

**NEGOTIATING WORLD LITERATURE IN THE FIRST
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERARY
STUDIES. THE ALBANIAN CASE**

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ABSTRACT. *Negotiating world literature in the first international journal of comparative literary studies. The Albanian case.* Former research on the first international journal of comparative literary studies, the *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* edited in Cluj, has often been to general and consequently avoided to tackle the basic question of the nature of the large scholarly network that made this journal unique. Through the case study of Thimi / Euthyme Mitko and the presence of the Albanian literature in ACLU the paper foregrounds the subtle, often almost invisible, but important negotiation of visions that came to frame the often neglected and less analysed dynamics of the journal.

Key words: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum, Brassai Sámuel, Hugo von Meltzl, Thimi Mitko, Dora d'Istria, Albanian literature, scholarly networks of collaborators.

REZUMAT. *Negocierea ideii de literatură universală în primul jurnal internațional de literatură comparată. Cazul literaturii albaneze.* Studiile legate de *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, primul organ internațional de literatură comparată, au fost de multe ori prea generale, iar detaliile legate de rețeaua vastă de colaboratori a ajuns pe planul al doilea. Lucrarea prezintă o analiză detaliată a modului în care figura carismatică a naționalismului albanez, Thimi Mitko (Euthyme Mitko) din Cairo, a fost cooptat în rețeaua internațională a colaboratorilor Actei. În acest proces complex de negociere dintre diferitele viziuni legate de literatura albaneză și universală, de noțiunile de națiune și cosmopolitism, soarta și re poziționarea textelor lui Mitko pot deveni un model în ceea ce privește funcționarea rețelelor de colaboratori în jurul *Actei Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*.

Cuvinte cheie: Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum, Brassai Sámuel, Hugo von Meltzl, Thimi Mitko, Dora d'Istria, literatură albaneză, analiză de rețele literare.

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It is probably striking, but the history of the first journal in international comparative literary studies is more like a history of oblivion. Typically to be the first in the archeology of a discipline, in this case the first journal of comparative literary history, seems evidently valuable. But having been a physically and linguistically hardly accessible "Eastern European case" this primeval role seemed to be not so obvious for the first international journal of comparative literary studies. Even though it has been a standard occurrence in international scholarship (including reference books, cyclopedia and companions to comparative literature), it has never been thoroughly investigated in the context of local and transnational literary culture. It was only a few years ago that Horst Fassel (in a volume of edited essays)¹ and David Damrosch (in an essay published in *Comparative Critical Studies* in 2006)² charted the multiple European beginnings – including the Eastern European ones – of comparative literary studies. Both highlighted the role of a review that – ten years before the 1887 start of Max Koch's *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* – seemed to be the first international review dedicated to the newly emerging field of comparative literary studies / comparative literary history, but both of them neglected the rich archival material and sometimes even the review itself.

In spite of this recent attention received by international scholars, the role and concept posed by "Összehasonlító Irodalomtörténelmi Lapok" (or later "Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum") still needs to be clarified: there are few complete editions available, and only one programmatic essay is usually in international circulation (this is the one selected also for the *Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature*³), there is a huge amount of archive materials never taken into account, and usually only one of the editors (the German-Hungarian Hugo von Meltzl) is discussed. Moreover, while scholars usually speak only about the review that has been published by Hugo Meltzl and by Sámuel Brassai (the latter being co-editor till 1872), there was a whole series of appendices and off-prints that differ from the materials published in the review.⁴ This makes even the philology of the review published between 1877 and 1888 in a polyglotte version even more complex. And the philological situation becomes even more complex if we take into account that the private correspondence of the review with the huge network scholars from all over the world has rarely been discussed, and that the complex relationship between the review and the local, newly established university and the local, Hungarian literary culture have been largely neglected. The former is especially important, since the review was

¹ Horst Fassel (Hg.), *Hugo Meltzl und die Anfänge der Komparatistik*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 2005.

² David Damrosch, "Rebirth of a Discipline: The Global Origins of Comparative Studies", in *Comparative Critical Studies* 3. 1-2, 2006, pp. 99-112.

³ David Damrosch, Natalie Melas, Mbongiseni Buthelezi (eds.), *The Princeton Sourcebook in Comparative Literature: From the European Enlightenment to the Global Present*, Princeton-Oxford, Princeton U.P., 2009, pp. 41-49.

⁴ This consists not only of the so-called *Fontes* series, but also of calls for papers, broadsheets and broadsides that were issues by the editors, respectively of the Hungarian versions of their publications often published, in parallel, in local or national newspapers.

also a university project: Meltzl was appointed professor of German (later, also French and Italian) studies, Brassai was professor of Mathematics, Sanskrit language and comparative linguistics, and instead of teaching along the conventions of their disciplines, they both started teaching what they termed “comparative view of languages and literatures“.

Recovering this fascinating story can shed new light not only to one spot of the global beginnings of comparative literature, but especially to the interplay of the local and the global, and the specific characteristics of this partly Central and Eastern European vision of comparative thinking. One of the basic problems that emphasizes this complex interplay brings into question the relationship of the network that surrounded ACLU. And the interpersonal relationships and narratives were not the only elements that made this venture work; one has to take into account also the labyrinthine negotiation of identities, visions, views that came to meet, intersect, pass by, and sometimes even collide to construct this founding phenomenon of comparative literary studies. How could we seize this fragile dynamics? How could we make visible the birth of professional solidarities, cleavages and even parallelisms in matters of comparative literary studies? We might have a chance of grasping this enthralling, but highly fragile and dynamic place of ACLU by focusing on the in-between situations, the transfer of ideas, the constant rewriting and recycling that occurs at the many real and virtual meetings ACLU initiated.

Thimi Mitko, the Albanian collaborator of the *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* and the interpretive risks of the „methodological cosmopolitanism“

For a long time, methodological nationalism has been dominating the reconstruction of the history of ACLU. We have been inventing the national self in and within the journal where it could have been more proper to assume hybrid identities.⁵ For instance, one of the founders of the review, Hugo von Meltzl has usually been said to be either a German or a Hungarian, depending whether the perspective is Hungarian or German. Moreover, from an orientalizing perspective the figure of “the German” Meltzl has often been considered to be “more foundational” and even exclusively important as compared with “the Hungarian” Sámuel Brassai. There is a whole tendency to tell the story of the review as a basically German or Western story, reducing the narrative to the personality and oeuvre of Meltzl and simply assuming that he was a German, “civilized” Westerner, even though there are many warning signs that this type of monolithic ethnicization and orientalizing leads to the fearful forgetting of basic and decisive part and sides of the narrative.

