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Imre József Balázs and the Romanian Culture

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Abstract. Imre József Balázs is a Hungarian poet, literary critic, editor and literary historian from Romania. His main subject of interest and research area is the Hungarian avant-garde from Romania. His research and work prove his attachment to Romanian literature as well – especially with the avant-garde. For example, he deals with Gellu Naum's poems for children and their translation. Thus, he fulfils the role of a mediator between Hungarian and Romanian literature not only through his studies and academic papers written in Romanian, but also through his contributions to the appearance of Hungarian poets in literary anthologies written in Romanian language. Furthermore, he plays an important role in publishing the Hungarian translations of Romanian poetry, thus becoming a mediator between the Hungarian and Romanian cultures.

Keywords: multiculturalism, translation, cultural intermediary.

1. Introduction

From a formal point of view, the birth of the Hungarian literature in Romania is linked to the 1st of December 1918, when Transylvania was attached to the already united principalities of Moldova and Wallachia. Kántor and Láng place the date and place of birth of the Hungarian literature in Romania as follows: 1919 Romania, in a narrower sense Transylvania (1973, 5).

Unquestionably, manifestations of Hungarian elements in the Romanian culture can be found even before this time, as there are always interferences and connections between neighbouring nations. György Gaál states the following:

> Mutual influences between the Romanian and Hungarian literatures can be dated from the period of the Reformation, starting with Bálint Balassi's poetry, which is particularly rich in folklore. The conscious creation of relations starts during the last period of and following the 1848 Revolution and freedom fight (Caesar Bolliac, Nicolae Bălcescu). (2010a, 1)

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Along the historical events which confine literature within boundaries, Béla Pomogáts believes that all European literatures have their own regional workshops – each one with particular aspects: the literature from the Paris area differs from that of Provence, the one in Munich is not the same as the one from Berlin. Similarly, Hungarian literature, which has been present in Europe since the foundation of the Hungarian state in the ninth century – as many folkloric works testify – and in written form since the thirteenth century, we can talk about a Hungarian literature west from the Danube – the one that came into contact with Western literatures, and about Hungarian literature in Transylvania, etc. However, the division of Hungarian literature is not based solely on regional considerations, but also on historical ones. After World War I, two-thirds of the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was divided between other states, as a result of which one-third of the Hungarian population received other citizenships. The same author points out that literatures of this nation were not born at the time of the redrawing of the state-boundaries because they had already developed their own features hundreds of years earlier. The Hungarian literature in Transylvania has followed its own course since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (2005, 1-3).

2. Miniatures of Hungarian Literature in Romania

2.1 Hungarian Literature in Romania

The term "Hungarian literature in Romania" has its own history, its use going back as far as the 1930s. Contemporaries used a much older term, "Hungarian literature in Transylvania", which differentiated a regional literature within the Hungarian national one. In the years immediately following World War I neither the Hungarian press from Transylvania, nor the other mass media seemed to use new concepts to mark the differences caused by the new borders. National identity was rather expressed in political and cultural articles – at an institutional and possibly an economic level. At a cultural level ideas such as unity, socio-economic and cultural development were promoted, primarily through education.[1] This is because, as already mentioned above, the existing specific characteristics of the Hungarian literature from this area became even stronger.

The term "Hungarian literature in Romania" was first used in the third decade of the twentieth century by Gábor Gaál, a future member of the Romanian Academy, professor in Cluj. He introduced the term bringing geographical arguments and showing that the expression "Hungarian literature in Transylvania" did not cover the reality, arguing that this term was a historical one, but, at that moment [in 1937], it was no more than tradition. It did not conform to reality because

1 Especially the journal *Erdélyi Szemle*.

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it excluded the Hungarians living in other geographical areas of Romania. He pointed out that the vast majority of [Hungarian] writers, indeed, lived in Transylvania, but the sphere of readers, without whom literature could not exist, stretched across the whole of Romania (1937, 214). However, the usage of the term remained sporadic, and its naturalization can rather be connected to Lajos Kántor and Gusztáv Láng who defined it in the work entitled *Romániai magyar irodalom 1944-1970* [*The Hungarian Literature in Romania 1944-1970*] as follows:

> [...] The Hungarian literature in Romania refers to the literature written in Hungarian on the territory of Romania after 1919. Its social determinant is the Romanian social reality and the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Both characteristics show differences from the literature written in Hungary, although they are strongly linked by language and by common cultural traditions, in a broad sense of the word. (1973, 7)[2]

2.2 Romanian-Hungarian Cultural Relations after 1919

All the above leads us to the problem of the contextualization of the Hungarian literature in the Romanian space, underlining the Hungarian-Romanian relations. I would mention only a few notable examples illustrating the real necessity of bilateral relations materialized in different frames. The evidence of this relationship can be observed in tournaments, conferences, literary evenings, literary circles[3], anniversaries and commemorations, theatre projects[4], etc., while in written forms magazines included surveys, studies and essays, translations and reviews.

