

## Narrative Poems of János Arany

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The epic poetry of this 19th century poet is one of the most interesting, most complex phenomena of the Hungarian literature. He turns towards the past so stubbornly that at first sight he seems to be an unshakable Conservative. In the middle of the century, in the time of Baudelaire the poet from Nagyszalonta turns back from time to time to the big form, to the epic poetry, to the extremely important literary genres of the European literature. He chooses from the possibilities offered by the classical epopee of Homer of the archaic heroic poetry, of the ballads, the comic epic and the novel in verse, uses their peculiarities and finds new perspectives in their poetical way of thinking. On the other hand this conservatism proves to be a creative force in his important works bringing novelty and new shapes to them. He introduces subtle changes, extends the possibilities and gives new characteristics to these literary genres which bring them closer to the problems of the modern world. In the literary forms used by him in fact it is the modern man who has the central role, the man who feels that safety, firmness and the chance of future are threatened. In his great epic poems there are to be found basically two ways of presenting the situation, of handling the problems, of giving artistic answers. His archaicholistic works claim the right to create an artistic anti-world. This world of visions comes to being with the help of an archaic-holistic way of looking at the world which proves to be safe and homogenous and very different from the meditative denial, remoteness, the crumbling of the entity and the victoriously advancing erosion (*Toldi, Keveháza*). On the other hand, the poems characterised by anti-heroism and destruction seem to present another possible kind of the crisis-handling attitude: they admit that the crisis is powerful and "illustrate" this power with the means of the metapoetical system of the narration (*The Lost Constitution, The Gypsies of Nagyida, Istók the Fool*) (*Az elveszett alkotmány, A nagyidai cigányok, Bolond Istók*). This double tie, the readiness to create an artistic antiworld visualising the integrity and the willingness to unfold the

feeling of crisis and being carried away by it gives the basic bipolarity of Arany János' work and the two characteristics seem to have equal weight. In other words: the poet cannot give up the vision of an existence in which the relative character of the values and truths is bounded by the undeniable absolutism but in the same time he can't help feeling the power and justice of the denial freed by the modern critical culture, by the reflexive sense of existence, by an inquisitive, doubtful, meditative attitude.

Of all the archaic-elementary-holistic epic works of Arany the *Toldi*, written in 1846 is the one that most successfully creates the vision of the flawless existence. The story itself came down to us from the 16th century and it used to be told by the minstrels and bards. Most of the action takes place in the court or in the surrounding of Louis Anjou (the Great) who ruled over Hungary in the 14th century. The main character is Miklós Toldi, a very strong young man, who in spite of his noble birth has to work in the fields together with the peasants because his elder brother, György, being envious and jealous of him does everything to keep him far from the royal city and the court. On a hot summer day, while the young man is working in the field some soldiers of the king appear and talk to him scornfully. As he has always been dreaming of becoming a member of the army formed by proud noblemen, of gaining fame and being called a hero, Miklós feels even more offended. But he is helpless and turns back home full of sorrow and anger. As he gets home he meets his brother, who has just arrived. György speaks harshly to his younger brother, even hits him. Miklós, who is much stronger than György could kill him at once but he stifles his anger, tries to find a quiet place somewhere to weeps bitterly. However this proves to be impossible. His brother finds him and urges his servants to tease him by throwing spears to him. As long as the spears bounce into the fence, Miklós ignores them, but when one of them hits his shoulder he raises a huge millstone which is lying there and hurls it towards the servants. The stone kills one of them so Miklós has to run away and his brother orders his soldiers to follow him. During the next night Miklós has to fight with two wolves, kills them, carries them to his native house and leaves them in his brother's room. In fact he only wants to say good-bye to his mother, but his brother wakes up and seeing the wolves realises his presence. By this time Miklós has to run away as far as he can to save his life. He walks up to Buda with the vague intention of doing a heroic deed and draw the king's attention. He seems to be lucky: a widow tells him about a foreign knight whom nobody could defeat so far, therefore he speaks about the Hungarians scornfully. But Miklós has no money, no weapons, no proper clothing. He can turn to nobody, none of the people of the town invite him for night, although he has just saved the life of many of

them by stopping a wild bull which has freed itself from the slaughter house. Feeling lonely and hopeless he goes to sleep to the cemetery and there he meets the old servant, Bence, sent by his mother. Bence brings him one hundred gold pieces and like this the opportunity to show himself by fighting against the foreign knight suddenly becomes a reality. Toldi and his servant celebrate this in a joyful way in an inn. On the next day Miklós appears in a wonderful armour and defeats the foreign knight attaining like this his cherished dream because the king is also present at the tournament. The monarch has already found out the truth about György Toldi's mean character and now pardons Miklós for killing his brother's servant and makes him a courtier. The possibility of a wonderful military career is opening up for Toldi.

