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**HOW TO BECOME AN ORIGINAL PLAYWRIGHT?  
THE SOURCES OF A DRAMA (JÓZSEF KATONA:  
*CLEMENTIA AUBIGNY*)<sup>1</sup>**

The first Hungarian professional theatre company founded in 1790 was short of everything: it had to face the lack of funding, the lack of original plays and translations, and the lack of audience. Due to these circumstances, they tried to satisfy the audience with performing fashionable genres. The first stable repertoire<sup>2</sup> was created by the companies of Pest and of Kolozsvár between cca 1790–1810.

First, they tried four genres: tragedies, comedies, sentimental dramas, and musical plays. The tragedies were immediately rejected by the audience, but the other three genres became quite successful.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, another genre was added to the repertoire: the late Ritterdrama from Germany.<sup>4</sup> The German Ritterdrama was born earlier, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, as an offshoot of the Sturm und Drang movement, taking its romantic and patriotic themes from the historical plays of Goethe and Klinger,<sup>5</sup> though Hungarian theatre did not use them as sources. The Hungarian repertoire was influenced by the later, second and third rate, Ritter- and Heldendramas that used only the shallow surface of the genre such as historical settings, costumes, crowded battles, jousting, and other pageantry;<sup>6</sup> they created plots overusing clichés and stock characters without any social and emotional background and without the motivation that used to be characteristic of the original genre.

After the collapse of the first professional company in 1796, the second group of Pest worked in the *Rondella* between 1807–1815. Rondella, i.e. the old rotunda of the city wall was converted into a theatre in 1774.<sup>7</sup> As it was the property of Pest,

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<sup>2</sup> KERÉNYI 1981.

<sup>3</sup> On the first repertoire, see: KERÉNYI 1981, 15–114. Sentimental dramas were rather familiar to both theatre producers and the audience, as they bore great resemblance to the plays performed earlier by the school theatres: on school stages, justice was compulsory, thus, through terrible sorrow and misfortune, the positive figures finally found happiness. The sentimental plots of the professional stage were similar in their happy ending, and also included horror and sometimes worked as thrillers.

<sup>4</sup> On the second layer of the repertoire: KERÉNYI 1981, 114–163.

<sup>5</sup> *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre* 1967, 801.

<sup>6</sup> WALDAPFEL 1942, 18.

<sup>7</sup> The Rondella had thick walls with windows in the upper circle, and it had a rigging-loft in the old tower. There was no trap; thus, a folding/flying bridge on the stage must have been used. The circular

the city let it out to the German theatre; from 1807, the Hungarian company also used it. In 1812, the German theatre moved to a new building of its own and left the Rondella for the Hungarians. The Rondella was demolished in 1815, as it was in the way of the new urban development – thus the Hungarian company broke off.

### **József Katona (1791–1830)**

József Katona, one of the very few eminent playwrights of Hungarian literature, was a member of the second Pest company. He was a genuine theatre person, he was an actor and he adapted, translated, wrote dramas. His career as a playwright was very short but high-speed: he spent only five years with the company, from 1811 to 1815. In 1815 (when the Rondella was demolished), he stopped writing plays – with the exception of his latest drama, considered a masterpiece: *Bánk bán / The Viceroy*<sup>8</sup> written in 1815, which he corrected or rewrote in 1819. He died unknown, but, thanks to some of his fellow actors, his drama manuscripts were kept, later copied, and performed.

In this paper, I focus on the sources of only one of his dramas – *Clementia Aubigny* – written in 1813.

### **Beyond Ritterdramas**

By 1813, Katona stopped translating Ritterdramas, yet he still used many of their elements in a modified context intending to motivate his figures and to make the plot logical and argumentative. He was fond of the imaginary old times shown in the Ritterromans (novels) and Ritterdramas, but as he was very much interested in history, later he looked for authentic sources. Thus, his next dramas in 1813 focused on the age of the French Henry IV and that of the Hussites. He used history in order to understand and motivate the dramatic action and figures. With the example of his drama titled *Clementia Aubigny*, I would like to show how Katona used and changed his sources; how he developed from the imitation of weak dramas to original works; and how he reached finally his own more and more tragic dramatic world.

