

THE METRICAL HERITAGE OF BALASSI IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HUNGARIAN POETRY

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Bálint Balassi's metrical inventions had a longlasting influence in 17th century Hungarian poetry. The imitations of his representative strophical forms denote a metrical universe that can be labelled with the name of the poet: the metrical universe of Balassi. This universe has been available for the methods of metrical mass analysis only recently, thanks to the publication of the entirety of seventeenth-century Hungarian poetry. (The title of the series of publications is RMKT=*Régi magyar költők tára, XVII.* [Old Hungarian poetry, 17th century].)

In the present paper I would like to propose a hypothesis that can lead us nearer to the mapping of Balassi's metrical universe within the system of strophes of 17th century Hungarian poetry, and it can also contribute to the general typological survey of 17th-century Hungarian strophes. In describing individual strophes, I shall not rely on the characteristics of the lines (although this is the usual method in Hungarian scholarship), rather, I take the rhyme-scheme as decisive. The reasons for this are the following: looking at the metrical patterns, the presence of Western European type of lines has long ago been registered even in medieval Hungarian poetry. On the other hand, if we look at the rhyme-schemes, we get the impression that the typical western pattern, the canso-type of strophes appear only in the 17th century, a fact which implies that Renaissance and earlier Hungarian poetry could not use the metrical achievements of Western European poetry. Let me mention some further points that make me to concentrate on the rhyme-schemes and on their comparison to the cansos of the troubadours.

(A) It is self-explanatory that the rhyme-scheme contains the most important information about the structure of a strophe. The analysis of rhyme-schemes is one of several alternatives to produce a systematic description of 17th-century Hungarian strophes.

(B) The characteristics of most of our contemporary poetry, on a fairly general level, can be compared to the characteristics of the troubadour canso. The correspondences can be explained by quite trivial historical

factors: "... it is a fact, that our borrowed strophes, in the largest part, do not show direct influence from Hellas and Rome, rather point towards 'the songs of Provance'. [...] The troubadours of Provance became the vanguards of the intellectual unity of medieval Europe; their radiating art, together with that of the poets of Northern-France, promoted new and strict poetical forms everywhere. Our [the Hungarian] metrical forms, generally called Western European, almost without exception derive from this Provance, that is Neo-Latin tradition, at least indirectly" (Gáldi 1961, 60–61. "Western European lines [!] in Hungarian poetry" is the title of the chapter from which this opinion is quoted).¹ Naturally, what is true about metrical patterns, may not necessarily be true about rhyme-schemes, strophes. It is nevertheless a fact that both the *canso* and the majority of old Hungarian songs (1) had rhymes, (2) had fixed number of syllables in the lines, and (3) were structured into strophes. The *canso* contained three kinds of elements (rhyme-scheme, melody, and fixed number of syllables) building them into a four level hierarchy. This hierarchy corresponds to the hierarchy of Hungarian melodic songs that were also rhyming, strophic, and counted the syllables.

ASPECTS OF THE <i>CANSO</i>	ASPECTS OF <i>HUNGARIAN SONGS</i>
The highest level, the whole poem, <i>canso</i>	poem, <i>cantio</i>
Second level, the strophe, the <i>cobla</i>	strophes, <i>verses</i>
Third level, the line or <i>bordos</i>	lines, <i>rhythm</i>
Fourth level, counting metrical syllables, <i>sillaba</i>	metrical <i>syllables</i>
(Cf. Roubaud 1986, 197)	

I think that on the basis of the listed parallels — from a typological and not a historical viewpoint — it can be fruitful to compare the strophes and rhyme-schemes of troubadour lyrics and old Hungarian poetry.

(C) By now we have considerable amount of material to carry out mass rhyme-scheme analysis. (1) A research group lead by Iván Horváth has

produced the the metrical repertory of all known Hungarian poetry written up to 1600. It is easy to generate the rhyme-scheme corpus of old Hungarian strophic poetry from this electronic database. (2) As for 17th-century Hungarian poetry, the FC-group of Szeged has also produced a few, partial metrical repertories in the past few years (most important among them is the repertory of the Balassi-universe, that is the variations of the rhythms invented by the poet). (3) I have also set up a metrical catalogue, based on the one thousand verse-adagia published by Péter Kisviczay in 1713. Any of these collections allows mass rhyme-analysis of old Hungarian poetry. I believe, it would be most fortunate to pursue a method of analysis modelled on the already existing "trobar"- and trouvère-repertories,² this can be easily adapted because of the similar notation of rhymes. Such a comparative work will make possible to match the various aspects of Hungarian strophical poetry and the verse-patterns of other medieval vernacular languages. To sum up: comparability is the prospective goal of rhyme-scheme analysis. The question is whether it can be carried out at all?

