

Doctoral Dissertation Theses

Bernadett Varga

“I AM JUST WANDERING LIKE ONE WITHOUT A HEART”
PÁL KERESZTÚRI BÍRÓ AND THE *MENNYEI TÁRSALKODÁS*



Doctoral School of Literary Studies
Faculty of Arts, University of Miskolc
Classical textology program

Miskolc

2013

Head of the Doctoral School

Prof. Dr. Gábor Kecskeméti , DSc, full professor

Thesis supervisor

Prof. Dr. János Heltai, full professor

I. Topic of the dissertation

Text types of early modern devotional literature (e.g. sermons, catechisms, private and community songs and prayers, meditations and consoling books and books on the right way of life) had a long-term impact on the thinking, language use and life style of 16th and 17th century communities organised on religious/theological bases. Large-scale publishing of small hand-held books, usually in octavo or smaller formats, for maintaining private or community piety offered immediate returns and was thus a secure investment. Considering the small numbers of extant copies shows that they were actually used to their end. The present dissertation focuses on the critical textual publication of Pál Keresztúri Bíró's *Mennyei társalkodás* [Celestial conversation], with related comments. The dialogue between God and the pious writer, lamenting his sins, was first issued in 1645 (probably at Gyulafehérvár) and was reprinted eleven times over the subsequent nearly 200 years. The booklet is the more noteworthy as in his examination of the piety of the 18th century Hungarian Reformed Church, Dénes Dienes claims no less than that "[in the 18th century] besides the *Praxis Pietatis*, the *Mennyei társalkodás* must have been the work boosting the development of the pious genre."

II. Antecedents of the dissertation and related points

II. 1. The Keresztúri-research

Research into the oeuvres of writers forming the Protestant intellectual circle around Gábor Bethlen and György Rákóczi I and II runs parallel to the interpretation and publication of their texts. In 2001 Dénes Dienes came out with an outstanding gap-filling monograph about Pál Keresztúri Bíró, a member of this circle. In order to identify the position of the present dissertation, the scholarly path leading to this biography and subsequent research will be described below.

The first manifestation of the Keresztúri reception is a summary of his teaching methods given in Miklós Bethlen's *Autobiography*. Using subjective criteria, the student introduces his master through his own story. Nevertheless, he does this as a conscious chronicler, as he is fully aware of the fact that his is the first summary of Keresztúri's pedagogy. On the pages of his *Autobiography*, Miklós Bethlen remembers János Apácai Csere in a similar context. In the words of József Jankovics "as an instinctive teacher, he

spreads their achievements, propagating their most fruitful methods, at least now at the time of summing up his own life.” There is no space here for interpolating Keresztúri’s educational activity based on Ramist theoretical grounds, but it is a fact that modern scholarly interest in Keresztúri was for a long time concentrated on this well-known pedagogical method of the time, as deduced from Bethlen’s description.

The ecclesiastical author Keresztúri is first heard of when in 1744 Kata Bethlen [who called herself Kata Bethlen the Orphan] had his *Egyenes ösvény a sz(ent) életre vágyodoknak...* [Clear instructions to those aspiring for a sacred life] reprinted (Várad, 1653). According to Mihály Kovács, Kata Bethlen’s former court preacher, who authored the introduction, this was because “he noticed the shortage of useful books encouraging piety in our native tongue.” This collection of preaching is “worthy [...] of your majesty’s guardianship as each of its pages contains instructions for the way to sanctity and recognising and purging sins.”

After these precedents, Péter Bod, who was also serving in Kata Bethlen’s court, evidently included Keresztúri in his *Magyar Athenas* [Hungarian Athenas]. Bod’s entry is also based on Miklós Bethlen’s data, but in addition to introducing Keresztúri as an educator, he is the first to give facts about his activity as a court priest and about his printed works.

In the course of the 18th century, Keresztúri is present in public thinking “merely” in the form of his texts: this is when the *Mennyei társalkodás* sees most of its reprints, although none of them includes any evaluation of the author.

