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Defining a genre in the *Répertoire de la poésie hongroise ancienne*

The repertoire of the Hungarian poems written up to 1600 is not a prosody repertoire but one of poetry.[1] The RPHA has followed the historical-poetical method. Research of poems large numbers, the inductive research is the first step in the historical-poetical investigation. This historical-poetical method was first worked out by Russian Alexander Nikolayevich Veselovski in his work titled *Istoricheskaya poetica*.[2] What I would like to say a couple of words about is a possible way of developing further this repertoire. It also seems worth refining further the fields of RPHA. And the second step of historical-poetical method could be the comparative research of the results.

This time I would focus on a collective genre, the protestant congregational song. Congregational songs play a significant role in the history of the Hungarian poetry in the 16th century. Since over one third of the poems written up to 1600 is congregational songs: 565 songs, 304 ones of which are psalms.

The repertoire, to solve the problem of genre specification, provides more than one genre-relationship, graph ("tree"), even in the case of one and the same song (RPHA I, xvi). This, however, can only be the first step in determining the genres. It would be advancement if we made a genre data base from even more aspects. In this data base the contemporary and subsequent genre specifications would be separated.

The contemporary genre specification is given according to the recipients of the given period. It tells us how the composers of the songs, the ministers (pastors), the editors of the protestant hymnals, and the singing congregation defined the genre of the congregational songs in the 16th–17th centuries.

I. The first recipient–approach can be a kind of updating in terms of genres of the two well-known Bible verses concerning the act of singing. In Paul' letters (Eph 5, 19; Col 3, 16) we can read as follows: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God." In the 16th–17th centuries the trio of psalms–hymns–spiritual songs (psalms–hymns–*cantica spiritualia*) was often related to a particular type of Biblical songs or some other genre.

II. The second recipient–approach could be the exploration of an implicit genre system: the mapping out of the contemporary use of the songs. The implicit genre system and genre convention

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[1] RPHA cf. HORVÁTH, Iván – HUBERT, Gabriella, H. – FONT, Zsuzsa – HERNER, János – SZŐNYI, Etelka – VADAI, István – GÁL, György, *Répertoire de la poésie hongroise ancienne,* I-II, Paris, 1992; offline- and online-version: http://magyar-irodalom.elte.hu/repertorium.

[2] Leningrad 1940.

of the 16th–17th centuries is applying the principle that 'everything is to be measured according to its own standard'. It is the prologues, running heads, main titles and subtitles in the hymnal that help us to determine the 16th-17th-century use of each poem, either during the services or elsewhere. Protestant hymnals can be regarded as edited books of poetry. The position of the songs in the composition of the volume can give us information about their genre. There are also manuscripts that show what songs should be sung on each feast of the liturgical year, or determine the place of the songs in the service.

In accordance with what I said, there can be made a table for each poem, a table, whose horizontal rows contain the main types of contemporary data, and the vertical columns feature the printed and manuscript collections where the given song can be found. The contemporary data could include on what days of the week and what feasts it was sung, its position within the service, its theme, and the event when it was sung.

III. About the third approach. A rhetorical analysis of the songs could be both a contemporary and a present day approach. One of the aims of rhetoric is to convince the mind and move and shake up the soul, to bring about a certain emotional state. This is an aim that, among others, guides the congregational song supported with melody, the conversation with God, too. From a rhetorical aspect, taking the four genera of melanchthonian rhetoric[3] or reading the explanations by Melanchthon, we find that all congregational songs can be classified into

either genus demonstrativum, the presenting and illustrating genus (for example praises about Christ, thanksgivings, or mourning songs);

or genus deliberativum, the negotiating genus (for example, rogations, invocations, songs of consolation, admonition);

or genus iudiciale, the judging or juridical genus (for example some songs of the Lord's Supper);

or genus didascalicum, the teaching genus.

This fourth genus was borrowed by Melanchthon from dialectics because church things and religious doctrines are to be taught. The typical genre of this genus is the catechism-song. As the genera of the issues can mix, congregational songs cannot be always classified straight into a certain genus, think of, for example, the psalms.

