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DUGONICS' ARGONAUTICA

The work and its times are subject to all of the questions surrounding one of the most important and as-yet insufficiently recognized turning points in Hungarian literature, the process by which Magyar–Latin bilingualism gradually gave way to unilingual Magyar literature.

The example of the polymath Piarist monk András Dugonics (Szeged, 18 October 1740–Szeged, 26 July 1818) and his role in the genre and its history is indeed well-known, although perhaps still not sufficiently, given his significance. His Hungarian-language work *Etelka*, published in 1788, was the first real Hungarian publishing success. Very little scholarship, however, has been devoted to its prime precursor, his Latin novel *Argonautica*. An exception to this was a German-language study¹ published in Berlin in 1962 by my dear former teacher Mária Révész Berényi, but this escaped the attention of Hungarian Dugonics researchers. On the occasion of the 13th International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, a facsimile of Dugonics' Latin work has been published, indicating—just like the above-mentioned German study—that the international academic literature had taken notice of the work. To appreciate the importance of the subject, it is worth noting that the second volume of the fundamental reference work of neo-Latin studies, by Jozef IJsewijn and Dirk Sacré,² points out that the history of the neo-Latin novel has been little studied to date, and may be a very attractive area for researchers.

Divided into 24 books, *Argonautica* was published in 1778 in Pozsony (today Bratislava in Slovakia) and Kassa (today Kosiče in Slovakia).³ The story of its birth, however, goes back to the late 1760s. The Országos Széchényi Könyvtár (Budapest) safeguards the folio codices—acquired by Miklós Jankovich as part of the Dugonics Collection—which contain preliminary studies and the early versions of the novel. The unpublished foreword in volume Fol. Lat. 81, which the writer dedicates to the reader, tells that he started work on the book in Medgyes, Transylvania (today Mediaş in Romania) in 1769, and then continued it in Vác, Nyitra (today Nitra in Slovakia) and, finally, after a transfer, Nagyszombat (today Trnava in Slovakia). He had to suspend the work for two years before taking it up again in 1772–73, after which, working mainly in the night hours, he

¹ Maria BERÉNYI-RÉVÉSZ, *Humanistische Anregungen bei den Anfängen des ungarischen Romans*, in: *Renaissance und Humanismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa: Eine Sammlung von Materialien*, besorgt von Johannes IRMSCHER, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1962, 95–103.

² Jozef IJSEWIJN, Dirk SACRÉ, *Companion to Neo-Latin Studies*, II,² Leuven, 1998.

³ Andreas DUGONICIUS, *Argonauticorum libri XXIV sive de vellere aureo*, Posonii–Cassovia, 1778.

reached book 19. Then he had the idea that before he completed and published the work, he would set out his researches into the Argonaut tradition in a mythographical monograph; it was in fact for this work, which remained only in manuscript form, that the foreword was written. The final version of the novel was completed only in 1776 (this is contained in codex Fol. Lat. 83), but even this differs from the printed edition in that the latter omits the prologue, some of the figures and particularly the large sketch map attached to the end, showing the route of the Argo from Iolkos to Cholchis. Also left out were the arguments written for the beginning of each book, even though these could have been particularly useful to the reader for keeping track of the complex plot.

Comparing all surviving versions with each other and the final printed book (the censored manuscript on which publication was based has not survived), we find that in addition to denying readers forewords they would certainly have been interested in, as well as appendices and guides that might have facilitated use of the work, it also omitted the short introduction that Dugonics wrote at the start of the first book in the second version; however, we can find this at the start of the Hungarian version of the work, *A gyapjas vitézek* (Heroes of the Fleece), published in 1794.⁴ In this introduction, the writer defines his narrative position as that of an anonymous chronicler who might have lived sometime in antiquity. (This device was used by many in the 18th century and afterwards; it was how Robert Graves⁵ worked, and we know that Károly Kerényi also started out with this approach in writing his Greek mythology.)⁶

