



1993

HUNGARIAN STUDIES

Laura M. Dolby: Janus Pannonius: The Poetics of the Grotesque

Anthony Geber: Lajos (Louis) Márk: His Life and Art

Pál Deréky: Literaturgeschichte als Fiktion? Der Forschungsstand im Problemkreis
„Ungarische Avantgardeliteratur“ Ende der 60er, Anfang der 70er Jahre

CHRONICLE

REVIEWS

HUNGARIAN STUDIES

a Journal of the International Association of Hungarian Studies
(Nemzetközi Magyar Filológiai Társaság)

Hungarian Studies appears twice a year. It publishes original essays — written in English, French and German — dealing with aspects of the Hungarian past and present. Multidisciplinary in its approach, it is an international forum of literary, philological, historical and related studies. Each issue contain about 160 pages and will occasionally include illustrations. All manuscripts, books and other publications for review should be sent to the editorial address.

Hungarian Studies is published by

AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

H-1117 Budapest, Prielle Kornélia u. 19–35

Orders should be addressed to AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ, H-1519 Budapest, P.O. Box 245
Subscription price for Volume 8 (1993) in 2 issues US\$ 56.00, including normal postage,
airmail delivery US\$ 20.00.

Editorial address

H-1014 Budapest, Országház u. 30. Telephone: 175–9011/327

Mailing address: H-1250 Budapest, P.O. Box 34

Editor-in-Chief

Mihály Szegedy-Maszák

Editors

Richard Aczel

Gábor Bezeczky

József Jankovics

Advisory Council

Loránd Benkő, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest; George Frederick Cushing, University of London; [Tibor Klaniczay], Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Budapest; László Kósa, Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest; Péter Rákos, University of Prague; Denis Sinor, Indiana University, Bloomington; Miklós Szabolcsi, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Budapest; Bo Wickman, University of Uppsala

HUNGARIAN STUDIES

VOLUME 8, 1993

CONTENTS

NUMBER 1

<i>Laura M. Dolby</i> : Janus Pannonius: The Poetics of the Grotesque.....	3
<i>Kathryn Milun</i> : Translating Árgirus.....	17
<i>Martha Lampland</i> : Death of a Hero: Hungarian National Identity and the Funeral of Lajos Kossuth.....	29
<i>József Ágoston Bogoly</i> : Der Begründer der Finnisch-Ugrischen vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft: József Budenz (1836–1892).....	37
<i>Mihály Hoppál</i> : Ethnosemiotic Research in Hungary.....	47
<i>György M. Vajda</i> : Grablegung und Weiterleben der Monarchie in der ungarischen Literatur bis zur Mitte der 20-er Jahre.....	83
<i>Anthony Geber</i> : Lajos (Louis) Márk: His Life and Art.....	99
<i>József Ujfalussy</i> : Ernő Dohnányi.....	129
<i>Pál Deréky</i> : Literaturgeschichte als Fiktion? Der Forschungsstand im Problemkreis „Ungarische Avantgardeliteratur“ Ende der 60er, Anfang der 70er Jahre.....	139

CHRONICLE

Hungarica in the University Library of Cambridge (<i>Lindesay Moffatt</i>).....	153
Did Miklós Radnóti Know the Work of J. M. Levet? (<i>Marianna D. Birnbaum</i>).....	158

REVIEWS

Eugen Thurner, Walter Weiss, János Szabó, Attila Tamás (eds): "Kakanien": Aufsätze zur österreichischen und ungarischen Literatur, Kunst und Kultur um die Jahrhundertwende (<i>Mihály Szegedy-Maszák</i>).....	161
Béla G. Németh: Péterfy Jenő (<i>József Ágoston Bogoly</i>).....	163

PRINTED IN HUNGARY

Akadémiai Kiadó és Nyomda Vállalat, Budapest

JANUS PANNONIUS: THE POETICS OF THE GROTESQUE

LAURA M. DOLBY

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
USA

The erotic epigrams of Janus Pannonius have historically been the focus of scholarly debate regarding both their authenticity and their possible biographical implications for the future bishop of Pécs.¹ Now, however, it is generally agreed that the poems were written by Janus and composed for the most part during his years in Ferrara at Guarino da Verona's school.² Janus' studies in Ferrara were financed by his uncle János Vitéz, Cardinal Archbishop of Esztergom, a powerful figure in the development of the intellectual life of the Hungarian Renaissance who contributed to the reestablishment of a university in Hungary.³ Pier Paolo Vergerio, a friend of Guarino, also played a role in the Hungarian Humanist movement through his influence over Vitéz and his ties to the intellectual currents of Italy.⁴ Thus Janus' intellectual interests were fostered by this fortunate configuration of power and scholarship, which resulted in a curious mixture of political success coupled with eventual accusations of treason and an early death in 1472, at the age of thirty-eight.⁵ Marianna Birnbaum, in the most recent book dealing with Janus' life, mentions that at Guarino's school Janus was not only provided with a humanist education in Greek and Latin, but was also exposed to the erotic poetry of Beccadelli as Guarino himself was an admirer of the *Hermaphroditus*.⁶ Nevertheless, the purpose of this paper is not to discuss the biography of Janus Pannonius since this has been done by other scholars, but to provide a preliminary analysis of the poems that have frequently been put into the categories of erotic or pornographic literature.