IV. About the fourth approach. If we are to take non-contemporary aspects, first we have to give the main characteristics. Speaking about the religious poetry of German baroque literature, Irmgard Scheitler attempts to separate the genre of *geistliches Lied* (spiritual song) and that of *Kirchenlied* (church song, congregational song). Doing this, he gives those genre characteristics that promote differentiation. This way the two genera of religious poetry differ from each other in the

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[3]   MELANCHTHON, Philipp, Elementorum rhetorices libri duo, Wittenberg, 1561.

following aspects: function, reception, theme, motives, language, style, metrics and musical form of the song. The type of the collection in which a poem of a given genre is published is also a feature to the given genre.[4] These genre elements can also be successfully adopted to define the genre of a given congregational song more exactly. Another distinctive feature can be the extent of the presence of the dramatic, epical and lyrical elements. And the melody attached to the text determines the genre of the congregational song.

All the songs can be placed in the contemporary genre convention: in the genera of the Melanchthonian rhetoric or in the trio of psalmi-hymni-cantica spiritualia. Both the biblical genre of the songs and the biblical motives can be features of the genre, too. Once the table is filled in, the contemporary use of a given song becomes clearer and also, the lyric of the song itself becomes easier to interpret.

Let's take an example — the marital song in the genre-tree of the RPHA. The marital song in the genre-tree is a: "poème ecclésiastique – non présenté comme histoire – concernant un événement – marital".

In the age of reformation religious love poetry flourished in the form of marital songs. The repertoire lists 6 marital songs of congregational use. So the genre of marital song, in accordance with what was said before, can be completed by further data in a genre data base.

Marital songs can be put into the categories of genus deliberativum or genus didascalicum. They can be classified according to:

– the proportion of Biblical and secular motives;

– the proportion of lyrical and epical elements;

– the speech situation developing in the songs, etc., and

– contemporary use. In the repertoire, this latter aspect can be exemplified by the song beginning with the line *Happy are those who fear God* (RPHA 207), which can be found among the psalms and which is a paraphrase of Psalm 128 (*Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord)*.

The use of the versified Psalm 128 in Hungary in the 16th–17th centuries can be described as follows:

1. It is listed among the psalms in the protestant hymnals with a separate section for psalms.

2. Unitarian song composer Miklós Fazakas Bogáti attached this psalm under the title of "a pious married couple's song" to the end of a secular historical song about Aspasia. He wrote the secular song in honour of the wedding of a nobleman (RMNy[5] 662). The theological content of the psalm (piety leads to happiness) made the poem suitable for being used as a wedding blessing. If we

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[4]   *Das geistliche Lied im deutschen Barock*, Berlin, 1982 (*Schriften zur Literaturwissenschaft* 3), 12-59.

[5]   RMNy cf. BORSA Gedeon – HERVAY Ferenc – HOLL Béla – KÄFER István – KELECSÉNYI Ákos, *Régi Magyarországi Nyomtatványok: 1473–1600*, Budapest, 1971.

have a look at the church services' orders, the agenda-s, there we can also find the prose version of this psalm at he end of marriage ceremony.

3. There is a 16th century Lutheran hymnal (RMNy 713) classifying the songs according to the periods between the feasts of the liturgical year. Marital songs are listed among the songs belonging to the period after Epiphany. Since, according to the pericopes, the set of biblical verses forming the basis of the sermon on the second Sunday after Epiphany is the story about the Wedding at Cana (John 2, 1-11). So in the Lutheran hymnal, Psalm 128 is related to the biblical verses of the sermon, so it can be found in the group of marital songs. The unknown Hungarian author, like Luther, who also translated this psalm, added a protestant theological message to the original Hebrew text. The translator supplemented the end of the psalm with an anagogical interpretation of the biblical text (with a heavenly explanation of the worldly marriage): "Because the marriage in God is pleasant, / who is crowned in eternal glory." In the 17th century this psalm appears in Unitarian collections as well, also as a marital song.

4. The text of this versified psalm was inserted into a long (a 33-verse long), and strongly didactic marital song: in the repertoire it is marked by the field "Cf. encore".

5. In the Lutheran hymnals of the 17th century – the psalm can be found in the thematic group of songs about pious Christian life.

The example of this psalm reveals that making a genre data base can be of much help with the interpretation of the individual poems as well.