Of course, the plot itself hardly makes us feel the richness and depth of this heroic poem which is full of warm serenity, optimism, freshness, strength and love of life presenting a world in which there are no gaps. Some say, and not without reason that the poem directly continues the naivety which is to be found in Homer's works. Anyway, Arany's poem is hardly a simple continuation. It is a remaking down to the smallest details. On the one hand the poet gets free from the common heroic poem, from the different kinds of stereotype means of expression which have such a great importance in the Christian heroic poems, on the other hand he makes them so subtle that they become unrecognisable. In the *Toldi* there is no "machina", the world is not doubled and the stereotype forms of fighting, the augury, the half-miracles, the invocation and the enumeration are also missing. The elements of comparison which have an important role in Homer's work like the lion, the sea, the storms in the hills and on the sea, the ships are also missing, as they are completely different from the colour locale of the Great Hungarian Plane. The local, rustic introduction contains a subtle allusion to the proposition of the heroic poem, the description of the death of the soldier caused by the millstone is suggestive and functional, the short argument before the fight (the *obiurgatio*) at the tournament is brief and proper, the objective, calm, detailed way of the Homeric narration is interrupted by exclamations by suggestions meant to warn the hero, by formula which maintain the connection between the poem and the reader. All these characterise the naive, folk forms. In Arany's conception the heroic poem was not a collection of literary conventions, but a very important archetypal genre which presents the claim of the human fantasy for the transcendental and the desire to create sacred things through physical strength and heroism proved by a series of trials, through the expected and finally gained fame. For the Hungarian poet heroic poetry meant an Elysium, an excellent shelter for the modern mentality which has already experienced the loss of certainty and the disappearance of

safety from life. In the heroic poetry existence and destiny, adventure and fulfilment are equal ideas, the inner and the outer are not yet detached, traditions guide the life of the people without conflicts as a "life immanence", there is no alternative to the institutions of the society, of the way of living and of the rituals. Nobody denies these values, they are firm and solid, serving as György Lukács said "as natural vessels for the flood of intimacy of the soul". The artistic anti-world of the *Toldi* knows nothing of the great contraversies of the modern life, in it there is no gap between man and nature, man and his way of living, man and the customs, man and the environment or activities, man and the other men. Through a magnificent abundancy of the comparisons all what happens to the heroes immediately becomes part of the vast nature, an episode of the natural way of life. The figure of Miklós appears in the mind of the poet as the camp fires lit by the shepherds on autumn nights, the draw-well sucks the blood of the earth as a giant mosquito, the deeply insulted young man is growling like a wounded boar, György's servants follow their master's urging to tease Miklós as readily as the hounds rush at a rabbit thrown to them, hope disappears from the heart of the lonely boy as birds fly away, blood is flowing from the tip of the Czech knight's fingers as water is dripping from the end of the icicles when spring is coming, mother and son are weeping on each other's bosom as the rain is falling from the heavy clouds. Proverbs and idiomatic expressions of the community are always available and ready to help the individual. No matter how deeply offended by his brother, Miklós is able to express his indignation promptly with adequate words and in an elaborate way, he can argue, defend himself and deny the accusation.

The idyllic characteristics of the *Toldi* are considered to be the genre creating gestures of the mentality of the modern age deprived from the certainties and firm grounding of life. Compared to the heroic poetry here the isolated microcosmos ruled by ancient, solid rules, the vision of a small world moved by the warm intimacy of the interacting relationships gain a greater importance. The detailed and professional-like description of the different ways and means of cooking and frying makes the description of the preparations for the festive meal realistic but not without playfulness and irony when the poet speaks about the sad lot of the suffering party, that is of the lambs and poultry. The marsh becomes a safe small world for the fugitive, the roots of the reeds serve him as bed and pillow, the blue sky becomes his blanket and the canvas of his tent is woven by the night. No matter where Miklós and his old servant meet, the warm love and trust that radiates from the old man immediately turns the space around them into a home. The empty bag seems to offer itself as a table on which the two apples will serve as adornment. Compared to the cold inhospiti-

tality of the slaughtering house the cemetery proves to be a convenient place to sleep in. The warmth of the relationships between the characters, intimacy and co-operation are present in the *Toldi* in a more accentuated form than in any other heroic poem, mostly because the signs and gestures of communication which seek for understanding and create relationships and ties are richly and very accurately described. While the young man is having his hearty meal, the mouth of Bence, the old servant is moving too, when Miklós is speaking about his intention to run away from home the old man is weeping and scratching crosses on his moccasin with his nails.

