Albion as a role model: Scottish folk religion, humour and upbringing in works by Ferenc Baráth

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Ferenc Baráth was teacher at the Lónyay Calvinist Secondary Grammar School, and belonged to an esteemed, internationally educated and multilingual liberal Calvinist intelligentsia, which valued above all else patriotism and the liberal values of the Reformation, and especially those of Calvinism. He was greatly affected by his peregrination, studying abroad in Scotland, made possible by a scholarship of the theologically conservative branch of the *Church of Scotland*, the evangelic branch also responsible for missions to the Jews (Hörcsik 1988). He, on the other hand, sympathised more with theological liberalism. It is most important to point out that the theological differences between conservatives and liberals did not mean that their political views could not agree, and it certainly did not mean that there were no significant agreements on important questions in both Hungary and Scotland. This is especially true for the question of patriotism. The exploration of this particularity, however, would warrant whole studies of their own.

After his homecoming, Baráth joined the group of liberals in Pest, who viewed English and Scottish society as a role model and presented it to the Hungarian public as an example to be followed. One of their tools was the *Vasárnapi* Újság *[The Sunday News]*, which was an indispensable platform expressing the thoughts of the aristocratic and peasant intelligentsia as well as the views of the emerging middleclass nobility. Starting from 1867 the Calvinist Miklós Nagy from Kolozsvár succeeded Alber Pákh as editor-in-chief, and became a defining figure of the Reformed elite (Szinnyei 2016).[1]

Vasárnapi Újság played a substantial role in shaping public opinion and understanding. After the years 1871-72, during Nagy's editorship the paper started to transform into a medium that defined public cultural development (Németh 1985: 219). Owing to the chief editor's preferred role as a mediator 'the numerous and diverse authors contributing to the paper made it impossible to be oriented towards one single ideology (or political party), nevertheless authors following folk-nationalistic views and conservative intelligentsia, scholars and scientists of the opposition who idealised the nobility formed a majority' (Németh 1985: 220). It was a company where Calvinist thinkers were more than welcome.

Thanks to Nagy's familial and denominational background and to his principles, the paper had its fair share of Calvinist writers as well as those who used Protestantism and liberalism synonymously, despite themselves belonging to Catholic or Unitarian denominations or even following different religions (*Vasárnapi Újság* 1879: 170). They kept alive the practice Széchenyi had begun and continued to adapt English and Scottish developments into Hungarian society. To them the 'vast, free and hospitable Albion' was truly a model to be followed. As Géza Buzinkay points out 'the focus and mindset of *Vasárnapi* Újság was defined more than anything by the English language, which dominated worldwide communication from technology to travel guides. With regards to the path to and tools of evolution, to civilizational progress and modernity and in general to thinking and ideology it was the Anglo-Saxon world that set the guidelines for the newspaper – the United States when it came to technological curio, and England when it came to topics of academic and scientific nature or pertaining to lifestyle. Not a single issue was published without English book and article reviews, translations, travelogues or without an article or literary portrait of varying length relating to some aspects of English scientific life or English scientists (Németh 1985: 222).

In stark contrast, the news and articles about German relations had to do mostly with politics, or sometimes reported on industrial achievements. Even German literature was all but ignored by the paper. French life and culture was always presented in a sympathetic light, but mainly in the form of short news articles, or to a lesser extent in portraits and literary publications. Anglo-Saxon and Scottish themes clearly dominated the weekly paper. Many of the writers had previously studied abroad in Edinburgh. More than one of these peregrinates became permanent contributors and editors. Ferenc Baráth, teacher at the Calvinist Secondary Grammar School of Pest, first through his many letters during his two-year stay in Scotland, and then with his countless articles, was one of the paper's rapporteurs in England and Scotland, working next to Endre György, who wrote about national economy. János Dömötör, who worked as a teacher of philosophy at the Theological Academy in Pest following his years in Edinburgh, as well as Baráth's two colleagues at teaching, László Dapsy and Lajos Komáromy all made good use of their experience gained during the years in Edinburgh and London. They too wrote a number of articles about Scotland and England in the newspaper (Komáromy 1870: 73 – 74). Based on their up-to-date personal experiences and contacts they were able to introduce England and Scotland and the intellectual life of these countries to an extent and in a depth that had never been possible before in Hungary. The example of the island country was to them the technological, civilizational, intellectual and political goal to aspire to – and it also clearly showed the way and model of solving prevalent social problems (Németh 1985: 222).

The audience was drawn in not only by these scholarship students but also by Pál Liptay, who published his travelogues and his excellent writings on Hungarian relations and connections

to England and the States (1871, 1873). Károly Szász, a future Calvinist bishop, contributed to the paper's diversity with his translations and poems. Beyond the vibrant English and Scottish friendships, the paper also presented in great detail the British way of life, and the intellectual, social and political events of England and Scotland. Gaining insights into the social life of Scotland was made possible through the strong connections between the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Protestant Church of Scotland (Németh 1985: 223). The extensive activities of the Scottish Mission established with the help of Archduchess Maria Dorothea were especially to thank for this (Kovács 2001: 1 – 15). The English-Scottish ways of child grooming, education (Tabajdi 1868: 405 – 412), technological development, the establishment of social institutions and charity missions, the patronizing of literature and arts, the uplifting of the peasantry and the working classes, these were all seen as civilizational benchmarks by Hungarians.

