

# On Board of the „Fulbright Scholar” Ship: Research in America

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I should probably apologize for the dubious pun in the title, but my seven-month Fulbright scholarship in 2002-2003 really felt like an exciting transatlantic voyage on board of a ship called the "Fulbright Scholar". It was a fruitful voyage, productive in terms of research and rich in cultural experiences. On board of the ship that left Hungary in September 2002 there were the three of us, that is, my wife, our son, and myself, and we felt all the way through that our time both in New York and (thanks to an additional three-month fellowship by the Folger Shakespeare Library) in Washington was most rewarding, and we would cherish fond memories of the trip for the rest of our life. My wife is a literary scholar, our son (my beloved stepson) is a student of mathematics, and the universities (first and foremost Columbia University) and the libraries (the "Butler" of Columbia, The New York Public Library, The Folger, The Library of Congress) we visited were very hospitable to them as well, so all of us could develop professionally during the ten months on the East Coast. Let me mention three inspiring colleagues from Columbia, professors David Scott Kastan, David Damrosch, and Jean E. Howard, all of whom were very helpful, ever generous with their time, ready to discuss budding ideas. A professor of mathematics from New York University, János Pach, helped our son to audit at the Courant Institute. During this period I gave some guest lectures at several institutions: "Camel, Weasel, Whale: The Cloud-Scene in *Hamlet* as a Hungarian Parable" at Columbia University; "»By What Authority?« The Leavis-Moore Controversy and the

Concerns of Scholarship”, as the Annual Harry T. Moore Lecture at the University of Southern Illinois, in Carbondale; ”»How I Became a Hungarian?« The Odyssey of a 19th-century Hungarian scholar”, at the Library of Congress. I also participated in a conference organized at Columbia University by the American-Hungarian Educators’ Association, the title of my paper was ”Myths of Fatherhood: Toldy, Gerwinus, and Literary History”. At the end I was invited to give an MA course on ”Alexander Pope and English Philosophical Poetry” at the University of California, Irvine, so finally we had two summer months to enjoy the beauties of the West Coast before the voyage ended and our ship returned home in August 2003. By then I had accumulated most of the material needed for my next two books, wrote several chapters in draft, and, thanks to the new perspective provided by a distant point of view, planned my long-term research and writing for years to come.

Meantime, my initial plan of research had been slightly transformed. Initially, when applying for the Fulbright scholarship, the idea was to write just one book, on Romanticism, to be titled *The Romantic Legacy in Literary Historiography: A Comparative Analysis*, as a sequel to my first book published in English, *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare: Literary Reception in Anthropological Perspective* (London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin’s Press, 1998). The motivation behind this initial plan was that my personal interest in this topic had been increasingly reassured by a favourable turn in the intellectual climate. Since the 1990s one could sense a renewed

academic interest both in the period of Romanticism (let me mention only the new Macmillan series, *Romanticism in Perspective: Texts, Cultures, Histories*, or the numerous reconsiderations of the diverse theoretical assumptions of M. H. Abrams, Paul de Man, and Jerome McGann), and in the history of nineteenth-century historiography and literary scholarship, leading to collections of studies which look at the subject in new contexts, viewing it mainly in connection with the forming of nations (let it suffice to mention *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha, London and New York: Routledge, 1990; *Nation Building and Writing Literary History*, ed. Menno Spiering, Amsterdam and Atlanta: GA. Rodopi, 1999; *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800*, eds. Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, Kevin Passmore, London and New York: Routledge, 1999). In the 1990s, amidst all sorts of academic, pedagogical, and administrative duties, I gave occasional seminars on the emergence of English literary historiography, tried to save time for research on the genesis of German and Hungarian literary historiography, and wrote several conference-papers on the subject. (”To Vindicate the Nation: The Romantic Legacy in Hungarian Literary Histories”, in: *Europäische Romantik und nationale Identität. Sándor Petöfi im Spiegel der 1848er Epoche*, ed. Csilla Erdödy-Csorba, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999. pp. 129–135.; ”Abstammungsmythen in der ungarischen Literaturgeschichte”, in: *Geschichtliche Mythen in den Literaturen und Kulturen Ostmittel- und Südosteuropas*, eds. Eva Behring, Ludwig Richter,