The need to insert these poems into established categories such as the erotic or the pornographic, speaks more to the critic's inability to deal with the sexual aspect as it approaches the borders of the poetic than it contributes to any reading of the poems. These poems themselves carry a history of academic modesty and prudery that has resulted in their absence from certain editions of Janus' poems. In fact, the Teleki edition, widely acknowledged for its accuracy, includes the erotic epigrams but encodes the obscene words of certain poems, apparently duplicating the way they appear in the Codex

Vaticanus 2837.⁷ Each letter of the coded word represents the consonant immediately following it in the alphabet. In the case of "De Lucia" (141), even the name of his mistress, Lucia, is coded.⁸ Perhaps when faced with an epigram that deals with the loss of an erection, even the name of the woman involved becomes pornographic in its own right. Oddly, other poems which contain material that could be viewed as explicit, are not necessarily coded.⁹ It is precisely this desire to determine what the poems are through the use of such classifying dicta as pornography, eroticism, or even the dismissive schoolboy fantasizing, that distracts the critical eye from a reading of the poem. The move to dismiss these epigrams because the perceived subject disrupts our notions of how eroticism can enter the realm of the poetic as well as carefully preserved assumptions about the moral and religious character of the author, ignores the possibility that these poems are disruptive in themselves. The poetic body that emerges is one that reaches grotesque proportions and as it expands and swallows it becomes a highly erotic body. Such a body challenges and disrupts normatized patterns which formulate erotic exchanges between well-understood and conventional sexual modes.¹⁰ In order to attempt a reading of this problematic group of poems, it seems necessary to also undertake a discussion of the situation of obscenity as it lends itself to the development of an erotic body that is no longer in the process of defining sexual exchange as exchange. This emerging grotesque body constantly expands, and through its size and mutability challenges the limits of sexuality. The use of obscenity with regard to a body such as this does not suggest a reduction, or a narrowly defined notion of the specificity of the male or female body as it is articulated through the sexual act. Such a limited understanding of obscenity would only serve to curtail the functions of the body, reducing and dismissing the potential for rupture and critique. The obscene addresses the possibility of an ambivalent sexuality, one that is not bound and articulated through a polarized sexual act modeled on economic and cultural propriety. The body loses the restrictions that define sexuality as a medium for exchange by means of the positioning of male-female sexual borders which in turn bespeak corresponding power structures. What takes place is not an erasure of gender, but a re-figuration wherein the body as it enters erotic landscapes and situations also participates in the breaking apart of the borders that contain and codify sex as an act marked and defined by familial and tolerated systems.¹¹ The concept of the pornographic also undergoes a certain rupture, and the realm of the strictly erotic loses its confines in order to function at the rhetorical or poetic level of the text.

The series of poems that will provide the basis for this paper are chosen not simply because of their erotic character, a difficult and unclear category in

itself. Rather, they have been selected because they constitute a group of poems that attempt to situate eroticism by displacing and removing the restriction of a heavily structured sexuality based upon the economic and regularized exchange of sexuality over clearly defined societal borders. These poems place sexuality within the growing and changing body that constantly makes itself ambiguous by altering and extending its own borders. This grotesque body becomes the medium and means for a break-down of the elements that formulate the binary exchange implicit in normatized sexual behaviors. The oppositional nature of sexual relations is dissolved and a double body capable of articulating itself through a non-polar eroticism emerges. Such an erotic schema does not coincide with the well-ordered cultural categories of male and female. The obscenity of this eroticism does not lie within a notion of impropriety, as the body does not operate as a proper space. Rather, obscenity stems from the shift that takes place when the body becomes disengaged from the standardized practices of sexuality.¹² The grotesque body is one that is inherently in the process of transgressing implicit borders and therefore obscenity loses its force as a transgression, and instead contributes to the articulation of a new eroticism.

