could ever arrive at affirming that a certain part of our various currents of experience (the part which is called 'external') is similar, indeed almost identical. As soon, on the other hand, as we have grasped the possibility of reaching understanding on this point, and are lucky enough to possess, in the languages which we have at our command, the means to such understanding, we at once become inclined to over-estimate the degree of precision in this understanding and to forget its inescapable limitations."<sup>15</sup>

Causal thinking pays no attention to limitations and takes cognizance of only the "similar, indeed almost identical" fields of "external" experiences and disregards the consequences of "their total and impenetrable exclusion of each other", relegating them to the world of hallucination or phantoms, and those who wish to articulate them through language are labelled as *mad*. At this point the scientist signals his doubt, speaks about limits, but for the poet this gap means a problem in actual artistic representation. The shift to the Dialogical Poetic Practice in the case of Lőrinc Szabó at the end of the 1920s did not constitute a turning point in his life, but had definite poetic consequences: he experienced a psychic and artistic crisis which entailed silence for a year and the use of drugs (though no real addiction) for several years. It is by writing the poem "Our Poet and His Present Time" that Attila József reaches a conscious or half-conscious articulation of this problem, through realizing the questionability of linguistic determination.

The duality of the world and the possibility of objectification cease to exist: "It's neither real, nor is it a dream". Once more, the poet tries to express this borderland sit-

<sup>14</sup> Erwin Schrödinger: Die Besonderheit des Weltbilds der Naturwissenschaft, *op cit.* pp. 61–62.

<sup>15</sup> Erwin Schrödinger: My view of the World... What is real? (1960). Chapter 2 of the cited study titled Linguistic information and our common possession of the world, pp. 78–79.



uation by means of irony and causality, but in a mediated way (“it’s called: a sublimation of my drive”); dissolution takes over and the image escapes language (“dissolve”). This is the point where the “iron world order” described in his earlier poems and dialogically posited in *Consciousness* loses inspiration for poetry: “Cadaveric lividity sits softly on the happy mounds. Night’s falling”. He has to abandon this duality by some poetic means. New approach is needed. He chooses the scrutiny of words detached from meaning, which allows him to construct a tuneful pseudo-image at the end of his poem.

This poetic development can be described as one taking place in accordance with the processes underlying contemporary European poetry: comparison is offered by the late poems of Yeats or Rilke’s elegies. However, in view of a particular kind of mediation even the world of *Tao te king* should be given consideration, along with the above noted suggestion of Huxley and Schrödinger: “Es ist das aber genau die Stelle, wo m. E. das griechisch-naturwissenschaftliche Denken wirklich einer Korrektur, einer ‘Blutmischung mit dem Osten’ bedarf”.<sup>16</sup> The genesis of the poem can be interpreted in this way as well.

“TRAGIC JOY”: THE ELEGIAC TONE IN 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY POETRY

“Our Poet and His Present Time” as one of the last but most significant poems of Attila József.

“Our Poet and His Present Time”

To Bertalan Hatvany

Behold a poem of mine.  
This is its second line  
“Our Poet and His Present Time”  
sounds firm with letter P.  
Nothing is flitting inside it  
as if it were the dust of anything-  
like the dust...

Nothing in it is flitting,  
as if it were something: the world  
swaying in expanding space  
embarking upon its future  
the way the branch sways, the sea rumbles  
the way the dogs are howling

<sup>16</sup> Erwin Schrödinger: Die Besonderheit des Weltbilds der Naturwissenschaft, *op. cit.* p. 74. Schrödinger cites from Aldous Huxley: *The Perennial Philosophy*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1946.



in the night...

Me, in the chair, that's on the ground  
and Earth is under the Sun  
the solar system and the jail  
are waking among the stars –  
the universe wakes nothingness,  
as, inversely, inside me  
this very thought...

My soul is space. It would fly  
to mother, to great Space, high,  
like a balloon to its nacelle,  
I tie it to my body.  
It's neither real, nor is it a dream,  
it's called: a sublimation of  
my drive...

Come my friend, come look around  
you are working in this world and  
compassion's working inside you.  
All the lies you tell are vain.  
Now let that go, now let this go.  
Watch the evening light with the evening  
dissolve...

As far as the slope stretches  
stands the blood red stubble-field  
bluishly clotting. The tiny,  
feeble lawn cries and bends down.  
Cadaveric lividity  
sits softly on the happy mounds.  
Night's falling.

(translated by Gábor Gyukics)

"Künstler und sein Kreis"

Für Bertalan Hatvany

Sehet, hier ist mein Gedicht.  
Das ist Zeile Nummer Zwei.  
Hart mit K-Buchstaben spricht  
der Titel: "Künstler und seine Kreis."  
Das Nichts schwebt darin auf und ab,  
fast scheint's, dass es von irgendwas  
der Staub sei ...  
Das Nichts schwebt darin auf und ab,  
als war's etwas: die Welt

die im sich ausbreitenden Weltall schwingt  
 und auf die Zukunft zuhält;  
 so, wie Laub und Meere rauschen,  
 so, wie in der Nacht der Hunde  
 Heulen gelbt ...

Ich auf dem Stuhl, der auf der Erde,  
 die unter der Sonne dann,  
 Sonnensystem ist der Kerker,  
 geht mit Sternbildern voran –  
 Alles ist im Nichts, genau wie  
 umgekehrt, im Innern dachte ich  
 grad daran ...

Meine Seele All. Auf, davon  
 zum Mutter-All will sie fliehn.  
 Wie an den Korb einen Ballon  
 binde ich an den Körper sie.  
 Dies ist weder Traum noch wirklich,  
 und man nennt es, überleg ich,  
 meinen Trieb ...

Komm, mein Freund, und sieh dich um: hier  
 ist die Welt, in der du wirkst,  
 und das Mitgefühl wirkt in dir,  
 vergeblich, dass du es verbirgst.  
 Lass nun jenes, dieses fahren.  
 sieh das Licht, wie es im Abend  
 sich auflöst ...

Stoppelfeld in rotem Blut steht,  
 bis zum Ende der Böschung  
 stockt es blau. Das feine Gras fleht,  
 schwach und leidend knickt es um.  
 Auf frohen Haufen vorsichtig  
 zeigen Leichenflecke sich.  
 Dämmerung.

(translated by Christina Kunze)

Two objective descriptions of the genesis of the poem are known, which complement each other but facilitate essentially contrasting interpretations.<sup>17</sup> The philologist György Tverdota presents a logically constructed genesis in terms of the tragic life course: at that time the poet, suffering from psychic disorder and depression, chose the lack of theme and inspiration as the structural principle and subject matter of his poetry at the suggestion of his doctors and friends. Characteristically, throughout the

<sup>17</sup> Attila József: *“Our Poet and His Age”*. Introduced by György Tverdota and István Vas. Magyar Helikon, Budapest, 1980. A reproduction of the poem’s manuscript and its interpretation.

evolution of his work Attila József tends to be challenged by the crucial need to renew his poetry at the most difficult moments of his life. Toward the end the views of the poet's friends, medical diagnosis as well as his own conscious self-image all threaten him with *insanity*. And this process coincides with the change in his poetic thought which, concerning the deployment of language as his creative medium, can be identified as a position of *madness* on the basis of the sociological consensus in post-Herakleitian philosophical discourse. The crisis in Attila József's self-evaluation that Tverdota discusses derives, in my opinion, from the mutual re-enforcement of the autobiographical/biological situation and the emerging search for new poetic forms.

In contrast with this, a contemporary Hungarian poet, István Vas (1910–1991) emphasizes the importance of tunefulness (displaying links with a concrete tune) and the perfect creative achievement of structuring a poem with the concluding *image* in mind. He becomes aware of a possible vantage point in the depth, the opposition of Nothing in Something rendered as a tune.

Either we interpret the genesis of the poem in view of its beginning, like Tverdota, or consider the poem's beginning as the interpretation of its final image following Vas, the artistic aim, the theme of the poem's internal genesis is the detachment from linguistic conventions. Seen from the beginning it develops through the re-patterning of sounds against concepts; viewed from the end the logical unity of signifier and signified is violated through the creation of a pseudo-image. Both descriptions are convincing, but neither goes beyond the objective links with autobiographical and poetic realities. My question is whether the experience of tragedy and that of happiness are mutually exclusive and, in regard to the poem of Attila József, whether the two descriptions pre-empt or, rather, re-enforce each other?

At the conference on the poetry of Attila József held on 18-19 June 1992, where an embryonic version of the present paper was read, a variety of scholars who used different critical approaches came to the conclusion that after the volume *It Hurts a Lot* (1935) the poet, whose life was to end tragically, presumably by suicide, was trying to express a kind of *joyfulness*, which can be analysed poetically.<sup>18</sup> However, there was no consensus as to the term that could describe the phenomenon. Later, the lectures of Mária Kurdi, an expert of modern Irish literature called my attention to the formula of "tragic joy", a recurrent expression in the late poetry of Yeats (the pieces in *Last Poems* covering the 1936-1939 period, contemporaneously with Attila József's last works), which stresses the contrast between biographical and poetic events. To quote from Yeats: "Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy; / We that look on but laugh in tragic joy" (*The Gyres*); "All things fall and are built again, / And those that build them again are gay" (*Lapis Lazuli*).

<sup>18</sup> I think of the talks and comments of the poet and essayist Zsuzsa Beney, the philologist Iván Horváth and the psychologist György Szóke primarily. All three of them are distinguished representatives of the research on Attila József in Hungary. The articles were published in *Irodalomismeret* 3. 2–3 (Sept. 1992).

Apart from my reading, this tonal change inspired one of Yeats's early critics, Louis Mac Neice to draw a parallel between the poet and Rilke:

“Both Yeats and Rilke [...] insist, for all their recognition of misery and bewilderment and frustration, that the mainspring of Art, and even of Life, is *joy*. In the Tenth *Duino Elegy* it is, by a basic paradox, the personified *Lament* that leads the newly dead youth to the source of Joy, ‘die Quelle der Freude, and tells him: Bei den Menschen / ist sie ein tragender Strom.’ (Among men it’s a carrying stream.) Yeats too held that a Lament can lead to the source of Joy and in a late poem makes the very true paradox that Hamlet and Lear are gay (Cleopatra’s suicide was after all an assertion of the values of life and of the joy of life also). Where Rilke, in spite of his loneliness, has to admit that ‘Hiersein ist herrlich’, Yeats has progressed through a series of disappointments to the conclusion: ‘Out of Cavern comes a voice / And all it knows is that one word Rejoice.’”<sup>19</sup>

Challenged to reconsider Rilke in relation to Yeats, I consider it relevant to cite the conclusion of the tenth piece in *Duino Elegies*, where the expression “Glück” unites such dualities as “steigendes” and “fällt”, the emerging and the falling: “Und wir, die an steigendes Glück / denken, empfänden die Rührung, / die uns beinah bestürzt, / wenn ein Glückliches fällt”. It is this kind of dual view of the happiness to be here and mutability itself that changes the cause and effect relationship manifest in European poetry into an oppositional one, for instance in Attila József’s poem *Consciousness*: “Only what is not can become a tree, / only what’s yet to come can be a flower. / The things that exist fall into pieces.”<sup>20</sup>).

The juxtaposition of “Hiersein” and “Dasein” in Rilke implies the joint presence of images without acts and acts without images. Both the ninth and tenth elegies by Rilke raise the issue of man’s relation to language as it determines the “mode” of existing in the world.

Action without image (“ein Tun ohne Bild”), naming, utterance qualifies as the task of man and that of the poet in the poem. Let me quote from the ninth elegy: “Sind wir vielleicht hier, um zu sagen: Haus, / Brücke, Brunnen, Tor, Krug, Obstbaum, Fenster, – / höchstens: Säule, Turm... – aber zu sagen, versteht, / oh zu sagen so, wie selber die Dinge niemals / irrig meinten zu sein”. And from the tenth: “Und höher, die Sterne. Neue. Die Sterne des Leilands. / Langsam nennt sie die Klage: Hier, / siehe: den Reiter, den Stab, und das vollere Sternbild / nerulen sie: Fruchtkranz. Dann, weiter, dem Pol zu: / Wiege, Weg, das brennende Buch, Puppe, Fenster. / Aber im südlichen Himmel, rein wie im Innern / einer gesegneten Hand, das klarenglänzende M, / das die Mütter bedeutet...”

The comparison of Yeats and Rilke has relevance for the Hungarian Attila József as well. One of the poet’s best friends in the 1930s, Ferenc Fejtő has recently called my attention to the fact that “Attila József read Rilke, he read out from his work to me, it was he who acquainted me with the *Duino Elegies*. He felt kinship with Rilke, tried

<sup>19</sup> Luis MacNeice: *The Poetry of W. B. Yeats* (1941), London, Faber, 1967. p. 162.

<sup>20</sup> *Winter Night: Selected Poems of Attila József*. Trans. John Bátki. Corvina, Budapest, 1997, p. 78.

to translate his work, but did not have enough time left for it".<sup>21</sup> We are justified to read the beginning of "Our Poet and His Present Time" as a continuation of the text quoted above, because of the intention to name things through the listing of sounds, which is the act of naming itself:

Behold a poem of mine.  
This is its second line  
"Our Poet and His Present Time"  
sounds firm with letter P.

Sehet, hier ist mein Gedicht.  
Das ist Zeile Nummer Zwei.  
Hart mit K-Buchstaben spricht  
der Titel: "Künstler und seine Kreis."

