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*A Contextual Analysis of Sándor
Bölöni Farkas's Travel Writings*

Summary of the Doctoral Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction and hypotheses

CHAPTER I

I.1. Literature review

- 1.1. Definition of key notions
- 1.2. New tendencies of travel studies and travel writing studies
- 1.3. The methodological framework of my research
- 1.4. History of travels and travel models
- 1.5. Hungarian travellers and travel patterns in an East European context

I.2. The reception of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travels and travel writings

- 2.1. The contemporary reception of Bölöni Farkas's travels and travel narrative
- 2.2. The emergence of cultic-sacral discourses in 19th century critics
- 2.3. Rediscovering *Journey in North America*, new interpretations
- 2.4. After the discovery of the travel journal
- 2.5. Studies in the second half of the 20th century, new perspectives
- 2.6. Aims and directions

CHAPTER II

II.1. The two texts: the travel journal and the published travel narrative

- 1.1. Architextuality of the texts
- 1.2. The relevance of paratextual elements
- 1.3. The *pre-text* of the published travel narrative: rhetorical and narratological functions
- 1.4. The dialogical relation of the travel journal and the published travel narrative

II.2. The first person

- 2.1. The linguistic markers of the first person: the subjective narrative perspective
- 2.2. The lyrical 'I'
- 2.3. Conclusions

CHAPTER III

III.1. Before the journey: Bölöni Farkas's role in the society

III.2. The complexity of the traveller: an advocate of reforms and a tourist

- 2.1. The main criteria of the categorization of different institutions
- 2.2. Questions concerning categorization

- 2.3. The results of the examination
 - 2.4. The relevance of private correspondence
 - 2.5. Conclusions
- III.3. A Transylvanian diplomat in the world of religious diversity
- 3.1. A church diplomat among other denominations
 - 3.2. The indirect critic of the church diplomat
 - 3.3. Conclusions: more than just a reform-minded traveller, more than just a tourist

CHAPTER IV

- IV.1. The function of guidebooks and travelogues in the 18th and 19th century
- IV.2. The *aid materials* of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's journey and travel writings: guidebooks, travel narratives and other texts
- 2.1. The significance of Bölöni Farkas's book catalogue (1830)
 - 2.2. Dictionaries and encyclopedias
 - 2.3. French publications
 - 2.4. British publications
 - 2.5. The relevance of American publications
 - 2.6. The reference literature of the published travel narrative
- IV.3. The *second* loan register: the different aspects of borrowings
- IV.4. The travel writer's interpretation of contemporary American travelogues
- IV.5. Conclusions

CHAPTER V

- V.1. In Europe: following previous examples and canonized models
- 1.1. Following others
 - 1.2. The relevance of European guidebooks
 - 1.3. The significance of private correspondence
- V.2. In America: different ways of interpretation of Bölöni Farkas's American journey
- 2.1. The impact of Levasseur's travel account on the travel writings of Bölöni Farkas
 - 2.2. *The Northern Traveller's* relevance in shaping the attitude of the travellers
 - 2.3. The role of reference letters in establishing foreign contacts and choice of itinerary
 - 2.4. Conclusions

CHAPTER VI

VI.1. The function of American guidebooks and travelogues - from the beginnings till the first half of the 19th century

VI.2. The role of the first Hungarian encyclopedia and travel narrative in shaping the image of the United States

VI.3. A brief overview of the significant literature: previous studies on the published travel narrative's America representation

VI.4. The main questions and assumptions of the present research

VI.5. A comparative analysis of the America representations of the two accounts – the image of America in the published travel narrative and in the travel journal

VI.6. Conclusions

Final conclusions

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Manuscripts
2. Text publications (Sándor Bölöni Farkas's published travel writings, other travel narratives)
3. Handbooks, monographies and lexicons
4. Studies appeared in periodicals
5. Internet sources

ANNEXES

1. Annex (MsU 959)
2. Annex (MsU 785/D)
3. Annex (785/C)
4. Annex (Institutions)
5. Annex (Events)

The publication of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travel narrative in 1834, entitled *Journey in North America*, opened up new horizons in the perspectives of the Hungarian reform movement. Functioning as a systematised compendium of the traveller's travel experiences and observations, the travel account triggered such an extensive discussion in the public sphere of the contemporary society that it soon became a popular reference source for political discussions at the different sessions of the Hungarian and Transylvanian Diet. It was mainly the reform-minded Dietal Youth which turned his attention towards the American model using *Journey in North America* because of its rich material, and due to this fact, among others, it can be clearly stated that Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travel account made a contribution to the contemporary process of knowledge transfer.

