

REVIEWS

Eugen Thurner, Walter Weiss, János Szabó, Attila Tamás (eds).
**"Kakanien": Aufsätze zur österreichischen und ungarischen Literatur,
Kunst und Kultur um die Jahrhundertwende**

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der Wissenschaften, Wien. 1991. 447 pp.)

In recent years numerous attempts were made to describe the cultural legacy of the multilingual Habsburg Monarchy. A joint committee was set up by Austria and Hungary to assess the literature of Central Europe in the period of Habsburg domination. The essays collected in the volume "*Kakanien*" were written by the members of this committee.

A proper assessment of the distinguishing features of the culture of the Dual Monarchy requires that the interpreter rise above national preconceptions. Such a high goal can be reached only by scholars who are familiar with the various languages spoken in the Danube basin. One of the shortcomings of several books published on the subject is that the information they can give is limited to sources in German. William M. Johnston, for instance, devoted several chapters of his monograph *The Austrian Mind* (Berkeley, 1972) to intellectual life in Prague and Budapest, but he had no access to material available in Czech and Hungarian.

The authors of "*Kakanien*" intend to break with this tradition. Johnston's work is criticized by Antal Mádl in one of the introductory chapters of the volume and by Attila Tamás, one of the editors, a literary historian whose summary of the beginnings of modern Hungarian poetry is meant to disqualify the antithesis "decadent Vienna versus politicized Budapest", which is one of the underlying theses of *The Austrian Mind*.

Unfortunately, not all the essays of "*Kakanien*" are free of the shortcoming pointed out by the two Hungarian critics. The eleven contributors from Austria focus on the Western half of the Dual Monarchy, and their occasional references to Hungary are based on second-hand information. One of the most striking examples of this one-sidedness can be found on the final page of the essay "Zur Kulturgeschichte der Zeit Franz Josephs in Österreich" by Walter Weiss. Except for the last paragraph, this 23-page contribution is a balanced and thoughtful summary of the political, philosophical, scientific, and artistic trends in Austria around 1900. Paradoxically, the comparison of the "therapeutic nihilism" of Viennese culture and the political engagement and revolutionary spirit of the intellectuals of Budapest made at the end of the text derives from the same antithesis which is dismissed as irrelevant by the above-mentioned Hungarian critics.

Although the nine Hungarian contributions are more comparative, most of them are less convincing than their Austrian counterparts. In one case the similarity between two writers remains a pure declaration. The title — "Die Symbolik Adys und Kafkas: Ein Kapitel zu einer Literaturgeschichte der Donaumonarchie" — is promising, but the essay is hardly more than a series of quotations. The use of the term "symbol" would need clarification, and the basis for the comparison is so abstract that nothing meaningful is learned by the reader about symbolism in Ady's poetry and Kafka's prose.

This essay is hardly representative of Hungarian scholarship, but it does show one of the weaknesses of the volume as a whole. The unity of the collection is marred by the discrepancy between the full documentation in most Austrian contributions and the absence of philological apparatus in several chapters by Hungarian scholars. The absence of editorial conception may be responsible not only for this but also for the uneven representation of the literature of the turn of the century. While Hofmannsthal's plays are discussed in two essays, Altenberg's impressionistic prose poems and the essays of Otto Stoessl are given a meticulous analysis, Rilke's works receive almost no attention. The visual arts are represented by two essays, but music is hardly taken into consideration. It is not justifiable that the tension between rural and urban culture as perceived by such major composers as Janáček or Bartók is not even mentioned in the essays, since this tension was one of the most fundamental characteristics of the culture of the Dual Monarchy. No musicologist can be found among the contributors, and the few references to music by literary historians are of questionable legitimacy. Alfred Doppler's comparison between alliteration and assonance in the poetry of Trakl and the structural use of tone-colour in the compositions of Schönberg is somewhat impressionistic to be taken as a serious attempt at interarts analysis.

No information is given about the date of the composition of the essays. This puts the reader at an obvious disadvantage in relating the collection to the important political changes that occurred in Central Europe in the late 1980s and led to a radical reinterpretation of the past of the region. The fact that two of the Hungarian contributors died some years before the book was published may suggest that at least some of the essays had been finished before Hungarian scholarship was liberated from political restrictions. The late István Király's essay on the poet and prose writer Dezső Kosztolányi reflects the Marxist ideology of György Lukács. Kosztolányi had a more profound affinity with such Austrian authors as Hofmannsthal, Rilke, and Karl Kraus than any other Hungarian writer. He translated Austrian poetry and published highly influential essays about it. A comparative analysis of his verse and fiction would be a significant contribution to a better understanding of the cultural creativity of Austro-Hungary. It is regrettable that Király's ideological bias made it impossible for him to see more in Kosztolányi than a writer whose message can be described in terms of the "alienation" and "dehumanization" characteristic of capitalist society.

As in most collections of occasional writings, the best essays are analytic inquiries which do not claim to present a panoramic view of the age. Miklós Szabolcsi develops a provocative argument by tracing back the innovations of 20th-century Hungarian prose to the journalism of the 1890s in "Wandlungen im ungarischen Feuilletonstil um die Jahrhundertwende". Géza Béla Németh takes a closer look at *Egyetemes Philológiai Közlemények* ("Contributions to General Philology"), a scholarly journal started by the Hungarian Academy in 1876. The focus in this study in the history of criticism is on the ideals of the bilingual editor Gusztáv Heinrich, and the method is truly comparative: the conclusion is that Heinrich's conception of cultural history was strongly affected by Western Liberalism and the Positivistic spirit of German science.