⁵ For deeper and larger analysis regarding methodological nationalism and its consequences, see: Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*, Amsterdam; Amsterdam U.P., 2006; Joep Leerssen, “Viral Nationalism: Romantic intellectuals on the move in 19th-century Europe”, in *Nations and Nationalism* 17/2, 2010, pp. 257-271.

The other, similarly tempting fallacy, is “methodological cosmopolitanism”, i.e. the visceral verdict to categorize every collaborator of the *Acta Comparationis* as genuinely cosmopolitan, international just because the review itself envisioned the literary field in a highly cosmopolitan manner. In such a case the hundred-and-some individual collaborators come all under the umbrella term and original vision of the founders and of the review, even if their individual life-stories and oeuvres seem to contradict partly or entirely the aspirations of the review. Nay, there are many cases when this methodological cosmopolitanism goes hand in hand with the assumption that all the collaborators were involved directly, in the same manner and degree into the cosmopolitan ideals, therefore building, consenting and assisting to a clear-cut and monolithic cosmopolitan voice of the ACLU. Instead of such a homogenization, it is probably more proper to envisage the first international comparative literary review as an accommodating pool of ideas, a framework open to negotiation and at the same time, negotiating a disciplinary and institutional place for the ideas it was bringing to the forefront. Such a framework could reveal the dynamics and especially the complex inner cleavages of what is thought to be „the vision” of the ACLU on the world literature and on the study of it and would finally stir discussions on the intricate nature of the scholarly and personal network of the ACLU.

Out of the many convincing case studies, Thimi Mitko could become the protagonist of such a perspective, interested in excavating the inner dynamics of the ACLU and the failures of „methodological cosmopolitanism”. This is the more true also because the research on the history of the ACLU was primarily concerned with those collaborators who seemed to be more “international”, “cosmopolitan”, inducing the idea that “minor” figures (nay, figures with nationalist stances or well-known in the nation-building of their own cultures) are inherently less important than the others.⁶

Thimi Mitko (Euthymius Mitkos) is certainly not the most well-known figure of Albanian literary history, even though he has a well-established place and role in literary historical narratives that portray the nineteenth-century nation-building / Rilindja movement of the Albanians from Italy to Greece, and from Romania to Egypt. He is usually presented as a merchant buying and selling not only goods, but also transmitting ideas and networking from Bucharest to Plovdiv and into the Ottoman Empire, or from Vienna to Egypt. After settling in Egypt he became an active intellectual hub of Albanian nation-building⁷ using his former

⁶ Already the first monographer of Meltzl and the ACLU, Kerekes Sándor reconstructed the network of the collaborators restricted only to the famous cosmopolite figures: Kerekes Sándor, *Lomnitz Meltzl Hugó 1846-1908*, Budapest, 1937, pp. 66-72.

⁷ Harry T. Norris characterized this mid-nineteenth-century Albanian community from Egypt by mapping their emergence: “the dynasty Muhammad Ali established, the affection it had for Albanians and received from them, and the haven it afforded to them as exiles from Ottoman control, victimization by Greek neighbours, or the sheer misery of Balkan poverty, meant that in time Alexandria, Cairo, Beni Suef and other Egyptian towns would harbour Albanians, who

connections from Greece to Italy for promoting the idea of a common Albanian cultural heritage. This work did not go without any conflicts. Besides his conflict with the Greek clergy after the publication of his folklore collection, Isa Blumi reports of his opposition to the Ottoman view on the Balkans: “reactions to the 1878 Berlin debacle incited a new wave of anti-Ottoman movement. Among the more aggressive opponents of the sultans regime was Thimi Mitko.”⁸ Natalie Elsie’s writings present him as a fierce nationalist figure whose collection of folklore made the Greeks raise their eyebrows (and, if we can believe the hearsay story, even burned the whole collection in public in Athens).⁹ He is said to have come into contact with Western European forms and ideals on collecting folklore during his Vienna years in the late 1850s while working as a tailor there.¹⁰ He translated and applied these by providing folklore texts for Demetrio Camarda’s collection, and finally, in 1878, he succeeded to publish his own collection consisting of 55 folk songs, 39 tales and popular sayings, mainly from his homeland region of Korça. Though the *Albanian Bee* (*Albanikë melissa*, bearing the Albanian subtitle *Bëlietta shqipëtare*) is usually thought to have been largely unknown in international literary and cultural circles (at least until Mitko’s disciple and fellow collector, Spiro Dine re-edited almost half a century later), its presence in the ACLU almost simultaneously with its publication could make us rethink the European status it had around its publication.

organized associations, published newspapers and above all wrote works in verse and prose that include significant masterpieces of modern Albanian literature. [...] Although they lived in Egypt for much of their lives, were essentially nationalists and not much influenced by the Islamic way of life that they saw around them.” (Harry T. Norris, *Islam in the Balkans: Religion and Society Between Europe and the Arab World*, University of South Carolina Press, 1993, pp. 209-210).

⁸ Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities. 1800-1912*, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011, p. 117.

⁹ For instance, the *Historical Dictionary of Albania* calls him directly a nationalist figure: “The first Albanian society of Egypt was founded there in 1875, and many others followed. Nationalist figures and writers such as Thimi Mitko, Spiro Dine [...] were all active in Egypt at some point of their careers.”, or: “Folklorist and nationalist figure.” (Robert Elsie, *Historical Dictionary of Albania*, Plymouth, Scarecrow Press, 2010, pp. 125, 307. Cf. Robert Elsie, *Albanian Literature: A Short History*, London–New York, I. B. Tauris, 2005, p. 49; Robert Elsie, “The Rediscovery of Folk Literature in Albania”, in Marcel Cornis-Pope, John Neubauer (ed.), *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries. III. The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions*, Amsterdam–Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 2004, p. 337.

¹⁰ Nathalie Clayer’s wide-ranging argument suggests that Mitko’s ‘intellectual’ career was not an abrupt career change at all: from the 1850s he was already part of an Istanbul-centred network of Albanists, then he extended his networks and actually became the centre of a larger integrated net together with Dora d’Istria: “Thimi Mitko et Dora d’Istria étaient les deux personnalités les plus importantes au coeur du réseau”. She characterizes this network as based mainly upon Orthodox Albanians, this leading to a series of inner debates and conflicts and thus a strong urge to legitimize themselves even at the end of the 1870s, during the first contacts between Mitko and the editors of the ACLU. Cf. Nathalie Clayer, *Aux origines du nationalisme albanais: La naissance d’une nation majoritairement musulmane en Europe*, Editions Karthala, 2007, p. 198.

