HStud 21 (2007)1–2, 297–314
DOI: 10.15566/HStud.21.2007.1–2.13

HUNGARIAN WRITERS ON THE MILITARY MISSION OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY IN THE BALKANS

VICEROY KÁLLAY AND GOOD SOLDIER TÖMÖRKÉNY

PÉTER HAJDU

Institute for Literary Studies, HAS, Budapest
Hungary

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's military missions on the Balkans can provide the only experience in Hungarian history that can be connected with a notion of colonization. The paper scrutinises some Hungarian writers' responses to that experience. Kálmán Mikszáth as a journalist shows a shift in attitude; he strongly criticized the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but eventually he proudly advertised a colonizing discourse. The most important monument of the 40-year connection with Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Hungarian culture was János Asbóth's monography in two volumes entitled *Bosnia and Herzegovina*. In that work the celebration of modernisation, westernisation, the development of economy and infrastructure does not imply racism and religious intolerance. The short stories by István Tömörkény that describe the military life in the sanjak Novi Bazar offer a careful analysis of the cultural and linguistic aspects of the experience of otherness in the multicultural Balkan environment.

Keywords: imagology, Balkans, Muslims, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, nineteenth-century Hungarian literature

I

Hungary never had colonies. Moreover, it was conquered by various empires during its history, and this historical situation might suggest that the Hungarian attitude towards colonialism should be that of the colonised, but it is usually not the case. Hungarians tend to describe themselves as conquered, but not colonised. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy played a role that can be compared to that of the colonisers. In 1878 the Congress of Berlin settled the situation after the Russ-Turkish War. The Russian Empire won the war, but the European powers did not allow it to use its military success to redraw the political map of the Balkan Peninsula as it desired. Austria-Hungary was commissioned to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. The goal of the dual Monarchy was actually not to extend its territory, but to prevent Russia from extending its influence in the region. The situation for Hungarians was more delicate. During

0236-6568/$20.00 © 2007 Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

the second half of the nineteenth century Hungarian politicians regarded Russia as the most threatening enemy, and therefore the Hungarian public supported the Turks in the war, although the Turks had been the traditional enemies, a fact constantly reiterated even in children's stories. Counterbalancing the Russian influence in the region was therefore an acceptable intention – especially because Pan-Slavism was regarded the most dangerous ideology threatening the integrity of the kingdom. Hungarians, however, did not like the idea of the occupation, even less the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (which finally happened in 1908), because they did not want to increase the percentage of the Slavic population inside the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Hungarian political discourse seldom focused on that occupied territory. Bosnia and Herzegovina was a poor and underdeveloped region, and its occupation never seemed a fruitful enterprise. Actually there were no sources to be exploited. The Monarchy rather had to spend a lot of money on the occupation, government, policing, infrastructure, and general development. The occupation therefore was rather regarded a mission of civilising, which is, however, a constant part of colonising discourse. A survey of the places where Kálmán Mikszáth (1847–1910), a life-long journalist, mentions the occupied territories can demonstrate the attitude of public opinion in Hungary towards Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1878 he made a character of a sketch say in a pub: "The bill, please ... As long as I have some money to spend. Until [prime minister] Tisza bosnias away our last penny"[1] (*"János úr, a politikus vagy a szegedi kísértet"* [John the politician or the Szeged ghost] Mikszáth 1965, 70). The verb I translated as *to bosnia away* was coined by the author and it is a *hapax legomenon* in Hungarian literature. It more or less means 'to spend on Bosnia' or 'gamble away in a game called Bosnia', but it also implies a rather rude pun based on the similarity of the name of the region and the infinitive form of the Hungarian verb that means 'to fuck'. Therefore the phrase suggests that Tisza "pisses the money away on Bosnia".

Mikszáth did not show too much sympathy towards the government that time. As a journalist he usually supported the ideas of the opposition, who championed a program of independence. The slow change in his political attitude, which resulted in his close friendship with prime minister Tisza and the joining of his party as a member of parliament in 1887, went parallel with the change in the Hungarian public's attitude towards Bosnia. During the occupation and the suppression of the local uprising, when Hungarian soldiers were bleeding and dying for an obviously meaningless conquest, which was to weaken the Hungarian position inside the Monarchy, he used harsh words against the cause, emphasising the absurdity, the costs and the moral indefensibility of the campaign. "We have bitten into the sour apple of occupation. Our empire is going to be extended. Curse on this extension!"[2] (Mikszáth 1968, 58.) He employed conspicuous Biblical imagery to

emphasise the vicious nature of the war. In another article he protested against Hungarian involvement in Bosnian affairs:

> The war of conquest is going on without victories, miserably. Without victories, when even a victory would make one blush. There is a curse upon Austria's unsheathed sword; its edge is blunt, its blade is fragile, its grasp is glowing. Oh shame that Hungarian guys have to hold that grasp! (Mikszáth 1966, 202)

This protest against the Hungarian involvement in the war, however, does not imply any antimilitary or pacifist attitude, since another article of the same period he brings to the fore the rather strange suggestion of a war against Serbia:

> If our brave monarchy really wants a conquest, it should conquer Serbia as well. Bosnia is going to be a disgusting hunchback on its body; but if Serbia is joined to it too, the gaps will be filled up, and its body will receive nice muscles and good proportions.
>
> Serbia, if she is controlled and joined to the Austro-Hungarian Empire with Bosnia, will create a strong dam against future Slavic currents. (Mikszáth 1966, 76)

The sustained metaphor of the empire's body concludes in the rather aggressive idea that the deformity of one's own body can be cured through the incorporation of the other's. This exceptional declaration suggests that the problem with the occupation was caused not so much by the costs, its immoral character, or the horrors of war generally, but by the poverty and backwardness of the occupied territory. It was not good business. However, it is exactly the poverty and backwardness that allowed Hungarian public opinion to create the narrative of a civilising mission in a medieval country. The conquest ceases to mean killing and oppressing people, but bringing for them development and enlightenment, i.e., European laws, institutions and know-how. It took twenty years of continuous investment, until in 1897 it was celebrated as a great success that the territory had become able to cover the costs of its own governing.

