

György Alajos Szerdahely and Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke: details of a cultural history debate from the 1780s

Piroska BALOGH

Associate Professor, Eötvös Loránd University

ORCID: 0000-0001-5075-0748

Abstract | This study examines an intellectual debate from the 1780s that is primarily represented by three Latin texts published in German journals and two corresponding Latin epistolary exchanges. The discourse originated with an anonymous letter in the *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses* in 1782 that criticized the Jesuits for allegedly stifling scientific and cultural advancement in Hungary. György Alajos Szerdahely, an ex-Jesuit professor at the University of Pest, responded with an *apologia* defending the Jesuits' contributions to Hungarian education and culture. Three years later, Elek Horányi, a Piarist scholar, rebutted Szerdahely's arguments, emphasizing the Piarists' greater role in the dissemination of modern scientific philosophy in Hungary.

The study contextualizes the debate within the editorial practices of *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses*, edited by Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke, a theologian with strong ties to the intellectual circles of Göttingen. Letters between Henke, Szerdahely, and another key figure, János Krizosztom Hannulik, reveal the cultural and personal dynamics underpinning the publications. The analysis highlights the role Latin played as a medium of transnational scholarly exchange and explores how historiography has ignored Szerdahely's oeuvre despite its intellectual impact.

The findings underscore the cultural and methodological tensions between Jesuit and Piarist scholars, reflecting broader shifts in educational and scientific paradigms during the late eighteenth century. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of Latin scholarly networks and the critical reception of Jesuit contributions in early modern Hungarian intellectual history.

Keywords | Jesuits and Piarists, 18th century, intellectual history, scholarly networks, latin journalism

* The present study was written with the support of project NKFIH 134719, *Esztétikai kommunikáció Európában (1700–1900)* (*Aesthetic Communication in Europe 1700–1900*), as well as the *Neolatin Költők Tára* (*Repository of Neo-Latin Poets*) project of the Institute for Literary Studies at HUN-REN BTK.

This study examines a debate represented by three texts published in Latin-language periodicals in Germany and two, also Latin-language scholarly correspondences from the 1780s. The first, brief text was published without a title in the cultural news section of *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* in March 1782.¹ In it, the editor published an excerpt from a letter that was received from a scholar who did not wish to be named. The anonymous scholar discusses how the decline of culture and sciences in Hungary was caused by the Jesuits' unbridled critical and competitive spirit. György Alajos Szerdahely, an ex-Jesuit professor of aesthetics at the university in Pest,² responded to this letter in June the same year in his letter *Epistola apologetica pro Iesuitis Hungaris, aduersus epistolam, insertam Ann. lit. Mart. pag. 281*.³ It was a shorter overview study, in which the author reflected on the role the Jesuit order played in the history of Hungarian education and culture. Another polemic on the topic arrived three years later, written by Piarist monk Elek Horányi⁴ and published by the journal as *Alexii Horanyi, e scholis piis, Responsum ad Georgii Szerdahely Apologiam pro Iesuitis Hungaris in literarios Helmstadiensium Annales illatam MDCCLXXXII* in June 1785.⁵ On the one hand, Horányi writes that the anonymous scholar was right to say that the Jesuits had a strong cultural monopoly in Hungary; on the other hand, he argues that the Piarists played a much larger role in establishing modern natural philosophy in Hungary than the Jesuits. The cultural context surrounding these texts can be reconstructed from partly preserved copies of two correspondences: the letters Szerdahely wrote to the editor of the Latin periodical, Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke⁶ during this period have namely survived in Henke's estate;⁷ as have many more letters from János Krizosztom Hannulik (who was behind the two other pieces)⁸ to Henke, in the same loca-

1 *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 1, no. 1 (1782): 281–283.

2 On György Alajos Szerdahely's (1740–1808) oeuvre, see BALOGH Pirooska, *Teória és medialitás. A latinitás a magyarországi tudásáramlásban 1800 körül* [Theory and mediality. Latin in knowledge transfer in Hungary around 1800] (Budapest: Argumentum, 2015), 13–37.

3 SZERDAHELY György Alajos, "Epistola apologetica pro Iesuitis Hungaris, aduersus epistolam, insertam Ann. Lit. Mart. pag. 281.," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 1, no. 2 (1782): 97–109.

4 For Elek Horányi's (1736–1809) biography, see HORÁNYI Elek, *Levelezése* [Correspondence], ed. SZELESTEI NAGY László (Budapest: MTA–PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, 2016), 7–20.

5 Elek Horányi's response: "Alexii Horányi e Scholis Piis responsum ad Georgii Szerdahely Apologiam pro Iesuitis Hungaris in litterarias Helmstadiensium ephemerides illatam, MDCCLXXXII," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 4, no. 1 (1785): 385–395.

6 On Heinrich Philipp Konrad Henke's (1752–1809) life, see Erich BEYREUTHER, "Henke, Heinrich Philipp Konrad," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 8 (1969): 526 [Online-Version]; URL: <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd115387056.html#ndbcontent> (download: 28.10.2024).

7 The text of the letters can be read in the appendix of this study. Source: Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Handschriftensammlung, Cod 623,9 Novi, *Letters and documents of Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke*.

8 On János Krizosztom Hannulik's (1745–1816) life, see VARGA László, *Hannulik János, a XVIII. század Horatiusa* [János Hannulik, the Horace of the eighteenth century] (Debrecen: Stúdium Könyvkiadó, 1938) and SZÖRÉNYI László, *Studia Hungarolatina. Tanulmányok a régi magyar és neolatin irodalomról* [Studia Hungarolatina. Studies on old Hungarian and Neo-Latin literature] (Budapest: Kortárs Kiadó, 1999), 130–136.

tion.⁹ The following describes this debate and the lessons learned in terms of cultural history from the correspondence and cultural networking that went on behind it.

