

HUBA MÓZES

## PERSPECTIVE AS A TEXT ORGANISING FACTOR

I have long been investigating Jenő Dsida's highly impressive poem entitled *Psalmus Hungaricus*. Due to its fame and influence, the poem was considered to be well-known and thoroughly analysed long ago. After its being written, two generations' lifetime had to pass for the unintentional misunderstandings and prejudiced misinterpretations brought on by its reception to disappear gradually. As for me, I think I have only just recognised the main organising principle of this monumental poetic work in that the conflicts hidden in it are organised into a unified whole due to a particular perspective. As regards the conflicts in it, the poet leaves us in no doubt. In his work, there is indeed a conflict between the Hungarians getting out of their country due to the historical events of the 20th century on the one hand and those living within the borders of Hungary on the other, between the citizens only craving for the advantages of belonging to Europe and those actually enjoying a European way of life and circumstances, between men carrying the burden of being cast out and men realising their possibilities without such burdens. These revolting tensions give rise to the no less revolting question: Is it possible, is it ethical to discriminate between Hungarian and Hungarian, citizen and citizen, man and man?

Dsida does not put the blame on anybody for the odium of exclusion, for these tormenting tensions in his rhapsody inspired by the genre psalm. With the conditional sentences of self-cursing, he warns of the necessity of relieving the tensions into unity.

The refrain of the poem, reminiscent of Psalm 137, recurs unchanged five times but for the sixth time it is varied.

First, I quote the basic variation:

*Epévé változzék a víz, mit lenyelek,  
ha téged elfelejtelek!  
Nyelvemen izzó vasszeget  
üssenek át,  
mikor nem téged emleget!  
Húnyjon ki két szemem világa,  
mikor nem rád tekint,  
népem, te szent, te kárhozott, te drága!*

In Ádám Makkai's translation prepared at my request:

*Let the water I swallow turn into bitter bile,  
if I should ever dare forget Thee!  
Let mine tongue be pierced  
with a gleaming hot iron nail,  
when it is not my people I speak of!  
Let the light of my eyes go pitch-black  
when they do not behold Thee,  
my holy people, damned and dearly beloved!*

Now let me quote the refrain in its varied form, formulated in first person plural:

*Mérges kígyó legyen eledelünk,  
ha téged elfeledünk,  
ó, Jeruzsálem!  
Nyelvünkön izzó vasszeget  
verjenek át,  
mikor nem téged emleget,  
ó, Jeruzsálem!  
Rothadjon el lábunk-kezünk,  
mikoron hozzád hűtlenek leszünk,  
ó, Jeruzsálem, Jeruzsálem!!*

In Ádám Makkai's translation:

*Let venomous snakes be our food  
if we dare forget you,  
oh Jerusalem!  
Let our tongues  
be pierced  
with gleaming red-hot nails*

*when it is not of Thee that we speak!  
 Let our hands and feet rot  
 when we grow unfaithful to Thee  
 oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem!*

The poet reformulates the commandment of faithfulness to one's own people as the order of faithfulness to Jerusalem, specifically to Jerusalem eternal as it is clear from the inner logic of his oeuvre.

Jenő Dsida primarily feels responsible for the big family of his own people. That is why in his rhapsody he addresses his fellow Hungarians living in different parts of the world:

*Elindulok, mint egykor Csoma Sándor,  
 hogy felkutassak mindenegy magyart.  
 Székelyek, ott a bércek szikla-mellén,  
 üljeteK mellém!  
 Magyarok ott a Tisza partján,  
 magyarok ott a Duna partján,  
 magyarok ott a tót hegyek közt  
 s a bácskai szőlőhegyek közt,  
 üljeteK mellém!  
 Magyarok Afrikában, Ázsiában,  
 Párisban, vagy Amerikában,  
 üljeteK mellém!*

In Ádám Makkai's translation:

*I set out on my way, as Sándor Kőrösi Csoma<sup>1</sup> once did,  
 to discover every single Hungarian.  
 Széklers, who live there in the high mountains on steep  
 ledges,  
 come, sit beside me!  
 Magyars, who live there in the plains by the Tisza river,  
 Magyars there by the banks of the Danube,  
 Magyars there among the Slovak mountains  
 and among the vineyards of Serbia,  
 sit beside me!*

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<sup>1</sup> Sándor Kőrösi Csoma (1787-1842) was a Transylvanian Hungarian linguist and ethnographic researcher, who went on foot all the way to Tibet in search of the Hungarians' homeland. This he never found, but in the process authored the first Tibetan-English dictionary, in memory of which accomplishment his statue stands in the British Museum in London. He was buried in Darjeeling. [Ádám Makkai's notes]

*Hungarians in Africa, Asia, Paris or America,  
come sit beside me!*

This is the reason why he calls upon both descendants and ancestors as the language community creates a connection in time as well as in space:

*Ti eztán születők s ti porlócsontú ősök,  
ti réghalott regősök, ti vértanúk, ti hősök,  
üljeteK mellém!*

In Ádám Makkai's translation:

*You who are yet to be born,  
and you ancestors, with your bones turned to dust,  
you poet-warrior lutanists, you martyrs, you heroes,  
come sit beside me!*

The tone of the poet is no less passionate than that of any other prominent author belonging to any nation who speaks about the vital problems of his/her own people. With the conflicts relieved into unity, the poet's passion does not become any more restrained. It is impossible to overlook, however, that the perspective ensuring this unity puts the whole of the poem in another dimension. It is hardly to be questioned that this dimension yields the possibility of a truly understanding approach to the poem.

## REFERENCES

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