Monolingual magazines (*Korunk*[5], *Erdélyi Szemle*, *Erdélyi Helikon*, *Boabe de grâu*[6], *Familia*[7], etc.) were supplemented by multilingual ones – published mostly

2 Quotation translated by Anikó Majla.

3 One of the resolutions of the first meeting of the *Work Collective Helikon*, founded in Brâncoveneşti (1926), says that its main cultural task should be the presentation and translation into Hungarian of the Romanian and German literary works written in Transylvania.

4 In 1920 Hungarian theatre companies started showing plays by Romanian authors translated into Hungarian (Caragiale, Lucian Blaga, etc.) and Romanian theatres played some Hungarian works as well (Ferenc Molnár or Menyhért Lengyel, Imre Madách, etc.).

5 The February number from 1936 is a "Romanian edition" in which collaborators from Bucharest (Andrei Şerbulescu, Ilie Cristea, etc.) or Braşov (Vasile Munteanu) were asked to contribute, these sending studies on the socio-economic and political life in Romania.

6 Editor Emanoil Bucuța participates at the meetings of "Helikon" and publishes translations of Hungarian authors.

7 Magazine founded in Budapest which – even after moving to Oradea – supported the promotion of Hungarian writers through surveys (1935 – 13 Hungarian intellectuals and 12 Romanians, from Hungary and Romania responded positively to the question concerning the collaboration between Romanians and Hungarians), translations, studies. It must be mentioned that in 1935 the staff initiated a meeting between the Romanian and Hungarian writers at Stâna de Vale.

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in Transylvania – such as *Barátság* (Cluj-Napoca), *Aurora* (Oradea) founded by George Bacaloglu, president of the "Societatea Cele Trei Crişuri," who wanted to follow "the cultural and literary movements on both sides" by translating the two literatures, by studies about the Hungarian-Romanian relations, with personalities interested in these relations: Ernő Ligeti, Justin Ilieşiu and Ion Lupu (RMIL, 107-108); the trilingual (German–Hungarian– Romanian) magazine *Banatul* (Timişoara); *Cultura* (Cluj) with articles published in Romanian, Hungarian, French and German; *Culisele – A Kulissza* (Cluj), etc. In the interwar period some publications were preserved, and new ones were founded. Árpád Bitay was among those who were concerned with and supported the cultural relations between Romanians and Hungarians:

> His [Bitay's] book entitled *A román irodalomtörténet összefoglaló áttekintése* [*An Overview of Romanian Literary History*] was a groundbreaking work, published in Alba Iulia in 1922, written from the Hungarians' point of view, which he translated into Romanian (Cluj, 1924). To satisfy the needs of the respective period, in 1923 he published the work entitled *Rövid román nyelvtan* [*Short Romanian Grammar*] in Cluj. Knowing his work, Nicolae Iorga invited him to the Free University of Vălenii de Munte, where for fifteen years he had held conferences in Romanian about the history of Hungarian literature and culture. (Gaál 2010a, 5)

Beside the above mentioned names, I would add the names of József Méliusz, Sándor Keresztury, Ferenc Szemlér, László Gáldi, Aurel Ciupe, Octavian Goga, George A. Petre and, last but not least, Ion Chinezu, who in 1930 defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Aspecte din literatura maghiară ardeleană. 1919-1920* [*Aspects of the Transylvanian Hungarian Literature. 1919-1929*].

