

Summaries

PIROSKA BALOGH

“Ape of Art”

The Problem of Imitation in Ágost Greguss’s Aesthetics

The paper reconsiders the prevailing view that Ágost Greguss (1825–1882), professor of aesthetics at the University of Pest from 1870 to 1882, consistently opposed artistic imitation. Through an examination of his major works – from *A szépművészet alapvonalai* (*Outlines of Aesthetics*, 1849) to the posthumous *Rendszeres széptan* (*Systematic Aesthetics*, 1888) – the study argues that Greguss did not reject imitation in general, but only its conceptually empty forms. His polemical phrase “majma a művészetnek” (“the ape of art”) targets mechanical mimicry and mannerist virtuosity rather than mimesis as such. Greguss distinguishes degraded replication from meaningful representation, valuing what he calls “characteristic fidelity to nature”, a position consistent with an Aristotelian view of mimesis. The analysis also considers his category of “fidelity”, introduced in *A hűség* (*On Fidelity*), where fidelity denotes a multidimensional relation – faithfulness, veracity, authenticity – to reality, the artist’s inner life, tradition, and formal coherence. This framework reveals a more flexible and integrative aesthetics than the conventional idealism – realism opposition suggests. Consequently, labels such as “anti-realist” or “anti-imitative” inadequately capture Greguss’s nuanced conception of representation. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70510/mfsz.21361>

KATALIN BARTHA-KOVÁCS

Mimesis and Idealisation in French Painting

Hunting Still Life Scenes in the Light of 18th-century Art Criticism

The dichotomy of mimesis and idealisation characterises the 18th-century discourse on art in France. Theoretical and critical writings on art from this period often refer to mimesis or imitation. Remarks on this subject can be found among others in the works of the abbé Du Bos or Charles Batteux, and from the middle of the century onwards, art critics’ writings (especially Diderot’s *Salons*) also frequently allude to the question of mimesis and idealisation. Using the example of the hunting still life scenes by Jean-Baptiste Oudry and Alexandre-François Desportes, but above all by Jean Siméon Chardin, the study sheds light on the opinion of 18th-century art critics of his genre: should the painter embellish the dead animals or should he depict them rather realistically? In his *Salon* of 1769, Diderot quotes the anecdote according to which that Chardin was unable to complete a painting of hunted game because his original models, tiny rabbits, were

rapidly decomposing and the animals he had brought new ones did not correspond to the idealised image he had formed of a hunted rabbit. In Diderot's eyes, of all the 18th-century painters, Chardin's works are the closest to nature, but what Chardin paints is never a mere imitation: the artist idealises his model to a certain degree, but not as strongly as his predecessors Oudry and Desportes did in their decorative hunting still life scenes. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70510/mfsz.21362>

BOTOND CSUKA

In Search of Ideal Beauty

On Sir Joshua Reynolds' Theory of Art

The paper revisits Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses on Art* (1769–1790), delivered annually at the Royal Academy of Arts between 1769 and 1790. The *Discourses* have long been celebrated, opposed or ridiculed as the epitome of eighteenth-century British neo-classicism. At the heart of the critical debates surrounding them is Reynolds' theory of imitation and the concept of "ideal beauty" that encapsulates it. The paper aims to reconstruct the concept of "ideal beauty" within the philosophical, intellectual, and institutional context of its conception. Many labelled Reynolds' theory of art "idealist" because of this concept, even though his notions of imitation, invention, imagination, genius and beauty are clearly expounded against the backdrop of a Lockean picture of the mind. Accordingly, Reynolds' "ideal beauty" is a general idea raised in the mind by the imaginative processes of comparison, generalisation and abstraction. In short, it is a "central form" of a given class or species, with affinities found in Pope's "nature methodized", Johnson's "just representations of general nature", the Jesuit Claude Buffier's notion of beauty as the most common form, and Kant's "aesthetic normal ideas". However, even in its post-Lockean formulation, Reynolds' ideal beauty appears anachronistic when compared to the new sensualist (Burke) or formalist (Hogarth) aesthetics of the period. During the 1750s, when Reynolds' theory of imitation was originally conceived, there was a shift in the understanding of beauty: the beautiful became unique, dynamic, sensual, affective and erotic – in short, aestheticized. The paper argues that not only did Reynolds notice this shift, but he also acknowledged the alluring and subversive force of the new aesthetic – embodied in what he labels the "ornamental" or "elegant" style. Nevertheless, Reynolds' cognitivist and moral concept of art prevented him from accepting these new *aesthetic* values as the general standards of *artistic* value. For painting to truly become a liberal art, as Reynolds argued in his *Discourses*, its objectives should be truth and moral perfection. Accordingly, artistic value was not to be created through the aesthetic immersion in the medium of painting, its materials, surfaces and techniques, but rather through the representation of "ideal beauty" or "central form".