Greater emphasis is put on the same in one of the drafts of the third line: "According to rule do I choose to poeticize." ("Szabály szerint költi kényem".)

There appears the image without action, nature, simile and the Faustian Gleichnis, which serve as poetic resolution of the tragic predicament even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the *Tenth Duino Elegy*: "Aber erweckten sie uns, die unendlich Toten, ein Gleichnis, / siehe, sie zeigten vielleicht auf die Kätzchen der leeren / Hasel, die hängenden, oder / meinten den Regen, der fällt auf dunkles Erdreich im Frühjahr".

It is fruitful to read against the last lines of Attila József's poem about happiness won and lost at the same time:

Watch the evening light with the evening  
dissolve...

As far as the slope stretches  
stands the blood red stubble-field  
bluishly clotting. The tiny,  
feeble lawn cries and bends down.  
Cadaveric lividity  
sits softly on the happy mounds.  
Night's falling.

sieh das Licht, wie es im Abend  
sich auflöst ...

Stoppelfeld in rotem Blut steht,  
bis zum Ende der Böschung  
stockt es blau. Das feine Gras fleht,  
schwach und leidend knickt es um.

<sup>21</sup> I recorded our conversation, dated 18 August 2004. I asked him if Attila József knew German well enough to translate Rilke, and Fejtő replied: "He did, and read him with a dictionary first."

Auf frohen Haufen vorsichtig  
zeigen Leichenflecke sich.  
Dämmerung.

It was right at the time when Attila József's last poems were written that a new kind of poetic structure attempting *synthesis* appeared in world lyrics, which consciously took a *dialogical* position in counterpointing and overwriting human history. Bearing this in mind, the reconstruction of the poem's genesis by the philologist György Tverdota and the sensitive receptionist observations of poet István Vas do not exclude but mutually reinforce each other in highlighting a new approach to the analysis of the poem. The poem "Our Poet and His Present Time" can be considered to be one of the lyrical manifestations of the attempt to transcend the Dialogical Poetic Practice<sup>22</sup> which had been evolving since the 1920s in the context of the Western mind obsessed with identifying the borders of causal relations.

<sup>22</sup> The conference was held at Pécs in Southern Hungary on 11–14 April 1991, and the proceedings were edited by Lóránt Kabdebó and Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, "*de nem felelnek, úgy felelnek*" ["their silence is the answer"], Janus Pannonius University Press, Pécs 1992. In 1992, together with Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, then a colleague at the Faculty of Arts at the Janus Pannonius University of Pécs, we drew up a programme for a conference on Hungarian poetry during the first half of the twentieth century. The programme in fact constituted a manifesto calling for a reevaluation of recent historical trends and the new developments in Hungarian poetry: "Since in recent international reference literature there have been many influential attempts at fresh approaches to conceptual contents detectable in the inner sphere of literature, i. e. in the field of literary devices, or in the change of literary paradigms and periods, the time is ripe to probe into the significant change that inaugurated a new poetical era in Hungary during the twenties and thirties. The closing phase of the historical avant-garde and the emergence of the trend described provisionally as 'lyrical neo-classicism' were parallel processes and poets like Lajos Kassák, Attila József, Lőrinc Szabó, Sándor Weöres and Gyula Illyés took active parts in them. It follows from this that the purpose of our investigations is to uncover the poetical and philosophical components of the transition from one period into another and to define its ideological assets. This is underlined by the fact that, as has been illustrated by akin processes in world literature, those decades saw trends of classical modernity transformed into new lyrical formations, providing a basis for contemporary idioms such as hermetism, abstract objectivism, reflective poetry, new subjectivism. Furthermore, these also present themselves in neoavantgardist and poststructuralist poetics. Therefore a key issue is to give a formal poetical description of the change of periods, interpret from this point of view the oeuvres of major import, and develop a new literary and historical context for the paradigms thus uncovered. This may help us describe and evaluate the history of the poetry of the thirties in terms of its actual articulation in trends and tendencies and to free it from traditional formulae fixed by such misconceived terms as neo-classicism and neo-realism."

## THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICATION OF AN INSCRIPTION

To place the poem in the above described position more precisely, I have to focus on a philological question, which is left open, not surprisingly, in the two analyses I referred to. The poem is dedicated to Bertalan Hatvany, who was Attila József's financial patron at that time. The Hatvany family were industrial barons and played a significant role as patrons in the history of Hungarian literature. Baron Lajos Hatvany, a political figure well known for having had a leading role in the 1918 bourgeois revolution, discovered and financially supported respective members of three generations of poets, Endre Ady, Attila József and Ferenc Juhász, who started as a distinguished representative of post-war poetry, as well as sponsored the outstanding periodical of Hungarian modernism, *West (Nyugat 1908–1941)*. His brother, Bertalan Hatvany was not so much in the forefront of public interest, and his relations with Attila József were not so strong. This is partly the reason why in his analysis of the poem István Vas attributed the fact that it was dedicated to Bertalan to the wish to honour his sponsorship, while György Tverdota refers to it as a kind of gift in appreciation of the support. Actually, this is how the person honoured by the dedication appreciated the poet's "gift" in his obituary written not long after the publication of the poem.<sup>23</sup> On my part I think that the poet dedicated his volume not so much to the patron but to the *orientalist*, whose *The Soul of Asia* was a book Attila József dealt with critically, although in accordance with the spirit of Marxism.<sup>24</sup>

My opinion is confirmed by Ferenc Fejtő's recollections.<sup>25</sup> Later in his recollections Bertalan Hatvany also emphasizes the role of personal links in the act of Attila József's dedication of the book to him.<sup>26</sup> He remembers a talk about metaphysical subjects:

"A week or so earlier we were talking about the expansion of the universe, something that had nothing to do with the professions of either of us, yet it was a subject both of us must have taken some abstract interest in, and I am still interested in it. As you know, in those days two theories prevailed: the one of big-bang, creation through a primeval atomic explosion, and the one by Holt about constant hydrogen explosion. At that time Holt's theory had not yet come

<sup>23</sup> Bertalan Hatvany: Attila. Published in the Jan-Febr. 1938 special issue of *Szép Szó*. I cite from the text re-published in *Contemporaries on Attila József (Kortársak József Attiláról II. 1938–1941)*, edited with notes by György Tverdota, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1987.

<sup>24</sup> Bertalan Hatvany: *Ázsia lelke* (The Soul of Asia) Franklin, Budapest, n. d. [approximate date 1935 assigned to it at the National Széchényi Library]; Attila József: The Soul of Asia. Notes on the book of Bertalan Hatvany. *Szép Szó*, March 1936. Republished in Attila József: *Collected Works*, III., Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1958, pp. 179–183.

<sup>25</sup> During our conversation, cited above, I asked him if Attila József was interested in Tao te king, and Fejtő said: "He was! We listened to Bertalan Hatvany at Márta Vágó's and also in the apartment of Hatvany himself". To my question if the poet and Bertalan Hatvany were on friendly terms he replied in the positive, adding that "it was not his financial support for Attila that sustained the friendship".

<sup>26</sup> Erzsébet Vezér: Talk with Bertalan Hatvany, *Kritika*, 1980. No. 12; *Irodalomismeret*, VI. 3. (1995): 11–12.



into being, we were chatting about the big-bang and the Doppler-effect, which neither of us understood but we found it interesting. And about infinitude, the cosmic law, described by Attila, the Marxist, in atheistic terminology, while I, the agnostic still speak about it with the inclusion of the name of God. Meaning, of course, not the anthropomorphic godhead who could be bodily represented or whose personal features would be verifiable or important; I think I have a right to consider God as the sum of cosmic laws. These were the topics of our friendly conversation, and a few days later he came back to me, saying: here is my poem, read it. I thanked him very much.”

Taking this aspect of the dedication into account, the poem may qualify as a special kind of lyrical reception of a prominent turn in the European mind (“Blutmischung mit dem Osten”).

Hatvany himself was anxious to trace the eastern aspects of Attila József’s poetry. He does not think that those he identifies as such derive from eastern texts, but, on the contrary, he refers to coincidences in or the comparability of existing texts. He reads the texts against each other, pointing out their diverse origins. The poem by Attila József, which is arguably structured in the western mode, he views in the context of *Tao te king*: “The pure, chiselled form emerges in his world like crystal in solution: it is a desire for order in today’s chaos. The metrical feet are like the facets of a piece of crystal. The sharp rhyme is the edge of the crystal. And if there is hardness – perhaps coarseness – in his poems, it is that of the diamond: the perfection of form, man’s desire for form, and the desire of nature for rules, the rules of law, reason and beauty.”

When our finest potential’s realized –  
Order shining bright –  
Then the mind can at last grasp  
Both the endless and the finite:  
The forces of production outside,  
And the instincts, here, inside...<sup>27</sup>

It is order that creates symmetry in the inanimate crystal and the living being by the same law: the Order which is the beginning and the end, the vital meaning of all events. It is the order of the East, the Tao. There is something profoundly eastern in Attila József’s poetry; this great admirer of western culture and the western style of life – the masterful translator of French poems had an eastern soul as an ardent seeker of synthesis.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Winter Night: Selected Poems of Attila József*. Trans. John Bátki. Corvina, Budapest, 1997, p. 69.

<sup>28</sup> When still alive Attila József must have read about ideas similar to those in Hatvany’s obituary in the book of Hatvany he reviewed: “While Confucius tried to harmonise mankind with the powers of nature through the improvement of society and the cultivation of appropriate rights, Lao-tze wishes to re-align the individual with nature. Tao is there in the hearts of all of us: we must just become conscious of it through simple contemplation and profound meditation. Only the one who withdraws from the noise of the world and frees himself from social rituals is able to detect the Tao hiding in himself. Whoever achieves this will become immortal” (Bertalan Hatvany: *The Soul of Asia*, *op. cit.* p. 127).

"[...] The poet, who was seeking to know his drives in analysis, felt *happy* about synthesis, the great, eternal Unity of peoples, races, fathers, mothers, lives and deaths. I often tried to persuade him to start searching for the real roots of his existence and interior through studying the ancient wisdom of Asia. He kept on refraining from it. Perhaps he was afraid to find himself in opposition to the system of one of his great masters, Freud, a system he expected to provide psychic healings and absolution in the form of *order*. However, he was well aware that Jung, the 'heretic' was following a path different from Freud's since he got acquainted with the teachings of the Orient. The poet of formal perfection understood and enjoyed the Orient's artistic perfection. [...] He had a sense of kinship, the kinship of those who seek perfection through contemplation, when he looked at Japanese drawings. Yet he misunderstood it. He agreed with Confucius's view that: 'the perfect relationship between humans is mutuality', but preferred to filter this through Hegel and Marx. He also knew that Confucius said that 'it is a vital necessity to correct the meaning of words'.<sup>29</sup> But the artist of words, the admirer of reason found his master in Freud, the expert on psychic disorder. I thought that following these paths will result in his consciousness of the Unity he was so much longing for. As a matter of fact his rational, straightforward and sincere atheism was but searching for the One: the One he could not and did not want to call God, because he strongly felt that the concept of God for the uneducated was akin to the father complex in Freud's teaching. I wonder if he had been happier searching for the One and Order in other ways. But even so he would never have been a more perfect artist and a better man".<sup>30</sup>

Later Hatvany in his translation of *Tao* reads a passage of *Tao te king* against a piece of text by Attila József: he makes the following comment on the final two lines of the fifth poem ("It is better to follow our heart than a series of vain words") as if to find a parallel in Attila József: "csung means middle, mean as well as what, in the words of Attila József, we carry in our hearts".<sup>31</sup> At the same time, on the back cover of the book he concludes the poet's bio with: "This book is also a farewell. Remain su-

<sup>29</sup> Attila József could read the same in Bertalan Hatvany's description: "what Confucius calls justification and correction is something totally unique in the history of human spirituality. When he was asked about what he considered to be most important in the world, he said: the correction of names, [...] feeling that the mixing up of concepts is the cause of all troubles" (Bertalan Hatvany: From Confucius to Nehemias. Read at a meeting of IMIT on 25 Dec. 1935. Offprint from the *1936 Yearbook of IMIT*, p. 107). For Hatvany this must have been of great importance regarding his spiritual relations with Attila József, since he comes back to it in his later translation of *Tao te king*: "The passable road is not one for ever, / the name uttered is not one for ever"; in his notes to the translation Hatvany adds: "Waley [...] translates the sentence like this: the road we can speak about is not an Unchanging Road, the name we can name is not an Unchanging Name. [...] in the traditional sense it refers to the truth that the human use of words is never able to express the real essence of things. As we are also convinced that the uttered word is not a name for ever, in our translation we choose to use this traditional interpretation". *Tao Te King: The Book of the Road and the Word*, Bertalan Hatvany's Hungarian translation with a preface and notes, *Látóhatár* (München), 1957; 2nd ed. Újvári-Griff, 1977, p. 19).

<sup>30</sup> Bertalan Hatvany: Attila... cited obituary, pp. 970–972.

<sup>31</sup> Az út és az ige könyve: a *Tao Te King*, Bertalan Hatvany's Hungarian translation with a preface and notes, *Látóhatár* (München), 1957. 2nd ed.: *Lao-tze: Az út és az ige könyve. A Tao Te King*. Translation and Essay by Bertalan Hatvany. Újváry "Griff" Verlag, München, 1977.

perfluous – Attila said”. Thus he inscribed Attila József’s own words in his bio, inspired by *Tao*.