In the post-war period, the number of ways to promote these relations increased considerably. At the first congress of the Hungarian People's Union held in May 1945, Gaál pointed out that the Hungarian writers in Romania were responsible for closing the gap between Hungary and Romania. Propaganda leaflets, like the *Román-magyar kultúrkapcsolatok* [*Romanian-Hungarian Cultural Relations*] appeared. Moreover, during this period the number of translations increased, they became more regular and improved in terms of their stylistic value. In 1955 the collection *Román klasszikusok* [*Romanian Classics*] was launched including over one hundred titles, and in 1981 the collection *Román költők* [*Romanian Poets*] was published. With the setting up of the Kriterion Publishing House Romanian translations of Hungarian, German, Ukrainian and Hebrew authors' works were published, as well as collections of studies on them (Gaál 2010b, 2). During this period numerous poetry, prose and drama anthologies were published in Budapest and in Bucharest. I would mention one of the first major instances: during 1961-

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1964 in Hungary, thanks to Michael Gafița and László Lőrinczi, the work entitled *A román irodalom kis tükre* [*A Small Mirror of Romanian Literature*] was published in five volumes, which is a selection of the most important writings from folk literature to contemporary Romanian literature. Anthologies appeared as well, where translations of Hungarian writers were included alongside their Romanian, German, etc. colleagues in Romanian editions. Among other ways of promotion one can mention studies, university courses, literary histories, monographs and bibliographies. The list of personalities who supported these relations seems endless. For further studies, Gaál mentions some fundamental works for those wishing to explore this area: *A román irodalom magyar bibliográfiája. 1831-1960* [*Hungarian Bibliography of the Romanian Literature. 1831-1960*], also *1961-1970* (1978), edited by Sámuel Domokos, as well as the volume *Magyar irodalom románul. 1830-1970* [*Hungarian Literature in Romanian. 1830-1970*] published in 1983 elaborated by Andor Réthy and Leona Váczy; *The Bibliography of the Relations of the Romanian Literature with Foreign Literatures in Periodicals* published by the Romanian Academy (1980-1985); the volume of interviews by György Beke published in Hungarian and Romanian, which comprises fifty-five writers: *Tolmács nélkül* [*Without an Interpreter*] (1972), *Fără interpret* [*Without an Interpreter*] (1972), but also Nicolae Balotă with the volume *Scriitori maghiari din România 1920-1980* [*Hungarian Writers in Romania 1920-1980*] (1981) or Avram P. Todor, *Confluențe literare româno-maghiare* [*Romanian-Hungarian Literary Confluences*] (1983). The number of multilingual magazines increased, numerous student journals were founded, of which we mention the one with the strongest tradition – the *Echinox*, launched in 1968 (Gaál 2010b, 3-6).

2.3. An Insight into the Hungarian Literature in Post-Revolutionary Romania

The overthrow of a regime – especially of an oppressive one – always represents possibilities for the manifestation of hitherto hidden or repressed artistic inclinations, even if the literature which falls under a dictatorial regime feels the need "to deceive it," thus leading, among others, to the diversification of expression, innovative solutions that contribute to the birth of artistic formulae that would not exist in other socio-political conditions. Freedom of expression, once gained, is doubled by pioneering moments characterized by enthusiasm, beatitude, live polemics and, not infrequently, radicalism. It is the period of manifests and declarative speeches, of creating groups and literary circles, of printing texts hidden until then, of associations and dissociations – most of them having already existed during the regime, at the moment of the revolution or in the years immediately following the regime change.

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Hungarian literature in Romania is not an exception to the rule. An important moment was the initiation in 1991 by Attila Sántha and Ferenc Bréda of a group called "Transzközép", a term which can be translated as "transmedian" – made up of the words "transz", Transylvanian and the Hungarian translation of (aurea) mediocritas. In 1993 the authors grouped around these two personalities devoted a whole number of the magazine *Echinox*[8] to this literature, which included, besides the texts of the founders, the first *Transmedian Manifest*. Among the chief representatives we can mention Attila Gál, Zsolt Karácsonyi, László Lázár Lövétei, Vince Fekete, Noémi László, János Dénes Orbán, Imre József Balázs, Éva Farkas Wellmann, Endre Farkas Wellmann, Attila Zsolt Papp. It can be considered the first and also the last major trend of Hungarian writers of the post-revolutionary Romania.

In 1991 the writers grouped around Bréda and Sántha established the "Gaál Gábor Irodalmi Kör" ["Gábor Gaál Literary Circle"][9] in Cluj-Napoca which, at the initiative of Péter Egyed, in 1993 changed its name into the "Bretter György Irodalmi Kör" ["György Bretter Literary Circle"]. The medium where they published their writings, the literature and art magazine *Előretolt Helyőrség* [*Advanced Garrison*][10] appeared in Cluj-Napoca between 1993 and 1995, after which it became a publishing house, in association with *Erdélyi Híradó*. An institutionalized form of this generation is E-MIL / Erdélyi Magyar Írók Ligája [HWLT / Hungarian Writers' League of Transylvania],[11] where an important role is played by the transmedians.