In the first step rhyme-scheme analysis has to answer the question, why a metrical series of elements (apart from the so-called "double nature" series) can be segmented only in one possible way? To give a Hungarian example, the representative strophe of Bálint Balassi: why is it that the series *aabccbddb* can be divided only into the phrases *aabccb/ddb* and not *a|abc|cbd/db*, or into any other versions?

In his study of 1973 Jacques Roubaud described the rhyme-schemes of the trouvères by the help of the combination of binaric elements. How could he do this? Let us take a stanza of the last troubadour, Guiraut Riquier, as an example (the first cobla of his song, "Be-m degra de chantar tener"):

Be-m degra de chantar tener, quar a chan coven aleg-
riers, a mi destrenh tant cossiriers. que-m fa de
totas partz doler. remembran mon greu temps passat.
esgardan lo prezent forsat. e cossiran l'avenidor.
que per totz ai razon que plor.
(The text and its French translation can be found in
Roubaud 1971, 436–9)

The rhymes of the cobla: -er, -iers, -iers, -er, -at, -at, -or, -or; the rhyme-scheme: *abbacdd*.³ This scheme is the most common type in the cansomaterial. The rhyme-scheme contains eight elemental units but consists of only four elemental constituents: *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*. The appropriate strategy of

analysis consequently must be the combination of four elements, not the combination of two, as in binary oppositions: 0 and 1, that is *a* and *b*. However, it is still possible to reduce the system into two elements, due to the inner structure of the strophe, generally called *pedes/cauda* or *frons/cauda* division.

In Roubaud's work, the inclusion of the *pedes/cauda* division into the analysis results in the expansion of the four-level canso modell into a five-level structure:

LEVELS	CORRESPONDING NOTATION
bordos (lines)	a, b, c, and d
"pied" (foot)	ab, ba, cc, dd
frons and sirma (cauda)	abba, ccdd
cobla (strophe)	abbacdd
canso	abbacdd, abbacdd,

If we start analysing the cobla, we see that it is divided into two greater units: (abba) and (ccdd). The traditional names of these parts are *frons* and *cauda*, a beginning and closing unit within the strophe. The *frons* again falls into two parts: (ab) and (ba). The name of these units is *pedes*, "feet" in the sense of Dante.⁴ Caudas could also be divided into two or three smaller units. As soon as we separated the cauda and made it distinct, its rhyme-scheme can be retranslated from (ccdd) to (aabb). After this, the only possible further division will be according to the four elemental constituents: *a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*.

The rhyme-schemes of the troubadours, in decreasing frequency, are as follows:

abba / ccdd
 abab / ccdd
 abba / cddc
 abba / ccddde

abab / cddc
 abab / cdcd
 abab / ccdee

I would like to emphasize the following characteristics of the above typology: (1) each scheme starts with (ab) combination; (2) the cauda of each scheme starts where the *c* element appears. To rephrase this: the dyesis, that is the border between the two greater units of the strophe in each case should be placed before the first *c* element. While the (ab) opening creates intrinsic versatility in the scheme, the *c* element fulfills the function of segmenting and hierarchy-building within the pedes/cauda structure. (We had better call this a "c-function", as it happens that the described segmenting and hierarchy-building is realized by a *d* element.) Looking at the later development of the canso, we ought to recognize the crucial importance of the (ab) opening in combination with the "c-function". The best example is the sonnet. This form appeared in Sicily about 1230 and many scholars consider it a mutant cobla-structure of the canso which eventually became independent and fixed. As Roubaud writes in *La fleur inverse*: "The sonnet is the formal remembrance of the canso." The sonnet behaves much the same as the coblas of the canso: it has an obligatory (ab) opening and a "c-function" divides it into *octava* and *sestett*. These two features have exercised an ongoing influence on modern (post-trobar) European poetry in such a way that they not only segmented the strophes but also created a horizontal hierarchy within the strophical units and made possible a great variety of rhyme-schemes.

After this introduction let us examine the Hungarian test-material, having in mind the question whether the common general model of the troubadour cansos and Hungarian songs contains common strophical structures, too?

