

**JOSEPH REMÉNYI AND SOCIALIST WORLD  
LITERATURE: SHIFTING MINOR, SMALL AND  
WORLD LITERATURE FROM SINGULAR TO PLURAL**

**JOSEPH REMÉNYI E A LITERATURA SOCIALISTA  
MUNDIAL: MUDANDO A LITERATURA MENOR, PEQUENA  
E MUNDIAL DO SINGULAR PARA O PLURAL**

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**Abstract:** Hungarian American scholar, Joseph Reményi's concepts of "minority literature," "small nation literature," and "world literatures" highlight the shift from the singular forms Deleuze and Guattari's "minor literature," Pascale Casanova's "small literature," and Marx and Engels and Karl Radek's "world literature" to their plural counterparts. In the discourse on "minor literature" and "small literature," Reményi offers a nuanced categorization of Hungarian literary production following the First World War. He delineates it into three distinct strands: "literature in Hungary," "literature of Hungarian exiles," and "Hungarian literature in the Successor States." This tripartite classification not only encapsulates the varied loci of Hungarian literary expression but also underscores the emerging literary dichotomy between Hungarian and Slavic & Soviet literatures in the aftermath of the Second World War. As for "world literature," Reményi's conceptual framework, which pivots on the axes of "regionalism" and "internationalism," segments world literature into four stratified layers: minority and marginal → local → national → world. This theoretical model facilitates a repositioning of the intrinsic diversities inherent within each stratum, mapping them onto a spectrum of diverse nations, cultural groups, and minority populations. Furthermore, Reményi's concept of "world literatures" represents a shift from the singular notion of Goethe's "eine allemeine Weltliteratur", Marx and Engels' "eine Weltliteratur", and Radek's "contemporary world literature" to a pluralized understanding. For "socialist literature", Reményi's categorization of Hungarian

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literature within the Western European tradition, as opposed to Eastern European literature, signifies the multifaceted nature of socialist literature. This concept, initially introduced by Marx and Engels in 1848, further elaborated by Radek in 1934, is eventually expanded by Reményi into a more pluralistic form as socialist literatures in 1956. The fusion of Reményi's concept of "world literatures" and "socialist literatures" provided a gateway to construct Socialist World Literature.

**Keywords:** Joseph Reményi, minor literature, small literature, world literature.

**Resumo:** Os conceitos do estudioso húngaro-americano Joseph Reményi de "literatura minoritária", "literatura de pequena nação" e "literaturas mundiais" destacam a mudança das formas singulares da "literatura menor" de Deleuze e Guattari, da "pequena literatura" de Pascale Casanova e de Marx e Engels e a "literatura mundial" de Karl Radek às suas contrapartes plurais. No discurso sobre "literatura menor" e "literatura pequena", Reményi oferece uma categorização matizada da produção literária húngara após a Primeira Guerra Mundial. Ele a delinea em três vertentes distintas: "literatura na Hungria", "literatura dos exilados húngaros" e "literatura húngara nos Estados Sucessores". Esta classificação tripartida não só engloba os variados locais da expressão literária húngara, mas também sublinha a emergente dicotomia literária entre as literaturas húngara, eslava e soviética no período posterior ao da Segunda Guerra Mundial. Quanto à "literatura mundial", o quadro conceptual de Reményi, que gira nos eixos do "regionalismo" e do "internacionalismo", segmenta a literatura mundial em quatro camadas estratificadas: minoritária e marginal → local → nacional → mundial. Esse modelo teórico facilita um reposicionamento das diversidades intrínsecas inerentes a cada estrato, mapeando-as num espectro de diversas nações, grupos culturais e populações minoritárias. Além disso, o conceito de "literaturas mundiais" de Reményi representa uma mudança da noção singular de "eine allemeine Weltliteratur" de Goethe, de "eine Weltliteratur" de Marx e Engels e de "literatura mundial contemporânea" de Radek para uma compreensão pluralizada. Para a "literatura socialista", a categorização da literatura húngara feita por Reményi dentro da tradição da Europa Ocidental, em oposição à literatura da Europa Oriental, representa a natureza multifacetada da literatura socialista. Tal conceito, inicialmente introduzido por Marx e Engels em 1848, posteriormente elaborado por Radek em 1934, é finalmente expandido por Reményi para uma forma mais pluralista para as literaturas socialistas em 1956. A fusão do conceito de Reményi de "literaturas mundiais" e "literaturas socialistas" forneceu uma porta de entrada para a construção da Literatura Socialista Mundial.