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GERGELY FÓRIZS

János Arany and the Tradition of Anthropoetics*Vojtina Ars poétikája*

This study examines János Arany's poem *Vojtina Ars poétikája* (*Ars Poetica of Vojtina*, 1861), in the context of the discourse on „anthropoetics” originating in the 18th century. The term „anthropoetics”, coined by Carsten Zelle, is related to the „anthropological turn” evident in 18th-century aesthetics, psychotherapy, passion theory, and dietetics, and refers to the potential of man for self-formation and the ability to recreate him/herself as a psychosomatic unity. According to the thesis of this paper, Arany's poem belongs to the anthropoietic genre of the ‘anthropological epistle’, a term introduced here. A characteristic feature of this literary form, which also originated in the 18th century, is that it constructs a mediocre ideal of humanity representing harmony between passions and abstract ideas, body and soul, which is ultimately embodied by the epistolary poet himself.

The interpretation places the poem in the context of the doctrines of one of Arany's professors in the Debrecen Reformed College, Pál Sárvári (1765–1846), who received his doctorate in Göttingen and whose views on aesthetics can be traced back mainly to Henry Home. Another important backdrop is Arany's lecture notes entitled *Széptani jegyzetek* (*Notes on Aesthetics*), which he wrote during his time as a high school teacher. The study pays special attention to the ideal of mediocrity (*mesotes*) manifested in the poem, which has both political and poetic implications and determines the perspective of the works topography, as well.

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DOROTTYA FÜLÖP

Aesthetic Letters in *Életképek*

Fidél Beély on the Nature of Imitation

From early 1844 until January 1846, Fidél Beély (1807–1863) published a ten-part series titled *Aesthetic Letters in Életképek*, edited by Adolf Frankenburg, in which he sought to familiarize a female readership with the basic concepts of aesthetics. The first part of this study reviews the antecedents of the initiative: it shows how the chosen epistolary form fits into the tradition of aesthetic discourse as well as into the system of the texts published in the periodical. The second part turns to an analysis of Beély's aesthetic work, with particular attention to the section entitled *Imitation of Nature* developed in the ninth letter, which is primarily based on Charles Batteux's concept of imitation and interprets art as the imitation of beautiful nature (“la belle nature”), addressing in detail the examples Beély cites of good and bad imitation. The third part examines the relationship between Beély's letters and their medial environment, highlighting how the aesthetic principles articulated in the letters come into a specific tension with the periodical's literary materials. This tension is illuminated primarily through an analysis of the early works of the emerging writer (and later editor of *Életképek*), Mór Jókai.

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IMMANUEL KANT

On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy

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ÁGOSTON KEISZ

Why and how to follow poetic and cultural patterns?

Methods and Forms of Imitation in the Ancient Greek-Hungarian Poetry of László Ungvárnémeti Tóth

In July 1818, Ungvárnémeti Tóth László (1788–1820) published a bilingual volume of poetry in Ancient Greek and Hungarian, containing imitations of various ancient genres, such as odes, epigrams, idylls and epistles, which were arranged by genre. He provided notes on each genre and included a glossary to explain his use of Greek vocabulary. In his writings published in the contemporary Hungarian press, Tóth elaborated on the meaning of each genre. He paid particular attention to the poetry of Pindaros, on which he published a special study.

First, this study presents the views on imitation of Winckelmann, Herder and Sulzer, who had a significant influence on Hungarian theoretical thought at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. The article then analyses in detail why Ungvárnémeti Tóth considered it important to follow foreign models, including Greek literature. Like Herder and Winckelmann, Tóth believed that the creative and original nature of ancient Greek poetry would aid the development of Hungarian literature. The article also explains why Tóth chose to write in Ancient Greek, which was an unusual decision for the time. It suggests that the use of this language was influenced by the status of Latin in Hungary, his personal ambitions and his passion for Greek culture.

The rest of the article analyses Tóth's entire process of creating imitative poetry, examining how it is based on his theoretical findings. It follows the steps of this process by analysing Tóth's sources, the genesis of his poems, the different forms of imitation and the poetic devices he used. The article also places great emphasis on the connections between Greek, Roman and contemporary poetic traditions.