The scientific literature has barely touched upon this debate so far. Analyses of historiography do not even mention it in connection with György Alajos Szerdahely, and although József Szinnyei's encyclopedia of authors does list the apologia among his works, it is almost impossible to identify it based on the bibliographic information it provides.¹⁰ Research on Horányi has covered more ground, thanks to László Szelestei Nagy, who published the letters of the illustrious Piarist historian of literature and science, as well as Horányi's letter to his fellow Piarist János Krizosztom Hannulik dated 1 March, 1785 in Pest.¹¹ Horányi's letter contains the text of his response, asking Hannulik to forward it to Schlözer in Göttingen, and stating that if Schlözer was not willing to publish it, he should publish it elsewhere, even in Nagykároly, giving another location. This is where László Szelestei Nagy published the Latin-language text of Horányi's original manuscript, adding the original, provocative news item that started the debate in a note, although he does not discuss Szerdahely's study in detail. Even though Horányi himself also referred to this virtual duel in his encyclopedia of authors, he did not provide any specific information or detail.¹² Gergely Tóth, in turn, briefly discusses the debate, or more specifically, Szerdahely's study, in the context of the texts written by Jesuit historians Károly Ferenc Palma, György Pray, and István Katona about the dissolution of the order.¹³ In other words, although the debate itself is not unknown to Hungarian cultural history, the literature has not examined its context, substantive elements, and lessons learned in detail, especially not in connection with Szerdahely's oeuvre.

In order to show the context of the debate and the weight of its substantive elements, it is important to say a few words about *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* itself, its editorship, and whether a Hungarian presence was common in this outlet, which was published so far away from Hungary. *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* was published between 1782 and 1789, and as its title also suggests, it was edited in Helmstedt in Lower Saxony, by a largely one-person publishing enterprise run by Heinrich

9 Source of the letters: Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Handschriftensammlung, Cod 623,9 Novi, *Letters and documents of Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke*. The corpus contains the text of 46 letters Hannulik wrote to Henke between 1780–1794, a total of 140, densely packed pages.

10 "Apologia Jesuitarum Hungaricorum. In Ephemeridibus Helmstadiensibus. Jaurini, 1782." SZINNYEI József, *Magyar írók élete és munkái* [The life and works of Hungarian writers], 13 (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1909), 806.

11 HORÁNYI, *Levelezése* ..., 117–122.

12 HORÁNYI Elek, *Scriptores Piarum Scholarum Liberaliumque Artium Magistri* (Buda: Typis Regiae Universitatis Hungaricae, 1809), XXII, 81–83, 87, 96.

13 TÓTH Gergely, "Ex-jezsuiták: Önkép, önreprezentáció és a rend 1773. évi megszűntetésének emléke Palma Károly Ferenc, Pray György és Katona István történeti munkáiban" [Ex-Jesuits: Self-image, self-representation, and the memory of the dissolution of the order in 1773 in the historical works of Károly Ferenc Palma, György Pray, and István Katona], in *Katolikus egyházi társadalom Magyarországon a 18. században* [Catholic religious society in the 18th century Hungary], eds. Forgó András and Gözsy Zoltán, 411–426 (Pécs: META Egyesület, 2019).

Philipp Conrad Henke (1752–1809).¹⁴ Henke is primarily known in cultural history as a church historian and theologian. He was professor of theology and later philosophy at the university of Helmstedt and also published many highly respected studies on ancient literature, philosophy, and the theory of aesthetics. He became associated with Latin-language periodicals relatively early: he often published in *Ephemerides Literariae* (1772–1775), a review journal edited by Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach¹⁵ in Halle, and he later joined the editors of *Commentarii de Rebus Literariis* (1778–1781), Schirach and Paul Jakob Bruns,¹⁶ in Helmstedt. This Latin-language journal of criticism became the above-mentioned *Annales* under Henke's editorship. Although Helmstedt was not a particularly famous university town, it can be considered a European center for journal editing in this period, since this is where one of the most successful German periodicals emerged in the form of Schirach's *Politische Journal*,¹⁷ as did Henke's subsequent periodicals on the history of the church, *Magazin für die Religionsphilosophie, Exegese und Kirchengeschichte* (1793–1804) and *Archiv für die neueste Kirchengeschichte* (1794–1799), both of which were well-known scientific journals at the time. These early periodicals focused on criticism, i.e. mostly reviews, and they were published in Latin. The latter is probably why even the German history of periodicals essentially skips over them, and barely any meaningful historiographic information is available on *Annales*. This is surprising because the journal published reviews on the authoritative authors of the time, primarily German writers and their volumes and periodicals, including the works of Moses Mendelssohn, Friedrich Nicolai, Johann Joachim Eschenburg, Albrecht von Haller, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Carl von Linné, Christian Traugott Schlegel, David Hume, and Cristoph Wilhelm Hufeland, as well as many professors from Göttingen, including Christian Gottlob Heyne, Johann David Michaelis, and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. It also reviewed the periodicals published in Göttingen. Incidentally, Henke was also approached by the university of Göttingen several times, where he clearly had strong ties, but he was a stubborn local patriot of Helmstedt. Returning to *Annales*, the journal was divided into four columns, *Anecdota*, which published miscellaneous studies on a wide variety of topics, including documents relevant to the history of the church,¹⁸ contemporary points of interest in phi-

14 On Henke, see note 7.

15 On Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach's (1743–1804) work as an editor, see Jeremy D. POPKIN, "Political Communication in the German Enlightenment. Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach's *Politische Journal*," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 20, no. 1 (1996): 24–41.

16 In Hungary, Paul Jakob Bruns (1743–1814) was mostly known as an orientalist, geographer, and theologian. For his biography, see Carl Gustav Adolf SIEGFRIED, "Bruns, Paul Jakob," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 3 (1876), 450–452 [Online-Version]; URL: <https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116813636.html#adbcontent> (download: 28.10.2024).

17 On the history of Julia Augusta, i.e. the university of Helmstedt, see Sabine AHRENS, *Die Lehrkräfte der Universität Helmstedt (1576–1810)* (Helmstedt: Landkreis Helmstedt, 2004). On Schirach's periodicals, see POPKIN, "Political ...," 24–41.