A novel published in 1887 by a woman writer repeatedly described the "colonization of the occupied territories" (Wohl 1907, vol. 2, 32) as a symptom of an ambitious but basically mistaken policy that serves the personal prestige of the leading politicians through eye-catching monumental projects instead of the equitable and forceful development of the homeland.

Bosnia and Herzegovina had a special status in the dual Monarchy, since they did not belong either to the Austrian Empire or to the Hungarian Kingdom. Their viceroy was the Common Finance Minister. (Both Austria and Hungary had their own Finance Ministers and a third one in common to manage the financial aspects of the common affairs, such as the common army and foreign affairs.) For a long

time, 1882–1903, the territory was governed by a Hungarian politician, Benjámin Kállay (1839–1903).

In 1888 Mikszáth published a sketch on Kállay (Mikszáth 1983, 27–29), most parts of which he made use of when he wrote Kállay's obituary fifteen years later. Kállay was a "political genius",[3] he writes, "who was working with inspiration as a novelist", and "that may explain such rapid development that Bosnia can be said to be flying toward civilisation" (Mikszáth 1910, 193). This statement implies that Bosnia had been completely uncivilised before the occupation and the mission of the Monarchy was forcing development. The viceroy's "notebook was always full of selected tricky plans of how Bosnians can be deceived so that they move in the proper direction" (Mikszáth 1910, 194). He was "stubborn in the execution of his plans, but Bosnians are also very stubborn in their backwardness. It is easier to make the Drina River flow backwards than to make a Bosnian go forward" (Mikszáth 1910, 195). We can see the implication of the view of history as a single line and unidirectional movement, familiar from ethnographic discourse. Hungarians know which direction is the proper one, and they are proud that they are able to push the uncivilised Bosnians in that direction. Mikszáth describes two examples of the viceroy's tricky plans, both concerning the development of agriculture. Every Bosnian received a taxation booklet every year, which contained an article in Turkish or in "Slavic language" on the most modern ways of growing plum trees or viticulture. (The plum was actually the only product the region was famous for also before the occupation.[4]) If a family had a literate member, the information necessarily infiltrated into their life, since the taxation booklet usually was the only material to read. Another example is Kállay's campaign to make Bosnians use iron ploughs instead of their traditional wooden ones.

II

The most important monument in Hungarian culture of the forty-year connection with Bosnia and Herzegovina is János Asbóth's monograph in two volumes entitled *Bosnia and Herzegovina* (1887). It was also created in connection with Benjámin Kállay's person. Asbóth (1845–1911) was a political thinker,[5] who, however, also wrote a single novel, which is nowadays regarded as an important contribution to the history of Hungarian fiction. As a leading employee of the Monarchy's Ministry for Foreign Affairs he was a member of viceroy Kállay's team, and he traveled throughout Bosnia in his company for four years. The description of the region is structured in accordance with a narrative of those travels into the various districts. The narration of a district's history, the description of the geographical setting and the economic situation, and the ethnographic discourse are impregnated with references to personal experience, reflections on the Monar-

chy's mission and celebration of the changes already caused by the new connection, and especially through Kállay's activity.

A little narrative inserted into the description of the capital Sarajevo can exemplify Asbóth's technique of presentation. The narrative is attached to a short remark on the huge eastern Christian church, which does not fit in the Islamic town through its modern Byzantine design. "It has been standing there only for fifteen years" Asbóth says,[6] "and when it was built it became really evident how much of an Islamic town Sarajevo is" (Asbóth 1887, 1.124.) The narrative of the church construction, which is said to have made the town's religious character visible, begins with a surprising reference to an eyewitness:

> The minister, who has come here now to organise the country, happened to be present that time too. Being the consul-general in Beograd he travelled all over Bosnia on horseback to get acquainted with the situation.

The minister referred to is of course Benjámin Kállay, who was Austria-Hungary's consul-general in Serbia between 1867–1875. The narrator suggests a sort of discernment through not telling his name, although he implies a narrative of the conscientious and well-prepared administrator, who carefully and devotedly studied the region already ten years before his appointment. The new Christian church was bigger than any mosque in Sarajevo, but what really annoyed the Moslems was the installation of the great bells.

> The excited crowd marched along the main street, where the church stood; hadji Loya, who later became the chief organizer of the resistance during the occupation, was leading them. When he met the Austro-Hungarian consul-general from Beograd, who was just watching the upheaval as a simple tourist, he cast at him a glance of dark fanaticism, and he said under his breath with grin of hatred: 'giaour'.

Finally the pasha suppressed the upheaval and forbade the bells. The narrative of the church building uses Kállay to guarantee the reliability of Bosnia's historical and geographical description. Even one's words said "under his breath" or emotions expressed only by a glance can be narrated as exempla that make up an image of the locals. The consul-general is the only person who could pass these pieces of information to the narrator. Readers should imagine a middle phase of the narration, when the eye-witness narrated the story of hadji Loya's glance to the narrator, and the reader's activity is encouraged also by the (not too difficult) puzzle of the consul-general's identity. The later antagonists' moral qualities are also displayed in this miniature scene; the later viceroy is called an organizer, which suggests disorder before his appointment, and has the discerned and benev-

olent look of an observer, while the leader of the local upheaval is causing trouble due to religious intolerance and hatred.