In order to keep our research within reasonable limits, I have decided to reduce the corpus of 17th-century Hungarian poetry to be examined. I needed a great variety of poems by various authors which represent most genres, topics, and registers of 17th-century Hungarian poetry so I have chosen the tenth volume of RMKT. This publication contains the poetry of the 1660s. My conclusions apply to this corpus of verse material, in case they are valid in a wider sphere of reference, I make this application clear.

The material examined, from the aspect of metrics, contains 293 texts. The distinguished 293 rhyme-schemes can be arranged into thirteen groups. The following table indicates their frequency:

<i>RHYME-SCHEMES</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>
(1) of one type of elemental constituent (a):	
1. <i>aa</i>	4
2. <i>aaa</i>	7
3. <i>aaaa</i>	244
(2) of two types of elemental constituents (a) and (b), eventually un-rhyming line endings:	
4. <i>aaaabb</i>	1
5. <i>aaaabbb</i>	1
6. <i>aabb</i>	2
7. <i>aabbx</i>	3
(3) of three types of elemental constituents, (a), (b), and (c):	
8. <i>abccb</i>	3
9. <i>abbcc</i>	1
(4) of four types of elemental constituents, (a), (b), (c), and (d):	
10. <i>abccbddb</i>	10
11. <i>abbaccadda</i>	1
(5) of five types of elemental constituents, (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e):	
12. <i>abccbddbeeb</i>	5
13. <i>abbaccdeed</i>	1
	<hr/>
Number of texts:	293 ⁵

Let us examine now these thirteen types of rhyme-schemes considering the occurrences of the c-element or "c-function". In this context categories (1) and (2) can be neglected, we need to look at the schemes with 3, 4, or 5 elemental constituents. Categories (3) — (4) — (5) contain altogether 19 texts. The proportion of texts in category (1) and the rest seems to be significant and proves the popularity of mono-rhyming even in the 17th century. At this point we may recall Dante's opinion about this practice; he formulated his views mostly in regard of the poetry of the troubadours: "There is another type of stanza in which the same rhyme appears in each line; it is obviously futile to seek any kind of proportional arrangement in such a form" (*De vulgari eloquentia*, in Dante 1962, II, 13). According to this judgement, the majority of old Hungarian poetry did not contain any kind of proportional arrangement, because Dante's definition of proportional stanzas did not consider rhyme-schemes of homogenous elements.

As Roubaud has clarified, there are only 65 poems in the entirety of troubadour texts having monorhymes, and out of these 65 only 5 are cansos (Roubaud 1986, 221). The dominance of the mostly one- or two-element rhyme-schemes combined with monorhyming four-line strophes in Hungarian poetry show a radically different practice of strophe-building from that of the troubadours characterized by the seven most popular canso-forms of Roubaud's repertory. This statement, though, needs some correction. Roubaud examined the troubadour rhyme-schemes in the canso form and almost neglected the *sirventes* and *tenso*. Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine, for example, still used one- or two-element rhyme-schemes in his poems, and many of his compositions are far from the sophisticated hierarchies of Jaufre Rudel. Some examples from the oeuvre of the "father of trobar":

one-element rhyme:

aaa "Companho farai un bers /qu'er/ covinen"

two-element rhyme:

*aaab*⁶ "Pos de chantar m'es pres talenz"

aaabab "Farai chansoneta nueva"

abbaab "Molt jauzens mi prenc en amar"

three-element rhyme:

abcabc "Ab la dolchor del temps novel"

Thinking of just the strophes we cannot accept the dichotomy of a *ric* "trobar" and a *paubre* Hungarian poetry, although we must admit that the strophical culture of the Provencal troubadours was richer than that of the old Hungarian poets. We acknowledge very different proportions but not oppositional poles in metrics.

Out of the 19 poems of the three- or more-element Hungarian texts, (1) sixteen are imitations or derivations of Balassi's representative stanza form; (2) one text is of uncertain origin; (3) one seems to be near the canso-form; and (4) one is neither of Balassi nor coble-type. This last one lacks hierarchy, it is a structure of coordinate elements: *aabbcc*. To sum up: as for the "c-function", it appears mostly in connection with Balassi's representative strophe.

The proportion of the Balassi-stanzas among the examined 293 texts is fairly small. It is because this stanza-form became rather exhausted by the 1660s; we are at the beginning of a long period of disappearance of this form in favor of the alexandrine. In spite of this, the Balassi-stanza, with

ten occurrences, is still second in frequency, while the third position again is occupied by a monorhyming strophe.