The accurate, tangible description of the substituting action is not an exception in the *Toldi*. The emotions are generally presented through physical changes, gestures or attitudes. The eyes of Miklós are aching as he is staring at the bright armour of the soldiers when they appear through the cloud of dust then, when they wound his feelings he proudly shows them the road leading towards Buda without saying a word, just pointing to the right direction with an enormous pole. When he is happy, he makes huge jumps, when he is about to weep he feels as if his nostrils were pierced. On hearing the bad news, the face of György becomes red like the boiled lobster. These physical signs, gestures and actions do not appear isolated or in a static form but as the meeting-points of the interactive network they are in a steady, firm connection with the environment which serves as socio-psychological background and never ceases to transmit stimuli and challenges. Here we meet a strongly realistic phenomenon which has nothing to do with romanticism. If we consider its story in the centre of which there are the heroic acts and in which the ability is unconditioned and supposed to be present, then the *Toldi* will be enlisted among the heroic-idyllic poems and romances. But this romance is interwoven by the complementary, authentic artistic devices of the modern, analysing realism. The core of the action, the desire for a heroic act is placed in a minutely described psychological environment, the emotional storm in the soul of the sensitive, hesitating hero, who is longing for a new life is described realistically with accurate plasticity. All the elements of the action are well-motivated, they have their reason and find their grounding on the level of the emotions. At the beginning of the poem the appearance of the soldiers stir the hidden desires in the soul of Miklós. When humiliated and helpless, first he feels an overwhelming anger which later turns into weeping and resignation. The pain in his wounded shoulder wakes up bitterness and indignation in his soul, he hurls the millstone and kills a soldier of his brother. He flees, but at the beginning he does not know what to do. He has only vague plans about his future, he is unable to go far from his home and confesses his feelings to his servant. The first trial, the killing of the wolves is

on the one hand a substituting action through which he just wants to get rid of the feeling of hatred for his brother, but on the other hand it is an important episode because it introduces a series of actions: Miklós carries the lifeless bodies of the animals home, places them beside his brother's bed, and this act results in his being pursued so far from his native place that he cannot think about going home any more. As he arrives to Pest-Buda the opportunity to realise his dream shows itself, but because of the lack of funds it flees. The saddest part of the poem is the one in which Miklós, losing all hope, goes to the cemetery to have a rest. But according to the vision of the *Toldi* God is always ready to help the one who needs Him. The old servant arrives with the money, dreams may become a reality. The wonderful, rustic description of the young giant's merry-making in the inn is in fact the celebration of this, the tournament and the king's pardon are only extra joys.

Is it possible to find a place for this poem which is woven from many elements and shows the characteristics of many literary genres and forms of literary thinking in the European literature? If yes, the reason is to be found in its being so extraordinary. As one of his analysers remarks Arany, who wrote this poem in the middle of the 19th century was the last adept of Homer. The *Toldi*, as I have already mentioned, is one of those turnings backs which mean a halt in the process of splitting up and detachment. In this work the romantic tradition and the unconditioned vision are not dried up wells but life-giving, fresh springs and the vision of the anti-world becomes a possible and rich artistic gesture.

While the *Toldi* tries the possibilities of the heroic poem and the idyllic poetry the poem entitled *Keveháza*, which was written in 1853 and is made up of nearly forty eight-lined stanzas belongs to the genre of the poetry of action. It speaks about two battles which took place in the time of the great migrations at Tárnokvölgy and at Cezumor. The Hungarian chronicles also speak about these battles in which the Roman soldiers defended the province of Pannonia lying on the right part of the Danube from the Huns (the predecessors of Attila) who were eager to conquer those territories. The "little epos" is characterised by gigantic perspectives, by monumentality, by energy, by triumphant strength and freshness. Huge armies clash, two worlds, East and West are facing each other and the narrator never leaves the position from which he can see all the details of this gigantic flood. Nations, languages, armours are muddled up and in order to make us perceive this multitude the narrator uses a series of metaphors and comparisons: the bank is bending under the crowd like ice, the river is swollen first by the blood of those who die, then by the tears of the mothers, the battlefield turns into the gigantic footprint of the army, just one step, and life disappears from it for years and years. István Vas, the great Hungarian poet living in