Writing about Disraeli Ferenc Baráth noted that not only Hungarians, but all in Europe should watch England's example, because it showed a way of 'solving the working class question through discourse and peaceful means', to which the greatest of national thinkers have been preparing all segments of the English public' (Baráth 1874): 178). This modest young man of the Hungarian countryside seems to have been also very sympathetic to the plight of the working class.

Folk religion and the character of the Scottish people

The students sent to Edinburgh were impressed and touched by their experiences in Scotland. They made deliberate attempts to use the knowledge they gained for the good of Hungary. Starting with Ferenc Balogh, through László Dapsy, all the way to Baráth, and even after them for many-many decades Scottish Calvinism was presented to the Hungarian audience as a social ideal. This effect was felt in all areas of political, public and religious life. Young students, Baráth included, inhaled deep of the fresh, invigorating air of Scotland, and brought it back home in countless different ways. The ideas so close to Hungarian Protestantism: liberty, independence, equality were only reinforced by the Scottish and English model of civic society, which were based on similar traditions, and where Calvinist democratic principles had been dominant for centuries.

Liberty, independence and equality

The ideology of Protestantism is a cornerstone of Baráth's worldview. Based on James A. Froude he writes with great reverence about the effects of the Scottish Reformation, as it 'saved the freedom of not only Scotland, but of England as well' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 47). This view on the significant role of Calvinism was present both in English-Scottish and in Hungarian society. The establishment of the *Presbyterian, democratic system* was of great importance to both nations during the era of the Reformation and it was during this period that 'the issues of religion became close with the soul

of the nation'. Essaying about the Reformation, Baráth praises not only its role in creating democracy (although he only implies this), but he also declares that when it comes to public education 'Scotland has the Reformation to thank for almost everything' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 47).

He regards the Scottish as he regards the Hungarians, a people who love freedom. Rooted in Calvinism, Puritanism had the covenant between man and God as its central tenet, and this was engraved deeply into Scottish religiousness. The feeling of being chosen, the responsibility of spreading the true faith and the equality of all were built upon this spiritual foundation. Naturally, Baráth was aware that achieving equality between social classes was a gradual process, but the English and Scottish served also as prime examples of this process to Europeans. It was in England where the first democratic revolution took place, and it was Calvinism precisely which provided a democratic worldview to launch the idea of equality. Religious principles brought to life a prospering democracy in the island country long before the pseudo-religious fervour of French revolutionary atheism. To them it was not questions of dogma that were important, but the principle of independence between the state and church and between the individual churches themselves. Much like Hungarians, they too fought hard for national and religious independence.

Scotland's independence was taken away by the English 'truly, it was not a small price in blood and money England had to pay for the assimilation of three and a half million Scots'. 'Even following physical annexation, the Scotsman not only retained countless privileges and ancient traditions in the areas of law and administration, but for centuries he withstood the overwhelming English culture, and preserved the outstanding traits of his unique character' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 46-47).

The charm of language: bluntness and gentleness as well as hospitality

Baráth describes the Scottish character as *lively* and *stubbornly tough*, which has a 'certain openness and straightness to his attitude and temperament, which surprises and impresses strangers and which often reaches a level of coarseness'. After this he compares the two peoples, the Scots and Hungarians in this regard and concludes that both countries have the same outspoken men and women. Another typical trait of the people is its *gentleness*, and this appears on countless occasions of 'affectionate, cooing, gentle words' of the language. Scottish vernacular is much richer than that of the English. Baráth does not stop at praises of the spoken word. He stresses that the Scotsman dotes 'not only on persons, on the babe and the gorgeous petite wife, but on the favourite animals and birds of the land'. He is also left in awe of the Scottish language, characterized by the 'broad Scottish accent'. He makes it apparent how much the Scottish language impressed him even through English when he writes: 'The poetry of Burns requires a whole dictionary on its own, just to understand his scotticisms' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 47). Anyone who has lived in Scotland and read Burns understands this even today.

The Calvinist student took notice of the openness and curiosity his Scottish fellows at the university had towards Hungary. He emphasises the hospitable nature of the Scottish. Compared to the Netherlands, foreign students in Edinburgh truly joined social life, and were welcomed. Meanwhile on the continent, students on scholarship to the Netherlands barely got any insight into the day-to-day life of the Dutch (Baráth 1897: 393). This was related to the communal aspect of Scottish religious life, which, much to Baráth's surprise, was taken very seriously. Baráth was met with a vibrant congregational community life he had never experienced back in Hungary. Scottish piety would leave a strong and enduring mark on his later life.