Wolfgang Schwarz. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999, pp. 347–356.; ”A nemzeti nagyelbeszélés újjászületése. A narratív identitás műfajvándorlása irodalomtól tudományig” (”The Rebirth of the National *Grand Récit*: The Peregrination of Narrative Identity from Literature to Scholarship”), in: *Nemzeti romantika és európai identitás. Tanulmányok a romantikáról (National Romanticism and European Identity: Studies on Romanticism)*, ed. Anna Cséve, Budapest: Petöfi Irodalmi Múzeum és Kortárs Irodalmi Központ, 1999, pp. 155–179.) All these preliminary works fell into a comprehensive pattern that was to be tested by further research and the result could be articulated in a new book. I thought I needed 10 peaceful months to complete my preparations by doing the necessary research on English and American literary histories of the Romantic and post-Romantic periods, by organising the material for a thorough comparative analysis, and by writing at least the first draft of the book itself. In *The Romantic Legacy in Literary Historiography: A Comparative Analysis* I wanted to focus on how the discipline of literary historiography and the scholarly genre of literary history emerged out of the post-Romantic world. I wanted to detect how the role and figure of the literary historian took shape, how literary history became the new grand narrative of the nation (inheriting some of its legitimating functions from the epic), how its historical vision, point of view, rhetoric, and vocabulary became indebted to romantic poetry, how all these traces reveal that literary historiography, in spite of its superior pronouncements about the

unreliability of poetic truth or fiction in general, to a considerable extent *grew out of poetry*.

Most of this plan remained, but came to be integrated in a more comprehensive project that was to be articulated in two books, one on the genesis of Hungarian literary history writing, and another one on the history of vindication as a cultural function of the intellectual. In New York I soon realised that for both projects one should go back to the late eighteenth-century histories of literature in England, Germany, and Hungary, and analyse the rhetoric of vindication by which accusations of cultural inferiority were (reciprocally) refuted. In the 18th century numerous European authors produced inventories of their nation’s literary heritage to prove that it is not inferior to their haughty rivals, and such efforts gave a tremendous impetus to the rise of scholarship in these countries. I wanted to find out how (and *if*) the motivation behind the 19th-century rise of American literary historiography differed from this European tendency. As vindication had remained one of the strongest motives that prompted 19th century European scholars to write their literary histories, I wanted to analyse not only the ways in which historiography sought to vindicate the nation, but also how this aim was inherited from traditional duties of the intellectual, how it shaped the main genres of the discipline, and how it was to be reconciled with the emerging ideal of scholarly independence and with the acknowledged need for critical judgement. By investigating the rhetoric and even the sheer grammatical formulae of nineteenth

century literary histories I hoped to test whether or not the predilection of some distinguished European authors of the period to use the first person plural with metaphors of descent ("our predecessors", "our ancestors", "our forefathers"), and thereby to make literary history function like a genealogical myth in the service of the emerging nation, was applicable to early American literary histories. Since in Eastern Europe the vocabulary of this genealogical *grand récit* was haloed by sacralizing metaphors of the literary profession itself (the written work as an offer on the altar of our fatherland, the poet as martyr, even the scholar himself compared to an apostle, etc), I was planning to examine, compare, and interpret the transcendental allusions, wherever significant, in the literary histories of the four countries. As regards Shakespeare's share in all this, I wanted to investigate how and why Shakespeare was given the role of a father-figure, whether seemingly natural or apparently adopted, in the genealogical myth used by the rising profession of national scholars in the countries chosen for inspection. As I needed material pertaining to the scholarly reception of Shakespeare from the mid-18th century to the late 19th century I thought (rightly) that the Folger Shakespeare Library, together with the nearby Library of Congress, would be ideal for this part of my research.