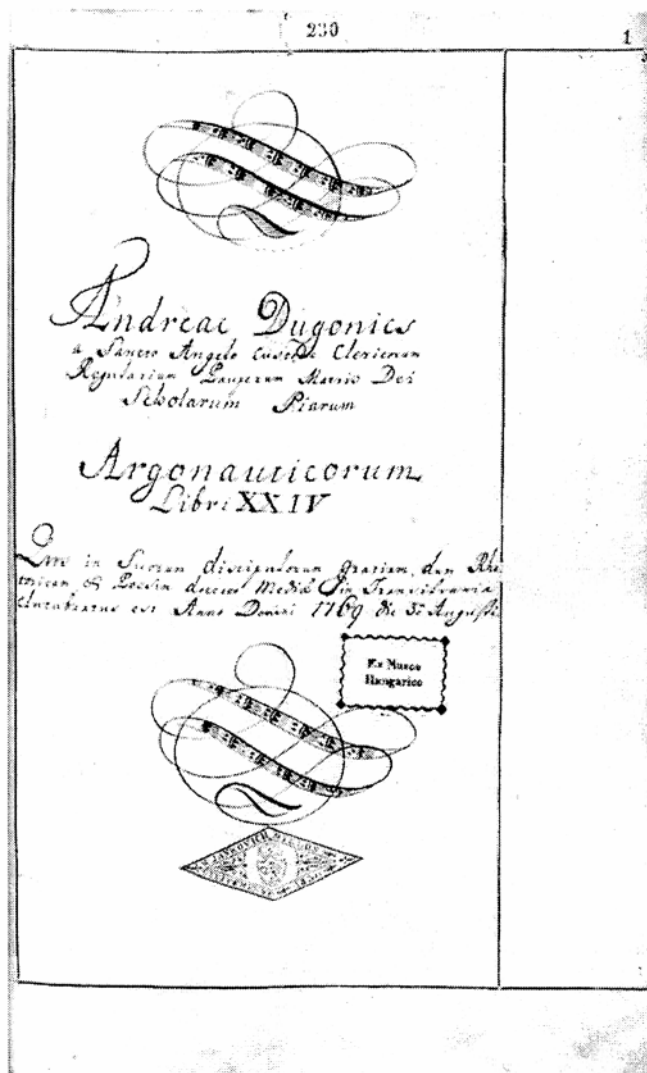
Finally, there was also a highly important—and unpublished—mythographic essay ending in an emended Hyginus text which the scholarly author compiled by summing up all his researches, drawing from the sources he had used and all accessible scholarly references, and then analyzing those aspects of the endlessly-branching Argonaut myths which for various reasons he had omitted from the basic fabric of his own novel. We cannot go into the details of this here; but we must certainly note that perhaps Dugonics' most important narrative decision was to completely leave out the return from Cholchis. He attempts to give philological grounds for this by arguing that all of Medea's evil acts committed on the return journey and thereafter belong in their entirety to a different section of tradition, and so should not be included in the reconstructed basic story.

Central to our discussion is the Prologue (*Prooemium*) of 1776, which also remained a manuscript. It starts on a highly subjective tone, recalling his joy in childhood and youth, on listening to, and later reading, all things to do with ancient times, the pastime which was to absorb all of his energies. He praises his teachers, who accustomed him early on to distinguishing coined money from the stage artifice (here having recourse to an address by Plautus) causing him to become a devoted reader of Virgil, who was recommended to him as the very finest. Then followed Homer, "Barclaus", Fenelonius and Gyöngyösi's *Chariclia*. Lesser writers are not worth mentioning. He then characterizes

⁴ DUGONICS András, *A' Gyapjas vitézek* (Heroes of the Fleece), I–II, Pozsony–Pest, Fűskúti Landerer Mihály, 1794.

⁵ Robert GRAVES, *The Golden Fleece*, London, Cassell, 1944.

⁶ Karl KERÉNYI, *Die Mythologie der Griechen*, Munich, 1992.