the 20th century who deeply loved and understood Arany's poetry related the *Keveháza* to Flaubert's *Salambo*. But the *impassabilité* of the great French writer mostly offers the vision of a meaningless and centreless milling while the literary rhetoric of the *Keveháza* is evident. The large group of the Huns represents strength, freshness and energy compared to the Western fatigue, the narrator speaks about their discipline, customs, belief, rituals drawing their cultural anthropology. In the same time he creates a world and a mythology: names are given in the geographical surrounding which like this is filled with magic power, the smoke of the sacrifices is rising towards the sky, witches are flying above the battlefield and the God of the dualistic religion, the *Hadúr* is looking down to the Huns ready to help them, while *Ármány* brings bad luck to them. This world may be related to the Parnasse too, although Arany's work precedes Leconte de Lisle's *Poemes barbares* with nine and the great volume of Hérédia, the *Les trophées* with forty years. The monumental, swirling vision of the *Keveháza* in a way also offers an answer to the doubts of the modern individual. The elements of this busy crowd are closely linked to one another, "the breath of one hundred thousand people" create a common field of force, the undeniable authority of the charismatic leaders, the automatism of the discipline in war turns man into a part of the "great entity which has one single will" and this takes off his shoulders the burden of loneliness, of being forced to decide, to choose in one word to be an individual. The unconscious communal space of the poem is an archaic paradise, a hypercommunal vision and the modern man, tortured by seclusion and fears in vain longs for it, only artistic vision can recall it for a moment.

As I have already mentioned besides trying to create worlds, another basic endeavour of the epic poetry of János Arany is characterised by subversive, deconstructive gesture. *The Lost Constitution (Elveszett alkotmány)*, *Istók the Fool (Bolond Istók)* and *The Gypsies of Nagyida (Nagyidai cigányok)* show the characteristics of the comic heroic poem and of the novel in verse. On the other hand in Arany's conception the comic heroic poem is enlarged, it contains the metapoetical ethos and system of gestures of Byron's novels in verse too. (This is different from the European traditions, but is in accordance with 18th and 19th century Hungarian literature, with the wonderful initiatives of Csokonai and Petőfi.) The narrator of the *The Lost Constitution* presents himself from time to time as an author, who is standing behind the story, is weaving and guiding it, staggering like this the role of the reliable author and making it uncertain. With his ironic interruptions brushes aside the appearance of having an exact knowledge of all what happens, the possibility of forming a realistic picture. He says that he is unable to describe the beautiful summer evening in a

proper way because he is short-sighted and cannot see well in dusk, he is willing to present the half-face of a person then the whole body only slowly, following the rhythm of the growing light and finally identifies the main character as a fairy-witch. He can't tell how long one of the characters was sleeping, as he hasn't got a watch, that is he makes it clear that he has no power over all the details of the story. In other places, for example in the last third of the fourth canto makes us understand that he knows the truth and he is willing to speak about it, but not within the poem and only if the reader interested in it is ready to pay for the mail. On other places he speaks about the way of compiling a poem or a story and presents it as an artificial act which wants to seem natural and spontaneous. He confesses that he calls the heroine *beautiful* only for the sake of the hexameter, at another place he apologises to the men of literature of his time for using another word for the same purpose. He calls creation a conformity depending on the genre and states with irony that the antique heroic poem must be considered as the basis of poetry. One of his heroes gets into a dangerous situation, but the reader can be sure, that he will escape, because everybody knows that in the novels also arrives the expected help in time. At the beginning of the sixth canto he readily admits that he has got tired of his characters and their adventures and has no idea how he will finish the poem.

