

I arrived at 1 o' clock pm to the entrance of his house's door. After some seconds of the ring Bob stood in front of me. I was pleased that his condition was not so bad on this day. We entered to the study and he offered me a seat, near the painting stand. The walls were decorated with his nice, favorite pictures. Music was sounded, such soft, body and spirit tranquil classical Vienna music in the room. Before I arrived he had been working on his manuscript, it seemed a good signal. When I asked about his health condition he answered pessimistically, his voice was full of quiet sadness. He lost a lot weight and his hair began to fall because of chemotherapy treatment. He told me that he was very ill and would not be able to work in new university building very ill. He absolutely knew all on his condition so I could hardly tell him that there always was chance. Glancing at the painting stand I asked whether he

painted. He nodded, but added that his arms were very weak and had to stop it quickly. I tried to encourage him that after the chemotherapy treatment he would get more and more powder. I was not really frank, but I wanted to be optimistic. I realized a deep sadness in his eyes.

When I gave him the report on my results he suddenly began to read it and asked me. Explaining him the figures he coughed more times. I suggested that I brought a little water but he indicated, did not need.

During our talking he remembered his Hungarian visit and Lake Balaton whose climate and atmosphere impressed on him very much at the end of nineties.

After half hour being here I felt that he became tired. I was very sad to say goodbye, but I hoped the miracle.

Contemporary Hungarian Literature

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My Fulbright research grant allowed me to have a very productive five-month stay at the University of California, San Diego. It was a rare privilege not to have any other academic responsibilities but research and writing; I could really focus on my theoretical project on the performative and performance aspects of identity construction in American literature. Having worked at UCSD on several occasions earlier (in 1981-82 I was there on an IREX grant, later, in 1986, 1987, and 2002 on short research visits), UCSD was familiar territory for me, with many friends and professional contacts. Everything and everyone on campus contributed to an optimal work environment: the library had the best resources, books, journals, and electronic services; my sponsor, Professor Donald Wesling, has devoted a lot of time to working with me; the faculty were friendly and accessible; the campus was beautiful, the days were long, the weather was perfect. Also, visiting classes, having consultations with several faculty members, and attending the department's various events, especially public lectures and readings, my attention was drawn to some critical and theoretical issues that I had not been familiar with, or had not considered, previously. Among the benefits I should also list my being able to buy books (I spent over \$2,500 on books) and bring them home so that they could be used in research and teaching. (Given the poor library facilities in my home university, in some cases I had to buy multiple copies for students back home.)

1. Research projects completed

1.1. *Az amerikai irodalom története* [*A History of American Literature*] I spent the first six weeks or so of my Fulbright grant doing the last touches on my manuscript just going into printing. This was *A History of American Literature* in Hungarian, published later in the fall (Budapest: Osiris, 2005, 874 pp). I had to survey the most recent critical literature; get an update on the most recent surveys (literary histories, period & movement histories); get a distance from my six year research and check dates of death. Having had discussions with faculty, looked into syllabi, and visited classes, I came to do major revision over the manuscript (such as rearrange the chapters). I also had to find a good image for the cover, one that could be read as the metaphor of how American literature has been continually restoring and reconstructing American values. The image of the Statue of Liberty in scaffolds does, I trust, convey this message.

A grand survey of American literature from its native pre-colonial beginnings to end of the 20th century, my book sets out to uncover the pluralism of American literature and the multiplicity of literary and interpretive canons. In addition to the traditional canon representing the culture of dominant social groups and producing the all too familiar national narratives, this *History* portrays the multi-cultural canon of representation as well as the canon of avant-garde experimentation. In other words, side by side with the familiar "Great Books," the writings