**Palavras-chave:** Joseph Reményi, literatura menor, pequena literatura, literatura mundial.

## I. RETHINKING WORLD LITERATURE FROM THE SOCIALIST SIDE

Dubravka Juraga and M. Keith Booker (2002, p. 1) once stressed that "most Western observers have seen the collapse of the Soviet Union" as not only "the end of the Cold War", but also "the collapse and final historical repudiation of socialism itself." Similarly, Nina Kolesnikoff and Walter Smyrniw (1994, p. 7) concluded at the beginning of the post-Soviet age that "in the early 1990s, when it became clear that after the collapse of political

systems in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Socialist Realism ceased to exist as well”, because “as an official method imposed by the state on the creative arts, Socialist Realism could only function as long as that political system was in power.” (p. 7) Notwithstanding that “at the beginning of the twenty-first century, billions of people still live in countries that officially identify themselves as socialist, including the two billion people who live under nominally socialist systems in China and India,” because “those people, after all are Orientals, and can’t be expected to behave entirely rationally.” (JURAGA; BOOKER, 2002, p. 1) In short, the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of socialism and Socialist Realism for many Western scholars. However, Eastern scholars, as noted by Juraga and Booker, argue that the post-Soviet period doesn’t necessarily signify the end of socialism or Socialist Realism for them. These scholars point to the continued existence of socialist systems, especially in countries like India and China, where billions of people still live under socialist governance. In these regions, there is a desire to reshape or rewrite World Literature to reflect their unique socio-political and cultural contexts influenced by socialist ideologies. This suggests that, despite the demise of the Soviet Union, socialism remains a relevant and influential force in certain parts of the world, shaping both political structures and artistic expressions, such as literature. For instance, the Indian scholar, Aamir R. Mufti’s *Forget English! Orientalism and World Literatures* (2016). Similarly, billions of individuals who previously lived under a socialist system are also endeavoring to redefine World Literature, e.g., Martin, Moraru and Terian edited *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (2017), and Mihaela P. Harper and Dimitar Kambourov edited *Bulgarian Literature as World Literature* (2020). In addition, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, numerous Soviet scholars engaged in rewriting Socialist Realism, translating their works into English, or directly publishing in English. For example, Boris Groys’s *The Total Art of Stalinism* (1992), Régine Robin’s *Socialist Realism. An Impossible Aesthetic* (1992), or Nina Kolesnikoff and Water Smyrniw’s *Socialist Realism Revisited* (1994), Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dombrenko’s *Socialist Realism without Shores* (1997), Irina Gutkin’s *The Cultural Origins of the Socialist Realist Aesthetic* (1999), Evgeny Dombrenko’s *The Making of the State Reader* (1997), *The Making of the State Writer* (2001), and *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (2007).

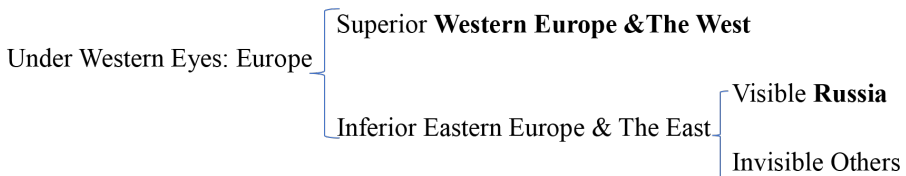
These rewrites introduced new elements to World Literature, challenging its traditionally West European orientation for the first time since Goethe's *Weltliteratur* in 1827, they shared certain similarities in various aspects. On one hand, while reevaluating World Literature, they disregarded its historical reconfiguration in English before the collapse of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, in their efforts to rewrite socialism, they not only detached it from World Literature as a whole, but also confined much of its narrative to the context of the Soviet Union. Therefore, it is crucial to delve into the historical concepts of Socialist World Literature and reevaluate the influence of Socialist Realism on literature globally. It is within this context that this chapter opts to examine Joseph Reményi's perspectives on World Literature.