It was the Florentine Dora d'Istria¹¹ who introduced Thimi Mitko to Hugo von Meltzl, one of the editors of *ACLU* in a letter written to him on October 21, 1878 in a larger emphatic context underlining the importance of folklore and folklore studies that both of them seemed to share: “You, Sir, who understand so well the importance of the folklore texts not only from a literary point of view, but through the way they offer solutions to the lacking data of the characteristics of the people, will perfectly understand the endeavour of the Albanian-Egyptians (Albano-Égyptiens). The volume entitled *Albanian Bee* (Alexandria, 1878) contains songs, riddles, tales etc. Its editor, living in Cairo, is Mr Euthyme Mitko, and the book contains also several fragments of historical data: for instance, a translation of my *Nationalité albanaise d'après les chants populaires*. The Albanian texts are so rare that it is necessary to be grateful to Mr Mitko for having decided to undertake this publication and to have taken care of it with such an ardour.” Meltzl was not tarrying at all, it seems that he found the Albanian connection useful in spite of having already a specialist on Albania: Dora d'Istria herself. He seemed to have expressed the intention of the review to focus also on Albania, an intention that was greeted by Dora d'Istria with a long passage, in a letter highlighting the alleged uniqueness of the Albanian community: “I find your idea of including Albanian poetry into the interesting publication you are preparing excellent. The so remarkable way in which Byron speaks of this country and its people in his *Childe Harold* justifies your decision once again. Regarded by some as Slavic, by others as Greeks, the Albanians, who actually are a branch of the Pelasgic family, are always forgotten when our Eastern Europe comes into discussion.”¹² It seems that Meltzl was eager to contact him directly as soon as possible since a next letter received from Dora d'Istria began with detailed practical instructions regarding such a future correspondence: “The editor of the *Albanian Bee*, Mr Euthyme Mitko has obviously the intention to go on with his venture, he even told me in his last letter that he would prepare a second volume. [...] He corresponds with me in Greek, but he knows Italian. He could therefore offer you translations of Albanian texts.”¹³ Nay, just two months and three issues after the Albanian case first

¹¹ Dora d'Istria was the pen name of Duchess Helena-Koltsova-Massalskaya. Born in the famous Romanian Ghika family, she received her education in Dresden, Vienna and Berlin. After marrying his Russian husband, she spent several years in Russia, then he headed for Switzerland, then moved to Italy, spending her final two decades (1870-1888) in Florence. She was a well-known scholar of her time, her polyglotte abilities made her an important intellectual interface especially for Greek and Albanian nation-building. For a detailed presentation and analysis of her relationship with Albanian nation-building see: Antonio D'Alessandri, *Il pensiero e l'opera di Dora d'Istria fra Oriente Europeo e Italia*, Roma, Gangemi Editore, 2007, pp. 181-193. (Curiously D'Alessandrini's excellent book makes no reference to d'Istria's relationship to Thimi Mitko.) Since my monograph on *ACLU* will have a detailed chapter on d'Istria's contribution to *ACLU*, I will refrain from a detailed discussion of her oeuvre in this context.

¹² Nicolae Iorga, “Lettres de Dora d'Istria”, in *Revue historique du sud-est européen*, 9/4-6 (Avril-Juin 1932), p. 153.

¹³ Dora d'Istria to Hugo von Meltzl. Florence, October 28, 1878, in Iorga 1932, p. 151.

appeared in the private correspondence of Meltzl and d'Istria, the editor already summed up not only the larger experience of the correspondence, but already seemed to have received Mitko's volume and informed his (Hungarian) readers also about the latest debates regarding the Albanian language: "On April 5, 1878 the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* Benloew presented a treatise with a somewhat peculiar title: *Le plan de la langue albanaise*. He reckons the major part of this language has Turkish, Slavic, Italian and Celtic origins, and the rest should be considered Pelasgian. Our esteemed colleague, Dora d'Istria, expressed a somewhat similar opinion in her letters addressed to us and in her former papers (among others, in an 1866 essay in the *Revue des deux Mondes* on *La Nationalité Albanaise d'après les chants populaires*, that made a huge stir). The nation of the famous Skanderbeg deserves as much aesthetic attention as the Bulgarian or any other nation from the Balkans. The Albanian poet Mitko Euthymio, living in Egypt, started an extremely estimable yearbook that contains Albanian folk traditions, folksongs etc. We received its first volume published in Alexandria with Greek title and introduction. We will return later to the this most interesting piece of scholarship not only in our bibliography."¹⁴ The private correspondence of Meltzl and d'Istria confirms that already in December 1878 Meltzl received a review copy of *The Albanian Bee* directly from the Alexandrian scholar he imagined would be the direct Albanian connection of ACLU: "Dear Sir, I learned with pleasure that you have received *The Albanian Bee*. Mr Mitko could be useful for you in Egypt, a country where it is hard to find an intelligent correspondent."¹⁵ Two issues later, Mitko himself appeared on the list of the collaborators.¹⁶ It took the editorial office of the ACLU only three months to learn about Mitko, to do a brief research, to contact him and, furthermore, to establish a "full collaboration" with him.

It then took a few weeks before Meltzl returned to the question of providing more space to the Albanian literature in the ACLU. Since the journal insisted on

¹⁴ "Rövid külföldi szemle / Kurze ausländische Revue", in *ACLU* vol. IV, no. XL, pp. 175-176 [in Hungarian].

¹⁵ Dora d'Istria to Hugo von Meltzl, December 14, 1878., in Iorga 1932, p. 156. In a next letter d'Istria confirms again the establishment of the direct link between Meltzl and Mitko whose ophthalmic problems seemed to impede a detailed and frequent exchange of letters: „M. Mitko m'a écrit qu'il reçu votre letter, et il semble très satisfait de la sympathie que vous montrez pour son *Abeille albanaise*. Il a seulement regretté que l'état de ses yeux ne lui ait pas permis de vous répondre plus longuement. Il y a certainement du mérite, à son âge après une existence à laquelle n'ont pas manqué les épreuves trop communes dans la vie orientale, à s'occuper, comme il le fait, de soustraire à l'oubli la poésie populaire et les traditions de sa terre natale." Iorga 158. Certainly, it could have been as well other reasons for the scarcity of letters between the two scholars. On the one hand, Dora d'Istria might have proved a too strong and central hub in matters of Albanian scholarship for the ACLU and for other scholarly international networks (this could be the reason why this was not the only occasion when Mitko sent word to the ACLU and Meltzl through Dora d'Istria and not by writin directly). On the other hand, as I will argue later, the ACLU repositioned the Albanian case in a less evaluative and mononational perspective.

