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**A BURLESQUE ON HUNGARIAN SOCIAL LIFE
(MIHÁLY WÁNDZA: *MARTZI ZÖLD, OR THE HOLD-UP
ROBBER*, 1817)**

Mihály Wándza, the outlaw theme, social-historical and cultural environment

Mihály Wándza (Szilágyperecsen 1781–Miskolc 1854), son of a Calvinist priest, educated in Kolozsvár (Clausenburg, Cluj-Napoca) and Vienna, was well-known in his age: stage-designer, actor, director, painter, etcher and writer, who greatly contributed to theatre-making in a dozen Hungarian towns from Kolozsvár to Kassa. No wonder that Gábor Döbrentei, who in 1825 dedicated his second translation of *Macbeth* to no smaller figure than Count István Széchenyi, had earlier consigned his first translation of *Macbeth* to Mihály Wándza, the ardently working Thespian.¹ Indeed, master of spectacle, tableaux, crowd scenes, all cast play and precise movements, Wándza, the first Hungarian director and protagonist of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Kolozsvár, 1811)² had several merits to his credit. He is, as a recently identified manuscript in the National Széchényi Library proves, the author of a full-scale Sturm und Drang tragedy, *The Curse, or the Guiltless Sinners*.³ As far as we know today, Wándza has written seven plays⁴ and translated some, too. He was the first to organise (direct, design and act in leading roles in) a Shakespeare cycle (six different Shakespeare plays staged in one season in Kolozsvár in 1812) at the dawn of the history of Hungarian theatre. When in 1806 Wándza published *Grieving Amor*, he created a double satire: one of the sentimental novel in the age of sentimentalism, and another of language reform in the age of language reform.⁵ Moreover, while working with only twelve to fourteen actors in his travelling company Wándza managed to stage plays that required a much larger cast, as he assigned double or even more roles to actors.

¹ "I want to dedicate it to Wándza, as he passionately works for the Playing house", wrote Döbrentei to Ferenc Kazinczy on May 20, 1811. *KazLev* VIII, 532.

² Kiss 2016a, 15–17.

³ Kiss 2016b, 555–577.

⁴ Wándza's plays: *Don Fernando and Eugenia or Unfortunate Love* (1810), *Horrides* (1810), *Orpheus and Euridike* (1811), *Marci Zöld, or the Hold-up Robber* (1817), *Moses* (1818), *The Curse, or the Guiltless Sinners* (?), *The Death of László Hunyady* (1822), *The Dream, or the Grimful Night to Fulfill the Vow to Hell* (1837). Kiss 2016b, 561–563.

⁵ Kiss 2016b, 556.; FUCHS 2007.

Last but not least, with his *Zöld Martzi*,⁶ Mihály Wándza figures among the authors of the earliest betyár plays as well as folk plays in Hungarian drama history.

Chronologically Wándza's fourth play, *Zöld Martzi, or the Hold-up robber* was published in 1817 in János Tichy's printing house in Nagyvárad (Oradea). János Tichy was an etcher who published beautifully illustrated books of significance (books on natural sciences etc.). The unpretentious, pocket-size edition of Wándza's *Zöld Martzi* appears to indicate its closeness to popular culture. *Zöld Martzi, or the Hold-up Robber* was based on true facts.

The title hero is a *haramia*, a *betyár* (outlaw/thief/highwayman), a Hungarian Robin Hood: noble Márton Zöld, the famous leader of highwaymen in Sárrét and the Hungarian Plain, who got hanged at the age of 26. His short life included a series of acts of personal revenge on the rich in support of the poor. There are several documents, like the notary report of Martzi's court martial trial including his own testimony and signature,⁷ but folklore has also preserved the memory of the lovable highwayman. Carved mauls and pamphlet illustrations have kept the 'portraits' of the gentle robber who turned to be both rebel and victim in an inauspiciously stagnant, therefore restrictive society. Oral tradition manifested itself in colloquial language as well: the commonplace saying 'he lives like Marci in Heves [county]' records the successful but short 'happiness' of the outlaw; this saying is in use even today. The songs and ballads about Martzi Zöld got published only around 1840, twenty-some years after Wándza's play had seen the stage of many itinerant acting companies.⁸

The figure of the rebel, preserved by Wándza's play and by oral tradition and collective memory, stimulated several authors to further write about Martzi Zöld. In 1835, author József Gaál whose uncle had personally met Martzi Zöld and other robbers,⁹ published a couple of fine short stories about the friendly young betyár (*Encounter in the Puszta*, *Haramia Kiss*, *Night on the Hortobágy*). In summer 1845, Sándor Petőfi handed in his own *Marci Zöld* play to the Drama Evaluating Committee of the Kisfaludy Company; he designed his play for his friend, the great actor, Gábor Egressy. Unfortunately, his play was not accepted, and in his frustration, Petőfi burnt his manuscript. Today, we can only imagine what his play, composed in the timespan between the fairy-tale resolution of *John the Valiant* (*János vitéz*) and

⁶ The surname Zöld means green, Martzi (in modern spelling Marci) is the nickname for Martin, so the whole name translates as Marty Green. All the quotes from Wándza's play and from other sources in this article are my translations (Zs. Kiss).

⁷ SOMOSKÖI 2017; ZSUPOS 2014; DÖMÖTÖR 1978, 95–97.

⁸ According to ZSUPOS 2014, folksongs about Marci Zöld were printed and sold in all country fairs from 1817, but according to earlier consensus, the first small prints (without date printed on them) probably come from the 1840-ies.

⁹ DÖMÖTÖR 1978, 93–100; GAÁL 1882.

the gloomy and greatly realistical *The Apostle* (*Az apostol*) was like. Reading his short stories in which poor men and women are his chosen characters and evidently, reading his poems about Marci Zöld (written from 1845 to 1847), we only wish his play could revive from its ashes.

In the following, we will examine three facts. First, the young betyár was hanged on December 6th 1816. Second, Wándza's play was published the next year, in 1817. Third, the play was staged on many occasions, all over Hungary until the mid 1830-ies. On account of these, we must agree that Wándza's *Martzi Zöld* entirely met the requirements of Hungarian theatre at the time. Despite its early state of development (travelling theatre troupes and slack patronage system), Wándza's theatre functioned exactly as media, filling the gap between personal and public spheres and responding quickly and powerfully to social events. Evidently, the execution of a shockingly young robber (not of a killer) was scandalous enough. Such an event may have increased people's awareness of the confusing closeness of good and evil, trust and mistrust in a society where taxes and wars burdened the poor the most, and where the 'free' social classes were monitored by a tightly built secret agent system, a militia state in disguise.¹⁰ By its plot, style and genre, Wándza's *Martzi Zöld* both presented and reflected upon the contradictory facts, identities, value judgements, and expectations concerning the betyár (outlaw) and his world.

Betyárs in Hungary, as outlaws in general, represented an embarrassingly significant economic-social phenomenon. The South-Eastern European social bandits¹¹ came into being and developed on those wastelands where the Turkish occupation ceased and the Habsburg rule started, along the 17th to the 19th century. Outlaws stemmed from veteran soldiers and young men who fled the army, as well as from poor youth who faced social limitations of inequity, public indifference, and destitution.¹² Robbing the wealthy on highways, in their homes and in taverns became a *modus vivendi* for those men who lost or had no social status, or were labeled as

¹⁰ "Once the secret informer system had been established, mistrust became the basic condition in the whole country." POÓR 1988, 73, 67–76.