The presence of Puritanism-rooted Evangelicalism in Scottish social life

Baráth emphasises the unique character of Scottish Calvinist piety in a reading he gave to the Susanna Lorantffy Society for Women, an organisation of aristocrats and the upper-middle class. 'They take the message of Christ to heart, they feel and know that our life on Earth, with all its thousand troubles, is given meaning only through this, and only because of this that it can give some measure of happiness' (Baráth 1897: 393).There is only one way to happiness – as he says: 'if we bring happiness to others'. In this argument Baráth's own Christian creed is also clear to see. He points out that Scottish generosity in acts of charity is based on their Christian faith and that it is peerless in the whole world. Indeed, Baráth was not exaggerating, as Evangelicalism, which appeared as a successor of Puritanism, resulted in a pious fervour of a magnitude and longevity which had rarely emerged throughout the history of Christianity.

The Scottish established orphanages, shelters to protect streetwalkers and kitchens to feed poor children. From the simple Scottish worker, through the clerks and to the factory owners, people from every segment of society took part in charity and donated to social and religious causes both home and abroad. Often, public and ecclesiastic life overlapped completely for Scottish Calvinists. Religion pervaded Scottish life to such an extent that Baráth was awed to find that Sundays were entirely reserved for religious activities. It was the charity of Calvinist Scots which made the Hungarian scholarship to Edinburgh possible and for this Baráth and every single student expressed gratitude countless times.

He especially praised Calvinist piety that grew from Puritanism. The positive effects of this were felt through the high level of public morals, the above mentioned generosity, and the religious education of children in Sunday schools (Kovács 2006: 997 – 1013). Baráth was surprised to encounter a practical and zealous Christianity which was in stark contrast with the barren spiritual life in Hungary. Grace prayers said every day and daily devotions were an organic element in the life of every Scot. He took heed of the latter in particular. 'The day begins at home with a devotion, and ends with a devotion, where again the family head is the priest. And it is not only the family who is present, but all the servants too. Everyone is given a psalm book and a Bible, and

the poor, orphaned maiden prays with the young lady she serves, and the family head, whether he be a humble grocer or owner of a huge domain, reads and explains the Bible to each of them. *Equality in the eyes of God* (emphasis by Baráth) is realised but for a moment, but realised every day' (Baráth 1897: 396). The observation of the holiness of Sunday also appeals to him, and although he finds its strictness to be excessive, he believes a day of rest dedicated to the Lord should also be held in Hungary. He is understanding towards the religious intolerance of the Scots, noting that all the good they give him and all the good examples they set overwrite the handicap of their obstinacy (Baráth 1897: 401).

Religion as a tool for the cultivation of morality during upbringing and education

Much like his theologian colleagues, the young Hungarian student observed that the *matters of the Church and religion* 'play an enormous role in everyday life […] The people are occupied day and night with matters of the Church. It is the dominant topic in day-to-day discourses. Their words are made up of biblical quotations, which are often employed with unexpected wit. They carefully listen to and judge preachers, they assess whether the priest is truly spreading 'healthy teachings". It is noteworthy that it is not a backward looking, joyless Christianity that Baráth sees, where he could describe a 'doctrinaire' Scottish Presbyterian religiousness, but rather he stresses the presence of humour and a healthy temper. Here, the people still look up to their priest with respect. Perhaps it is here where Baráth begins to formulate the ideal image of a priest and teacher for himself, since he writes with deep sympathy about the pastor acting as a teacher and 'master' and leading with example. 'The pastor, this good, honest man, who has nothing and yet has everything, who educates, disciplines, does good, loves, chats and jokes with his flock, doing everything when it is the time for it, and who inspired so many candid features in the temperament of the Scottish people' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 47).

The deliberate education given to students in Scotland is likely to have given Baráth the mindset of teaching which in turn affected the writer, Ferenc Neumann (Molnár) so deeply while he was Baráth's pupil. In Scotland, Baráth's teachers gifted him with many books and as a teacher he would go on to do the same to his own pupils. Stanley L. Jaki's [László Jáki] opinion seems to support the idea that Baráth's worldview was moulded by Scottish Calvinism.

> On the suggestion of Baráth, Ferenc Neumann (Molnár) had read Dante's Inferno first in Hungarian, and then in German. After this, following Ferenc Baráth's advice – writes the author – he started learning Finnish, the only language with some resemblance to Hungarian […] He became so adequate in Finnish, that with the help of a dictionary he was able to read the Kalevala, the national epic of the Finns. […] The essence of his influence – and the main message of the book -, is that spurred on by Ferenc Baráth's lectures Ferenc Molnár assembles a reading book and supposedly produces 50 copies to be distributed to his

> classmates. Based on Mihály Balogh's richly documented book there is hardly a doubt that this is another case of a difficult-to-grasp pedagogic influence. Neither Baráth, nor Ferenc Molnár was 'just anybody'. By this we mean Baráth's immense background knowledge, his studies abroad, his academic publications, his personality and character, and Molnár's familial background, the affinity his mother had for literature and theatre, etc.' (Jáki 2008: 187).

Baráth does what he himself had also experienced in Debrecen, the Calvinist Rome, and what he later saw his teachers do in Edinburgh. The young teacher found true joy in his job.