The problematic category of the grotesque has certainly been approached by scholars other than M.M. Bakhtin outside of what might be considered erotic or pornographic literature and art. C. F. Flögel in *Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen*¹³ and *Geschichte des Burlesken*¹⁴ discusses the combination of high and low that specifically characterize the burlesque. The elements of culture usually considered high because they form an index of seriousness and acceptability are re-positioned so that they no longer occupy their recognized positions. Tragedy also operates as an element of the high culture that burlesque attacks through grotesque and exaggerated gestures which result in disruptive laughter. In this case, the body also becomes the focus for the grotesque because it is the ground for opposition and parody. The comic actor wears absurd shoes and exaggerated clothing highlighted by an immense phallus, as opposed to the tragic actor whose clothing is much less indicative of the body's signficatory power. Thus the grotesque consists of an exaggeration and twisting of normatized and well-known conventions. Wolfgang Kayser also develops this notion of the grotesque as a complex interchange between culturally defined oppositions. In his analysis, the effect of the grotesque is to produce a moment when the distinctions between a series of well-defined categories are blurred. In this blurring the grotesque has the ability to mean more, to produce a separate set of circumstances that allow for a critique, or at least a different understanding, of that culture.¹⁵ What seems particularly significant about the development of possible interpretations of

the grotesque is their lack of focus upon the body as a locus for abjection and disgust. The grotesque does not retain a series of prefigured concepts which organize the body as a repository for the complex systems of sin and filth. Rather, it provides the possibility for an examination of the demise of established assumptions concerning a variety of well-understood cultural frames and borders. Among these assumptions are those concerning the functions of the body that contribute to the development of eroticism. This is not to suggest that the erotic and grotesque function without certain obvious and multi-layered predispositions that are relevant whenever these terms enter into play. However, a discussion of the erotic as it develops through the invention of the grotesque body will contribute to a reading that does not fall victim to the impulse to polarize and attribute sexuality to an overdetermined schema that situates the cultural figures of male and female within available and strategic topoi. The grotesque can produce a critical moment where a highly erotic body contributes to the breaking down of the apparatus which organize the cultural force of sexuality.

Teleki 55, "Quaestio Ardua et Difficilis", is not an erotic poem in any conventional sense. It does not detail, describe, invite, or deny any sexual act. Instead, the poem provides the very basis for sexual differentiation by means of a re-consideration of the Platonic myth of the circle men which Aristophanes undertakes in the *Symposium*. This particular Platonic "myth" was also of great importance to the neo-platonic tradition which placed emphasis on certain images which could simultaneously conceal and reveal.¹⁶ In this instance, it is the genitalia which are hidden: either internalized in the case of the circle men, or hidden through the overt act of sex itself. In short, the myth describes mankind's origins as a grotesque and sexless creature, their unsuccessful attack on the gods, and the ensuing creation of the two genders, which introduced desire itself to the human race. However, in Janus' epigram the explicit purpose of the poem is to explain "cur pennem cunnus, cur contra mentula cunnum/Appetat..." (1-2). That is, desire is founded upon the dynamic of presence and absence as it is incarnated through the protuberance and convexity of genitalia. The interest is not focused upon the body as a separate, individuated entity, but instead upon how the body exists and desires through its ability to become a new double-body. The genitalia serve as the points of intersection and combination for this newly constructed grotesque body. Sexuality is thus prefaced by a cutting that necessitates the re-combination that sex regulates and guarantees. Union is always re-union and an attempt to deny the cutting that defined gender and difference.¹⁷

The final lines of the poem serve as a kind of "embodiment" of the interstices that are so explicitly suggested. The last two lines form a series of

imperfect chiasmi. "Inde suam partem semper locus ille requirit/Inde suum semper pars petit illa locum." The anaphoric repetition of "Inde" in the first two lines gives way to the formation of a chiasmus between the second parts of each line. No word, with the exception of the repeated "inde" appears precisely in the same case. The two verbs, "requirit" in the penultimate line and "petit" in the final line, are the only two words that do not find their rhetorical and poetic partner within the arrangement of the lines. The "partem semper" of the earlier line corresponds to the "semper pars" of the last line, as does the "locus ille" and the "illa locum" of their respective lines. This series of polyptotons (use of the same word in different cases or tenses) in turn forms a chiasmatic arrangement such that each set of terms has a corresponding yet different "mate" in the following lines. These last lines form the poetic and textual equivalent of the "requiret" and the "petit" of the body that the poem maps. That is, desire becomes an element of the text and is constructed at the level of the rhetorical scheme of the epigram. The lines are composed of identical words with different case endings arranged in a chiasmatic pattern that initiates a series of protuberances met with corresponding convexities. The motion of the double body as it formulates its own ambiguity also produces a textual level of ambiguity as words are changed and exchanged across the borders of the poetic and metrical line. The words in these patterns are essentially the same, yet they can appear in different cases at different places in the text and thus linguistically indicate different things. They are the textual equivalent of the foundation for desire which serves as a focus for the epigram. Thus a relationship is created between the rhetorical level of the text and the emerging concept of the double body.