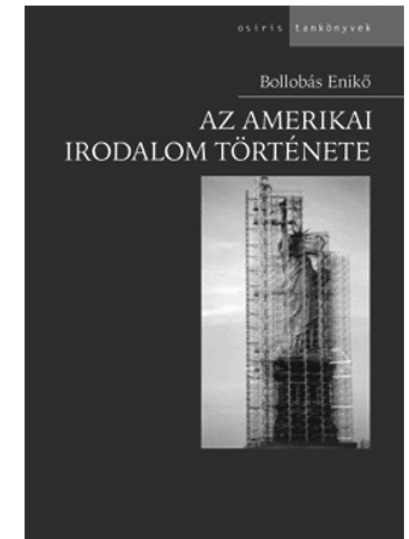
of previously muted minorities – women, African Americans, Native Americans, Chicanos, gays and lesbians, and others – are treated as integral and representative works. At the same time, the history of avant-gardism – the impulse to innovate, renew, change, and experiment even at the expense of being "difficult" or inaccessible – is being surveyed with similar scrutiny. The ultimate thesis of the book concerns one of the most exciting questions of U.S. literature: how representational diversity and experimentation compete for furnishing its unique "Americanness."

1.2. *Speaking Acts and Performing Texts: Reading Gender, Race, Sexual, and Non-Human Identity through the Performative in American Literature*

This was my major research project, being written into a new book with a similar title. Here I focus on how acts are performed in literature, creating an interaction between writer, text, and reader. Acts are therefore understood as being performed by both writer and reader; both writing and reading are considered forms of doing. It is also about how these acts bring about changes in both the textual and the actual world we inhabit. My assumption is that while text is the locus, the primary existence of these acts – they are performed in the text through the participation of writer and reader – they interact with context in both determining and being determined by it. In other words, they bring about changes not only in their immediate texts, but also in their contexts, textual and otherwise.

Moreover, these acts always engage the large contexts, of cultural narratives which serve as common ground in communication; by this engagement they either affirm or revise the contexts that frame them.

I have been interested in a particular set of difficult authors and texts, where the difficulties arise not from representation but performance, framing, and the crossing and revision of frames. Certain poems seem to be difficult not because of what they mean but how they mean. Iconic and concrete, as well as objectivist, gestural, and visual poetry, for example, makes the claim of not just being about things but the thing itself. Emily Dickinson seems to play an elusive game with the reader, who is allowed to see masks and poses as her supposedly real self. Even her metaphors are enigmatic, blocking rather than allowing access to herself: typically, she will empty out the concrete part of her metaphors and make, instead, the abstractions concrete and tangible. Henry James's *In the Cage* presents the telegraphist who lives in a world she has constructed out of the telegraphs that pass through her hands. Her reading of the telegraphs is fictioned by her own assumptions, while James helps (manipulates?) his readers to construct (fiction?) a different reading of the events – and ultimately of his text – by allowing a very different set of frame assumptions to emerge within the context. *The Beast in the Jungle* holds up textual tension by both revealing and not revealing the secret: the ghost of homosexuality makes its performance around the silence of the empty signifier. Not



only is the boundary between the real and the fictioned worlds always crossed in Mark Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*, but it becomes clear that what we experience as real is only a matter of performance. At the end it turns out that it is *this* world, the physical one, that does not exist; reality loses its ontological grounding and will be swallowed by or collapsed into the constructed-performed world of dream and imagination. Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* lays bare the linguistic basis of *dramatic acts*: artifice and artifact have a high visibility as the drama openly deploys rhetorical and pragmatic processes that violate some basic rules and assumptions of communication, while Robert Lowell's *The Old Glory* and Paula Vogel's *And Baby Makes Seven* presupposes certain textual knowledge on the part of the reader. In Gertrude Stein's *Three*

Lives, H. D.'s *HERmione*, Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*, and Willa Cather's *My Antonia* the characters perform acts of identity which invalidate common ground frame assumptions; while the performative acts cite these assumptions, they revise them too. In Robert Duncan's *The H.D. Book* the poet uncovers the hidden scripts of female intellectualism and female sexuality by some transgendered performative sympathy, whereby he both makes these scripts visible and playfully assumes their identities in a performative manner. James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* presents a plot of racial, sexual, and gender transgression. A boy of mixed racial ancestry, feminized in his homosexual relationship to his white patron, the protagonist passes, by performance, as a white heterosexual male by the end of the novel. Non-human identities are performatively assumed in such diverse pieces as Edward Albee's *The Goat*, D.H. Lawrence's *The Fox and St. Mawr*, William Faulkner's *The Bear*, Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis," Gabriel García Márquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings," Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog*, John Steinbeck's "The Chrysanthemums," Richard Wright's *Native Son* (woman as black cat), and Frank Norris's "Lauth."