During his studies in Scotland he realised that, besides developing a school system, which Protestants emphasised all over Europe, the Scottish advanced in another aspect: 'making Bible readings a twice-a-day activity had a positive and originally unexpected effect. Without even mentioning the education of the mind and spirit, it preserved the ability of reading in simple peasant or labourer households, who after they leave school may never touch a book again, unless they own an old Bible they can joyously read while sitting around the fireplace in the evenings'. Baráth, along with the students of Debrecen and Pest, and future professors of theology, Ferenc Balogh, Lajos Csiky and Aladár Szabó believed fervently in teaching through the Bible (Balogh 1904; Szabó 1903 – 48).

He noted that there was another tool of education besides Bible reading 'which was also the work of the Church'. He emphasises the role of pastors in the fight to give the Church a self-governing form. The pastors 'elevated the issue to the pulpit, where they kept it current, educating and agitating about it. Thus the people did not only embrace the issue, did not only show heightened interest, but through introducing debates over the issue into its everyday life, its intellect was enhanced, reinforced and enriched in the art of arguing, and as it was kept busy continuously throughout generations, the public intellect underwent an astounding development, which also affected other parts of life'

Baráth was most apt in noticing Calvinism's role in forming a democracy in Scotland, which had few equals in Europe. This locally achieved *self-government* which the Presbyterian system meant had an immense influence on the Scottish love of freedom, 'which will have no peer with any European people. *It is no wonder, this people loves its Church*' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 47).

Baráth employs a socio-historical interpretation, and in his article written in 1870 he does not mention the point (perhaps as this was self-evident to him) that the Evangelical home missionaries had taken part in arduous social work in several Presbyterian denominations, and that the Puritan faith and piety had a crucial role in this. This internal urge could have in many cases naturally aligned with liberal ideals based on democratic and rational foundations. In Scotland, popular progressive conservatism often connected with liberal values, exactly because they drew greatly from the democratic traditions of Calvinism. Later, in his text from 1897 he does write about this. The reason for the change is likely the difference in topic between the two articles.

He believes healthy cunningness to be a main characteristic of the Scottish people, which prevents the Scots from being misled in either their judgement or their views. He mentions strong national pride as a positive value 'which is present in any nation worth its salt', and praises the ability to quickly adapt to changing circumstances and the tendency to instinctually avoid luxurious complacency in life. Whether they came from Hungarian or Jewish backgrounds Baráth and his contemporaries such as Ödön Kovács, Mór Ballagi, or even his predecessors like Pál Török, Károly Szász, or József Székács who was of Slovak descent naturally connected patriotism with liberalism. And Baráth quite possibly expresses what would become his principle in teaching when he writes 'every nation with any value possesses an immense richness to its well-tempered humour, which it uses as if to gild the entirety of life, lending a moment of light, liveliness and levity to even the most severe of matters, and it is so much part of its nature that it is expressed in small things the same way it is expressed in the weightiest of actions and most crucial of questions as well as on the deathbed' (Baráth, 1870-74: 47). As such, according to Baráth's description of the Scottish, their life is deeply and on a fundamental level pervaded by humour, the Calvinist love of freedom, self-determination, and the love of the Church and country.

He keenly feels the process of social transformation during which the Scottish upper class starts to turn cosmopolitan as a result of the empire's expansion, 'while the middle class still feels national dishes, clothing and traditions to be important' (Baráth, 1870-74: 47). Baráth sees positive values in both attitudes, both in preserving Scottish traditions and in becoming British cosmopolitans. This mediator role is noticeable in his thoughts on anecdotes and humour.

He was a big enthusiast for Scottish humour. During his years as a student, he was introduced to the quite popular book by Edward Bannerman Burnet Ramsay (or simply Dean Ramsay), and he very much enjoyed translating segments from it. By the time a young Baráth got his hands on it following the year 1867, the book published under the title *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character* in 1858 had been reprinted more than once (Ramsay 1858). Since the book emphasised the importance of a national character, and because it was very entertaining, it fit the style of *Vasárnapi Újság* very well. Baráth introduces the work at the start of his series of articles. Ramsey's book consists of six parts. The first talks of general characteristics, the second of religious feelings and observations, the third of old Scottish conviviality, the fourth of old domestic servants, the fifth of 'humour proceeding from expressions and proverbs, and the third of miscellaneous stories of wit and humour' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 61-62, 75 – 76, 86 – 87).

Humour, aesthetics and education of the masses: the influence of English and Scottish humour on Ferenc Baráth

To Baráth, humour was not merely entertainment, but a powerful tool to broaden horizons and knowledge. The character of a nation could

best be understood through its humour. He first marks entertainment. '[Readers] will find such excellent anecdotes and lively features, each of which will, even after reading, keep the nerves in a pleasant chuckling excitement for half an hour. For us, Hungarians, who have time to read outside of travel, he would have certainly recommended it as after-lunch reading, and all we can add to this is that whoever wants to spend a few hours with truthful intellectual pleasure after or during lunch or dinner should take Dean Ramsay's book and he will have reached his goal'. Second, he underlines that 'other than pleasure, one can also grow in knowledge by way of this reading. There is hardly a better tool to know the character, thinking and temperament of a nation than the unique peculiarities of that nation's anecdotes and witty sayings, which relate to its day-to-day life and which express precisely the products of that nation's spirit. They are the things that set apart individual from individual, nation from nation' (Baráth 1870 – 74: 46). Third, the author employing humour must be a moral judge within society and must keep truth in his vision (Baráth 1874b: 397). He explores this third point in a future article he would write to criticise satirical political papers.