¹¹ In his monograph on Rózsa Sándor, Japanese scholar Shingo Minamizuka calls Rózsa Sándor a social bandit. See MINAMIZUKA 2008. As for the Hungarian terms for the social bandit: *zsidány* [1569, youngman] *betyár* [1744, rogue, scoundrel, unmarried youngman, around 1800 day labourer] and *haramia* [1547, highwayman, robber] derived from Turkish; the latter two came as Serbo-Croatian borrowings. ETIMOLÓGIAI SZÓTÁR 2006, 939, 67, 287.

¹² With Ferenc Rákóczi II's defeat, the nobility took an oath of loyalty to the Hapsburg empire, but many armed peasants refusing to obey the noblemen and their local governments, became betyárs. Extreme exploitation often forced peasants (by the lowest stratification they were *jobbágy*, *zsellér* and *háztalan zsellér*) to run away from their servitude to the wild waste lands which, not so pastoral, became reservoirs of converts to robbery. A great number of beggars, vagabonds (from homeless serfs through horse-dealers to noblemen) became betyárs by fleeing hard taxation, military conscription or at some point, the never-ending military service.

'lazy' or 'good for nothing'. Hungarian betyárs dwelled on plains and in woods around scattered ranches, villages, and towns hindered in development, or became depopulated by raids and wars.¹³

A large group of robbers appeared during and after the Napoleonic wars. Bandi Angyal (1760–1806) from Csongrád county, Martzi Zöld (1790–1816) from Berettyóújfalu and Jóska Sobri (1809–1837) from Sopron were all literate. The latter two came from impoverished noble families and they were both renowned and beloved for their handsome looks and gallant behaviour. Caught red-handed at stealing animals, they were imprisoned. Escaping from prison or military service, they found supporters to arbitrarily and illegally 'tax' the rich and 'help' the poor. Although he was wanted, Bandi Angyal was not caught for the second time, he died at home, while a 'descendant', a younger betyár 'borrowed' his name.¹⁴ Martzi Zöld took part in the failed noble insurrection against Napoleon. He was imprisoned for assault and stealing livestock. He spent six years in different prisons. In 1814, he escaped from Nagyvárad (Oradea) prison, met and joined Pista Palatinszki, Betskereki, Miska Kapus and other robbers.¹⁵ This group committed more and more offences. Martzi, Palatinszki and Betskereki were the last to be caught after being reported by a shepherd¹⁶ in a tavern at Öcsöd. They were hanged in the outskirts of Fegyvernek. Marci Zöld's direct follower was Jóska Sobri (1809–1837). Sobri, a swineherd's son sank into misery and crime when he lost some of his swineherd. He must have read József Gaál's stories about Martzi Zöld: during his life, he emulated Martzi's gentle attitude towards the poor and the fair women. Facing execution, he shot himself. Around the 1848 revolution and afterwards, the betyars lived longer; more documentation about them is available.¹⁷

The local authorities of the deserted plains where nomadic animal farming spread were the shepherds. Shepherds' work was complicated and many-folded, from producing dairy products to healing, their activities were hugely respected, sometimes

¹³ A haunting description of the unpeopled region surrounding Debrecen where outlaws may commit crimes dates back to 1792. See DÖMÖRÖR 1978, 93.

¹⁴ Angyal Bandi is a double nickname: Andy Angel; the real surname of this robber was Ónódy.

¹⁵ Other robbers mentioned in Wándza's play (1.1.): Pál Pálitz and Imre Kovács. WÁNZDA 1817, 4.

¹⁶ The hersdman's name was István Csökmei. SOMOSKÖI 2017.

¹⁷ Sándor Rózsa (1813–1878) imprisoned for cow stealing, got regular beatings in prison. He was released by Kossuth to join the war of independance, later he turned back to being a betyár and was caught again. After he received amnesty, he wanted to become a cop, but was turned down as he was illiterate. He got imprisoned again for train robberies, and finally died in prison. Jóska Savanyú's (1845–1907) robberies were betrayed by a shepherd. After being pardoned and supported by a bishop, he opened a tailor's shop; at old age because of rheumatic pains he killed himself. Pista Sisa (1846–1910) was imprisoned several times and regularly tortured, he worked as a tailor in prison for 21 years, after his release he got married, and dying, he left his club to his last 'master'. https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kateg%C3%B3ria:Magyar_bety%C3%A1rok

mystified, but rarely controllable. Prosperous and merciful shepherds were inclined to defend the wretched who fell out of economical, social or political favour. However, sometimes it was the shepherds who betrayed their former protégés, the revolting vassals of a society petrified in feudalism.¹⁸ So shepherds and betyárs, the legal and illegal masters of the puszta often interacted; Wándza's play thoroughly depicts such situations by setting characters of two shepherds, two robbers, two persecuting gendarmes and two supportive rescuers¹⁹ in interference. Revolt, tolerance, and resistance, active and passive attitudes towards social injustice, crime, punishment and repentance were deeply entangled. Identity, clear perception and loyalty, actually, mere survival in such a society was not easy. With its tension and the ambivalence between theme and genre, plot and tone, Wándza's *Martzi Zöld* bears witness to such complexity.

Martzi Zöld, according to its 1817 edition is an *amusing* play (mulattató játék), while playbills describe it in various ways: as a *moral* Schauspiel (erkölcsi nézőjáték), as a *sensitizing* play (érzékenyítő játék) or as a *Singspiel* with music, singing and dancing (zenés-énekes-táncos vígjáték). The flexibility or rather the uncertainty about identifying theatrical genres was quite characteristic of the period. Mixing genres may have resulted from the haste to produce many plays in many genres, on the one hand. On the other hand a self-censoring attitude of playwrights, actors, prompters and directors to slip by official restraint and illustrate disturbing social matters could have also contributed to the mixing.

Sources, text, and context

Looking for the immediate sources of Wándza's betyár play, we can discern three-four significant authors who provided models for *Martzi Zöld*. Within a broader cultural context, when he set down to write his play to depict outlaws, Wándza must have been influenced by European sentimentalism, by the Sturm und Drang and by the Viennese popular satirical plays.

Schiller's *Robbers*, written in 1781, first staged in January 1782 at Mannheim, was translated into Hungarian by 1793, staged in 1794, and several further translations were penned; as for Wándza the actor, he became a renowned Karl Moor on Hungarian stages. Even Ferenc Toldy (Schedel) translated the *Robbers*, and in the preface to his translation (1823) he compared Schiller's protagonist to Don Quixote. According to Toldy, Karl Moor is one whom "we hate, love, admire and pity", one who "attends the school of penury" in a "languished, emasculated century." Karl

¹⁸ DÖMÖTÖR 1978, 93.

¹⁹ One of the rescuers is a landowner, but to the point, the other is a priest; pastor, shepherd of souls.

Moor "pawns his soul to the devil", his conscience is like a "roaring beast." The hero's tragic fall in the *Robbers*, concludes Toldy, expresses the thought that "law cannot be sustained by lawlessness."²⁰

Actually, there are closely related textual parallels between the *Robbers* and *Martzi Zöld*. Both protagonists tell monologues in which they express how they suffer from guilt. They both experience a strikingly similar dilemma between two loyalties: on the one hand, they try to be worthy of the few honest people who assure them of their benevolence, on the other hand, they cannot avoid their criminal companions whom they promised to stick together till the end.

