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The reception of the work of Ferenc Faludi

PhD Thesis Summary

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THE TOPIC AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION, THE APPLIED METHODOLOGY

There is a point in which the majority of the works that dwell on the historical and literary significance of the oeuvre of Ferenc Faludi converge (irrespective of the period in which they were published): the author is regarded as someone who fulfills by his works a deficiency, he is considered a “threshold”, a milestone at the border of two epochs, and the insufficiencies of his works are explained precisely by this position. Thus he reached rather early the periphery of the literary canons based on aesthetic criteria or of originality, even if he stood among the first at the early genesis of these canons. In my work I have not tried to redesign this picture, only to shade it, emphasizing the fact that in the Hungarian literary canon, or even beyond it, over the centuries there have always been readers (or even writers, poets) who did read and use his works, considering them even to be models to follow, to imitate, even though they were not among the shapers of the literary canon.

The process of "restoring to light" of the prestige and work of the Jesuit author began in the 1780s by the literary and editorial activity (by marking his place in the first literary hierarchies of the 18th century) of the polyhistor Miklós Révai, and we can say that after the efforts of the 19th century this aspiration is present today as well. This paper does not attempt to enroll among these works (although in certain aspects it contributes to this tendency too).

The object of this dissertation is exactly the study of these “restorations to light” and the parts of the thesis are integrated based on the idea of reading (in the broad sense). If we were to simplify the definition of the dissertation topic: each chapter attempts to answer the question of who, when, how, and in what way read or used Ferenc Faludi’s works, trying to interpret evidently also the reasons for the lack of their reception. I do not consider the reception of Faludi's works as the drafting of a continuous process, but rather as the presentation of its different segments and sides from different methodological points of views.

The texts defined as cultural acts or the disclosure and interpretation of their primary contexts constitute the bases of research. This way the aesthetic approach is not the primary one, it is supplemented by the perspective of the analysis of the historical or socio-cultural phenomena. The approach to the problems is historical or canonical with respect to the topics of the chapters.

The importance of the multilateral activity of Ferenc Faludi in the culture of the era, the interpretation of his "roles" - Jesuit, professor, headmaster (school culture in the 18th century), leadership of congregations, spiritual director at Pazmaneum in Vienna (spirituality), director of printing, librarian (book culture), novelist, poet, author of drama pieces, etc. - occupies an important role in the reception of his works in the 18th and 19th centuries. The study of this is motivated also by the fact that in that period (and for the non-professional readers today as well) biographies determined the reception of the works. The first chapter of the dissertation deals with the problem of the biographies. In studying the reception interpreted as a cultural act the thesis uses the results of research in the field of religious history, and sometimes it tries to rebuild the "cultural grammar" of the public at the end of the 19th century, since the cult of Faludi is considered to be an act of self-interpretation of a community (primarily local).¹

The second chapter rereads certain texts, works published in the critical edition in 1991, based on certain categories of values, through which are also outlined the aspects of extratextual intentions and their ideological facet. At the same time, it also studies the channels through which this has manifested. Regarding the problem of the genres, it applies the empirical genre categories of modern poetics, in which the pragmatic nature, the function of communication shapes the genres of these texts. This paper seeks answer also to the question what kind of "reading offers" contain these texts or their liminary texts because the reading as intended by the author is and was also one of the possible readings (approved or not by readers). To unravel the problem of alienation, it tries to reconstruct - at least at the level of some examples - that first context consisting of liminary texts that were surrounding Faludi's texts at their genesis or primary reception, having in mind the place where the latter are positioned as opposed to the contemporary peritexts as far as the formulated programs are concerned. With the help of contemporary concepts related to genres and species we may approach better the "natives' point of view," the problem of "what they meant to the authors of those actions",² what kind of reading strategies or models of uses they offered.

¹ TAKÁTS, *Antropológiai látásmód és irodalomtörténet-írás* = TAKÁTS 2007, 38–39., *idem*, *Nyolc érv az elsődleges kontextus mellett* = *idem*, 85.

² TAKÁTS, *Antropológiai látásmód és irodalomtörténet-írás* = TAKÁTS 2007, 38.

The third chapter follows a history of the editions of works by Ferenc Faludi until the early 19th century. The sum of the editions (along with data on the number of copies printed) is in itself an indication of popularity, but in addition, the research of books as objects with multimedia content may be benefited from also from the perspective of reception. The sketching of the primary context (in this case its material and medial side) requires an interdisciplinary methodological approach (the methods of printing history, of book history, and those exhibited by Gerard Genette in his work on the nature of the paratexts).

This idea is continued in the following chapter. From the perspective of the new philology and textology through the philological analysis of poems published posthumously and of the reflections of the editorial policies in the published texts, this chapter tries to answer the question how the first publishers (Révai Batsányi) read the poetical works of the author, or how they wanted them to be read. Subsequent corrections also have cultic implications. This analysis involves the study of ideas about language and literature of the publishers, the transformation of the poetic ideal in the discourses related to the emergences of Faludi's poems (Révai, Batsányi, Kazinczy).

The fifth chapter studies the notes (those of the owners', marginal ones, highlights), the "confessions" of the books from different libraries and Transylvanian collections with the aim to depict the readers, the empirical owners and also the ways of reading or using of these works.