Reményi holds the distinction of being the initial scholar born in the Socialist Bloc, formally advocating for the inclusion of Socialist Realism in English within the realm of World Literature. Furthermore, Reményi took the initiative to edit the inaugural collection dedicated to Socialist World Literature: *World Literatures* (1956). Certainly, Reményi is not the first scholar to assert the core idea of Socialist Literature, but he contributed a crucial layer to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and Karl Radek's concepts. Chapter I of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) was the genesis of Socialist World Literature, mainly because of its proclamation that the bourgeoisie's "exploitation of the world market gives a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country." (MARX; ENGELS, 1987/2000, [s.p.]). This character exerted influence over both "material" and "intellectual" aspects of production and consumption, which made "the intellectual creations of individual nations become common property." Therefore, "national one-sidedness and narrow mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature." The five key phrases of Marx and Engels' concept are "individual nations," "common property," "national literatures," and "local literatures," which broadened Goethe's concept of "Weltliteratur" when reading the Chinese novel *Haoqiu Zhuang* in two ways: "national literature is now rather an unmeaning term, the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach." (GOETHE, 1883, p. 212) On one hand, Goethe's core idea centered around the interconnection of two levels: *national literatures* → *World Literature*, namely the national and the global, with the "nation" serving as the foundational premise. Marx and Engels divided this interconnection into *three levels*: *local literatures* → *national literatures* → *World Literature*. On the other hand, Marx and Engels introduced an additional layer of Socialism into World Literature:

“common property”, which was absorbed by Karl Radek. There was also a trend of shifting World Literature from Paris to Moscow after the formation of the Soviet Union. At the First Soviet Writers’ Congress, Radek (2004[1934], [s.p.]) mentioned “the split in [contemporary] world literature” as “bourgeois literature” and “proletarian literature.” Based on this split, Radek asked the question “James Joyce or Socialist Realism?” ([s.p.]). Then, he concluded that Socialist Realism was the answer and hence, constituted a new direction of World Literature:

Permit me to express the hope that at this first international congress of Soviet revolutionary writers we shall be able to say that since the time of our present congress a great socialist literature has arisen, based on the consummation of the building of socialism in the USSR, on the victory of the socialist revolution in a number of countries, on the alliance of the best writers of dying capitalism with the proletarian writers into one family of those who create the images of the new life – of life in the epoch of victorious socialism (RADEK, 2004, ([s.p.]).

However, Radek’s anticipation of the new epoch of Socialist World Literature never came to fruition for three main reasons, one of which was the Soviet Union’s underprivileged status within Europe and the cultural competition during the Cold War. Another was the conflicts within the Socialist Bloc, Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union, including the Sino-Soviet conflict that started in 1954, the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, and the Prague Spring of 1968. Those conflicts sustained contradictions between small nations and large ones, e.g., Russia as the large and dominating nation, Czechoslovakia and Hungary as the small ones. The Soviet status in Europe and internal conflicts within the Soviet Union could be described as follows:



Hungary is one of the “Invisible Others” that holds significance in rethinking Socialist World Literature due to its short-lived socialist regime in the early 1920s and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Furthermore, Hungary is noteworthy for its minorities and marginalized groups with

diverse ethnic identities and nationalisms<sup>2</sup>, encompassing dynamics such as individual/collective, minority/majority, and marginal groups/mainstreams. These factors have contributed to internal and local issues in the socialist country since the mid-nineteenth century, presenting another reason why R's vision of a new life failed to materialize. These internal problems not only encompassed the third level of Marx and Engels' Socialist World Literature, i.e., local literature, but also revealed a fourth level of World Literature comprising minority literature and marginal literature. Therefore, it is essential to consider those three perspectives simultaneously to accurately reinterpret and rewrite Socialist World Literature, a primary characteristic of the theories put forth by the Hungarian American scholar, Joseph Reményi.