The 19 poems containing c-elements represent five different rhyme-schemes. Two of them are direct derivations of the Balassi-strophe: the Balassi minor (two periods) and the Balassi maior (four periods). Comparing these to the canso/cobla structures we can see the followings: in the troubadour lyric the pedes/volta and frons/cauda elements constitute an intermediate structure between the levels of the individual rhyme-elements and the rhyme-scheme. We can also find a kind of intermediate level in the Balassi-stanza, this is the period (*aab*). The c-elements here introduce the second period (*ccb*), thus having not only a dividing function as rymes have in general, but also a function to build up hierarchies (a good parallel is the usage of Giraut Riquier). This also designates a border, a *diesis*, only not the type of diesis which separates the frons and the cauda. It is easy to understand why: the frons requires minimum two feet, there is no one-foot frons.⁷ Consequently, Balassi's (*aab*) period could function as a foot (as we know about ternary feet among the strophes of the cansos), but it cannot fulfill the role of a frons. Beyond the periods, the whole of the Balassi-stanza also has ternary characteristics: the periods are not hierarchized in the strophe, only juxtaposed (*aab*)(*ccb*)(*ddb*). The first c-element thus is equivalent with the first a- and d-elements, in case of four-period strophe even with the first e-element. In the canso the "c-function" of the cobla is undividable and refers to one distinct elemental constituent. On the contrary, in 17th-century Hungarian poetry, the c-elements have divided functions and they only separate, do not create hierarchies. This last function is reserved only for the b-elements.

Analyzing the rhyme-schemes of the 19 mentioned texts, it is only two in which the c-element has a different function from that of the ones in the Balassi-stanza. These are the following:

- (1) *abbaccadda*
- (2) *abbaccdeed*

These two rhyme-schemes are variations of each other. The first six elements are the same in both while the last four can also be reduced to identical structures:

- (1) (*adda*) — *abba*
- (2) (*deed*) — *abba*

The difference lies only in the fact that example (1) contains feedback rhymes (airbridges between the frons and the cauda) while (2) lacks this function. These two, 10-element schemes with (*ab*) openings can be

regarded as frons/cauda, and within this, piedi/volte structures. The (cc) pairs in the center of the schemes are the diesis.

Further and complex examination of these texts, however, greatly reduce our satisfaction over the discovery of pedes/cauda strophes in the Hungarian poetry of the 1660s. The first text is a handwritten strophe of István Kállói Fényes, scribed in an account book of the city of Debrecen in 1666:

Jól vagyon, jó bíránk, szépen számot adtál,
 Az mit neked adtak, vagy tölled elhoztak, ratióban felirtál,
 Az város javára s megmaradására rendessen disponáltál,
 Fáradságod után Isten sok jót adván, s esztendeig nyugodjál.
 (RMKT XVII/10, item 7e, p. 37)

[It is good that you have given a good account, our good Principal, /
 You have written down everything to be brought to you or give away,
 / You have worked well for the benefit of the city, / After your toil,
 helped by God, enjoy your rest for a year.]
 (Literal translation)

From the typographical arrangement of this text it becomes clear that the strophe contains an alexandrine and a Balassi-stanza (a + aab/ccb/ddb) thus the rhyme-scheme, following Hungarian traditions, must be described as follows: *a + aabccbddb*. The dichotomy of Hungarian and Provencal metrics is shown by the fact, that such a division would be senseless in troubadour poetry. The text of Kállói Fényes, in spite of the seeming similarity of the canso/Hungarian song rhyme-schemes, has a radically different strophical character.

The second text appears to have a cobla-type of rhyme-scheme. The only problem with it is that — as if by cooperation of author and printer — the text is practically uncomprehensible. The esthetically worthless poem of Timotheus Hillarius Binnerus, student of theology, was published in Jena in the treatise entitled *Cirkov moskovskij sive dissertatio theologica de religione ecclesiastica Moscovitarum...* (Johannes Schwabe, 1665; cf. RMKT *op. cit.*, item 64, p. 283).

We have established that the (ab) opening and the occurrence of the "c-function" are in close connection with the structuring principles of the canso strophes. All this suggests that the inner variability of a rhyme-scheme greatly depends on the beginning. If we understand by "beginning" the first two elements, two possibilities — the identical and the differing pairs (aa) and (ab) — should be taken into consideration. It cannot be by chance that in the poetry of the troubadours the (ab) openings were do-

minant and there also must be a reason that in old Hungarian poetry the usual (aa) openings were followed by monorhyming schemes. I am inclined to compare the importance of openings of rhyme-schemes to openings in chess: the beginning strongly determines the middle game and the two directly point towards the conclusion.