3. Imre József Balázs

3.1 The Outward Bound

Imre József Balázs,[12] Péter Demény – mainly being concerned with journalism – and Zsuzsa Selyem break away from this group and go with the flow. Today there is a strong trend that develops primarily against the League, transmedianism and the values promoted by them. Perhaps this rebellion – the red wire, perhaps the only link besides the biological age, which connects the generation to come – is an index of the "institutionalization", "canonization" of the League, and of

8 *Nagy Transzközép-Szám* [*The Big Transmedian Number*], in *Echinox*, 1993/3.

9 Translations of titles, names of journals, institutions, etc. in round brackets exist in Romanian, and those between square brackets belong to the author of this article.

10 It generates new literary groups – "Serény múmia" ["Industrious Mummy"] and "Előretolt Helyőrség" ["Advanced Garrison"] – with their own headings.

11 9th February 2002, Cluj-Napoca.

12 Imre József Balázs was born on 9th January 1976 in Odorheiu-Secuiesc. He graduated from the Faculty of Philology, Babeş–Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (1998, Hungarian-English section) and is associate professor at the Department of Hungarian Literature of UBB.

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the transmedian orientation. Balázs is the initiator of the "new wave", which turns its back on its own masters and consciously tries to form a new generation of writers and poets[13] represented by Előd Benjámin Horváth, Zsolt Visky, Orsolya Láng, András Borbély, Zalán Serestély, Noémi Jáncsó, etc., who leave behind the "lagging poetics."[14] This generation is promoted by magazines such as *Látó*, *Helikon* or *Korunk*, literary portals like Nappali Menedékhely (blog of contemporary literature), Eirodalom.ro or magazines from Hungary.

3.2 Imre József Balázs and *Korunk* – How to Become a Mentor

Since 1999, Balázs has been the editor of the literature and criticism column of *Korunk* magazine issued in Cluj-Napoca, and between 2008 and 2012 he worked as the editor in chief for the same magazine where, at the beginning of 2006, he initiated a section dedicated to young poets and debutant writers entitled "Generator", the conception being "special because, besides each piece of writing, a biographical sketch of the author was published, together with a short interview[15] about the work and about more general questions related to the author's concept on literature" (n.a. 2008). In 2008, Balázs coordinated an anthology entitled *A meghajlás művészete* [*The Art of Curtsy*], published by the Komp-Press publishing house, Cluj-Napoca, which included peoms and prose works by eleven young authors (Tamás Bálint, Pál Nagy Váradi, Ilka Papp-Zakor, Előd Benjámin Horváth, Réka Szalma, Szabolcs László, Orsolya Fülöp, Jutka Tünde Bekő, Boróka Kósa, Orsolya Láng, Zsolt Visky). Perhaps choosing the number of authors was not accidental, the first conscious generational[16] manifestation of poets, prose writers and essayists in Hungarian literature in Romania was *Tizenegyek antológiája* [*Anthology of the Eleven*][17] or *Erdélyi fiatal írók antológiája*[18] [*Anthology of Young Transylvanian Writers*], published in Cluj in 1923. The title of Balázs's anthology *A meghajlás művészete* [*The Art of Curtsy*] can also be understood as a tribute to the pioneers.

In September 2007 the *Korunk Akadémia* was established – jokingly called *Kakadémia* (*kaka* meaning excrement in Hungarian)[19]; its aim was the training of

13 What emerged after the transmedians is difficult to define in terms of poetics, says Zalán Serestély, a young writer of the post-transmedian generation.

14 From the post transmedians generation's point of view.

15 The interviews were conducted by Balázs.

16 According to Béla Jancsó, one of the authors in the anthology.

17 Authors: Ferenc Balázs (introduction, program and short stories), István Dobai, Zoltán Finta, Géza Jakab, János Kemény, Albert Maksay, László Mihály (poetry), Sándor Kacsó, Sándor Szent-Iványi, Áron Tamási (short story), Béla Jancsó (studies).

18 The full title is *Tizenegy fiatal erdélyi írótól erdélyi művészek rajzaival. Versek–Tanulmányok. (Erdélyi fiatal írók antológiája)* [*Poems – Stories – Studies by Eleven Young Transylvanian Writers with Transylvanian Artists' Drawings. (Anthology of Young Transylvanian Writers)*].