18 For example: "Lutheri Epistola ad Hier. Wellerum," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 3, no. 1 (1784): 481–485.

lology,¹⁹ news in classical philology,²⁰ or David Hume's Latin-language autobiography.²¹ The author's name was very rarely indicated, with the exception of Szerdahely's and Horányi's above-mentioned apology and response, which were published in this column, and where both authors were willing to reveal their identity. That being said, the journal mostly consisted of reviews, which were organized in the columns of *De libris novis* and *De libellis academicis*, occasionally supplemented with miscellaneous cultural news in the column of *Nova litteraria*. The short news item against Jesuits that started the debate was also published here.

Annales was thus an influential journal entrenched in contemporary German-language intellectual circles, and because it was published in Latin, it specifically targeted a learned, educated audience. A Hungarian presence was not typical in the journal: there are no other studies in the *Anecdota* column beside Szerdahely's and Horányi's texts that are of Hungarian relevance. Looking at the reviews, it is striking that the periodical is increasingly dominated by Henke's gradual turn towards an interest in the history of the church. That is why a review (otherwise unknown to the literature) is also promptly published of János Ribini's Lutheran history of the church in 1787.²² And that is also probably why the editor had an interest in the Jesuit order, which was still active, even though it had already been banned across Europe. At least that is suggested by the fact that in 1787 *Annales* published a review of a text about the Jesuits that had no Hungarian relevance.²³ This could explain why the news item on the Hungarian Jesuits was included in the journal and why Horányi's response was accompanied by a conspicuously rare editorial footnote that declared the impartiality of the editorial board, indicating that the study was published at the author's request, since the text it addressed had also been published in this journal.²⁴ From the letter Horányi wrote to Hannulik, mentioned above, it is also clear that this request was not in fact made by the author: Horányi originally wanted to publish his response in Göttingen. This explains why he chides Szerdahely in the introduction for publishing his response in the Helmstedt paper, which had little awareness of the Hungarian context and so could not judge the particular situation. This created quite an ironic situation in retrospect, since Horányi's response also ended up being published here. As to why Henke accepted the piece is explained by the review column of the periodical: in addition to publishing a review of the collection of poems by the excellent Piarist Latin poet János

19 For example: "De Bibliotheca Hardtiana," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 4, no. 2 (1785): 193–201.

20 For example: "Virgilii MS. duo fragmenta," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 2, no. 1 (1783): 193–195.

21 For example: "Davidis Humei de vita sua acta liber singularis, latine redditus," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 7, no. 1 (1788): 3–25.

22 "Memorabilia Augustanae Confessionis, in Regno Hungariae a Ferdinando Primo usque ad tertium," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 5, no. 2 (1787): 244–247.

23 "Origo collegii Societatis Iesu ad Sanctum Salvatorem Augustae Vindelicorum, Fuggerianae pietatis in Deum, et patriam monumentum perenne. Augustae Vindel. ap. Nicol. Doll. 1786. Pag. 120 8," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 5, no. 2 (1787): 248.

24 "Istud responsum editores Annalium repudiare noluimus, quippe semel typis destinatum, et vel sine nostra opera publicandum. Ceterum nos ab omni partium disceptationum studio liberos nosmet profite-mur," *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 4, no. 1 (1785): 385.

Krizosztom Hannulik in 1783 and 1786, Henke also published complete Latin-language poems by him, accompanied by enthusiastic laudations (which was quite unusual for this review journal). On a personal level, Henke was thus clearly an enthusiastic reader of Hannulik's poems.²⁵ It could be assumed based on all of this that Henke accepted the response letter at Hannulik's request, although he cautiously distanced himself from it in the above-mentioned editorial footnote. The validity of this assumption is indicated by the 46 letters that Hannulik wrote to Henke between 1780–1794, which contain 140, densely packed pages and can be found in Henke's estate.²⁶ In the first letter of response, Hannulik clearly introduces himself as a response to Henke's request, describing his surroundings in Nagykároly, his patrons, and the instruction of the Latin language in Hungary. He also sends additional manuscript poems. The letter corpus contains several interesting details, an examination of which is way beyond the scope of the present study. Two aspects should be highlighted in terms of the debate: on the one hand, it seems from the letters that Hannulik himself might have been the anonymous scholar who initiated the debate about the excessive influence of the former Jesuits; on the other hand, he was indeed the person who sent Horányi's response to Henke, asking him to publish it.

At the same time, no editorial note accompanies Szerdahely's piece. This may seem surprising at first sight, since this was a paper published by a Protestant editor and distributed in Protestant circles, and so it would be logical for him to distance himself from both protagonists of this Catholic "internal affair." The explanation for this surprising lack of comment, which almost implies a fondness, can also be found in the review column. If we have a look at the Hungarian aspects of the review columns, we may notice that *Annales* published a separate review of Szerdahely's eulogy on the death of Ferenc Handerla, a Catholic priest and professor of philosophy, in 1783,²⁷ also introducing Szerdahely's *Ars poetica generalis*, *Poesis narrativa*,²⁸ and *Poesis dramatica* volumes in positive reviews in 1784.²⁹ In 1785, describing the previous relocations of the royal Hungarian university, it provided a detailed review of Szerdahely's inaugural speech at the university, as well as his eulogy on the death of Ferenc Weiss, a former Jesuit professor.³⁰ Although the reviews were published anonymously, it is quite telling in terms of their potential author that according to Henke's extant library records, his library still included these volumes by Szerdahely when Henke died in 1809.³¹ We can thus conclude that through the review column, the former Jesuit Szerdahely became by far the highest-represented Hungarian author in this Protestant journal. It is also conspicuous that beyond those mentioned so far, *Annales* only published reviews of the

25 Reviews and published poems: *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses* 2, no. 2 (1783): 170–175; *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses* 5, no. 1 (1786): 275–277.

26 On the letters, see note 9.

27 *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses* 2, no. 1 (1783): 572.

28 A combined review of the two volumes: *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses*, 3, no. 1 (1784): 409–412.

29 *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses* 3, no. 2 (1784): 341–343.