In addition to the possible implications of the rhetorical bodies that circulate in the text and their potential relationship to the emerging double body, the distinctions that indicate gender differences within language also articulate a special relationship to sexual ambiguity and exchange. The last two lines of the epigram which form a chiasmatic twinning, also delineate by means of grammatical cases and verbally constructed gender, a shifting that occurs when sexual difference defines sexual need. The feminine "suum partem" of the penultimate line becomes the grammatical object of the masculine subject "locus ille" which appears in that same line. Strangely, the subject of the phrase could be translated as "that place" and the object as "its part" thereby allowing a word with a feminine gender to signify the male sex organ. Furthermore, the word attached to this feminine gender forms the active subject of the phrase. In the final line, "pars...illa" is the feminine subject which is in fact the penis that seeks its masculine object "its place." This final reversal posits a feminine subject which is in fact the penis that seeks its

masculine object, the vagina. The use of language that confronts assumptions about gender by linguistically "feminizing" or "masculinizing" genitalia with the conventionally opposite gender, places the very notion of gender in a peculiar state of crisis. Such a crisis contributes to the perception of sexuality as a moment wherein the distinctions circumscribing the terms "male" and "female" are blurred. Furthermore, the status of woman as object of desire is critiqued via a grammatical sequence that places her in the position of subject. The resulting ambiguity becomes the very foundation for an erotics that attempts to reconsider the traditional categories that define sexuality as exchange over constantly perpetuated boundaries.

This does not suggest that a simple relationship exists between the possible interpretations of the poem and the corresponding rhetorical or linguistic formulations that implicate at a textual level those interpretations via language. A reading such as this would prescribe too closely a determinable and correct interpretation for the poem. What I mean to suggest is that there could be a series of interstices whereby poetry that confronts eroticism can do so at the level of language structure. Thus the poem takes on an additional layer of possible sexualization and language becomes charged with the dynamics of ambiguity and exchange. Even as sexuality loses the pattern of socially prescribed exchange and becomes a function of a far more dynamic body, so language can also participate in an exchange grounded upon its capacity to modify its original form. The means of signification, through their own operations, maintain themselves at an ambiguous level. Thus language begins to demonstrate its own ambiguity through the concomitantly complex and ambiguous territory of explicit or erotic poetry.

Epigrams 105 and 106, "De Laelia" and "Ad Eandem", also address the situation of the emerging double body. "De Laelia," the first of the two poems, is only two lines long and castigates Laela for trying to seek her lover's tongue. "Laelia, quid nostram toties petis improba, linguam?/Si iuvat, hoc totum vipera, sorbe caput." The use of "vipera" in conjunction with the invitation to "swallow his entire head" is suggestive of several potential interpretive foci. Perhaps the most obvious is the biblical connotations of the snake as Satan incarnate and his seduction of Eve. The collapse of Laelia into a snake denotes a relationship formulated by the snake as seducer over and against woman as victim not only of Satan's seduction, but of her own concupiscence. The woman as snake provides an orientation for the double figure of Satan and Eve. The snake is suggestive because its body is without protuberances or convexities for arms, legs, noses, or sexual organs. Thus the image of woman as snake swallowing the head of her lover, becomes the moment wherein the mouth and head take the place of genitalia and become the site for a

transgression of implicit borders. The locations for intersection and coitus have shifted and the result is an ambiguous consolidation. That is, since the nature of this combination is not dependent upon the genitals, the borders that normally separate the body and are at least partially transgressed via intercourse, become far less defined. It seems as if transgression also undergoes a re-definition and becomes instead of a penetration, a radical combination wherein the borders that have defined and limited the body are greatly expanded. This transgression does not take place at the normal locations for intersection. The locations themselves have shifted and to that extent the act of swallowing is not one of intersection and intercourse, but of consummation and duality. Two bodies become infused through the addition of one to the other. The body of the snake resolves the convexities and protuberances that mark the human body and in turn becomes the figure of the double body.

