

Kelemen, Zoltán. 2017. *Emlék a kertről* ['Memory of the Garden']. Szeged: Juhász Gyula Felsőoktatási Kiadó. 365 pp.

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Zoltán Kelemen's *Memory of the Garden* is a collection of twenty-one articles published over the last two decades thus providing a comparative view of Hungarian and world literature and also of leading critical approaches of the recent years. The author of the book is a university professor at the Department of Comparative Literature Studies of the University of Szeged, Hungary. His academic interest covers the Hungarian literature of the last two hundred years, the literary-artistic phenomena of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Central Europe, as well as the nineteenth- and twentieth-century English literature. In his scholarly articles and books, he focuses on the dialogue between literary studies and other fields including religious studies, immigration and minority studies, information technology, cultural history, and musicology; and the present volume is a selection of his many writings on these topics. The book consists of two parts, a collection of articles on the peripheries of world literature and a series of critical analyses of classical and contemporary Hungarian literature, accompanied by two philosophical-aesthetical meditations on music, one opening and one closing the collection. These articles are indispensable as they call for a debate among various disciplines while at the same time drawing attention to the present situation and possible future of the humanities in a globalized and ever globalizing world. Accordingly, although varied in their topics, these articles jointly call for asking these questions: what challenges might humanities confront in the face of current and future cultural, social and political changes? And how can we preserve our national identity and cultural legacies in the social and cultural realities of the twenty-first century?

The first part of the book addresses various issues of world literature and literary theory, providing analyses of the works of authors such as Northrop Frye, J.R.R. Tolkien, H.P. Lovecraft, and Philip K. Dick. Although the thematic requirements of this journal do not allow a discussion of many of these articles, some parts of the book touch upon cardinal questions of specifically Hungarian national and cultural identity, and therefore are noteworthy here. In "A gúny mint a meghatározás formája: Nemzetkarakterológiák az irodalomban és azon kívül" ['Sarcasm as a Form of Characterization: Nation Characterologies in and out of Literature'] (61-67), Kelemen discusses the "nation characterologies," i.e., the tendency to ascribe to other groups sets of traits that differentiate them from the author's group and more often than not look down on them. Examining the sarcastic narratives that many nations make up to create their own

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deformed stereotypes and prejudices about other nations, like e.g., the Serbians describing the Hungarians during a 1790 church congress as "orangutans" whose power should not be tolerated (64-65), Kelemen notes that both the literary and the strictly verbal manifestations of sarcasm are to be seen as preliminary to the social construction of identity and national consciousness, especially among lower classes and uneducated people. This identity construction requires the formulation of ethnicity-based dichotomies, especially in multiethnic settings, wherein the majority determines itself through its dissociation from minority ethnic groups. This statement is curious if we look at contemporary stereotypical expressions on Hungarians in the neighboring countries, for example in Romania, where the stereotypes about Hungarians reflect negative attitudes toward them and thus deepen the conflicts between the Romanian majority and minorities like Hungarians.

Kelemen's articles on James Joyce's so-called Hungarian legacy are of special interest in this part and in the collection as a whole as they not only shed light on Joyce's reception in Hungary in the interwar period, but they also explore some traces of the Hungarian literary and cultural traditions appearing, most notably, in Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and *Ulysses* (126-147). As for Joyce's influence on Hungarian writers, Kelemen's critical analysis of Béla Hamvas's reading of Joyce points to the fact that, contrary to the rather dismissive response in Hungary to Joyce's novels, Hamvas was among the first to call Joyce a visionary. Moreover, Joyce's influence can be traced in Hamvas's own work. In another article discussing Hungarian issues in Joyce's novels (148-168), Kelemen claims that the various interpretations of Joyce's novels, in particular *Finnegans Wake*, offer the opportunity for a complex examination of his views on Hungarians as appears in his works. This statement is further emphasized in a third article on Joyce (169-182). Here, regarding the brothel scene in *Ulysses*, which is read by some as a parody of the crowning, in 1867, of Franz Joseph I. of Austria, Kelemen contends that it illustrates Joyce's compassion with the Hungarians and criticism of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's pre-1867 subduing of the Hungarian nation.

The second part of the book examines classical and contemporary Hungarian literature reaching out to its sociopolitical, historical and aesthetical background and impact. The first article in this part examines the idea of death in the ballads of János Arany (1817-1882) (215-222). Kelemen's main argument is that the concept of death appears in Arany's ballads in two ways: either as the source of the lyrical I or the persona's spiritual transformation following the death of other figures (e.g., in poems like "Ágnes asszony" ['Mistress Agnes'] and "Vörös Rébék" ['Becky Scarlet']), or as part of the persona's own dying and going through spiritual transformation (e.g., in "A hamis-tanú" ['The False Witness'] and "Híd-avatás" ['Consecration of the Bridge']). This metamorphosis is present in different forms and degrees in Arany's ballads, and Kelemen claims that the various manifestations of death all serve to exemplify that earthly life is far from the only option of existence.