The texts perform acts in these pieces, and meanings come about through performative textual processes and/or the evocation of presuppositions and other frame assumptions. I identify performatives and presuppositions as tools that help explain what happens *inside* texts: what texts *do*, as opposed to what they

refer to. They shed light on how meanings are constructed when *acts are performed* in texts and *other text are cited*.

My interest in these texts goes beyond the challenge posed by their difficulty. Several of these texts have new critical readings, and these readings seem to be taken for granted as much as contrary readings were before. I am interested, therefore, in the mechanics and background of this interpretive tide change. What is it that triggers revisionist readings of the American canon, and what is it that can overwrite or nullify previously current readings, which were considered as obvious at their time as the new readings are today? To answer these questions, I identify the performative processes in texts and their dynamic interaction, dialogue, with presuppositions and other frame assumptions. These pragmatic processes will be seen to characterize both the literary text and its reception, hence the performative and the presuppositions will be helpful tools in both exploring the nature of these difficult texts and understanding the reasons for why competing readings have evolved.

Performatives and presuppositions, linguistic and pragmatic concepts I will define early on, are tools for exploring how meanings are produced by the interaction of text and context, the dialogue of writer and reader. Indeed, textual acts brought about by such interaction account for a new readerly involvement too. Texts will be meaningful for those who participate in the interactional process between reader and text, who respond to the textual acts and citations performed.

Obviously, the reader's subject position will play an important role in this interaction, for every reader will have different responses to the acts and the citations. Indeed, not only does the reader emerge as active participant but the same text can have different meanings for different readers in different situations. And these different responses to the text will create different experiences of the text too. As such, language becomes force: something that happens.

In my book I first give a short survey of linguistic pragmatics. Next, I explore the relevant pragmatic concepts applicable to the study of literature. I then investigate how performatives are seen to act in, and interact with, contexts and frames, in the literary text. I discuss the phenomenon commonly called word magic, iconic and concrete poetry, the material text, visual and performance poetry, the wounding power of speech. The next chapter explores the verbal construction of alternative realities in some 19th century American poetry and fiction. When describing the dramatic use of speech acts I investigate various language games such as irony and deceit, as well as intertextuality. Exploring the ways the performative has recently entered the contested ground of social construction theories, I provide instances of the performative construction of gender, racial, and sexual, identity and boundary crossing thereof, and show how presuppositions form a key component of such identity constructions and transgressions.

Of this book I managed to complete 180 pages during my Fulbright grant (ca. 75%

of the book); the remaining chapters are there in a synopsis form, but supported by a huge collection of research materials. Hopefully I can finish it over the next few months. I also have two chapters accepted for publication by *The Journal of Pragmatics*.

2. Lecture trip to Montana and Oregon

My lecture trip to Oregon and Montana was sponsored by the Occasional Lecture Program. At the University of Oregon, Eugene, and at the State University of Oregon, Corvallis, I gave talks about women in post-communism, gender studies in Hungary, and the feminist perspective in literary criticism in East-Central Europe. I gave two lectures at the University of Montana, Missoula, (English and Women's Studies); both grew out of my Fulbright research project, the performative-discursive constructions of gender, race, and sexuality.

3. Guest-editing a Hungarian issue of *Tó Tópos*

During my lecture trip I had a meeting with the editorial board of the journal *Tó Tópos (Poetry International)*, where I agreed to be guest editor of a special issue devoted to Hungarian poetry. This issue has since come out, with a rather comprehensive overview of contemporary Hungarian poetry.

Here is an excerpt from my Introduction.

“If there were to be a national vote among Hungarians as to what part of their culture (if anything) they are most proud of, their difficult language, their tragic history, and the grim pessimism of the Hungarian character would surely be among the top-ranking objects of national pride.