Clearly the collapse of Laelia with the image of the snake could indicate additional ambiguities. In particular, the snake and the lower bodily stratum, specifically the male sex organ, share a set of signficatory and cultural associations. The body of the snake which, as I mentioned earlier, is without protuberances suggests a three way collapse wherein Laelia, the snake and a penis collude to form a new, albeit ambiguous entity. The snake in its potential role as penis produces a level of homo-tropism that lends a different quality to the indeterminate borders which govern sexuality. Now, Laelia could become a penis that attempts to swallow the man. This configuration elaborates a new location where the woman can provide a ground for the organization of an erotics that is not based upon a heterosexual orientation. The combination that Laelia instigates involves the poetic production of a snake which functions as a figure with an indeterminate relationship to its possible referents. Essentially, the figure of the snake-woman has the power to "mean-more" and to mean on an ambiguous level. Such an image might signify a quasi-feminine body or a situation charged with the dynamics of homo-eroticism. This dual signification obscures those distinctions that define individuated sexual orientation. A woman, Laelia, provides the contours for the complex dual image of snake-penis and in so doing conveys a context that is no longer clearly articulated as either heterosexual or homosexual. The possibility of Laelia as an ambiguously engendered creature indicates that the systems which define male-female coitus and combination become effaced and are no longer useful for determining an erotic scheme.

Because this epigram uses the complex and ambiguous figure of the snake to organize a particular sexual topos, the potential for additional textual as well as signficatory resonances is also apparent. The presence of the snake as a figure for combination and coitus echoes the story of Tiresias which is told

in book three of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* beginning at line 316.¹⁸ An argument between Jove and Juno about which gender has the greater pleasure in sexual intercourse is settled by Tiresias. He is an apt judge because when he came across two snakes mating in a forest and struck them with a branch, he was turned into a woman for seven years. In the eighth year, Tiresias returned and again saw two snakes mating, struck them with a branch and became a man once again. Thus the link between the snake and the possibility of an ambiguous sexuality is furthered by the mythical echo of Tiresias, the Seer, a man who had been both male and female, a figure who represents the possible convergence and containment of both sexes. Two snakes locked in a strange embrace provide access to the shift from male to female and back again. In the end, however, Tiresias agrees with Jove that women have the greater pleasure in sex, and is punished by Juno with blindness. Jove, in turn, grants him the gift of prophecy. Tiresias becomes a strange multi-sexed location where the fundamental question of sexual pleasure is debated and scored. Tiresias, in his male incarnation as prophetic Seer, will never again see a woman, nor two snakes mating. He becomes a strange isolated figure who both sees and has experienced what usually remains in the field of the imaginary circumscribed by extreme speculation and fantasy.

Epigram 133, "Ad Eandem", continues to elaborate the image of the snake. However, in this case the text differs from the previous one in its situating of the snake as the emerging double body. Instead of Laelia consuming her lover, she joins in his embrace, and it is the nature of that embrace as conjunction and intercourse that becomes the focus of the poem. "Tam coeunt artis gemini complexibus angues/Ut duplex uni quis putet esse caput." (1-2) Thus the snake without arms, legs, or well-defined genitalia becomes the figure for combination. Intercourse is thus articulated not through convenient oppositions which become physically and emotionally reconciled through the sex act. Instead, what takes place is a twinning, or doubling wherein the bodies of the partners become so fused as to become one. A definite shift has taken place wherein the bodies which were so readily defined and differentiated lose their distinguishing features and become united.

The use of "gemini" in line one, and "ut duplex uni" in line two already heralds the movement toward the twinned or doubled body at the level of the language of the text. At lines two and four this twinning as an aspect of the emerging conceptualization of the body becomes a function of the rhetorical construction of the poem. "Ut duplex uni quis putet esse caput" (2) and "Ut mihi diversam nec caput esse velim." (4) The "esse caput" and "caput esse" form once again the chiasmatic doubling that provides a rhetorical ground for the body that is articulated. In this instance, the words appear in precisely the same cases but in reversed order. They are particularly significant in light of

the preceding poem's emphasis on the head. Whereas in that epigram the head was the medium in conjunction with the mouth, for the possibility of union, now it becomes the complex moment of duplication. The first "esse caput" in the second line includes the modifying adjective "duplex", the second word in that line. The "caput esse" in the final line is modified by the "diversum", but this time the line is governed by an "Ut...nec" clause. What seems most significant about the uses of these two phrases is that their placement enables them to express different figures of the double body. The first instance hinges upon a body which, except for the head, appears to be one body. The second use expresses the desire that this ultimate erasure of the borders separating the two bodies be accomplished. Thus the "esse caput"/"caput esse" marks the potential hinge that both separates and joins the two bodies. The use of these phrases in the poem also foregrounds the potential ambiguity of language as it attempts to define and articulate a body that is in the process of changing and combining. Language becomes a function of the ambiguity of the body through its own ability to move and reconvene at different points in the poetic text.