Subsequently, Keresztúri’s name emerges in the scholarly literature about religious disputes as late as the end of the 19th century. This is when György Rákóczi I’s and Ferdinand III’s mutual book confiscation campaigns in 1640–1642 are first described by János Reizer, then Sándor Szilágyi, and finally by János Illésy in the *Magyar Könyvszemle* [Hungarian Book Review] periodical. Here we encounter Keresztúri as the author of the pamphlet called *Talio*, an anonymous reply to a Catholic libel against Zsuzsanna Lorántffy. These studies deal with the ensuing diplomatic complications and issues of authorship.

Later, Jenő Zoványi devotes a separate entry to Keresztúri in his *Magyarországi protestáns egyháztörténeti lexikon* [Hungarian Protestant Church History Encyclopaedia], mostly relying on data from Sándor Szilágyi’s above-cited article on the *Talio* affair. There are a few references also in Jenő Zoványi’s *A magyarországi protestantismus története 1895-ig* [The History of Hungarian Protestantism up to 1895], where Keresztúri is presented as an outstanding educator of the age in connection with the *Csecsemő keresztyén...* [A baby Christian...] catechism, first published in Hungarian at Gyulafehérvár in 1638. In the same

place, Keresztúri also features as a disputant: In addition to the *Talio*, Zoványi attributes the anonymously issued piece *Papistak meltatlan üldözése a vallásért...* [Papists' undeserved prosecution] to him.

Another renowned church historian, Géza Nagy also makes particular comments about Keresztúri in his monograph about the history of the Reformed Church from 1608 to 1715, primarily acknowledging his achievements as an educator but not adding any new findings.

In contrast, János Herepei shares considerable new information about Keresztúri's life in his *Adattár* [Datastore], and formulates the need for a possible monograph. He notes that "as a writer, but especially as an educator, Keresztúri occupies a prestigious place in our cultural history [...], but] his life and work still have to be processed."

Although the monograph still takes a long time to produce, in 1976 the *Református Szemle* [Reformed Review] carried a short study by Dániel Borbáth, interpreting Keresztúri's practice of preaching, the main value of which is most probably the related text. At this point, Keresztúri was brought back into the public eye as an author of preaching. Although the publication of the text may have been a springboard for further research, Borbáth's study does not seem to have attracted sufficient attention.

Subsequently, the *Teológiai Szemle* [Theological Review] published Jr. Endre Szabó's reading of the *Mennyei társalkodás* from the perspective of the Puritanical penitence practice. This work is also valuable for including a number of excerpts from the original. Otherwise, the analysis is overshadowed by the attempt to convince the reader to see the theological reasoning as an act of proselytization.

As noted earlier, there is a considerable educational historical interest in the Keresztúri oeuvre. Accordingly, based on Bethlen's recollections Imre Bán and József Jankovics reconstructed the Keresztúri method in comparison with the pedagogies of Apácai and Comenius.

In his study called *Szent atyák öröme...* [The Joy of the Sacred Fathers...], János Heltai placed the dispute between Pál Medgyesi and the Jesuit Dániel Vásárhelyi into a wider literary and historical context, while showing Keresztúri's *Talio* pamphlet in a new light, stressing that it was the *Talio* affair "that had confirmed [György Rákóczi I's] conviction that he could not allow printers to work without supervision."

It was also János Heltai who concluded that the 1645 volume, *Az egész kereztényi vallásnak rövid fundamentomi* [The Brief Fundaments of the Entire Christian Religion] issued at Gyulafehérvár and containing three smaller works must have been authored by Keresztúri

It is an outstanding point in the Keresztúri research that in the third volume of the *Régi Magyarországi Nyomtatványok* [RMNY - Old Hungarian Prints] the bibliography of the full printed Keresztúri oeuvre is processed, making it available to the wider public. These items are vital for the topic because they place the relevant philological, bibliographical, literary, printing and church historical knowledge into a new context, and add further findings to it, which lays the foundations for rethinking Keresztúri and producing a possible monograph.