30 *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses* 4, no. 2 (1785): 274–275.

31 *Bibliotheca Henrici Philippi Conradi Henke*, 2 (Helmstadt: [s.e.], 1810), 48 (items 9039–9041).

works of three Hungarian authors: István Katona's *Historia critica regum Hungariae*³² and János Molnár's *Physiologicon complexum historiae naturalis regna tria* in 1782,³³ and János Keresztély Horváth's treatise *Theoria globi aerostatici, ob inflammabilem, quo repletur, aerem in altum ovulare soliti* in 1785.³⁴ What these authors share is that they were all Jesuit scholars and renowned scientists (for instance, Jesuit János Horváth Keresztély was also a corresponding member of the Göttingen Academy), who were Szerdahely's colleagues at the Nagyszombat, Buda, or Pest universities, including the above-mentioned astronomer Ferenc Weiss. It thus seems that the answer to Horányi's question as to why Szerdahely published his apology in this distant periodical that did not have a thorough understanding of the Hungarian situation is not simply that the offensive text had also been published there. Another significant circumstance is that this outlet, which was published by learned Protestant editors and targeted educated readers, could not be accused of some kind of religious or feudal bias for the Jesuits, although the readers of the paper may already have been familiar with the accomplishments of the former Jesuit Hungarian scholars and the genres of scholarly debate and criticism as a result of their previous scientific achievements anyway. At the same time, these perspectives may give rise to the suspicion that some type of scholarly interaction may have gone on in the background, just like in Hannulík's case. This assumption is also confirmed by Henke's estate, which includes the manuscripts of eight Latin-language letters written by Szerdahely to Henke between 1782 and 1785, the texts of which can be read in the appendix of the study.³⁵ From the first, introductory letter it seems that Szerdahely approached Henke as the esteemed editor of *Annales*. The subsequent letters discuss how Szerdahely regularly purchased *Annales* (and possibly became its Hungarian distributor) and also sent books to Henke, including his own volumes. These purchases were mostly completed through booksellers, and not without some difficulties. Szerdahely only briefly refers to the debate in his letter of February 1783, from which it is clear that he would have liked his piece to appear anonymously, although he accepted Henke's editorial decision in retrospect. The letters are respectful rather than familiar in tone and contain several fragments of information, for instance about the situation of the university in Buda, which later moved to Pest.

Having reviewed where and why the documents accompanying the debate were published, it is now time to talk about their content as well. The first report, published in March 1782, refers to an unnamed Hungarian scholar (based on the publisher's correspondence, Hannulík), and it claims to be publishing an excerpt from the anonymous scholar's letter. It puts forward quite a strong accusation, in quite strong language: it claims that for centuries, the Jesuits have scared away every Hungarian scholar who was not one of them from sharing their results with the public and serving the common good, and even now, a decade after their dissolution, they were plotting to make

32 *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 1, no. 1 (1782): 81–83.

33 *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 1, no. 1 (1782): 163–165.

34 *Annales Literarii Helmstadiensis* 4, no. 2 (1785): 272–274.

35 See the text of the letters in the appendix.

sure that all scientific results and initiatives would seem to come from them. He thus labels the Hungarian Jesuit scholars a sort of “*morbus*,” a disease on the body of Hungarian culture. Three unique characteristics should be highlighted in connection with this short piece. On the one hand, this kind of anti-Jesuit content and rhetoric was not unknown in the Hungarian scholarly correspondence of the time, although it was not common, either. It is thus possible that a missive was indeed behind it, and this aspect may be of significance in connection with the possible author of the letter. On the other hand, rather than questioning whether the Jesuits’ scientific achievements were real and valuable, the text argues against the monopoly they had in science. Third, the text does not claim that the Jesuits achieved this scientific dominance through some kind of administrative or political lobbying, but by exercising quite strong and harsh criticism against other people’s books publicly:

illius scripta non modo palam vilipendebant, et aspernabantur, verum pedibus proterebant, dentibus dilaniabant, probris, et ludibriis, indigna caelestibus animis contentione lacesabant, eorumque studiosos ac cultores spectro infamiae ab illis abstrahere ac retrahere conabantur.³⁶

Expressions such as “tread on,” “tearing apart with their teeth,” etc. become interesting especially in light of how the Hungarian intellectual circles received Mátyás Rát’s experiments, who studied with Schlözer in Göttingen and tried to establish the genre of the critical newspaper review in the Hungarian language, voicing genuinely critical perspectives. His attempts were received with indignation, disbelief, and outrage, and the authors treated criticism as a personal insult, not understanding why public criticism was necessary for works that had already passed censorship.³⁷ It thus seems that this brooding attack was not a response to some kind of Jesuit lobbying activity but the critical approach preferred and encouraged by the Jesuits, which was indeed harsh, merciless, and uncomfortable at times. This approach also characterized their historians’ source criticism, including György Pray and István Katona’s methods. It must be noted that this outburst against criticism had a somewhat counterproductive effect when published in a journal of review and criticism.

After only a few months, Szerdahely published a study close to half a sheet in length as a response. Only the first two sentences of this text refer to the original attack: “*Calumniam veritati gentique meae iniuriosam habent illae querelae*,” i.e. “these complaints unjustly offend the truth and my people,”³⁸ which is why he responds to them, also subtly suggesting that the journal did well to publish the original letter word for word because (as I already suggested above) the truth value of the complaint could al-

³⁶ *Annales Literarii Helmstadienses* 1, no. 1 (1782): 282.

³⁷ KÓKAY György, “Göttinga, Rát Mátyás és felvilágosodás kori irodalmunk kezdetei” [Göttingen, Mátyás Rát, and the beginnings of our literature in the era of the enlightenment], *MTA Nyelv- és Irodalomtudományok Osztályának Közleményei* 23 (1966): 121–145.

