

Pázmány Péter Catholic University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Violetta Ivett Vámos

*The motif of the fleeing maiden: the influence
of Ovid's story of Daphne and Virgil's Eclogues
on Mihály Vörösmarty's epic and dramatic
female characters*

Doctoral theses (PhD)

Dissertation Supervisor: Alinka Ajkay PhD, habilitated
assistant professor

Doctoral School of Literary Studies

Head of Department: Emil Hargittay DSc., Professor,
Head of the Institute

Budapest

2023

Table of contents

I. Background of the research, problem identification	3
II. Research methods	5
III. Research results.....	7
IV. Publication activity.....	13

I. Background of the research, problem identification

In my dissertation, I examine the Daphne theme in Mihály Vörösmarty's oeuvre - the forms of which show a textual connection with Ovid's *The Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Eclogues*. My thesis is based on the transcription of the text of Ovid in the text of *Zalán futása*, which was omitted from the earlier reception of Vörösmarty. The aim of the thesis is to examine Vörösmarty's epic and dramatic works with regard to the Daphne theme in order to show how allusions and intertexts from ancient texts participate in the formation of Vörösmarty's textual world. On the basis of my preconceptions, I assume the existence of a tendency-like text- and meaning-forming mechanism, which allows for the transformation of elements of ancient culture in Vörösmarty's works in a way that endows the story and characters of the author's works with psychological meaning. I assume that the adoption of the Daphne motif is due to the meaning-forming effect of the mythological archetype represented by the Daphne figure, and that the motif is thus present in Mihály Vörösmarty's work because it represented a psychological attitude for the poet, with which he wanted to express certain emotional processes.

I was prompted to hypothesize the operation of the meaning-forming mechanisms discussed above by the examination of the Ovidian elements of *Zalán futása*, after identifying the Daphne story as a text-world-editing intertext in the epic, and discovering connections with other Vörösmarty texts. Indeed, the motif of the maiden Daphne fleeing from her pursuer appears in several of

Vörösmarty's epic works, such as *Tündérvölgy*, *Délsziget*, and the epic poem *A' Rom*. An important starting point for the identification of Vörösmarty's epic phase in my research is Zsolt Gere's studies, in which Gere attempts to reconstruct Vörösmarty's supposed concept of the epic.¹

The study of Vörösmarty's concept of epic is an important question for the Ovidian parallel, because the identification of a text-forming structure from an ancient text could shed light on larger contexts: among other things, the development of contemporary literary and linguistic attitudes. My hypothesis is that it is possible to identify psychological processes in Romantic literature that have not yet received sufficient attention in the literature, and that authors have used elements of classical antique culture and national or popular motifs to depict these processes.

¹ GERE Zsolt, „*Hat gím jöve sebtén elébe*”, *Vörösmarty eposzterve és őstörténeti felfogása a Zalán futását követően*, ItK, 2000, 454–496.; GERE Zsolt, *A szépség tudományának mitizálási kísérletei*, It, 2007, 3–50.; GERE Zsolt, *Szebb idők: Vörösmarty epikus korszakának rétegei*, Bp., Argumentum, 2013.

II. Research methods

In my research on this topic, I first examined the presence of the identified Ovidian transcription in the whole of Vörösmarty's oeuvre. The question of the micro-historical background of the adoption arose in the course of finding the identified textual sites: on the basis of archival research and with the help of literature on the history of pedagogy, I tried to determine the possible time of the adoption in the poet's biography. A detailed study of Vörösmarty's school years has not yielded any concrete results on the circumstances of the adoption, but I have succeeded in identifying Vörösmarty's Latin books on the basis of certain translations of Ovid by his students.

The next stage of the uptake study was to detect the effect of *vergilius Eclogas*. Using philological methods, the co-occurrence of the Daphne transcription with the textual elements of Virgil's Eclogue II was detected. The emergence of a new corpus of texts led to the delineation of the figure of the fleeing maiden: the occurrence of the Ovidian and Vergilian textual sites can be linked to a specific, schematic Vörösmarty female figure, the so-called fleeing maiden, who in almost all cases prepares to flee after an encounter with a strange male figure, but turns back at the man's request.

I examined the figure of the fleeing girl in relation to her origin in the Ovidian story of Daphne through the artistic interpretation of the new mythology, trying to explore the connections with the modern interpretation of women in the movement that was prevalent in Vörösmarty's time, to which the lectures of János Lajos Schedius,

Vörösmarty's university teacher, who represented the new mythology, may have contributed. The study of the interpretation of women in the period also led to the assumption of the presence of the patroness-attitude that was already beginning to spread in the period. The specific influence of the "daughter-in-law" myth could not be detected in the case of the figure of the fugitive girl, but it did draw my attention to the differences between the mythological figure of the fugitive girl and that of Daphne. For, although the similarity of the fleeing girl to Daphne can be demonstrated textually, Vörösmarty's female figures turn back towards their supposed or real pursuers. I have sought answers to the differences in motif by studying archetype theory.