Intolerance plays an important role in Asbóth's survey of Bosnia's medieval history, when it was more or less dependent from the Hungarian kings, who wore the title "king of Rama" (i.e., Bosnia) and the crown princes were always Princes of Bosnia; but the country was governed by local 'bans' (Asbóth 1887, 1.41). Asbóth describes the extension of the Hungarian influence as a sort of benevolent defense against other powers like Byzantium or Venice. He writes both on Croatia and Bosnia that "they were looking for defense and they found it under the Hungarian crown" (Asbóth 1887, 1.37 and 41). The coexistence resulted, Asbóth repeatedly states, in Bosnia's golden age during the periods when the Hungarian kings were not intervening in the territory's religious affairs. However, many Hungarian kings – in alliance with Rome – were sending crusades against the Bogomil heretics, and "eventually the Roman Church and Hungary lost Bosnia because they would not tolerate the Bogomils" (Asbóth 1887, 1.29).

Some copies of the first volume contain some unnumbered pages between the foreword and the first chapter with a sort of advertisement. This text offers a summary of Asbóth's statements about the history and the current state of the region. It emphasizes the importance of religion in the history of Bosnia. The Bogomil heresy is said to have separated the region from every other part of Europe and to have caused continuous wars of religion.[7] The Bogomil aristocracy invited the Turks to occupy the country, because in their desperate fight against Western Christianity they needed support. They changed their religion and this decision allowed them to stabilize their feudal power for centuries.

> The presence can be understood with this historical background: a country that until the occupation has been governed by the sublime Porte only in name, practically by the national aristocracy, which was not accustomed to serve, but to rule, which was Slavic from the viewpoint of race and language, Muslim from the viewpoint of religion, and feudal from the viewpoint of institutions, privileges, morals – exactly as five hundred years ago (...) The author not only describes this state of affairs, but also explains the ways the Monarchy tries to solve the very hard political, social and economic problem of integrating this Muslim country into its modern European state organization. (Asbóth, unnumbered)

The book, however, does not so simply suggest a civilizing mission of leading Bosnia from the Middle Ages directly to modernity, but also the inorganic nature of this rapid development. Asbóth emphasizes the importance of some new institutions (e.g., the factories and the railway to Sarajevo that started being built just after the occupation, obviously for military reasons), but he also feels some nostalgia for the easy disorder and freedom of what he calls the East.[8]

The medieval arrangements could survive because the Ottoman Empire was not interested in the inner organisation of the occupied territories, but exclusively in conquest: "Turks – just like the Romans – accepted the organization they had found in a conquered country, as far as it fitted in with their plan to conquer the world" (Asbóth 1887, 1.129). Since Asbóth highlights the fact that Bosnia's medieval organization ended with the Austro-Hungarian occupation, he seems to make a contrast between the occupation, which was changing and transforming the country, and the Turkish conquest, which had conserved the old institutions. Asbóth's claim of tolerance in religious affairs does not imply any strategy of non-intervention; the occupation should develop the country and contribute to the happiness and advance of the population. He celebrated in detail the development of the economy and the infrastructure,[9] but he also highlighted the importance of the strong administrative control of a modern European state and that of the developed legal system deeply rooted in the western tradition: "The most obvious advantage the Monarchy could supply to the occupied territories was public order and legal security"[10] (Asbóth 1887, 1.146).

The new government tried to teach the population to settle their own minor affairs (Asbóth 1887, 1.181.), mopped up the bands of brigands in Zagorje (Asbóth 1887, 2.34–35), and installed reliable and consistent courts; Asbóth regarded all these preconditions of the economic development, since previously "the eastern institutions, the unstable governing and jurisdiction, the religious conflicts and the uncertainties about estate possession hindered it" (Asbóth 1887, 2.2). It sounds just logical that the modern, western institutions are preconditions of a western way of development. That is what is usually called colonization, and Asbóth clearly sees that the local population did not necessarily enjoy the advantages of this development.

> One can often hear the complaint that the urban element, namely the craftsmen and the tradesmen, are sinking into poverty. Every rapid cultural change has its victims. Some industrial sectors and some craftsmen cannot stand the competition with the European industry and craftsmen flowing in from the Monarchy. (Asbóth 1887, 1.178)

The rapid westernization causes basic changes in the social stratification and gives splendid opportunities to the immigrant entrepreneurs who have been trained in the western economic system. This does not mean that the task of the immigrants was easy; they had to face the difficulties caused by the region's backwardness and the insecurity of the transition period. Therefore the entrepreneurs were recruited mostly from the most mobile and venturesome social groups in the Monarchy. As an example I quote a passage from the description of Sarajevo:

> We passed the Bosnia Tobacco Factory and the First Bosnia Leather Factory, which has been floated down by a Hungarian Jew from

> Temesvár. We hear many Hungarian words; they are said (apart from the soldiers) mostly by Hungarian Jews, who always speak Hungarian to each other, and who are the main representatives of the European element in commerce and industry. (Asbóth 1887, 1.10–11)

Asbóth did not find problematic the fact that an ethnically alien new elite was coming up; he tended to describe this phenomenon as a cultural or civilizing mission undertaken by the immigrants, and their future riches as the fair profit of a risky and especially hard enterprise. As a historical parallel he used the eighteenth-century history of the Temes region, which was reoccupied from the Ottoman Empire in 1718. The land was cheap in the disorganized and depopulated area, since agriculture was unprofitable at the moment. Huge estates were bought by some venturesome people, which soon became the basis of extreme riches.