19 Explanation of the translator.

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young intellectuals and the reconversion of the older generation through a range of accredited courses in areas that were missing, or were considered incomplete at university level. The areas covered were history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, book- and magazine editing, creative writing – a workshop also coordinated by Balázs;[20] translation of scientific as well as literary texts. At the same time meetings with various writers were organized.

3.3 Ambassador of Hungarian-Romanian Cultural Relations

Balázs's effort to establish Hungarian-Romanian cultural relations can be seen in his translations and in his encouraging other Hungarian writers to translate from/into Romanian. As mentioned above, the promotion of Romanian literature in the Hungarian space happens through translations and studies, through editing and coordinating bilingual anthologies and through studies dedicated to Romanian authors. In this respect, Balázs's work can be divided as follows: contributions to editing books, anthologies and intercultural projects; studies of literary criticism and history, along with reviews or articles in various publications; translations and also a keen interest in the reception of Hungarian literature in the Romanian milieu.

3.3.1 Coordinator

Bilingual anthologies. A first anthology edited by Balázs begins with the volume entitled *Travers. O antologie a literaturii maghiare din Transilvania* [*Travers. An Anthology of Hungarian Literature in Transylvania*], a volume edited together with Ciprian Vălcan, which appeared in 2002 in the series *The Third Europe* at the Polirom Publishing House, Iaşi. The volume contains eleven contemporary poems translated by Paul Drumaru (poems by Sándor Kányádi, Aladár Lászlóffy, László Király, András Visky, Ferenc András Kovács, Károly Jánk, János Dénes Orbán), four short stories (by Ádám Bodor, István Szilágyi, Zsolt Láng, Vilmos Molnár) translated by Ildikó Gabos, Marius Tabacu and Tibor Szász. A strength of the anthology is the preface written by Balázs – "Lecturi paralele ale aceluiaşi fenomen" ["Parallel Readings of the Same Phenomenon"][21], and three studies on Hungarian literature in Romania, "Séta egy definíció körül" ["Walk Around a Definition"], written by literary historian Gusztáv Láng, "Gyöngy és homok" ["Pearl and Sand"], author Éva Cs. Gyímesi, both translated by Szabolcs Szonda, respectively "Egyidejű korszakok az erdélyi magyar irodalomban" ["Simultaneous Epochs in Hungarian Literature in Transylvania"], written by Balázs, translated by Ildikó Gabos. Balázs

20 The works resulting from the participation at these workshops were later also published.

21 Balázs's study offers an overview of the anthologies of the Hungarian literature in Romania published so far, while at the same time it also outlines trends and authors of the 1990s.

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hoped that this way some of the major living Hungarian authors (including Ádám Bodor, István Szilagyi, Zsolt Láng, Sándor Kányádi, András Ferenc Kovács, András Visky, János Dénes Orbán) would occur in an exegetical context that could serve as a starting point for the Romanian readers, not losing hope even after a year from the appearance of the anthology: "I haven't met comprehensive reviews, direct echoes about this volume yet – though I hope that the excellent network of the Polirom Publishing House will fulfil the expectations and the volume will reach the readers" (2003, 129).

The next step was the editing of the *Antologie bilingvă de literatură maghiară* [*Bilingual Anthology of Hungarian Literature*] as a special number of *Echinox* (2/2011). The anthology contains eighteen texts by seven young authors (Noemi Jáncsó, Szabolcs László, Nagy Pál Váradi, Orsolya Láng, László Potozky, István Takács, Tünde Vízi). The texts were chosen by Zalán Serestély and Árpád Kulcsár, the selection criteria being that these authors had not yet had editorial debut. Serestély said that they wanted to publish a much larger number of authors, some of whom gave up being afraid of not being able to translate their texts properly (many of the texts were translated by the authors themselves and later reviewed by the Romanian editors). In the evening the volume was launched – where László Potozky, Nagy Pál Váradi and Tünde Vízi, Rareş Moldovan attended – Serestély said that, taking into account the length of the anthology, he was convinced it would rather draw attention to the still extremely low number of Hungarian poems translated into Romanian than fill this gap. "This kind of cultural mediation is still the task of a narrow layer of intellectuals" Serestély also said (quoted in Varga 2012, 4). In the anthology there can be found mini interviews with the authors as well, through which the poets' impressions and opinion with reference to translation in general are revealed.