Inner front cover of manuscript
(Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Fol. Lat. 83, f. 1r)

the great writers he has listed. A worthwhile digression in the analysis of his judgements would be a comparison with György Alajos Szerdahely's pioneering book on genre theory and genre history *Poesis narrativa*,⁷ even though this only came out some years later, but it moves in the same medium of thought; the philological foundations are largely identical; and the authors were friends. He first appraises Homer, whom he regards as for the most part unrivalled, chiefly for his genius of deep simplicity and honesty and for his encyclopaedic knowledge, but notes that he himself regards the last two songs of the *Iliad* superfluous; he considers it would have better to finish the work with the killing of Hector. (Interestingly, Bahtin⁸ also notes that from the viewpoint of a novel, Hector's burial in the *Iliad* could not possibly be an ending. This seems like a coincidental excursion.) In his glorification of Virgil, he supplements his own words by quoting Scaliger's panegyric. And there is a comment which incorporates the considerations of his own novel: he found excellent that Virgil took much from Homer, Ennius (and he mentions another seven authors) but never made this explicit, leaving it to the reader to realise, if he so wishes, the borrowings and imitations.

Dugonics' third favourite is Barclay; he sincerely declares—however peculiar his opinion might seem, since he has never encountered anything similar—that he finds in Barclay's work *Argenis* an excellence that one might seek in vain in Homer. This is none other than the incomprehensible variability of the subjects, the wonderful outcome and unforeseeable turn of every element, and finally the constant and tireless endeavour to connect the most diverse things. If it was not for an occasional tendency to excessive profusion and crowdedness and effusive detail over insignificant things, he would boldly declare that it surpasses every poet of ancient and modern times. His portrayal as real of a completely fictional subject, and the superb interweaving and consummation of the episodes are completely unmatched and make him greater than anyone else.

Iлона Berthóty⁹ addressed the influence of John Barclay's *Argenis* on Dugonics, and particularly on *Etelka*, in 1908, and Anna Thuróczy in her as-yet unpublished doctoral thesis¹⁰ dealt with the general influence of the Greek novel on Dugonics and in Hungary, a theme further analyzed by Dezső Baróti.¹¹ This was subsequently used by Lajos

⁷ Georgius Aloysius SZERDAHELY, *Poesis narrativa ad Aestheticam seu doctrinam boni gustus conformata*, Budaë, Typis Regiæ Universitatis, 1784. On the epic and the novel: 30–152; on Heliodoros: 63–65, 101; on the drawn-out ending of the *Iliad*: 106; on Dugonics: 116; on Gyöngyösi: 141. For Szerdahely's narrative theory cf. TÓTH Sándor Attila, *A latin humanitás poétikája: A studia humanitatis iskolás poétikájának műnemi és műfaji kérdései a magyar irodalmi nyelvújítás kezdetéig* (The poetry of Latin Humanism: Issues of form and genre of the scholarly poetry of the studia humanitatis to the beginning of Hungarian literary reform), II/1, Szeged, Gradus ad Parnassum Könyvkiadó, 2000, 106–120.

⁸ Mihail BAKHTIN, *Epic and Novel*, in: ID., *The Dialogical Imagination*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

⁹ BERTHÓTY Ilnka, *Dugonics és Barclay: Bölcsészeti-doktori értekezés* (Dugonics and Barclay: PhD dissertation), Budapest, Hornyánszky Viktor, 1909.

¹⁰ THURÓCZY Anna, *Dugonics és a klasszikusok* (Dugonics and the classics), PhD dissertation, 491/1921/22, library of the Institute of Hungarian Literary History at Szeged University, no. 10.233/3.

¹¹ BARÓTI Dezső, *Dugonics András regénye* (The novel of András Dugonics), 1934; *Dugonics András és a barokk regény* (András Dugonics and the Baroque novel), in: ID., *Írók, érzelmek, stílusok* (Writers, emotions,