The spontaneous, natural, trustworthy narration is made uncertain in most of the first canto of *Bolond Istók* too and not accidentally. The first fifteen stanzas of the work are totally dedicated to seeking the story and the hero. The story itself starts in the sixteenth stanza, but even after this the narration is characterised by playfulness and uncertainty. Reality mixes up with the fantastic and the narrator keeps speaking about the events of his own life, his own reflections and his own point of views: he is thinking about monuments calling them things that remind us of being mortals, then he relates the story of Job, the episode of the funeral from the story reminds him of the death of his mother and of his father going blind, to the forehead of the small main character associates phrenology and expresses his doubt about it, the rosy colour of the dawn leads him to Homer and from Homer he gets to the poetical dilettantism characterising literature in his own country. Other important characteristics of the *Bolond Istók* are the parentheses showing the change of the levels, the allusions to literature, the intertexts, the seeking for figures of speech, the commentary of the rhymes, the admittance concerning the forming of the story, of making it to flow slower or swifter. In the sixth stanza the narrator makes an allusion to what has happened previously and recalls the key-words of the first stanza. In the seventy first stanza he states that the way of narration has been too slow so far, in the fifth and the fifteenth part urges himself not to follow a roundabout



way when writing his poem, in the twenty second part he suddenly gets tired of the poetic description of the sky in dawn and finishes it quite unexpectedly. In the sixty sixth stanza the compared one remains uncertain and in the one hundred and seventeenth it is revealed as a means of finding a rhyme.

*The Gypsies of Nagyida (A nagyidai cigányok)* written in 1852 is maybe even more interesting and complex. The story of the very strange heroic poem is the following. Gerendi Márton, the captain of Nagyida seeing that they have no chance of defending the fort any more against the besieging army of the emperor escapes together with his Hungarian soldiers leaving behind the Gypsies. The latter are very happy of suddenly becoming so respected persons and to celebrate this, organise a Fiesta, they are eating and drinking and shooting with the cannons randomly. The captain of the Germans cannot understand this and finally decides that it must be some very cunning plan. So he calls a council of war and the perplexed leaders are helped along by a map according to which there is a hill near the fort. That's great, because if they climb up the hill they will be able to look into the fort and see what is happening in it, what's more, they can place cannons on the top of the hill. It is true, that nobody has ever seen that hill, but the captain thinks that books and maps always tell the truth so he sticks to his plan. Like this, during the night they start to carry the cannons to the hill, but all of them disappear in the marsh which lies there in the reality. Another war council follows and after some quarrel they take two wise decisions. On the one hand they agree that the map must be blamed for the failure, the plan itself was a good one, if there had been a hill there they would have succeeded. On the other hand they consider that in the given circumstances the best thing to do is to flee as quickly as possible. The third canto of the heroic poem describes the great clash, the huge swirling of the armies. The Gypsies finally defeat the enemy, found a country of their own, make a feast, and quarrel all the time. But as it is revealed in the second part of the fourth stanza all this, including the victorious battle and the triumph was only a dream of the vaivode Csóri. It is true, that when he wakes up he sees that the enemy is really running away. The Gypsies are very happy, begin to threaten the Germans shouting to them, that if there had been any gunpowder left they would have killed them all. Hearing this, the Germans return and take the fortress banishing the poor Gypsies from it.

The chronicler-narrator of *The Gypsies of Nagyida (A nagyidai cigányok)* does not use any mixing up of the levels of the action or any reflection, but he never fails to use the possibilities offered by the ridiculing of the artistic devices of the heroic poetry. He asks a red-cheeked, sun-burnt peasant Muse to help him, instead of Pegasus he speaks about the feather of the gander he is

writing with, he finds great joy in the profanation of the Homeric comparisons: the Gypsies rush to eat and drink like a flock of sheep, they are running to and fro like the crowd in the market at Túr when somebody cried that a mad dog has been found among them, the cannons lie in the marsh as the drunken man who has fallen down and falls asleep and it is impossible to take them out from their place just as it is impossible to make a stubborn buffalo leave the pond. The clash between the leader of the army and his enemy is compared to the staggering of two huge oak trees under the striking of the axe, although the narrator confesses that he has never seen such a wood-cutting. The description of the fighting makes us laugh, irony, mocking, burlesque, jokes, fantastic and grotesque are equally present in it. In a quarrel among the Gypsies women fight on the sides of their husbands with their strong teeth and nails, children are shouting like jays, when attacking the Germans the Gypsies blindfold themselves so as not to be disturbed by the smoke and the light of the cannons. The heads which are cut are somersaulting, the Gypsy Amazon's breast rises like a bastion while she kills a lot of men. Laboda, the Gypsy, and his old enemy also have some problems: Laboda is cross-eyed, so his intention of fighting cannot be stated, while the old German's head is shaking continuously, so who could aim at it? The narrator of the *The Gypsies of Nagyida* uses simulating irony as the main element of mocking, playfulness. He keeps calling the Gypsies *heroic, valiant* fighters, the burlesque actions of war are treated with as much respect as real heroic deeds, the mythical elements of the traditions of history and literature are used as proper allusions and he keeps emphasising that he is not talented enough to describe the wonderful subject. When enumerating the Gypsies he prays for being able to present them as proud, noble knights should be and then introduces them one by one in a pathetic way as bold, stout knights committing heroic acts. In reality they are bent, hairy, cross-eyed, one-eyed, lame, bulky Gypsy lads who steal horses and break into houses. The second canto is full of excellent, grotesque descriptions of human bodies as the narrator depicts the Gypsies falling asleep after the great merrymaking: the babies let their mothers' breast, their dirty face is spilled with white milk, one of the men is hanging with his bald head like haggis on the smoke, another one is blowing the dust with his nose, the tall lad is coiled up, the fat one is sleeping on his back and snores as if he had the soul of a swine in him.

