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FROM THE NANNY'S SONG TO THE FLOWERS
THAT WILT: HUNGARIAN
WRITERS AND POETS ABOUT THE PASSING
STAGES OF LIFE

Those who know Hungarian poetry surely remember the two popular poems by Sándor Petőfi to which the title refers. One is titled “At My Birthplace”; in it the poet returns to the region of his birth, which still resounds with the song of his childhood. Only a few months later, Petőfi wrote “At the End of September”, which is a prevision of the future. Because of the white streaks in his dark hair, and because he had just passed twenty-four, he did not know how long he was going to live. Had the Struggle For Freedom (*szabadságharc*) not broken out, Petőfi’s life may not have ended two years later.

One may ask, why do writers and poets write about the phases of human life? No matter how obvious both the question and the answer is, interestingly, before the generation of Mihály Vörösmarty – that is, before the early nineteenth century – very few Hungarian literary works reflected on childhood, maturity and old age as central narrative themes. It is surprising how little the great classic writers of memoir and diary literature (such as Miklós Bethlen and Kelemen Mikes, to mention just two names) confided to their readers about the impact of passing time on their personality. It was the age of Sentimentalism and Romanticism that turned the attention of Hungarian authors to the theme of aging. Historical periods have more than one profile: the 1820s and 1830s, the decades that we call the reform age, the time of national revival, were also ones of the discovery of individuality, of the interest in the human psyche.

Surprisingly, the universal human experience of aging has no trace in literary history and criticism. The science of the study of aging is called gerontology. It has extensions in medicine, sociology, psychology and politics. As it will be demonstrated, the stages of human development inspired a rich literary production in Hungary and, as we may add, worldwide as well. Scholars of literature, however, missed the challenge of an obvious and rewarding investigation of the literature of aging. No such study exists either in Hungary or elsewhere. The reason why the present paper may appear essay-like rather than scholarly is that there is simply no secondary material to refer to.

Returning to the question of why writers deal with phases of human life, the obvious answer is that they write about humans, very much including themselves. Among the greatest experiences of life are the transitions from one age group to another. Such as, when the child realizes that the rainbow is but a delusion (I am referring to János Arany's poem, "The Child and The Rainbow"), or when the adult (such as Petőfi) notices the white streaks in his dark hair. This experience does not result necessarily in resignation or disillusionment. Mihály Fazekas's gutsy popular character, Matt the Gooseherd (*Lúdas Matyi*), grows from a good-for-nothing teenager to a skilled and learned young man of the world. His primary goal is to avenge an injustice meted out to him in his youth; however, there is no doubt that he will also benefit from his self-education once justice is done. Magda Pórtelky, the heroine of Margit Kaffka's novel *Colours and Years*, whom the author modeled after her mother, also prefers to watch life as a big theatre performance when she is already a widow, having brought up three independent, graduate daughters. She finds life more colourful and comfortable than when she still participated in it as an overworked wife of an irresponsible, lazy husband, taking care alone of their three sprightly little girls.

The transition to another age group need not have a bearing on the subject at hand, which is the reflection of aging in the writer's consciousness. We can think Petőfi's long and bitter poem, "The Apostle", in which a baby who is found on the street ends his life as a white-haired would-be assassin of his country's king. "The child grew to a young man, then matured to a man". So much for passages. The development in Sylvester, the hero, is ideological: from reformer to a lonely anarchist. He is most unfit for our purpose. (And also for other purposes, "The Apostle" being one of Petőfi's most outlandish poems.)

Childhood is one of the favourite subjects of literature. "I have turned into a child again," writers profess with Sándor Petőfi. Sigmund Freud was the one who vilified childhood as a dark period of traumas, when little children go through shocking experiences, which they banish to their subconscious. There was, however, a world rich in beautiful experiences before Sigmund Freud — and let us hope, for many children, there still is one. Our nineteenth-century poets looked back at their childhood with nostalgia rather than fear. No wonder: the discovery and conquest of the world is the great experience of childhood, and who would not like to discover something — if not for mankind, then for himself at least. This is why it is beautiful to return to that early age when (as János Vajda wrote) the grass of the forest of Vál (his birthplace) was of silk, and the pebbles in the creek were of silver and gold. Is it possible that in the near future, distanced from the Freudian fad by a century, we will be able to

accept once again László Szentjóni Szabó's charming and insightful lines from the late eighteenth century:

Don't believe that old people
turn into children again:
While we live, we are always
children
only our games change.