¹⁶ *ACLU* 1879, vol. V., nr. XLII.

publishing unprinted materials he was most likely awaiting for novel scholarly work from Mitko, and meanwhile, as an impatient editor, thought of introducing this "hot issue" based on the information he gathered in the last half year: "I think that you have every reason to believe that a short article on the folk poetry of the Albanians in the *Journal of Comparative Literature* would prepare the spirits for a more complete venture. This reminds me of having not sent the titles of the collections of songs published by the Albanians since Albanian nationality saw the lights of the day."¹⁷ At the end of June she reports again on Mitko who is to send the (promised) verses to the editors.¹⁸ But before arriving to the editorial office, the text was mediated by d'Istria, who was not just a simple intermediary, but a "cultural broker" when she translated and negotiated the meaning that was given to the first Albanian text to be published in the *ACLU*: "I am sending you a translation of Mr. Mitko's verses. The meaning of some passages might leave a few doubts, but I believed it was better to send you the translation as soon as possible so as to let you have a global view on it, and to be able to clearly separate issues of secondary importance. And there are political allusions as well, all the *Lamentation* resembles to that of Jeremiah on the sad situation of a land that seems to work in its destruction. But the substance, as the title points it out, is an appeal to the Albanians to how wrong they were of never thinking to awaken intellectual life at their premises. [...] Your translation of the small Albanian poem is excellent, I am enchanted."¹⁹ The double reference actually covered two poems: not only the *Lamentation*, but also an inedited "small" Albanian folk song Meltzl translated, too, with the help of d'Istria, and published already in September 1879.²⁰ In spite of this promising and speedy beginning that foresaw a short review and a longer paper to be published later, a poem by Mitko translated and reworked into French for the editors by d'Istria and a "short Albanian poem" translated by Meltzl into German, things slowed down. Three more months passed away before the promised substantial material was published on the last day of October. The *Ndsjtaejae mbae shkjypaetaraet paer tae shkronjaezuar gjuhaen e tyre. Ineditum / Exhortation aux Chkipétars pour rendre leur langue littéraire*²¹ was clearly the highly political text d'Istria had been alluding to. The footnote accompanying the prose translation of Mitko's poem made clear that the French interlinear version was identical with the one d'Istria commented upon in her letter to Meltzl: "This French translation was based upon a former version of the Albanian original by a French writer. The poem which is noteworthy both from an ethnographical and an aesthetic view, clearly comes from the Vormärz period. Out of the people from the Balkan peninsula it deserves attention also from a philological point of view so much the more since modern history and ethnography are so primitive

¹⁷ Dora d'Istria to Hugo von Meltzl, April 20, 1879, in IORGA 1932, p. 171.

¹⁸ "Je reçois à l'instant une lettre de M. Mitko, qui se prépare à vous envoyer des vers albanais" (Dora d'Istria to Hugo von Meltzl, June 29, 1879, in IORGA 1932, p. 178).

¹⁹ Dora d'Istria to Hugo von Meltzl, July 24, 1879, in IORGA 1932, p. 180.

²⁰ "Canto albanese di alta Albania / Albanesisches Volkslied", *ACLU* vol. VI., no LIII, 1128.

²¹ *ACLU* vol. VI, no. LVI, 1168-1173.

that they still employ terms like “Greek-Slavic peninsula” (cf. Crousse, Bruxelles, 1876.) From that matter the poem to be compared is a modernised folk-song.”²² The lament and its French translation were just one side of a larger Albanian spotlight of ACLU that went on with a paper in two parts authored by the Hungarian(-French) Lajos / Ludwig / Louis Podhors(z)ky, commenting upon the mostly indirect, alleged Albanian-Hungarian linguistic connections.²³ Of course, this latter was not a purely descriptive compilation of excerpts and lexical examples either, but seemed partly a vociferous reiteration of the Albanian-Pelasgian connection, and appealed to a Hungarian rediscovery of the alleged Albanian primaeval ethnographic elements: “Probably we do not need to stress the extraordinary chance given to us, Hungarians, to reveal and decide in highly important matters regarding the primaeval past of our language. This chance was given to us by the events of the last few months since the Austrian and Hungarian triumphant arms conquered even Albanian subjects for our country. Our Hungarian philologists should enter the midst of Albania as soon as possible, before the neo-European cultural barbarianism will level everything, will make the ancient traditions disappear, and even the last ancient links will vanish between the oldest of our old neighbours and us.”²⁴ The sequel of the paper was visibly shortened and made it obvious that the whole argumentation was actually reshaped from the private letters of Podhors(z)ky and the editors. Meltzl and Brassai used them as a discursive element in order to contextualize Thimi Mitko’s poem and Dora d’Istria’s translation, even though they repositioned the Albanian and French texts from another, national, partly “Hungarian” perspective: “We take the comments below from Mr Podhorszky’s letter who writes among other precious notes about the Albanian language: »The same applies to the Basque and Breton language what you righteously say about the Albanian one. These three European languages should be propped with golden columns so as they would not perish.«”²⁵ And to make the spotlight on the Albanians even stronger the appendix of the issue made reference also to the Albanian language to be included into an imagined and alleged *Encyclopedia of the Poetry of the World*: “For a collection, polyglot, or, as far as possible panglot, to be published under the above title, we are in search of characteristic specimens hitherto *inedited* if possible: firstly, of all European idioms, secondly of all the languages of Asia, America, Africa and Australia. Specimens ought to be accompanied by details as to their source and by a literal interlinear translation in one of the European languages. What we ask for, is in the first place, a *popular song*, and at least another short poetic composition, in each of

²² Idem 1171.

²³ “Albánai elem a magyar nyelvben” (Albanian elements in the Hungarian language), *ACLU* vol. VI., no. LVI., 1173-1175.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 1175.