Investigating the text of these two plays, one can easily notice how guilty conscience, sense of isolation, despair and other motives gained expression similarly, in similar situations with almost identical nuances and emphasis. Such lines are uttered by both protagonists in both plays: 'it would have been so much better to serve the country' or "My dear guns, be ready if danger comes [...] oh unhappy I that I want to threaten others when I am terrified by everything."²¹

The second, and possibly the closest source for Wándza's play appears to be István Balog's *Bandi Angyal* (1812).²² Originally, *Bandi Angyal* was a dramatic trilogy (for wooden puppets and adult stage as well), from which several fragmented manuscript promptbooks have been preserved. *Bandi Angyal* represents the first dramatic mention of a Hungarian betyár, as well as a forerunner of folk plays. A versatile and successful author, a beloved and respected comic actor, József Katona's friend, István Balog (1790–1873) succeeded in writing amusingly about acute and grave social matters. In 1812, he wrote two plays about rebel heroes: the young Bandi Angyal and the Serbian rebel, György Cserny.²³ In most of his plays, Balog presented popular heroes: Bandi Angyal and György Cserny were real historical figures, while Matyi Lúdas or Ilona Tündér were borrowed from literature, therefore they were imaginary. The protagonists of Balog's plays fight for a just cause and try to defeat their oppressors by intelligence, bravery, playfulness, and solidarity with their environment.

Before Balog wrote his *Bandi Angyal*, he translated *Rinaldo Rinaldini*, Karl Friedrich Hensler's *Rauberposse*.²⁴ The third part of the three-piece play contains several motives and episodes we can find both in Balog's and Wándza's play: the jovial robber's confrontation with the legends about his own death, common people's respect for and fear from the gentle robber, women's unconditional attraction to him, etc.

²⁰ TOLDY (SCHEDEL) 1823, 5–10.

²¹ WÁNDZA 1817, 17.

²² PÓR 1974, 37–61.

²³ An early, if not the first historical-political documentary play in Hungarian. See PÓR 1974, 35, 163–167.

²⁴ Parodistic plays on robbers, knights and fairies, so popular in Viennese suburbs, were rapidly adapted to the Hungarian stages. PUKÁNSZKYNÉ 1930, 143–160.; PÓR 1974, 17–36.

But Balog's play contains historically accurate episodes, his protagonist steals out of need and not for fun, and the other characters represent the poor. Besides, along the plot, Balog introduces folk ballads and songs about the robber. These were beginning to take roots in oral tradition at the time. Comparing *Martzi Zöld* to the fragments of *Bandi Angyal*, we may confirm with certainty that Wándza follows Balog in each above described aspect of his dramaturgy.

The connection between the two plays is significant, if we consider a slight difference between them regarding the protagonists. As *Bandi Angyal* was not executed but died in bed, the extant fragments of Balog's play should at least vaguely bear the signs of this 'positive' historical evidence. But the tone of the play is ambivalent. How come? This ambivalence is due to the folkloric inlays.²⁵ It is remarkable how perfectly Balog and Wándza merge the comical nuances of the Viennese slap-stick comedies and the dark, even tragic tone of Hungarian *betyár* ballads. In contrast to Balog's luckier protagonist, Wándza's model, *Martzi Zöld* was doomed and executed yet oral tradition and collective memory have equally appreciated and valued this young robber as a hero. Folklore has attached *conflicting presumptions and conjectures* to both *betyárs*. Therefore, we may agree that both playwrights relied on and registered elements of folklore in *status nascendi*.

As for Wándza, while blending *Sturm und Drang*, sentimentalism, rough-humoured burlesque, Hungarian theatrical tradition, and genuine folklore, in *Martzi Zöld*, he insistently and recurrently presents scenes of chase where his protagonist tricks the gendarmes, his ultimate executioners. Such episodes embarrassingly refer to actual social difficulties. Yet, chase scenes in *Martzi Zöld* are parodistic enough to fit the patterns of the Viennese Sunday (folk) plays.²⁶

A central episode of Wándza's play, the forest inn scene (Act 2, Scene 13) presents a furious character's awe and respect for Sunday churchgoing. The play invites the audience to get involved in a funny, but to some degree puzzling situation. In this scene, peasants stop for a drink and talk about *Martzi*, the robber. They start disparaging him. The inn-keeper, who is *Martzi*'s lover, opposes them, but soon she is also denigrated by her guests saying she spoils their drinks by diluting them. The fight gets heated, the peasants take *Jutzi*'s bonnet and toss it around. At this point, the hostess bursts out in sobs, worrying about not having a clean bonnet for church on Sunday.

"Act 2, Scene 13 (2.13.) *Forest inn. Hostess and peasants*

FIRST PEASANT It is certain that he has deserved the gallows. [...]

²⁵ The first recorded *Bandi Angyal* song dates back to 1807. DÖMÖTÖR 1930; PÓR 1974, 53.

²⁶ The mock-plays of serious plays from the Burgtheatre were staged on Sundays. They offered cheap and light amusement with some singing and dancing and developed certain themes (the Stadt und Land conflict, etc.) and a particular, satirical but sentimental style.

HOSTESS Oh, leave the worthy man in peace, he harms no soul, he only taxes those who have more than enough.

FIRST PEASANT He should work as we do, he should sweat blood and live by God's law. [...]

SECOND PEASANT How haughty she is, as she is Zöld Martzi's lover – [...]

HOSTESS My bonnet! My bonnet!

ALL Let's throw it around! (*they toss it*)

HOSTESS (*angrily sits down and sobs*) O my God, what shall I wear on Sunday?"

Sunday, for the simple folk with swaying judgements, even for the inn-keeper who protects the outlaw, signifies a sphere of order, cleanliness, and peaceful conduct. The protagonist with shattered self-esteem, guilty conscience but habitual readiness for newer trespasses is absent from this 'Sunday-scene'. No wonder that the robber gets involved in a (Sunday-like) community ritual, a wedding, he finally gets caught. The forest inn scene shows that the common mind-set reveals fear from both social and spiritual authorities, and social circumstances solidify negative feelings, like scapegoating or envy. Clumsy merry-making and satirical farce in Wándza's play converge with dark indignation or resignation since these demeanors are not allowed on Sunday stages.

It seems obvious that the playwright may have touched upon another literary model, one that accepted and vivified individual revolt. Much before István Balog composed his *Matyi Lúdas*, it was Mihály Fazekas who in 1804 created an epic poem with this title. His work circulated in manuscript form until Ferenc Kerekes, at the time a student in Vienna, published it anonymously in 1815. Then, making some emendations to the text and writing a preface,²⁷ Fazekas 'authorised' a second publication. This second publication came out in 1817. Wándza must have read Fazekas' *Matyi Lúdas* either in manuscript or in the unsigned first edition. There is a small dramaturgical and textual detail which connects *Martzi Zöld* to Fazekas' *Matyi Lúdas*. The basic trick, by which the clever lad, Matyi Lúdas, manages to take revenge on the cruel landowner is role-play. There are four moments of such role-play in Fazekas' epic, and each time the same phrase: "I am not... but I am Matyi Lúdas!" is repeated.

Wándza's *Martzi Zöld* abounds in such *role-playing episodes*. The phrase "I am Martzi Zöld!" frequently occurs all through the three acts. There are six such moments in each act. The two Shepherds²⁸ do not recognise the robbers when meeting them. One of the shepherds (Juhász) even tries to pretend to be Martzi. All are afraid

²⁷ In his preface Fazekas insists that his plot happened in the faraway past, as law is sacred in his time. Evidently this was his defence against censorship. FAZEKAS 2003.