*Ne hidd, nem igaz, hogy a vének
Kétszer gyermekké lennének:
Gyermek az ember amíg él,
Csak a játéknemben cserél.*

(A gyermekek)

Twentieth-century poets were different. Thanks to Sigmund Freud, they lost their innocence some time in their childhood. Tiny Attila József howls and rages in vain, demanding that his mother take him to the exciting loft instead of the basketful of washed clothes. The overworked laundress does not answer him, nor looks at him: "she [just] hung the linen on the line" [csak ment és teregetett némán] . As we know, the never-abating demands and endless curiosity of little kids (which are actually signs of their yearning to learn) cannot be fully satisfied. If, however, this curiosity remains *usually* or *always* unsatisfied, this can turn into a lasting experience of defeat. Attila József, for whom his mother never had time, and who never tasted any special cake while he was a child [*"öt forintért kuglert venni"*], showed signs of such experience of defeat all through his life. His contemporary, Dezső Kosztolányi – who, as a whole, had a happier childhood than Attila József – later published sixty-four poems under the title *The Laments of a Poor Little Child* about the secret world of children. The collection as a whole reflects our childhood experiences, which were both happy and sad. The death of his grandfather, fear of darkness and the unknown, and the butchering of a toad are memories intertwined with others: those of the kind grandmother, the healing hand of the family doctor, and colourful inks.

Few writers managed to represent the private world of children as successfully as Margit Kaffka. Their secrets are often ugly ones, such as when Csaba, fourteen-year old Magda's brother, tells her how he and some of his buddies plan to blind a captured jackdaw. Such references to childhood sadism, similar to the story of Kosztolányi's toad, are clearly Freudian: nineteenth-century taste would not have accepted them. Also memorable is the episode when Magda and two boys want to sneak up to the window of the jail one night to see an infamous brigand on death row. Predictably, some unexplained shadows in the dark alley scare them out of their wits.

The irony of aging is that what goes around comes around: parents deserve all the mischief that their children cause, since this is just payment for what they did to their own parents when they were children. The world of children appears even more irreconcilable with that of adults when the two clash. Kafka's heroine Magda Pórtelky was, as we have seen, nothing like an angel when she was little, and her three little daughters seem to take after her. In an episode, she is alone at home: the servant girl is running errands, and her second husband does not count as he paces up and down aimlessly in his office, mumbling to himself. The two older daughters are kicking the door of the nursery:

'Coffee, mummy!' 'Mimi-mummy, kiffee-coffee!' Now they're laughing, the little one repeating after the bigger one, 'Mimi-mummy!' Oh dear, they'll wake the baby! ... Oh, do keep quiet in there! Just you wait, you rowdy little imps, I'll be after you with the broom-handle!

[“Anyu, kávé! Mimi-mama, kivi-kávé!” Most már kacagnak, a kicsi utánamondja a nagyobbiknak: “Mimi-mama!” Jaj, felköltik ezt a parányit!... “Lesz csend odabenn? Ejnye, garázda kölykek, ha bemegeyek a seprűnyéllel!”]

The psychological phenomenon called empathy motivates Lőrinc Szabó's poem “Lóci Becomes a Giant”. All of us who have had a child recognize the behaviour of the two-year old little boy who is driving his poor father, the poet, to madness. But Lőrinc Szabó had not been a true poet if he had only described the ravages of the little rascal – he also wants to understand his son. He crouches, and presently he sees the world through the eyes of the child. He learns to hate his helplessness among the large objects (and imagined persons) around him, and gets to the point that he, too, wants to assert himself by rebellious destruction. Instead, he lifts up the little imp high “to make him a giant, mighty tall” [hogy nagy, hogy óriás legyen].

More clearly recognizable than the assumed threshold of old age are the few years of puberty. While it may arrive earlier or later, depending on individual factors, it brings along the beginning of sexual activity (which, to emphasize it again, tapers off much slower in old age). This is when the elderly father in Tibor Déry's *Dear Beau-père* envies his little son's first signs of sexuality; while he is nearing the end of the road, the boy is just about to start off. Also, this is why Magda Pórtelky's grandmother (Grósz) decides that the fourteen year-old girl can no longer sleep in the same room with her younger brothers. Apart from these ex-

amples, I was amazed at how few other literary instances I found about puberty, even in twentieth-century Hungarian literature. The reason may be that until recently European literature treated sexuality cautiously. The fact that the pendulum has swung far into the opposite direction in the past decades is, however, not much reason for jubilation.