²⁵ “Albán elemek a magyar nyelvben” (Albanian elements in the Hungarian language), *ACLU* vol. VI, nr. LX, 1255.

the following idioms: [...] Albanian: Tosk and Gheg. [...]”²⁶ The very next issue of ACLU returned to an author who was not unknown for its readers since Dora d’Istria introduced his *La Grèce avant les Grecs* already in the first year of the new review.²⁷ Louis Benloew’s *Analyse de la langue albanaise. Etude de Grammaire comparée* (Paris, 1879) received favourable comments in January 1881, also suggesting that the emancipation of the alleged aboriginal language of the Pelasgians should be intimately linked with independent statehood. In fact the linguistic comments ended up in forceful political stances, actually quotations riven from the book: “[...] Albania demands the right not only to speak its language and follow its customs, but to govern its own children and to live its national life. It is an undeniable right, it would be totally unfair to refuse it.”²⁸ The next issue of ACLU evoked the Albanian with a bibliographical emphasis on d’Istria’s new book, *Gli Albanesi in Rumenia* that linked the story of the Albanians of Romania with her own family, and repositioned the latter along an alleged Albanian origin.²⁹ One of the next issues published on March 15 of the same year takes us one step further and shows the depth of the involvement both editors of ACLU showed vis-a-vis Albanian culture. It was not Meltzl, but Sámuel Brassai who undertook the task of translating the folklore text no 31 from Mitko’s *The Albanian Bee*.³⁰ This was not the first time he showed interest in the revival of Albanian matters in ACLU: in a built-in short remark of his series dealing with the translation of Horatius, he had already made a reference to the formal strategies of the translation of Mitko’s *Exhortation*³¹ in one of the last 1879 issues of ACLU, but this time he became really involved. Even though it seems that Mitko or d’Istria did not have an overt comment on the much-awaited translation, probably it weighted in the symbolic economy of the respect d’Istria treated Brassai when they succeeded to meet in 1882.³²

²⁶ Appendix to ACLU vol. VI. nr. LX.

²⁷ She offered her essay accompanied by a letter on August 27, 1877. Cf. Iorga 1932, pp. 136-137.

²⁸ “Petite revue polyglotte. Albanesische Literatur”, ACLU vol. VII., no. LXI., 1269. The text is originally written in French.

²⁹ *Gli Albanesi in Rumenia. Storia dei principi Ghika nei secoli XVII, XVIII e XIX su documenti inediti degli archivii di Venezia, Vienna, Parigi, Berlino, Constantinopoli etc.* Traduzione dal francese di B. Cecchetti, Firenze, Tipografia editrice del associazione, 1873. Cecchetti also wrote a preface to her translation introducing Dora d’Istria. The book triggered an uproar from the Ghyka family which repudiated the Albanian origin (and favoured the Aromanian one), while the Albanian community in Italy greeted the volume with enthusiasm.

³⁰ “Alban ballada”, Αλβανική Μέλισσα (Albanian Ballad. Albanian Bee), ACLU vol. VII., no. LXV, 1326-1328.

³¹ Brassai Sámuel: *Aesthetische Kritik als Beitrag zur Theorie der Horatz-Übersetzungskunst (Fortsetzung)*, ACLU VI, no LIX, 135. The same issue rang in the translation of the ballad (p. 1224.), though the “inedited ballad of Mitko” must have referred to the inedited translation, not to the original.

³² „J’ai eu le plaisir de voir ici M. le professeur Brassai, qui, malgré son âge avancé, donne encore des preuves si remarquables de sa belle intelligence. Il a fait, pendant le dîner, pour ma cousine, Constance Rasponi, un autographe qu’on dirait écrit par un jeune-homme. Je lui ai demandé de vos nouvelles, et j’ai été enchantée de tout ce qu’il m’a dit de vous et de votre famille.” (Florence, May 27, 1882. in Iorga 1932, p. 195).

After the publication of the ballad that was mediated by d'Istria's French prose translation, in June 1881 a new and last material from Mitko was published in the *Acta Comparationis*. The material was a contemporary folksong („Im Volksmunde der Augenzeugen") arisen from the destructive fire and earthquake that put to the test the people of Corçë (Corizza / Cortcha / Koritsa) in 1879. Meltzl clearly got the text directly from Mitko, since he had serious problems in deciphering it both literally and metaphorically. In an unprecedented way he had to leave out two bits of the original and commented upon the illegible manuscript.³³ Moreover, he translated into German only the first part of the text, and though he apologized for not having enough space to publish the remaining few lines, this was a rather unprecedented case even if we think of the formerly published, much longer Albanian texts that had appeared in the ACLU.

Meltzl's African voyage in 1882, Brassai's retirement from the University of Kolozsvár / Cluj (that made him step aside also from his position as an active editor at the ACLU in 1883³⁴) might have played a paramount role as well in the loosening of the Albanian connection. In the next years the more friendly Meltzl and d'Istria's connection became, the less they corresponded on Albanian texts and problems. And even though Euthyeme Mitko was preserved on the front page among the collaborators, he seems to have ceased sending further material to the ACLU. In January 1883 Podhors(z)ky, on friendly terms both with Brassai and Meltzl³⁵, introduced a smaller poem of Jeronim / Girolamo de Rada, entitled *Sursum corda*. But this was not a revival of the former years when there was no year without Albanian texts and reflections on the fate of Albanian literature in the *Acta Comparationis*. Podhors(z)ky's translation had another context, less national, but more South-European: the poem of de Rada stood as a counterpart of a Bulgarian folksong, translated by the same Hunagrian-French collaborator with a reference to Hungarian women, and thus became part of a small panorama of South-East European poetry.

Even thus de Rada's poem closed a whole epoch of the presence of Albanian literature in *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* in which Dora d'Istria proved to be the main hub of this scholarly network: she was the one to introduce Albanian literature to the editors in her *Grece avant les Grecs*, it was her

³³ „Obiges ist ein möglichst genauer Abdruck des etwas unleserlichen ms, das mit mangelhafter Interpunktion versehen zu sein scheint. Die mit + bezeichneten Stellen sind im ms. fast gänzlich unleserlich." (*Die Katastrophe von Korizza in Albanien 1879*, ACLU vol. X., no XCI et XCII., 1776).

³⁴ This has often been debated without any philological background. Brassai's philological heritage has two important documents that shed light to the exact date and circumstances he retired also from the active editing process, while still remaining a collaborator of the ACLU. According to these manuscripts Brassai stepped down on November 3, 1883. Cf. Brassai Sámuel Collection. Miscellaneous MSS. The Archives of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, Cluj.