Project coordinator. His work as a coordinator widens the sphere through his interest in intercultural projects. In his vision the collaboration between the editors of the *Apostrof* and *Korunk* in Cluj is significant, given that they have already organized a whole series of conferences on topics relevant to both parties. The transcribed texts of these conferences appeared in the *Apostrof*, and since then the *Apostrof* has shown continuous concern regarding Hungarian culture (Balázs 2003, 129).

3.3.2. Studies and Articles of Literary Criticism and History, Reviews

Balázs's studies on Romanian culture have appeared mainly in Hungarian, becoming a kind of promotion. I must mention that his main field of interest is the avant-garde, especially the avant-garde as it appears in the Hungarian literature in Transylvania, this period being the topic of his doctoral dissertation. In this regard, he is preoccupied with the wave of new

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research[22] on Romanian avant-garde and lists young Romanian researchers concerned with this topic (Simona Popescu, Ovidiu Morar, Paul Cernat, Emilia Drogoreanu, Dan Gulea) and with the new approaches suggested by these authors. The article "A román avantgárdkutatás új hulláma. Popescu, Morar, Cernat, Drogoreanu, Gulea" ["The New Wave of the Romanian Avant-Garde Research"] published in no. 2/2010 of *Korunk* magazine proves not only his knowledge of the Romanian literary avant-garde, but also of Romanian research in this field. This knowledge is exploited in other articles and studies such as "Akik megölték halottaikat. A román avantgárdirodalom hatástörténeti helye" ["Those Who Murdered their Dead. The Position of the Romanian Avant-Garde Literature"] in which the author follows how the history of Romanian literature builds the place of the historical avant-garde in the literary tradition, respectively the features that enhance constructivism, which occupied an important place in the Hungarian avant-garde literature, too. One of the greatest strengths of this study is its comparative approach, the author completing his research with Hungarian references. This direction is kept in other articles such as "Az álom antológiája. Vázlat a román és a magyar szürrealizmus mitologikus elemeiről" ["A Dream's Anthology. A Sketch on the Mythological Elements of Romanian and Hungarian Surrealism"] – concerned with the logic of dreams, alter-egos, myths and trips in the works of Robert Reiter, Tibor Déry, Andor Németh, Tristan Tzara, Ilarie Voronca, Gherasim Luca, Geo Bogza, Max Blecher, Paul Păun, Saşa Pană, Gellu Naum. For the latter ones the author shows a keen interest in articles, reviews such as "Válogatott képek a Gellu Naum-mitológiából" ["Selected Images of Gellu Naum's Mythology"][23] or "Apolodor és Zebegény. Gellu Naum gyermekirodalmi munkáiról és fordításaikról" ["Apolodor and Zebegény. About Gellu Naum's Works on Children's Literature and on their Translations];[24] "Szürrealisták randevúja" ["Surrealist's Rendezvous"]. Obviously, avant-garde writers are followed by other authors that have aroused his interest: Mihail Sebastian,[25] Mircea Cărtărescu[26] or Bogdan Ghiu,[27] and he reviews their texts. His

22 Also see the review "Hogyan épült be a társadalom hálózataiba a román avantgárd" ["The Way the Romanian Avant-Garde Infiltrated Society's Networks"] in which he presents the book of Stelian Tănase, *Avangarda românească în arhivele Siguranței* [*The Romanian Avant-Garde in the Sigurantei Archives*] (*Korunk* 2009/2. 101–104.)

23 The article, besides touching upon translation problems -- like all the writings of Balázs related to Romanian literature – is concerned with the archetype of the journey in "pohemul" *Vasco da Gama*.

24 The study was also published in Romanian in *Caietele Avatngardei* [*Notebooks of the Avant-Garde*] (5/2015). It focuses on the character of Apolodor, its history and its metamorphoses, but also the problems encountered in the translation.

25 "Újraolvasott barátságok. (Mihail Sebastian: Napló)" ["Reread Friendships. (Mihail Sebastian: Journal)] appeared in *Élet és Irodalom* [*Life and Literature*] on the 7th of May 2010.

26 "Milyen is a Loch Ness-i szörny? (Mircea Cărtărescu: Postmodernismul românesc)" ["What Is the Loch Ness Monster Like? (Mircea Cărtărescu: The Romanian Postmodern)"] appeared in *Korunk* 11/1999.