György,¹² Antal Wéber,¹³ József Szauder,¹⁴ István May¹⁵—in a treatment of other heroic novels—and Olga Penke, in a recent exemplary critical edition of *Etelka*.¹⁶ Barclay also had an influence on Bessenyei's *Tariménes*, as noted by Imre Nagy's critical edition.¹⁷ Ferenc Bíró¹⁸ established the place of the heroic novel in the literary system of the Hungarian Enlightenment, and Mihály Szajbély¹⁹ wrote about the novel's effect on theory. Interestingly, only Mária B. Révész realized that *Argenis* and *Etelka* are linked via *Argonautica*, and in recent decades the formerly unrecognized status of *Argenis* has increasingly come to light. For example, last year saw the publication of a twenty-eight volume history of Italian literature, edited by Enrico Malato. Volume 10, dealing with the Baroque era, includes a separate chapter on Barclay by Quinto Marini,²⁰ despite Barclay having been of Franco-Scottish rather than Italian descent. (This is not always clear from the Hungarian academic literature, which also claims in some places that this father of several children was a Jesuit.) This is not just because *Argenis*, although it was published posthumously in Paris in 1621, was actually written in Rome, where Barclay spent the last five years of his life and where he died. The work embodies most perfectly the criteria of Italian and thus the pan-European Baroque novel, since it is by virtue of its subject a Hellenistic historical novel, with a good few elements of Arcadian utopia; at the same time, with its much-debated *roman-à-clef* elements, it is a vision of contemporary history conceived as world history. In addition, its heroes are moved by the possibilities of spiritual renewal ranging from Irenism to Orthodoxy; and its unexpected twists, taken from

styles), Budapest, Magvető, 1971, 88–127, 484–488. The author erroneously refers to Anna Thuróczy as *Emma Thuróczy*, *ibid.*, 485.

¹² GYÖRGY Lajos, *A magyar regény előzményei* (Antecedents of the Hungarian novel), Budapest, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1941.

¹³ WÉBER Antal, *A magyar regény kezdetei: Fejezetek a magyar regény történetéből* (The rise of the Hungarian novel: Chapters from the history of the Hungarian novel), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959 (Irodalomtörténeti Könyvtár, 5).

¹⁴ SZAUDER József, *Dugonics emlékezete* (Memories of Dugonics), in: ID., *Az Estve és az Álom: Felvilágosodás és klasszicizmus* (Evening and Dream: Enlightenment and classicism), Budapest, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1970, 136–155.

¹⁵ MAY István, *A magyar heroikus regény története* (History of the Hungarian heroic novel), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1985.

¹⁶ PENKE Olga, *Utószó* (Afterword), in: DUGONICS András, *Etelka*, ed. PENKE Olga, Debrecen, Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó, 2002.

¹⁷ BESSENYEI György, *Tariménes útazása* (The voyage of Tariménes), ed. and accompanying study by NAGY Imre, Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 1999, 50, 75.

¹⁸ BÍRÓ Ferenc, *A felvilágosodás korának magyar irodalma* (Hungarian literature of the Enlightenment), Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 1996², 196–197, 200–201, 208–209.

¹⁹ SZAJBÉLY Mihály, „*Idzadnak a magyar tollak*”: *Irodalomszemlélet a magyar irodalmi felvilágosodás korában, a 18. század közepétől Csokonai haláláig* (“Sweating Magyar pens”: Literary attitude in the Hungarian Enlightenment era, from the mid-18th century until the death of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz), Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó–Universitas Kiadó, 2001. On the state of the novel: 159–191.

²⁰ Quinto MARINI, *La prosa narrativa*, in: *Storia della letteratura Italiana*, diretta da Enrico MALATO, V, *La fine del Cinquecento e il Seicento*, Parte II, *L'età barocca*, Milano, Il Sole 24 Ore, 2005, 991–992, 1008, 1012–1015, 1025–1026.

comedy, link it to travel, pirate and adventure novels. Poetically, it almost takes on the impossible, and with great success, by simultaneously imitating the *Odyssey*, Heliodoros and the five-act classical tragedy model. On top of all this, it puts into action and maintains throughout a character modelled, to all intents and purposes, on himself: a poet and writer who is part of the plot while being an external observer, critic and—most importantly—the literary recorder of events. Then the novel has a feature which must have given Dugonics much food for thought: the appearance of ancient Celtic characters—ancestors of his Scottish and French relatives—at key points in the novel. This may have encouraged Dugonics in his portrayal of the Scythians, regarded as the precursors of the Magyars. Returning for a moment to Malato's reference work: the Italian Baroque novel grew solely from this one work (*Argenis*), and its influence even shows up in some 19th-century works,²¹ not to mention the multitude of translations of the original text and the seventy editions in the 17th century alone. (According to some scholarly comments—see Langford,²² Davis,²³ Schulz-Behrend,²⁴ Bush,²⁵ Berger²⁶—it also influenced all 17th century English-language novel literature, and had its effect on the French and the Spanish, too. The significance of Opitz' German translation is also well known.)