³⁵ Several of his letters written to Sámuel Brassai on matters of Oriental languages are to be found in the Archives of the Transylvanian Unitarian Church, in Cluj: Brassai Sámuel Collection. General Correspondence of Sámuel Brassai.

who initiated and contextualized the presence of Thimi Mitko in ACLU and thus elicited interest also from Brassai and Meltzl's former acquaintance, Podhors(z)ky to reflect on a possible Hungarian-Albanian connection, and later to return with an Albanian translation of de Rada. It seems that after the period of 1877-1883 the interest of Meltzl, who remained the sole editor of ACLU, decreased. But actually what was the nature of this overt interest? Did the viewpoint of the different cultural actors involved into this exchange of ideas coincide? And if not, what would this tell about the mechanisms upon which the first international journal of comparative literary studies worked?

Entangled perspectives, negotiating the framework of Albanian literature in ACLU

The phenomenon I called earlier "methodological cosmopolitanism" could suggest, as it did many times throughout the history of the reception of ACLU, that the simple presence of the Albanian texts and references in the first international comparative journal would make them also „cosmopolitan”. But the Albanian case is one of the instances which can show the diverse (and often divergent) strata and the composite, sometimes eclectic nature of ACLU that often makes binary terms like nationalism and cosmopolitanism come together in less binary, but more fragmented, intricate and complex ways.

The founders of the "Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum" clearly had the ground-breaking thesis of the equality of languages. According to this all languages should be treated in a similar way, and having more or less speakers does not count in the fine balance of the scholarly and literary world, the number of the speakers and the history of a language cannot decide in matters of value. This democratic and in many respects unique nineteenth-century vision went hand in hand with a politics of protecting "endangered" languages and cultures. Therefore this made translation not a merely technical, but a deeply cultural endeavour for them. In this respect translation could be an attempt even to create standards or literary forms of non-standardized languages: such a case was that of the Rroma language. The repeated translations to and from different Transylvanian Rroma dialects (including well-known literary texts like those of Goethe) aimed at constructing a literary standard and levelling obvious socio-linguistic differences.³⁶ This is how translation became for Sámuel Brassai and Hugo von Meltzl also a disciplinary toolkit for reassessing the inequalities deriving from the often hierarchical geopolitical status of the different languages.

³⁶ The research and translations focusing on the Rroma led to one of the first European networks of Romology around Meltzl whose disciples, Henrik Wlislöcki and Anton Herrmann / Herrmann Antal reinterpreted and radicalized some basic ideas of the Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum where they published their first findings. For the Rroma case see my paper under press: "Hugo von Meltzl, Henrik Wlislöcki és Herrmann Antal: egy innováció hálózata" (Hugo von Meltzl, Henrik Wlislöcki and Herrmann Antal: a network of innovation), in Keszeg Vilmos (ed.), *Tanulmányok az erdélyi néprajz kutatástörténetéből*, Kolozsvár.

A similar role was attributed to folklore. The founders, especially Meltzl, saw it as a way to (re)construct and compare cultures especially when forms of literature were missing. But the editors of ACLU were not overemphasizing folklore as an exclusive ethnonational form dividing people, but thought of it more like a fluid network that connects different groups through recurrent motifs, forms, textual variants. All in all, they applied to folklore the same basic beliefs they were emphasising when speaking about 'the flow of world literature': "But the most famous and huge mistake ever made is the one committed by those choosing for the core of their narrative *the politics of race and the national szédelgés*. [...] [N]ational literature is in vogue, but as everything that is in vogue has to become outdated, I foresee only a shorter span of life for such a literature. [...] What a tautology to speak about national literatures. Could we call the Niebelungenlied a national epic poem? Not really, since we can trace its origins till India."³⁷

At a first glance Albanian literature and folklore fitted into this framework perfectly. The introduction Dora d'Istria offered to it in her essay on *La Grèce avant les Grecs* enthralled Meltzl since it envisioned not only a primaeval community striving to recover and construct its language, customs and administrative unity, but also a people that concentrates meetings, criss-crossings, interminglings and overlapping of linguistic and cultural contacts. As Dora d'Istria's essay stated: „[b]ut just as the Basque Countries, Brittany, the Principality of Wales, etc, are only refuges where the memories of the old people of our continent were preserved, Albania is also only last asylum where the remains of a world constantly reduced by the conquest and the invasions remain.”³⁸ This is the double framework Meltzl assessed and became interested in the Albanian case from the very beginning. The first context in which he employed the term “cynism“ stood for an allegedly unfair geopolitical treatment of Albania: “The word cynism you employ to characterize the diplomatic attitude towards Albania is highly precise.” – d'Istria writes to him in 1879³⁹ The defenselessness of a language and culture that needs to be levelled through cultural means was an ideal along which the Albanian language and literature seemed the perfect case for Meltzl. And even though d'Istria and Meltzl seemed to agree in matters of Albanian literature, it is important to be able to notice also the different emphases and the different starting points that led the two scholars to agree on the importance of Albanian culture. What was a geopolitical stand with the aim of establishing a culturally homogenous and politically independent Albania for d'Istria, it became a more general viewpoint on the equality of languages

³⁷ *A kritikai irodalomtörténet fogalmáról* (On the notion of critical literary studies). Egyszeresmind bevezetésül a német irodalom új korának történetéhez. Felolvasás mellyel a kolozsvári egyetemen a „német irodalom kritikai története Opitzon kezdve (Új kor)” című előadásait 1873. Oktober 22-ikén megkezdette, Bécs [Wien], Edition of Faesy és Frick, 1875.

³⁸ Dora d'ISTRIA, “La Grèce avant les Grecs. Etude linguistique et ethnographique...”, in ACLU vol I, no. XV., p. 301.

³⁹ Dora D'Istria to Hugo von Meltzl – Florence, December 29, 1879., in Iorga 1932, p. 189.

and the levelling of cultural disparities. The cultural narrative of a primaeval, but stigmatized, ridden and scattered people for the Florentine scholar became a case of literary and cultural contacts for the young professor from Kolozsvár/Cluj.

It is important and obvious that these were not huge and dividing differences, but almost invisible diverging viewpoints that could be easily reconciled. Stances of nation-building and cosmopolitan egalitarian ideals of a future world literature comprising all the languages of the world could easily be translated into one another up to a certain point in ACLU, and the case of the Albanian texts is the master example for this type of mutual recycling and translation. Since this negotiation occurred without conflicts and explicit controversies, it is hard, but not impossible to follow the lines of division and mutual reinterpretations. Let us overview some of these.