Scholarly literature places the heyday of political satire between 1867 and 1875. This is the very period when the young student, Baráth is introduced to the writings of Dean Ramsay in Edinburgh, and he turns his attention, among others, to humour. The underlying cause is that following the Austro-Hungarian compromise, freedom of speech and press reaches a height as never before. Public life was revitalised and satirical papers reflected the array of constantly changing political, spiritual trends, which slowly started to crystalize on differing socio-ideological platforms. The survival of satirical papers 'required the existence of a consumer base of social layers and groups that demanded and supported satirical papers. The bourgeois and intelligentsia were still underdeveloped and small in number, and it was the supporters of political parties who sustained demand for these papers' (Baráth 1874b: 397). The position of these papers also started to change after the compromise. It was no longer possible to simply produce satire defending 'the Hungarian' from 'the foreigner'. As 'the Hungarian' rose to power, it split into opposing classes, layers and groups, and it became necessary to switch from the passivity of defence, to the activity of improvement and self-government. It was, of course, still possible to write anecdotes, and so did for example Üstökös [Comet], but it became more and more the voice of the flat nostalgia of 'the good old times' (*A Politikai &c* 1867 – 1875).

The obvious connection between satirical papers and party politics was also clear for contemporaries to see. The papers reflected political life in the country and every paper aligned itself with a respective political side. So, it was widely accepted that *Borsszem Jankó* was the pair of *Reform* (1869-1875), Üstökös was twin to *Hon* (1868-1882), - *Ludas Matyi* was the same for *Nép Szava* (1868-1872), and *Mátyás Deák* was parallel to *Magyar* Állam (1868-1908). Edit Fabó points out that government subsidies to *Borsszem Jankó* were criticised by all satirical papers. (Fabó

2007: 36). The paper and the corresponding political party were most vehemently attacked by *Bolond Miska* (*Bolond Miskaa* 1868: 120; 156).

The paper had the editor Adolf Ágai, and Prime Minister Gyula Andrássy presented by the caricatures Lopszem Jankó and Count Jula [*Lopszem* being a pun on *Borsszem,* where '*Lop*' means 'to steal' and refers to accusations of plagiarism] (*Bolond Miska* 1870: 169). The harshest words were used by *Ludas Matyi*, which showed Ágai as a chained dog to Andrássy (*Ludas Matyi* 1871L 220 – 21; 252 – 53). As for the evaluation of the papers, Buzinkay claimed that *Borsszem Jankó* was the only paper managing to transcend barren, cheap, and short-sighted opposition politics. 'Both in that it did politics with a moral principle, vision, clarity, and in that it viewed politics nothing more than a measurement of education and social progress. The other papers used the unique tools of satire to unscrupulously attack political opponents, replacing arguments with coarseness, *Borsszem Jankó*, however, strived to inform and broaden horizons in its politically themed writings' (Szabolcsi 1867 – 75: 170).

Buzinkay cites a study by Ferenc Baráth, which however seems to contradict this statement, and criticises both sides equally for being 'servile underlings' of political parties (Baráth 1874b: 396). According to the contemporary Baráth, *Borsszem Jankó* also wrote with a significant bias. His writing titled 'Of Hungarian satirical newspapers' is critical of both government supporting and opposition newspapers. The text by the young teacher is in fact an unbiased masterpiece, which no member of the intelligentsia should forget about even in modernity. He introduces the situation humorously, saying that up to that point (1874) no-one had criticised the critics. The introduction of the question itself was ingenious and unprecedented: 'Was it wariness that kept the respectable gentleman from arguing with the crooked, provocative clown, hoping that he would avoid becoming a target himself? Or was it contempt and underestimation of the satirical paper and its influence?' (Baráth 1874b: 396).

He believes both of these to be wrong, since the first case is one of weakness, while the second is one of a colossal error in judgement. Baráth evaluates based on aesthetic and moral grounds. He accurately argues that the satirical papers do not fulfil the very thing that should be their purpose. They do not educate the masses. The proper judge of morals 'have more or less stooped down from his throne high above (which ought to be the only place for him), or are currently in the process of stooping to the level of a naughty street-urchin or circus clown, whose insults may target any honest man without any chance of appeal' (Baráth 1874b: 397). Baráth repeats this thought while reviewing one of his beloved English novelists: 'Thackeray, the moral judge, has never been as stern and strict, and at the same time as touching and gentle, as in these two works of his (Baráth 1862: 70). The two works were *The English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century* and *The Four Georges*.