On thing is certain: the poet may have read and heard Bertalan Hatvany’s lecture at Christmas 1935, in which *Tao te king* was touched upon, and he may even have known the piece of translation presented:<sup>32</sup>

There is something, Something mysterious  
 There wasn’t sky, nor earth, but this was already.  
 It was silent, it was alone.  
 It was standing alone and unchanging,  
 Making a circle, but still unchanging.  
 I could call it Mother of the World  
 But I do not know its name.  
 I could say Existence or Intelligence  
 Or – awkwardly – I can say the Great.  
 The Great: it is eternal motion  
 Always in motion, infinity,  
 And the infinite returns into itself.  
 (translated by Bálint Szele)

Referring to *Tao te king* in his lecture Hatvany argues in a way which parallels Schrödinger’s later train of thought: “He who transcends his thirst and the desires and emotions created by the visible world, has mastered the fate determined by the chains of cause and effect! For cause and effect are not tied to the individual and his life. The consequences and resonances of the acts of the past, the words uttered and the ideas thought up disturb and change the sea-like mirror of existence. There is no individual, the “I” changes from minute to minute: it is illusory to posit the “I” as a continuity”.<sup>33</sup>

Besides the citation from *Tao te king* there is the text which, similarly to Rilke as well as the poem itself, defines the concept of happiness with an image devoid of act: “according to him the wise man withdraws into the steppe, or into nature itself. Into nature which is one with man. For him happiness is not manifest in acts, but in the inward-looking contemplations of the soul”.<sup>34</sup> In this spirit the poem by Attila József, in self-addressing tone (the poem is descriptive, it proved too hard to decide if it addresses someone else or the poet himself): “Let this go now, let that go now. Look”.

The dedication of the poem to Bertalan Hatvany has a thematic relevance, and the poem links itself to the crisis in European scientific thinking. It is two extremes, the atheist and the agnostic that clash with each other, and there appears a faultline. In my view *Tao te king* has a transcending role here, not contradicted by philology.

<sup>32</sup> Bertalan Hatvany: From Confucius ... lecture, the poem he translated and read is on p. 104.

<sup>33</sup> Bertalan Hatvany: From Confucius... cited lecture, p. 109.

<sup>34</sup> Bertalan Hatvany: From Confucius... cited lecture, p. 104.

## A BELATED COMPARISON

A casual remark of the writer and painter Gábor Karátson, who has translated the work of Lao-ce three times, raises the possibility of seeking parallels between Attila József and *Tao te king*.<sup>35</sup> In the notes to his latest translation he refers to a possible explanation of the written image of the word *king*: “‘thread of chain; rule, law; to control, manage; penetrate’. According to the *Chinese-English Dictionary* of Matthews [...] ‘classical books’. ‘It seems to be the image of a loom’, Wu Jing-Nuan says [...] ‘with a skein of yarn and a spool beside; poetic reference to Fu-hsi, who taught people how to make notes and webs from threads’. Thus *The Book of Changes*, the *ji king* could be translated as ‘*The Loom of Changes*’. *Tao te king* could be translated as ‘*The Loom of the Road’s Magic*’.”<sup>36</sup> With this in mind the reading of the stanza cited from Attila József’s poem *Consciousness* may lead to new insights.

It was the translations of Gábor Karátson that called my attention to the parallels between “Our Poet and His Present Time” and *Tao te king* in the 1990s.<sup>37</sup> The following part from Attila József’s poem and the first piece of *Tao te king* evoke similar ideas:

Nothing is flitting inside it  
as if it were the dust of anything –  
like the dust...

Nothing in it is flitting,  
as if it were something: the world  
swaying in expanding space  
embarking upon its future

Das Nichts schwebt darin auf und ab,  
fast scheint’s, dass es von irgendwas  
der Staub sei ...

Das Nichts schwebt darin auf und ab,  
als war’s etwas: die Welt  
die im sich ausbreitenden Weltall schwingt  
und auf die Zukunft zuhält;

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the universe wakes nothingness,

<sup>35</sup> *lao-ce tao te king*. Translation and afterword by Gábor Karátson, Cserépfalvi, Budapest, Second, completely revised edition, 1997. Third completely revised edition Q. E. D. Kiadó, Budapest [n. d.]

<sup>36</sup> *lao-ce tao te king*. Translated from the Chinese and notes by Gábor Karátson. Q. E. D. Kiadó, Budapest, [n. d.] p. 98.

<sup>37</sup> *lao-ce tao te king*. Translation and afterword by Gábor Karátson. Cserépfalvi, Budapest, Second, completely revised edition, 1997. Third completely revised edition Q. E. D. Kiadó, Budapest [n. d.].

as, inversely, inside me  
this very thought...

My soul is space. It would fly  
to mother, to great Space, high,

Alles ist im Nichts, genau wie  
umgekehrt, im Innern dachte ich  
grad daran ...

Meine Seele All. Auf, davon  
zum Mutter-All will sie fliehn.

The recent analysis of a young colleague about the poem deploys the idea that, following Schrödinger, I described as the borderline state of the Western mind. In the lines cited the words “nothingness” (“semmi”) and the adverb “inside” (“benne”) form an anagram, opening up the possibility to imply the adverb “inside nothingness” (“semmiben”), by which

“we suddenly sense the restructuring or, rather, complete defiguration of the phenomenal relations since we confront the completely aphenomenal instance of the text being pre-empted, void, itself floating in nothingness. It remains unanswerable whether the text is floating in nothingness or nothingness is floating in the text. The conceptual meaning of ‘nothingness’ is doubled, as ‘nothingness’ (‘as if it were the dust of anything’) originally meaning ‘lack’, now assumes the meaning of ‘space’, ‘emptiness’. Thus the tropological definition of ‘nothingness’ also becomes questioned: if instead of ‘Nothing is flitting in it’ ‘something is flitting’ in nothingness, the adverbial potential of nothingness is activated in its conceptual meaning and it operates referentially, while becoming the subject beside the word ‘flitting’ it functions as a trope. [...] The conclusion offers itself that the illusion of ‘something’ is generated by the active doubling of ‘nothingness’ in several ways (but not by its ‘charging’). ‘Nothingness’ and ‘something’ cannot be separated from each other, yet neither of the two includes the other. The ‘poem’ is not simply ‘nothing’, in the sense of the aesthetic doctrine of undifferentiability, let us say, but is ‘something’ as well, though the relation of the two cannot be determined. The text is doubly distanced from itself through the disparate function of ‘nothingness’.”<sup>38</sup>

This interpretation seems to harmonise with Gábor Karátson’s first translation of *Tao*:

We call nothing  
The beginning of Heaven and Earth  
We call being  
The Mother of Ten Thousand Things  
Or, rather  
let it be Nothing forever  
so that we can see the Wonder

<sup>38</sup> Csongor Lőrincz: Inscription and Transposition. József Attila: “Our Poet and His Present Time.” *Alföld*, No. 4, 2004, pp. 60–77, p. 65.

let there be Being forever  
 so that we can see its Contours  
 and this pair lives together  
 but on stage their name is different  
 they live together the Depth  
 Depth, ever increasing Depth  
 The Gate of All Wonders  
 (translated by Bálint Szele)

Gábor Karátson continued the search for parallels where Bertalan Hatvany left it but approaching the issue from a different vantage point. Ironically speaking, in his translation it is *Tao te king* which reads Attila József, not the other way round.

Bertalan Hatvany, whom the poem is dedicated to did not complete his full translation in the poet's life, which differs from Karátson's rather literal one. Even if the first reading seems to confirm the cultured physicist Schrödinger's witty insight that every translation of the pieces of *Tao* constitutes a poem on its own,<sup>39</sup> the Hungarian translations are similar to each other in their structure and differ only in the terms they use.<sup>40</sup> However, until now it was this "only" that prevented us from a comparison with the poem of Attila József. Among the earlier Hungarian translators Bertalan Hatvany used the combinations "Existence" ("Lét") and "Non-existence" ("Nemlét"), Lajos Ágner juxtaposed "lacking desire" ("vágynélküliség") and "desire" ("vágy"), while Sándor Weöres used "without desire" and "he has desire". The best known western translations, however, do not resort to this kind of differentiation between European and non-European. Richard Wilhelm adopts the term "nicht-sein", J.-J.-L. Duyvendak uses the phrase "non-être". It is Gábor Karátson who introduces the word "nothing" ("semmi") into his translation, which corresponds to a key-word in 20<sup>th</sup> century European philosophy. Thus Karátson creates a basis of comparison which makes the difference between European and Oriental thinking measurable. Whether Attila József consciously implied the same or merely repeats the term current in the western mind at the beginning of his poem remains a question. Also, it remains one whether we can, at all, make a link between the poem and the eastern references.

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Having completed the poem *It Hurts a Lot* Attila József reached a kind of crossroads signalled by his new concepts of love and the divine, and the intellectually new poetics of the work "Our Poet and His Present Time". Like almost all our poets he came from a tradition that was historically determined to be political and concerned with reasoning and teaching. Added to this, his interest in Marxism shaped his aes-

<sup>39</sup> "But I once got hold of two different German translations of Tao-te-king. As I remember them, it was possible to recognise only here and there that both were versions of the same little Chinese work." (Erwin Schrödinger: *My view of the World... What is real?* (1960). p. 84.)

<sup>40</sup> *Lao-ce: Tao-te-king*, trans. from the Chinese by Lajos Ágner. Officina, Budapest, 1943; *Lao-ce: the Book of the Way and Morality (Tao Te king)*, trans.: Sándor Weöres, Európa, Budapest, 1958.

thetic views according to the principle of materialist reflection. It was after his becoming tragically disillusioned with politics and seriously ill that he changed his mode of writing.

Exact information about the last months of Attila József's life is available, yet legends around it have also emerged. He was under constant medical supervision at that time. Most of his biography is known from the descriptions and memoirs of his psychologists. The poet himself had no opportunity to report about his internal experience. In lack of that we have to resort to the interpretation of his poetics. His achievement can be examined in terms of the most significant poetic practice in contemporary Europe: the handful of his last poems register poetic events in ways comparable to the best of contemporary Hungarian (Dezső Kosztolányi [1885–1936], Lőrinc Szabó) and world lyrics (Rilke, Yeats), and they evoke the scientific thinking representative of the era as well. Having experienced the crisis of the European mind, he was striving to create a kind of harmony in poetry. An admirable poetic sensitivity is present in his poem the way the contemporary scientist developed a sense of new vistas in his own field. Attila József's

“Our Poet and His Present Time” can be read alongside with the following by Eddington: “Our present conception of the physical world is *hollow* enough to hold almost anything. [...] A skeleton scheme of symbols proclaims its own hollowness. It can be – nay it cries out to be – filled with something that shall transform it from skeleton into substance, from plan into execution, from symbols into an interpretation of the symbols. And if ever the physicist solves the problem of the living body, he should no longer be tempted to point to his result and say: ‘That’s you’.”<sup>41</sup>

Attila József's poem can be said to have its genesis in the mind and poetic ambitions of the era. The poet did not respond to the challenges of his time in direct terms, but in his particular mode of writing. This is why his contemporary, István Vas could not but feel – as his memories record –, that he was reading a great poem. The problematics the work articulates poetically and intellectually can inspire different interpretations in the course of times, revealing further links and implications for the analysers.

## 2. LŐRINC SZABÓ: THANKSGIVING (*HÁLAADÁS*)

### *THE ANALYSIS OF DESPAIR*

It was in the middle of the 1930s that the *theme* of using eastern, Indian and Chinese anecdotes for ethical purposes appeared in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó. Most importantly at the time when he wrote the poems collected in the 1936 *Private Truce*, that is

<sup>41</sup> Sir Arthur Eddington: *New Pathways in Science*. The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, 1959, pp. 313–314. Both István Vas and Tverdota agree that the poet knew the Hungarian edition of Eddington's book: Sir Arthur, Eddington: *A természettudomány új útjai*, citation from pp. 299–300.



between the end of 1932 and the end of 1936. There is information about his reading Buddha during his holiday at Abbazia in September 1934,<sup>42</sup> though in the prose volume *Poem and Reality*, a unique commentary on his own work, he says the following about a poem of his written in Abbazia: "it is the product of my long-term study of and readings in Buddhism".<sup>43</sup> Which means that he was inspired not only by occasional readings but his relevant interest and careful studies. However, I think that this theme derived from an ideological-philosophical interest which did not generate poetic reception at the same time. In contrast with Sándor Weöres, whose contemporary interest in the Oriental became integrated in his poetic practice. Lőrinc Szabó used the inspiration of Eastern philosophy in his poetic practice based on the European logic. As he says about a poem in *Poem and Reality*: the examples are "old Hindu and Chinese masters, although they could have been new and European".<sup>44</sup> He uses Eastern themes following the poetic tradition of Goethe, introducing a new direction into Hungarian poetry.

<sup>42</sup> "And I was planning to do this and that, read Buddha and other things" – he writes to his wife (*Thirty-six Years. The Correspondence of Lőrinc Szabó and His Wife (1921–1944)*, p. 452).

<sup>43</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality. Intimate Data and Comments*. Edited by Krisztina Lengyel Tóth, Katalin Kiss et al. under the auspices of the Lőrinc Szabó Research Centre. Osiris, Budapest, 2001. Towards the end of his life, presumably between 1954 and 1957 the poet recorded, with the help of his friends, the genetic conditions of all his published and forthcoming poems. While dictating he added a few private stories. The cited is about the poem *The Preaching of the Courtesan*, p. 85.