The first Keresztúri monograph came out not long after the third volume of RMNY. Dénes Dienes's *Pál Keresztúri Bíró (1594?–1655)* applies considerations of the church, education, piety and cultural history, building on available findings and including additional sources. Dienes wrote Pál Keresztúri's detailed biography, placing his figure into Hungarian church and educational history through his various posts and functions. It is especially noteworthy that Dienes reconstructed the portrait of Keresztúri as a teacher in more detail than anyone before, widening the analysis by using for comparison the findings of modern Hungarian and international research into school history. When portraying Keresztúri as a pastor, Dienes overviews the oeuvre from the points of religious dispute, preaching and spiritual guardianship, grouping the texts accordingly and citing them inside the monograph, as well as in the attached short reader at the end of the volume.

Even after the much-needed monograph, Keresztúri's works did not lose interest in the literature. Thanks to Éva Petrőczy, we have a study on Keresztúri's christening preaching, not processed in the Dienes monograph, in which Petrőczy sensitively emphasises Keresztúri's "fatherly" emotions that as György's former tutor and court priest, as well as Zsófia Báthori's spiritual leader he cherished for the young princely couple.

Subsequently, Ibolya Maczák compared the textual strategies of four 17th century authors (the Catholic Péter Pázmány and György Káldi, the Reformed Pál Keresztúri, and Mihály Tofeus, whom the author regards as Evangelical) related to psalms 22/23. Concerning the dispute-neutral topos of the good pastor and the variety of sources included in the interpretation, Maczák speculates that there may have been a shared concordance that all the authors used, but the selection and rhetorical organisation were not guided by denominational criteria.

Although as it can be seen, the Keresztúri research has received new impetus over the past ten years, it is thought that by applying the approaches of additional disciplines (philology, textology, rhetoric, poetics, genre theory and the history of printing), Keresztúri's life work deserves repeated investigation.

II. 2. Research into meditation and prayers

As one of the goals of the present paper is to read the *Mennyei társalkodás* also from a genre theoretical perspective, possible contact points of meditation and prayer research are to be overviewed.

For the analysis of the modern meditation and prayer literature, primarily work by Gábor Tüskés, Csilla Gábor, Klára Erdei and Gergely Tamás Fazakas is relevant. Further important conclusions about the two genres are drawn by János Heltai, who groups and presents early 17th century printers' products according to genre and function. The authors cited apply similar methods for exploring the Hungarian meditation and prayer literature, as "contemporary authors usually defined meditation in its relation to prayer, defining it as one type of prayer [...] There are no theoretical works for constructing meditations or their formal and substantial issues", for this reason they get closer "to the poetic and rhetorical requirements of texts" through "analysing the pieces and collecting the random comments about the theory of meditation."

Related to the investigation of the two genres, the clearly tangible denominational approach is to be noted, according to which Fazakas, among others, referring to tendencies in predecessors' works, definitely distinguishes between Catholic and Protestant prayer book traditions, concentrating his own attention exclusively on Protestant prayers. The same is true for Gábor Tüskés's choice of material, as out of the Catholic ascetic literature, he focuses on the Jesuits' meditations. A similar perspective is present in the work of Klára Erdei, who discusses 16th century meditation literature in a way that she defines the genre as denominationally different possible answers to different spiritual crises. Thus, she distinguishes between Catholic, Lutheran and Calvinist meditations. This is how the present dissertation also approaches meditation and prayer, two basic genres of pious literature, as on the one hand, different denominational needs and dogmatic constraints imply different rhetorical and poetic tools and result in different pious acts; on the other hand, this approach is obvious also for delineating and narrowing down the scope of investigation. It needs to be added that Csilla Gábor's investigations show that individual case studies might reveal interconfessional relations. Thus, they may justify a certain easing of the image of the apparently strict dividing lines between denominations.

III. Dissertation objectives

Although producing a new Keresztúri monograph is not the objective of the dissertation, as Dénes Dienes has already completed the task, but it seems important to give a brief outline of the most recent findings related to the oeuvre. For the sake of representing the primary context of the *Mennyei társalkodás* from its paratext, the Rákóczi House's literary self-representation, as well as Keresztúri's role in this representation is approached through the inclusion of recent sources. Also to be examined here is the interpretation of the community ideal and the concept of nation briefly touched upon in Keresztúri's dedication to the *Mennyei társalkodás*, which may be grasped in the comparison with contemporaries' notion of the nation.