Nevertheless, in terms of Bölöni Farkas's bequest, this published travel narrative wasn't the only vehicle for knowledge dissemination in the 1830's, since even those writings that surround *Journey in North America* have become a functional part of this process: diaries (the travel journal and the intimate diary), journey correspondence, book catalogues, loan registers. These documents have a significant relevance for us since they could have contributed to the sharing and shaping of the vast mass of information about the West, either confirming the image of the United States or shattering the myth of a perfect realm.

The present PhD thesis, that can be assessed as a summary of the research carried out during the doctoral programme, investigates in a wider sense the travel writings, and consequently the travels of Sándor Bölöni Farkas, whereas it also endeavours to grasp the significance of his travels in the process of knowledge transfer. Sándor Bölöni Farkas's journey is interpreted as an effective means for knowledge transfer in the era of national consciousness, since travel as a systematic method for exploration results in observations and experiences that a whole nation can benefit from.

Therefore, my PhD thesis intends to highlight the different aspects and facets of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travel writings, not only grasping their cultural and historical significance but also revealing their apodemic value. The main question of my research concerns the question of how and to what extent these travel writings contribute to the process of knowledge transfer. Testing the following hypotheses of my research, I seek to demonstrate that all these documents, either directly or indirectly, in different contexts, have assisted in the shaping of the public's perception – they have influenced not only the perception of the large audience, but even of those who revolved around Sándor Bölöni Farkas:

1. The discourses – surrounding the travel narrative *Journey in North America* – are diverse but analysing the nature and character of these discourses in a specific period, a certain degree of uniformity and similarity in terms of their language and treatment of subject matter can be revealed.
2. Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travel journal is a heterogeneous text that functions as the paratext, the private epitext of the published narrative, and not only thematically, but stylistically as well nuances the *Journey in North America*. Therefore, I attempt to explore the dialogical relations of the two narratives, encompassing the threefold relation of author, narrator and character, the narrative structure and the different modes of representation of the traveller's experience.
3. Since the travel journal is primarily conceived for personal use, and therefore is not meant for the public, it conveys a more authentic and realistic, subsequently less idealistic image about the West, especially about the United States.
4. The figure of the traveller can not be discussed in terms of a single social category. Since it is a complex entity, the traits of the reform-minded traveller, the main attributes of the typical tourist and the features of the accredited diplomat of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church are all embedded within the figure of the traveller.
5. Applying the method of parallel and comparative reading of different sources – the travel journal, the published travel narrative, the book catalogues and loan registers of Bölöni Farkas's private library –, the researcher can make an attempt to reconstruct the itinerary of the journey, to define the adopted travel model, and to determine those objects brought back from the journey that function as relentless representations of the West. Implementing this method of reconstruction or re-enactment, we can analyse the role of the publications in the *formation* of the published travel narrative. In addition, these sources can also facilitate our endeavour to give an answer to the following question: *to what extent do these books shape the audience's – including Bölöni Farkas's acquaintances' – perception of the West?*

CHAPTER 1.

The first unit of this chapter provides an analytical overview of the significant literature published on my topic. Within the framework of this overview, first I provide a theoretical definition of these two notions, TRAVEL and KNOWLEDGE, then I systematize the dominant paradigms. The analysis of the term KNOWLEDGE is carried out mainly from the perspective of information theory

The systematic study of travels – *travel studies* – is a relatively new discipline since it was only a few decades ago when the systematic investigation of travels, and consequently the examination of the written manifestation of these travels gained attention and popularity. Until the 1980's mainly such cultural studies as ethnography, anthropology and historiography regarded the examination of such sources as their primary task. This belatedness, belated recognition can be attributed to their hybrid nature, since their heterogeneous character made their unifying definition problematic. They were viewed as secondary genres, writings whose aesthetic value – in terms of style – does not meet the standards of the canonized literary genres.