Of course, this is not the only example of the narrator's showing rustic, grotesque bodies instead of the fine, idealised ones which are so often to be found in literature. One of the Gypsy "knights", Diridongó opens his mouth widely in his great indignation, his face gets purple, his eyes and neck swells, the German captain holds his belly, bites his lips and utters ununderstandable words in order

to stifle his laughter, graceful, well mastered movements become instinctive, unorganised jumps or awkward trudge (while waiting for their meal the Gypsies are running to and fro with fluttering ankles, Dundi the extremely fat woman is slipping and dancing as a huge stove). Sensual and touching stimuli are also strong, decisive: Csóri feels that all his fingers are itching when he finds the treasure and he wants to throw away his old wife, Évike because she once was swallowed by a whale and Csóri can't help finding her terribly stinky. Instead of a spiritual, searching, mental uneasiness we find the serene, safe materialism of the world, the unity creating effect of the metabolism. Hearty meals get supreme importance, tooting and defecation are often mentioned. The Gypsies' fleshliness their voluptuousness which is not influenced by any cultural inhibition, their vitality, hurly-burly, their glaring colourfulness, rustic directness and spontaneity finds a rich, tumultuous descriptions in the poem. In spite of the mocking tone a very interesting, positive vision is created. The place of the lofty, idealised, abstract ideas, of the finished and separated existence is taken by a physical one, and the rich, triumphant principle of the material, the qualities which seem to be ugly, distorted, "niederkomisch" from the point of view of a refined aestheticism, the rough way of speaking which is used instead of the polite one, the swearing and cursing, the vulgar jokes and stories become parts of a rustic, robust, but in its way complete and valid culture. Arany's *The Gypsies of Nagyida* probably creates the vision which the genre of the comic heroic poem has always wanted to reach but could only partially achieve so far by creating a complete cultural alternative vision, the fresh, vehement counterpoint of the sublime high culture, something that appears in such an inventive, full of life way in Mihail Bahtyin's conceptual vision about the folk laughter-culture.

The Hungarian poet inherits his interest in the third great group of narrative poems, the ballads, from the Romanticism but he gives to this genre the importance of a universal poetry and vision of existence. He reshapes the conventions of the ballad, fills them with poetical meaning and makes the principle of the individualism of the form considerably valid. The form is built in a very characteristic way in all its details, the semantic characteristics of the structure are changed and becomes suggestive and symbolic. In the *Countess Rozgonyi* (*Rozgonyiné*) the variations of the questions and answers between the wife and the husband then between the beautiful Cicell and King Zsigmond are pedantly repeated, in the same time they are playful, pompous, correcting and suggest the existence of a naive, safe, harmonically organised world. In the *The Two Pages of Szondi* (*Szondi két apródja*) the vision of the dialogue becomes the symbol of the incompatibility of the innerly guided honesty and faithfulness and the in-

strumental activity, automatic conformity. After the lost battle the two pages are singing about the heroism of their captain near the latter's grave while the messenger of the victorious Turkish pasha keeps interrupting them, tries to convince them to leave the grave and become the pasha's servants. The youngsters hear, they must hear the warning, tempting, threatening arguments but they pretend not to hear anything, they stubbornly sing their own story, stick to their poetical theme and their language. The balladic mysticism, periphrastic way of definition and floating musicality in *Clara Zács (Zács Klára)* soften the mythical, irrational terror. The relationship between the narrator and the audience could be called a *tactful* one: the chronicler does not overwhelm the people with the facts of the uncontrolled cruelty but makes them bearable by speaking about them vaguely, making allusions or remaining silent or using a rhythmical-metrical euphemism.