Meltzl's first reaction to Mitko's *Albanian Bee* was not necessarily a pure enthusiasm. He was surprised to see that his new Albanian correspondent from Cairo published his collection of folk songs without any translations. As we already saw this was not a minor technical issue for the editors of ACLU: they thought of translation not as a mere practical mechanism of internationalization of literature, but also as a methodological viewpoint of comparison. That is why he should have been unpleasantly surprised. At least according to a short response of d'Istria, the affable and gentle editor who had every interest in preserving all the collaborators of ACLU criticized Mitko's decision. "Sir, you are right to say that Mr Mitko should have enclosed a translation to the Albanian fairy tales he published. Fortunately mr. da Rada, Camarda and Ioubanij translated into Italian some of their songs contained by their collection the data of which I have sent to you in my former letter" - sounded d'Istria's response.⁴⁰ Of course, her answer also eluded Meltzl's perspective, since the Italian-Albanian bilingualism of the authors and the texts he evoked was not exactly the polyglottism Meltzl was thinking of when he raised the issue of translation. On the other hand, Meltzl himself was forcing a principle which was not so obvious outside ACLU and the notion of comparative literary studies / history elaborated in it. The negotiation of d'Istria and Meltzl could show how subtle this mutual recycling of one another's viewpoint is: various visions upon translation can reveal wholly different stances of the literary work, but without breaking or overtly revealing the major differences in the network. Moreover, the whole *Albanian Bee* was recontextualized in this cultural transfer. Originally, the collection was neither a 'pure' and 'neutral' form, but generated and stepped into a dense discourse of Albianity. As Jane C. Sugarman suggested, on one hand the Egyptian Mitko actually summed up the Italo-Albanian folk song collections that had been published from the 1860s onwards, positioning himself and the Egyptian Albanian community at the forefront of nation-building by becoming a central hub for the Greek and Italian Albanian intellectuals whom he was corresponding with. On the other hand, the

⁴⁰ Iorga 1932, p. 172.

whole collection opened up a strong cleavage between the Greek and Albanian community, the Greek orthodox clergy perceived the volume using a modified Greek language, but defining itself against Greek culture, as a strong peril.⁴¹ The relocation of the text from Mitko's collection into ACLU eliminated this strong cleavage and, instead, introduced another one: far from appreciating Mitko's effort to create a standard language, Meltzl brought to book for the lack of translation. While in the case of the original collection the lack of translation itself was the sign successful nation-building, in the new context of the ACLU the lack of it made less valuable in the eyes of the editors.⁴²

From this same angle it becomes more than curious that d'Istria, the author of the tiny review on Louis Benloew's *Analyse de la langue albanaise* was hiding her identity when she returned to one of her favourite linguists in matters of Albanian language and culture. The lady who proudly reviewed Benloew's former book vigorously asked Meltzl not to reveal the identity of the author: "It seems to me that it is better for the reviewer of Mr. Benloew's book to remain anonymous. Would the *Journal de la littérature comparée* wish to publish a more lengthy review later, this would be the business of an expert philologist."⁴³ It is a telltale sign how the Florentine scholar backed down and negotiated a place for her short partisan text, while she herself stayed in the background, feeling that both the original book and her presentation of Benloew's publication turned out to be too committed to the Albanian cause. On the other hand she was questioning not only her philological expertise, but was waiting for a larger consent of the scholarly world. Her uneasiness was disclosed by a passage of a private letter: "Mr. Bréal, university professor at Collège de France and translator of Bopp's *Grammar* told me a few days ago that this book had a real value and it deserves to be studied by the erudite who deal with linguistics more seriously."⁴⁴ In other words Benloew's new book was too partisan and too complex at the same time for a d'Istria who not only championed for the Albanian cause, but was also sensitive to her international image of a cosmopolitan scholar that recommended her previously also to the editors of the ACLU.

⁴¹ Sugarman, Jane C., "Imagining the Homeland: Poetry, Songs, and the Discourses of Albanian Nationalism", in *Ethnomusicology* 43/3 (Fall 1999), p. 422. "Knowing that the Greek Orthodox clergy were opposed to the development of Albanian literacy, Mitko addressed the preface to a Greek readership, arguing that the masses of Albanians could come to appreciate the ideas associated with Greek »civilization« only after having learned to read their »mother tongue«." Sugarman draws attention to the double-talk Mitko used: he characterized his book to the would-be-supporting Albanian merchants as a path to the unification and awakening of the Albanian people (*Ibidem*, p. 423).

⁴² Another change derived from the medium shift: while in the original form Mitko's intent was "to use the songs both to construct a national history of the Albanian people and to provide images of military heroism that might inspire Albanian men to participate in a future independence struggle." Sugarman 1999: 423. The poem published in the ACLU was devoid of this metanarrative and gained new local meanings, being re-nationalized and becoming the master example for an alleged 'Albanianness'.

⁴³ Florence, December 3, 1879, in Iorga 1932, p. 187.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

Or let us take the other founder of ACLU, Sámuel Brassai. Even though he translated the ballad from Mitko's *The Albanian Bee*, he perceived it as a pure and simple question of translation, not as a partisan compliance for one nation or another. Even though in the late 1850s he "defended" Hungarian national music from the alleged Roma origins Franz Liszt / Liszt Ferenc attributed to it in his *Des Bohémiens et leur musique*, this was one of the rare occasions of partisan ethnic argumentation of his oeuvre.⁴⁵ As his remark inserted into his *Aesthetische Kritik* might hint at, for him the „Albanian case" was probably a peculiar and enthralling case of translation that broadened his extraordinary interest in the theory, practice and history of translation. Thus Brassai (and the ACLU) changed the original ethnonational framework of *The Albanian Bee* without visibly disturbing Mitko who clearly perceived this and, in general, the presence of the Albanian literature in the ACLU as an obvious sign of the internationalization of the ethnonational Albanian struggles.

But we could look at the other Albanian texts and occurrences as well for similar cases of complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that made way to ceaseless translations and reworkings of one another's views on literature, nation, comparison etc. For instance, Meltzl was extremely moderate when he labelled Thimi Mitko's lament a „modernized folk song" „with political overtones" since the poem was an overtly political artefact with a surprising ending that foregrounded the figure of Dora d'Istria herself in Albanian nation-building. The Ghyka princess not only left out the last passages, but did not comment upon the verses and the ending at all, thus opening the situation up for a split situation: the original of the poem was a harsh, strong and overtly personalized version with strong references to the present, while the translation and the whole new context recycled it as a lament of a nation striving to achieve its unity.