It also seems necessary to clarify the credibility of data concerning the author and the publication date, as we have no extant copy of the first edition of the *Mennyei társalkodás*. In order to obtain conclusive results, not only the circumstances of publication but also other pieces from the author's lifework will be described. Thus, the dissertation gives an overview of Keresztúri's other works, modifying somewhat the canon of textual corpus in the present literature.

Among the objectives of the dissertation is to examine the extent to which Dienes's weighty statement about the *Mennyei társalkodás* being a fundamental text for 18th century Reformed piety may be right. We have to analyse whether the publication history confirms this argument. In other words, the basis of printing houses' publication policy is to be identified. Additional factors (as for example, censorship) affecting publication will also have to be touched upon. Related to this issue, the readers' and audiences' expectations will have to be looked into, as we can say about them what Gergely Tamás Fazakas established for prayer books:

Merging readers' experiential horizons concerning the primary and the later, historically secondary contexts of these books was possible, and it was possible to reprint books with practically no modifications over such a large time span because, despite the distance in time, they used tropologies (or perhaps: topologies) similar to the ones that prayer books and other texts did decades later.

From a genre theory perspective, the *Mennyei társalkodás* is seen as a piece to be interpreted from the tradition of the meditation and prayer literature. Thus, the dissertation intends to be part of the meditation research trend formulated by Csilla Gábor, whose ultimate objective is

“processing early modern meditational tracts (i.e. the theoretical reflections on meditation, whether they be actions or written texts), aiming to prepare textual editions and case studies.”

Accordingly,

In the field of textual publications, several types of editions may be considered, ranging from facsimile and critical editions to supplementary educational materials (selected readers). The so very much needed canon correction may be even more effective here than in other fields, as it will not simply try to prove the value of texts (the way even the most thought-provoking studies do) but shows them and turns them into public assets.

The present dissertation intends to provide a critical edition, while the supporting network of biblical allusions is to be textually uncovered. By comparing the different editions, we have to take a stand on the reconstruction of the editio princeps and the interrelations of various editions.

Csilla Gábor considers it one of the crucial tasks of meditation research *to prepare case studies, as it is often in the part that the whole is revealed in its utmost beauty. The philological clarifications concerning a particular volume, book type or textual material, because most of the devotional works issued in our country are translations, grasping the messages offered by the comparison with the original source may show us relations and interconfessional links going far beyond meditation research.*

This is why it is worth presenting the same as an example of fuzzy lines between genres, as early modern devotional volumes frequently feature prayers and meditations together; meditations are often introduced and concluded by supplication, as is the case in the *Mennyei társalkodás*. Moreover, in Keresztúri’s dialogical work, it is the part recounted by the believer that may be read as a prayer. As a result, the prayer following the meditation may be analysed in the *Mennyei társalkodás* as a sub-category of the type.

In order to take a stand on whether *Mennyei társalkodás* is an original piece or a translation, it is essential to include in the research a wider Hungarian and European comparative textual corpus, similar in genre and form. Because of the dialogic character of the text, the story line of the meditational dialogue is to be drawn, starting in antiquity and proceeding to its emergence in early Hungarian devotional literature.

IV. Dissertation achievements

Our dissertation as a case study wished to contribute to the questions of meditation and prayer literature enjoying great popularity in the 17th and 18th century. While our primary aim was to sketch one characteristically Calvinist meditational example through *Mennyei társalkodás*, we went into detail about the delineation of the newer research results concerning the author's oeuvre in the first chapter of the paper to the necessary extent.

According to this we put Pál Keresztúri's pedagogical activity in the schola aulica into the framework of the self-representation of the Rákóczi court building a dynasty. The manifestation of this self-representation – beside the confirmation catechism *Csecsemő keresztyén* – is the not yet thoroughly analysed two school dramas, the *Schola triumphata* and the *Pallas Dacica* belonging to the consultatio genre. In these works the real nobility means the conjunction of Ars and Mars, that is the heritage of Gábor Bethlen's cultural policy. Nobility comes true through the well-educated dukes proving their suitability to reign. The *Mennyei társalkodás* is another formation of the court representation from this view of reading: the duchess' device of self-representation through piety.