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auditorium was 341m<sup>2</sup> with the capacity of 500 persons (18 boxes, 49 parterres, seats and stand-by places on the ground floor, also standing seats in the gallery). It had fine acoustics. KERÉNYI 1981, 32, 109, 130.

<sup>8</sup> *The viceroy* 2003.

### The source of *Aubigny Clementia*<sup>9</sup>

Katona wrote his *Clementia Aubigny* in 1813. The primary source of the historical plot was the short story of the French Louis d'Ussieux: *Clémence d'Entragues, ou le Siège d'Aubigny (Anecdote française)* that was first published in a separate booklet (À Paris: Chez Delalain, Libraire, rue de la Comédie Française, 1773.).<sup>10</sup> D'Ussieux's two-volume collection titled *Décameron françois* contains ten stories. The fourth anecdote is *Clémence d'Entragues, ou le Siège d'Aubigny*.

D'Ussieux was mostly interested in history. His genre called *anecdote* or *nouvelle*, practically used as synonyms, is a sort of moral tale rooted in Marmontel's *Contes moraux* (1755–1759).<sup>11</sup> D'Ussieux employed heroic historical figures – mostly heroines – fighting against aggressive powers like suppression and despotism; thus, the stories connect virtue and the quest for personal happiness combined with social utility.<sup>12</sup> His *Décameron françois* was extremely popular in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was re-published several times thus the story on *Clémence d'Entragues* was soon translated into German (*Clementia von Entraques*)<sup>13</sup> and was later adapted by German journals

<sup>9</sup> Katona's sources were revealed by WALDAPFEL 1933.

<sup>10</sup> *Clémence d'Entragues, ou le Siège d'Aubigny. Anecdote française*. In: *Le Décameron françois*. Par M. d'Ussieux. Tome premier. À Paris, Chez J. P. Costard, Libraire, rue Saint-Jean de Beauvais, MD-CCLXXVII, 169–244. D'Ussieux published ten anecdotes in two volumes titled *Le Décameron françois*; earlier, each anecdote was published as separate booklets, and they were just bound together in the two volumes. Thus, the title page of *Clémence d'Entragues...* has a different date and publisher (À Paris: Chez Delalain, Libraire, rue de la Comédie Française, 1773.).

<sup>11</sup> The first French predecessor of d'Ussieux's genre was the French writer and translator Jean Regnault de Segrais's (1624–1701) *Les Nouvelles françaises, ou les Divertissemens de la princesse Aurélie* edited in two volumes in 1656–57. (GEVREY 2011, 85.) The historical topic was first used by François-Thommas-Marie de Baculard d'Arnaud (1718–1805) in his „moral tales” showing moral examples in the 1760s (*Les Épreuves du sentiment*, 1773). Baculard's *Nouvelles historiques* (1774–1783) presented French historical heroes as moral examples. His stories were deeply religious and emotional, strengthened by impressive illustrations. Historians mention Baculard and d'Ussieux as writers of historic moral tales. (ASTBURY 2001; MOSER-VERREY 2011.)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. ASTBURY 2001.

<sup>13</sup> *Historische Erzählungen, aus dem Französischen des Herrn d'Ussieux*. Erster Band. Bern, den der typographischen Gesellschaft, 1776. Today, it is now unavailable but it is listed in two registers: *Des d'Ussieur Erzählungen find angenehm und lehr reich. Es find hier ihrer fier: Berthold, Prinz von Mähren, Rüdiger und Victor von Sabran, Thelaire eine mexikanische Geschichte, und Clementia von Entraques*. 1. *Allgemeines Verzeichniß neuer Bücher (mit kurzen Anmerkungen nebst einem gelehrten Anzeiger)*. Leipzig: bei Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius [Siegfried Leberecht Crusius], 1777, vol. I., 128. (item N° 289.); 2. *Historisches Journal*, ed. Johann Cristoph Gatterer, Göttingen, 1778, vol. 11., 165. (item N° 206.). Most probably, the 1795 edition (*Erzählungen für unsre Müßiggänger*, Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1795.) provides the same translation.