Let us take another case. Girolamo / Jeronim da Rada was present in the ACLU not with his famous songs full of political allusions to the Albanian awakening, but with a two-part poem: a first part resembling the classical European theological and poetical lines of the Christian *sursum corda* and a second part on the wasteful character of the humans who ruin much of the beauty nature gives them. Podhors(z)ky seems to have negotiated the position of de Rada with an eye on his friends' view on the national, and unlike Mitko, he chose the text(s) that fitted into the less ethnonational biases of ACLU, but shoved off the original context of the oeuvre.

But the last text to be published by Mitko in the ACLU is also enlightening. Even though Meltzl evoked the lack of space when he left out the German translation of the second part of *Die Katastrophe von Korizza in Albanien 1879* he might have had even a more serious and less formal reason not to publish the remaining part of the folk

⁴⁵ For a broader interpretation of Brassai's gesture see my former paper: "Just Pure Music? Franz Liszt Revisited: Interethnic Relationships and Literary Norms in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Hungarian Culture", in Mihai Fifor (ed.), *Symposia. Proceedings of the International Conference of South-European Anthropologists*, Craiova, Aius Press, 2004, pp. 529–546.

poem. In a second footnote he suggested it was too much for 'insiders', too political, too intimately interwoven with the Albanians throughout Europe (mostly in Romania and Egypt, i.e. the communities to which Mitko was strongly related to from the 1850s onwards). The unpublished part would have needed further comments to be published, he reckoned.⁴⁶ But this was not the real ending of the story (as those catalogues which simply map the publications of the collaborators would suggest)⁴⁷. At the end of 1881 (i.e. after the publication of the whole series of Albanian texts, including *Die Katastrophe von Corizza* that was published a few months ago) Meltzl introduced a tiny footnote into a new series of unedited Rroma folklore texts. However insignificant at first sight, the footnote may be telling in how Mitko's collection of folklore, the Egyptian scholar's texts, d'Istria's books and papers and other Albanian materials were rearranged and recycled by Meltzl for his own usage: „The above songs are due to the woman several times specified. Both of them are songs of mockery and they work like question and answer. They could be compared to the Roman ritornelle, the Szekler dance manners and the Albanian songs of vituperation [‘Scheltlieder’] etc. etc.”⁴⁸ It is obvious that however supportive Meltzl was seeing and reading about the latest developments of Albanian nation-building, he recycled and transformed these information into references, viewpoints, methodological tools for the comparative method and other languages, literatures, cultures ACLU proposed to assess. What was an ethnonational vindicative information or challenge for Mitko, slowly, but surely became an analytical tool of comparative analysis for Meltzl or a theoretical and practical framework for translation studies in the hands of Brassai.⁴⁹

„The nation of the famous Skanderbeg deserves [...] aesthetic attention”⁵⁰-wrote Meltzl in 1880. Probably Thimi Mitko and Dora d'Istria would not have agreed entirely with him, and could have protested against the meaning Brassai and Meltzl proudly stressed when using the term *aesthetic* in the ACLU and often

⁴⁶ „Raummangel verhindert auch die Übersetzung der zweiten Hälfte, die übrigens ein unorganischer, dem Woltätigkeitsinn der auswärtigen Albanesen geltender zusatz sein mag der ohne eingehenderen Kommentar nicht übersetzt werden kann.” “Die Katastrophe von Korizza in Albanien 1879” (ACLU vol. X., no XCI-XCII., 1777).

⁴⁷ A very useful and correct catalogue is given at the end of FASSEL 2005, though on the one hand there are much more references to Mitko and contexts of Albanian literature in the ACLU as the catalogue would suggest, on the other hand one of the items (*Trübner's Oriental Record*) contains no reference either to Mitko or to Albanian literature.

⁴⁸ ACLU vol. X., no. XCV-XCVI, 1833.

⁴⁹ The only item of personal correspondence between the editors and Mitko seem to provide another argument for this shift of ideas. The recently discovered copy of Mitko's letter, written on September 20, 1880 contains a surprised acknowledgment of the Cairo-based scholar who received a letter with Italian poems and no sign of the sender. According to the tiny notice on the back of the copy, Meltzl sent the original of the letter to Cannizzaro in January 1881 and made a copy after the original. All in all it seems that the 'mistake' was actually an attempt of Meltzl to establish a connection between his good friend and long-term collaborator of the ACLU, Tommaso Cannizzaro, and to reposition and broaden the stance of Mitko. Thimi Mitko to Hugo von Meltzl. Cairo, September 20, 1880. Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődési Egyesület / Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania. Szabédi Ház (Cluj). The Collection of Köllő Károly. The correspondence of Hugo von Meltzl with various personalities. Misc.

⁵⁰ “Rövid külföldi szemle / Kurze ausländische Revue”, in ACLU vol. IV, no. XL, pp. 175-176 [in Hungarian].

positioning it against politics, nation-building and the partisan ethnic usages of literature. But Mitko and d'Istria did not protest, since the framework created by the founders of the ACLU proved to be open to interpretations and various usages. This cannot be attributed solely to the tolerance of Brassai and Meltzl, or to the fear of the founders from losing their regular contributors. The relatively open structure of the ACLU (and the relatively open structure of the discipline they created through ACLU) was partly due to the nature of the multiple scholarly networks that made up ACLU. Typically they were loose with different hubs, alike the way d'Istria, and not Meltzl or Brassai, came to be the scholarly hubs or interfaces for Thimi Mitko's presence in the journal⁵¹. They often represented languages, literatures and cultures which were quite far from one another, and through their radical alterities could be mis/reinterpreted/recycled/translated more easily and radically. These are the basic reasons why this huge network of networks could prove to be one of the real challenges of the future scholarly work that focuses on the first international journal of comparative literary studies, the *Összehasonlító Irodalomtörténelmi Lapok / Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*.

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⁵¹ On the other hand Mitko himself seems to have become the interface for another loose network: in April 1880, under the title *Neuigkeiten über Petöfi aus fünf weltteilen* [News on the Hungarian poet, Petöfi, from five continents] the *ACLU* reported also on an Arabic translator from Egypt involved into translations of Petöfi: "In Egypt, on the intervention of our learned friend and collaborator, Mitko, Soliman M. E., the professor of the military academy is dealing with our poet in Arab language." *ACLU* vol. VII., nr. LXVII-LXVIII., p. 112.

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