The next four articles focus on the works of Gyula Krúdy (1878-1933). The first of the four discusses the influence of Buddhism in Krúdy's works, referring to his *Szindbád ifjúsága és utazásai* ['Sindbad's Youth and Journeys'] (1911), relating to the world-renowned eighth-century *A Thousand and One Nights* oriental tale collection, and to his novels *A vörös postakocsi* (1913) ['The Red Postal Coach' (1967)] and *Napraforgó* (1918) ['Sunflower' (2007)] (221-233). This critical approach not only sheds new light on Krúdy's oeuvre but also provides a glimpse into the renewed intellectual interest in Buddhism among Hungarian intellectual circles at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the second article on Krúdy, Kelemen compares Krúdy's works to those of László Cholnoky (1879-1929) claiming that the works of Krúdy and Cholnoky come

close in their Platonic conceptualization of love and in their attempts to promote the integration of Hungarian literature into leading streams of world literature (234-251). In the third article, Kelemen explores Krúdy's engagement with war in his novel *A 42-ős mozsarak* ['The 42-year-old Mortars'] (1915). In contrast to critics emphasizing the anti-war message in this novel, Kelemen sees it as primarily a love story with the war functioning as the story's menacing background. Kelemen also claims that the poor quality of this narrative raises the question of whether its technical mistakes are to be seen as a weakness, or maybe they are to be viewed as the author's pacifism expressed by his sentimental depiction of military life and of love as triumphant over war. The fourth Krúdy article explains the way Sándor Márai (1900-1989) paid tribute to Krúdy in his novel *Szindbád hazatér* ['Sindbad Returns Home'] (1940) (267-282). Here Kelemen emphasizes that applying Joyce-like stream-of-consciousness rendition Márai's obituary both commemorates his friendship with Krúdy and makes an homage to him as a major Hungarian author.

The following article is about Sándor Márai's own work and in this case his portrayal of Casanova in two of his works: the novel *Vendégszínház Bolzanóban* (1940), translated into English as 'Casanova in Bolzano' (2005), and the short story "Egy úr Velencéből" ['A Gentleman of Venice'] (1960) (283-298). According to Kelemen, these two works are not only thematically compatible with each other, but they also express the author's rejection of lyrical and epical conventions of his time and wish to express, instead, his own poetic voice through various genres.

Kelemen devotes two articles to the poetry and prose of Győző Határ (1914-2006). In the first of the two, Kelemen identifies Határ's poetic oeuvre as the follow-up to that of Sándor Weöres (1913-1989) in its mastery of poetic language (299-309). Complex language command lies at the heart of Határ's poetry, Kelemen notes, and he adds that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether it is language that takes control of the poet with an overbearing power, or if it is the poet who masters language with astonishing self-confidence. The second article about Határ discusses issues of Hungarian self-image and emigration in his philosophy and fiction (310-322). Here Kelemen sees the essence of Határ's writings in his dealing with the charged relations between domestic and emigrant Hungarian authors as well as with the emigrant writers' external or outsider existence and viewpoints, in which language gains a new meaning through their very act of transgressing cultural borders.

The next article focuses on a poetic-documentary collection of Péter Hajnóczy (1942-1981), entitled *Jelentések a süllyesztőből* ['Reports from the Drain'] (323-329). Hajnóczy's work, written with sociographic precision, provides an authentic report of the Hungarian people's early-1970s sense of disillusionment of the state-socialist system. In those years it became clear to all that the state completely disregarded human rights as it enforced its laws, objectives and power and arbitrarily transferred, imprisoned and executed individuals and even entire sectors, all for the so-called benefit of society. According to Kelemen, in Hajnóczy's works this fearful reality is reflected in the very language of the system and its mechanisms, like law enforcement and the ways in which it reduces individuals and groups into silence. For its referentiality, Hajnóczy's text is to be seen as a record of the voices that were silenced by the oppressive regime of that time.

The final article examines a special segment of the Hungarian and Central-European minority literature, the Romani literature, offering an analysis of the poetry of Károly Bari (b. 1952) (330-351). Although Bari refuses to be classified as "a Romani poet," Kelemen argues that his poetry shows a strong attachment to Romani folklore. More importantly, Kelemen draws our

attention to Bari's ideas on poetry and politics, his notion of language as a carrier of truth, and to his political stances in the late 1970s, for which he was constantly subjected to harassment by various state authorities.

As we could easily notice, the various articles in Kelemen's compelling collection are thematically and structurally multifaceted. With its analytical method, Kelemen's book draws attention to the necessity of transdisciplinary approaches that are nowadays vital for literary criticism. For their diversity and innovative approaches, these writings inspire further research and debates on the writers they discuss and the issues that these authors treat in their works. Moreover, some of these theories and critical perspectives can be fruitfully applied in current Hungarian literary studies.