The more explicit epigrams, that is those which address the more problematic territory of sex acts themselves, also confront the potential constraints of the body and those that effect the poetic text. Janus wrote three epigrams entitled "De Vulva Ursulae" (306, 321, 322), and the poem immediately after 322 "De Eadem" is, as its name implies, also about Ursula's vagina. The poems are not erotic in the sense that eroticism is an evocation of permitted sexual practices operating with the sphere of personal exchange. Instead, with the exception of the first line of 206, they are complaints about the size of Ursula's sexual organs. The first of these poems begins with a brief catalogue of Ursula's physical charms. "Blanda est lingua tibi, mollis caro, vultus honestus", (1) But the "Ante" of the next line situates her charms as specifically pre-coital. "Ante opus et nobis Ursula Tota places." At the third line Ursula's vagina becomes a "laxo...cunno" and the epigram evolves into a grotesque and explicit discussion of genitalia. The description of the vagina as "laxo" in line three gives way to the terms, "non latus aut fundum" (5), and "vasto...late...hiatu" (7). Thus the body which began as a flattering image of the desirable woman, develops into a fantastically proportioned pit. The female body ceases to exist as a medium organized for and by the lover, and the metaphors to describe it also reflect this uncontrollability. As the vagina spirals more and more beyond its regular location, it becomes an impossible location, a comic vagina that is so immense that it cannot possibly be a location for sex in the sense that the vagina serves as the sexual counterpart for the penis. "Conatus pereunt, peris omnis sudor anhelii/Pectoris, et rruptis

ilibus ossa dolent.” (11–12) Thus the vagina which normally serves as an orifice through which the borders of the body may be overcome, grows to the point of exceeding the human body that would normally contain it.¹⁹ The grotesque body becomes one that is dominated by the orifices which are conventionally reserved for the privatized and controlled exchange of sex. The privatized reality of sexuality and sexual encounter loses the parameters which serve to delimit and confine its status as an enigmatic and intimate proceeding. The body that emerges out of the unstable system is in itself unstable and proceeds to expand in such a way that the vagina becomes an incomparable landscape that exceeds its role as functionary in any normalized system of sexuality.

The second poem in this trilogy (322), dispenses with the initial line of flattery that characterizes the first of these epigrams and begins with images of vast and uncontained proportion. The phrases “*altia ostia Ditis*” (1) and “*Taenaris...Fauces*” (91) are brought into focus by the “*Te futuo*” at the end of the second line. As the poem progresses the language continues to incorporate images of grotesque proportion.

“*Panditur et late cedit inane chaos,
Quod caperet teneri coentia semina mundi
Quo possent atomi pervolitare leves:*” (6–8)

The penis undergoes no corresponding change in stature, but remains very much an aspect of the complete and privatized body of the lover. The vagina takes on proportions that are entirely grotesque and at the same moment undeniably comic. It is this vagina in its incredible vastness that swallows up the body of the lover, penis first. “*Nec tantum penem, sed testes, ilis lumbos/Devort, ac pariter bracchis, crura, caput.*” (9–10) Yet this image of the swallowing woman that figured so prominently in epigram 104, “*De Laelia*”, has been altered so that it is now the vagina that swallows the lover.²⁰ In this instance, that earlier dynamic of snake-woman who consumes her lover, is considerably altered because it is the vagina that provides the entrance into the body. The vagina has replaced the mouth and instead of providing an entrance into the digestive system, it provides one into the reproductive system. As this reproductive mouth exceeds all bounds and establishes itself as an independent aspect of the body, it also reverses the birth process. The man, swallowed up during sex, is eventually re-born and in this manner passes through sex, death, and birth all within the grotesque vagina. The vagina becomes the location for an entire life cycle developing into a world of its own entirely divorced from the body, and from the social and cultural patterns that

define and limit the female sex organs as aspects of a privatized and essentially economic exchange organized for the twin goals of male pleasure and progeny.

In addition to the re-conceptualization that the vagina undergoes, the poetic text itself also begins to take on a different level of inter-relatedness and becomes, in its own right, a locus for the breaking apart of borders. In particular, Vergil's *Aeneid* appears in Janus' text when Sybil's injunctions to Aeneas find an echo in the epigram. The second part of the first line "alta ostia Ditis" is similar to the 127th line of the sixth book of the *Aeneid* where Sybil's line ends in "atri ianua Ditis". Janus' line is by no means a precise replication of Vergil's. Nevertheless, a peculiar correspondence exists between "alta" and "atri" and "ostia" and "ianua." In line four of "De Vulva Ursulae" this correspondence becomes more definite. "Sed revocare gradum plurimus inde labor" (4) functions in part as a duplication of Book six, line 128: "Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras." The first part of the following line from Vergil "Hoc opus hic labor est" is also echoed in Janus epigram. The "labor" of Janus' epigram is getting out of Ursula's vulva while that of Vergil's is an attempt to warn Aeneas of the difficulties he should encounter when he returns from the underworld.