Travel writing studies, as a discipline, has attempted to provide a complete and thorough definition of the term *travel writing*. From a generic point of view, it has been stated that it encompasses a wide range of texts. These texts are defined by hybridity and flexibility since they might freely combine the features of fictional texts – for instance the characteristics of the picaresque – with the features of factual, non-fictional genres.

Since due to its heterogeneous nature, there is no general consensus on the definition of *travel writing* – Tim Youngs, mindful of dissenting voices, has attempted to summarize the different approaches, and consequently has provided us with his own definition –, the paradigms and disciplines read these texts differently. Hence, it can be stated that travel writing is not only characterized by generic hybridity, but by the hybridity and diversity of the existing paradigms and approaches. This is how the following paradigms read these texts:

1. The critical readings, deeply rooted in deconstructivism, shatter the illusion of neutral and objective travel writing by exposing the ideological workings of the texts. According to them, the traveller uses only those means of representation, those tools that are allowed by the ideology.
2. In opposition to the deconstructivist paradigm, literal readings analyse the experiences and observations of the traveller as straightforward and honest representations, therefore these readings avoid making allusions to any existing ideologies.
3. Between these two paradigms the formalist approach occupies an intermediary position and mainly considers the literary techniques and devices of the travel narrative – for example the poetic strategies, the narrative constructedness, the threefold relation of traveller, author and narrator.

My contextual analysis of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travel narratives does not pledge to adhere to any of these readings, their methods are being applied along with each other. This is

the result of three main factors: on the one hand, we have access to the travel journal, to the paratext of the published travel narrative. Mindful of the following axiomatic statement, according to which writers address the private sphere and the public audience differently, the parallel interpretation of the two text – travel journal and published travel narrative opens up new horizons. On the other hand, I also consider the reality beyond the text, the referential world, since I use such sources that are not directly tied to the narrative of the journey, but nevertheless, they surround it.

Following the outlined principles, the second part of this chapter employs a diachronic approach giving a historical overview of the main models of utilitarian and non-utilitarian travels, and within the framework of this diachronic approach, I assign the position of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travels in the context of 19th century travels. Then still implementing a diachronic approach, under the guidelines of the reception theory and history, I endeavour to analyse all the critical tendencies of the press: not only the contemporary reader's reaction, but the following generations' reading experience of *Journey in North America*

After the synthesis of the various discourses surrounding the figure and journey of the traveller, I have concluded that, the first hypothesis of my research was confirmed. After the death of Sándor Bölöni Farkas, in reverence for the memory of the Transylvanian traveller, these discourses adopt a special language kit that implements sacral and cultic elements when expressing high esteem. But in the 20th century we can trace as this tendency, mode of expression gradually simplifies, becomes more objective and factual. From this point of view, the 1930's mark another shift: when referring to Sándor Bölöni Farkas, he is now defined as an ardent democrat and citizen – representant of the emerging bourgeoisie – and not only as a traveller and patriot.

The discovery of the travel journal – that now can be found in the Unitarian Collection of the Romanian Academy Library in Cluj-Napoca – has opened up new horizons and has offered critics and researches new ways of interpretation. Still, this variety of the available sources – the published travel narrative, different manuscripts, official documents, book catalogues and loan registers – has neither generated notably diversification in the nature of the research, nor caused the proliferation of the discourses concerning the travel writings of Sándor Bölöni Farkas.

In the studies of the second half of the 20th century, we can identify the same tendencies and critical attitudes: the journey and the travel writings of Sándor Bölöni Farkas are still

examined in a socio-political and economic context. It is only after 2000 when a proliferation and differentiation in the nature of these discourses can be experienced, when various studies focus on Sándor Bölöni Farkas's literary translations, and the published travel narrative, often called the manual of democracy, is interpreted in a sociocultural context from a cultural-historical perspective.