<sup>44</sup> See what is said about the poem Pity in Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality... op. cit.* p. 91. In his self-commentary there are similar remarks concerning other texts about eastern themes: "I read a great deal about Hinduism, The Vedes and Buddhism. My great favourites were the six volumes of the *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie* by Deussen, which was a treasury of knowledge about the spirituality of the ancient Hindu world. I also liked Reden des Buddha very much, and a lot else. I thought that József Schmidt's book on Buddhism was very useful, and so was another of his on Sanscrit literature. In the course of time I bought a lot of books [...] I often read from a shortened edition of the philosophy of Tsuang-ce (Diederichs Verlag) which contains a large number of, for us incomprehensible anecdotes and fragments like other books of this kind, which means that the reader has to study such books by the dozen or hundreds to apprehend them in terms of the European logic. I read Meng-ce, Confucius and Lao-ce, The Vedes, etc. in the same kind of edition [...] My anger with Christianity, the remnants of my youthful spirit of protest and also my sense of justice made me decide that in this wretched Christian Europe and Hungary I shall disseminate the ideas of the religions and folk beliefs that I like: there were good, wise and saintly people outside Europe too! [...] this is how I considered or, rather, wanted to consider the Hindu and Chinese (mainly Buddhist) things and thought that after thousands of years my poems will mediate them, just like the Christian sermons, to the young people. At the same time they offered fantastic and grotesque material as well. Cuang-ce's book: *Das wahre eBuch vom südlichen Blütenland* tempted me to engage in several rewritings. But I could work only with those that were intellectually at least as attractive to my imagination as the love of a sweet and dear woman. These themes were articulated mostly in long prose texts, and I give them structure and Europeanized them. [...] It was the Chandagya upanishad that I really liked, among others: the talk of Uddálaka Áruni with his son, Svetaketu. This education, the search for the essence of

This is why it must be emphasised that this thematic change had been preceded by two poems about Eastern subjects in the volume *You and the World*, which collected the poems written between 1930 and 1932. *Rigveda*,<sup>45</sup> in fact, was a translation, and with the other, *Tao te King*, it contributed to the poet's analytical approach in his *dialogically* signalled poetry, which was constructed from opposites reflecting the character of the Western mind. In the poem *Ardsuna and Siva* he goes as far as saying that

the two halves of the universe devour each other  
and the idyll is full of monsters.  
(translated by Bálint Szele)

The increasing variations on Buddhist thought in Lórin Szabó's work reinforces the tragically posited causality and emphasises man's being locked in suffering and loneliness – the personal experience that suggests a link between the sense of disillusionment and inertia and the appearance of Middle-European historical crisis. Therefore in his poetry Lórin Szabó sees the evasion of all those personal and political problems poetically justified which, for a variety of reasons, he did not always isolate himself from in his private life. This was made possible by the European tradition of that kind of analytical poetry which enabled him to transcend certain personal and politically related experiences, the stylistic unevenness manifest in his pre-war, 1938–39 activity as a reporter, as well as the one-sided interpretation of some of his personal remarks which were spreading like anecdotes. In his post-war apologia he was justified in citing these poems as a kind of transcendence over the views about Nazi Germany, which threw both himself and the contemporary intellectuals in despair.<sup>46</sup> In his apology the analytical poetic texts, laced by Oriental wisdom, shine like pearls. His inward-looking attitude facilitated self-saving and the creation of poetic value. He used the Oriental theme to develop an aspect of the European poetic tradition fur-

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the world covers pages and pages. This prose pieces meant to me as much as love or at least as much as a sermon to a devoted priest, and from the terrible long, boring and irritatingly naïve I made, by contraction and using a self-devised formula of refrain, a tolerable, even attractive version of the Hindu message for the European mind and psyche"; but he intends each of them to be a mask poem: "I do not have to say that it is me who speaks from under the mask of Vimala, the courtesan. [...] About the poem titled Vang-An-Si he writes: 'It is about a nearly one thousand year-old communist project. It was the modern socialist endeavours and my strong doubt of their success that made me rewrite it'. In another case: 'I could not make a proper distinction between my daily experience at the editorial office, my love life and what I read from these texts. In summary he emphasizes the subject matter: I would really have liked to reconcile east and west, old and new, and combat one-sidedness and ignorance.'" (*Poem and Reality*, *op. cit.* pp. 85–91.)

<sup>45</sup> Lórin Szabó included it with his translations under the title *The Hymns of Creation*. See in *Friends Forever I–II*, Osiris, Budapest, 2002, Vol. I. pp. 657–658.

<sup>46</sup> The contradictory attitudes of the poet are still debated in Hungary, even though he was not engaged in extremities like some other provocative personalities of 20th century literature including the by now classic Ezra Pound, Knut Hamsun, Weinheber, Drieu la Rochelle or Montherlant. In the case of Lórin Szabó some important facts came to light only recently. He also travelled

ther, namely the analysis of despair. This impulse underlies the creation of some of his own poems and translations. The latter group includes the translation of Kleist's satirical *Amphitryon*, a bitter dramatic representation of human defencelessness, which he rendered into Hungarian during late summer and autumn 1938, coinciding with the

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frequently to Germany. In 1938 and 1939 he was member of the press staff for the official visits of Miklós Horthy and Prime Minister Teleki, respectively. In 1941 he travelled to the Leipzig International Fair, and later that year he accompanied the National Theatre's tour of Germany. As an advisor and translator, he participated in the editing of the short-lived Deutsch-Ungarische Gesellschaft's 'Kazinczy Series'; as part of which there were three small books published in 1941: G. Keller's *Spiegel, das Kätchen*, T. Storm's *Aquis Submersus* and A. Dorste-Hülshoff's *Die Jugendbuche*. In 1941, as a guest of the Weimar Dichtertag, he participated at the conference of the Europäische Schriftsteller-Vereinigung. He travelled to Berlin and Vienna several times as a lecturer: in 1939 in Berlin at the Collegium Hungaricum the title of his lecture was 'Neue Ungarische Dichtung – Geist und Stil'. In 1942 he travelled both to Berlin and Vienna again. And, what he had to be silent about even after the war was that he facilitated the connection between a German-Nazi administrator and John Dickinson, working in Hungary at that time. The latter was the Middle-European organiser of the English secret service. During his Weimar trip he strongly opposed the ideas of 'Gleichschalt' in occupied Europe, and he made friends with Carl Rothe, Secretary of the Writer's Union, who was related to the 1944 conspiracy against Hitler, and during his visits to Hungary, he kept contact with the English Resistance. It became clear only very recently whom Rothe met in Hungary as a guest of Lőrinc Szabó: the Scotsman John Dickinson (1910–1962), who, working for the Price Waterhouse, had escaped to Hungary from Berlin. In Budapest, in the social-political circle of József Balogh (a martyred literary gentleman, patristic scholar and editor), Dickinson met baroness Ella Teleki (b. 1918) and married her in 1940. During the siege of Budapest, they both became close colleagues of the famous Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg. In 1945 Lőrinc Szabó wrote about his wartime activity: 'those who did not know me or misjudged me, abused me for years, and I had to bear it and remain silent. Even now I was reluctant to say all this, and still other things may remain in secret'. Mr Dickinson, after he could escape to London and then to Stockholm with his family in April 1946, was also told never to talk about his Hungarian relations. After the war he received the Order of British Empire from Queen Elizabeth II. After the war the authorities detained Szabó several times for his visits in Germany and his relations with some German individuals; on 25 September 1945 he was censured as a journalist. He wrote about the adversities of this period in his *Napló* (Diary, published in the book *Bírákhoz és barátokhoz, To Judges and Friends*), and in his trials he made two defence speeches in which he summed up the earlier facts of his life. The documentation of the trials, together with the speeches, were published: Szabó Lőrinc: *To Judges and Friends* (Diary and apologia from 1945). Magvető, Budapest, 1990. The two apologia were written for the identification procedure of May 1945 and September 1945 and were read out on that occasion. The story which had been unknown for decades was revealed in the talk of Marianne Dobos with Mrs. Dickinson, countess Ella Teleki (Marianne Dobos: *Christmas Came Then Too*, 1944), Bibor Kiadó, Miskolc, 2002, pp. 77–107). See also in the internet journal *Kakanienrevisited*: Noémi Kiss: Wer ist Carl Rothe? Eine literarische Kartographie der Begegnung zwischen Szabó Lőrinc und Carl Rothe, www.kakanien.ac.at /beitr/fallstudie/Nkiss1pdf/15/04/2002; Briefe von Carl Rothe an Lőrinc Szabó und Lőrinc Szabó an Carl Rothe. Edition: Ursula Reber (Wien), Lektorat: Angela Eder (Wien), Recherche: Noemi Kiss (Miskolc): www.kakanien.ac.at /beitr/materialen/UREber1.pdf /20/04/2002.

Munich Pact. At the same time he wrote a poem which fuses the tone of resignation with horror in the description of a scene in nature. Several of his friends disapproved of the poem, reading it as an acceptance of the Munich Pact. My view is just the opposite, I hear an exclamation of despair provoked by the cynicism of politics when reading the poem:

Lesson

Devouring the worm, it looked at me shuddering,  
 devouring the worm, 't was regarding my sole,  
 the head, the neck, then eating the whole,  
 devouring-gorging the whole at one mouthful,

the whole worm, the two-digit, squirming  
 green flesh, almost choking, almost drinking, while  
 its eye was clinging to my enormous legs  
 in a frightened and cautious agony of

what I'm about to do. I did nothing,  
 (first I couldn't then I didn't want to),  
 I was just standing and shuddering, just standing  
 with the great lesson whirling in my mind.

By the end of the fight, I approved everything.  
 The lizard was gaping, lazy and swollen,  
 looking up at me innocent and  
 satisfied. And it was licking its mouth.

(translated by Bálint Szele)

And then he completed the authentic Hungarian translation of *Troilus és Cressida* that he had not been able to finish before the war.<sup>47</sup> Later, during the Bolshevik dictatorship he translated Racine's drama *Andromaque*.<sup>48</sup> The work was inspired by Oriental anecdotes that he used according to the Western mind. In his *Diary* the poet writes: "In *Collected Poems* the chronologically last piece is *Buddha Replies*. – I would not have the strength to write it now".<sup>49</sup> At the same time he indicates involvement in the

<sup>47</sup> In his 1945 *Diary* he writes: "The Landauer-volume appealed to me because the essay about *Troilus and Cressida* begins with the following: 'this is one of the most significant plays by Shakespeare'. So I had to read it. I translated one act of it several years ago, but I failed to do the rest, [...] I started to read *Troilus* itself. If I were living a quiet life I might perhaps start the translation again or continue the work. It is a horrible play, shows links with our world. I should write parallels to the curses of Tersites" (Lóránt Szabó: *To Judges and Friends*... p. 112). Finally, the translation was finished for the 1948 edition of Shakespeare's *Collected Plays* 1–4 by Franklin Publishers, included in volume 4, pp. 313–446.

<sup>48</sup> He completed the translation early in 1949, and published it in Racine's *Collected Plays*. Edited and introduced by Gyula Illyés, Franklin Könyvkiadó, Budapest, [1949]. pp. 135–208.

<sup>49</sup> Lóránt Szabó: *To Judges and Friends*... *op. cit.* p. 56.

study of Buddhism, a new stage of the synthesis between Eastern and Western, underscoring the Eastern thought which gives emphasis to Western despair: "During the years I deepened this Buddhist state of mind to train myself to the utmost, and wrote poems like *Song on the Rhinoceros* and *Buddha Answers*. These no longer just echo the tenets of Buddhism in its vulgarity".<sup>50</sup> About the latter poem he says:

"According to my readings there exists a kind of superior Buddhism (for which the *Bhagavad-Ghita* itself is an example), and this superior Buddhism permits action and total cruelty as far as they are not driven by interest. The conclusion is about his states of mind and the realization that Buddha 'recommends' me inhuman loneliness".<sup>51</sup>

In both poems the prayer-mill kind of refrain – under a Buddhist mask – offers a European teaching in the Lőrinc Szabó poems, which became crystallized at the end of the 1930s: "I provided the frame to the whole and it is obvious that *Song* is a concise history of psychic development, including my eroticism, idealistic socio-political ambitions, self-hatred and self-exile into loneliness, etc. At the end I talked to 'myself!'"<sup>52</sup>

– And I fell and I came to hate all,  
I saw man in the filth of sin. –  
And the rustling of the trees answered: "Live alone,  
like a rhinoceros in the forest of solitude."

(*Song on the Rhinoceros*, published on 27 March 1938,  
translated by Bálint Szele)

Say with me: the wise do not bear locks,  
Take off their past, like the snake its slough.

(*Buddha Answers*, published on 20 February 1943,  
translated by Bálint Szele)

If the poet had happened to lose his life during the war or in the course of his being called to account after the war, this tragic sense of despair would close the presence of the Western-type analytical poetry in Hungarian literature. Counterpointing human weaknesses and giving voice to a tragically heroic self-sacrifice appeared in works like the translation of *Timon of Athens* (1935), the melancholic Jacques' texts in *As You Like It* (1938), the translation of *Macbeth* (1939) – down to the poems *Lesson* and *Buddha Answers*.

The poetry of Lőrinc Szabó does not resolve antinomies by assimilating Eastern-philosophical parallels, but retains the European form of causal reasoning and uses the antinomy called pseudo-ethical by Schrödinger: he experiences the duality of unethical existence and the "humanistic" ethics of the mind.

<sup>50</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality... op. cit.* p. 86.

<sup>51</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality... op. cit.* p. 132.

<sup>52</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality... op. cit.* p. 104.