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ZSOLT KOMÁROMY

Mimesis, Form, and Formlessness in Alexander Pope's *Dunciad*

The paper first discusses the Aristotelian roots of the neoclassicist idea that mimesis serves the upholding of some ideal, and how this was seen applicable to satire, despite its imitation of ignoble themes – and then asks if such principles can be used to describe Pope's satirical masterpiece, *The Dunciad*. I argue that the neoclassicist view of the imitation of the underlying order of nature was inherited by modern criticism in the idea of mimetic form, and this has shaped the tradition of the interpretation of *The Dunciad*: although it may imitate a formless, chaotic world, it has usually been argued to give form to it by means of its own poetic order. I argue that this is an insufficient account because various features of the work suggest that its poetic order is consciously contaminated by

the chaos it depicts, and as a result, *The Dunciad* does not operate within the confines of the idea of mimetic form, or, indeed, the notions of neoclassicist poetics on which mimetic form is built. In the concluding sections I discuss various related allusions to Ovid and some recurring metaphors for the description of the dunces and argue that Pope's poem does not suggest that formlessness can be overcome but sees it as inherent to the world and to form.

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ZOLTÁN NEMESSÁNYI

Translator's Preface (Immanuel Kant: *On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy*)

Immanuel Kant's brief 1797 essay became widely known through its famous thought experiment: should we lie to save a life, if a murderer is at the door. At first glance, the essay's conclusion runs counter to our moral intuitions and may appear to be a radical enforcement of deontological ethics. However, Kant's argument is primarily built around legal and political principles. Its core proposition – “Right must never be adapted to politics, but politics must always be adapted to right” – remains especially relevant today. Although the text has often been referenced in Hungarian philosophical literature, this is its first complete translation into Hungarian, further enriching the otherwise already extensive body of Kant's writings available in Hungarian.

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ZOLTÁN POPOVICS

Representation and Utopia

Marin and Richir on Idealization

I would like to compare Marin and Richir's concepts of utopia and idealization, drawing primarily on two of their books (Louis Marin's *Utopiques: Jeux d'espaces* and Marc Richir's *L'institution de l'idéalité*). It is not necessarily obvious that Marin and Richir can be compared. The main argument for their compatibility is that the tradition of phenomenology has paramount importance to both of them, and indeed the problem of the *sublime*, i.e., the question of *representation*, is unavoidable for both of them. In both Marin's and Richir's readings, *utopia* is distinguished by its connection to the question of representation: the representability of that which is not here and now. At the same time, for both of them, the question of representation – and utopia – also leads to the problem of *idealization*. In the process of representation, we necessarily transform what we represent. We embellish it, so to speak. However, at the very least, we change it. We turn *u-topia* into *eu-topia*.

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TAMÁS SEREGI

Lukács and Zola

My paper analyzes György Lukács's conception of realism and his critique of Émile Zola's naturalism, showing that for Lukács reality can be understood only as an organic totality organized by human meaning and taking the form of narratives. According to Lukács, modern abstract art and naturalism – especially Zola's – disrupt this unity of totality by isolating surface facts and details and by failing to grasp essence and necessary relations. The essay challenges Lukács's critique of Zola and, using *Nana* as an example, argues that Zola's representation is not mere surface description or random detail, but an exploration of the deeper psychological and social motivations of the concrete world and of personality.

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SZÉPLAKY GERDA

“I am still a Jew”

Mihály Vajda: *Man in the transcendental homelessness*. Budapest, Múlt és Jövő Kiadó. 2024. 218 pages.

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TREMBECZKI ISTVÁN

Dignity, Virtues, Possibilities at the End of Life

Tamás Barcsi – Sándor Kőműves – László Nemes: *End of Life Decisions*. Budapest, L'Harmattan Publishers. 2024. 150 pages.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70510/mfsz.21375>

TAMÁS VALASTYÁN

Poetry as an Aesthetic Act

Why is it Possible to Read Hölderlin's Verse form as an Idea of “a whole world”?

In my paper, I examine Friedrich Hölderlin's poetry in the context of contemporary philosophical-aesthetic trends. I interpret the main motifs of the poem *Bread and Wine* primarily in the light of the ideas found in the text fragment entitled *The Oldest Systematic Programme of German Idealism*. I argue that the poetic text is motivated by the idea of “a whole world”, through which art is the most appropriate way for man to realise his own creative and productive capacity for world-making. The general theoretical framework for my study is the concept of idealisation in György Márkus's philosophy of culture.

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