> How little capital is needed for such a business can be seen from the example of some people who immigrated when the occupation took place as poor Jewish innkeepers or grocers, and they own 1–2000 hectares now. Just like the latifundia in Temes region were created by Serb and Armenian pig dealers,[11] it is probable that the Jewish element will play a similar role here, since they have no competition because nobody wants to face the current situation of agriculture and the primitive life conditions. (Asbóth 1887, 2.2)

Asbóth described such phenomena with discern and without evaluation; the celebration of modernisation, westernisation, the development of economy and infrastructure are not challenged by the discussion of the possibilities of access to the new goods or the chances of joining the new competition. This makes Asbóth's Bosnia book a kind of colonising discourse that lacks racism and religious intolerance. In this representation the very possibility of the rapid transformation of the occupied territories is based on the presupposition of a basic similarity between the occupier and the occupied. Cultural otherness seems, if not denied, limited to the realm of folk costumes and customs.

III

It is a less known fact that the Congress of Berlin commissioned the Austro-Hungarian Empire also to maintain under military control the territory of the sanjak Novi Bazar (in the today's usual transliteration Novi Pazar), although it remained a part of the Ottoman Empire. The task of the Austro-Hungarian army was to ensure the safety of the commercial routes. This thirty-year mission was finished about the first Balkan war, when the territory of the sanjak was divided between Serbia and Montenegro. That military mission became a topic of the Hungarian literature in 1888, when István Tömörkény (1866–1917), the young

short story writer was forced to join the army, and as an act of childish revolt he took the hardest possible task, i.e., to go to Novi Bazar. He had one year to regret his decision. Tömörkény, originally called Steingassner, was a child of a rather rich bourgeois family in Szeged. When his father went bankrupt, the child started working as an assistant in a pharmacy. Even in this condition he had the "right of volunteering". In 1886, however, he turned his back on his bourgeois career and started working as a journalist. He became an outcast and could be drafted into the army as a private. He reacted with extreme indignation to the situation that seemed unfit for a member of his original social class, and the indignation resulted in his decision of selecting the hardest possible version of the humiliating lot of a private.

He wrote short stories about his Balkan experience both during his stay in Novi Bazar and his whole career as a writer. Many of his soldier stories simply discuss the poor life conditions of the troops or the homesickness of the Hungarian soldiers, who came from the Great Hungarian Plain to the high mountains. But there are other stories discussing the encounters of the Hungarian soldiers, the natives, and the Turkish authorities. Tömörkény had to face Balkan reality on the lowest social level. While in the neighbouring Bosnia-Herzegovina Austria-Hungary played the role of colonisers (including their efforts to export European cultural goods and the discourse attached to them), the troops in Novi Bazar were not allowed to intervene in administrative or economic affairs. Tömörkény and his fellow soldiers were merely observers of a way of life, which was rather strange for them.

The position of the not personally involved observer can be compared to that of a traveller or a tourist. A soldier's life, however, has some drawbacks: the lack of free movement and action, and others that may follow from these, such as boredom. Nevertheless, the ideas of tourism and observation sometimes arise in the stories. The landscape with its beautiful high mountains is characterised as follows: "This would be a place for British tourists.[12] It is inhabited by the population of a miserable Turkish town and some military companies" (*"Szabad nap"* [A day's leave], Tömörkény 1958b, 62). The landscape is suited for tourism, but neither the local population, nor the soldiers have the opportunity to enjoy it. The introductory scene of the short story "Camp Entertainment", however, visualises the observing position of the soldiers. They are terribly bored, and the majority lean on the camp fence watching the road and listening to the conversations of the locals when they meet. They prefer the Serbs to the Turks, because the former ones usually pursue long conversations, while the latter only salute each other and go on (Tömörkény 1958b, 100). There is no communication between the occupying troops and the locals; not only the fence separates them, but also the differences of tradition, habits, language, and religion. The soldiers remain in their own

camp and they look outwards; they observe the local life only because they have nothing else to do.

In 1902 Tömörkény made a minor journey to Orsova, a town of mixed population on the southern border of Hungary (now Orşova in Romania). In his feuilleton he displayed a tourist's views, and the most impressive part was the description of New Orsova or Ada-Kaleh, a small island in the Danube of uncertain national status, but with a Turkish population. Tömörkény felt the nostalgia of a traveller, who had arrived amid surroundings familiar from previous journeys. He recognised with pleasure the uniform of Turk policemen, since four such people had been sent by the Sultan to show his interest in the place. (A troop of soldiers from Szeged was actually keeping order.) Ada-Kaleh, however, was a place for tourists, who went there to enjoy the air of the East without actually taking a long journey. Tömörkény seemed proud of his real knowledge of the world of the Turks, on the basis of which he could realise that what was being sold there was not genuine Turkish wear, but orientalising junk made in Germany (Tömörkény 1902, 2–3).[13] The narrator of the sketch was a tourist, but his nostalgia and his pride concerning his local knowledge gave the impression that he was regarding his previous experiences in the region also as something similar to tourism.

When he was in Novi Bazar, Tömörkény found the poverty of the local population – including Turk soldiers, whose pay was usually stolen on its way from Istanbul to the periphery through a corrupt administration[14] – the most depressing phenomena, as well as the poor condition of public safety. He explains the correlation of both problems in the story *"Téleste a délen"* (A winter's night in the South): if the winter is extremely cold (and it usually is), the famine forces the village population to make a living from robbery (Tömörkény 1958b, 114). That was actually the reason for the military mission of Austria-Hungary in the region. The methods of the local Turkish police against the bandits, however, he found shocking.

> Someone that walks around sees a lot of various things, but I have never seen anything so characteristic, anything that demonstrates the difference between Europe and the real Balkans so clearly, as when the official power, the Sultan's selected soldiers carry a freshly cut human head in a pale; they carry it in the streets of the town as a triumph with the people's jubilation. (Tömörkény 1903, 1)

This story of bandit Bagulovics is narrated in detail in *"Novibazári emlékek"* [My memories from Novi Bazar] (Tömörkény 1958b, 300–302). The highly personal narrator finishes the story with a remark as follows:

> Other so called "shocking sights" that I saw in my life have never haunted me. But that head of bandit sometimes appears in my dreams; it does not say a word; it only laughs from the pale.