We also summarized our new research results concerning the pieces of Keresztúri's oeuvre in the first chapter, based on which – after the detailed review of the style and political differences of thinking – we assessed, that Keresztúri's argumentative essay titled *Papistak meltatlan üldözése a' vallasert* can hardly be his work. Furthermore, it is not probable, that he would have been the translator of the Romanian *New Testament* and the *Psalms book*, since the evidences indicating this are not convincing enough. At the same time we reckoned the locus collection titled *Rövid fundamentum* [A Short Foundation] among Keresztúri's works. We attempted to grasp the puritan rhetoric and stylistic peculiarities coming forward in Keresztúri's works in the same chapter, because the exploration of the lingual terms of *Mennyei társalkodás* makes it necessary.

The second part of the paper first clears up the philological problems of an unknown copy of *Mennyei társalkodás* from 1645, then examines from the genre theory's point of view the frontiers of meditation and prayer revealing in the text. Examining the question of the frontiers we confronted the text with interconfessionality and we came to the result, that the common ars devotio primarily expresses itself in formal peculiarities, as the borrowed dialogue form, otherwise the typical topics of the interconfessionality are missing, like the fiancé mysticism or the detailed evocation of the suffering story of Christ.

Puritan rhetoric systems are joined to the Calvinist dogmatic theological content appearing in *Mennyei társalkodás*, that implies the Bible's mode of expression with literary standards in this case. We explored the text from this point of view as well. We found that the primary text source of *Mennyei társalkodás* is the Bible, while the effect and infiltration of other piety works' with a similar character cannot be revealed textually, only thematically. Since we have not found a work except for the Bible of which *Mennyei társalkodás* in parts or as a whole would be a translation or borrowing, we assume it being an original creation, and practically the only one, considering the prints of contemplative dialogues, that is not based on translation.

The third big chapter researches the reasons of *Mennyei társalkodás*'s 18th century success, outlines the framework of the spiritual claims of the reformed pietism, to what the text can reflect from a hundred years' perspective, and presents a possible explanatory framework, which is presented in the up till now unknown meditation theory *Oktatás az elmélkedésről*. We examine the form of dialogue in *Mennyei társalkodás* also in this chapter and scrutinize the history of contemplative dialogue in Europe to place the text in this process.

Approaching the re-editions from a typographical viewpoint we may form a notion about the wider context in which *Mennyei társalkodás* circulated on the market and what kind of place it filled between these. It can be said that although Keresztúri's work proved to be undoubtedly popular, it appeared in less copies compared to the works with a similar topic, so Dénes Dienes's statement that *Mennyei társalkodás* would have been the most determining piety literary work beside *Praxis pietatis* having an incentive impact on the development of the devout genre in Hungary in the 18th can hardly be underpinned. Moreover, the repeated publications of the text cannot merely be explained by the readers' claims, as the censorship of the Protestant presses' deformed the practice of publishing to a certain degree. Since they kept already authorised works among the publications for a long time and other works of similar interest were not allowed because they were declared dangerous.

Finally a critical text edition of *Mennyei társalkodás* is joined to our dissertation, to which we drew a detailed comparison of the texts of the different publications. We cleared up the relationship between the editions showing that the edition printed in Kolozsvár in 1726 was borrowed and published without major changes in Debrecen, Pozsony and Budapest until 1842. The text edition is accompanied by critical, philological and explanatory notes.

This text edition is of primary importance, since it helps to understand the mentality and the use of language of large communities organized on a religious basis in the 17th and 18th century. This language full of biblical allusions provides a basis of the 19th century

poetic oeuvres like the one of János Arany, who naturally takes possession and converts the rich heritage of the 17th century.