Considering the whole of old Hungarian poetry, the fact — proved by the computer-generated repertory of Iván Horváth and his group — that before 1600 *all* rhyme-schemes started with (aa) opening can hardly be overexaggerated! These (aa) openings naturally contain the variations of the Balassi-stanza, too, as the first two elements of the (aab) period is also (aa). It is really perplexing to notice the total lack of (ab) openings which indicates significant consequences.

There is actually one (!) exception before 1600. As one might expect, it is a poem written by Bálint Balassi, "Kit egy lengyel citerás lányról szerzett" [Which he composed of a Polish zitherist girl] (incipit: "Szít Zsuzsánna tüzet..."). The fifth stanza of the poem runs as follows:

Mert már neked adta
nagy szerelmű szüvét,
Viszont nála hadta
szüvedet, ő színét;
Így túled vett
szüven szüvet,
kit tart mint drága követ;
Örül s nevet
s vígan követ
téged, mert lát víg kedvet,
Kit régen eszében vett.

[<Cupid says:>

She has given you / Her heart with great love, / In exchange she has taken / Your heart, dearest to her, / Thus she has bought from you / a heart for heart, / That she keeps as a precious stone; / She rejoices / And follows you / Happily, as she sees / Your long awaited happiness.]

(Literal translation)

The strophical structure is *a6 b6 a6 b6 c4 c4 c7 c4 c4 c7 c7*; the rhyme-scheme consequently is *ababccccc*. This is the first cobla-type structure in Hungarian poetry with a clearly distinguishable frons and cauda, with "c-function", (ab) opening, and within the frons with two (ab) feet. This poem,

unfortunately, did not inspire followers, and the (aa) opening remained practically exclusive even in 17th-century Hungarian poetry.

At this point we may venture at some positive and negative statements as conclusions about the general character of old Hungarian strophical poetry.

1. The length of old Hungarian strophical poems was not limited, except for a few experiments in number symbolism and Balassi's aim to create 3-stanza poems. On the one hand we see a tendency to minimize the length of the poem to one strophe or one period, eventually a couplet (which is difficult to call still strophical); on the other, Hungarian poems had a tendency to be very long.⁸
2. As for rhyme-schemes, mono-rhymes were dominant. Among strophes, four-line structures were the commonest.
3. It was the Balassi-strophe that introduced in greater variety and quantity 4-element (or more) and 4-7 lines (or more) structures among the traditional two-element rhyme-schemes and 4-line strophes.
4. Rhyme-schemes are dominated by the juxtaposition of similar elements instead of alternating structures. This seems to be in connection with the lack of (ab) openings. In harmony with the type of rhyme-schemes used we had to register the total lack of hierarchized structures, the cauda/pedes type of inner segmentations. It should be noted, however, that such strophes are fairly common in the Psalter-translation of Albert Szenci Molnár (1607). Seemingly his translations of complicated rhyme-schemes had no effect on later 17th-century Hungarian poetry.
5. The strophes cannot be segmented (coordinated, or juxtaposed lines side by side); because of the lack of the "c-function" the only level that is higher than the line is the period.
6. Within the strophes the rhyme functions only as delimiter.
7. Even if the closing strophe differs from the previous stanzas, it cannot be considered an "echo"; if there is no cauda, there cannot be tornada either. The closures of Hungarian songs do not designate any formal divisions in the way as the tornada defines the cauda.
8. The stanzas of old Hungarian poetry, these "rooms" are narrow, that is they are composed of few or identical elements in their rhyme-schemes and lines in their metrical structures. Within the basic walls there are no thinner space-divisions (why to divide an otherwise narrow room?), not even semi-walls. They are well-known to us, inhabited for a long time. Only sometimes we are longing for more spacious halls.

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Although we have been doing no more than setting up a typology in this paper, the question naturally arises whether the summarized VIII conclusions of the canso/Hungarian song comparison apply solely to Hungarian poetry? It would be interesting to know which vernacular languages show similar metrical characteristics in the given period and which do not? Where can we draw the line between canso-type and song-type poetry in space and time? Until there will be more Eastern European metrical repertoires available no definite answer can be given, only more or less wild guesswork.