²⁸ They wear two different names, two Hungarian synonyms for the same job: Juhász and Pásztor.

of him except for two courageous and honest men: the Landowner and the Village Preacher. These two do not chase or blame the others but listen to them, assure them of their influence and support on condition that they improve. But they are drifted by events, they never stop doing what they are accustomed to. Martzi's associate, Betskerekí who is notorious enough, imitates Martzi as he threatens a Peasant who, comanded by the authorities, carries a hand-bill to town to warn against the robbers (1.3.). Then Betskerekí tries to gain the sympathy of a young woman when he introduces himself; the superstitious woman believes that the two robbers have already been hanged, but they lived on, because even in the gallows they were talking and being fed by birds... But soon she is ready to leave her home behind and to become Betskerekí's lover (1.8.). The hold-up-men play a surprising hide-and-seek with all people. To escape from their pursuers, they settle in an old shepherd's hut while this shepherd (Pásztor) is away (from 1.10. to 2.3., 15 scenes). When the Pásztor returns, Martzi feigns being a pursuer and asks the shepherd to help to catch the two offenders. The shepherd gets paid²⁹ and agrees, then he can watch how Martzi sets the two gendarmes and their people fight against each other, as if they both were Martzi (1.12–22.). Act 2 opens with the two robbers disguised in gendarme uniforms tricking the old Pásztor. Soon, the young shepherd, Juhász shoots a pistol to Betskerekí pretending to be Martzi. This excessive burlesque continues in the mansion of the nobles Nemes (Noble)³⁰ where the robbers get invited. They behave gallantly during coffee time, and they assure the ladies and the rest of the idle company to protect them against Martzi. A frittering middle class man, Várhegyi (Castlehill), invents a game to amuse themselves; he pretends to be Martzi and the rest of the company kneel down and place their jewels and watches at their feet. At this moment the real robber feels tempted to interrupt and grab the loot (2.4–8.).

The absurd comedy of mistaken identities pauses for the scenes where the Village Preacher tries to save the robbers' soul (2.9–11.). Martzi gratefully offers money, and when his bid is refused, he commends a horse instead to the Preacher. Serious inner decision is not made. From the forest inn scenes (from 2.13. onwards), the comedy gets even more precipitated. The decline of the hero begins. Juhász, the young shepherd tells Jutzi, Martzi's sweetheart some rumors, which causes confusion. Before long, this shepherd gets captured instead of Martzi.³¹ The two protagonists are invited to another noble's house where Martzi charms the ladies and offers them jewels while Betskerekí empties the cellar. The Gondos (Careful) family does not suspect

²⁹ Both Martzi and the two pursuers bribe people, the regular fee is 100 forints. This meant five times an actor's wage at Nagyvárád at the time. NAMÉNYI 1898, 47.

³⁰ The names of the characters intensify the comedy. The characters of the noblemen wear names that reveal their personality traits, while most of the simple folk's names reflect their trade.

³¹ The authorities use force and bribery towards the shepherd who will in turn betray the feared outlaws.

anything until their horses are stolen and they find a signed letter from Martzi Zöld under the tablecloth. The two most hilarious episodes follow. Announcing he is the feared robber Martzi Zöld, once more Martzi steals only to immediately redistribute the booty (3.6.). Finally he teaches a shocking lesson of reality to an Italian traveller (3.7.). At the end, the two robbers try to disappear in a swarming wedding party. Betskereki gets caught, and Martzi does not run away as he wants to free his mate. At this point, the Pursuer plays another trick. He has learnt to play Martzi's signature tune from the captured young Shepherd, and he begins to play it. Martzi loses control: he believes that Betskereki is breaking free, and he answers the call from the Pursuer. This puts an end to the charade.

Wándza's dramaturgy

Several critics have argued that Wándza's comedy has far too many short scenes.³² Indeed, the first act runs up to 22, the second act includes 18, and the third act has 16 scenes; it adds up to 56 scenes altogether. However, the stage practice of the time structured plays in many short scenes. Every entrance or exit and all scenic changes marked the beginning of a new scene. The colourful and farcical scenes of *Martzi Zöld* constitute a well-balanced structure and offer a panoramic view of the middle and lower strata of society. The scenes nicely connect the plot and they fall into three distinct groups.

The first group encompasses (Schillerian) moments that reflect Martzi's *sense of guilt, despair, isolation*, and inner turmoil resulting from his gradually weakening determination to give up robbery. There is a regularly repeated stage instruction to these scenes: such episodes take place in front of a "stormy dark sky" and sound effects to imitate thunder. Wándza was famous for his spectacular stage designs.³³ The first stage instruction include lightening that sets a walnut tree on fire in the middle of the opening scene. The monologues and dialogues in Wándza's comedy represent all sorts of human characters, from simple to complex,³⁴ but they are never only good or evil. Martzi's monologues express his gradually growing awareness that his 'joy' and 'luck' at robbery will end at some point. When he decides to turn to the Landowner for his support, he says he will force the landowner to obtain official pardon for him and his associate; eventually, the Landowner shakes hands with him and offers his help willingly (1.6.). But Martzi goes on feeling doomed. When he

³² BAYER 1897; SOLT 1933.

³³ On Wándza's *Laterna Magica*, galanty show, Greek fire and other spectacular stage designs for *Macbeth* see FODOR 1939, 14. and BARTHA 2010, 101.

³⁴ Applying an explanation used by today psychologists, we could say some characters suffer from 'mind-narrowing or debilitating stress'.

is not in haste or 'action', he mopes in a desperate state of mind entrapped in negativity, blame, self-pity, even self-hatred: "despair presses my soul, my head is blunt, my heart breaks into pieces, my feet do not hold me. Oh, why did I not go back to the Preacher? Oh, earth, open below me! stars, fall upon me! Sin, with your venom corrupt all my body!" (3.13.)

We may recognise a mock-Doctor Faustus moment in the highly theatrical scene (2.9–10.), where the two robbers kneel down in front of the Village Preacher to repent. Just like the Landowner from Act 1, the Village Preacher promises to obtain pardon from the regiment and the city, if the two robbers never sin again. Echoing the bedchamber scene from *Hamlet*, Wándza alludes to what Gertrude and Hamlet say in Shakespeare's tragedy: "*Gertrude* O Hamlet, thou has cleft my heart in twain. *Hamlet* Throw away the worsier part of it,/And live the purer with the other half."³⁵ This emotionally charged scene is followed by sheer fun: Martzi insists that the Preacher should accept a stolen horse as a present for his moral support. Reading the playtext, one may notice that Martzi's words are footnoted at this passage. The author remarks he is quoting the robber's own words, as they were recorded.³⁶

Martzi, like Karl Moor,³⁷ is isolated and cannot escape the conditions he himself has engendered. His associate, Betskereki only aggravates his situation, having no guilty feeling and being more superficial. As a matter of fact, both young men know they only delay the time when the authorities seize them for being run-away soldiers in the first place; they plan nothing, they only commit more and more offences. Martzi tries to think ahead, but ready for the worst, is unable to change. Betskereki does not think much about turning back from sinning.