We can see the colonising view in both passages. The narrator is clearly an outsider, an eyewitness, who is not involved in the action (no matter that his task is also to fight the bandits). When he experiences a behaviour on the behalf of the locals that he finds strange he makes a clear-cut division between "us" and "them", and attaches positive values to the former, negative ones to the latter. The former is Europe, the latter is the Balkans, or anything else, and the strangeness of the other becomes a nightmare. In an extreme case the strangeness is visualised by impressing a scene, in which the disrespect of human dignity is symbolised by the disintegration of a human corpse.[15] Never mind that it is the corpse of a public enemy: at this final point the sympathetic attitude towards the local population disappears. The understanding of the logical chain poverty–criminality–repression cannot mean the understanding of the cruelty of repression, or of people's jubilation in face of the extreme materialisation of cruelty.

The contacts with the civilian population were rather poor. The Hungarian soldiers were allowed to enter only one small district of the nearby town Prijepolje (*"Szabad nap"* [A day's leave], Tömörkény 1958b, 65–67), and the contacts were also hindered by the language barriers. The separation resulted in a peaceful coexistence. At first sight it seems paradoxical that peace and love follow from ignorance of the other's language, but it is one of the paradoxes Tömörkény experienced both in the Balkans and in the Austro-Hungarian army. The highly personal narrator of a short story speaks of an intimate friendship with a Turk soldier, Musztafa, and he narrates one of their friendly meetings in the canteen, during which the glances, the expressions of their faces, suggest some kind of real mutual trust in spite of the lack of verbal communication:

> We are sitting face to face, looking at each other. What I know in Turkish is not more than "Mer habak", and he only can say in Hungarian: "Jo nabot". I say to him mer habak, and he cordially answers: jo nabot. (*"Diskurzus"* [Table talk] Tömörkény 1956, 105)

Even the most simple and formal phrases of greetings appear in a deformed spelling expressing funny pronunciation, but this does not prevent the characters from performing real cordiality. Another story offers the counterexample of some soldiers, who came from Zombor County, which had a mixed population, and are said to have been killed by the locals, since

> they spoke the language of the country [i.e., Serbian], so they fraternised with the locals, and therefore they sometimes quarrelled with each other. But such happens also at home among people with young blood, be they soldiers or civilians. (*"Péter a hóban"* [Peter in the snow], Tömörkény 1958b, 49)

A story of this kind is narrated in detail in *"Egy pár fehér lábért"* (For a pair of white legs, Tömörkény 1956, 233–239). In this story the Hungarian soldier is killed by a jealous husband, but the situation is organised by the malignant servant Babanyák, who tells the soldier that the husband is far away and at the moment it is safe to visit the woman. Babanyák acts from the hatred of the foreign invaders. Womanising, however, is not a steady part of the descriptions of soldiers' life in Novi Bazar. The separation of women in the Muslim country may explain this fact.[16] A remark, however, suggests that the Hungarians did not find the local women attractive ("the only beautiful Bosnian woman I have ever seen": *"Káplár Papp"* [Corporal Papp] Tömörkény 1956, 126), but it could have been a case of sour grapes.

The relations with the Turk soldiers were even quieter, since both sides were obliged to be on friendly terms. Moreover, they felt mutual sympathy, since both Hungarians and Turks were foreigners in that sanjak, who came from far away places. As the Hungarians felt homesick for the flat plains, the Turks did for the palms (*"Albán csárda"* [An Albanian tavern] Tömörkény 1958a, 187; *"Szabad nap"* [A day's leave] Tömörkény, 1958b, 65). The representation of the Turks usually emphasises the differences of religion, which also result in differences of habits. The entrepreneur that was running the canteen had to transport the live pigs in boxes since "the Muslims did not allow him to drive the impure animals through their town" (*"Péter a hóban"* [Peter in the snow], Tömörkény 1958b, 48). A Turk spits on a Hungarian soldier because he is eating bacon and this almost makes both garrisons fight fully armed, but finally they change their minds and do not do anything (*"Novibazári emlékek"* [My memories from Novi Bazar] (Tömörkény 1958b, 304). The most discussed topic is the prohibition of alcohol. Turks are many times represented as drinking champagne or rum, but this usually needs some explanation. A character called Musztafa drinks rum "in thimble sized portions, because that is such a negligible quantity that Allah will not see" (*"Diskurzus"* [Table talk] Tömörkény 1956, 105). Other soldiers put the rum bottle under the bench and only soda water on the table, and the rum and soda they drink does not really look like alcohol (*"Novibazári emlékek"* [My memories from Novi Bazar] Tömörkény 1958b, 303). The funniest explanation is offered by the short story "A day's leave", where the Turk soldiers or the narrator create an ideology to regard rum as an exception: "Mohammed, the Lord forbids wine, but not rum, since rum had not existed at the time the prophet invented his rules" (*"Szabad nap"* [A day's leave] Tömörkény, 1958b, 65). Tömörkény many times described the scene of what happened when the Turkish officers gave a sort of farewell banquette with a lot of champagne to other officers, but in these cases they did not offer any explanation of the contradiction between Muslim law and drinking habits. The author only discussed the strange phenomenon that champagne was popular all around the world among people who wanted to show off