As a test-case I have compiled a concise catalogue of 16th and 17th-century Polish poetry based on the anthology *Poezja polska* (Warsaw, 1973), following the same methodology as with my Hungarian material. The only difference was the following: while I have disregarded in the Hungarian material those poems which were rhyming, syllable-counting but not strophical (cf. the first point in footnote 5); I have included them in my Polish catalogue. The reason for this is the strong tradition of such poems in Polish literature, out of the 112 texts of the examined anthology 59, all the poems of Mikolaj Rej among them, belong to this category. (I indicate the serial-constructions in my table by adding the ∞ marker.)

<i>RHYME-SCHEMES</i>	<i>FREQUENCY</i>
(1) of one type of element (a):	
1. <i>aa</i>	3
2. <i>aaaaaaaa</i>	1
(2) of two types of elements (a) and (b), eventually un-rhyming line-endings:	
3. <i>aabb</i>	32
4. <i>aabbx</i>	1
5. <i>abab</i>	3
(3) of three types of elements (a), (b), (c):	
6. <i>aabbcc</i>	4
7. <i>aabbcc...∞</i>	56
8. <i>aabcbc</i>	1
9. <i>abababcc</i>	1
(4) of four or five types of elements:	
10. <i>sonnets</i>	10
Number of texts:	112

Although it is dangerous to base conclusions on the material published in an anthology, I venture at drawing the following hypothetical conclusions:

- I. This corpus is characterized by the minority of mono-rhyming structures.
- II. Couplets and serial rhymes ((aabb) and (aabbcc)), on the other hand, are more frequent than in Hungarian poetry.
- III. (aa) openings are less dominating than in the Hungarian material.
- IV. (ab) openings appear without "c-function", cf. types 5. and 9.
- V. This latter type of opening seems to be in connection with the appearance of the sonnet.

The Polish corpus shows similarities to the Hungarian, it is also obvious that the former was more open to canso-type of strophes than the latter. In spite of the similar strophes in the two literatures, their "philosophy" of metrics appear to be rather different.

Old Hungarian poetry was *not* a "post-trobar" poetry. We cannot find those forms in pre-18th century Hungarian poetry which in other literatures established the trobar achievements (canzone, chanson, sonnet, sestina, etc.).

As for the lack of (ab) openings and "c-functions", the parallels ought to be looked for more in the East. The chapter entitled "The Stanza" in B. O. Unbegaun's classic study, *Russian Versification*, informs us that strophical structures played little role in old Russian poetry. (Non-strophic forms are generally considered more archaic structures — this is quite clear from Hungarian poetry, too.) Early strophic forms in old Russian appeared with monotonous rhyming, and the first dynamic changes in this tradition occurred only in the 18th century — under Western-European influence. In Lomonosov's poetry (1739) and with Derzhavin (1743—1816) we come across *ababccdeed* rhyme-schemes. Pushkin completed this stanza-form with a ternary foot in *Evgeny Onegin: ababccdeeffegg*. It is also not by chance that in one of his sonnets, after mentioning Dante and Petrarch, the great Western European tradition, Pushkin referred to his contemporary, Anton Antonovich Delvig, as the father of Russian sonnet. It seems quite certain that the state of pre-18th century Russian poetics — at least in respect of the lack of the canso-modell — shows the closest parallel to the shortages of old Hungarian poetry.

The first Hungarian sonnet was written only at the beginning of the 18th century — the lack of canso-modells logically resulted in the lack of sonnets. It is easy to see that no sooner can sonnets be written than (ab) openings and "c-functions", that is hierarchized structures appear in poetry. This is how it happened that the classical flowering of sonnet-writing in Hungarian — after the beginnings in the 18th and 19th centuries (cf. Kunszeri 1965) — fell in the first half of the 20th century. It has been our contemporary poet, György Somlyó, who most clearly understood the meaning of the lack of old Hungarian sonnets. Using "cento", or "quotation" technique, in 1974 he compiled an imaginary, "potential" poem, "The Sonnet of Albert Szenci Molnár on the Condition of Poetics". This kind gesture was not only meant to pay homage to the translator of the Psalms, he also reflected on the condition of our 17th century poetry. Those who appreciate the idea of the *littérature potentielle*, or like the experiments of the OuLiPo or ALAMO of Paris, will not find Somlyó's method surprising. His comment to the poem is also interesting: he affirms that sonnets potentially could have been written in 17th-century Hungarian poetry. Somlyó quotes from Szenci's preface to the Psalms and comments on it: "Altogether the Psalms follow one hundred and thirty melodies and the same is the number of the types of poems.' If he could translate that many forms, why he could not have translated the sonnet as the one hundred and thirty first? By that time the sonnet, thanks to the Pléiade, became the dominating form of French poetry and already much earlier Clement Marot, Szenci's model, also used it — even if not in his Psalter" (Somlyó 1977, 66). Because of one element, this train of thought must be classified utopistic: just in connection with the poetical conditions of 17th-century Hungarian poetry, that is the lack of the (ab) opening and the "c-function", sonnet writing was impossible at that time. No matter how many sonnets Albert Molnár could read in foreign languages, he could not write even one in Hungarian.