V. Publications related to the dissertation

Papers in peer-reviewed journals and edited volumes

1. *Schola triumphata és Pallas Dacica: Ünnepeles búcsúvizsga, avagy fejedelmi önreprezentáció = Esemény és narratíva*, szerk. BOKA László, STEMLER Ágnes, Bp., Bibl. Nationalis Hungariae–Gondolat, megjelenés alatt, 2013 őszére várható (Bibliotheca scientiae & artis, 4).
2. „Hát én, Uram, mit szólnak te előttem...?”, *Imádság és elmélkedés viszonya Keresztúri Bíró Pál Mennyei társalkodásában = Régi magyar imakönyvek és imádságok*, szerk. BOGÁR Judit, Piliscsaba, PPKE BTK, 2012 (Pázmány Irodalmi Műhely, Lelkiségtörténeti tanulmányok, 2), 243–255.
3. „Zajgódgyatok Magyar 'Euangélicusok vala-míg tetszik...”, *Még egyszer a Papistak meltatlan üldözéséről = Bibliotheca et universitas, Tanulmányok a hatvanéves Heltai János tiszteletére*, szerk. KECSKEMÉTI Gábor, TASI Réka; Miskolci Egyetem BTK Magyar Nyelv- és Irodalomtudományi Intézet, Miskolc, 2011, 43–57.
4. *Interkonfesszionális és Kempis-recepció Keresztúri Pál Mennyei társalkodásában = Crescit eundo, Tisztelgő tanulmányok V. Ecsedy Judit 65. születésnapjára*, szerk. SIMON Melinda, PERGER Péter, Bp., Argumentum–OSzK–MOKKA-R Egyesület, 2011 (A Magyar Könyvszemle és a MOKKA-R Egyesület füzetek, 4), 209–214.
5. *Keresztúri Pál Mennyei társalkodása és a Biblia = Biblia Hungarica philologica, Magyarországi bibliák a filológiai tudományokban, az Országos Széchényi Könyvtárban a Biblia Sacra Hungarica, a könyv „mely örök életet ad” (2008. 11. 21–2009. 03. 29.) című kiállítás alkalmából 2009. január 30-án tartott konferencia előadásai*, szerk. HELTAI János, Bp., Argumentum–OSzK–MTA ITI–MOKKA-R Egyesület, 2009 (A Magyar Könyvszemle és a MOKKA-R Egyesület füzetek, 2), 121–146.
6. *Lírai puritán próza a 17. századi Erdélyben = microCAD 2001., International Scientific Conference, March 1-2. 2001, Bölcsészettudományi szekció*, szerk. LEHOCZKY László, KALMÁR László, Miskolc, 2001, 111–114.
7. *Egy 17. századi fiktív dialógus szövegkritikai és műfaji kérdései: Keresztúri Bíró Pál Mennyei társalkodásáról = Doktoranduszok Fóruma, Miskolc, 2000. okt. 30.*, szerk. LEHOCZKY László, Miskolc, ME Innovációs és Technológia Transzfer Centrum, 2000, 98–102.
8. „A gyermek tanítani ritka és példa nélkül való” *Keresztúri Bíró Pál = Magyar Református Nevelés*, 2000, 8–12.

Presentations

1. *Schola triumphata és Pallas Dacica: Ünneplés búcsúvizsga, avagy fejedelmi önreprezentáció*, elhangzott Budapesten az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár *Esemény és narratíva* című Tudományos Ülésszakán, 2013. január 21-én.
2. *Az imádság műfaji határvidékéről: Keresztúri Pál Mennyei társalkodása*, elhangzott Piliscsabán, a Pázmány Péter Katolikus Egyetem, BTK, Lelkiségtörténeti Műhelyének *Régi magyar imakönyvek és imádságok* című konferenciáján, 2010. április 9-én.
3. *Interkonfesszionalitás és Kempis-recepció Keresztúri Pál Mennyei társalkodásában*, elhangzott Budapesten az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Tudományos Ülésszakán, 2010. január 25-én.
4. *Bibliai idézetek egy református imádságoskönyvben*, elhangzott az Országos Széchényi Könyvtárban, a *Biblia Hungarica philologica, Magyarországi bibliák a filológiai tudományokban* című konferencián, amely a *Biblia Sacra Hungarica, a könyv „mely örök életet ad”* (2008. 11. 21–2009. 03. 29.) című kiállításhoz kapcsolódva került megrendezésre, 2009. január 30-án.
5. *Lírai puritán próza a 17. századi Erdélyben*, elhangzott a *microCAD 2001., International Scientific Conference* című konferencián, Miskolcon, 2001. március 2-án.
6. *Egy 17. századi fiktív dialógus szövegkritikai és műfaji kérdései*, elhangzott Miskolcon, az ME Bölcsész Doktoranduszok Fórumán, 2000. október 30-án.