If, according to twentieth-century literature, it is not easy to be a child, is the life of adults happier just because they grew up to be tall? Obviously, Lőrinc Szabó knew, too, that this was not the case. And, as Kosztolányi wrote in a later collection of poems titled *The Laments of a Sorrowful Man*:

A few gulps of wine left

in my glass,
and on my shoulder the

weight of adulthood.

How heavy my travel bag is,
and even the wine tastes
sour now.

Kupámban

még pár kortynyi bor,

A vállamon

a férfikor.

Jaj, de nehéz ez a batyu,

S a bor, a bor is savanyú –

While most literary works were written by people between twenty and fifty years of age, and describe experiences of this age group, whenever these authors started analyzing the passing of their years, their voices sounded disappointed. Years merge into each other, the colours disappear, just like in the memory of Margit Kaffka's heroine. The first ten chapters of *Colours and Years* indicate exactly how old the heroine is, from age ten to twenty-one. Then these indicators become less exact, and finally disappear. Magda starts her retrospection when she is fifty.

To quote Kosztolányi once again, about the monotony of adulthood:

I am but flesh. I am
bones.

My head a machine.

My hands a machine.

*Csak hús vagyok. Csak csont but
vagyok.*

Gép a fejem. Gép a kezem.

In this writer's short story "Appendicitis", even the memory of a routine operation, along with the smell of chloroform, turns into a life-long experience for an insignificant petty office clerk.

The life of aging parents can also become aimless when their children grow up and leave the family home. This is what happens in Péter Halász's *Second Avenue*, to mention an example. The only reason that

the Horváth family fled Budapest in the fall of 1956 was the participation of their fifteen year-old son in the revolution. Ten years pass, the three children grow up and move out, and the parents stay alone in New York's Hungarian district, in a world that they never got used to.

And when does old age kick in, actually? There is no objective measure for this, although in the past the phases of life started earlier than they do now. "Here I am, on the zenith of adulthood," [Itt bent vagyok a férfikor nyarában] wrote Petőfi at the age of twenty-five. "I am an old woman, I passed fifty last year" [Öreg asszony vagyok, tavaszkor múltam ötven esztendő] says Margit Kaffka's heroine. "With my old man's wrinkled hands [...] let me hold your lovely hand," [Már vénülő kezemmel fogom meg a kezedet] addresses the forty-one year-old Endre Ady his young wife, Berta Boncza. Naturally, poets and writers also tended to play roles, just like actors do, because they, too, spoke partly for others, and definitely to others. Besides, their way of life was not always traditional. János Arany, who lived a sober and settled life, could call himself old at the age of sixty (in his poem "Under the Oak Trees") with more justification than Ady in his early forties. If, however, it is true that passions make one old, or, referring to a proverb, one is as old as one feels, then Ady, the diseased alcoholic genius was right, too. Especially women's life was influenced by the commonly held pseudo-scientific view that past the age of fifty they were old – even women themselves accepted this. On the other hand, the fear of approaching the threshold could cause psychological aging, as in the case of the heroine of Zsigmond Móricz's *God Has Turned Away* (*Az Isten háta mögött*).

In a surprisingly unsubstantial collection of essays on old age, Gyula Illyés states that old age has no literature¹. One wonders what his criteria were, since one could quote dozens of examples from Hungarian literature. It should suffice to think of János Arany's *Toldi*, one of the most popular and beloved poetic tales about a 14th century strongman. In the third part of this work, the elderly Miklós Toldi and his even older servant Bence show much of the sadly comic aspects of experiencing age. Toldi also has to endure something that so many old people have gone through: heckling by arrogant youth. He is not taking it well, and actually kills one of the young hecklers in a rage.

It would be rewarding to investigate how literature reflects the symbiosis of different ages. One version of such literary works is one generation's view of an other: observations of adults about their children or parents, Kosztolányi's memory of his grandmother, and so on. Another interesting subject that, to my knowledge, Hungarian scholars have not explored yet is the relationship between an older husband and his young

¹ *Kháron ladikján* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1969), 87. l.

wife. "Where has the lustre of your eyes descended?" [Hová merült el szép szemed világa?] asks the concerned forty-three year-old Mihály Vörösmarty his twenty year-old wife, Laura Csajághy. "Daydreaming ruins life with lying view," [Ábrándozás az élet megrontója] reminds her, not very consistently, the greatest dreamer of Hungarian Romanticism. But what can he do if he, the mature husband, may not satisfy a young woman's daydreams? We cannot know what Laura was dreaming of, neither did Vörösmarty, but the suspicion itself left him concerned.