This is the end of our present investigation. The conclusion is obvious: old Hungarian poetry did not develop following the canso-model. This fact generates great difficulties in examinations of comparative poetics. We must realize that the assimilation of canso-type of strophical thinking is still under completion in Hungarian. It has a symbolic significance that the first sestina in Hungarian was written in 1910 by Mihály Babits, translator of Dante's *Divina commedia*. Ezra Pound's famous sestina ("Altaforte: Sextine") appeared two years earlier, in 1908. The structure of Babits' poem is

open, "destructured" while Pound, due to his cult of Dante, could reach back to the closed poetry of Daniel Arnaut.

Notes

1. I do not want to go into the details of the debate about the contacts between medieval Hungarian poetry and the troubadours. A comprehensive study of the question is Eckhardt 1971. Beside the positive Hungary-image of Gaucelm Faidit and Peire Vidal, we should recall, however, what Eustache Deschamps suggested in the second half of the 14th century. In the dedication of his "Ballad against Hungary and Lombardy" he called the Prince for an ideal utilization of Hungary: as the favorable geographical and natural conditions of France did not provide severe enough circumstances for sending the opposition into exile [cf. the mild environment of Elba], Hungary should be the Siberia of the French!
2. The rhyme-scheme analysis of the troubadours and trouvères have been done by Jacques Roubaud. I have used his 1973 study for the trouvères, and also the material of the colloquium *Changement de forme, Révolution, Language*, organized in the same year. Roubaud worked out the rhyme-schemes of the troubadours in the preface of his anthology of 1971, then, elaborated on the topic in his monograph, *La fleur inverse*. At this point I intend to acknowledge the encouragement of the Centre de Poétique Comparée in my work.
3. My rhyme-scheme notation follows the international usage: the first line-ending is **a**, the upcoming rhyme(s) again **a**, the first differing ending is **b**, ... etc.
4. "We cannot disregard the fact that our mentioning feet runs contrary to the traditional Latin poetics, because they claim that a line consists of feet while we state that a foot consists of lines" (Dante 1962, 395 [II.11]). The division of the strophe into *pedes/cauda* became popular all over Europe as the achievements of the "trobar" poetry were spreading. Traditional names witness this: the **canzone** is divided into **fronte** and **sirma** (*syрма*); while these consist of **piedi** and **volte**. The two greater parts are separated by **diesi**, at the end of the *canzona* there is a **commiato** — this is, just as the **tornada**, the full repetition of the **coda**. As for the *Minnesängers* the **Aufgesang** and the **Abgesang** had similar function. These terms had no equivalents in Hungarian poetics.
5. I have excluded from the examination the following texts published in RMKT volume 10:
 1. rhyming, syllable-counting, but not strophical verse;
 2. rhyming but not syllable-counting and not strophical verse;
 3. non-rhyming, classical versification;
 4. and two texts of uncertain form.
 12 texts versus 293 poems clearly demonstrate the dominance of rhyming, syllable-counting, strophical poetry in 17th-century Hungarian literature.
6. The **b**-rhyme is an **estrampe** here!

7. For example the rhyme-scheme of the already mentioned poem, "Ab la cholchor del temps novel" — **aabcbc** — must be divided (abc)(bc) and not (aa)(bcbc). The plural of the Latin term, **pedes**, also proves this rule.
8. As it is well known, in contrast to the Hungarian usage, the canso was also determined by its limitation of size. The definition of this form started with the following formal criterion in *Leys d'amors*: "La definitios de chanso. Chanso es us dictatz que conte de v. a .vii. coblas" (Nelli-Lavaud 1960, 1:618).

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