## II. REGIONALISM, MINORITY & MARGINAL GROUPS, AND MINOR LITERATURE

Based on Goethe's definition of *Weltliteratur*, the mainstream of World Literature has traditionally been rooted in the national context. This is because the premise and logic of "the end of national literature" dictate that there must be a nation for national literature to exist. However, on one hand, the national context falls short in explaining the circumstances of certain minority and marginal groups that don't neatly align with a single nation or may belong to two or more nations simultaneously. Consequently, their identities are primarily international and global rather than strictly national. This complexity was a prevalent phenomenon in the eras of the World War and Cold War, especially for scholars who either compelled to seek exile or voluntarily opting for emigration from small countries in the Socialist bloc due to heightened political pressures. On the contrary, the national context proves inadequate in elucidating internal conflicts within a nation, such as the contradictions among diverse races and classes, and the perpetual dominance of certain races and classes

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Hungary had "a population of approximately 9.5 million" in 1804. "1.6 million lived in Transylvania, where there were around 580,000 Magyars and Szekelys (35.9 percent of the total), 850,000 Romanians (52.7 percent), 140,000 Germans (8.7 percent), and 43,000 people of other ethnic backgrounds (Armenians, Roma, Greeks, Ukrainians, etc.). Of the other "estimated 7.9 million" in Hungary, excluding Transylvania, but "including Croatia, Slavonia, and the southern border territories", approximately "3.3 million (42 percent) were Magyars, 790,000 Romanians (10 percent), 1.1 million Slovaks, 1.48 million (18.5 percent) Serbians and Croats, 750,000 Germans (9.2 percent), 280,000 Ruthenians (3.8 percent), and 180,000 other." See Szelényi (2006, p. 115).

over others. Hence, Goethe's definition of literature, which emphasizes "national contexts" as the crucial element for international recognition, proves inadequate when applied to minorities or marginal groups. While certain internal conflicts within a nation might be examined through Marx and Engels' local contexts, two layers of these conflicts would still be overlooked. The first involves internal issues within a local context, and the second pertains to trans-local contexts within a nation, characterized by Reményi as minority and marginal contexts.

## 1 Minority and Marginal Contexts of World Literature

Reményi was born in Pozsony (Bratislava), Hungary, on December 1, 1892. During the period when Pozsony belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a significant European power. Reményi barely mentioned the problems of minority or marginal groups before World War I, but afterwards, he began to regard Hungarians as minorities and he divided them into two marginal groups, one of which was Hungarian-American. Reményi came to the United States in 1914 and "was appointed to a secretarial post in the Austro-Hungarian consulate at Philadelphia." This "was a decisive break away from his contact with writer-journalists who energized Hungarian literature during the early twentieth century" (MOLNAR, 1964, p. ix) for two reasons. On one hand, Reményi began to work on immigration problems. After a short stay in Philadelphia, he moved to Cleveland, where he "joined the editorial staff of the Hungarian daily *Szabadság*," and later he "became an immigration expert for the Cleveland Trust Company for about a year and then accepted the position of social investigator for the Cleveland Foundation." In this job, he "interviewed more than 800 foreign-born men and women from Central and Southeastern Europe." (p. ix) On the other hand, Reményi became "the literary spokesman and apologist for the relatively new community of Hungarian immigrants in America who sought to bridge the gap between Central Europe and American culture." Most of his novels and stories, including *Új emberek* (*New Man*, 1915), *Messzeségek* (*Distances*, 1916), *Amerika* (*America*, 1916) and *A sárga székfü* (*The Yellow Carnation*, 1917) "identified completely with the hopes and fears of the immigrant." (p. x).