Teleki 321, the shortest of the "De Vulva" series is only two lines long. Nevertheless, it contains an allusion to Vergil's *Aeneid*. "Totus devoror Ursulae barathro/Alcide, nisi subvenis, perivi!" The use of "barathro" in connection with "Alcice", Hercules, forms an echo of the story of Casus from Book Six of the *Aeneid* (lines 187–279). Cacus was the much feared semi-divine son of Vulcan, who terrorized King Evander and his people. Hercules comes to destroy Cacus as well as the underground palace where he lives. "Barathro" in Janus' epigram appears in Vergil's text as "Barathrum" (245) and "Alcide" the vocative form of "Alcides" also finds its parallel four lines later at 249. In this instance, the female genitalia become as limitless as Cacus' cave and at the same time, take on language that is both epic and horrifying in tone. Though the parallel between disgusting abyss and female sexual organs is clearly comic and hyperbolic, the sex act is still circumscribed by a certain fear and loathing associated with their very presence.

As "De Vulva Ursulae" grows and expands, it subsumes within its textual borders portions of Vergil's well-rehearsed text. In this manner, a text that is defined as an aspect of an idealized Roman past is resituated within the grotesque vagina. The epic world of Aeneas and heroic entry into the underworld is revisited in such a way that a once exemplary act is now not simply debased but redefined. In this same manner, Hercules' destruction of Cacus and his palace becomes a less than heroic battle with a vagina. This

ancient text, a model for poetic and creative thought among humanists, reenters circulation and in so doing fractures a particular set of conventions at once drawing attention to the convention and to the ease with which that convention is perverted. The poetry of Vergil as it is stripped of its epic situation can no longer stand as a solid and concrete text. Instead it becomes an element of the grotesque body and participates in its own devaluation and readaptation. Such as re-use removes a text from its normal context and thereby opens the space necessary for the advent of ambiguity and the potential for multiple and complex referents. The text has the ability to utilize another text and thereby layer its own moment of signification with a set of older contextually different signifiers. The echo of Vergil's poetry within Janus' epigram provides a focus for the poetics of multiplicity that characterizes images of grotesque sexuality.²¹

The final epigram of this short series "De Eandem" (308) uses the immense mythological metaphors established in the previous poem to produce a kind of mythological geography that attempts to orient the vastness of Ursula's vagina. The first lines "Quantus ad aethereum coeli suspectus Olympum,/In Pracepes tantum bis tibi vulva patet": (1-2) are followed by a brief map of Hades: "Huius non toto sentirem Cerberon antro,/Non Stygis hanc obeant flumina tota novem." (3-4) which is painfully small in relation to Ursula's sexual organs. This vagina also traps Castor, Hercules, and Orpheus (5-6), and none of their heroic talents can provide for their release. The vagina further evolves forming a prison for the non-Olympian deities and monsters. The final two lines, "Omnia sed quamvis concurrant monstra, nequibant/Dimidia cunnum parte replere tuum." (15-16) brings this massive mythological landscape to an end with Ursula's vagina only half full. The comic implications of this kind of hyperbolizing are readily apparent: a vagina can now contain the whole world. Borders have expanded to the point where the notion of bodily border dissolves and with it the possibility of transgression. The interest in geographizing the vagina makes explicit its break from the heavily normatized patterns of sexual exchange that control and organize the sexual organs as elements of a private and unseen world. In the previous epigram the vagina still functioned within specific parameters because it was the location for a particular cycle which served a progenerative end. In this final epigram, the vagina has exceeded all borders and becomes its own mythological land defined in terms of its own inconceivable vastness and gigantic inhabitants.

My analysis of these epigrams remains in a preliminary state as there are still other poems that deserve attention and additional aspects of eroticism that require examination. Nevertheless, these poems provide certain insights into the way in which the erotic attempts to reconsider the orientation of boundaries that distinguish and define sexuality. One locus for a discussion of this

bordering and engendering of sexuality is the grotesque body that constantly grows and exceeds its own contours. Within the grotesque body the locations for the act of sex itself becomes radically altered and the genitalia cease to exist as contained, privatized aspects of codified exchange. The grotesque body can expand to include another body thereby not just shifting or reordering the borders that define sexual economies, but eliminating them. These texts also articulate exchange and redistribution at a rhetorical level as words and phrases are transferred and recontextualized across the textual borders of meter and line. An erotics which stems from the grotesque body has the potential to avoid positioning the entities of male and female within clear and well-defined systems of power and exchange. What can take place instead is a reformulation of the erotic based upon a body which is in the process of altering and absorbing its very self, one that does not participate in a polarity of positions or power structures. The erotic becomes a medium for rethinking the problematic categories of male and female as they are defined and circulated within culture.