³⁸ SZERDAHELY, “Epistola ...,” 97.

ready be judged based on the text itself. Following the script of the apologies written by his fellow former Jesuit brethren,³⁹ Szerdahely then outlines a summary of cultural history, a concise *historia litteraria*. In the first part of his text, he refers to charter and chronicle sources, discussing how Latinized culture, and even a knowledge of the Hebrew language, appeared as a result of the Benedictines' activities in Hungary, starting with Saint Gerardus and discussing the status and characteristics of schools and education in detail. He also talks about the unique nature of the travels of university students following the Mongol invasion, as well as the Hungarian authors' excellent command of the Latin language. While he mentions the attempts to establish universities, and the cultural initiatives launched by Louis the Great, Sigismund, and later King Matthias and the Báthorys, and indicates that Hungarian culture in this period was characterized by authors of European renown and quality (e.g. Janus Pannonius and Johannes Sambucus) as a result of *peregrinatio academica*, he believes that the majority of the population, especially lay people, were mostly uneducated. Szerdahely then describes how the Jesuits settled in Nagyszombat and what role they played in establishing university education as well as promoting so-called Latin schools among a wider layer of society. He discusses the subjects they taught and the methods they used, the role the French Jesuit⁴⁰ Dionysius Petavius, i.e. Denis Pétau played in what methods were used in the teaching of theology, up until the turning point in education hallmarked by Gerard van Swieten.⁴¹ According to Szerdahely, Jesuit education transmitted the Newtonian turn in physics and natural philosophy well and at a European level, thanks to, for instance, Pál Makó⁴² or the above-mentioned János Keresztély Horváth.⁴³ At the same time, some people did not receive such state-of-the-art education in other schools, and the complaints that could be read here were a result of their jealousy, and people should do work in their homeland instead of complaining abroad. He refers to Horányi's volume *Memoria Hungarorum*,⁴⁴ mentioning that the author should have aimed for quality instead of quantity, although his volumes still confirm how many people of various estates and ranks from outside the Jesuit circles were

39 For details of the structure of Jesuit apologies and the arguments they used, see TÓTH, "Ex-jezsuiták ...," 411–426.

40 On Denis Pétau's (1583–1652) significance and his oeuvre, see *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600–800*, eds. Ulrich L. LEHNER, Richard A. MULLER, and A. G. ROEBER (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 66, 112, 137, 365, 527.

41 On Gerard van Swieten's (1700–1772) cultural and educational reform, see Ernst WANGERMANN, *Aufklärung und staatsbürgerliche Erziehung. Gottfried van Swieten als Reformator des österreichischen Unterrichtswesens 1781–1791* (München: Oldenbourg, 1978).

42 For details on Pál Makó's (1723–1793) oeuvre, see SZÁDOCZKI Vera, "Makó Pál élete és munkássága" [Pál Makó's life and oeuvre], in *Makó Pál költői munkái* [Pál Makó's poetical works], ed. SZÁDOCZKI Vera, 9–27 (Budapest: MTA–PPKE Barokk Irodalom és Lelkiség Kutatócsoport, 2018).

43 On János Keresztély Horváth's (1732–1799) importance in the history of physics, see GAZDA István, "Horváth Keresztély János," in *Nemzeti évfordulóink 2007*, eds. BEKE László et al. (Budapest: Balassi Bálint Magyar Kulturális Intézet, 2006), 29.

44 HORÁNYI Elek, *Memoria Hungarorum et Provincialium scriptis editis notorum*, 1–3 (Pozsony: Anton Loew, 1777).

active in Hungarian science and literature during the last few centuries, who thus had not been silenced. He lists many people who were not Jesuits but were still illustrious scholars and did not complain that the Jesuits oppressed them or monopolized science or culture, including Bishop Ignác Batthyány,⁴⁵ many Piarist scholars, including Elek Horányi himself,⁴⁶ András Dugonics,⁴⁷ Miklós Révai,⁴⁸ István Pállya,⁴⁹ and Lipót Schaffrath⁵⁰ (noting that the Paulines and the Franciscans were seriously vying with them lately), and he also names illustrious Protestant scholars, including Karl Gottlieb Windisch,⁵¹ István Weszprémy,⁵² József Benkő,⁵³ and Dániel Cornides.⁵⁴ This element, i.e. an overview of the contemporary scientific world with a canonical intention that is tolerant in terms of religion, is a new and modern approach compared to the Jesuits' previous self-apologies.

Based on the above, it is quite surprising that Horányi was the one to respond to this piece, and only three years after the article. Beyond the critical comment about his encyclopedia of authors, Szerdahely's article in fact praised and recognized him. The increasingly obvious advancement of the Piarists in university education around 1784 was likely behind this, as well as the fact that former Jesuits were being forced out of these fora (Szerdahely was also forced to leave his university position in 1784 during Swieten's university reform).⁵⁵