Baráth is a big enthusiast of humour as well as political satire, but believes that it is not inconsequential 'what a nation laughs at, or what a nation mocks in its satirical newspapers: it is

every bit as important as what it mourns or what it is inspired by' (Baráth 1874b: 396 – 97). He castigates the satire of both sides asking if they 'have always been able to see the borders between what is sacred and what is profane; the tone and voice which is still allowed for mockery; the honesty and fairness which must be present *even there*; and the line that must never be crossed'. Here too the young teacher remembers the educational, teaching role of the moral judge, and laments how the satirical papers fall short of what is expectable. His review is depressing, as in 'our [Hungarian] satirical papers' much like in those of the twenty-first century there is no striving towards truth and moral elevation. The author who holds liberal principles so dear, is demonstrating his regard for the preservation and propagation of values, that the satirical papers have it in their right to think differently. After this, he succinctly expresses his opposition to these papers as well as his own socio-political creed, stating 'one cannot, however, underestimate their influence, or put them above criticism, without risking damage to public morals'. Baráth did not exaggerate when he warned about the dangerous devolution of analytical criticism, which led Hungarian satirical papers into the belief that they have unrestricted freedom, and as a result they did not shy away from any underhanded method in party-political arguments, and 'the interests of the party all but completely swallowed the quest for truth'. He held 'serious critics' responsible for not realizing: in only a few years political satire had warped public taste immensely. He grasps very clearly the impact of these papers, as what they publish 'have a deep, serious effect on the morals of the nation, at times greater than most serious literature combined…' (Baráth 1874b: 396).

He believes satirical papers have the duty to be moral judges 'in the matters of the nation, except that they utter the sentence under the guise of laughter, just like the poet of satire and humour'. Arany put it well: 'The public will laugh at the fool for fooling around, But if he has not one clever word, do not waste your time on him" (Baráth 1874b: 402). Baráth explains how he envisions the role of the moral judge. The aim of social commentary is to uplift the public and educate the masses with a unique mixture of humour, sarcasm and satire. According to a historical analysis of the period's Hungarian press: 'The critique of the Calvinist grammar school teacher and literary historian Baráth harboured a conservative aversion towards satirical papers, and he never noticed the essential connection between the era and sarcasm, and between the era and satire. He did not match his expectations to the genre, and so he could not set the path for the genre's development – on the other hand he revealed the dangers in press becoming dependant on political parties' (Buzinkay 1985: 170).

A study by István Wintermantel goes right against this statement. The author accurately points out that, as the Arany quotation also shows us, Baráth represents exactly the theory of humour started by László Arany. Both former Nagykőrös pupils prioritise satire as the vessel for comedy, exactly because its realism operates so well as social commentary (Wintermantel 1971: 184). Baráth's conservative-rooted national

liberalism lays down the boundaries of this genre. He defends strongly radical satirical criticism, but also believes that it must have its limits. And this is the sublime and noble aim of moral upbringing. Satire may thus never be unprincipled, dependant on, or biased towards a certain political agenda, and it may especially never be obscene. The Calvinist teacher is in fact offering satire the bench of the moral judge. Wintermantel stresses that Baráth makes the largest concession in order to inject satire into humour. 'Not only does he let satire enter into the realm of comedy, but he makes it an essential part of it'.[2] If we accept the view of Károly Szalay, according to which comedy is the common 'prima materia' from which satire, humour and irony is derived, then Baráth's stance also becomes legitimate (Szalay 1977: 8).

It is worthwhile to stop here for a moment and study contemporary English and Scottish literature in this light. There, humour and satire meet in the works of several authors. Baráth's stance may well have evolved in Scotland, or if he had already had it, Scotland may have been where it became deliberate.[3] If we study his long essay on William Makepeace Thackeray, we may assume that it is not only Arany's influence we see in Baráth, but also the English influence, most likely encountered during his two years in Edinburgh (Baráth 1882: 54 – 93).[4]

Humour can fit into novels, just as it can fit into satirical newspapers. The English author William Thackeray used it to great success. In his essay, Baráth describes him as: 'a novelist and moralist; drawer and satirist; relentless critic of character and morale, who makes fun even of himself, but never wavers in his love of humanity; a great apprentice and successor of the English humourists of the eighteenth century, - only with higher morals and greater art – whom and whose time period he so loved to include in some of his works' (Baráth 1882: 55). Baráth's essay is interesting not only from the perspective of literary history, but also to understand Thackeray's influence on him. The quoted essay is evidence to our assumption that it is incorrect that Arany was the sole influence on Baráth's views on humour. Baráth sharply criticised both the Jókai-edited folk oriented Üstökös, and Adolf Ágai's *Borsszem Jankó*. The first did 'in the tone of a peasant' the same the other did 'with the deceptive subtlety of the rake'. 'They are the exact same in one regard: they both prefer to bring their readership obscenities and indecent satire' (Baráth 1874b: 398). His words clearly present him as the moral judge opting for the golden mean.

It may seem overly idealistic to expect satirical papers to express their criticism in humorous or at times satirical ways, while fulfilling the role of the moral judge. However, Baráth cites his experiences in Scotland and presents them as the formula to be followed by Hungarian newspaper editors. The English *Punch* upholds these very ideals, and does so magnificently. He points to Thackeray's *Jeames' Diary* and *Snob Papers*, which he likes very much (Baráth 1882: 62). Baráth's style is captivating as in his writing he himself parodies how the humour in *Punch* would appear in *Borsszem Jankó*. This is a taunt to Hungarian satirical press. And it is very appropriate. He castigates both politically aligned papers, saying 'the general public must

not be entertained on the expense of any private individual: the common law of morals forbids it'. Here, he criticises the unscrupulous and unprincipled ways of *Borsszem Jankó,* and then chastises Üstökös for their 'scandalously tasteless' character, Kotlik Zirzabella (Baráth 1874b: 399). He compares the war between Hungarian satirical papers to the clashes between *Punch* and Disraeli, and points out that it is possible to criticise sharply in an elegant, gentlemanly way.