The sexual encounter of generations has been a traditional theme of world literature. We may even consider the Oedipus myth from this angle: older woman married to a younger man. There are only two versions of the situation, depending on which party is the older and which the younger one. It followed from women's place in society that the older husband-younger wife combination was regarded as natural, and thus literature often represented such marriages. Mihály Timár married Noémi in Mór Jókai's *The Man With the Golden Touch*, in spite of the obvious age difference. But, was it not Jókai who wrote a novel by the title *An Old Man is Not an Ancient Man* (Öreg ember nem vén ember) in which, by the way, there is nothing pertinent to our theme in spite of the title? The same Jókai, whose first wife was eight years older, the second one fifty-four years younger, than he? (Another famous inter-generational marriage was Zoltán Kodály's to Emma Sándor, his senior by twenty-four years; while his second wife, Sára Péczely, was some sixty years younger than Kodály.)

The age difference in marriage can create situations that are both comical and pathetic. This is what happens in János Arany's charming comic ballad, "Knight Pázmán". It has a Molièrian reminiscence, discussing the jealousy of an aging man who has an attractive young wife. The comic element unfolds not from the age difference but from the fact that all that the husband has reason to resent is a stolen kiss from his wife by a young member of a royal hunting party. The fairly innocent seducer turns out to be king Matthias, the favourite character of many popular tales who, having defeated knight Pázmán in a duel, gives him good advice: "Next time stay at home, if you don't have anything better to do, / And learn to appreciate your wife better". [Máskor ülj honn, ha bajod nincs, / És becsüld meg jobban Évát!]

One has to have a good reason besides age to make fun of the elderly. From the point of view of our age, it is especially difficult to understand the vulgar humour of literary works that mock elderly women who do not behave according to the expectations of their time. One can mention not one but at least two examples by the controversial Mihály Csokonai Vitéz: the comic epic *Dorottya*, and the comedy titled *The Widow Mrs. Karnyó and the Two Swindlers*. It is hard to place the author himself in

the evolution of Hungarian literature; he wrote the most artistic rococo poems, as well as some repulsively vulgar works. There is but one rationale for his presentation of elderly single women: the enlightened idea that one has to know himself and recognize his place in society. Affected old women, mostly widows who are desperately trying to re-marry, are not living up to this expectation. It was only a century later that the great feminist Mrs. Pál Veres pointed out the reason for women's dependence on marriage: either they had no skills and therefore no jobs were open for them, or, even if they had their means, society ostracized single women. While we may believe to live in more liberal and enlightened times, radical age differences in partnership still raise eyebrows. (It is hard to tell, of course, what a "radical age difference" concretely means, and what our limit of tolerance is.)

Similarly fascinating can be the generational symbiosis if the younger party is not the hero's wife but another relative, maybe one that he is not connected to by a blood tie. Such is the case in Tibor Déry's *Dear Beau-père* (*Kedves bópeer*), narrated in the first person. After a longer sojourn in Switzerland, the author's son arrives home with a seventeen year-old wife. Temporarily they stay with the father (father-in-law). The presence of a charming young woman pretty much shakes up the elderly man's emotional life, especially when Catherine/Kati also shows attraction to him and on one occasion surprises him with a kiss on the mouth. While this does not seem to be a call for a liaison, it makes the author re-evaluate his age. Although just shortly before the event he had a sexual encounter with an untalented but beautiful woman who wanted to secure the publication of her manuscript by seducing him, the hero expects something else from the mutual emotional attraction:

This is all that I ask for: to bathe my old heart in the magnetism which a young, pretty – although slightly skinny – woman radiates in my house. I don't even want to hold her hand. It is enough if I can follow the contours of her body with my eyes.

After a near-fatal influenza, the narrator's healing is also facilitated by her presence, hearing her steps as she approaches his room and his sick-bed. However, the time is turning: the young couple expect a baby, and the room in the paternal home won't suffice. The author's silent goodbye is: "Fare thee well, my last love".