Finally, in the last phase of the research, after the separation of the Diana and Daphne archetypes, the study of the literature of fairy-tale and structuralist interpretation of fairy-tale and mythology led to the interpretation of the Daphne archetype, which I have identified as a kind of psychic attitude within the personality, symbolically indicating an inflexibility similar to the properties of the laurel tree in the course of personality development, and whose presence can be detected in the figure of the fleeing girl in the Vörösmarty saga.

III. Research results

In Mihály Vörösmarty's epic poem *Zalán futása*, there is a text from Publius Ovidius' *Naso Metamorphoses*, which is found in the story of Daphne's transformation. The extracted text is only three lines of paraphrased text, but as became clear during my research, the virginal text and characters of the Daphne story had a marked influence on the plot and the representation of the characters in *Zalán futása*. The extract identified is wedged into the text at the introduction of Hajna in *Zalán futása*: originally, it is Ovid's reflection on the god Apollo chasing Daphne. In Vörösmarty's text, it is recognised as the narrator's emotional speech. In the presentation and dramaturgical role of Hajna, her relationship with the Southern Fairy, who is unrequitedly in love with her, is reminiscent of Daphne, while the character of the Southern Fairy is reminiscent of Apollo, who is unrequitedly in love with her. Their scenes together recall those of Daphne and Apollo (the chase, the flight, the kiss), and their motivations in their interconnection and its failure model the Daphne-Apollo relationship.

Examining the philological connection, it turned out that the transposition of the text already appears in an earlier, fragmentary comic epic experiment, but there it is an ironic insertion of a text, indicating a dramaturgically different context, lacking erotic overtones. The identification of the earlier Vörösmarty passage has made it possible to determine that the author must have read the text before 1820. The analysis of the textual effects before 1820 outlined that during Mihály Vörösmarty's years at the Gymnasium, a

transformation in the structure and concept of public education was observed. The Ratio Educationis of 1806 required the production of new textbooks, written by Hungarian authors, which modernised the 18th century Jesuit textbooks previously used for teaching Latin language and literature. The new textbooks and text collections included many more texts from Ovid's works, which, according to contemporary descriptions, were more popular with students because of their light language and exciting themes. The three tansegédlets in use, which were not previously registered in Vörösmarty's literature, do not contain the Daphne story, so in determining the circumstances of the text's acquisition it is important to take into account the booksellers in Fehérvár, Pest and Szekszárd, the grammar school libraries in Fehérvár and Pest, and the library owned by Mihály Vörösmarty's personal acquaintances, from which the young author may have borrowed a Latin-language copy of the *Metamorphoses* for use. We also know the surviving items from Vörösmarty's own book collections; however, there is no trace of the *Metamorphoses* in circulation before 1820, so it is likely that he was reading a borrowed copy.

In the dramaturgical circumstances and character traits of the other female figures appearing in *Zalán futása*, the Daphnean traits identified in Hajna's case can also be observed, thus raising the possibility of the interpretation that the realisation of the Daphnean character traits appears in the epic as a panel element. The influence of the figure of Daphne can also be observed in the female characters of the other Vörösmarty texts examined alongside *Zalán futása* (*A'*

hűség diadalma, Tündérvölgy, Délsziget, A' Rom, Magyarvár, Két szomszédvár, Eger, Széplak). The Vörösmarty literature has already shown that during the 1920s Vörösmarty was thinking of a planned but ultimately unrealised epic concept, which, realised as interconnected but also separately readable stories, would have painted Hungarian historical and mythical memories embedded in a new mythological and religious tradition concept. From a narratological and structural point of view, the storybook that would have been produced would have corresponded most closely to the so-called *carmen perpetuum*, also identified as the genre of Ovid's *Metamorphosea*, if it had been produced, which explains the narratological purpose of including the Daphne story as a panel.

The similarity in dramaturgical solutions and representations of the female figures outlined in the case of epic works also raised the possibility of examining the female figures in dramatic works and in transitional genre texts. The presentation of the female figures in dramatic and epic texts, as well as in transitional genres (*A' Várasi és Pásztorleány, Szép Ilonka* etc.) and their textual motivation showed convincing similarities with those of epic female figures, and thus the text *Beautiful Ilonka* also raised the question of the historical motif of the hunting idol, identified as the origin of the motif of lovers meeting in the forest. The first appearance of the hunting idol motif is associated with the Vörösmarty drama *A' belső háború*, the first version of which, *Salamon király*, was published in 1823, while a revised version appeared in 1826. According to the literature, the *Salamon király* text is the first in which the hunting idyll scene from