for ladies<sup>14</sup> in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century stories.<sup>15</sup> (Katona could have been able to read some French so might have used the French original together with its German translation.).<sup>16</sup>

The story of *Clémence d'Enragues, ou le Siège d'Aubigny* takes place in France in 1591. The Catholic de la Châtre follows Henry III the previous French king. The Protestant Aubigny family is the devotee of the present king Henry IV, that is why de la Châtre is to besiege the fortress and city of Aubigny. What is more, the young Aubigny and de la Châtre's daughter have already been engaged. As the war starts, the young lovers have to depart. The young Aubigny is captured by de la Châtre's soldiers and is threatened to be executed. His mother, Clemence, overcomes her maternal emotions and continues the war. After some hectic war scenes and a little hesitation, the wounded de la Châtre suddenly recognizes the truth – releases the young Aubigny, and loyalty to Henry IV who suggests (or orders) the young couple to marry.

<sup>14</sup> *Clementia von Aubigny = Flora. Ein Journal von und für Damen, herausgegeben von den deutschen Damengesellschaft* (Halle, 1786, II., 28–58.). The same text was published in the *Lehrreiche Erzählungen* (Berlin, in der Vieweggsche Buchhandlung, 1787, 85–121.). The editor, Franz Rudolph von Großing, or (in Hungarian:) Grossinger Ferenc Rudolf (1752–1789) already published *Damenjournal* in Halle in 1784–1785. (Szinyei József, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*, Budapest: Magyar Könyvtár- és Könyvtarjesztők Egyesülése, 1980–1981, III, 1495–1499; *Jezsuita névtár*: <http://jezsuita.hu/nevtar/?l=G>). Another German adaptation titled *Clementine von Enragues, oder die Belagerung von Aubigny* (the author is given as *E'ussinur*) was published in another ladies' journal (*Unterhaltungen in Abendstunden, Vaterlands Töchtern geweiht. Eine Monatsschrift zum Unterricht und Vergnügen von einer Gesellschaft bayerischer Frauenzimmer*, Hübschmann, Donauwörth, 1793, vol. 2., book 4., 145–154.) It is only the first part (with the monogram of the translator's: C.v.H.g.B.B; unknown), the edition was probably interrupted.

<sup>15</sup> Johann Friedrich Rochlitz (1769–1842) published *Die Belagerung von Aubigny*, in *Der Sammler* on November the 7, 9, 14, 16, 1809 (N° 133–134., 136–137.; pp. 529–531., 533–535., 541–544., 545–548.).

<sup>16</sup> We know of four dramatic adaptations, three German and one French, but Katona was unaware of them. (1) Anton Clemens Graf von Törring-Seefeld [vagy: Törring zu Seefeld (1725–1812)]: *Die Belagerung der Stadt d'Aubigny*. Ein heroisches Schauspiel in fünf Aufzügen von G.v.T.z.S., [Mannheim or München(?), 1778; (2) *Clementine von Enragues oder die Belagerung der Stadt Aubigny*. Schauspiel von Johann Heinrich Fischer, Hildesheim, 1779; (3) *Clémence d'Enragues*. Mélodrame historique en trois actes par M. Coffin-Rony, Membre de la Société académique des sciences de Paris, de Maçon, etc. Représenté, pour la première fois, sur le théâtre de la Gaîté, le 7 juillet 1810, À Paris, chez Favre, Libraire et Commissionnaire, en librairie, Palais-Royal, galerie de bois n°. 263, au filles de mémoire, 1810; (4) Franz Carl Weidmann (1787/1788–1867), *Clementine von Aubigny*: ein dramatisches Gedicht in vier Aufzügen von F. C. Weidmann, k. k. Hofschauspieler. Für das k. k. Hoftheater (Wien: 1816, in Verlag der J. B. Wallishausser).