Another conflict of generations is the kind that does not rely on sexual differences. This is the (in)famous generation gap, the clash of values and ideologies. Similarly to Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, a number of nineteenth-century writers reflect the conflict of conservatism and progressivism. András Fáy's *The Béltekys* (*A Bélteky ház*) and Mór Jókai's

Zoltán Kárpáthy are two good examples from Hungarian literature. In the twentieth century, this politicized generational difference is no longer present in our literature. There have been enough of other conflicts.

Yet another conflict is based on neither ideology nor values but on the simple fact that the manner and conduct of life often radically differs from one generation to another. The most striking, still relatively recent (thirty-year old) novel that shows the devastating effect of an older father and his middle-aged son on each other is Iván Mándy's *What's Up, Old Man?* (*Mi az, öreg?*). Paradoxically, the title refers not to the father but to the son: his ever young father calls him an old man, doing his best to accelerate the son's aging. Most of the novel is a retrospective view of a dysfunctional family: the daydreaming, rambling and womanizing father, the unhappy, confused mother and the adult son who never married and just wants "to be left alone, sitting and staring in the air". The novel starts when the father is taken to a sanatorium after yet another attention-begging suicide attempt, and it ends when both parents are dead. The misery of physical decay is aggravated by the emotional vacuum. When they take away the father, János, the son, enters his father's room. "One could still smell that smell. That of used shirts, socks, the heap of handkerchiefs." His reaction is: "Air! Air!" His secret hope is that his father won't come back home any more. "He won't mess up my manuscripts any more, he won't lecture me about my creative development." (János is a writer.) The memory of his incapacitated mother who had to be taken down to the ambulance sitting on a kitchen chair haunts him. Insignificant minor objects of everyday life seem indispensable to the sick old people when they are taken to the hospital.

They knew that the ambulance was on the way, yet the moment came so suddenly. In haste they picked up the necessary things and threw them into a small suitcase. Mother was sitting on the edge of her bed. 'My bottle... My bottle of rubbing alcohol!'

After the parents have passed away, János finds secret letters by both of them, to each other and to others – letters which should have better been left unread. They are full of insinuations and scheming.

Mándy was not a writer of pleasant readings. This novel is also unsettling, as it touches on some of our innermost fears: of becoming a burden to our family, of losing our mental and/or physical capacities to a humiliating point, of pain, and eventually of the unknown. The writer tests us, whether we are able to face the realities of old age. We may ask: how about the writer or poet? Is he able to reflect his aging analytically, as he often does his observations about life? Shock is a better word to characterize his self-reflection. Feeling the disadvantages of old age, the

artist may revolt without good reason, or in vain, somewhat similarly to Lőrinc Szabó's little son Lóci. Milán Füst is taking his own senses to justice in his poem "Old Age" (*Öregség*): where are his eyes, his ears, his teeth gone?

Since the phases of aging are quite personal experiences, I found only two examples of a philosophical treatment of the subject. The first one: Károly Kisfaludy's *Stages of Human Life*, actually provides a number of insightful psychological observations as well. The author was 34 years old when he wrote this poem, consequently he did not have subjective experience about mature mid-age and old age. Nevertheless he characterized earlier developmental phases accurately: when the child discovers time, when he is gaining independence from his parents and family, when his tender feelings towards the other sex arise, when illusions turn into a sense of reality, and so on. It is typical that Kisfaludy illustrated these transitions in the life of a male – however, he was one, too.

The other example is our great classic drama, Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*. Its fourth through fourteenth scenes survey human history from the pharaohs until an obscure future, thousands of years after the writer's time, and ours. First, Ádám appears as a young pharaoh; he becomes a middle-aged man in the medieval scene; then ends his journey in time and space as a broken old man, in a scene which is also the last stage of human history. Madách's masterwork is jam-packed with scientific and philosophical theories available in his age. One of these was the idea of organic historicism, meaning that the collective development of mankind reflects the individual development of organic life on a huge scale, from birth and youth through maturity, and finally into old age. Madách was not yet forty-two when his weak heart took him to the grave. At his age, one could still afford to represent old age in abstract and symbolic terms.

In the final analysis, the literary representation of life's stages is a literature of memory. Children don't write poems about themselves, or they do it only exceptionally, like the not-yet-teenaged Attila József, who started his first poem with the familiar childhood wish: "If I only were rich!" [De szeretnék gazdag lenni] As mentioned above, middle-aged writers seldom analyze their age. Elderly ones talk about themselves more often. But most of the literature on aging is retrospective: adults reminisce about their childhood and youth.