CHAPTER II.

The present chapter explores in the context of a textual and stylistic analysis the dialogical relationship between the published travel narrative and the travel journal. Applying to different methods of literary theory, the main aim of this research is to discuss the literary devices used by the writer – narrative techniques, lyrical and poetical elements – in the frame of a descriptive – comparative study.

Considering the descriptive and narrative conventions of the period, I examine the following aspects: the choice of genre, the positions of the narrator, the dialogical relationship between the published travel account and the travel journal.

The entries of the travel journal follow a chronological order, they record accurately the daily experiences and observations of the traveller, but in addition, due to their socio-historical material, these entries bear a significant relevance for the cultural historian. Even though the published travel narrative transposes the events of the travel diary in their original sequence, mainly due to the preponderance of descriptive and discursive passages, the published narrative differs in many ways from its private epitext.

After a thorough and detailed explanation of these documents, I have reached to the conclusion that the travel journal nuances not only thematically but stylistically too the experiences of the traveller. When giving a final form to his narrative, the writer and editor Sándor Bölöni Farkas uses a wide range of rhetoric, poetic and narrative strategies: the setting (date and places) of certain events is changed, the personal events are alternated, and the subjective, almost lyrical narrator is withdrawn. Because of these reasons, the private epitext of the published travelogue constitutes a more coherent and authentic source for analysis and reconstruction. Consequently, in the travel journal such linguistic markers, as the first person, gain a higher relevance from the perspective of an existing reality, that is beyond the text. In the published account, compared to the diary, the image and representation of the continent is a lot different, and this is due to the clear aberrations from the primordial experiences recorded in the journal.

CHAPTER III.

After a thorough analysis of narratological, poetic and rhetorical devices, the following chapters implement a new method and perspective: the illustration of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's journey from a historical approach. Within the framework of this analysis I have resorted to Peter Burke's directives and perspectives. In this chapter I attempt to grasp the complexity of the traveller's image by dismantling its figure in different categories, in the next chapter using the available sources, I systematize those books – mainly those guidebooks and travel narratives – that could have influenced and determined the traveller's itinerary and the adopted travel model. In the framework of the latter investigation, special attention is granted to those books and publications that were circulating among the reading public, and consequently, could have had an impact on the perception of the audience.

In the third chapter I have demonstrated that Sándor Bölöni Farkas represents that type of traveller who has manifested great interest towards all aspects of the New World, even discussing in detail the contradictory aspects of the West. The categorization of the visited institutions and facilities – I distinguish the cultural institutions from the administrative, social and religious ones, and from the category of industrial facilities – has confirmed my hypothesis concerning the image and figure of the traveller. Thus, it can be concluded that he can not be labelled with one word, with one social category. The different types of institutions, the nature of his reflections, all these things prove that he integrates the features of the reform-minded traveller, of the contemporary tourist and he also adopts the typical attitude of the Unitarian diplomat. As an ardent pursuer of reforms, under the principles of “nation and progress”, looks for a democratic political entity, as a tourist he travels for pleasure in a new world that is made familiar by guidebooks and travelogues, and as an accredited diplomat of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church he crosses the sea and the ocean to institutionalize relations with coreligionists living in England and in the United States.

After this examination I got unexpected results as well, since I have come to the following conclusion: there are obvious overlaps between the features of these three types of travellers, we can not strictly separate these three from each other.

CHAPTER IV.

This chapter seeks to explore and define all those tangible *memories* that have probably been brought by the traveller in Transylvania. In order to conduct this research, I apply to different sources: I use Sándor Bölöni Farkas's book catalogues – 1825 and 1830 –, his loan

registers and the different collections of his private library. Although I am strongly convinced that the complete exploration of such publications can never be finished – since the researcher might stumble upon a book with Sándor Bölöni Farkas's authentic signature in it when he does not even expect that –, the outcome of the study proves that the Anglo-American collection of his private library has been a lot bigger than his book catalogues show. It can be concluded that these publications have had a strong impact on the perspective of the *Journey in North America*, since the footnotes of the published narrative name explicitly these sources.