If ever so slightly, the method was to differ from that of *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare: Literary Reception in Anthropological Perspective*, but it was to incorporate some of its methodological principles and theoretical assumptions. In

that book, trying to explore the coherence of a latent religious pattern in the reception of Shakespeare, I had to keep a wide focus so as to include (for comparative analysis) both the verbal and the non-verbal manifestations of cultic reverence in a unified field of research (mainly inspired by the cultural anthropologist Victor Turner), instead of the usual (and for my purposes, disabling) methodological dichotomy between an aristocratically exclusive attention to critical history and a hostile or at best condescending attitude to literary cults conceived of as mere conglomerates of amusing oddities. Now the focus was to be hardly less wide but for a different purpose: as I wanted to explore how the authorial roles and the rhetorical characteristics of Romantic poetry had contributed to the formation of post-Romantic literary historiography, and how both the Romantic birth-mark and the late nineteenth-century professionalization of this discipline had been shaped by the self-legitimizing (ideological and psychological) needs of the newly established or redifined political nations, I had to keep my focus wide enough to include both the poetic and the scholarly works of the nineteenth-century, to make them accessible for comparative analysis, and to acknowledge the possibility of influence between them in both directions instead of giving absolute priority to literature and treating literary historiography or scholarship as something derivative, merely secondary, or downright parasitical. As a general methodological guideline I fully agreed with Joep Leerssen's succinct point: „The history of literary history [...] has been

studied by literary scholars as a derivative epiphenomenon accompanying literary practice: as a sort of meta-literary history. [...] The time has perhaps come to release the practice of literary history-writing from its dependence on literary practice and to re-contextualize it. Some of the contexts in which the historical praxis of literary history-writing could be fruitfully studied include: the development and professionalization of general history-writing, the emergence of cultural history, the academic establishment and professionalization of the human sciences, the changing role of the academies and universities in the nineteenth-century nation-state, and the nineteenth-century penchant for canonizing, monumentalizing and commemorating the national past.” (Leerssen, in: Spiering 1999, pp. x–xi.) Let me add that my recontextualization was to include the genesis of literary historiography in terms of *genre*: one of my central hypotheses (based mainly on Hungarian case studies and to be tested by further comparative research) was that in some countries the history of national literature as a new scholarly genre took over some functions and even some characteristic features from the epic, creating a new distribution of labour in the comprehensive (poetic *and* scholarly) system of post-Romantic genres. To examine this I was to analyse the minutiae of both social and textual data, and had to narrow my focus, whenever needed, in order to highlight the telling details of microhistory.

The significance of this comparative research was easy to discover. It was symptomatic that in Menno Spiering's pioneering collection of studies, *Nation*

*Building and Writing Literary History* (1999), the range of the countries discussed did not include a single East European example. Most of the recent monographs or studies on the subject confined themselves either to Western or to Eastern countries, as was the case in Shakespeare studies as well, where you could find anthologies like *The Romantics on Shakespeare*, in which "the" Romantics were all English, German, or French. As I tried to bridge this separating gap between East and West by a more comprehensive research strategy in *The Romantic Cult of Shakespeare*, in the new projects I wanted to show that four countries, two from Western Europe (England and Germany), one from the region of Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary), and the United States deserve to be analysed together because of their latent connections, interesting similarities and no less revealing differences. Three of these four countries figured in René Wellek's *Confrontations: Studies in the intellectual and literary relations between Germany, England, and the United States during the nineteenth century*, an important little book he published back in 1965, containing, as he put it in his *Preface*, "studies on German-English and German-American literary and philosophical relations during the Romantic Age". (I gratefully acknowledge here that Wellek himself generously supported my work by sending me encouraging letters, books, and offprints, all through the 1980s, when it was much less possible for Hungarian intellectuals to travel to conferences in the West.) By this comparative analysis I wanted to show that the Romanticism of Hungarian culture, a culture that in the early nineteenth century (and lamentably

often ever since) suffered from an undue inferiority complex, had interesting and valuable things to offer to Western literature and scholarship. As regards the significance of the new research and writing for my own professional development, after having written books on the history of literary *cults* and the history of literary *criticism* respectively, I hoped to get my third major possibility to study the social ways of appropriating literature, this time in the history of literary *scholarship*. I have always felt that these three means of appropriating literature are interconnected, and now, studying the last of the three, I was hoping to unearth some hidden aspects of their mutual connection. Personally, being 53 years old in 2002, I was looking forward to a carefree academic year of full-time research in an inspiring environment, before the next hectic period of university and institute responsibilities would take over, making the time for sustained archival work as difficult to spare as ever.