-
- 45 For details on Ignác Batthyány's (1741–1798) cultural activities, see JAKÓ Zsigmond, "Batthyány Ignác, a tudós és a tudományszervező" [Ignác Batthyány, scholar and science manager], *Erdélyi Múzeum* 53, no. 1–4 (1991): 76–99.
- 46 On Elek Horányi (1736–1809), see note 4.
- 47 András Dugonics' (1740–1818), Piarist, professor of mathematics at the university of Pest, author of novels. For his biography, see *A Magyar Piarista Rendtartomány történeti névtára 1666–1997* [The historical directory of the Hungarian Province of the Piarist Order 1666–1997], eds. LÉH István and KOLTAI András (Budapest: Magyar Piarista Tartományfőnökség, 1998), 97.
- 48 On Miklós Révai's (1750–1807) oeuvre, see THIMÁR Attila, *Hős és áldozat. Révai Miklós és a klasszikus századforduló irodalomtörténete* [Hero and victim. Miklós Révai and the literary history of the classical turn of the century] (Budapest: Universitas, 2007).
- 49 On Piarist superior general and playwright István Pállya's (1740–1802) life, see *A Magyar Piarista ...*, 286.
- 50 Lipót Schaffrath (1734–1808), baron, Piarist, censor in Pest, and professor of physics at the university of Pest. On his life, see *A Magyar Piarista ...*, 330.
- 51 Karl Gottlieb Windisch (1720–1793), historian from Pozsony and journal editor. On his oeuvre, see *Briefwechsel des Karl Gottlieb Windisch*, ed. Andrea SEIDLER (Budapest: Universitas, 2008).
- 52 On physician and historian of medicine István Weszprémi's (1723–1799) oeuvre, see *Weszprémi István emlékezete. Halálának 200. évfordulóján* [István Weszprémi's memory. On the 200th anniversary of his death], eds. GAZDA István and SCHULTHEISZ Emil (Piliscsaba–Budapest–Debrecen: MATI–Simmelweis Orvostörténeti Múzeum, Könyvtár és Levéltár–DOTE, 2000).
- 53 József Benkő (1740–1814), theologian, botanist, historian, and linguist. On his oeuvre, see CSATA Adél, *Benkő József, a historia litteraria művelője. Egy kontextualizáló olvasat* [József Benkő, a cultivator of historia litteraria. A contextualizing reading] (Kolozsvár: Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület, 2020).
- 54 Dániel Cornides (1732–1787), professor of diplomatics and heraldry at the university of Pest. On his oeuvre, see SOÓS István, "Hajnóczy József és Cornides Dániel levelezése" [The correspondence of József Hajnóczy and Dániel Cornides], *Levéltári Közlemények* 56, no. 1 (1985): 97–124.
- 55 The literature discusses the anti-Jesuit trends in university circles particularly in connection with Heinrich Bretschneider, see BRUCKNER János, "A jozefinista kultúrpolitika és az Egyetemi Könyvtár

The first part of Horányi's answer gets rather personal, addressing his comments to Szerdahely directly, although rather than call him by his name, he calls him "Scriptor Aestheticus," referring to his oeuvre as a professor of aesthetics. In terms of length, his response is much shorter than Szerdahely's text, and after briefly questioning the role Petavius⁵⁶ played in the turn in the teaching of theology, the main part of the response focuses on how the eighteenth-century turn in philosophy and natural science in Hungary was primarily transmitted by the Piarist teachers and scholars rather than the Jesuits, describing Elek Körver's⁵⁷ oeuvre in detail to prove his point. He finally also suggests that it does not matter if the available intellectual capabilities are the same if the financial ones are not: this refers to the wealth of the Jesuit order, although it is not really a relevant argument for the period after 1773.

Several lessons can be learned from this debate. On the one hand, it is important to emphasize that Szerdahely saw the cultural role of the Jesuit order in three things: spreading literacy among a wider circle of lay society, teaching methodology, and a quick reaction to the eighteenth-century turn in philosophy and natural science. Horányi challenged the latter and vindicated it in favour of the Piarist authors, also drawing attention to Elek Körver's oeuvre. On the other hand, none of the authors, not even Horányi, who specialized in cultural history, reflects on what is really at stake in the debate, although it is what made it possible for the debate to be published in *Annales*: justifying the establishment and use of the critical approach in science and culture. That being said, the debating parties were likely not that far from each other on this point. It is no coincidence that Szerdahely does not mention the historical paradigm associated with Gábor Hevenesi, György Pray, and István Katona that established an innovative approach of source criticism,⁵⁸ even though he had great respect for it, as his Pray epitaphs,⁵⁹ published in his collection of poems, also indicate. This critical approach, however, was accepted and approved by the emerging Piarist historians of the time, including Károly Koppi,⁶⁰ nor was Horányi, who behaves in a somewhat offended manner here, a stranger to it.⁶¹ It also makes one wonder why such a debate between denominations, which had cultural consequences and which struck an informative

(1780–1784)" [Josephinist cultural policy and the University Library (1780–1784)], *Magyar Könyvszemle* 72, no. 2 (1956): 112–137.

56 Denis Pétau, see note 40.

57 Elek Körver / Cörver (1714–1747), Piarist philosopher, see *A Magyar Piarista ...*, 74.

58 On the Jesuit school of historians, see SZABADOS György, *A magyar történelem kezdeteiről. Az előidő-szemlélet hangsúlyváltásai a XV–XVIII. században* [On the beginnings of Hungarian history. Shifts of the perspective of the ancient times in the 15th–18th centuries] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2006), 184–221.

59 SZERDAHELY György Alajos, "Epitaphium Georgio Pray historiographo Hungariae celeberrimo," in SZERDAHELY György Alajos, *Silva Parnassi Pannonii*, 201–202 (Buda: Typis Regiae Universitatis, 1803). In the footnotes, Szerdahely added further text variants of the poem published in the main text.

60 BALOGH Piroska, "Koppi Károly. Kísérlet a göttingeni modern történettudomány metodikájának magyarországi meghonosítására" [Károly Koppi. An attempt to establish the Göttingen methodology of modern historiography in Hungary], *Századok* 151, no. 5 (2017): 953–970.

61 SZELESTEI NAGY László, "Horányi Elek, a lexikonszerző" [Elek Horányi, lexicographer], *Vigilia* 80, no. 1 (2015): 20–25.

and less offensive tone, was published in a Latin-language periodical that published reviews in the German language area rather than a Hungarian journal. The debate culture and critical approach *Annales* represented during the 1780s was necessary for an internal cultural debate to receive the appropriate media platform, even if it referred to the Hungarian state of affairs. Fourth, the correspondence between Szerdahely and Henke explored in connection with the debate shows how important it is to reexamine the stereotype put forward in the literature according to which Szerdahely's books on aesthetics were only compilations thrown together for the Hungarian university students and did not have any meaningful impact abroad, since it is obvious from the letters published here that they drew both Henke's and Bruns' attention. Finally, it should be noted that both Henke's journal and his correspondence with the two authors shows that at the end of the eighteenth century the Latin language was a perfectly active and suitable medium for both developing international cultural connections and introducing cultural content to a wider readership. Therefore, rather than focusing on a closed and narrow set of issues in a slightly anachronistic fashion, the Latin-language periodical literature in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century was a living, transforming cultural medium that used a critical approach, research on which can provide important additions to our knowledge of the history of literature and culture.

1. 19. 01. 1782. Buda

Clarissime Domine!