The reception of Ferenc Faludi's works in the manuscripts from the 18th and 19th centuries represents an important part of the reception of Faludi's poems that has not been researched so far, only mentioned in the monumental bibliography of manuscripts of songs and poems elaborated by Béla Stoll. The large number of copies and variations that have at their base a text by Faludi present in these collections demonstrate the popularity of Faludi's "songs" in that period. The use in the context of popular poetry involves the movement of the complex system of connections between orality and literacy. The preference for some songs and the variability of the texts reveals the taste and "reading" habits of a certain stratum of readers and provides important data regarding the reception of Faludi's works. The methodology applied was that of statistics and textology.

Given the fact that the four chapters deal with different aspects of the reception of Ferenc Faludi's work, the shift of points of views requires us to address the problems

through various research methods. Thus, in terms of applied methodology we can not speak of homogeneity, the subject under scrutiny imposes the applied method or methods.

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS

In the first chapter I tried to sum up the results of the biographical literature on Faludi and also to specify the source of any imprecise data and their persistence in the specialized literature. We can talk about the biographical reconstruction of the image of the Jesuit author even from the time of the first editions of his poems. We may ascertain already at Révai, but especially starting with Batsányi the way the biographies function as preconceptions in the reading process, and anything that was not consistent with this model was considered a problem and had to be excused or even corrected.

Readers of the 19th century were predisposed to a biographical approach towards Faludi's works. The roles he assumed (eg. monk, teacher, professor), his moral character contoured in biographies, and also his place in the history of Hungarian literature (the latter conceived as a process) determined in positive and negative ways the readings of the 19th century (causing problems especially in the case of the reception of his lyrical oeuvre).

Faludi's moralizing prosaic works under the form of ethical categories - rooted in the ancient or baroque literature -, as intended by the author, attempt the "reorganization of reality", the forming "of the conceptual means and emotional repertoire" of the readers.³ The "channels" through which the transmission of the concepts of behavioral culture are realized in which the dialogue between the hierarchies of secular and religious values take place are the empirical and changing genres of the political-moral literature.

The use determines the genres also but at the same time we can observe their tendency towards becoming a reading. The original functions are placed in the background and the language acquires a special importance. The genres which operated at the genesis of the texts sometimes become obstacles of the comprehension with aesthetic premises.

³ TAKÁTS, 45.

The chapter on editions concludes and specifies the data referring to them. The study of the different editions of Faludi's works in the context of the editorial policies of this period resulted in the summing up of the multitude of editions, and what from the point of view of reception is even more important, in the discerning the activities of those institutions and agents (printers, editors, prenumeration, patronage, competition, literary hierarchies, canonization) who were at the base of these editions.

The research of the publications from the perspective of mediality highlighted another aspect of the reception: books as objects with multimedia meanings mark the undulations of the reception and the possible readings through the typographic elaboration and through paratexts.

Based on these results the next chapter studies the fact how publishers read and what reading modes they provide. By applying the methods of textology and new philology it was possible to reveal the connections between different texts (between the editorial paratexts and the text of the poems), and in a broader context, the relationships between "agents" and texts. Due to this research it was revealed that by publishing his poems Révai and Batsányi wanted to display a model of language, and the reading strategies they offer are formulated according to this. The evidence for it is shown by their interventions to the authorial texts on poetic and textologic level done in the hope of a „flawless” edition. In the context of the literary life which was in full formation, the values and imperfections and their "improvements" become the means by which the editorial authority is built, or in the case of Batsányi, how the subject of the debate is defined.⁴

As a result of the research of book notes we cannot outline a general homogeneous perspective. Although fragmentary, these data are very interesting, because this way we can approach the empirical readers of the past. Sometimes the notes only record the possession of the book, their donation or appurtenance of a certain college library. In other cases the reader of long-ago underlines or marks the parts of fragments that were considered rather interesting or important. The most impressive (but also the rarest) are the notes that reflect the reading process, that refer to the content of the book and that create a dialogue with it.

Library catalogues, lists of books or lending of this period proved to be useful only as complementary sources. Enlarging the area of research is promising not so

⁴ About the term "situation of dispute" see TAKÁTS, 50.

much from the geographical point of view as from the direction of involving other sources, such as the correspondences of the time that were under publication.

The research of manuscripts of songs - as in the previous case - resulted in the sketching of the empirical reader and of a specific reading strategy, except that here we are dealing with a more heterogeneous context. Faludi's poetry texts (in most cases becoming anonymous) were integrated in the chain of the tradition of this *popular poetry* (similar to the poems of László Amade and Mihály Csokonai Vitéz). The recording is also a matter of choice and it signals the popularity of Faludi's songs in this context which is constantly moving.

The statistical registration of these texts demonstrated not only the popularity indices, but their chronological evolution, too. Such research would open a new perspective towards the shaping of alternative canons, which would modify to a high degree our knowledge of the history of Hungarian reading in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The textologic approach captures what happens to these songs and texts in this context. The roads of usage lead from the precise copying to travesties, from the total fragmentation of this "treasury" to the reorganization of its elements. The forms of variogenesis and topogenesis prove the popularity of Faludi's texts and the attitude of these "textmasters" can by no means be called indifferent.

Another contribution of the application of textology is the conclusion that the same process occurs in the case of the reception of Faludi's poetry in the context of cult literature (eg. in the cases of Verseggy, Révai, Szentjóbi Szabó, Benyák Bernát János Nagy, György Fejér etc.) .

KEY WORDS

Hungarian literature, 18th and 19th centuries, Ferenc Faludi, literary reception, biography, contextualism, editorial policies, editions, philology, textology, history of reading, popular poetry