The publication of the travel narrative in 1834 played a key role in intensifying and focalizing the attention of the reading public in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca on the United States since we can trace a significant increase in terms of the loan of those books that are related to the *West*. Attempting to reconstruct the circulation of these publications, I have concluded that even from 1832 – the year of return – these publications and Anglo-American editions are lent to different individuals. Beside Levasseur's travel narrative, most of the borrowers take home Unitarian publications. The entries of this loan register also prove that after the publication of *Journey in North America*, the local intellectuals' interest towards the United States has significantly increased, since from the end of 1834, mainly historical, geographical, statistical and law publications on the United States were popular.

Simultaneously, one of the most relevant findings of this research is that the Anglo-American books of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's library are brought by the traveller himself from his journey. The entries of the book catalogues and loan registers prove that these books have come into possession of the traveller either during the journey or after his return

Sándor Bölöni Farkas's intimate correspondence highlights that after 1832 he used the contemporary means of book acquisition and brought new publications from the West with the help of Gábor Döbrentei. On the other hand, we can also conclude that even the French collection of his private library has grown – many entries of the travel journey refer to booksellers in Paris. But one can clearly state a difference in the nature and aspect of the French and Anglo-American publications: the Anglo-American collection contains only referential writings – statistics, religion, history, political, science textbooks, accounts of real travels –, whereas among the publications of the French collection one can detect fictional – literary – writings as well.

CHAPTER V.

When considering questions concerning travel management and the art of organizing travel, this chapter still resorts to the guidelines and directives of Peter Burke and is engaged to provide a complete reconstruction of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's journey.

After the outline of all those European and American itineraries that the Transylvanian travellers seemed to follow and after providing a brief overview of the adopted travel models, I have endeavoured to answer these questions:

1. To what extent do the popular guidebooks – *The Traveller's Guide through Scotland* and *The Northern Traveller* influence the choice of itinerary and destination?
2. To what extent do they follow the recommendations?
3. To what extent can we analyse Sándor Bölöni Farkas's journey independent from travel habits and trends?

After a thorough analysis of Sándor Bölöni Farkas's texts, I have concluded that different travel narratives, American and European guidebooks have not only facilitated the orientation, but they have also had an impact on the perspective and itinerary of the Transylvanian travellers. Although more American stations coincide with the stations of Levasseur's and Lafayette journey, the itinerary is not the same. Their choice of destination and itinerary is influenced by many factors: beside popular guidebooks, the reference letters adopt a key role in the choice of destination, and in addition, the diplomatic responsibilities of Sándor Bölöni Farkas ought not to be neglected.

Taking into account all these aspects and conclusions, I can declare that the fifth hypothesis of this research has been only partially confirmed. Using all the available sources the researcher can only partially determine define all those objects – mainly books – that arrived in Transylvania due to Sándor Bölöni Farkas's travels.

CHAPTER VI.

The last part of this PhD thesis employs a comparative approach: in this chapter I explore one key segment of the relations of these two documents – the published travel narrative and travel journal. The great majority of studies discussing the representation of the United States have reached to the unanimous conclusion that the traveller manifests a boundless optimism towards the new political entity. If we include in the framework of this analysis the

travel journal as well, we can detect many differences and discrepancies between the two representations of the United States. In this comparative study I have evidenced in the published travel narrative a more powerful manifestation of an ideology which led to the following recognition: this knowledge transfer does not communicate neutral values, but values influenced by the ideology of a perfect democracy.

Through its unconditional enthusiasm for the American institutions, through the application of the techniques of selection and combination, the published travel narrative *Journey in North America* transfers a more idealistic and romantic view and it gives a less authentic picture about the United States. All in all, I conclude that the third hypothesis of my thesis, referring to the question of representation, has been confirmed.