## ADVERSARIES IN THE EUROPEAN POETIC MODE

The kind of rationality which accepts “total cruelty” only in “disinterestedness” will express itself in an anecdote about Lőrinc Szabó’s life. At the onset of his career he suggested to a friend of his that he should commit suicide to terminate the trap he found himself in – the friend had a role in organising nationalist-spirited literary life while he became an outcast in the society and was ostracised from public life on account of his Jewishness. The poet added that in a similar situation he would choose the same solution. In fact, he found himself in a similar one in 1945, when being called to account. In his poetry the recorder of social injustice confronts the circle of his leftist friends as a person who, before the war and during it for a time, expected national recovery with German help. By that time, however, his view of the personal consequences of the trap seems to have changed. About the earlier advice appearing in *Buddha Answers* he writes in his *Diary*, giving it a new interpretation: “I would not have the strength for it”. Although in the same *Diary* he reiterates the idea of suicide like a refrain, – because of the incompleteness of his poetry (he uses the word “falsification”) he refuses it categorically. When another close friend of his younger years – the earlier best performer of his poems – breaks all ties with the poet and becomes a prominent political figure in the procedure of calling to account, the poet writes his *Adversaries*.<sup>53</sup> Despair here does not evoke the choice of suicide. It presents the biased accuser who acts *not* in disinterestedness but in total cruelty and without weighing anything concerning the accused, who undertakes *weighing* his possible guilt. The poem closes, in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó, the measuring of deeds in terms of the Western order of evaluation. With Schrödinger in mind, the poem can be seen as suggesting:

“Darauf kann man zunächst sagen, bei der Regelung des bürgerlichen Lebens können wir uns den Luxus, die Persönlichkeit auszuschalten, nicht leisten, viel eher einen Verstoß gegen die Folgerichtigkeit der Naturwissenschaft. Wer aber an dieser doch festhalten und daraus ableiten will, dass ihm unrecht geschieht, der überlege, dass dann ja der Gesetzgeber, der Richter, der Polizeisoldat und der Gefangenenaufseher ebenfalls nach unabänderlicher Notwendigkeit handeln und darum ebensowenig recht oder unrecht tun wie eine Lawine oder ein Erdbeben.”<sup>54</sup>

He summarises the meaning of the historical trap which caused suffering to his friend during the war, and whose horror he himself experiences during the war and post-war reckoning. Yet in this poem – for the first time in his oeuvre – he transcends the situation which derives from the tragic human predicament. In the disguise of the accuser he presents how any kind of bias leads to the loss of moral integrity and becomes the means of destruction. Since he is defenceless, the accused can, at any time, become victimised as a result of being accused and judged. The poem is about how, in his *consciousness*, the accused evades the “procedure”. A procedure starts inside him-

<sup>53</sup> He intended to include the poem in his autobiographical cycle *Crickets’ Song*, but finally did not do so and the poem remained unpublished in his lifetime.

<sup>54</sup> Erwin Schrödinger: *Die Besonderheit des Weltbilds der Naturwissenschaft*, *op. cit.* p. 70.



self, he undertakes thinking about the accusation. Thus the poem, written in the European tradition, displays a poetic tone which suggests Eastern wisdom. Against victimisation gaiety appears, which resolves the duality between the pursued and the pursuer, having the former comment on the chances of his own being found guilty. All this at a time when the poet himself is pursued.

The poem summarises elements of the *dialogical* mode of discourse while it represents a new poetic strategy, offering *synthesis*. From the description of the historically defined danger of causal relations there is a shift towards the opposition of history by the poetic acceptance of the principle of gaiety tempered by self-criticism, rendered in the still traditionally signalled *dialogical* mode of poetic discourse. The process of constructing the rhetorical structure of the poem constructs its very opposite as well, although it is only the completed poem that makes a different reading of the *whole* work possible. One represents a monologue, which emphasises the right of *an* accuser to *the* absolute. This transforms the monologue from that of a judge into the self-justification of an executor; its philosophical and ethical claim reduced to the level of psychology. The image, however, reflects the perspective of the other, that of one thrown into profound despair by the accusation. The aggressive argument of one is called into question by the one-sided presentation of the other: two kinds of prejudice are opposed. At the same time the accused, who presents the other as a prosecutor obsessed with his job, from a seeker of mercy grows into a seeker of justice ready to punish even himself. In the poem he, unknowingly, is enabled to consider the truth involved in the charge. Attaching thus an ethical and philosophical value to the charge which has been thrown in danger by the very person who represented it so far. Eventually, it is the accused himself who offers a reconsideration of the charge in terms of its truth value:

Why does he Hate him? If he has no right to do so,  
He has right to nothing. As he has never been more  
careless, when he believed, so blindly,  
so fatally. Because mercy  
would condemn him. Because his pride  
is slave and drunk of the first moment,  
of revenge. Because he spoke and heard  
different languages: and he didn't know!  
Because he was (and is) so selfish,  
that every truth was just a tactical move  
for him, a situation, mere self-defence.  
Because fear lifts him up.  
Because he feels there cannot be more than  
what he did, what he swore on,  
only the realisation can be more fearful  
that whom he crucified was innocent.  
He hates him, because his sin is comfortless...  
And because, a little, still – he is right!

(*Adversaries*, translated by Bálint Szele)



To the question “why does he hate him?” the answer comes at the end of the poem in the form a self-critical coda, which, hesitantly though, sympathises with the claim of the narrator: “because, a little, still – he is right!” The whole poem offers variations on the *caricature* of the person who presents himself as one who knows the whole truth. Who “Because he spoke and heard different languages: and he didn’t know!” Who lost the ability to communicate to the extent that what he says degrades the truth: “that every truth was just a tactical move for him, a situation, mere self-defence”. The draft of the poem which can be found in the manuscript archive of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences („neki az igazság már csak taktikai mozdulat” etc.) suggests that it elaborates on a biographical theme, but the changes in the later version introduce a more universal, philosophical level into it, underscoring the judgement of the maniac accuser who considers himself to be the master of “all” truths while he ignores truth itself. The accusation he words includes “hatred”, “selfish”, “drunk”, “revenge” and, finally, “fear”. The philosophical inspiration becomes transformed into a psychological one. However, in case the accusation can be defined psychologically, the claim of the accused to “mercy” has a psychological validity as well. At the same time the enunciation cannot include mercy, because fear is generated by the feeling of pity changing the judgement of the *accused* – and thus that of the *accuser* – “mercy would find him guilty”. By the end of the poem the portrait of the accuser reflects the possibility of changing roles: “whom he crucified was innocent”, which develops the judgement of the accuser: “He hates him, because his sin is comfortless...”. The accusation becomes a form of guilt, its psychological enunciation leading into its own ethical condemnation; the psychological assessment is condensed by the attribute “comfortless”, which functions as a predicate. Thus, the changing of roles in one direction takes place by *almost the end* of the poem. The conclusion of the poem finalises the changing of roles: the accused, drawing on his gaiety, splits the only truth and includes the force of the accusation into his own predicament. The source of his gaiety is that he does understand the accuser from his own side, while seeing his enemy sinking into a kind of moral-psychic *comfortlessness*. Presenting the respective portraits of two people who are irresolvably entangled in their mutual charges, the poem offers a *gay* resolution through the possibility of a double reading, the splitting of truth. After the story ending with three dots, the last line of the *poem* does not promote the acceptance of some kind of judgement, but in opposition to the closed nature of the charge it offers the possibility of a parallel reading and the consideration of truth as multiple, which has been latent in the poem throughout. Thus it is the *whole* of the poem which rises above the persons portrayed, and the monologues presented through them. This involves experiencing the gaps in European poetics, which Lórinç Szabó reflects in his translations of the plays and fiction focusing on cruel topics (*Troilus and Cressida*, *Andromaque*, *The Fountain of Bachchiseray*, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: A Pure Woman*): since even in the tragic stories shaped according to the rules of a particular genre there appears a coda involving the chance of a non-tragical continuance. Such works record the moments after war and destruction from which a new form of peace, the synthesis of the order of life may evolve (e.g., the feast of the Trojans after the fight of Hector and Ajax with the Greeks, the plans of Pyrrhus

to marry Hector's widow and take care of his son, the patient love of Khan Girey for his Christian captive). However, once the moment is over the forces of destruction gain tragic dominance and the dreams embodied in the plans fall victim to senseless destruction together with their creators. The reality of the "order of war" has, again, triumphed over the ideas trying to restrict it. They are reinforced by the causal rules of the genre through a kind of irrational subversion.

*FIGHT FOR SALVATION (HARC AZ ÜNNEPÉRT)*

From the poem *Among the stars* to *Adversaries* (between 1932 and 1947) the poet reflects danger and the process of the tragic fragmentation of the self by means of a *dialogical* poetics, and "separates" the individual from the problematics and disorder of his historical presence. At the same time, coinciding with his facing the war in European history, particular changes can be discerned in his *epistemology* as well. It involves opening toward a new domain in his poetics. It is the volume *Fight for Salvation*, collecting the poems written between 1936 and 1938 in 1938, which reflects his awareness of the "gaps" which characterise the Western mind. Almost all the poems in the volume inhabit a borderland: from the description of reality they shift to the weighing of possibilities, though in each case there is a view of the hard facts of reality.

The first example of pointing in this direction is still in the volume *Private Truce*, titled *In the Desert*. In the poem, which can be regarded as an analytically structured adaptation of Baudelaire,<sup>55</sup> the Sphinx<sup>56</sup> replies to the European traveller interested in the meaning of existence using a quotation from Seneca, influenced by the stoics.

"A minute of your life is worth more  
than the eternal universe"

"A minute of your joy is worth more  
than all the suffering of the world."  
(translated by Bálint Szele)

Looking back, the poet himself does not know what the source of this inspired reply in the poem was: "I myself still do not know what the true meaning, the emotional implication of the cited two lines is. Whether it was a mocking, bitter, cynical, compromising, encouraging, cruel, frivolous or desperate mind or experience that whispered

<sup>55</sup> As Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó's essay *Spleen and Ideal* sees it; in: *The Forms of Translation and Intertextuality*. Ed. Lóránt Kabdebó, Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó, Anna Menyhért. Anonymus, Budapest, 1998, pp. 162–175.

<sup>56</sup> In his essay *Paraineses and the Rules of Life* Schopenhauer, speaking about the past cites Homer to claim that we should forget about what happened, no matter its sadness, and adapt ourselves to the necessary. About the future he says that it depends on the Gods, "hingegen über die Gegenwart: singulos dies singulas vitas puta (Sen.) und diese allein reale Zeit sich so angenehm

these lines in reply to my query”.<sup>57</sup> This way he described a borderline situation the poem did not transgress: it is not with existence but history, living in the fragmented present that it confronts individual events, appraising certain highlighted moments of European thinking.

The title poem of the volume *Fight for Salvation* is shaped in terms of the pending fight between “salvation” and “magic”. It is not the result but hope for it that the poem reflects: “I tread into a wall and it opened a door”, which indicates the poeticisation of *search*: the articulation of the “gap” as Schrödinger speaks about it. The most precise expression of it can be seen in the poem titled *The Punishment of the Faithless*:

once it was faith to combat  
the mirages of the faith...  
I won, and now triumphant truth  
bewilders me with its bleakness!  
-----  
there is better, what I imagine  
But without faith, imagination only  
humiliates and dishonours me,  
  
and my life is so poor now,  
so bare and so forlorn,  
that I am almost sitting in death  
and coming upward from the depths of  
  
worms and the filth  
I am drawing tales and visions  
on the skies, – and I’m only  
punishing myself with it:  
  
souls can burn beside me,  
all the gods of the East,  
monsters, powers, animals, ideas:  
none of them can help me,  
  
and if in my blood and brain  
the Greatest is born,  
it is more frightening what I create,  
and to know all the while what I am.  
  
I’m flouring between dust and dust, and inside  
I am full of deities...  
(translated by Bálint Szele)

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wie möglich machen” (Arthur Schopenhauer: *Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit*, Fünftes Kapitel: Paränesen und Maximen, B./ Unser Verhalten gegen uns selbst betreffend, in: *Parerga und Paralipomena*, Hg. von Rudolf Marx. Kröner, Stuttgart, 1974, S. 147.

<sup>57</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: A Handful of Lybia. Published in *Új Idők*, 25 July 1942, pp. 91–92. Republished in Lőrinc Szabó: *Memoirs and Journalistic Writing*. Ed. Aranka Kemény. Osiris, 2003, p. 647.

This is a precise poetic articulation of the "gap", the borderline between search and analysis. In the 1943 *Collected Poems* this becomes a point of reference, from which the process of questioning is controlled. This is recalled in his *Diary*, upon coming across a poem by Pushkin about a similar topic: "Religions and gods; see *The Punishment of the Faithless!* – Puskhin wrote a longer poem elaborating on a similar problem: *The Faithless*. Several of us discover the same thing, several of us are struggling in the same trap".<sup>58</sup>

Lórinč Szabó's word for what Schrödinger call "gap" is "trap" here. He has discovered it, the question is how far the poet goes in trying to fill the gap.

*THE ELEGY APPEARS IN THE FORM OF OXYMORON. DELIGHT IS PRAYER,  
PRAYER IS DELIGHT*

According to his 1945 *Diary* Lórinč Szabó described the politically lowest point of his life before and during the war not only through poems that followed the causality of European poetry. At the lowest point of his tragic poetic analysis his epistemological discovery was that European poetry was able to open up. Against the analytically defined pessimism he achieves the openness of asking about the whole of existence. Against the historically grounded, ethically defined image of the self he voices the freedom to ask about the mode of existence as the centre of his poetics. His new poetic synthesis deploys the existential vision of European poetry along with the pleasure principle of Eastern poetry. In view of this particular interpretation he translates Shelley's rhapsodic *Ode to the West Wind*, thereby representing the poetic situation of directly confronting the individual mind with the magic of existence.