The second type of scene presents Martzi's *encounters* with various people from noblemen to manual labourers and vagabonds. Noble people get more thrilled than scared at the risk of meeting Martzi. In their boredom, they talk about him or imitate him. The poor either berate him or look up to him. They mediate between the authorities and the robbers. The simple folk, men and women, shepherds, ostlers, home servants, peasants, merchants, mechanics and vagabonds, all funny and surly at the same time, enter the stage complaining, quarrelling or singing. Wándza poignantly portrays them as they fight for survival. The Schwabish knife-grinder and the gypsy tinker are characters reminiscent of Balog's linen-trader Slovakian from *Bandi Angyal*. Martzi Zöld's vaguely thought-upon intention to 'change the world' is expressed in these scenes. He 'taxes' the affluent Jewish jewelry salesman, then he

³⁵ Act 3, Scene 4 from *Hamlet*, see SHAKESPEARE 1958, 92, 177–179.

³⁶ See this footnote in WÁNDZA 1817, 64. Another such realia appears in the play when the two robbers discuss they should have run away from the consequences of their actions to "Oláhország" (Vlachia or the Romanian province; 67).

³⁷ In Schiller's tragedy the brother's treacherous plotting partly justifies for Karl's turning to sin.

passes the stolen money to the poor Jewish goatskin merchant. Martzi's encounters with the cross-section of society culminate in the episode with the Italian vagabond who carries a pile of busts on his cart, among them Julius Caesar's, Nero's and, since the author wished to please the audience with a *metatheatrical* motif, Rinaldo Rinaldini's. The interaction between Martzi and the Italian man gets heated, and the traveller wants to make a fortune at all cost. Martzi asks the Italian to shoot Rinaldini's bust while he holds it in his hand, in order to test whether the Italian is worthy of joining the highwayman. The Italian hesitates before shooting, but completes the task. Martzi pretends to be dead. The Italian grabs all he can find in Martzi's pockets when the robber suddenly 'comes to life' and shatters the Italian's self-esteem.

Behind the vivid and humorous adventures, the panorama of social life appears completely stark, hopeless and deadly without the funny ditties of each labourer. Hungarian textual segments meet German, Gypsy, and Italian phrases; each song complains about poverty and childish longings for some better sort of life. Beyond this burlesque, two worlds collide in a vicious circle: the villain is the victim, the outlaw is the hero, all are afraid, and no one is right.

The third type of scenes include *chases*. The two Pursuers are ineffective and ignorant. Without collaborators, they cannot capture the robbers. It is significant that the representatives of law and order do not agree with the Landowner and the Preacher. The latter two are the authoritative members of higher social classes who pity and support the robbers, and are not afraid of them. Ironically enough, and contrary to Martzi's failure to improve himself, finally the Pursuers 'develop' some skills to get a hold of the trespassing youth.

Comedy (stemming from encounters and chase scenes) in Wándza's play is accompanied by motifs of loneliness, regret, self-pity, resignation, fear, and apathy. Didacticism is avoided by a naive simplicity characteristic of folklore.

As we can see, Wándza's amusing morality play, this *early modern anti-pastoral* embraces parody and tragedy, haste and delay, appearance and reality into one expression, which extends from the public to the personal.

Reading the text, one can see how multi-layered a simple popularity-seeking burlesque used to be. Neither too moralising, nor too amusing, *Martzi Zöld* may have challenged both the actors and the audience.

Theatre and the betyárs. What playbills tell us

When Martzi Zöld and Betskerekí were hanged,³⁸ Wándza was the member of the Nagyvárád (Oradea) theatre company. Nagyvárád is close to Fegyvernek where the execution took place. Apart from the geographical closeness to the scene of the event and the seeking of popularity, what else drove Wándza to follow István Balog's example to write about a Hungarian betyár?

Travelling theatre troupes met betyárs from time to time, as some actors have referred to such incidents in their memoirs.³⁹ Moreover, young actors' life sometimes was not much safer than any penniless vagabond's. Actors who worked at a relatively stable theatre company in a town could also run into curious situations. At Nagyvárád, for example, actor István Nagy wished to borrow a suit for a performance from their director, Count József Sándorfy; the answer was no, unless he managed to steal one for himself! Therefore, the actor did steal one, but later he returned the suit.⁴⁰ Moreover, the closeness between the betyár's and the wandering actor's life seems to have been a commonplace: actors were considered "a pack of ragged fools who starve and wander as if chased by bad conscience".⁴¹

Wándza spent two hard but very successful years at Kolozsvár (1811–12). He helped the company that had lost their sponsor to start anew, he travelled around Transylvania with their celebrated repertoire, but then had to leave the troupe. In 1813, he joined the actors of Debrecen. He met István Balog there. They put on 'provocative' plays, so their company was heavily censored. On the first of February 1814, Wándza and several actors signed a contract with Count Sándorfy, director of the Nagyvárád players. At Sándorfy's order, a full inventory was made of all the costumes, decorations, and books the company owned. He even fixed the wages of his actors.⁴² The terms were clear and stable, but in exchange, actors were not allowed to go on tours. Wándza remained in Várád until 1823 when he left for Szeged.

In 1815, censors banned István Balog's *Cserny György*, a play that mesmerized all audiences; Hungarians and Serbians were unanimously thrilled by it. Balogh and

³⁸ According to the small prints of Martzi Zöld's songs and ballads (two leaflets without date of publication, but on the frontispiece of one a handwritten note says "in the 40-es", while on the second frontispiece a printed note says "in this year"), there were three robbers; Palatinszki was the third. Apart from the three robbers, Martzi's sweetheart, the "town council" and common people also 'sing their parts'. The leaflets of the songs contain various illustrations (a well-dressed youngman horseriding, village dance, three men hanged, etc.) See *Zöld Martzi, és a szeretője nótáji, és egymástól való búcsúzások* a; b.

³⁹ DÉRYNÉ 1879; GÁL 1858, 37.

⁴⁰ NAMÉNYI 1898, 50–51.

⁴¹ SZIGETI 1856, 61.

⁴² 20 forints was an actor's wage, 22 forints were paid to the leading actor, and the musical conductor got 30 forints. NAMÉNYI 1898, 47.

his colleagues (Wándza was with them) founded their independent company called Republic, but they soon fell out with Sándorfy. Balog left Nagyvárad.⁴³

No preserved playbill attests whether *Martzi Zöld* was performed around the time when the play was published at Váradi. Nevertheless, theatre historians point out that Hungarian 'verbunk' (Werbung, recruitment songs, dances, music) and gypsy music were played during some scenes and the interval of Wándza's *Martzi Zöld* as early as in 1817.⁴⁴

The play had its own life.⁴⁵

The first playbill that announces the *Zöld Martzi* performance for the following day comes from Székesfehérvár, where in 1819, on Thursday, August 29th this amusing comedy was staged by János Király and János Kárpentzky.⁴⁶

The next certain date of *Zöld Martzi* performance comes from Kolozsvár, where several performances were held in January and February of 1820, in László Rhédey's hall.⁴⁷

A Székesfehérvár playbill from the 31st of May 1821 announces that *Zöld Martzi* will be performed on the following day, Thursday, June 1st 1820. It offers further details: "the seats will be well arranged for the performance to be held in her Ladyship Mrs Horváth's yard". As for the genre description, an "original Schauspiel (énekes-játék) based on real events, about the most famous hold-up robber is, performed on horseback and with great preparation."⁴⁸

As it is known from István Balogh's diary,⁴⁹ Balogh took the playtext of *Zöld Martzi* along with himself, and like his *Bandi Angyal*, Wándza's play was often performed only partially in Quodlibets. This happened in Kunszentmiklós on the 27th of October 1820; it was Sunday, and the Quodlibet consisted of scenes from two plays: *Hamlet* and *Zöld Martzi*! Balogh travelled further, and staged *Martzi Zöld* again in Paks on the 19th of November 1820 (it was Sunday), in Kalocsa on the 14th of December 1820 and on the 7th of January 1821 (Sunday again). Further, the audience saw *Zöld Martzi* in Szombathely on the 1st of June 1821, and then Balogh reached Pest where he staged and played *Zöld Martzi* in August and September 1822.⁵⁰

⁴³ NAMÉNYI 1898, 50.