### Katona's Hungarian version

All the translations and adaptations, as well as Katona's drama, thoroughly followed d'Ussieux's original story, the frequent dialogues of which made dramatization easier. We have no data of any ban on any variations of the story, except that of Katona's drama: in 1831, the Hungarian censor banned its performance:

„This play cannot be performed as it is full of curses, speaks of God indecently, and recalls old religious fights.”<sup>17</sup>

The ban might be partly understood from the full title of the drama: *Clementia Aubigny or the religious chaos in France during the reign of Henry IV.*<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Protestants were no longer persecuted in Hungary. Protestant churches became autonomous (already in 1790–1791), thus, there was peace and 'recalling old religious fights' was definitely not advisable.

We have to add that d'Ussieux's original story did not speak of religious conflicts at all; French readers must have known the background and the author focused on the question of loyalty to the king.

In spite of Katona's subtitle on religious chaos, there is almost nothing written about religion or denominations in his drama either – with the exception of two scenes, which part cannot be found in the original short story. In these two scenes (III.2., 5.), Chatre<sup>19</sup> and his advisor Sericour cite lines from the Bible in order to find the truth about religion and denominations. Chatre complains that he himself is not supported by God in his true fight, therefore, he recalls events from the Old Testament when characters who rebelled against God received their punishment. The word *heretic* referring to Henry IV is pronounced by only Chatre and only once (III.5.). At this point, his wise friend, Sericour, fights back:

„You have been fighting for religion, and do you want to fight for it again? For what reason? To force people to Paradise, people who do not want to go...?”

„You want to force people to destroy the happiness and the wealth of your country for the imaginary danger of the church?”

Sericour compares religions to a huge masquerade:

„Believe me, Chatre, religion is a big party with Turkish, Jewish, Hindu, Greek and Roman fancy dresses, and no one can tell which mask is the most beautiful one... You should not force others to accept your own taste.” (III.5.).

<sup>17</sup> „Ezen darabot előadni nem szabad, mert szítkokkal tele vagyon, Istenről nagyon illetlenül szól; és régi vallásbéli villongásokat előhoz. Kassán 23. Dec. 1831.”. Országos Széchényi Könyvtár/National Library, Budapest, Színháztörténeti Tár/Documents on Theatre History: N. Sz. A 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Aubigny Clementia vagy is A' Vallás miatt valo Zenebona Frantzia Országban 4<sup>dik</sup> Henrik alatt.*

<sup>19</sup> As Katona uses the form *Chatre* in the drama, we do the same when speaking of the Hungarian drama.

This argument on the equality of all religions without a chance to find the truth would itself make the censor nervous.<sup>20</sup>

Such arguments are brought to the drama by Katona who must have found the arguments on the dogmas and on the status of the church extremely important. There was nothing like that in d’Ussieux’s short story or in any German versions. He could not find anything similar in the Ritter- and Heldendramas either, as such long arguments would have been too serious or oppressive. Katona was creating his original oeuvre, he intended to burden his dramas with dialogues on political, philosophical, and moral dilemmas. The main arguments used in the debate of Chatre and Sericour go back to Katona’s studies at the university. He was a student of law at the university of Pest where one of his favourite teachers was Ádám Brezanóczy (1751–1832),<sup>21</sup> the teacher of canon law. The wise Sericour echoed Brezanóczy’s views in the drama: according to Sericour – and according to Katona –, church (religion) should be subordinated to the state. Sericour’s references to the Old Testament<sup>22</sup> are also Katona’s own additions to the original short story. Sericour cites just the same examples Brezanóczy used in his classes. When Brezanóczy spoke of the relationship between state and church, he quoted the well-known examples of the French Henry III and Henry IV, thus Katona must have found d’Ussieux’s story quite familiar.<sup>23</sup>