(*"A kis kadét"* [The little cadet] Tömörkény 1958b, 23–24; *"Novibazári emlékek"* [My memories from Novi Bazar] Tömörkény 1958b, 299). In a near contemporary Hungarian novella (written in 1886), however, pilgrims in Mecca drink champagne during Ramadan, and a commentary offers the explanation that Muslim law does not regard champagne a fermented drink, and therefore it is not forbidden (Jókai 1988, 70). In a novel by the same author a character explains the legal situation as follows: "What I give you to drink is wine, and it is not wine; it is the juice of grape, but it is not fermented; it has been bottled in its original condition as the French can make it. That is not forbidden by the Prophet." And to prevent readers from thinking that it is a personal and sinful invention of the character (namely Ali Tepelenti) to go around the prohibition the narrator inserts a footnote: "The Muslims do not think that the religious prohibition concerns French champagne" (Jókai 1962, 360). Drinking habits seem a central feature in the Hungarian literary discourse on Turks or Muslims in general,[17] and the otherness is not simply displayed by their not drinking alcohol, but by the funny ideologies they develop to allow themselves to drink it in spite of the prohibition, which actually suggests a basic similarity of Muslims and Christians. This similarity is also implied in Tömörkény's description of the effect of coffee. In a coffee shop Hungarian soldiers usually drink ten cups of coffee, and that "makes one jolly. Those who have drunk ten cups of such strong coffee will sing and whistle exactly as if they had drunk wine. But they will not stagger" (*"Szabad nap"* [A day's leave] Tömörkény, 1958b, 66). Using legal or illegal drugs seems a universal human habit notwithstanding minor differences in ideologies or in the actual effects of drugs.

The question of nationality in this context is inseparable from the question of religion. Being a Turk means being a Muslim and using different gestures, while the name and the spoken language are Serbian (*"Kolónia élet"* [Life in the colony] Tömörkény 1957, 206). Turks are usually descendants of renegade Slavs (*"Novibazári emlékek"* [My memories from Novi Bazar] Tömörkény 1958b, 303), which practically means that the only difference between local Turks and Serbs is that of religion. Conversion to the Muslim religion was said to be forced by the government in order not to allow the percentage of the Turkish population to decrease (Tömörkény 1903, 2). This concept of national identity was rather different from the one used among the nations of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, where the language or ancestry were regarded the distinctive factors.

In some soldiers' stories, however, the multilingual and multinational character of the Monarchy's army is represented in a joyful tone and with a heavy emphasis on the absurdity of the whole situation that they seem to point forward to a masterpiece written somewhat later in another language of the dual Monarchy, namely *The Good Soldier Svejk* by Jaroslav Hašek (1883–1923).

Denomination of a soldier always implies a hint at the multilingual situation, since Tömörkény refers to the fellow soldiers with a reversed word order (family

name in the second position as in German) and many times with the German version of the first name. The denomination of the military rank tends also to be in German and to have the first position in a German-like word order.[18] The names of the soldiers therefore appear as alien bodies in the Hungarian text. They are quotations from another discourse or from another language. That language, however, is not simply a foreign one, i.e., German, it is rather the army's language spoken by the Hungarian soldiers. The general language of command was German, but a regiment was ethnically homogeneous and used its own native language. Therefore the army's language was a special mixture in every regiment. Without actual knowledge of German the soldiers used some words of opaque significance with distorted pronunciation. Tömörkény, a native speaker of German, enjoys the opportunity to make fun of that soldier's German by putting sentences on the paper in Hungarian transliteration. The disappearance of signification on the level of words might be suggested by the following example:

> ... the warrant officers make their reports that men have clean underwear on, and they have also washed their feet. It is really beautiful in German when they report instead of "Wäsche gewächselt, Füsse gewaschen" that "vesse gevassen, füsze gevekszelt, meldige hozzám". (*"Szabad nap"* [A day's leave], Tömörkény 1958b, 63)

The Hungarian warrant officer's linguistic incompetence is displayed by the phonetic transcription of his sentence in a characteristically Hungarian spelling, which suggests that what he is speaking is actually not German, but the confusion of the two languages (actually he says "underwear washed, feet exchanged"), and this is also shown by the popular etymology of the last phrase. He changes the borderline between the words of the phrase "[Ich] melde gehorsam" [I humbly report] to harmonise it with the Hungarian rules of accent and to put a Hungarian word at the end. "Hozzám" means 'up to me', but it cannot mean anything in this alien context. No matter, how the words of the sentence are pronounced, how its words are regrouped or substituted by Hungarian words, the utterance is one single unit of significance that performs its function notwithstanding any deformation. Another story narrates how Hungarian soldiers decipher an order written in German.

> ... it came in a written order that *die Fahne ist zu hissen*. All right, everybody knows that Fahne is Fanny Regimenz, the flag of the regiment, which is addressed in this moving tone by the Hungarian regiments; she evokes unparalleled enthusiasm. But what can the 'hissen' be? We were rather soldiers than linguists of German, therefore we did not know, but we had an order, and Fanny was involved, so we hoisted the flag. (*"Vélemények"* [Opinions], Tömörkény 1958b, 30)

The soldiers' inability to communicate in German is the topic of a short story on a soldier who has a hole in the sole of his boot, but he dares not ask for a new

sole because he cannot explain his problem in German. A warrant officer teaches him the sentence (in a terribly deformed German), but in the moment of truth, face to face with an officer, he confuses the fragments of various German words, and he does not receive any sole (*"A bakancstalp"* [Sole of a boot] Tömörkény 1958b, 341–348). The words of commands, however, were taught so effectively that soldiers did not regard them foreign. Of course, for a Hungarian peasant the commands of very special movements did not substitute any Hungarian notion. Therefore a young soldier can say, when he is watching the drill of a Polish troop and listening to the familiar German words of command: "Look, even these damned Polish are commanded in Hungarian" (*"Vélemények"* [Opinions] Tömörkény 1958b, 33).