Becoming an American citizen on August 23, 1918, was an important turning point in Reményi's life, which he "always spoke of with pride," because "he was an American by choice," which "means to be born a second time, but with one constant" (Molnar ix). Nevertheless, Reményi

started to perceive a gap in his own identity between Hungary and America. This prompted him to not only address the challenges faced by fellow Hungarians who “emigrated to the United States and experienced difficulty in settling down”; for instance, János Barth in Reményi’s series of stories like “*Jó hinni (It is Good to Believe)*, Budapest, 1922, *Emberék, ne sírjatok (Men, Don’s Cry)*, Berlin, 1926, and *Élni kell (One Must Live)*, Kassa, 1931” (Molnar, p. x), but he also described his own struggles in the United States. Novels like *Lesz-e reggel (Will There Be a Morning)*, 1928), *Szerelmesek voltak (They Were in Love)*, 1936), and his “autobiographical verse” *Idegenben (Abroad)*, 1934), all portrayed the personal difficulties he had to overcome as a Hungarian in America. Reményi’s transformation can be attributed to World War I, specifically the consequences of the so-called peace treaty of Trianon in 1920, as he explained in his own words, “more than two thirds of the Hungarian nation have been ceded to the surrounding countries. Ten million Magyars live in Hungary proper, and about three million in the Transylvanian section of Romania, in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, eastern Austria, and elsewhere in Europe.” (MOLNAR, 1964, p. 30) The aftermath of World War I further fueled Reményi’s apprehension regarding Hungarians being relegated to a minority and marginalized status, a consequence of regionalism; more precisely, due to 1) Aron Tamasi, a Transylvanian regionalist, 2) Transylvania as a “Succession State” of Romania, and 3) the characteristic of Hungarian literature of “Succession States”.

In “Aron Tamasi, The Transylvanian Regionalist”, Reményi (1946b, p. 135) described Tamasi from two perspectives: (1) his home is Transylvania; (2) all Tamasi’s writings to “imply that he consecrated his life to the service of the Szekely (Sekler) people, his kin.” Reményi composed an extensive footnote detailing the Szekely to elucidate their connection with Hungary and Transylvania:

Approximately 500,000 Szekelys (Seklers) live in the southeastern corner of Transylvania. Historians, ethnographers and linguists are uncertain about their origin. According to legends they are the descendants of Attila’s Huns, there is a theory which links them with the Avars, then there are those who declare that they are Magyars who in medieval times were transplanted to Transylvania by Hungarian kings to guard the frontiers. The total population of Transylvania is about 3,500,000, of which 40% are Hungarians, including the Szekelys, the rest are Roumanians, Saxons and a sprinkling of other nationalities. The Szekelys are a highly imaginative people, thrifty, good artisans and toilers of the soil (REMÉNYI, 1946b, p. 135).



Reményi's discussion of Tamasi and the Szekely (Sekler) people serves as an exemplar for delving into the intricate layers of the identity of minority and marginal groups in Transylvania from the end of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. This exploration includes an analysis of their national identity predicament as Hungarians. Tamasi "was born in 1897" (REMÉNYI, 1946b, p. 138) in Transylvania, a complicated region in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Turkish Empire had overrun Hungary in 1526 and occupied it "for one and a half centuries" (CZIGÁNY, 1984, p. 9) but a "smaller part" of Hungary "came under Austrian rule" that "on account of the decline of the Turkish Empire," and Transylvania only "existed as a semi-independent principality under the patronage of the Sultan of Turkey." Hungary was "incorporated in the Habsburg Empire" at the end of the "seventeenth century," when the Austrians were "able to extend their rule to virtually the whole country" and the "Habsburgs regarded their new acquisition as a colony." (CZIGÁNY, 1984, p. 9) Reményi addressed these changes by emphasizing Transylvania's historical significance "as a buffer-state between the Turkish Empire which penetrated deeply into Europe, and the Habsburg Monarchy," and that this "small country was the only pillar of the independent Hungarian State idea" in "the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." (REMÉNYI, 1946b, p. 136) Briefly, the Hungarians lacked autonomy under the Habsburg Empire. However, this scenario underwent transformation with the growth of national consciousness, coinciding with the Habsburgs' waning power, leading to a compromise reached in 1867. The Habsburg was "divided between the Austrians and the Hungarians and became the Austro-Hungarian Empire", which was "a major European power before World War I." (CZIGÁNY, 1984, p. 9).