⁴⁴ PUKÁNSZKYNÉ 1930; PÓR 1974, 19.; KERÉNYI 1981, 154–155.

⁴⁵ All the following data, if not noted otherwise, are from the Playbill Collection of the National Széchényi Library (OSZK) Theatre History Repertory.

⁴⁶ FRIGYIK 2003, 11.

⁴⁷ FERENCZI 1897, 527.; 62 KERÉNYI 2000, 101.

⁴⁸ FRIGYIK 2003, 15.

⁴⁹ BALOG 1928.

⁵⁰ Apart from Balog, for the performances at Pest see KERÉNYI 2000, 101.

As the National Széchényi Library possesses two large, beautifully decorated, accurate playbills of one *Martzi Zöld* performance each, it is rewarding to study and compare them.

The first playbill comes from Kolozsvár, the 9th of February 1823 (Sunday). According to the usual formula on the top of the playbill, the performance was "allowed by the higher orders". But at the bottom of the playbill there is a handwritten note by Antal Hollaky, orchestra manager and from October 1822 to August 1823 leaseholder of the theatre. This note says: Mr Filep Sámuel Deáky, theatre director had the play staged against Hollaky's will.⁵¹

According to the playbill, the performance started at 6.15 and ended by 9 o'clock in the evening. Five type of seats for different prices are listed, and the playbill announces that the Hungarian dances will be accompanied by the first "Chorus" (orchestra).

Similarly to the published playtext, the *Dramatis personae* announced on the playbill consists of 26 roles.

As the playbill indicates, *Martzi Zöld* was played by István Göde (1801–1872), a respected actor; it was Göde who uttered the first words in the play performed at the inauguration of the new theatre building ('Stone Theatre') on the 11th of March 1821.⁵²

Lajos Farkas appeared in Betskereki's role; he came from a family of actors, he was very handsome and he usually played heroic lovers.⁵³ Five actors played double roles.

György Simonfi⁵⁴ played the Ostler (Acts 1 and 2) and the Second Jewish merchant (Act 3). According to the 1817 edition, the young Shepherd (Juhász) was in fact "the robbers' ostler", both minding his own business and providing the highwaymen with horses. It is hard to tell whether the Ostler of the Kolozsvár performance complained about *Martzi* having stolen his horses or his sheep. Interestingly, the Kolozsvár playbill does not discriminate between rich and poor Jew; it says "One Jew" and "Another Jew", while the *Dramatis personae* in the Nagyvárad edition describes them as "Isaac, the Jew with Rings" and "Jacob, the merchant Jew". The

⁵¹ Ferenczi 1897, 300–302. Antal Hollaky, later cabinet secretary was too gentle with the actors, he had asked Kótsi to direct the theatre, but the actors opposed Kótsi, too. In February 1823 Filep Sámuel Deáky, translator, secretary, amateur actor and singer, directed the Kolozsvár theatre. It was a time of "mutual suffering" and strong disputes between leadership and staff.

⁵² The play was *Matyás Corvinus*. The opening words were as follows: "A messenger runs swiftly towards our town, certainly he is announcing a bright victory." Giving all the sources for all the data concerning the forthcoming actors will be avoided.

⁵³ His nickname was "the handsome". He was prompter and director, too. His greatest achievements were connected to Kolozsvár. From 1847, he played at the Pest National Theatre.

⁵⁴ György Simonfi later worked as a stage decorator in Miskolc; little by little he took over Mihály Wándza's job there, when Wándza got older and his decoration were considered out of date.

episode in the playtext, however, starts off with Jacob the rich ring-merchant and Isaac the poor goatskin-merchant. When Martzi cries out "I am Martzi Zöld!", from this passage Jacob's name signifies the poor Jew, and Isaac's name signifies the rich Jew. Has Martzi Zöld played his trick on the playwright or the editor in this scene, we cannot tell.⁵⁵

Miklós Udvarhelyi (1790–1864) played the two 'saviour figures', the Landowner (Act 1) and the Parson or Village Preacher (Act 2). He had a well-trained bass voice, possibly he could easily move the audience to tears.

Celesztin Pergő (1784–1858), the famous old-style comedian played the noble Várhelyi (Castlehill, Act 2) and the Italian traveller (Act 3).

János Kemény (1778–1850), who generally played schemers, undertook the two noblemen: Mezei (Field, Act 2) and Gondos (Careful, Act 3).

Pál Jantsó Gidófalvi (1760–1845) played the old Shepherd (Pásztor, Acts 1 and 2) and the First merchant Jew (Act 3); we can surmise that he must have been the rich ring-seller Jew. Pál Jantsó was a dominant actor of his company, and Mihály Wándza's maternal uncle. He became a comic actor against his will, like Károly Megyeri later in Pest-Buda; he was a trained tenorist, too. He never played at any other company but the one in Kolozsvár on principle.

There were six roles for actresses; the fickle young peasant woman was not enlisted.

Mrs Farkas played the daughter of nobleman Mezei in the second act.

Susánna, actor József Székely's sister played the Maid working for the Mezei family; she played naive heroines from 1810 to 1834.

Mr Gondos' wife from Act 3 was played by Borbára Siményi, a good character actress who had been ideal for naive heroines first, but her voice became shrill, therefore she fitted intriguers' roles better.⁵⁶

Amália, daughter to the Gondos family was played by Mrs Udvarhelyi. Jutzi, the inn-keeper was played by Mrs Pályi.

The bride constituted the sixth woman role. As no name appears on the playbill, probably a dancer or a member of the chorus undertook this minor role.

Similar to the Slovakian poor salesman from *Bandi Angyal*, two quite popular episode characters from Act 2 are the Schwabish knife-grinder and the Gypsy tinker, who for some work and pay compete in singing half in Hungarian, half in their mothertongue. The Kolozsvár playbill records that the prolific author and translator, György Éder (1788–1844) was the Knife-grinder. Éder was a significant actor, he was the first Beckó in Kisfaludy's *Prince Stibor*.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ WÁNDZA 1817, 89.

⁵⁶ Thus from Shakespeare's Cordelia and Juliet she moved to roles like Lady Milford (Schiller).

⁵⁷ Born in Szabadka, György Éder was the author of *Napoleon or the battle at Győr*, play which was the

Elek Pályi (1797–1864) was a very active theatre organiser, although had little talent for playing. From 1823 to 1824, he studied in Vienna to become the best trained Hungarian tenorist of the period. But before he began singing, he played First Persecutor.⁵⁸

József Molnár played the Second Persecutor. In the *The Bridesman's* role the playbill shows Sándor Gillyén (1799–1852), who became a most respected and beloved prompter (at the Pest-Buda National Theatre for a long time).

The playbill does not indicate any names for the Tinker and the Carter (Act 2). No names figure for the wedding guests and musicians (final scenes), although "Hungarian dance and some music" are mentioned on the playbill. Spectacular conclusion was strongly needed for a play with so much ambivalence, cheap comedy mixed with dangerous references to the bad state of social order and righteousness.