As a rule, Tömörkény did not translate into Hungarian the sentences or phrases he inserted in any foreign language. The reader should share the discouraging situation of the characters facing a multilingual setting, in which it is hard to orientate. The reader's position is sometimes rather unprivileged, since the narrator and the characters are suggested to understand the alien inserts, which requires that the readers should behave as if they were doing it too. Therefore they should do their best to find out the signification from the context. One of the rare occasions he supplies a translation is when a Polish officer gives his order in Hungarian. The narrator says that the utterance is comprehensible on the level of the narrated, since all the soldiers understand it; but for the readers he must offer a translation into a comprehensible Hungarian as follows:

> Captain Wolhynyacky is not saying here that those who do not eat the soup at once will kick the bucket, but that those who do not shoot simultaneously will not have lunch today. That speech is rather short but rich in content, and the company familiar with Wolhynyacky's revised and enlarged Hungarian grammar understands it perfectly. (*"Parádé"* [Parade] Tömörkény 1956, 401)

What should be translated is Hungarian spoken by a Polish officer, but the Polish phrases that some Polish soldiers sing appear in Hungarian spelling, without any translation; its content must be known or concluded by the context supplied by the narrator:

> The Polish soldiers of the Army Service Corps were drinking spirits in the canteen and singing that estye Polska nye zginyela, which was not really obvious, since the children of the oppressed Polish homeland, who had got to Novi Bazar, could hardly stand at the moment. (*"Katonakarácsony"* [Soldiers' Christmas] Tömörkény 1956, 212)

The tone of discussing ethnic differences and the multilingual, multicultural situation is rather cheerful. Although in the short story I last referred to some Hungarian soldiers, who are frustrated because the Christmas post is late, want to at-

tack the Polish and drive them out of the canteen by force, they eventually renounce to canalise their own despair this way. Finally the post arrives, which makes all happy (*ibid.* 215). In another short story the Hungarians give to the Polish a lot of food they have received from home in the Christmas Eve post (*"Egy önkéntes katonáról"* [On a volunteer] Tömörkény 1958a, 272).[19] The absurdity of the soldiers' lot is probably best displayed by the Christmas Eve scene when some privates gather around the prison window of a deserter, who is shouting all night, bent on his bench, because he is simulating madness – or because he went mad, which is also possible. The soldiers listened to his shouting "since there was no other entertainment" (*"Katonakarácsony"* [Soldiers' Christmas] Tömörkény 1956, 213).

Notes

1. "Fizetni ... Amíg lehet fizetni. Amíg Tisza el nem boszniázza az utolsó garasunkat is..."
2. Written on 27. June, 1877.
3. Mikszáth's 1888 sketch on Kállay was called "A Minister Full of Genius".
4. According to Asbóth (1883, 1.164) Bosnia's first position in plum export was overtaken by Serbia just before the occupation due to some more effective dehydration procedures; the occupation changed the trend.
5. See Szegedy-Maszák 2005.
6. Asbóth wrote this sentence in 1887, and the church was erected exactly in 1872.
7. Mór Jókai's (1825–1904) novel *A három márványfej* [A triple head of marble] (1882) also represents the region as a fertile soil that grows various heresies.
8. For this image of the East cf. Said 1995.
9. Since the book's coherence is established through the narration of Asbóth's travels in the country, the laudation of new routes is a steady part of almost every chapter, which frequently contains the celebration of the achievement of the Monarchy's engineers and soldiers (e.g., 1,241 and 244).
10. Similar conclusions can be found in the "Epilogue" of Amin Maalouf's (1983) history of the Crusades.
11. This historical fact is also represented in Hungarian literature. In Jókai's novel *A cigánybáró* [The gipsy baron], the setting of which is the reoccupied Temes region, the local nouveau rich is a previous pig dealer.
12. Asbóth advertised similar ideas: "When these regions are open to civilisation including the stream of tourists, it will be source of income for the population. There is no more beautiful place in Europe except Switzerland and the Pyrenees." (Asbóth 1887, 1.233)
13. The locals of Ada-Kadeh are described as follows: "The Turks' characteristic hatred against foreigners cannot be seen on them, although they may have it in their hearts. They know that they owe their living to the tourists, and that they are specialties, something to be visited, but they do not really bother about remaining original" (Tömörkény 1902, 2).
14. See some passages in the short stories *"Egy vidám katonáról"* [On a gay soldier] (Tömörkény 1956, 189–190) and *"Albán csárda"* [An Albanian tavern] (Tömörkény 1958a, 187).
15. This Turkish habit of putting the cut-off head of a criminal or a rebel on public display is a frequently repeated motive of Mór Jókai's historical novel *A janicsárok végnapjai* [The last days

of the janissary], which narrates some events of the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire (Jókai 1962, passim). The disrespect of the integrity of the human body appears also as a shocking feature of the Turks in a short story by Zsigmond Móricz, published in 1922. A poor Hungarian woman accuses a Turk soldier of having drunk her milk without payment. The Sultan asks the soldier three times if he did so, and he denies it three times. Then the Sultan orders his belly to be cut out, and the milk pouring with his blood proves he was guilty (Móricz 1988, 317–320).

16 The only exception is a tragic love story of a young officer and the daughter of a local authority. Bey Ismail eventually kills his daughter (*"A vízityúkok, Izmail bég s egyebek"* [Moors, bey Ismail etc.] Tömörkény 1957, 288–289). More characteristic is another story, in which a private falls in love with one of the wives of another local authority. He can only see her from a big distance, and everybody makes fun of him, because he can actually see nothing of the woman but her clothes of silk. He explains his emotions as follows: "She never says a word" (*"Egy vidám katonáról"* [On a gay soldier] Tömörkény 1956, 192). The condition of women's life is hardly ever explicitly discussed; the Turk Mustafa when he is drinking together with a Hungarian soldier is supposed to "be dreaming of a world where a woman is also regarded human" (*"Diskurzus"* [Table talk] Tömörkény 1956, 106).