Katona’s strong interest in the political role of the state indicates that the debate of Chatre and Sericour is not on religion, but rather on the status of the sovereign. The drama ends with the praise of Henry IV who is „a king and a human being at the same time”,<sup>24</sup> who brought peace and wealth to his country. Right beyond the religious confrontation, the main focus is the legitimacy of the sovereign and choice between loyalty to the king or rebellion. Jesuit school theatres dealt quite often with these questions in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: they played quite a few dramas on Biblical, ancient Greek and Roman history, showing good and bad kings, godly and evil advisors and rebels etc., but all dramas ended in peace and in God’s word. The Hungarian schools often performed Metastasio who was still one of the favourite authors of early 19<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian theatre. Therefore, the Hungarian audi-

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<sup>20</sup> Cf.: The performance of Lessing’s *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*, 1779) was first permitted for the Burgtheater of Vienna only in 1819, on the condition that its main message on the equality of religions would be completely left out. The Vienna version was made by some Berling a comedy writer and prompter. (PRUZSINSZKY 2014, 169.)

<sup>21</sup> After teaching canon law for several years, Brezanóczy published his views in his *Institutiones juris ecclesiastici* I–II., Pest, 1817–1818.

<sup>22</sup> Sericour’s references: 1. Athaliah, Jehoiada, Jehoash (2 Kings 11–12.); 2. Abiram and Dathan against Moses and Aaron (Nu 16:1,12,24–25,27; 26:9; De 11:6).

<sup>23</sup> The references and examples used by Katona in the drama can be found in the Latin text of the book. See: WALDAPFEL 1933, 253–255.

<sup>24</sup> „Király és ember egyszersmind”.

ence might have understood the play well; the topic was familiar to the audience – and to the censor, too. The censor must have thought of this tradition when he banned the performance of *Clementia Aubigny*.

### The use of battle scenes

The siege of Aubigny was in the centre of d’Ussieux’s story where all the battles were described in detail. The audience of the Rondella theatre was also used to crowded battle scenes frequently shown in the (German) Ritterdramas, although the stage of the Rondella was quite small.

In *Clementia Aubigny*, at least two battle scenes were unavoidable. As Katona could not bring actual comotion to the small stage, he tried something different which proved to be a new dramatic method.

In one of the two battle scenes, we cannot see the battle, but we hear Clementia who does not take part in the battle. She narrates what she sees from her fortress. This way, Katona solved the problem the small size of the stage presented, but, what is more: the main emphasis was placed on Clementia’s psychic process. She tells us what she sees from a certain distance, she tells how her only son is surrounded by the enemy and captured, and she tells us how she cannot help. From Homeric epic and ancient Greek tragedies, Katona might have learnt about the (captive) women’s lament on fallen cities and on their beloved ones.<sup>25</sup> This effective method was adequate for giving an inner characterization of Clementia the heroine, which is definitely an important dramatic development for the playwright.

In the other battle scene, Katona inserted another original element in order to emphasize the motivation of his figures and his plot. Considering the small stage, Katona showed only the duel of two elderly persons, i.e. of Chatre and Clementia Aubigny. Practically, they are alone on the stage with some soldiers in the background, when the scene ends with Clementia’s mortal strike on Chatre.

Till this point, the original short story and the German translation match:

„L’héroïne lui enfonce son épée au défaut de la cuirasse, et l’en retire sanglante. [...] Il s’ébranle, et tombe en roulant au pieds de la muraille. La Châtre expire, s’écrient soudain les affiégés; il expire, il est mort.”<sup>26</sup>

„Die Heldinn stößt ihm, weil ein kleiner Harnisch anhat, ihren Degen in den Leib, und zieht ihn blutig wieder heraus. [...] La-Chatre ist verlohren..., rufen die Belagerten plötzlich aus; ...er ist verlohren, er stirbt...”<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Thanks to my colleagues Jean-Frédéric Chevalier and Martin Bažil who called my attention to the connection to the dramatic situation of the ancient Greek captive women’s laments. Cf. DUÉ 2006.

<sup>26</sup> D’USSIEUX 1773, 209–210.

<sup>27</sup> *Erzählungen für unsre Müßiggänger* 1795, 310–311.