On the other hand the compact, dense ballads show a dynamism of the form too. When turning a story into a balladic theme Arany endows the three main "conventions" of the genre, the dialogue, the scene and the concealing with extra meaning and like this they gain an important role in the creation of the greater freedom of the fantasy, of dynamism, and of a field of energy full of impulses. As I have showed above the vision of *The Two Pages of Szondi (Szondi két apródja)* is created by the pseudo-dialogue, by the basic incompatibility of the two voices, the quick-witted, playful but accurate answers of the heroine in the *Countess Rozgonyi (Rozgonyiné)* show the clarity and transparency of the laws that guide the world, the spontaneous, living, working existence of the norms. The concentration of the plot into scenes means that in the ballad central points are created, elevations from the top of which we can look both back and ahead, the action is filled with meanings and suggestions and they often contain deeper, "final" intentions too. In *The Two Pages of Szondi* the young men, while recalling the events of the besiege, group them into three important scenes: the captain is receiving the message of the Turks to surrender, preparing to death he sets fire on all his possessions and finally he goes on fighting even when he remains by himself and has already fallen on his knees. The great, provocative trial of the strength presented in the festive scene of the *The Bards from Wales (A walesi bárdok)* serves as a basic situation for the whole ballad containing the scornful, tyrant king's demonstration of his power and the helpless humiliation of the defeated region. The king orders the bards to sing laudatory songs about him, but the terrible tension finally results in a desperate revolt. The wife, who has helped her lover to kill her husband in *Agnes (Ágnes asszony)* goes mad and tirelessly repeats the same movement: be it summer or winter she never stops washing her blood-stained sheet. Arany's ballads become even more dynamic by the perfect use of telling-concealing. In

*Zách Klára* the powerful, grey-haired father urges his daughter in a friendly way to speak about her trouble, but the deceived girl, who has lost her virginity tries to avoid this desperately. The poet does not speak about her confession but in the next scene we see the father as he rushes to the royal family to take a revenge on them with his sword. What kind of discussion has taken place between the two people previously? How did the father receive his daughter's confession: with understanding or with the merciless rejection of a patriarchal aristocrat? We may image it as we want.

From the point of view of the poetical meaning *hiperobjectivism* is also important in Arany's poetry. Rhetorism and conceptuality are totally missing from the ballads of the poet from Nagyszalonta, the objective world gets other semantic values transmitting emotions, opinions, moods, presentiments taking away from conceptuality the duty of creating meanings and visions. In the *V. László* the magnificent performance of nature, the blowing wind, the darkness preceding the storm, the rain pouring down and after all this the cloudless sky and the stars are in close connection with the tension dominating the king's soul, with the desperate rage and the transient calmness. In the legend about *Saint László (Szent László)* the dead king comes out of his grave to help the Szeklers fighting with the Tartars and the final proof of this miracle is that when after three days the blessed body turns back to its coffin it is covered with sweat. *Countess Rozgonyi (Rozgonyiné)* is able to go to the battle and fight as a man without losing her female charm (she refuses to separate the two roles). Her pearled kerchief can be seen under her helmet, she ties her sword on a velvet belt, on her small, red boots there are silver spurs and she is wearing a fluttering green skirt.

Similarly to the poetical synthesis we can find universal, age-spanning ways of forming and explaining the world in Arany's ballads. In fact this group of poems, which from a poetical point of view forms one single genre, contains the great, significant ways of discussing reality that are to be found in the history of literature. Taking into consideration Northop Frye's conceptualisation the ways of the world interpretation lying in the *romance*, the *high mimesis* and the *irony* get equal importance in Arany's ballads and the poet created perfect gems in all these *moods*. The great Canadian man of literature compares the heroes of the romance to the mythological gods. These heroes grow above the other people and the surrounding world, they have to prove their heroism and bravery in fantastic trials, not even the laws of nature can stop them. In this ancient, great literary thinking desires are not compelled to make compromises, miracles happen naturally, individual, sexual and social fulfilment end up the action. In the first group of Arany's ballads the world is categorised by the means of this naive fantasy, the *Countess Rozgonyi (Rozgonyiné)*, *The Knight*