Nuper admodum intellexi Vos in Universitate Julia Carolina moliri Annales Litterarios sermone Latino, et cum principio Anni 1782 initium velle facere. Gaudeo vehementer de consilio hoc prudentissimo, utque rem perfectam detis oro, obtestorque per illum amorem, et studium, quo Vos ferri comperi in augmentum scientiarum. Ego in Universitate Budensi, quae fuit antea Tirnaviae, octavum in annum profiteor Aestheticam ad exemplum doctissimae Germaniae, facerique debeo me Vestris Libris, et eruditione proficere, mirificeque delectare. Testimonio sit Aesthetica mea, quam anno 1778 Latinis litteris evulgavi. Novi sapientiam Vestram. Si quid in Annales Vestros opera mea conferre possum, facite Viri Clarissimi, ut sciam et voluntatem Vestram, et modum, rationemque scribendi. Experiemini me tam amicum diligentem, quam aequum aestimatorem, cultoremque vestrum. Vale, meque amicitia Tua dignare, qui sum

Tuus Clarissime Domine Professor, Servus Officiosus

Georgius Szerdahely

Budae in Hungaria, die 19. Jan. 1782.

2. 06. 04. 1782. Buda

Doctissime, Clarissimeque Vir!

Non possum dicere magnitudinem illius gaudii, quod ex Litteris, Annalibusque Vestris accepi. Habeo Tibi Clarissime Vir gratias quam possum maximas! et oro, ut tria exemplaria Lipsiam ad D. Bibliopolam Weidman mitti facias; inde enim Librarii mei Pesthienses Weingand, et Köpf postulaturi sunt, ut leviori aeris impendio cum aliis mercibus ad nos perveniant. Occasionem magis opportunam nunc invenio. Aesthetica mea si laudem aliquam tulit apud Eruditos Germaniae, gratulari mihi debeo; Vobis enim imprimis complacere volo. Ceterum non vobis, sed gentilibus meis scripta fuit; et si quis in ea Gustus est, Vobis Germanis debetur. Poesim Aestheticam, sed latinis litteris, iam dudum est quod adparaverim labore, et ut puto eruditione diligenti; at quae mea, vel potius nostra est infelicitas, Typographi, et Librarii nostri questum e tali scriptionis argumento non faciunt. Non invideo felicitati Vestrae, sed sorti meae tanto magis indoleo, quanto certius intueor Litteras, et Scientias apud vos pulcherrime florere, fructusque uberrimos procreare. Amo vos amore incredibili. Si servire possum, imperate, et me Vestrae, aliorumque Eruditorum notitiae commendate, qui sum

Tuus Doctissime, Clarissime Vir, Officiosus Servus, Georgius Szerdahely

Budae 6. Aprilis An. 1782.

⁶² Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel, Handschriftensammlung, Cod 623,9 Novi, *Letters and documents of Heinrich Philipp Conrad Henke*.

3. 27. 02. 1783. Buda

Viri Clarissimo, Doctissimoque Hen. Phil. Con. Henke

A. Georgius Szerdahely

Octo menses Annalium Vestrorum sine defectu ad nos pervenerunt. Habe a me gratias, ut par est, immortales, quod epistolam meam doctissimis vestris lucubrationibus inserueris. Oravi, ut faceres, nihil dubitans, quia novi aequitatem, et consuetudinem vestram. Maluissem nomen meum omitti; sed cum Tu ita sibi posse indicaveris, aquiesco. Reliqui quatuor menses anni superioris ut etiam perferuntur, oro memineris. Annum 1783, me Tibi molestiam facessam, opera Librariorum Pestiensium Weingandi et Köpf accipiemus. Cum enim illi suas merces Lipsiae singulis annis a Weidman, et Reich soleant petere, tam sunt a me admoniti, ut Annales Vestras in exemplis totidem ad nos deferri curent. De hoc Te securum facio. Forte alii duo accedent, qui scripta vestra petitura sunt. Scribis Te addere scriptiunculam quamdam a Te editum; gavisus eram, dum legis epistolam, sed quam Tu pro tua modestia scriptiunculam adpellasti, frustra quaesivi: non erat addita. Pro hac quoque voluntate oportet me gratias agere. Adeo bonus es, ut Te amare debeam. Dabisne mihi, ut alias ad Te possim scribere? Quamquam enim Annalem accepturus sim ab alia manu, manum tamen Tuam me visurum confido. Si putas me Tibi inservire posse, iube, et impera. Eruditissimum Brunsium, quem Tuum esse scribis, ut Tuum saluto. Una cum illo vale, et me, qui vere Te amo, ama. Dabam Budae die 27. Februarii anno 1783.

4. 26. 03. 1783. Buda

Buda, Amplissimo, Doctissimoque Viro Henrico Phil. Conr. Henke in Universitate Julia Carolina Professori Publico Ordine Helmstadii, per Pragam, Lipsiam.

Phil. Conrado Henrico Henke, Viro Doctissimo Clarissimoque S. D. Georgius Aloys Szerdahely

Offero Tibi sermonem meum, quem paucis abhinc diebus in funere Collegae mei habui. Res est tenuis; sed non habeo aliud, quo meum in Te animum, et observantiam possim adtestari. Accipe illum pro Tua singulari humanitate benevole. Secundum exemplar serviat Doctissimo Brunsio, quem peculiari cum adfectione saluto. Valete! et si orare sinitis, me Vobis commendatum habete. Dabam Budae anno 1783 die 26 Martii.