17 Géza Gárdonyi, who tended to represent Turks as completely immoral thieves, simply declares that they drank Hungarian wine when they ruled a part of Hungary. "Mohammed could have spoken whatever he wanted, the Turks preferred eternal punishment to letting the wine of the Hungarians turn to vinegar" (Gárdonyi, 1982, 83). A character of his most popular novel *The Eclipse of the Crescent Moon* answers the objection "Turks don't drink!" as follows: "Ah, but not one of them's a Turk when they see wine." (Gárdonyi 1991, 21). In the same novel an aga drinks wine shouting now and then. A character explains this behaviour to another:

"Well, you must know that the aga shouted like that so that his soul should descend from his head to his feet while he's drinking. For the soul dwells in the head and ascends to the other world when we die. And there, as you know, the true believer is punished for drinking wine"

"But if the soul isn't guilty?"

"Well, the aga too thinks that his soul won't be touched by his sin if he scares it away for a minute. But my view is that such tricks don't do any good." (*Op. cit.* 214)

18 I am going to offer some examples. In the name of „Alexander Ördög" (*Katonakarácsony* [Soldiers' Christmas] Tömörkény 1956, 215) the family name is obviously Hungarian, but the first name is translated into German. Private Csupak is denominated as *Infanterist Csupak* (Tömörkény 1956, 147) with the German name of his rank, but "Fischer közlegény" (private Fischer) receives the Hungarian equivalent in the Hungarian word order, probably because that Hungarian guy has a German family name (Tömörkény 1956, 214). The only exception I know is "Klein Mór", whose name is always put in the Hungarian word order and with the Hungarian version of the first name, which is actually the second one here. Of course the family name is German, meaning small, and Klein Mór is actually too small to be a soldier. Nevertheless he has been enlisted, because the army happened to need a tinman, and he had the bad luck to be one. The Hungarian form of his name suggests that he is a civilian essentially, and no soldier (*"Parádé"* [Parade] Tömörkény 1956, 394–402).

19 I tend to read Tömörkény's soldier stories a short story cycle, which allows me to regard the events narrated in the two short stories identical, and to regard the common feeding the continuation of the almost-combat narrated in another narrative. Tömörkény never published his soldier stories in one volume, which is usually regarded a precondition of defining a set of short stories as a cycle. I think, however, that a reader also has the right to select his own cycle of an oeuvre if they find a set of short stories strongly linked by thematic patterns. See my discussion on the theory of cycles: Hajdu 2003.

References

Asbóth, János (1887) *Bosznia és a Herczegovina.* 2 vols. Budapest: Pallas.
Gárdonyi, Géza (1982) *Dávidkáné – A kürt* [Mrs. Dávidka; The horn] Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó.
Gárdonyi, Géza (1991) *The Eclipse of the Crescent Moon,* transl. George F. Cushing, Budapest: Corvina.
Hajdu, Péter (2003) "Story Cycles as a Challenge to Literary History" in *Neohelicon* 30/2: 49–57.
Jókai, Mór (1988) *Aki a szívét a homlokán hordja: J. M. Összes művei, Kisregények 4* [Who wears her heart on her forehead, Jókai's complete work, Novellas, vol. 4] Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
Jókai, Mór (1962) *A fehér rózsa – A janicsárok végnapjai: J. M. Összes művei, Regények 7* [The white rose – The last days of the Janissary, Jókai's complete work, Novels, vol. 7] Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
Maalouf, Amin (1983) *Les Croisades vues par les Arabes.* Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès.
Mikszáth, Kálmán (1910) "Az alkirály ötletkéi" [The viceroy's little strokes of genius] in *Az én kortársaim* [My contemporaries] Budapest: Révai, vol. 1, 192–197.
Mikszáth, Kálmán (1965) "János úr a politikus, vagy a szegedi kísértet" [Gentleman János, the politician, or the Szeged ghost] in *Mikszáth Kálmán Összes művei* [The complete work of Kálmán Mikszáth], vol. 30, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 66–71.
Mikszáth, Kálmán (1966) *Összes művei 55, Cikkek és karcolatok.* [The complete work of Kálmán Mikszáth, Articles and essays] vol. 5, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
Mikszáth, Kálmán (1968) *Összes művei 53, Cikkek és karcolatok.* [The complete work of Kálmán Mikszáth, Articles and essays] vol. 3, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
Mikszáth, Kálmán (1968) *Összes művei 77, Cikkek és karcolatok.* [The complete work of Kálmán Mikszáth, Articles and essays] vol. 27, Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
Móricz, Zsigmond (1988) *Válogatott novellák* [Selected short stories], Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó.
Said, Edward (1995) *Orientalism.* London: Penguin.
Szegedy-Maszák, Mihály (2005) „The Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Conservatism" in *Neohelicon* 32: 17–24.
Tömörkény, István (1902) "Oda alá, 3. rész" [Down there, part 3] in *Pesti Hírlap* 24: 20 September, 1–3.
Tömörkény, István (1903) "Balkáni sorsok" [Human lots in the Balkan] in *Pesti Hírlap* 25: 17 March, 1–3.
Tömörkény, István (1956) *A tengeri város. Elbeszélések 1885–1896* [The town on the sea. Short stories 1885–1896] Budapest: Szépirodalmi.
Tömörkény, István (1957) *A Szent Mihály a jégben. Elbeszélések 1897–1900* [The "St. Michael" in the ice. Short stories 1897–1900] Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó.
Tömörkény, István (1958a) *Új bor idején. Elbeszélések 1901–1904* [Time of new vine. Short stories 1901–1904] Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó.
Tömörkény, István (1958b) *Hajnali sötétben. Elbeszélések 1905–1910* [In the darkness of dawn. Short stories 1905–1910] Budapest: Szépirodalmi Kiadó.
Wohl, Stefánia (1907) *Aranyfüst* [Tinsel] Budapest: Franklin Társulat.