*Pázmány (Pázmán lovag), Saint László (Szent László), Szibinyáni Jank, Mátyás's mother (Mátyás anyja), Legend about the miraculous Deer (Rege a csodaszarvasról)* all are related to the heroic poems, the legends, the myths, the idyllic poems. The heroic deed and the fame that follows it here too are the solid basis of the existence, it ensures the integration of the hero to the community and has the power of turning the earthly to transcendental. When helpless, man can always expect assistance, the dead king rises from his grave and takes part in the battle, the totem animal from the coat of arms appears from the sky to take the letter to the future great king and brings an answer to the worried mother on that very day. The transcendental power which is guiding the fate of the heroes finally always proves to be benevolent and wise. The miraculous deer leads the two princes through fearful, strange worlds through "sombre wilderness" getting them farther and farther from their home. The young men decide every evening that they will not follow the deer any more, but when the dawn comes they forget about their promise and set off pursuing the demonic animal until the possibility of going back vanishes. But a mystical power turns their foolishness into good: they find a beautiful, rich, new country which will be the home of two nations, the descendants of the two young men, the Hungarian and the Hun nations.

According to the desire-fulfilling naivity of the romance in such works of Arany the society is also presented as free, intimate and without estrangement. The institutions are familiar, direct, they serve the interest of the people, ceremonies, rituals and stern interests do not characterise them. The inherited customs seems to be wise and fair, those who have social rank are full of merit and believe in their duties, the leader, the king is the radiant centre of communal integration. The capacity of the human psyche and its possibilities seem to be boundless, emotions are fresh and strong and they are not influenced by fatigue or fading, *id, ego* and *superego* form a complete, harmonious entity, the soul is not dominated by mechanisms defending the individual but by lofty impulses which are related to higher entities. The permanently present addressing and defining formula, chosen with great inventiveness have more or less a similar role as the allusions created by the position of the hands, heads and bodies on Giotto's and Fra Angelico's charmfully didactic paintings: they never cease presenting the orderliness and meaningfulness of relationships in the world.

The second group of the ballads may be described by those literary world interpreting ideas which are called *high mimetic ways* by Frye. The heroes are strong and ambitious but the world proves to be stronger, their environment is dominated by violence and roughness and they are finally ruined. Yet their boldness gives meaning to and makes order in the existence, morality gains strength and validity. The heroes who reject the instrumental way of acting and

stick to their inner guidance create a situation of catharsis. In vain does the tyrant king send to the stake the bards of the conquered region, they refuse to sing about his victory (*The Bards from Wales*) (*A walesi bárdok*). The pages are quite aware that they finally will be beaten and imprisoned, yet they do not stop singing their own song. When doing so they represent faithfulness towards the captain who loved them with parental love (a person to person relationship which finds its roots in love), heroism (a great moral value), and the essential individuality of the poetic theme (it can't be changed by anything else, it is almost like a mania) (*The Two Pages of Szondi*).

The third group of Arany's ballads gets closer to the lower mimetic way. In these ballads the characters are "everyday people" who make mistakes and are led by interests and by mechanisms who defend the individual. The sins what they commit are not insignificant: perjury, wickedness caused by jealousy, cruelty of the mother towards her children, heartless behaviour, complicity in murder. However the order in the world is not completely ruined. The existence of the sin is undeniable, consciousness is giving punishment mercilessly but justly. Ágnes goes mad because of her remorse, never ceases to see the stain of blood on her sheet and never stops trying to remove it. In these ballads consciousness and remorse are not earthly, are not the words of law turned into an inner impulse, not a mania, an altered need of punishment but the sign of a divinity who has left the Earth. This sign points towards a nobler entity and does not let the world to fall into a final shapeless chaos.

Finally there are some ballads in which doubt proves to be stronger than certainty. In these ballads sin becomes dim and faded. Eszter and Ferkó have to die because they dared to love before being married (*The Cleaning of the maize*) (*Tengeri hántás*), the outcast people of the big city commit suicide and are surrounded by a devastating chaos (*The New Bridge*) (*Hídavatás*), Pörge Dani is bewitched and urged to murder and finally hanged (*Vörös Rébék*), the beautiful maid and the members of the Zács family who are slaughtered are innocent victims of wicked greediness, thirst for power and desire to take a revenge for the offence (*Klára Zách*). Here we are walking on the terrain of the *ironical way of presentation, of the demonic fantasy*. According to these poems human desire to change the alien, chaotic world and to create a free society is sentenced to failure. The mythical, superstitious world of the *Vörös Rébék* is dominated by wickedness which cannot be explained or understood by man because it has no reason and no target. In vain does the narrator repeat in a dull voice at the end of every stanza the words meant to banish the crow-witch.