For emigrants, memory is an even more complex process than for those in the old country. Many of us spent our youth in Hungary. Whether it pleases us or frightens us, a return to the past is not only a journey in time but also in space, inasmuch as we have to recall another cultural and physical environment. We cannot find examples of such double memory within the Hungarian borders where the confrontation is

always with one's past. With an understandable bias to my present culture, I will demonstrate the phenomenon through the poem of Tamás Tűz, a Catholic priest and poet who lived thirty-five years of his life in North America, mostly in Canada. Let me quote his poem "Gerontology", written in free verse, in my verbatim translation almost in its entirety:

The gramophone record sweeps off the ashes from the ember of memories the record the old song the forgotten muscatel flavoured waltz always the same one it cannot be another the old man plays it ten times a hundred times doesn't get fed up with his stick he scrapes the ashes through the wrinkles around his eyes poppy fields radiate among the wrinkles of his forehead the wind of spring blows through that ember he won't let it be put out [. . .] he is not ready to die as yet only the cab takes him home between two records for a short nap.	A hanglemez lesöpri a hamút az emlékek parazsáról a hanglemez a régi dal az elfelejtett muskotályízű keringő mindig az az egy nem is lehet más fölteszi az öreg tízszer is százszor is nem únja meg botjával a hamúban kaparászik szarkalábas szemén átsüt a pipacsos rét homloka ráncai közt átfú a tavaszi szél azt a parazsat nem hagyja kialudni [. . .] nem akar meghalni még csak a taxi viszi haza egyidőre két hanglemez között egy röpke szundításra.
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In Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* the taste of a biscuit called "madelaine" makes the hero recall his bygone years. In Margit Kaffka's *Colours and Years* (which she wrote in 1912, one year before Proust started writing his novel cycle) it is the colourful flower garden of the heroine that takes her back in time. For Tamás Tűz's old man, it is "the old song, the forgotten muscatel flavoured waltz" that brings back the red poppy fields of the past that the spring breeze ruffles. Maybe he heard the old song as a child, as his mother sang it, or when some relative played it on the piano. Or maybe he danced to this song at a ball of which there were many in the pre-disco age. But what was that old song?

Tűz is not telling us. One great secret of literature is that it compels the reader to construct his own image of the characters, scenes, events, sounds and flavours. The written text is but a mould that we fill with our imagination and our own memories. The international masters of waltz, the Strauss family, were as popular in Hungary as in Austria; maybe one of them composed the old Hungarian-Canadian's favourite song. Other readers may prefer to think of Ferenc Lehár's or Imre Kálmán's operettas, which were staged equally frequently in Hungarian and German. For them the gramophone plays "Mädelein, Mädelein/Gimbelem, gombolom/ Sweetheart, be mine", or "Machen wir'n Schwalben nach/Túl az Óperencián/Over the rainbow we'll find happiness". There were also many popular waltzes hardly remembered any more, like the "Memory of Herkulesfürdő" [*Herkulesfürdői emlék*]. So many readers, so many songs: the mental record plays something else for each of us. We may not even want to know what the old man was listening to. We would be disappointed: we were guessing at another waltz. The intrusion of truth would disappoint us and deprive us of our illusion. We can appropriate literature mentally precisely because it does not strive for exactitude, but rather leaves certain details unsaid. And this is why it differs from the sciences, in which precision is everything.

Trying to find a fitting conclusion for this paper, I was wondering whether those pieces of Hungarian literature that deal with the passages of human life have any peculiarity that we cannot find in the literature of other European nations. Or, conversely, is any typical motif of Western literatures missing from Hungarian literature? I have a hypothesis that only a few European examples substantiate, yet it seems that Hungarian writers and poets tend to accept the unavailability of growing up, getting old and, eventually, dying. I could not find examples of a revolt against nature's law. On the other hand, in European literature the story of Everyman (or Jedermann) who tried to delay his death appeared first in the fifteenth century and found a brilliant late reworking in Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*. Similarly to this narrative motif, both in England and Germany the story of Doctor Faustus became widely known: that of a scholar who sold his soul to the devil so that he could turn young again and re-live his life, endowed with miraculous power. Dylan Thomas, one of the great mid-twentieth-century poets, wrote these often quoted lines of one of his poems:

Do not go gentle into that good night, [. . .]
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Is it possible that our writers and poets have found the great wisdom that we only live once; therefore, we have to live fully within the limits granted to us? So that with Mihály Vörösmarty we can say, returning to our ancestors in the dust:

“Thank you, life, for thy blessings,
 this has been great joy, yea, the Work of Man!”
 [Köszönjük, élet! áldomásodat, / Ez jó mulatság, férfimunka volt!]
 Since political correctness is still a fashionable fad, let us add: “... and
 the Work of Women, too.” [...és női munka is.]