As we see, both the French and the German texts show Châtre being dead. Later, without any explanation, the epic story continues with the living Châtre being in bed, attended by her daughter and Sericour.

Katona's instruction – „*The weak old man falls down, Clementia grasps his banner and throws it away, then she stabs Chatre, who falls off the wall.*” (II.12.)<sup>28</sup> – only speaks of Chatre falling down and the scene does not end here. The only voiced part of the scene is the exclamation of Clementia and her men: „Victory! Long live Henry IV!”. Parallel with the exclamation, an important mute activity occupies the foreground of the stage: in the very minute Chatre falls down, two pilgrims run forward, one of them picks up Chatre's falling body, the other one brushes the enemy aside in order to make way for the one carrying the body.<sup>29</sup>

This element turns to be the most important factor in Chatre's change; he is not only wounded but – as he does not know who his rescuers were – he gets into an uncertain psychic condition. The rescuers – Sericour and Chatre's daughter – appear and unmask only after Chatre's final change or turn. Katona's fine dramatic idea is meant to show several scenes of Chatre's hesitation and debate with Sericour before Chatre's final decision. Katona's amendment to the original story made Chatre's turn logical, and what is more, he showed the dramatic process on the stage. The pilgrim outfit proved to be an excellent disguise and a good dramatic tool, no wonder, pilgrim figures were very much loved by Ritterdrama, and Katona learnt it from there; moreover, Katona built the pilgrim episode deeply into the dramatic plot, making it the main tool of psychic motivation that was missing from the original short story.

One of the two actors of the pilgrim episode is Chatre's daughter, Rozália. Female figures of the Ritter- and Heldendramas were central (as the main goal of the fights) but passive and vulnerable. The active figure of Rozália changes this, as well as the role of the tender, passive female figure who she used to be in the short story. She becomes active in organizing the dramatic plot (just like Clementia).

One may say that Katona followed the original story with tiny differences that are due to the change in the genre; as a drama should necessarily introduce alternative methods. However, that is not the case: Katona's original solutions changed the emphasis, his figures ceased to behave like stock characters, instead, they had a personal past and carried their views or ideology.

D'Ussieux's original short story did not explain how and why de la Châtre found the truth, and his sharp turn from Henry III to Henry IV was not motivated at all.

<sup>28</sup> „Végre a' már a' nélkül is erőtlen öreg el hanyatlik. Clementia ki ragadja kezéből a' zászlót és le veti a' falról, Chatrét pedig le döfi.” Ezután Chatre „le fordul a' falról”.

<sup>29</sup> „CHATRE !: le fordul a' falról, de abba a' nyomba :/ KÉT SZARÁNDOK !: elő rohan, az egyik meg kapja ölben, a' lajtorján le hempergő öreget, a' másik egész erőből lökdösi széllyel az ostromlót, hogy annak, a' ki Chatrét viszi, utat tsináljon :!”

Katona's world became far more complicated. At the beginning, heresy is the main question for Chatre who is loyal to the Catholic king, and who does not accept the Protestant/heretic Henry IV. From his life-threatening situation, he was saved by two unknown persons, and then Chatre becomes ready to reconsider his views. At this point, Katona raises questions about political concepts such as the status and the duties of the sovereign, the political role of the state, the relationship between the state and the Church, and the wealth of the country. All these problems are connected to social utility and they are intertwined with the quest for private happiness of the dramatic figures. This is the true novelty of Katona's new plots: social and political issues are deeply encroached in the private sphere, in the personal lives of the characters.

This way, the abstract value of honour, loyalty, heroism, and sacrifice become alive, and personal dilemmas force Katona's figures to balance between social duties and private happiness; thus we are taken to the very complex world of public and personal duties, responsibilities. This world is full of conflicts, but these conflicts are solved and settled by the end of the play – for the time being, in this drama. Katona's later dramas are different, and the figures struggle with unsolvable problems, and both life and death lead to deep tragedies for them.

The dramatic version of *Clementia Aubigny* was a necessary step for Katona to leave and to exceed the fashionable Ritterdrama heritage.