The fruits that resulted from the Fulbright and Folger scholarships are numerous, and more than the first half of the double plan has already been accomplished. In terms of publication this means the completion and publication of a monograph, my bulkiest ever, titled *Egy nemzeti tudomány születése: Toldy Ferenc és a magyar irodalomtörténet (The Birth of a National Scholarship: Ferenc Toldy and Hungarian Literary History)*, Budapest: Akadémiai, Universitas, 2004, 1028 pages. As the text is in Hungarian, let me mention here that there is a due acknowledgement of the benefits of my Fulbright scholarship and the inspiring intellectual climate of Columbia University at the end of the Preface, on page 17. In

addition, there are several publications in English. I gave a version of a paper, "Camel, Weasel, Whale: The Cloud-Scene in *Hamlet* as a Hungarian Parable", at the Department of English and Comparative Literature of Columbia University, and another version of it at a Shakespeare conference in Basel, and the final version was subsequently published in America as part of the book *Shifting the Scene: Shakespeare in European Culture*, edited by Ladina Bezzola Lambert and Balz Engler, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004, pp. 95–110. I published "Weimar, Shakespeare and the Birth of Hungarian Literary History" in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, volume 141, ed. Ina Schabert, Bochum: Verlag und Druckkontor Kamp GmbH, 2005, pp. 98–118. Another related paper, "Shakespeare, Pope, and the Philosophy of Vindication" will be published in a volume growing out of an international conference on "Shakespeare and Philosophy in a Multicultural World". More importantly, I am systematically working on the material accumulated during my Fulbright and Folger scholarships in America, and I am getting closer to writing the second book, in English, on the genres and history of vindication in 18th-century England. Remembering the painted glass window of the Old Reading Room in the Folger, with its emblematic figures representing the seven ages of man from *As You Like It*, now is the time in my life to do it. One day, maybe in five years' time, that book will be completed, and I will surely acknowledge that it would not have been possible to write it without the research started during my Fulbright months in America. I am grateful.

# Your Right to your Language

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One good thing among the many about the Fulbright program is its Occasional Lecturer Program whereby visiting scholars can lecture to students and faculty at an American university other than their host institution. In March 2003, I spoke at the Linguistics Colloquium of the University of North Texas on a topic that is of the utmost importance to me: language rights and language-based social discrimination. If I can believe my hosts, Professors Patricia Cukor-Avila, John R. Ross, and Shobbana L. Chelliah, the talk was received favorably by both students and faculty. What follows below is a reconstruction from the notes of my Texas lecture. It also formed part of the workshop on Linguistic Human Rights I gave at the Linguistic Society of America Summer Institute on July 11 and 12, 2003, in East Lansing, Michigan.

## 1. Introduction

Many people suffer from Linguistic Human Rights violations but they may be unaware of it. If you are a native speaker of English in Texas or Michigan, or a native speaker of Hungarian in Hungary, you may think your language rights are not being violated, but

if you are a native speaker of Spanish in Texas or Michigan, or a native speaker of Gypsy/Romany in Hungary, you may be rather sensitive to language rights violations. You may even have experienced them. In this paper I hope to show that there is a good reason for the differential perception of language rights violations between native speakers and nonnative

speakers of a language, but I will also show that most native speakers' language rights are also violated, hence the parentheses around "variety" in the title.

Language rights as social problems have been with us from time immemorial, but awareness of them is quite new. When I took linguistics classes at Indiana University-Bloomington in 1978–81,