Notes

1. Marianna Birnbaum provides a discussion of the various critics and their stances with respect to these epigrams in her monograph *Janus Pannonius Poet and Politician* (Zagreb, 1981). 68–69.
2. Birnbaum, op. cit. p. 22 and p. 70. Tibor Kardos, “Janus Pannonius: Poet of the Hungarian Renaissance”, *The New Hungarian Review* 14 no. 49 (1973): 79–93.
3. Leslie S. Domokos, “János Vitéz, The Father of Hungarian Humanism”, *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, 20 (1979) 142–150. This article provides particularly helpful information about the historical situation of the Hungarian Renaissance.
4. *Ibid.*, 147–148.
5. J. Bak and B. Király (eds.), *From Hunyadi to Rákóczi: War and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Hungary* (New York, 1982).
6. Marianna Birnbaum, op. cit. 31.
7. Anthony A. Barrett provides a helpful and brief discussion of the various manuscripts and their relative reliability in the preface to his translation of Janus’ epigrams. Anthony A. Barrett (ed., trans.) *Janus Pannonius The Epigrams* (Budapest, 1985).
8. Samuel Teleki, *Iani Pannoni Poemata* (Utrecht, 1784). The numbers I include in parenthesis are the numbers used to designate poems in this edition. Oddly, Marianna Birnbaum (op. cit.) mentions that the Teleki edition does not include the erotic poems. See page 51. Tibor Kardos has this to say about the Teleki edition: “The theoretical foundation of the 1784 edition takes an entirely new turn. This so-called ‘Teleki’ complete edition begins to sense the erotic element in Janus, and undertakes to defend it with the watch word ‘enlightenment’. It sees in him, in other words, a predecessor of the Hungarian Enlightenment, one of the foundations of the enlightenment, one of the foundations of enlightened culture.” Tibor Kardos, “Janus Pan-

- nonius, Poet of the Hungarian Renaissance", *The New Hungarian Quarterly* 14 no. 49 (1973), 79-93.
9. Teleki's 306, "De Vulva Ursulae" contains the word "cunno" in the third line, a word that is coded in the final line of 141, "De Lucia". Thus the coding of what is considered unfit for the readerly eye is inconsistent.
 10. The concept of the body that I am attempting to develop is somewhat different than those set of notions defined by Norbert Elias in his book *Über Den Prozess Der Civilization* (München, 1969). The notion of the private and its relative cultural status is, however, very important to the idea of the borders of the body itself.
 11. This line of analysis owes a great deal to Bakhtin and his discussion of the carnivalized body. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Massachusetts, 1968).
 12. Jacques Rossiaud provides a series of interesting insights into the market value of women in general, as well as the ways in which those markets were deployed and supported by different sectors of society. His analysis of the legal situation of women who were prostitutes or victims of rape is particularly helpful. *Medieval Prostitution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (London, 1988).
 13. C. F. Flögel, *Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen*. Revised by W. Ebeling (Leipzig, 1888).
 14. C. F. Flögel, *Geschichte des Burlesken* (Leipzig, 1794).
 15. Wolfgang Kayser, *Das Grotesque, Seine Gestaltung in Malerei und Dichtung* (Oldenburg, 1957). See in particular pages 20-25.
 16. Edgar Wind in his book *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* discusses briefly the orphic fascination with these Platonic "hybrid gods". (London, 1958).
 17. See Page Dubois, *The Sowing of the Body. Psychoanalyses and Ancient Representations of Women* (Chicago, 1988). See especially p. 169. The final chapter "The Platonic Appropriation of Reproduction" is of particular interest in its analysis of Plato.
 18. Prof. Antal Pirnát pointed this association out to me in an earlier draft of this paper.
 19. M. M. Bakhtin, op. cit. p. 317.
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 325. I take issue with Bakhtin on several concepts surrounding the development and organization of the grotesque body. His interpretation seems ultimately phallo-anal-centric, since he sees these organs as those with the greatest potential for the realization of the grotesque. The erect phallus as an instrument of both sex and comedy is certainly highlighted in a wide variety of texts. Yet it seems to me that the vagina as a possible location for the overcoming of borders that implicate sexuality as a system of exchange and power deserves more attention. I do not advocate a reading that falls victim to preconceived notions of phallic significance, rather I see the vagina as one possible beginning for the emerging double body.
 21. Teleki 200 and 201 "In Furem Virgilianum" and "In Eundem" are two of Janus' own epigrams that address the problem of plagiarism. They both point to the layering that characterizes the composition of Vergil's own work. Nevertheless, the two epigrams castigate an author for his use of Vergil's poetry. Again, I have to thank Prof. Pirnát for his help with these allusions.