5. 1783. 08. 01. Buda

Doctissimo Sapientissimoque Viro D. H.P.C. Henke, S. D. G.A. Szerdahely

Bibliopolae Pestenses Weingand et Köpf a me, et duobus, aliis orati erant initio anni huius, ut Annales Vestros Litterarios Lipsiae peterent a Weidman, et Reich, nobisque traderent persoluto pretio. Promissis non steterunt; quod ego fero aegerrime. Quid illi duo sint facturi, nondum scio; ego autem Te oro, ut menses anni huius mittas Lipsiam ad proximas nundinas, eosque, ut ad me deferantur, Weidmanno commendes. Pretium eorum mittam ad easdem nundinas, et addam opuscula tria nuper a me vulgata, quae

sunt: 1.) Memoria Cl. Viri Augustini Pupikoffer etc. 2.) Ars Poetica Generalis ad Aestheticam, seu Doctrinam Boni Gustus conformata etc. 3.) Poesis Narrativa, ad Aesth. etc. Accipies utique hoc testimonium meae erga te aestimationis, et amoris? ego pro duplici Tuo munere eruditissimo habeo gratias, et precor ut valeas, ac Doctissimum Brunsum etiam salvere iubens. Scripsi 1. Aug. anno 1783.

6. 02. 08. 1783. Buda

Buda à Monsieur Monsieur Henr. Phil. Con. d'Henke, professeur très renommé à Helmsstadt, par Prag, Leipzig.

D. H.P.C. Henke Doctissimo Clarissimoque Viro S. P. D. G.A. Szerdahely

Offero Tibi litterarium munus! Quae de Poetica scripta sunt, non Vobis, sed gentilibus meis scripta sunt. Errores seu sint in materia, seu in typo, excusabit benevolentia vestra. Aeger eram; editionis curam debitam habere non potui. Pro Cursu Annalium Litterariorum huc accludo Ducatum unum. Universitatem nostram spero sequentibus annis plura praesidia scientiarum habituram; Augustissimus enim Caesar singularem curam, et providentiam in eam ostendit. Vale Amice Vir, et me Tua amicitia proseguere. Brunsum Carissimum saluto, et utique Vestrum pro indefesso scientiarum studio grates habeo. Dedi ad 2. diem Augusti mensis anno 1783.

7. 12. 07. 1784. Buda

Henrico Philippo Conrado Henke Viro Sapientissimo S. P. D. Georgius Aloysius Szerdahely

Valde dolet me, measque res ita esse infortunatas, ut ad Te tardissime perferantur. Librariis Pestanis Weingand, et Köpf die 2da Augusti anni proxime evoluti tradidi epistolam ad Te cum opusculis meis recentibus: Memoria Pupikoffer habita; Ars Poetica Generalis; et Poesis Narrativa. Adclusi ducatum Cremniczensem, non quantum debui; ne si forte hoc periret, magnum esset detrimentum: volui experiri, an tutum esset hoc modo mittere pecuniam. Nuper accepta tua epistola accessi illico ad Librarios. Spondeat e fide honesti hominis se tuto omnia expeditisse, teque iam aut accepisse, aut certo accepturum. Incredibile est, quam aegre mihi faciat eorum tarditas, aut fallacia: cupio enim maximopere tibi complacere. Ab eo tempore nihil omnino tibi scripsi; causae fuere multae, quas inter prima, quod status Universitatis nostrae incertus fuerit. Iam modo definitum est, Pestum, seu Pestinum nos transituros, et Budam in locum nostrum ventura prima Regni Tribunalia, quae sunt: Consilium Regium Locumtenentiale; Curia Regia; Suprema Armorum Praefectura; et Camera Regia, quae hactenus erant Posonii. Accedet Serenissimus Archi Dux Franciscus M. Ducis Hetruriae primogenitus, qui iam est Viennae. Rex noster Augustissimus Budam, et Pestum, quod commodissimo pulcherrimoque loco, et in corde Regni posita sint, mirifice diligit, et ad summam venerationem elevare cupit. Pro munusculo litterario nuperime dato, habeo gratias humanissimas; ego tibi nunc mitto Poesim Dramaticam, et tres sermones de Ivone Jurisconsulto. Pecuniam omnem ad proximas mercatores Lipsienses sese transpositurus iurant praedic-

ti Bibliopolae. Habe quaeso eatenus patientiam. Aestimo, tandoque vestram operam, quam possum, maxime; et delector illa singulari aequitate, humanitate, ceterisque virtutibus, quas in aliis scriptis periodicis non semper reperio. Quid faciam, ut vestram amicitiam emerear? Valete Viri Optimi, Tu praecipue, et Brunsius! Facite, ut notus sim amicis Vestris, id est similibus doctis, et politis, vestra enim amicitia volo gloriari coram meis gentilibus. Scripsi die 12. Julii Anno 1784 Budae.

Scripta haec epistola haesit apud me usque ad 6tam Augusti culpa veridiciorum verba dantium. Nunc insero duos Florentinos Poesi Dramaticae, quos post indicem capituli reperies.

8. 25. 06. 1785. Buda

Viro Clarissimo et Doctissimo Henrico Philippo Conrado Henke S. P. D. Georgius Aloysius Szerdahely

Litterae Tuae die 10 Septembris Anni superioris datae tandem pervenerunt ad me una cum parte Annalium Literariorum die 10 Maii anni huius 1785. Illas autem, quas 18. Aprilis scripsisti, cum ceteris mensibus, et Programmate Tuo accepi die 20 Junii. Grattias, quas possum, ego Tibi Amice cum pro munere isto edito, tum pro honore mihi in scriptis vestris praestito: Vestrum enim iudicium et amicitiam maximi facio. Vestra etiam voluntate stimulatus ederem iam Poesim Lyricam, et Didacticam, nisi plura essent impedimenta. Cum Universitate nostra Pestinum ita, tametsi Danubius tantum traiciendus fuerit, nolui; meliori loco sum Budae, ubi praecipua Regni nobilitas est. Adcludo duos numos aureos pro elapso tempore, et rogo, ut Annales euntes anni 1785. duobus in exemplis mittas; unum quidem per Cursorem, vel Currum publicum: avidè enim expecto; alterum autem sicut hactenus per Librarios. Pretium huius anni alias mittam, ne ista epistola oneretur. Nunc Tibi duos Sermones offero, et me constanti amicitiae sic commendo, ut magis non possim. Calixtum Tuum hodie incipiam legere. Vale, et non solum cuius eruditio est admiranda, sed alios etiam Bonarum Artium promotores ex me saluta. Dabam Budae die 25. Junii 17[85.]