27 "Mit lát az üvegszem?" ["What Does the Glass Eye See?"] appeared in *Korunk* 11/1998.

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role of mediator would not be complete without his work in the "other direction", to promote Hungarian culture, especially Hungarian literature, among the Romanians. Here I would mention his reviews published in the *Observatorul cultural*, *Apostrof, Echinox* or the article from the bilingual magazine *Provincia*[28] about which he states that "it showed – especially in its first numbers – a real appetite for dialogue, which sometimes had a polemic accent. In this magazine [...] you can and could carry on a conversation about values, a well thought discussion based on real arguments" (Balázs 2003, 130). The works reviewed by him have been translated into Romanian by Anamaria Pop and Marius Tabacu, and appeared at prestigious publishing houses like the Humanitas, Editura Paralela 45 or Est. Still, the number of Hungarian works translated into Romanian has remained low, and often works to be translated were chosen on the basis of their authors becoming famour first in Western countries – for example, Nobel Prize winner Imre Kertész, as well as Ádám Bodor, Attila Bartis, the last two born in Transylvania, but emigrated to Hungary. Regarding this matter, Balázs shows that there are reviews on such authors as Péter Eszterházy, Péter Nádas, György Konrád, that *A Treia Europă* magazine contains interpretations of prominent representatives of Hungarian modernism, such as Dezső Kosztolányi, Gyula Krúdy, Sándor Márai, etc., but that "still, the reception (through studies, articles) of the Hungarian literary phenomenon in Romania has to be improved. (Those listed above are all authors from Hungary.) This would, of course, be useful for Hungarian literati from the region, to see their faces in a new, well-polished mirror" (2003, 129).

3.3.3 The Reception of Hungarian Literature by Romanians

Balázs's opinions about the reception of Hungarian literature in Romania can be detected from his various surveys, interviews or articles. One of his articles on the subject starts from the question posed by Daniel Vighi in the survey of the *Vatra* magazine in August 1999: "Still, what the hell, so to speak elegantly, have written the Hungarians in Transylvania and in Banat after the Great Coup in December 1989?", which he reformulates like this: what does a Romanian writer know about Hungarian literature in Romania? And "the conclusion proved to be simple as this: nothing" (Balázs 2003, 129). The reasons are manifold: first, the lack or poor circulation of information sources – translations, anthologies or literary histories. Balázs draws our attention to the fact that such sources do exist, even if they are not sufficient (Balázs 2002b, 5). Sources he names are *Aspecte din literatura maghiară ardeleană (1919-1929)* [*Aspects of Transylvanian Hungarian Literature (1919-1929)*] by Ion Chinezu (1930), *Scriitori maghiari din Romania 1920-1980* [*Hungarian Authors from Romania – 1920*-1980] by Nicolae Balotă

28 The article "Ce număr poartă la pantofi literatura maghiară din Transilvania?" ["What's the Shoe-Size of Transylvanian Hungarian Literature?"] was published in *Provincia*, no. 4/2000.

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(Bucureşti, Kriterion, 1981), and *Istoria literaturii maghiare din România* [*The History of Hungarian Literature in Romania*] by Gavril Scridon[29] published by the Promedia Publishing House in 1996 in Cluj at that time the most recent among such literary histories. In the meantime the list has been completed by Szabolcs Szonda's work, *Literatura maghiară din România. Aspecte cronologice şi noţiuni de bază* [*The Hungarian Literature in Romania. Chronological Aspects and Basic Notions*.], published in 2008 at the RHT Publishing House Bucharest-Sfântu Gheorghe, which has the advantage of having chapters about the post-revolutionary Hungarian literature as well.

Balázs's text "Receptare fără studii şi articole" ["Reception without Studies and Articles"] from the no. 6-7/2003 of the *Vatra* magazine shows similar preoccupations. This article was born in response to an investigation of a graduate student (2003) from the "Petru Maior" University in Tîrgu-Mureş, Judith-Izabella Gall, who wrote her final paper entitled *Receptarea literaturii maghiare în revistele româneşti* [*The Reception of Hungarian Literature from Romania in Romanian Journals*]. This work included a survey of Hungarian writers, the investigation meant to highlight the "feelings of the receptors" (Cistelecan 2003, 128). Among the interviewees there was Balázs, who said that "one cannot speak of an authentic perception if no interpreting context is created around the translated works" (2003, 130). He points out that the lack of studies leaves the reader face to face with just a text and the name of the author, most often unknown. This issue presents problems arising from each other: the reader "does not know how that author is quoted in the other culture, whether he/she integrates into any literary trend, whether he/she is young or old, whether that work is representative of his oeuvre, etc." (2003, 130). Thus the text may only be reported to pre-reading contingencies and "even after reading the text, the reader will not know what that literature looks like – he/she will only know whether he/she likes that work or not" (Balázs 2003, 130). The above mentioned anthology *Travers* constitutes a telling illustration of this belief, in which literary texts are complemented by studies, although this does not guarantee a wider reception.