AUTHORS AND WORKS REFERRED TO AND QUOTED

in alphabetical order

(Only those English titles are capitalized which, to our knowledge, exist in translation.)

Poets:

ADY Endre (1877-1919).	I guard your eyes	Órizem a szemed	pub. 1918
ARANY János (1817-1882)	<i>Toldi's Sunset / Toldi estéje. 1848. Ref. w/o. title.</i>		
	The child and the rainbow	A gyermek és a szivárvány	1851
	Knight Pázmán	Pázmán lovag	1856
	Under the oak trees	A tölgyek alatt	1877
CSOKONAI VITÉZ Mihály (1773-1805)		Dorottya	1804
FAZEKAS Mihály (1766-1828)	Matt the Gooseherd	Lúdas Matyi	1804
FÜST Milán (1888-1967)	Old age	Öregség	
JÓZSEF Attila (1905-1937)	If I only were rich	De szeretnék gazdag lenni	ca. 1916
	Mother	Mama	1934
KISFALUDY Károly (1788-1830)	The Stages of Life	Az élet korai	1822
KOSZTOLÁNYI Dezső (1885-1936)	The Laments of a Poor Little Child	A szegény kisgyermek panaszai	1910-23
	The Laments of the Sorrowful Man	A bús férfi panaszai	1924
PETŐFI Sándor (1823-1849)	At the end of september	Szeptember végén	1847
	At my birthplace	Szülőföldemen	1848
	The apostle	Az apostol	1848

	Here I am, on the zenith of adulthood	Itt benn vagyok a férfikor nyarában	1848
SZABÓ Lőrinc (1900-1957)	Lóci becomes a giant	Lóci óriás lesz	1933
SZENTJÓBI SZABÓ László (1767-1795)	The children	A gyermekek	
TÚZ Tamás (1916-1992)	Gerontology	Gerontológia	
VAJDA János (1827-1897)	In the forest of Vaal	A vaáli erdőben	1875
VÖRÖSMARTY Mihály (1800-1855)	To the Day-Dreamer	A merengőhöz	1844

Thoughts in the Library/Gondolatok a könyvtárban. 1844. ref. w/o. title.

OSZK
Országos Széchényi Könyvtár

Prose writers and playwrights:

CSOKONAI VITÉZ Mihály (1773-1805)	The Widow Mrs. Karnyó and the Two Swindlers	Az özvegy Karnyóné s két szeleburdiak	1799
DÉRY Tibor (1894-1977)	Dear Beau-Père	Kedves bópeer...!	1973
FÁY András (1786-1864)	The Béltekys	A Bélteky ház	1832
HALÁSZ Péter (1922-)	Second Avenue	Második avenue	1967
JÓKAI Mór (1825-1904)	Kárpáthy Zoltán The Man With the Golden Touch An Old Man is not an Ancient Man	Az arany ember Man Öreg ember nem vén ember	1854-5 1872 1898
KAFFKA Margit (1880-1918)	Colours and Years	Színek és évek	1912
KOSZTOLÁNYI Dezső	“Appendicitis”	“Vakbélgyulladás”	
MADÁCH Imre (1823-1864)	The Tragedy of Man	Az ember tragédiája	1861
MÁNDY Iván (1918-1995)	What's Up, Old Man?	Mi az, öreg?	1973
MÓRICZ Zsigmond (1879-1942)	God Has Turned Away	Az Isten háta mögött	1911

Some short quotes were taken from the anthology *In Quest of the 'Miracle Stag': The Poetry of Hungary*, Adam Makkai, ed. (Chicago: Atlantis, 1996). These quotes are:

P. 122: Lőrinc Szabó, translated by E. F. Kunz; p. 726 in anthology.

P. 125: Mihály Vörösmarty, “To the Day-Dreamer”, tr. W. Kirkconnel and H. H. Hart; p. 251 in anthology.

P. 131: M. Vörösmarty “Thoughts in the Library,” tr. H. H. Hart and A. Makkai; p. 267 in anthology.