In addition to some Hungarian literary histories, international neo-Latin literary history—since IJsewijn's epochal article²⁷—also gives the work its due weight. It is enough to mention that the recently published critical edition of *Argenis* by Terentius, i.e. Terence Turnberg²⁸ has even been put on the Internet.

Barclay's earlier novel *Satyricon*, published under his pen name Euphormio Lusinius, also had an enormous effect. It was mimicked and followed in France, the Netherlands and Italy, and its effect was often confused with that of classic Spanish novels which swept Europe in Latin translation. (I am happy to note here that the Transylvanian copy of Guzman de Alfarache's Danzig Latin translation has recently been discovered: in 1701 it was in the library of the Jesuit mission house in Nagyszeben [today Sibiu in Romania]. See Briesemeister's essay on this translation.²⁹) The effects were also felt in

²¹ In my view, for example, Ippolito Nievora, in whose novel *Confessioni d'una Italiano* one of the protagonists is called Argenide.

²² Gerald LANGFORD, *John Barclay's "Argenis": A Seminal Novel*, Studies in English (University of Texas), 26(1947), 59–76.

²³ Charles J. DAVIS, *John Barclay and His Argenis in Spain*, Humanistica Lovaniensia, 32(1983), 28–44.

²⁴ George SCHULZ-BEHREND, *Opitz' Übersetzung von Barclays Argenis*, PMLA, June 1955, 455–473.

²⁵ Douglas BUSH, *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century, 1600–1660*, second edition, revised, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1962, 54–55, 530–531.

²⁶ Günter BERGER, *John Barclay' Euphormio: Zur Rezeption eines neulateinisches Bestsellers in Frankreich*, in: *Acta Conventus Neolatini Torontonensis*, Binghampton N. Y., 1991, 231–240.

²⁷ Josef IJSEWIJN, *John Barclay and His Argenis: A Scottish Neo-Latin Novelist*, Humanistica Lovaniensia, 32(1983), 1–27.

²⁸ http://www.csus.edu/indiv/t/rileymt/Argenis/Table_of_contents_Argenis.html.

²⁹ Dietrich BRIESEMEISTER, *Zur Theorie der Übersetzung aus den Spanischen in das Neolateinische im deutschen Barockhumanismus*, in: *Troisième congrès international d'études néo-latines – Acta Conventus Neolatini Turonensis, Tours, Université François Rabelais, 6–10 Septembre, 1976*, ed. Jean-Claude MARGOLIN, I–II, Paris, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1980, 585–598.

Hungary, certainly of the fourth part of the novel, the sharp-witted study of national characteristics, *Icon animorum*.³⁰ In my opinion, Dugonics—who in the Alcaeus ode appended to the front of the printed version of his own novel and dedicated to the member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, Ferenc Esterházy, resolutely condemns the national sins inhibiting the Enlightenment and progress—certainly must have drawn lessons from chapter eight, in which Barclay discusses the Hungarians' virtues and sins in strong terms. The latter include frequently-manifested barbarian cruelty and predilection for servants faithful to the point of self-sacrifice. An example of the first in the novel is the unrestrained cruelty of the Scythian—i.e. Magyar—Idaea; she is mother of Medea, and although Dugonics left out all of the evils in Medea's gesta, we learn about mum's peccadilloes instead. An example of the second is the character Acarnan, and his beastly heroic or heroically beastly behaviour, the Scythian spy who turns and then reverts to allegiance to his previous lord. The slightly unhinged elder brother of Medea, King Almus (i.e. the Hungarian Álmos), presages the drunken Árpád of *Etelka*.