the play, in which the two characters, Bátori and Jolánka, meet in a forest while Jolánka is picking flowers, first appears. The hunting idyll scene itself actually only occurs in a revised version of the drama, but this does not affect the connection of the motif with the Daphne motif: in Vörösmarty's epic and dramatic works alike, the meeting of male and female characters in a forest setting is a common motif, during which the male character surprises the female character, who is not expecting him, and love then develops between them. A genre-historical overview of the hunting idyll motif has drawn attention to the antecedent texts of the hunting idyll genre, the pastoral idylls, and in Vörösmarty's mixed-genre texts (especially in the first half of the 1920s) the pastoral setting or character is a frequent motif when lovers meet (e.g. *A' Várasí és Pásztorleány*). In the context of the pastoral idylls, an examination of Virgil's eclogues as a prefatory text has yielded surprising results: the female characters in Vörösmarty's texts, presented with daphnean dramaturgy and with daphnean qualities, often appear in poetic situations borrowed from Virgil's second eclogue (in the position of the unrequited lover who complains of his love sorrow to the nature around him), or, which can be interpreted as a transcription of the text, they utter monologues from Virgil's second eclogue. The Vergilian utterances are often associated with the male protagonist, but their behaviour in these cases is reminiscent of Daphne's (wandering in the woods). The combination of the Daphne motif and the hunter and shepherdess motif in the male characters raises the question of the extent to which the motif of the protagonist wandering in the woods is linked to the female characters, since it also

appears in some of the male characters. The daphne and eclogue qualities of the female and male characters are not, for this reason, linked specifically to the characters of the female figures, but also to the female figures and the feminine traits of the male figures.

In the third chapter of the thesis, the psychological approach, which also includes an archetypal approach to the aesthetic principles of the new mythology and the realization of the "homegirl" motif, tries to approach the motif of the rushing girl from the perspective of structuralist mythological research and the psychology of fairy tales. The study of the emergence of archetypes or mythologemes in literature is linked to the analysis of motif interpretations. In the third chapter, I will try to outline the interpretation of the Daphne myth in the works of Mihály Vörösmarty: in my view, the archetype of Daphne represents the willfulness, ingrained rigidity that appears at the level of the psyche, which is a destructive psychological attitude, and therefore the need to get rid of it is necessary for the character's personal development.

The focus of the paper is thus on the examination of the Daphne theme related to female figures in Mihály Vörösmarty's epic and dramatic works from various angles, the result of which will hopefully provide an opportunity to include aspects that are in some respects new for Vörösmarty research.

IV. Publication activity

1. VÁMOS Violetta, *Adalékok a Szép Ilonka egyik előzményverséhez*, .Studiolo. A Kubinyi András Történész Műhely folyóirata, 1(2014), 83–90.
2. VÁMOS Violetta, *Apollo és a Délszaki tündér: Ovidiusi elemek a Zalán futásában*, ItK, 120(2016), 55–66.
3. VÁMOS Violetta, *A Zalán futása szerelmi szálának antik elemei = Syrinx*. A CHSEC X. Országos konferenciáján elhangzott előadások, Budapest, 2016, Eötvös Collegium, 92–101.
4. VÁMOS Violetta, *A Metamorphoses hatása Vörösmarty műveire = Római költők a 18–19. századi magyarországi irodalomban: Vergilius, Horatius, Ovidius*, szerk. BALOGH Piroska, LENGYEL Réka, Budapest, Prime Rate Kft., 2017, 305–315.
5. VÁMOS Violetta, *A Metamorphoses hatása Vörösmarty műveire = AMΦΙΔΡΟΜΙΑ*. A CHSEC XI. Országos konferenciáján elhangzott előadások, Budapest, 2018, Eötvös Collegium, 74–80.
6. VÁMOS Violetta, *Vörösmarty gimnáziumi évei: mikrotörténeti adalékok a költő középszintű tanulmányaihoz = Nyom-Követés 3.:* A Vajdasági Magyar Doktoranduszok és Kutatók Szervezete és a Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége Irodalomtudományi Osztály II. közös konferenciájának tanulmánykötete, Budapest, 2018, 277–292.
7. VÁMOS Violetta, *Vörösmarty Mihály egyik olvasmányélménye: A Daphné-történet = Nyom-Követés 4.:* A Vajdasági Magyar Doktoranduszok és Kutatók Szervezete és a Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége Irodalomtudományi Osztály III. közös konferenciájának

tanulmánykötete, szerk. SEMSÁG Tibor, Budapest, 2018, 277–292.

8. VÁMOS Violetta, *Pásztor- és vadászdill-motívumok Vörösmarty Mihály epikus nőalakjaiban = Nyom-Követés 5.: A Vajdasági Magyar Doktoranduszok és Kutatók Szervezete és a Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége Irodalomtudományi Osztály IV. közös konferenciájának tanulmánykötete, szerk. NOVÁK Anikó és SEMSÁG Tibor, Budapest, 2020, 137–149.*
9. VÁMOS Violetta, *Vörösmarty Mihály latintankönyveinek azonosítása Ovidius-fordításai alapján, Magyar Könyvszemle, 136(2020), 125–137.*
10. VÁMOS Violetta, *Vörösmarty Mihály epikus és drámai nőalakjai az új mitológia tükrében = Nyom-Követés 6.: A Vajdasági Magyar Doktoranduszok és Kutatók Szervezete és a Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége Irodalomtudományi Osztály V. közös konferenciájának tanulmánykötete, szerk. B. KISS Máttyás, Budapest, 2021, 199–215.*
11. VÁMOS Violetta, *A bukoliko-daphnéi nőalak szerepe Vörösmarty Mihály epikus és drámai műveinek szerelemábrázolásában, ItK, 125(2021), 417–433.*