The second *Martzi Zöld* playbill comes from Miskolc. The "amusing merry play in 3 acts" took place on a Sunday again, the 18th of February 1830. After several stations⁵⁹ across Hungary, this was the time when Wándza settled in Miskolc. This playbill, like the Kolozsvár playbill, relates the particularities of the performance at length.

The main role "in several disguises", as the playbill announces, was played by Dávid Kilényi Kocsis (1791–1852), the first entrepreneur theatre director, who opened the Miskolc theatre in 1828.

Betskereki was played by Mihály Szőke (Szökő).

The young Shepherd (Ostler at Kolozsvár, Juhász) was played by Mr Lajos. It is uncertain whether he was Lajos Fánecs, Lajos Könyves or someone else with Lajos as his surname. Moreover, Isaac, the rich Merchant was played by the same Mr Lajos, whoever he was.

Lajos Könyves played the nobleman Mezei (Field).⁶⁰

The playbill probably contains a mistake, as Lajos Könyves figures for Várhegyi's (Castlehill's) role, too. Doubling two roles within one scene was hardly possible.

Nobleman Gondos was played by István Nagy (alias Pista), the actor worked together with Wándza and Balogh at Nagyvárad and had to steal a suit from their director. Nagy also appeared in the role of the old Shepherd (Pásztor).

István Nagy's son, probably possessing a good voice, played the Village Preacher.

target of several censorial attacks. Éder translated from 16 languages, he penned his own translation of *Macbeth*.

⁵⁸ Born in Pápa, he performed in Transylvanian German theatres and in Bucharest, too. He composed music and translated 22 librettos.

⁵⁹ Kolozsvár, Eger, Vienna, Pest-Buda, Kolozsvár, Debrecen, Nagyvárad, Szeged, Szabadka, Miskolc, Kassa, etc. were the towns where Wándza worked for the theatre.

⁶⁰ Lajos Könyves was the son of actor, prompter and translator Máté Könyves. He started as a playbill distributor from 1827 in Komárom.

Young Lajos Fánecy (1809–1854), who later became famous for his Jago and Edgar,⁶¹ in the Miskolc performance of *Martzi Zöld* may have played the young Shepherd (Acts 1 and 2), but he certainly performed the Peasant who carries the warning against the robbers (Act 1 Scene 3) and the Bridesman (Act 3 Scene 11-12) who dances; so maybe Fánecy tripled roles.

The Knife-grinder was performed by actor, tenorist, translator Ádám János Láng (1772–1847), who doubled roles, as he was Jacob the Goatskin-seller Jew as well.

The Miskolc playbill distinguishes between the two Pursuers ; "Grab it" was played by József László (1818–1878), an excellent actor for bonvivants, heroes and comic characters equally. The second Pursuer alias "Don't let him go" was performed by István Kiss, who later became a prompter, editor and theatre critic in Pest-Buda. All actresses doubled roles.

The fickle young wife who meets and joins Betskereki (Act 1) and the Gondos daughter (Act 3) were doubled by Mrs Déry's sister, Johanna Széppataki (1798 – 1878), an actress famous for her beauty more than her talent.

The Gondos (Careful) daughter, Amália was played by Mrs Könyves. Perhaps she doubled, or Mrs Lajos was another actress, who according to the playbill played the inn-keeper Jutzi.

Mrs Dell who used to play widows, spinsters or witches, in *Martzi Zöld* played the Maid, and she doubled the role of Mrs Gondos (Act 3).

The Carter on the Miskolc playbill appears as Servant, this role was played by Egri.

József Molnár played the Tinker.

No names for the wedding guests and soldiers were found.

To raise expectations and attract a large audience, the playbill announces that "Dávid Kilényi and Lajos Fánecy will dance a Hungarian duo dance, and finally Fánecy will dances a solo dance."

The last documented performance of *Martzi Zöld*, part of a Quodlibet together with *Bandi Angyal* and *Hamlet*, was held in Debrecen on the 21st of March 1833.

⁶¹ Fánecy had great talent, his strengths were good speech, plastic movements, and an ability for psychologically well portrayed character changes. He not only was a good actor and a wonderful colleague with pedagogical skills, but as director of the National Theatre, he was firm and brave during the severe Bach-régime.

Critical reception, further impacts. Conclusions

The 1833 Debrecen performance of *Martzi Zöld* (in Quodlibet together with *Bandi Angyal* and *Hamlet*) have been mentioned in a review, although not very favourably. A Kotzebue comedy was reviewed on April 17th, mentioning that the play, to critic Hdgr.'s surprise, although similar to the *Bandi Angyals* and *Martzi Zölds*, proved to be real fun. The understatement of this review contains the idea that plays like *Bandi Angyal* and *Martzi Zöld* should not reach the stage. Actually, the critic questions the right of a comedy to be 'too amusing' unless it follows the taste and norms of those who are by agreement the elite: "comic effects should respect certain limitations, and it is only the educated audiences who can judge these limits."⁶²

Andor Solt argues that early Hungarian theatre criticism had unrealistic expectations in the name of classicism. Some critics like the one cited above fought against contemporary plays, and considered them provincial and unsuitable for the educated classes. Solt remarks that such a pedantic and *irrealistic critical attitude* could not and was not accepted even by the first National Theatre when it opened in 1837. The first theatres aimed at attracting all and each strata of the audience.⁶³ Sturm und Drang melodrama, historical tragedy, sentimental moral play, farce, parody, fairy play, Viennese Posse, burlesque, and folk play were all mixed in various ways.

Martzi Zöld was written, published and staged in a period when the 'two Hungarian countries' were declining and suffering under an unpredictable rule. 1817 in retrospect meant twenty-some years after the Martinovics conspiracy, when the republican movement was repressed, and it took place six years after a terrible devaluation of currency, and two years after the Sacred Alliance defeated Napoleon and restored absolutism, etc. The first decades of the 19th century forced the Hungarian nobility to oppose the Habsburg court, including high aristocracy and bureaucracy. Going through an identity crisis, nobility lost his privileges and got involved in a resistance (and later reform) movement.⁶⁴

Though fragmented, *Bandi Angyal* constituted the first original Hungarian outlaw play embedded in folk tradition; but while folk ballads expressed anger, early theatre did not allow the expression of such an emotion. In *Bandi Angyal* the tragic voice, except the folksongs, is absent. Bandi's words on his poverty are quite realistic and almost jovial. He 'lightens the rich travellers' because he is poor. He listens to the legends of his own hanging and argues that he is still alive. To the poor woman's surprised question: "is he not hanged yet?" he answers with healthy humour: "not yet."

⁶² See Hdgr.'s critique from the "Conversational" (Társalkodó) in Solt 1971, 131.; KERÉNYI 2000, 165–166.

⁶³ SOLT 1971, 130.

⁶⁴ NAGY 1993, 9–26.

Bandi Angyal is the ideal betyár. But to the point, Bandi Angyal was not executed. According to Balogh's inventories made in his diary, his play brought more money to the company than *Martzi Zöld*, another *Kassastück* did, with a darker sense of reality. Against the tradition of viewing Wándza's play as simple patchwork, we must consider more favorable critical viewpoints, too. Bayer admits that *Martzi Zöld* contains all the elements of a folk play.⁶⁵ Lajos Tóth remarks that "the ideal robber is missing from Wándza's play. Two noble families are confronted with horseherds, shepherds robbers, peasants and all sort of poor commoners. Wedding songs and dances engage the stage *twenty-six years before the folk play officially is acknowledged*. Wándza published his *Martzi Zöld* two years before Károly Kisfaludy's plays were first staged!"⁶⁶

Martzi Zöld's character was *not very much tamed for the stage*: he was the desperate outlaw threatening the whole region, energizing himself with robbery and redistribution who was sentimental, gallant, but headfast and tricky. Martial law quickly sentenced Martzi and his mate(s) to die, as there was no proper dungeon for captives in Fegyvernek. Tragedy flickers through everyday tableau, Sunday parody and moral Schauspiel.