In his essay "Un Frankfurt ardelean sau ce vede scriitorul român din literatura maghiară din România" ["A Transylvnian Frankfurt or What a Romanian Writer Sees from the Hungarian Literature in Romania"] he reflects on the results of the investigation initiated by Daniel Vighi in the *Vatra* magazine and tries to find answers to the cultural "parallelism". He shows that the situation reflected by the

29 Balázs pinpoints the merits of this literary history as follows: its quasi-comprehensive character, prompt reporting of existing Romanian editions of the works of Hungarian writers, and as a shortcoming, the language and content of the book have suffered because the manuscript of the book was ready for publication in 1984, but because of some changes that the author refused to make, the study could not appear until 1996. Subsequently, an update of the material could have been done, and the value system to which Hungarian literature in Romania was reported remained unchanged (2002b).

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survey is accurate, but not definitive, more exactly the translated volumes are not sufficient and sometimes they are not representative and the Romanian reader must have "working tools" in order to form an opinion about the Hungarian literature in Romania (cf. Balázs 2003, 130).

In an interview given to Melinda Varga about the special number of the *Echinox* magazine (bilingual anthology of young Hungarian poets) he talks about the readers' attitude, pointing out that the majority of the public receptive to such issues is made up of Romanian poets. Here he also emphasises that, from a poetic point of view, the selected texts show similarities with contemporary Romanian literature and, upon the publication of the anthology, a real interest in contemporary Hungarian poetry could be noticed.

3.3.4 Translated…Translator

Even if translation is not one of Balázs's main concerns, it still constitutes part of his work. The magazines where he works as editor have sections of literary translation which promote, quite massively, Romanian literature. From a theoretical standpoint, he is concerned with the avant-garde of Hungarian literature in Romania, his interest extends to the avant-garde of Romanian literature, not only through the already-mentioned studies, but also through the translations of authors such as Gellu Naum, Virgil Teodorescu, Ilarie Voronca, Sesto Pals (Simon Şestopal) or Jonathan X. Uranus (Marcel Avramescu). He has also translated Max Blecher and the contemporaries Ion Stratan, Mircea Cărtărescu, Rareş Moldovan. At the same time, some of his own texts have been translated into Romanian, especially his academic work, by Francisko Kocsis, "Avangarda în literatura maghiară din România" ["The Avant-Guarde in Hungarian Literature in Romania"], published by Bastion Publishing House from Timişoara in 2009, respectively into English – the volume of studies *Avant-Garde and Representations of Communism in Hungarian Literature from Romania* by Didactică şi Pedagogică Publishing House, Bucharest 2009.

Conclusions

Hungarian literature in Romania has a special status given that from a socio-economic, political and historical point of view it is part of Romanian literature and from a linguistic point of view it belongs to Hungarian literature. It is the sum of social, economic, political and historical aspects of the two cultures, allowing to be considered much richer and flexible thanks to the multiple influences. Thus, the ways of communication, but also the mediators, cultural ambassadors are not only welcome, but necessary.

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Poet, critic and literary historian, translator, university teacher Imre József Balázs has become not only a prominent figure of Hungarian journalism in Romania by creating innovative literary sections, writing and editing publications and specialized volumes, but also of contemporary literary life, coordinating literary workshops and mentoring and promoting young authors. Thus he is a mediator of the Hungarian-Romanian cultural relations and his belief is that "what can bind these cultures is a very pragmatic approach to the realities in which we live, [because] sometimes we seek answers to the same scientific and everyday questions" (2003,129). Through his translations, publishing of bilingual anthologies, through articles and studies concerning the literature of other nations – especially Romanian literature – he manages to open channels of intercultural communication highly needed among the circumstances in which – despite the "massive amount of accumulated translation" (see the *Introduction* to the August 2004 issue of *Korunk* magazine) – we still do not truly know each other's literature.

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