*Diary* records the drastic change through self-observation:

"According to my wife I am a monster, beyond understanding. Neither do I understand how I managed to write new Cricket-pieces, there are 39 of them already! In a wretched body my heart is very bad, it hardly works, my soul is weak and in torpor, yet my spirit, or rather, a small part of it, its core is indestructible: it maintains and controls me! *It wrote my poems as well*, the recent ones – irrespective of the utmost pain swelling in my head it elaborated on subjects of totally different nature, atmosphere and mental content, which are by no means timely subjects, as if nothing was ailing me! It is really frightening. Am I mad, or am I childish?"

The report about the suicide of the Führer evokes in him the image of the emperor shutting himself up in the wrecks of his burning castle. It makes him realise the apocalyptic nature of the catastrophe produced by the cruelty of history, terminating in his poetry the compulsion to consider all according to the Western pattern of analysis and the moral teaching borrowed from Eastern philosophies earlier. From both sides he is confronted by a nihil. The "wind of lunatic time" elaborated on by the poem *In the Desert* seems to have lifted and dropped him on a special, personal desert. His "trial"

<sup>58</sup> Lórinč Szabó: *To Judges and Friends... op. cit.* p. 53.

of justification, the city around him destroyed by the siege, the awareness of the simultaneously happening personal tragedies (the death of friends, his son-in-law becoming a prisoner of war in spite of his status as a civilian) disorient him, close down the former stage of his personal poetic past.

Under the weight of the universal catastrophe and his individual suffering, having become disillusioned with the purifying strength of the idea he conceived (see his *Diary* and the poem *Adversaries*), he starts to record the first movements of a man breaking himself away from history and recreating himself only for himself. In an old volume of essays he finds the eastern story of Mohammed in a western interpretation. In William Bolitho's (1890–1930) book<sup>59</sup> he finds the sentence: “that the mountains where David was walking joined with a sublime bass in his songs”.<sup>60</sup> He makes a note of it in his diary, adding: “This is nice”, and creating a title for the whole: “Moment”, – according to the implication of “your life a minute”.<sup>61</sup> The shaping of the poem takes a long time, including the title and the attempt to find the poetically appropriate expression: *Moment, Walk, When all*,<sup>62</sup> (he publishes it titled *Thanksgiving* years later.<sup>63</sup> He searches for a place for this *beauty*, not in thematic but poetic terms. From the rationally politicised biography of Mohammed he raises those “beautiful” texts which counterpoint the misery of his life, and may fulfil the gaps of the European mind. He searches not for their thematic placement but for a form of poeticising them.

“Walk or the like”: he is interested in assessing the beauty of the world in a kind of poetic structure that he came across with while translating Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*. The description of beauty and linking it with the human fate he found in the 91st Sura:<sup>64</sup>

By the Sun and *his* rising splendour  
By the Moon when she followeth *him*  
By the Day when it sets out *his* glory  
By the night when it covers *him* in darkness  
By the Heavens and *him* that made them  
By the Earth and the Soul. ...

<sup>59</sup> William Bolitho: *Twelve Against the Gods. The Story of Adventure*. First published in 1929. Citation from the edition by Penguin Books, 1939. Chapter IV. Mohammed, pp. 99–124.

<sup>60</sup> William Bolitho: *op. cit.* p. 112.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. in Lórin Szabó's 1945 Diary. In: *To Judges and Friends...* p. 73.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Lórin Szabó's 1945 Diary *op. cit.* 130: “A short poem about the subject ‘You too’. Another one: walk or the like”; p. 162: “Poem: When all. After many drafts completed today”; p. 166.: “I started to work on poems, nearly finished ones, and managed to complete them. I was happy! When I have the inspiration I can work quickly; the most important thing is that one should be able to speak naturally, wear his heart on his sleeve. Three poems: When all, You too? and Yet divine?”; p. 169: “Zem-Zem, Aisha and the like in the poem When all: I took them from the book *Twelve Against the Gods*, a long time ago. Also the citation from Mohammed, about ‘women especially...’”.

<sup>63</sup> The poem completed in 1945 is published in 1948, in the monthly *Reply*, edited by himself.

<sup>64</sup> William Bolitho: *op. cit.* p. 108.

Verily he that purifieth them is blessed  
And the contrary is he that corrupteth them.

It is followed by the 55<sup>th</sup> Sura with its incantation that stresses beauty and pleasure:<sup>65</sup>

Besides these there shall be two gardens  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
Of a dark green,  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
In each two fountains of welling water,  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
In each fruit: dates and pomegranates,  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
In them women, smooth, lovely,  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
Black-eyed damsels kept in pavilions,  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
Whom no man has yet enjoyed, nor even a Djin  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
The Believers shall lie with them on green rugs  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*  
And lovely soft carpets,  
*Which then of the signs of the Lord will ye deny?*

Then it is not only the poems but the poetic quotations of the Mohammed-tradition he takes out of Bolitho's text: beside the already mentioned psalm of David the other says "That one thing is his taste for women, which he now indulged generously. Instead of Khadija he now possessed, as the nucleus of a gracious party, the little Aisha, twelve-year-old daughter of Abu Bekr, whose own testimony in her old age was that 'the prophet liked three things most, women, scent, and eating, but mostly women'".<sup>66</sup>

This *walk* in the world of pleasures is completed by the *prayer*, the 1st Sura,<sup>67</sup> which sanctifies the *poetic* appearance of the beautiful:

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of creation,  
The merciful, the compassionate  
Ruler of the Day of Judgment

Lórin Szabó reads not about religious commitment in the text, but the *difference* it represents, the rejection of despair, and the possibility of a different route:

<sup>65</sup> William Bolitho: *op. cit.* p. 111. This edition of Bolitho's book mentions the 5th Sura, incorrectly.

<sup>66</sup> William Bolitho: *op. cit.* p. 119.

<sup>67</sup> William Bolitho: *op. cit.* p. 112.

Lead us in the path,  
 The Path of those to whom thou hast made promises  
 Not of those you are angry with, who walk in error.

This demands the definition of *man*'s place, the position of the *one* among the surrounding relations: this is attempted in a sonnet from the same period, under the title *Yet divine?*, repeating the notes about his being a "monster", "madman", "child". In the poem, however, these are reassessed, demonstrating the new poetic achievement:

I'm looking into myself: into you:  
 you are still a hero? Not a child of earth?  
 Still divine, like eternal Heaven?  
 (*Yet Divine?* Translated by Bálint Szele)

Once he has thought this over, he is able to complete the poem mentioned as "Mohamedes" in his *Diary*. He finds the appropriate poetic definition: *Thanksgiving*. The final title to the poem is suggestive of its generic feature as well.

The four-part poem creates a sequence of "beautiful" texts, creating in it and by it a new poetic self (the coda will be discussed later). It establishes a link between the words of pleasure-seeking and self-confident heroes with the poet's personal dreams and hopes:

#### Thanksgiving

1.  
 In my desert, walking amongst  
 bones and stones, as did once Mohammed,  
  
 at dawn the song of the mountains  
 I heard, accompanied (inside)  
  
 like the psalm of David, the holy king:  
 at some of its words  
  
 their deep bass bellowing  
 ever and anon, fresh and cheery.  
  
 I felt their companion.

2.  
 At noon, as I was fainting with  
 hunger and thirst on the glowing sand,  
  
 down came rustling a cool cloud of  
 hours, and, as once Mohammed,  
  
 it whipped me away, and among plentiful  
 dishes, in a flow of ethereal balms

at the waters of Zem-Zem  
the rainbow-winged wind put me down.

Fighting, crying, broken: do not lose hope.

3.  
The women, the costly balms,  
the choice dishes were good, or, as

Mohammed confessed, the food, the  
drinks, but especially the women.

And the foremost among them:  
the 20-year-old, who makes one

forget about death, daughter to  
caliph Abu Bekr, Aisha.

Delight is prayer, prayer is delight.

4.  
Night has come. Mutely I'm lying on a  
rocking ledge 'tween being and nihility.

Mohammed's crescent above the trees.  
I am pulled and dropped by stars.

O, Kismet! Allah! Hot like teardrops  
heart and joy come boiling to my lips,

thankful that I live, that there were wonders,  
that the world's so fine, so beauteous,

when  
when

when everything's just fun and foolery.

(translated by Bálint Szele)

The "walk in the desert" sanctifies the raising of the texts from the essay, confronts the bitterness of life with triumphant existence, and, at the same time, describes finding pleasure in all through textualising. Hidden in the textualised joy there is the poet's reference to his love affair having lasted for twenty years: he transcribes Bolitho's text. Instead of the "twelve-year-old" Aisha he evokes the heroine of the "twelve-year-old" relationship, Erzsébet, as recalled in *Poem and Reality*.<sup>68</sup> It means freedom from the moral constraints of the Christian concept of carnality. "Between existence and non-existence", at the given moment, in the daily estimation and in the

<sup>68</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality* ... *op. cit.* p. 276: "Erzsike means, as yet, only a piece of consolation breaking through my despair".



assessment of life he recognises a new way of textual creation: what is objectified in the work as the product of creation may also become experienced by the individual; it can offer a pattern of personal existence for all individuals, since the life of epic proportions described in the vision is *life* itself. Man can celebrate his freedom: through the vision of the creative self he can experience the totality of life, human existence. The essence of the new poetics is that pleasure comes through overwriting pain.

This provides a counterpart to the poem *In the Desert*, written at the time of the publication of the volume *Thanksgiving*. *In the Desert* presents a European traveller who inquires into human fate embodied in history, while in *Thanksgiving* the history of man's creation unfolds, involving its pleasures as well as dangers. It focuses on human history, prefiguring *Crickets' Song*. The theme of being "magically" saved during the war repeats the scenery of his journey in Egypt, though observed not from the inquisitive horizon of the European traveller but embedded in the site of "magic": "In my desert, walking among bones and stones", the poet appears as a partaker of "magic": "I felt I was their partner". In his autobiographical and meditative cycle of poems *Crickets' Song* (1945 – 1947), which assesses his life, the poet includes these two very different works reflecting the new poetics. The *synthesising* character developed during the inception of *Thanksgiving* is taken over by the entire volume of *Crickets' Song*. However, the subject of *Thanksgiving* appears under the title *Gratitude* even within *Crickets' Song*. At the same time it establishes a connection between the thanksgiving prayer and the memories of Egypt in the poem *In the Desert*, transforming the earlier structure of *In the Desert* into "magic" storytelling. Thus the volume *Crickets' Song* as a whole becomes an extended, magnified version of the poem *Thanksgiving*.

A sparkling sky, a dream, song of crickets.  
 The wind's sweet, like the witness of a woman.  
 A flower kisses me. I'm waking. Where am I?  
 On what threshold? Like once the sand,  
 when I was lying at the feet of the pyramids,  
 the grass is rustling around me,  
 and the lotus-eyed chantress is flying right above  
 whom I saw in Cairo, in the museum, a mummy:  
 the moon waves through her mist-body,  
 a whirl opens, deepens above the trees  
 I am pulled and dropped by eternal stars:  
 oh, Universe! Hot like teardrops  
 heart and joy come boiling to my lips,  
 thankful that I lived, that there were wonders,  
 that the world's so fine and so beauteous,  
 (translated by Bálint Szele)

The old story is poetically reshaped, along with its cadence: the analytical philosophical text is poeticised into a "prayer". It evokes the style of western religious traditions and the psalms fused with that of the eastern Bible and the Islamic text based on and related to it: "*Delight is prayer, prayer is delight.*"

What the poet could not achieve in his Buddhist, eastern poems, he seems to achieve in works introduced by this poem whose subject is Mohammed and which evokes the tone of the Suras. He was able to transcend the tragic blind alley of the western mind only by avoiding all forms of asceticism which connects pleasure with sin. Inspiration came from the Suras, restoring the link between his poetry and the world of psalms and making it possible that he re-join mainstream European poetry and renew as well as liberate his art. Deploying the oxymoron he assimilates the experience of "tragic joy" into his poetry.

Written ten years later, in *Poem and Reality* there is no trace of recalling the source of this change.<sup>69</sup> By that time he had completed the poetic synthesis of *Crickets' Song*. He had gained an insight into the "miracle" of *human* existence, in opposition to the development of man the stages of which, nevertheless, he also followed. Throughout his life the poet, searching for the justification of his faith, was in the habit of singing and humming psalms and placed himself in being using the words of psalms 4 and 9: "I lie down in peace and fall asleep; for You, My Lord, are the only one who give me courage to live". In this poetically shaped metaphysical field does he quote, encoded in the story of Protestant galley-slaves, the motto of the Finnish people expressing hope for freedom,<sup>70</sup> the Emmaus scene in the Gospel, Buddha and the world of the Suras.

#### The Statue of Galley-Slaves

[...] because I believe in you, goodness, patience,  
I believe in you, reason divine, –  
I believe in you, liberty and love,  
and I believe that you'll win, pure weapons.