That Baráth was influenced by his stay in Scotland is apparent in his thinking. He sees the satirical English and Scottish humour as the role model, which realises what should be the aim of satirical press. He supported this with examples, and commented on them as such: 'In this regard, satirical papers differ from serious issues or books only in that they show moral truth while *laughing*. But if moral truth is not what they show, they have no justification to exist even for an instant. All who raise their voice for the public to hear must speak the truth they most firmly believe in, or must not speak at all' (Baráth 1874b: 400). This is a strong reproof, given that the primary aim of satirical papers was political provocation and entertainment, which did not avoid vulgar remarks either.

Baráth's views on the outstanding English and Scottish persons of literature show well the ideals he believed in. Baráth regarded both Thomas Carlyle and Thackeray as humourists and moralists. This might have been surprising at a glance, as both were generally known as novelists. The former mostly passes judgement on historical events and personalities, while the latter comments on the everyday life of people in his novels. With regards to history, Carlyle 'becomes a defining preacher of hero-worship, while Thackeray declares war on novel heroes and ends his campaign with a victory more brutal than any other. But the seed of respect for novel heroes remains in his heart'. Baráth considers Thackeray's drawing from Shakespeare as evidence for this last statement. By way of his lifelike descriptions Carlyle made history as vivid as a novel, while Thackeray made the novel as real as no-one else before him, and in fact, his novels demand as much open and straightforward realism, as historical figures do, and as much objectivity from the author as they would from a historian (Baráth 1882: 88).

The story of Baráth's life reveals to us a personality that always liked straightforward, impactful expressions, but as a person of unusually sensitive mentality he also believed boundaries to be very important. This was perhaps in part for his own protection. Drawing a parallel between Mór Jókai (Hungarian novelist, 1825-1904) and Thackeray he made this observation: 'That frightful and pitiable trait of the human character, that it is a unique mixture of good and bad, and that it is unable to reach a certain harmonic perfection, and that great virtues are joined by great failings and that each of our hopes carry within and with it its own reverse and weakness: few have seen this so clearly and perhaps no-one has shown this with such convincing and astounding clarity as he did. In the objectivity and fairness he shows to all of his characters: there is something terrifying. This is why naïve *God-fearing souls cannot enjoy*

Thackeray (emphasis mine); they are wary of him, they retreat from his incisive knife. From this point of view there can hardly be a bigger difference than there is between him and our Jókai' (Baráth 1882: 70).

According to the Thackeray-enthusiast Baráth, while the English author is similar to Zsigmond Kemény (Hungarian writer, 1814-75) in his cruelly faithful depiction of human nature, Kemény is more of an epical talent. Already as a humourist, Thackeray's personality is more in the foreground, thus giving his works a unique character. Both were called pessimistic. Baráth, who always feels nuance keenly, notes that this is more or less true, but their pessimisms are different. 'Kemény's is more reminiscent of a thinking philosopher's, who was made so by his discerning mind; Thackeray's is like that of one speaking from the cathedra (a role he often assumes in his novels), who with an aching heart 'preaches' of the vanity of the world. The former is consistently depressing; the latter lets through the occasional rays of amusement and humour' (Baráth 1882: 66 – 67).

After this, he points out the humourist Thackeray's place in Anglo-Saxon literature. He considers the novelist as a great realist, who surpasses all his contemporaries in this regard. 'Dickens perhaps has more sympathy for humanity, his humour is more delightful, brighter; his genius is displayed in captivating sparks through his characterisations, he shines a terrifying light to given points: but on the whole he exaggerates in his characters; he likes extremes, oddities, and these are not drawn from life'. Baráth is most insightful when he studies the works of George Elliot, who characterises subtly 'and at times dissects the threads of passion and emotion like only women can. She has humour too, which stands out in *Mrs. Poyser* of *Adam Bede*; but she is nowhere near her two colleagues in diversity of tone and topic, and she lacks the strength necessary to depict the more tragic clashes of life, and there too, she excels instead in unravelling the individual' (Baráth 1882: 90).

