

## ABSTRACT

### THE PATHS OF READING: FROM BIOGRAPHY TO POPULAR POETRY

There is a point in which the majority of the works that dwell on the historical and literary significance of the oeuvre of Ferenc Faludi converge (irrespective of the period in which they were published): the author is regarded as someone who fulfills by his works a deficiency, he is considered a “threshold”, a milestone at the border of two epochs, and the insufficiencies of his works are explained precisely by this position. Thus he reached rather early the periphery of the literary canons based on aesthetic criteria or of originality, even if he stood among the first at the early genesis of these canons. In my work I have not tried to redesign this picture, only to shade it, emphasizing the fact that in the Hungarian literary canon, or even beyond it, over the centuries there have always been readers (or even writers, poets) who did read and use his works, considering them even to be models to follow, to imitate, even though they were not among the shapers of the literary canon.

The object of this book is exactly the study of these “restorations to light” and its parts are integrated based on the idea of reading (in the broad sense).

The texts defined as cultural acts or the disclosure and interpretation of their primary contexts constitute the bases of research. This way the aesthetic approach is not the primary one, it is supplemented by the perspective of the analysis of the historical or socio-cultural phenomena.

The importance of the multilateral activity of Ferenc Faludi in the culture of the era, the interpretation of his “roles” (Jesuit, professor, director of printing, librarian novelist, poet, author of drama pieces, etc.) occupies an important role in the reception of his works in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In that period (and for the non-professional readers today as well) biographies determined the reception of the works, and anything that was not consistent with this model constructed in the biographies was considered a problem and had to be excused or even corrected (causing problems especially in the case of his lyrical oeuvre).

Faludi’s moralizing prosaic works under the form of ethical categories – rooted in the ancient or baroque literature –, as intended by the author, attempt the forming „of the conceptual means and emotional repertoire” (Takáts) of the readers. The „channels” through which the transmission of the concepts of behavioral culture are realized in which the dialogue between the hierarchies of secular and

religious values take place are the empirical and changing genres of the political-moral literature.

The use determines the genres also but at the same time we can observe their tendency towards becoming a reading. The original functions are placed in the background and the language acquires a special importance. The genres which operated at the genesis of the texts sometimes become obstacles of the comprehension with aesthetic premises.

The chapter on editions concludes and specifies the data referring to them. The study of the different editions of Faludi's works in the context of the editorial policies of this period resulted in the summing up of the multitude of editions, and what from the point of view of reception is even more important, in the discerning the activities of those institutions and agents (printers, editors, prenumeration, patronage, competition, literary hierarchies, canonization) who were at the base of these editions.

The research of the publications from the perspective of mediality highlighted another aspect of the reception: books as objects with multimedia meanings mark the undulations of the reception and the possible readings through the typographic elaboration and through paratexts. The book studies the fact how publishers read and what reading modes they provide. By applying the methods of textology and new philology it was revealed that by publishing Faludi's poems Révai and Batsányi wanted to display a model of language, and the reading strategies they offer are formulated according to this. In the context of the literary life which was in full formation, the values and imperfections and their „improvements“ become the means by which the editorial authority is built, or in the case of Batsányi, how the subject of the debate is defined.

As a result of the research of book notes we cannot outline a general homogeneous perspective. Although fragmentary, these data are very interesting, because this way we can approach the empirical readers of the past. Sometimes the notes only record the possession of the book, their donation or appurtenance of a certain college library. In other cases the reader of long-ago underlines or marks the parts of fragments that were considered rather interesting or important. The most impressive (but also the rarest) are the notes that reflect the reading process, that refer to the content of the book and that create a dialogue with it.

The research of manuscripts of songs – as in the previous case – resulted in the sketching of the empirical reader and of a specific reading strategy, except that here we are dealing with a more heterogeneous context. Faludi's poetry texts (in most cases becoming anonymous) were integrated in the chain of the tradition of this *popular poetry* (similar to the poems of László Amade and Mihály Csokonai Vitéz). Such research would open a new perspective towards the shaping of alternative canons, which would modify to a high degree our knowledge of the history of Hungarian reading in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Another contribution of the application of textology is the conclusion that the same process occurs in the case of the reception of Faludi's poetry in the context of cult literature.