#### The Hand of the Shade

"Stay with me, because the dusk is growing."  
The congregation's listening to the Bible.  
The nightfall's burning on the church-window.  
I'm without faith, wriggling loneliness.  
"Stay with me, because the dusk is growing."  
– If it's strange this way, take it as human,  
a voice whispers, and as my sighted eye  
muses on the old scene

<sup>69</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality ... op. cit.* About the inception of Thanksgiving he says, not even mentioning Bolitho: "Behind the poem there are my readings, the memory of heat in Egypt and barrenness of my life at that time", p. 276.; "Gratitude: the poem is a revised part of another, longer poem", p. 263.

<sup>70</sup> It is in his talks and correspondence with the Finnish Helena Kangas, a young journalist who gained a scholarship to visit Hungary during 1943–1944 that Mannerheim's Latin motto, originally selected as an *ex libris* (*candida pro causa ense candido*) appears. During the Finnish-Russian wars the motto served as a slogan in the Finnish war of independence.

of Emmaus and I forget myself,  
 on the ray-bridge flits hither silently  
 an eternal Shade: it could be Buddha  
 but here they call him otherwise and thorns  
 crown him: it's just me creating him  
 still he looks at me like at a brother,  
 like at a child: he sees, knows that  
 my heart is breaking, I am so alone,  
 and I need faith, community, and love.  
 He reaches out a hand. Because it's getting dark.  
 (translated by Bálint Szele)

The Knocker!

That day you shall be scattered like moths  
 and like the never-stopping sand  
 that day the iron-boned mountains  
 shall be broken like carded wool and bleeding  
 that day only him that has packed his  
 balance full of good deeds  
 can only drink the holy light,  
 the water of holy Zem-Zem,  
 he can only embrace and kiss  
 the fresh-virgin houris,  
 and as for him whose balances are light  
 will be struck with the black  
 drum-beat of the abyss, its throbbing  
 simoom: roars the star-stone-hail; scoops  
 the dashing flame-secret, the howler:  
 the Hardest Fire of all, the Knocker!  
 (translated by Bálint Szele)

In the latter poem, having done a metaphysical estimation, it is the English version of Bolitho that he assimilates into *Crickets' Song*. He finds the 101st Sura “a hymn in which we can hear the cracking of the sinews of his thinking”.<sup>71</sup> “Three quarters of the poem paraphrases this short and beautiful chapter into rhymed iambic pentameter,

<sup>71</sup> William Bolitho: *op. cit.* p. 108.

That which striketh! What is that which striketh?  
 And what shall certify thee what THE STRIKING is?  
 The day mankind shall be scattered like moths  
 And the mountains carded like coloured wool  
 Then as for him whose balances are heavy, he shall enter into Bliss  
 And as for him whose balances are light  
 The Pit shall be his dwelling!  
 And what shall certify thee what is the PIT?  
 A RAGING FIRE.

while interspersing it with other Mohammedan stories.”<sup>72</sup> In contrast, the last 4-5 lines offer a change in rhyme and mood, evoking the “for me symbolic description of the last air raids and shell-fire attacks against Budapest” – and perhaps the onomatopoeic part stands “for<sup>73</sup> the persecution of the poet and his recurring heart problems. By evoking this “really beautiful” section he transcends the cruelty of the European historical situation and also his own moral uncertainties concerning the pleasure-principle to govern his life. Before the war the “tales” about Buddhist themes represented the cruel world, which turns into its opposite later, namely the poetic foregrounding of a kind of optimism linked with the Christian, Old-Testament style of the psalms and reinforced through the mediation of Mohammedan teaching. Thereby Lőrinc Szabó managed to complete the thematic turn in his work which the poem *Adversaries* initiated. He contrasted a western and an eastern form of reckoning: from the mode of revenge-taking “legal” reckoning (linked with court trials, political testimonialization etc.) In *Adversaries* there is a transition to the cheerfulness of self-measuring and -judging; the poem *The Knocker!* creates a protective aura of being measured outside the world of deeds.

This poetic model liberates human existence from historical determination. The piece of art appears as the emanation of what happens in authentic time. Linear time, broken into now-points, arranged the poetic texts and spiritual events into history. As the events of religions could form an organic unit in the whole of existence, in a kind of absolute time – which is different from historical contrasts – and at different points of time in history could, realized through culturally divergent stories and anecdotes, present the different faces of one particular scene (creation, fall, redemption after the fall through divine sacrifice),<sup>74</sup> poetic texts might form a unity at a given moment of the creative process, complementing each other. At the time of writing *Crickets' Song* Lőrinc Szabó claimed that he was not thinking in terms of styles (evoking history), and the piece of art may be the sum of classical achievements<sup>75</sup> – a piece of art is either good or not. It is through aiming at the creation of synthesis that Lőrinc Szabó achieves his own classicism and gains a sense of the common features connecting different religions at the same time. He discovers “magic” in existence and its potential representation in poetry by liberating it from history and the sequence of ongoing dis-

<sup>72</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality. op. cit.* p. 259.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Bertalan Hatvany's already cited work, *The Soul of Asia* discusses the same topic.

<sup>75</sup> See the analysis titled *Szabó Lőrinc* written by a close friend of the poet, the aesthetician and essayist László Baránszky-Jób. In: *Experience and Thought*, Magvető Kiadó, Budapest, 1978: “When I said what a pity and how wrong it was that he ruthlessly transcribes his first, expressionist volumes into a later evolved, more balanced language and form, he briefly replied: – You must understand that I wanted to write like this at that time too, but I could not. I have written now what I could not at that time. I remind you that all poets had wished to write as clearly as Horace, but they were not able to. – I found this ahistorical view very peculiar, which, by the way, is not reflected in the two volumes of *Friends Forever* where there is a thematic, even if not historical arrangement of the poems.” p. 133.

ciplinary reckonings. This may be hinted at in *Poem and Reality*, which he included to counterpoint the poems concerned with eastern themes in *Private Truce*: “while I was longing for the shore on the other side, which I reached toward the end of my life...”<sup>76</sup>

*THE REVERSE OF THE PRAYER*

Questioning existence reveals the “beauty” of existence along with its mode and depth of realization: “I am writing poems. Indifferent themes appeal to me more than the present problems. However, my present mood penetrates all. In the poem about Mohammed the last line provides a reversal of the whole, which *trouvaille* is its essential feature. To find pleasure in daydreaming, tales, the imaginary, *because* the writers know the reality as well!”<sup>77</sup> Anticipating the poem the same appears in his *Diary*: “I think I only deceive myself and those who encourage me deceive me as well. The end is: bang, bang”.<sup>78</sup> The poem closes with the following:<sup>79</sup>

when  
when

when everything’s just fun and foolery.

At the same time he acquaints himself with western literature: though with reservation, asking “is he really so great?”,<sup>80</sup> he discovers Eliot for himself. About the same time when writing of the multipart poem *Thanksgiving* he translates Eliot’s also multipart poem *The Hollow Men*. Their parallel gives him an insight into the eastern and western images of man isolated from history.

Sightless, unless  
The eyes reappear  
As the perpetual star  
Multifoliate rose  
Of death’s twilight kingdom  
The hope only  
Of empty men.

\*

*Here we go round the prickly pear  
Prickly pear prickly pear  
Here we go round the prickly pear  
At five o’clock in the morning.*

<sup>76</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality* op. cit. p. 85.

<sup>77</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *For Judges and Friends*, op. cit. p. 171.

<sup>78</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *For Judges and Friends*, op. cit. p. 153. These lines refer to the 1945 process of being called to reckoning and political testimonialization.

<sup>79</sup> The same is repeated in the closure of the poem *Gratitude in Crickets’ Song*.

<sup>80</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *For Judges and Friends*, op. cit. p. 86.

Between the idea  
 And the reality  
 Between the motion  
 And the act  
 Falls the Shadow  
*For Thine is the Kingdom*

Between the conception  
 And the creation  
 Between the emotion  
 And the response  
 Falls the Shadow  
*Life is very long*

Between the desire  
 And the spasm  
 Between the potency  
 And the existence  
 Between the essence  
 And the descent  
 Falls the Shadow  
*For Thine is the Kingdom*

For Thine is  
 Life is  
 For Thine is the

*This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 Not with a bang but a whimper.*

This reminds the poet of the gaps in the western mind, the "faultline". He deploys the same mode of poetic creation when he translates the monologue of Yeats's Irish airman:

I balanced all, brought all to mind,  
 The years to come seemed waste of breath,  
 A waste of breath the years behind  
 In balance with this life, this death.

This confrontation, however, is introduced in his translation through words which have no textual trace in the English original: "*A lonely impulse of delight / Drove to this tumult in the clouds;*". Lőrinc Szabó's text deviates from it: "egyszerűen az élvezet hozott e dult felhők közé" [it was simply delight that brought me into this tumult of the clouds]. His poetically creative translation presents the triumphant moment of man experiencing confrontation with existence: the meaninglessness of its fragmentation along with the freedom that being placed in existence involves.

But all this is put to test by the suicide of the beloved in 1950, and the brutal turn in political life represented by the communist takeover in the early 1950s. In the sonnets of *The Twenty-sixth Year* (with the exception of *Afterword* the volume had been collected and closed by Easter 1951) the poet could test the strength of the poetic system devised in *Crickets' Song*. In poem after poem he could confront the tragic finality of causal thinking with the “beautiful” and pleasing mode of existence liberated by the imagination. He has a sense of personal- and universal destruction parallel with the past rearranged in an imaginary space and time, and a kind of desired existence out of time: evoking “beauty” and “pleasure”. As *The Knocker!* exemplifies it, by using the oxymoron.

At the publication of the final version he changed the title of the poem about Mohammed for a thematically and generically new one: *Thanksgiving*; likewise, he gives a poetically relevant title to his last volume: *Something Beautiful*.<sup>81</sup> The choice made it clear that the cultural alienation underlying a single poem earlier now had links with the manifold tendencies assimilated by his poetry, enabling the development of its freedom and idiosyncrasy.

In my 1980 monograph about the poet<sup>82</sup> I discussed *Thanksgiving* as a poem realizing a poetic idea in *Crickets' Song*, yet unaware of the fact that the poem which took such a long time to develop marked, at the same time, the birth of a poetic system. A translated variation on a sura survived in the form of manuscript too, under the title *The Pattering Fire and Paradise*.<sup>83</sup> Unlike the earlier eastern poems, there is not only a thematic but a structural-poetic parallel with the most significant translations he accomplished at that time of T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats, including *The Hollow Men* and the gesture of the Irish airman undertaking freedom. Together, these are characteristic of the second volume of *Friends Forever*, and the volume of translations he collected before his death.<sup>84</sup> They reflect the synthesizing character launched by the poem *Adversaries*. The collection reflects a two-way process: as a result of selection there appears a cruel vision of the world, displaying the gaps of the kind of thinking they bring into dialogue; at the same time the editor's wish to *synthesize* constructs a structure from these details which the intention to please. Leading up to the Miltonian vision offered as coda, “the sacred effect of Light” against Satan, to what he describes as

<sup>81</sup> This collection was planned to become a separate volume, but came out in the 1956 *Selected Poems* (Magvető, Budapest).

<sup>82</sup> *The Time of Summary 1945–1957*. Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1980, pp. 103–109.

<sup>83</sup> The manuscripts and two typed, meticulously corrected versions of the poem can be found in the archive of Petőfi Literary Museum, numbered V 5487/13. Connected selection from the 100th and 86th suras of the Koran.

<sup>84</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Friends Forever*, II. Second collection of shorter lyrical translations. Budapest, 1948. University Press. The table of contents of *Friends Forever*, the anthology of his collected translations, was put together and forwarded to the publishers by the poet himself. The book came out only after the poet's death in 1958, the lexical material being completed by his devoted young friends. See the new edition: *Friends Forever I–II. The shorter lyrical translations of the poet*. Osiris Kiadó, Budapest, 2002.



“Empyrean Heav’n, extended wide / In circuit, undetermined square or round”, “Opal Towers”, “Battlements adorn’d / Of living Sapphire” where “from the walls of Heav’n / Shoots far into the bosom of dim Night / A glimmering dawn” (*Paradise Lost*, Book II. 1033 – 1050).

There is a similarity with the structure of *Crickets’ Song*, where *Thanksgiving* is repeated in the stanza called *Gratitude*. *Gratitude* is organically linked with the closing stanzas in *Crickets’ Song*, which present the eastern poetic theme as an existential issue and achieve the wonderful poetic balance of *Imagined Death*, conceived in the “manner of Milton”,<sup>85</sup> assimilating and developing the inspiration of the English poet. “Dying into the infinitude of friendly nature”.<sup>86</sup>

and you close your eyes, the wind kisses again  
in and out faint into one another,  
and the sound clangs, and humming rolls the field  
and as your heart takes up its rhythm  
as if on the light-loose surface of a globe  
it would break away, the ‘I’ leaves you behind,  
it rushes, it grows through the skies,  
and only when the world is yet inside  
when it is the envelope for it, only then  
do you see yourself again,  
the disappeared corpuscle, when you are  
already a frame for everything, and everything  
is your inner self...: at once in a divine  
security your earthly consciousness dies  
and on the big, blue field the stars  
start their heavenly cricket-songs.

(translated by Bálint Szele)

Besides, the signalling of death as absorbed into the poetics of “beauty”. The 1943 *Collected Poems* was closed by an analytical poem describing the horror of dying:

#### The Unspeakable

Your heart almost bursts  
you would, but you cannot speak,  
you would, but cramp and pain  
come drowning up your throat

so deep as if your soul,  
the cracking nerves  
were drawn with it, your dumb sigh  
aches towards your mouth.

<sup>85</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality*, op. cit. p. 268.