The robber's theme gained growing significance as years passed. There must have been an interference between life and culture, theatre, and folklore in this respect. The theme of Marci Zöld inspired romantic poet Vörösmarty to write his long poem entitled *Becskeréki* in 1831.⁶⁷ To attest that the robber's memory was alive in folklore, it is worth citing a letter by Lajos Kossuth in which he remarked an interesting idea: as a community nurtures its own tradition, therefore people in Fegyvernek will sing not the Marsellaise, but their favorite songs on Marci Zöld.⁶⁸

Years before the first edition of these folksongs, József Gaál published his bewilderingly dramatic short stories in *Rajzolatok* (*Sketches*) in 1835. One year later (on October 29th 1836), the same magazine included a report about highwayman Jóska Sobri "who must have read too many novels on robbers, since he behaved as Marci Zöld: gallantly gave back some jewelry to a lady for a kiss."⁶⁹

Sándor Petőfi met Gaál as they both worked for the magazine *Pesti Divatlapok* (*Fashion News in Pest*). Ten years later, during three weeks time at Szalkaszentmárton, Petőfi wrote his play on Marci Zöld. The play was not well received by the Kisfaludy Company. Petőfi intended to extend *the limits of the tellable truths* both in literature and on stage.⁷⁰ It is even more curious that Petőfi's manuscript was not accepted

⁶⁵ BAYER 1897, 287.

⁶⁶ TÓTH 1932, 28.

⁶⁷ VÖRÖSMARTY 2000.

⁶⁸ DÖMÖTÖR 1974, 100.

⁶⁹ DÖMÖTÖR 1978, 99–100.

⁷⁰ GERSKOVICS 1969, 714.

when István Balog was among the members of the Drama Evaluating Committee at the time.⁷¹

Petőfi's authorial crisis, marked by another play, *Tiger and Hyena*, a novel, *The Executioner's Rope* and his poem cycle *Clouds*, coincided with the European spleen period, when Emily Bronte wrote her *Wuthering Heights*, or when József Eötvös wrote *The Carthusian* and his novel was soon praised by the English. Petőfi started to write another play, too: *Caraffa, the Executioner at Eperjes*. Rebellion and repression were certainly thoughts that annoyed him not long before 1848 and that tragic and brutal 31st of July 1849.

Petőfi kept writing about the unacknowledged simple folk. His short stories *The Runaway*, *The Grandfather*, *The Sallow Lass and the Maroon Lad*⁷² (about Backbone Marty and Delay Sarah) express peasants' mentality, serfs' life with great psychological accuracy, through a sturdy but flexible style.

His poem on the robber: *Stolen Horse (Lopott ló)* from 1833 expresses deep sympathy towards the strong-willed betyár. His *Encounter in the Puszta (Pusztai találkozás)* from October 1845, not long after his play had been refused, contains the betyár's kiss episode; a motive probably well developed in the play. *Marci Zöld*, from April 1847, has a dark tone of indignation, including the image of crows and German commands at the gallows.

It may surprise us, but it seems plausible enough that Petőfi's rhyming drama, *Marci Zöld* was refused in consideration with some principles that found Wándza's play too 'low'. On the 29th of July 1845, the journal *Honderű (Home Serenity)* commented: "there is *no moral in it*, but at certain passages one may find *genuine, accurate [körmönfont=crafty] Hungarianness, the dialogues are not bad, but rough and without any poetry or elevation*."⁷³ Above all, Russian critic Gerskovics expresses his hope that perhaps Petőfi's manuscript is still hidden somewhere.⁷⁴

When Mór Jókai turned towards Marci Zöld in the 1850-ies, he viewed the dramatic plot through a veil of nostalgia. Marci Zöld then seemed a mild dreamer in comparison with Sándor Rózsa. Jókai published several facile and off-hand anecdotes on this robber. *Rogue (Zsivány)*, originally entitled *Marci Zöld* came out in 1856, and *Robbers (Betyárok)* in 1857.

In *Rogue*, Jókai relates a charity deed accomplished by Marci Zöld either in the imagination of the idealizing posterity, or in the golden sometime before 'our cruel time'. According to this anecdote, Marci Zöld once caught a whole caravan of wandering students, he took them to his ranch and kept them singing all kind of

⁷¹ PUKÁNSZKYNÉ 1939; PÓR 1974, 28.

⁷² PETŐFI 1955.

⁷³ GERSKOVICS 1969, 714–715.

⁷⁴ GERSKOVICS 1969, 712.

amusing songs to entertain them. When he noticed how ragged and shabby the students were, he beckoned to his apprentice robber to fetch the finest black cloth they had. As they had no yard-stick (*rőf* in Hungarian) to measure the tissue, the head of the robbers marked off the fine black material pulling it from one tree to the other: "and we believe that among all accepted European units of measurement this was the longest."⁷⁵

Betyárs (*Betyárok*) is a rougher sketch. In Jókai's story, highway men from the Plain taught each other how to endure corporal punishment. They did it so well that they did not mind 50–60 slaps. A horse-thief got his beatings yearly, but he never cried out in pain. *Betyárs* taught each other how to place one foot over the other after every ten slaps, marking the count. When the *betyár* was allowed to get off the rack, he clapped his ankles. The ideal *betyárs* endured this without ever showing signs of weakness or woe.

To conclude, it is essential to remember that Wándza wrote his *betyár* play (when Marci Zöld's death was news) in the decade which was so fruitful in Hungarian drama history, giving József Katona's *Viceroy Bánk* (even if it was not recognized at the time) and Károly Kisfaludy's plays. This critical period forced people to look for new points of self-reference and new aspects of individual and community life. Tradition seemed to collapse, and the energies of the reform age were still far.

Wándza's *Martzi Zöld* was meant to entertain an audience with lower educational level not simply because the theme was an outlaw's life, but because a *hybrid genre* as Balog's or Wándza's play did not harmonize with extant rules of classicism, preromanticism, etc. However, Sunday entertainment and popular theatre did not allow for too much conflict and reflection. When in Wándza's play *Martzi*, the outlaw is tracked down amidst a fine rural wedding, the collision between the outsider and the community is brutal and mysterious: having sung and danced, the best man of the feast expresses joy when the robbers are captivated, and he even gives *Martzi* a few slaps (3.13.).

As early as 1817, in *Martzi Zöld* the community is not idealised, and the protagonist cannot articulate what he revolts against. Katona's *Tiborc*, Petőfi's *Szilveszter*, some of Szigligeti's heroes⁷⁶ will know more of that. Wándza's hybrid play, eventually, was amorphous but not without structure. It was collage-like, everyday-like, shrill, untempered, rough, low, but it was update and served its audience.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ JÓKAI 1992, 265.

⁷⁶ Gerskovics notes that Szigligeti's heroes, aware as they are, make compromises. GERSKOVICS 1969, 712.

⁷⁷ To serve perhaps Balog and Wándza right, Veszprém Kabóca (Cicada) Puppet Theatre staged *Marci Zöld, a körhintás betyár* (the merry-go-round robber) in 2015.