It was really as a neo-Latin novel that Dugonics read Fénelon's *Telemachus*, since he did not have French. Fortunately—mainly by the good offices of Béla Köpeczi³¹—we are very familiar with Fénelon's reception in Hungary, so Dugonics' reading can be fitted in here. Of particular interest is what he says about the political and philosophical lessons he works into the novel; he considers that apart from Seneca and Petrarch—the latter name clearly linked to his book *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, whose popularity in Hungary has been documented by József Turóczi-Trostler³²—there is no writer in world literature to whom we owe so much as regards the practical wisdom of modern life. The French writer was indeed more than a poet: he was a statesman who exposed and divulged the secrets of royal courts.

Finally, Dugonics lauds Gyöngyösi's Hungarian *Chariclia*, and what I consider particularly important in this appreciation is his brilliant perception—although he admitted that he could not state for certain—that Gyöngyösi did not really translate so much as restore existing text fragments and composed lines himself, so that the resulting work hardly falls short of Virgilian perfection. I should note that this view—some elements of which seem also to have been adopted by Szerdahely—is still the best approach to that which, taking account of all Gyöngyösi scholarship, has most recently been expressed by József Jankovics in his foreword to his new *Chariclia* edition³³ and which was also fully

³⁰ John BARCLAY (Euphormio Lusininus), *Icon animorum*, Caput VIII, in: *Satyricon, multo quam ante emendatius*, Leydae, Ex officina Jacobi Marci, 1619, 389–398.

³¹ KÖPECZI Béla, *Bevezető tanulmány* (Introductory study), in the Hungarian edition of FÉNELON, François de Salignac de La Mothe, *Telemaknak, az Ulisses fiának csudálatos történetei* (The adventures of Telemachus, son of Ulysses), Budapest, Magyar Helikon–Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1980.

³² TURÓCZI-TROSTLER József, *Keresztény Seneca: Fejezetek a kései humanizmus európai és magyarországi történetéből* (The Christian Seneca: Chapters from the European and Hungarian history of late Humanism), Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny, 1937, 25–75.

³³ JANKOVICS József, *Utószó* (Afterword), in: GYÖNGYÖSI István, *Új életre hozott Chariclia* (Chariclia revived), eds. JANKOVICS József, NYERGES Judit, Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 2005, 478–529.

accepted by Heliodoros' greatest Hungarian expert, Tibor Szepessy.³⁴ (For the Heliodoros translation which served as the model for the first half of Gyöngyösi's work, attributed to Mihály Czobor, see Péter Kőszeghy's critical edition.³⁵)

Neither is the foreword devoid of pleasantries. He professes to know merely the name of Apollonius Rhodius. (We know from the unpublished codex Fol. Lat. 81 that he had read him relentlessly in Greek, and naturally learned an enormous amount in the process.) But the nicest is an extra comment—in the margin, under a cross—that he has not read Epimenides' 5600-line lost epic on the Argonauts either. Of course, it is lost, as he says in this properly-formulated scholarly note.

Since, for Dugonics, and to some extent even for the more classifying Jesuit Szerdahely, the epic and the novel constituted more or less the same category, I think that the Latin *Argonautica* should from now on certainly be approached as, in a sense, the final summing-up of the Hungarian neo-Latin epic as well as a possible source of the romantic Hungarian epic. We must also point out that *Etelka*, the Dugonics novel which is well known to have inspired Katona and Vörösmarty, drew on the lessons he had learned from writing a Latin novel or prose epic.

³⁴ SZEPESSY Tibor, *Utószó* (Afterword), in: HÉLIODÓROSZ, *Sorsüldözött szerelmesek: Etiópai történet* (HELIODOROS, Persecuted lovers: Ethiopian tale), trans. SZEPESSY Tibor, Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1964; and SZEPESSY's review on József Jankovics' edition: *Helikon*, 51(2005), 561–574.

³⁵ CZOBOR Mihály (?), *Theagenes és Chariclia* (Theagenes and Chariclia), ed. KŐSZEGHY Péter, Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó–Balassi Kiadó, 1996 (Régi Magyar Költők Tára: XVI. század, 10).