We can observe quite a unique point of view in Baráth's understanding of literature. Baráth was certainly an original thinker, who may have worshipped Thackeray but could also be critical of him in spite of his admitted bias. He saw the author as the greatest representative of English prose. Pál Gyulai saw even Jókai as 'the greatest Hungarian humourist' despite the fact that his work was, at most, touched and spiced by humour (Szalay 1977: 12). Bearing this in mind, Baráth's understanding fits well into contemporary context. He liked that Thackeray was not naïve in his world view, and that he did not sugar-coat his writing. This is, however, a massive difference between him and Jókai, as we will soon point out. Knowing how Baráth spent the last years of his life it is easy to assume that he sympathised with Thackeray based on traits they shared. The simultaneous presence, what's more masterful blending of humour and satire, joy and melancholy, but with realism fleeing into criticism as the dominant theme (Balogh 2008: 89). Thackeray's works were always 'tinted by a certain melancholy, a certain shade of sorrow and pain' (Baráth 1882: 91). He disagrees with the stance of 'a handful of

glassy eyed German aesthetes' also held by some Hungarian critics, who say that Thackeray was not a humourist. Baráth concedes that in a sense even the adjective 'pessimist' is applicable to him, but 'only in passing, and not in general'. He however never supports his claim any further. He insists that the satirical, realist, sarcastic humour that Thackeray represents is an essential part of his art. He clearly likes the English writer very much, but he does not exempt him from his judgement passed on Hungarian satirical writers. The author entertains, that much is beyond question, educates even of the deepest recesses of the human psyche and soul. And finally, he is a true judge of morals, a moralist just like Carlyle and Dickens (Baráth 1882: 88).

Baráth would have perhaps agreed with Taine's opinion: Thackeray 'desires that at every page we should form a judgement on vice and virtue; he has blamed or approved beforehand, and the dialogues or portraits are to him only means by which he adds our approbation to his approbation, our blame to his blame' (*'Az Angol Irodalam'* 1885). It would seem even he did not measure up to the real moral judge, because he is too controlling and opinionated.

'If we hold up Thackeray's work and worldview to the highest standard and ask whether they give us guidance during our life, give us solace in sorrow, give us cure for our doubts, give us reaffirmation in times of despair: we must answer with no.' This rhetorical question posed by the Calvinist teacher outlines another duty for an author. Literature must give its audience guidance and direction to ennoble and uplift it. Realistic and elegantly humorous portrayal of the period, of society and of people is in itself not enough. The real message must be expressed. From a background of his uniquely religious, folk-liberal piety Baráth argues that: 'Thackeray is not an evangelium. But which author is one? Certainly Shakespeare is not one either. *Up to now, there is but one evangelium given to humanity, and that is in the book of books* (emphasis mine) and reading it even with only half faith or without faith shines some warm light to the heart, a two thousand years old fraction of what had once been pure radiance and blazing flame' (Baráth 1882: 91). Here Baráth's liberal Christian faith also surfaces, which sees the Bible as the unquestionable guide to humanity. This message is expressed in the Gospel, which to him summarises love above all else. He believes in the scripture's healing powers: 'And until a son of man comes again who feels it in himself, and can express through his words that which once again heals this sick world, and in renewed faith and love unites the millions of humanity who now hate and fight among each other: until then we will have to make do with what we have'. Baráth was truly critical of his favourite English humourist. Thackeray's world view – according to Baráth – fed on the conviction that 'human nature is made up of an inseparable union of good and bad, of sinful and perfect' (Baráth 1882: 91). This kind of thinking could have been sympathetic to Baráth, as this type of monism was one of the unique aspects of Hungarian theological liberalism, which identified the transcendent with the immanent. Baráth's rural, Biblical belief was also educated in this spirit and presumably this

is why he was captivated by the famous novelist's satirical humour, which he saw and presented as a role model.

Finally, it is also obvious that Baráth, who came from a Protestant, rural, burgher family could have found the topics Thackeray explored interesting, as they had in their focus the civic mind-set and worldviews that were at the time replacing the disappearing feudal way of thinking in England. The platform of the Protestant intelligentsia, who after the Austro-Hungarian compromise were hopeful for a democratic transformation, matched the author's social criticism, which depicts the old world with satiric humour. The novels depict heroes who the author expects to be industrious and productive, while mocking and ridiculing the old world with its snobbery, kow-towing, pretentiousness, hypocrisy and sentimentalism. For a significant segment of the urbanising Hungarian Protestant intelligentsia this stance may have served also a social, political platform. This is the exact reason why Scottish and English Calvinism, which succeeded in democratising society, became role models in Baráth's life.

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Endnotes

1 Ürgödi Nagy Miklós (1840-1907). His father, Ferencz Nagy was a professor in Kolozsvár (Today Cluj Napoca of Transylvania, Romania) and Nagyenyed (Auid, Romania) at the Hungarian Reformed College. His sister, Ilona was married to Domokos Szász Reformed bishop in Transylvania.

2 Baráth's concepts stand in right opposition to that of the followers of Jean-Paul, who dismiss satire on the ground that it does not alleviate the ugly and passion. But his stance also differs profoundly form those who later write this part of history of printed publishing as historians.

3 It is also a great question whether one needs to search for Western European influences as it is customary amongst Hungarian historians. I argues that one may well propose and assume that an independent mind is able to achieve similar results that could well be similar in nature.

4 Here Baráth wrote reviews of the following books: *A Brief Memoir of the late Mr. Thackeray*. By James Hannay. Edinburgh, 1864 and *Yesterdays with Authors. Thackeray.* By James T. Fields. London,1872. and *Thackeray the Humourist and Man of Letters. The Story of His Life* by T. Taylor Esqu. London, 1869.