One of the most enjoyable essays is a portrait of Karl Lueger, mayor of Vienna. Karlheinz Rossbacher's inquiry is based on a close reading of contemporary accounts of the character of the most popular public figure in the empire of Franz Joseph. The presentation of the anti-intellectualism of the lawyer who made a political career as a representative of the petite bourgeoisie is highly instructive: his dislike of non-Austrians (Hungarians, Jews, etc.) appears as a paradigm of the irrationalistic Populism that proved to be a powerfully destructive force in the later history of Central Europe. No less far-reaching are the implications of the investigation made by Johann Holzner. His startingpoint is the provincial literature of Tirol around 1900, but his analysis moves on a far more general level; it reveals the tension between cosmopolitan urbanism and provincial ruralism which may explain the paradox of "Kakania", its high culture and resistance to sociopolitical modernization.

Whatever weaknesses the volume may possess, such essays make it a worthy contribution to the better understanding of the paradoxical ambiguity of a world which produced the most rigid and most

self-destructive state bureaucracy but was also the home of greatness in literature, art, and music. The activity of the bilateral committee which is behind the collection "*Kakania*" may have prepared the way for a more systematic study of the Habsburg Monarchy that will give full justice to the multilingual character of its culture.

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Béla G. Németh
Péterfy Jenő

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Es gibt um die Jahrhundertwende in der ungarischen Literatur eine Gestalt, die vom Gesichtspunkt der geistigen Orientierung und der denkerischen Autonomie ein organisch mit dem europäischen Zeitgeist zusammenhängendes, aber dennoch ein auf die eigene Fragestellung eine Antwort suchendes, literarisches Lebenswerk ihr eigen nennen kann: Jenő Péterfy. Die meisten der zu seinen Lebzeiten in Institutionen oder bei Zeitschriften in wichtigen leitenden Positionen tätigen Literaten haben das Wesen seines Werkes und seiner Person überhaupt nicht richtig erkannt. Die Nachwelt hingegen verspürte schon genau die außergewöhnliche entwicklungsgeschichtliche Bedeutung von Péterfys Denkweise in der ungarischen Literatur. Von seinen Zeitgenossen hielten ihn zum Beispiel Frigyes Riedl und Zoltán Ambrus, und von der Nachwelt János Horváth und Mihály Babits für einen der größten literaturkritischen Denker.

In der wissenschaftlichen Laufbahn von Béla G. Németh (der zur Zeit die Abteilung für Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft der Ungarischen Akademie der Wissenschaften leitet) hat die Beschäftigung mit Péterfy mehrfach, man kann vielleicht sagen, fortlaufend eine zentrale Rolle gespielt. Die jetzt in der Reihe „Irodalomtörténeti Füzetek“ (Literaturhistorische Hefte) erschienene kleine Monographie ist eine, die anfänglichen Ergebnisse zusammenfassende, vollkommen ausgereifte Arbeit. Vorläufer der jetzigen Publikation war die in der Reihe „Magyar Klasszikusok“ (Ungarische Klassiker) in Form einer längeren Studie verfaßte Einleitung zu „Péterfy Jenő válogatott művei“ (Jenő Péterfys ausgewählte Werke, 1962). Dann erschien 1988 in der Reihe „A Múlt Magyar Tudósai“ (Ungarische Gelehrte der Vergangenheit) in einer neuen Version diese Studie von Béla G. Németh über Péterfy, die den Umfang eines kleinen Buches hatte. In den letzten 40 Jahren publizierte 1972 nach langen Forschungsarbeiten noch István P. Zimándi eine Monographie über Péterfy. Diese Arbeit sticht durch ihren ein Zeitbild vermittelnden Reichtum an Angaben und durch ihre philologische Tatsachenaufdeckung hervor.

Béla G. Németh aber hat, aufbauend auf den besten europäischen Traditionen der Studien und der analytischen Essays mit seiner umsichtigen bildungsgeschichtlichen Methode eine geradezu vollkommen organisch ausgebildete psychologische, historische, ideengeschichtliche und philosophisch empfindsame Péterfy-Studie geschrieben. Als Erbe des geistigen Nachlasses von Péterfy zeigt er dem Leser jedes Hauptmotiv dieser geistigen Erscheinung. Er deckt Beziehungen mit seiner von der Bildungsgeschichte ausgehenden, geistiges Porträt und Laufbahn aufzeigenden literaturgeschichtlichen Methode auf, die zugleich analytisch und synthetisch ist. Für den Autor ist eine leider in der ungarischen Literaturgeschichte noch immer als ungewohnt geltende, auf außergewöhnlich tiefer Kenntnis der Zeit gründender Anspruch auf Vollkommenheit bezeichnend: er vermag das Weltbild des Kritikers Péterfy, seine literarische Empfindsamkeit und Empfänglichkeit für die Kunst zum Gegenstand komparativer