<sup>86</sup> Lőrinc Szabó: *Poem and Reality*, op. cit. p. 270.

And at once you're so weak  
that winged dizziness embraces you  
from among your teeth something  
crying, something bestial

wailing agonises out  
and you think: the next  
moment will blow away everything  
living, like the wind a cobweb.

(translated by Bálint Szele)

Its counterpart is what Lőrinc Szabó titled as *Sura 101*, a poem of his *own*, a personal version of death in the last judgement, the saying of the unsayable, the poeticization of suffering:

A sound chirrs outside. And in my heart, too.  
It's tiny. But it nips. A sound and also a thorn:  
it's stabbing at me, stabs and stabs again,  
it drives its little drill in me deeper and deeper,  
in every second, since my old purples  
appeared, silently, but so ruthlessly  
as if it were a needle, the needle of Time,  
and it was taking my heart apart.  
A sound chirrs in my heart, its word  
is unease, its sentence danger,  
if I'm watching: maybe it's self-deception,  
if it's an instrument: nervous depravity,  
but, anyhow, the sign of a crash,  
something big, vicious, which sends its  
message in a millionfold absorption,  
a light-silent shade, a light-swift fright,  
death, the trumpet, the howler:  
Sura Hundred-and-One, the Knocker.

(translated by Bálint Szele)

The choice of the title is unique: the thematic paraphrasing of the 101th Sura is called *The Knocker!* in *Crickets' Song*, but the personal, thematically different poem he titles *Sura 101*. Thus he indicates that the world of the *Koran* became assimilated and restructured in his own poetry, adapted to the personal experience of human life: the teaching of the pleasure principle is deployed to express the experience of dying. The former poetic articulation of the despair associated with death is replaced by a poetics which links death and pleasure.

#### *A SYNTHESIS CONSTRUCTED OF SOUNDS*

In conclusion, let me quote one of the best experts on the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó, namely István Sőtér, who was one of the first to appraise the 1947 *Crickets' Song*:

“The monotony, humming and dozing mood in *Crickets’ Song* is rooted deeper, in the muted ecstasy of the Buddhist contemplation which forms the basis of this poem. Even the happiness advertised by this work – the happiness that derives from the trifles of life, its most modest incidents, pictures and episodes – , even this low-key happiness has a contemplative nature. ‘This ecstasy, that of memory – which is constantly nurtured by the present’: lo and behold, it betrays the most about the state of mind in which the poet conceived his work. *Crickets’ Song* is a great achievement of inner quiet. It is a sinister achievement, for its inertness amounts to the admission that contradictions remain irresolvable.”<sup>87</sup> When I started to negotiate his views I had already accepted his description of the “sinister achievement”, and was searching in Lőrinc Szabó’s work for what Sőtér referred to as a counterpoint of the “sinister”: “At certain places the surface of ataraxia is troubled by screaming – expressing loneliness, the feeling of being forlorn or waking up to the truth. This introduces a sense of relief into the standstill of *Crickets’ Song*”.<sup>88</sup> *In opposition to it* both of us were searching for the sigh for companionship with European poetry.<sup>89</sup> Finally, listening to the recital of *Crickets’ Song* by József Gáti, the best interpreter of poetry at the end of the twentieth century, Sőtér<sup>90</sup> offers a new understanding of the contemplation: Lőrinc Szabó is not contemplating the void but assimilates the whole troubled world into the soul and makes it the object of contemplation. I welcomed his interpretation,<sup>91</sup> and now quote him with reverence because he realized something very *important*, which leads us to the adequate reception of the synthesis constructed from gaps.

Indeed, under the influence of eastern poetry, which had its roots in religious subjects and drew on the psalms of David and the Gospels at the same time, in 1945 there came about a turn in the poetry of Lőrinc Szabó, liberating it from the fatal grasp of *one* of the European poetic traditions. It created a new position in poetics, which transcends the ethical-historical determination of man and, being aware of anthropological existence, achieved a kind of interrogation to confront personal existence with the mode of being. The interrogation of the simultaneous experience of all and none was a shaping force in the continuation of his career.

The variations of the eastern and western poems on depth and height had their parallel in the career of the poet, in his personal destiny, translating activity and most significant works.<sup>92</sup> At times they had their ideological, other times their poetic influence. Having experienced personal and historical crisis, after reading an essay one

<sup>87</sup> István Sőtér: Lőrinc Szabó. In: *The Collected Poems of Lőrinc Szabó*. Magvető Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1960, p. 1266.

<sup>88</sup> Op. cit. pp. 1266–1267.

<sup>89</sup> Lóránt Kabdebó: *The Time for Assessment. 1945–1957*. Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1980, pp. 115–207.

<sup>90</sup> István Sőtér: *Crickets’ Song* by József Gáti. *Új Tükör*, 1980, No.17, p. 28.

<sup>91</sup> With the permission of Endre Illés, director of Szépirodalmi Kiadó I could refer to his writing in my monograph even after imprimature. *The Time for Assessment*, op. cit. p. 125.

<sup>92</sup> See, for instance, the three different translations/retranslations of Fitzgerald’s Omar: 1. Omár Khájjám: *Rubáját*, Táltos, Budapest, 1920; 2. Omar Khajjám: *Rubáját*, Kner, Gyoma, 1930, again by: Helikon, Budapest, 1965; 3. Omár Khyyám: *Rubáját*, Új Idők Irodalmi Intézet Rt.,

single poem initiated the creation of one of his masterpieces, *Crickets' Song*, and now allows me to perceive the most hidden phases of his creative work.

In reference to Lőrinc Szabó I have quoted two methods of Bertrand Russell, which deal with reality in distinct ways. His epistemology describes these two:

“We shall find it convenient only to speak of things *existing* when they are in time, that is to say, when we can point to some time *at* which they exist (not excluding the possibility of their existing at all times). Thus thoughts and feelings, minds and physical objects *exist*. But universals do not exist in this sense; we shall say that they *subsist* or *have being*, where ‘being’ is opposed to ‘existence’ as being timeless. The world of universals, therefore, may also be described as the world of being. The world of being is unchangeable, rigid, exact, delightful to the mathematician, the logician, the builder of metaphysical systems, and all who love perfection more than life. The world of existence is fleeting, vague, without sharp boundaries, without any clear plan or arrangement, but it contains all thoughts and feelings, all the data of sense, and all physical objects, everything that can do either good or harm, everything that makes any difference to the value of life and the world. According to our temperaments, we shall prefer the contemplation of the one or of the other.”

To illustrate the two kinds of methods Russell brings an example:

“For example, if you know the hour of the sunset, you can at that hour know the fact that the sun is setting: this is knowledge of the fact by way of knowledge of *truths*, but you can also, if the weather is fine, look to the west and actually see the setting sun: you then know the same fact by the way of knowledge of *things*. [...] Our knowledge of truths, unlike our knowledge of things, has an opposite, namely *error*. So far as things are concerned, we may know them or not know them, but there is no positive state of mind which can be described as erroneous knowledge of things, so long, at any rate, as we confine ourselves to knowledge by acquaintance. Whatever we are acquainted with must be something: we may draw wrong inferences from our acquaintance, but the acquaintance itself cannot be deceptive. Thus there is no dualism as regards acquaintance. But as regards knowledge of truths, there is a dualism. We may believe what is false as well as what is true. We know that on very many subjects different people hold different and incompatible opinions: hence some beliefs must be erroneous. [...] How are we to know, in a given case, that our belief is not erroneous? This is a question of the very greatest difficulty, to which no completely satisfactory answer is possible.”

In contrast, “some knowledge, such as knowledge of the existence of our sense-data, appears quite indubitable, however calmly and thoroughly we reflect upon it”. According to Russell’s conclusion, which characterized Lőrinc Szabó’s earlier method as well, “The criticism aimed at, in a word, is not that which, without reason, determines to reject, but that which considers each piece of apparent knowledge on its merits, and retains whatever still appears to be knowledge when this consideration is completed.”<sup>93</sup>

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Budapest, 1943. He intended to publish the three translations in one volume, having written the afterword to it before his death: Lőrinc Szabó: Afterword to the Joint Publication in: *Years of Maturing*, Irodalmi Múzeum, 1979, pp. 257–259.

<sup>93</sup> Bertrand Russell: *The Problems of Philosophy*. London, Williams and Norgate, n. d. pp. 155–156; 211; 186–187; 235; 236.

Russell remains within the framework of the European mind. Whatever is outside it becomes a target of criticism for him, the opposite of his concept of truth is *error*, rather than "gap". Lőrinc Szabó resorts to this mode of thinking in that the intellectual and ideological structure of his poem is rooted in the European mind. At the same time in his poetic activity, in the period following the volume *Private Truce* and during *Fight for Salvation*, he realizes the "gap", and then while writing *Crickets' Song*, anticipated by *Thanksgiving*, he accepts as the determining force of his creative work the inspiration coming from the potential answer to the interrogative horizon of the "gap". In his poems he calls the challenging poetic situation a "miracle". Yet he remains aware of the duality, remembers the "old captivity", the cause and effect nature of living in history ("always in the one body / the same stake, number, time, substance"), besides this, however, he experiences the whole of existence: "Life is full of miracles", which articulates the *ars poetica*: "Fly like thought". And here is the dialogue:

But really free

I could only be if everything  
that Was, Is, Will be would go on inside.  
He is unhappy that is not a god!

*Captivity*, 1949 (translated by Bálint Szele)

In this form the dialogicity of *Private Truth*, the poetically assimilated and preferred solution is articulating the "miracle" of being outside time and history, beside which the causal interpretation appears to be tragically limited.

By having created a "moment" of "journey" in *Thanksgiving* and *Crickets' Song*, the poet joined himself to the trend in the European mind which had always been eager to complete the "gaps" of its mode of thinking, and comprehend *world literature* in terms of Goethe's concept. It meant absorbing the programme that Schopenhauer formed out of the parables of European thinking: "Jeder Tag ist ein *kleines Leben*, – jedes Erwachen und Aufstehen eine kleine Geburt, jeder frische Morgen eine kleine Jugend, und jedes Zubettgehen und Einschlafen ein kleiner Tod".<sup>94</sup>

A kind of justification? – I refer to one of the poet's friends, an essayist and novelist,<sup>95</sup> László Németh, who presented many valid ideas as well as points of misunder-

<sup>94</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer: *Aphorismen zur Lebensweisheit*, Fünftes Kapitel: Paränesen und Maximen, B./ Unser Verhalten gegen uns selbst betreffend, 13. in: *Parerga und Paralipomena*, Kröners Taschenausgabe, p. 150.

<sup>95</sup> The poet thought so highly of the view of László Németh, that the pieces of what was to be perhaps his most important volume, the 1932 *You and the World*, he sent to Németh before editing the volume to know his opinion. Although he would very much have liked to know what the other thought about the poems, Lőrinc Szabó could not be informed about it before his death. Unless he had the chance to read the manuscript of the essay titled *Hungarian Workshop* during the days following the outbreak of the 1956 revolution. Németh himself did not know the whereabouts of the essay about Lőrinc Szabó. In 1967 he mentioned it to me as a neglected piece prepared for a literary event but never presented there. After his death a journal published it for the first time, as part of Németh's heritage.

standing about Hungarian poetry. In the year of the poet's death he wrote two essays assessing his views about the most important directions in Lőrinc Szabó's poetic career as well as its novelty of form and method in Hungarian literature. For me, what he says about Lőrinc Szabó can be seen as belonging to the most subtle observations of a writer as critic. László Németh offers a precise diagnosis of the borderline position of the poet who confronted the "gaps". He presents Lőrinc Szabó as a poet who adequately records what he discovers in terms of the western analytical spirit, which was also so crucial for the critic László Németh:

"He complains about a crucial fact of life, namely that man burnt God out of himself. Few people demonstrate it as tellingly as Lőrinc Szabó how man is able to live without missing God completely, while not having found an Intellectual Force of equal value either."<sup>96</sup>

But it signifies the attempts to transcend the "gaps":

"I appreciate Lőrinc Szabó as an untiring master of world lyrics, who applied the western method of analysis to his poetry, giving a complete and true picture of himself that rivals the best drawn characters in fiction. Opening *Crickets' Song*, however, will convince the reader that this western-style poet identified himself with the 'pre-human' hero of the *Gilgames* epos as a teenager, and continued to remain in the habit of choosing Chinese thinkers and Buddhist legends to articulate his most private philosophy. Perhaps it is even more important to remember that his suffering and feeling of alienation in the capitalist and then non-capitalist society of Pest involved not only the country person's but also the easterner's tension with the western world".<sup>97</sup>

"Lőrinc Szabó is not only from the country but an essentially eastern man too; testified by his Mongol features (I witnessed that a Mongol soldier opened the cordon in front of him) as well as the pain that the western capitalist form of living involved for him. Russian literature favours the easterner as a character destroyed by western rationalism, or portrays him as one whose, like Raskolnikov's, attempt to adopt its methods turns him into murderer. Lőrinc Szabó, although he was not able to adopt it ('I am not fit to break in'), achieved a spiritual synthesis of the eastern treasures he had stored in his mind and the western method of articulating experience through experimentation and analysis."<sup>98</sup>

<sup>96</sup> László Németh: Lőrinc Szabó In: *A Last Look Around*. Magvető and Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1980. p. 383.

<sup>97</sup> László Németh: Hungarian Workshop. In: *Unpublished Essays*. Magvető, Budapest, 1968. Vol. 2, pp. 200–201.

<sup>98</sup> László Németh: Lőrinc Szabó. In: *A Last Look Around*, p. 383.