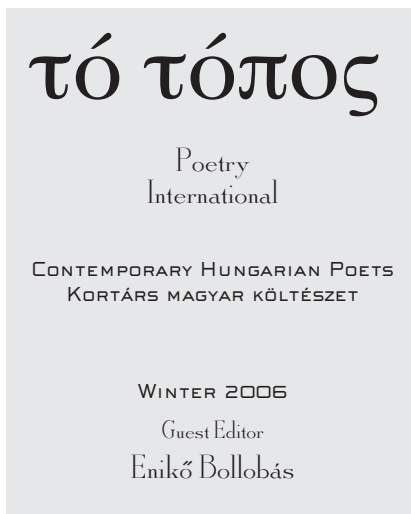
Joking aside, somewhere in these possible self-images would lie, I suggest, the centrality for Hungarian culture, of literature, and of poetry in particular. For it is a culture that both reflects and is produced by a history peppered with oppression, failed revolutions, and a strange (Finno-Ugric) language related only to Finnish and Estonian in Europe, hopelessly difficult for speakers of Romance, Germanic, and Slavic languages (just about everyone else in Europe). Its psychological disposition to hopelessness is evinced in its consistently top rank in the world’s suicide’s rates.

In spite of the successive waves of “modernization” or “Westernization” this Central-European country has gone through in the past century, poetry is still a highly respected intellectual enterprise, with poets whose word seems to count even when they are not writing poetry. People

still read poems just for fun, and they still go to bookstores to browse through poetry sections and then to buy the books that caught their attention. Of course, the world would be a better place with less television and more poetry in Hungary too, but I’m afraid this is yet a moment in history we will be nostalgic about later. Like the “average year” for a Hungarian: worse than the previous one, but better than the one coming after . . .

With the poetry gathered here we tried to provide a glimpse into the variety that so characterizes contemporary poetic writing – of men and women, formalists and experimentalists, realists and surrealists, Roma poets and “minority poets” (Hungarian poets living as minorities in countries surrounding Hungary), those preoccupied with space and those preoccupied with time.”

I returned to Hungary with fresh ideas, intellectually recharged after five months on the campus of a very fine American university. I felt full of energy and determination to continue my work of importing American ideas – in the form of American Studies and American Literature – from the U.S. to my home country.



Philosophy and Literature – Literature and Philosophy

Géza Kállay

Dear Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you very much for the invitation and for coming tonight. The occasion, needless to say, is my return from the University of California, Santa Cruz, where I spent the Academic Year 2004-05 with a Fulbright Grant. I suppose I should also give a full account of my Family’s and my stay there, yet I think it makes this occasion even more exciting, if I do not only speak about our very pleasant and useful, but personal adventures: that, for example, in Santa Cruz High School and in Westlake Elementary School, respectively, all my three daughters have learnt wonderful English, which is an invaluable treasure for life, and for which we are for ever grateful. It would be tempting to go on and make mention of my wonderful colleagues at UCSC, many of whom have become friends, or about the beautiful scenery in the Monterey Bay area, yet now I will try to give an account of what was happening in my mind, while I was sitting in my office overlooking the redwood forest and, on other occasions, the Pacific Ocean, with all internet and library facilities at my disposal. That could be called the ‘research’ part of my stay, while my primary duty was to give five courses over three quarters: two on East- and Central European Literature and one on the genre of Comedy for the Literature Department, and one on Metaphor and another on the Vienna Circle and Wittgenstein for the Department of Philosophy. But since I had the rare opportunity to teach both literature and philosophy ‘legally’, and in a parallel fashion (a privilege not all universities would have granted me), even preparation for my classes was often thinking about literature and philosophy or philosophy and literature, to the extent that at one point I was inclined to coin the name of a new discipline, philostructure and literophy, in Hungarian perhaps “filozalom és irozófia” or “literazófia és filozotúra”. In Santa Cruz, first and foremost, I tried to cut myself some paths in the jungle, thinking about possible ways in which these two disciplines might be related at all, heavily relying, of course, on the material available in my printed and electronic resources. I must confess that while going through especially some of the philosophical stuff, I often felt like the fallen angels in Pandemonium, who, as Milton tells us in Paradise Lost