

THESES FOR THE DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION

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**Between Literature and History**

*The critical biography as an interdisciplinary genre:  
the quixotic gentleman Károly Lovik*

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## I. Introduction

There has not been a decade since the death of Károly Lovik in 1915 without the publication of a scholarly work about his life; however, the discourse surrounding him is still determined by the narrative of the forgotten writer from the turn of the century who has been excluded from the literary canon. Therefore, the present dissertation aims to address a fundamental shortcoming of previous research, namely, the lack of detailed and systematic study of the author's biography and his closely related works based on primary sources. There have been competing traditions of interpretation (quixotism – gentleman) building on various modes of narration, which have fundamentally shaped the horizons of interpreting Lovik and other novelists from the turn of the century, which have also influenced their reception. Thus, the aim of the dissertation is to investigate the possibility of reforming this fragmented narrative tradition, which has not shown openness towards exploratory research, while providing the readers with a critical biography of Lovik which is based on a wide range of sources and yield unique findings.

## II. Methodology

As a consequence of the above, writing a traditional biography based solely on records from archives would have been insufficient as the previous methodological approaches were considered unfruitful since they have rendered the interpretation of and the research related to Lovik rather close-ended. For this reason, I turned to the genre of critical biography, which is well established and widely utilized in Anglo-Saxon literary criticism, which provided the possibility of integrating various approaches and methodologies. This way it was not necessary to make a choice between writing a dissertation focusing exclusively on literary analysis or writing one based on data, because these methodologies could be applied together in a parallel fashion. The focus of the dissertation is historical in nature since it investigates the life and works of an individual, yet it also emphasizes the historical nature of literature itself in a self-reflective manner using the methodological approach of New Historicism; besides, the dissertation investigates how Lovik can find his way to present-day Hungarian literary criticism, referring to Stephen Greenblatt. It is attempted to apply innovative aesthetic approaches in the study reflecting on reception-history, for instance, the inventory of hermeneutics, imageology, spatial

poetics and commemoration history. The resulting text corpus is admittedly interdisciplinary, heterogeneous and fragmented in nature; however, it is believed that the findings of the dissertation will justify the validity of this approach.

### III. Findings

The results of the study can be categorized into two major parts. Firstly, I would like to emphasize the chapter “Philological Appendix” and the related research that can be found in the appendix. It was considered to be of paramount importance to conduct a thorough study of the novels of Károly Lovik, researching the various versions of the texts, because studying these can yield important implications. The dissertation attempts to place the author's biography into context with unprecedented richness of data, while presenting the connections related to literature and publication. The second category of findings could be based on this exploratory research. These findings make claims about Károly Lovik as a person and about his works; in addition, they make suggestions as to what novel and up-to-date questions can be asked about Lovik and his works. The findings suggest that Lovik was a considerably more autonomous writer and individual than previously assumed. For example, despite being a practicing Lutheran, he was also an active Freemason. His autonomy also is shown in the way he rewrote his novels before having them published in a volume or the poetic devices that he used. The fact that he was allegedly an outsider from the popular literary circles of his time is only partially accurate; besides, this did not mean that he that he did not follow the literary trends closely. We can see a picture of him unfolding according to which he was a considerate and sensitive writer who effectively and accurately captured the paradigm shift that took place in his time. This latter quality is that of Károly Lovik, the so far unknown publicist, who has received little attention from the profession so far. Taking all these findings into consideration, it can be concluded that instead of focusing on fragments, it is more rewarding to concentrate on organic development as well as systems and processes overarching historical periods, possibly by building on Gilles Deleuze's theory of Rhizome and literary cartography. If Dezső Kosztolányi remembered the quixotic writers from the turn of the century and did not fail to mention that he had once walked with them hand-in-hand, than the above proposition also bears validity for current Hungarian literary criticism.

#### IV. List of Publications Related to the Dissertation:

Péter VIGH, *Lovik és Babits: eltérő morális közelítések a Nagy Háborúhoz*, Kommentár, 2012/6, 107-115.

Péter VIGH, *Félreérthető dicséret? A szlovák ethosz összeolvasása Lovik Károly műveiből*, Magyar Napló, 2013/Január, 35-41.

Péter VIGH, *Szabdkömvés (és) hívő Lovik Károly és az eszmetörténeti labirintus*, Kommentár, 2013/2, 84-101.

Péter VIGH, *Szövegváltozatok a romantikára. Lovik Károly: A halál kutyája*, Irodalomismeret, 2013/2, 81-89.

Péter VIGH, *Vér és nyomdafesték*, Irodalmi Magazin, 2014/2, 76-77.