Nevertheless, Hungary was "reduced to one-third of her former territories" (CZIGÁNY, 1984, p. 9) after World War I for two reasons. One was the Hungarian-Romanian War that started on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1918 and ended on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1919, when "Romanian troops occupied Budapest," along with "much of the Hungarian territory, chiefly Transylvania." (CLAYTON, 2021, pp. 137-138)<sup>3</sup> The other was the Paris Conference in January 1920, which put an end to World War I and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and then the Treaty of

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<sup>3</sup> According to Matt Clayton (2021, pp. 137-138), the main reason the Romanians won was because, during World War I, the Allies were "keen on using Romanian troops to prevent the spread of Bolshevism from Russia, so they largely turned a blind eye to Romanian gains in 1919".

Trianon in June 1920 to “officially define the borders of Hungary.” (p. 136) More precisely, the Treaty of Trianon shifted Hungary from being “a major European power” to a minor country. On June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1920, the Allies “were able to effect the formation of a Hungarian government under Admiral Horthy that was willing to deal with them, and the peace treaty was finally signed at the Trianon Palace in Versailles.” This meant that, “like Austria, Hungary emerged as a sadly shrunken state, with only one-third of her pre-war territory and about 40 percent of her pre-war population” (ROUNCEK, 1947, p. 59) as follows:

The Trianon Treaty misplaced 3 million Magyars in neighboring states. Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia became part of Czechoslovakia. Croatia, including the Adriatic coast and Fiume, Slavonia, and the western third of the Banat, were ceded to Yugoslavia. Rumania acquired the large and prosperous province of Transylvania, whose population was almost 60 percent Rumanian, and the eastern two-thirds of the Banat of Temesvar, on the northern bank of the Danube (ROUNCEK, 1947, p. 59).

In other words, the Trianon Treaty was the turning point of the segmentation of Hungarian territory. One-third of the original Hungarian territory was re-located to other countries near the new Hungary, and Reményi called the territory that belonged to other states “Succession States”. Hence, the general meaning of “Hungarian literature in the Succession States” is the literature written by Hungarians in those States. However, Reményi left an open question, because he failed to clarify the language the Hungarians used in their writing. Therefore, “Hungarian literature in the Succession States” was very broadly defined as long as the writers were Hungarian. Furthermore, the Trianon Treaty also “gave rise to the greatest racial disturbances and animosities”<sup>4</sup> among the Hungarians. For example, Hungarians constituted the majority of the population in Transylvania before World War I, and Romanians were the minority, but Hungarians officially became internal exiles after 1920 and, hence, the minority in Transylvania, and Romanians became the majority, even though there were fewer Romanians than Hungarians in the country. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the identity of the Hungarian minority retained multiple layers, constituting a significant aspect of Reményi’s case study on the identity transition of Tamasi.

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<sup>4</sup> For European minority problems caused by the Trianon Treaty, please see Joseph S. Rouncek (1947, pp. 63-67); for World War I & II impact on Hungary, see Rouncek (1947, pp. 422-444).

Tamasi was born in 1897 and raised in Transylvania in the Austro-Hungary Empire as one of the Hungarian majorities, but when “Transylvania was annexed to Roumania in 1920,” he became one of the minority Hungarians in Romania. As a Transylvanian, Tamasi belonged to the Szekelys, who made up almost 30% of the total Hungarians in Transylvania and, as a Szekely, he was born “in the village of Farkaslaka, County Udvarhely.” (REMÉNYI, 1946b, pp. 136-138) Thus, Tamasi’s identity transited from majority to minority because World War I and the disappearance of the Austro-Hungary Empire. Tamasi’s minority identity since 1920 could be described as having four layers:

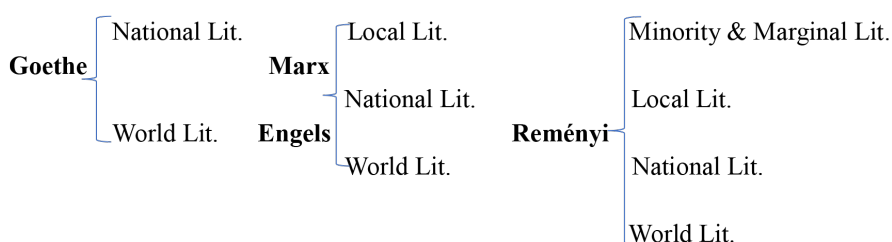
Village Farkaslaka → Szekelys → Hungarian → Transylvanian of Romania

From these four layers, it becomes evident that Reményi’s concept of minority expanded Marx and Engels’ regional and local contexts of national literature by incorporating minority and marginal layers. More precisely, in the case of Tamasi, Reményi categorized the distinctive characteristics of Transylvania as a region into three layers: encompassing the entire region, the communities of various minority groups, and the diverse villages inhabited by different minority groups.

However, Reményi’s notion of minority and marginal groups was not solely based on regionalism and diverse regional levels. Reményi considered two more perspectives: Hungarians’ identity trauma and related Hungarian literature. After the Trianon Treaty, the Hungarians “in the Transylvanian section of Romania” and other Succession States such as “Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, eastern Austria, and elsewhere in Europe” (MOLNAR, 1964, p. 30) were similarly forced to accept a new identity of “belonging to a minority” due to “the political change.” (REMÉNYI, 1937, p. 416) Reményi observed that Hungarians faced three identity problems, which were fostered by geographical and political changes. Minorities residing in their native regions but falling under the Succession States encountered challenges of regionalism and nationalism. Meanwhile, those who stayed in Hungary grappled with emerging nationalism, and exiles, whether voluntary or involuntary, found themselves caught between nationalism and internationalism. All three groups experienced profound trauma, or to say they all “involved a heretofore unknown psychology”, which “meant self-consciousness, divided orientation, paralyzing uneasiness, fear of suspicion,  *nolens volens* an attitude which hurt their pride.” (REMÉNYI, 1937, p. 416) This psychological trauma gave rise to two distinct forms of

literature: “literature of Hungarian exiles”, and “Hungarian literature in the Succession States.” (MOLNAR, 1964, p. 30).

Based on these identity problems, Reményi categorized Hungarian literature into three distinct classifications: (1) “literature in Hungary”; (2) “literature of Hungarian exiles”; and (3) “Hungarian literature in the Succession States.” (MOLNAR, 1964, p. 30) These categories serve as primary illustrations for elucidating the four layers of the World Literature context. Moreover, those categories not only expand upon Goethe’s *Weltliteratur*, but also enrich Marx and Engels’ three layers of Socialist World Literature as follows:



Reményi’s ideas of a Hungarian minority and marginal groups and their related literature are important for redefining 1) minority and marginal groups, and 2) “minor literature” in a contemporary world view<sup>5</sup> for two reasons. The first is that Reményi’s ideas simultaneously included three core aspects of minority: national roots, regional roots, and a marginal position. Only two of these aspects are normally used to discuss a minority: national and marginal, or regional and marginal, e.g., African American, and Asian American. All three of them would only be included in a discussion of certain political situations, such as war (including the practical Hot War and symbolic Cold War) and political refugees. As Milan Kundera mentioned in *Central Europe*, having an Eastern European regional identity, in addition to a complex nationality

<sup>5</sup> Even for Hungarians in Hungary, Romania, America and elsewhere, Reményi’s ideas of a Hungarian minority, in exile and their literature are still useful, especially when more books about Hungarians as a “minority” are published in English. For example, Endre Szentkirályi’s *Being Hungarian in Cleveland: Maintaining Language, Culture, and Traditions* (2019), Tamás Kiss, István Gergő Székely, Tibor Toró, Nándor Bárdi and István Horváth etc., *Unequal Accommodation of Minority Rights: Hungarians in Transylvania* (2018), Ferenc Laczó’s *Hungarian Jews in the Age of Genocide: An Intellectual History, 1929–1948* (2016), Balázs A. Szelényi’s *The Failure of the Central European Bourgeoisie: New Perspectives on Hungarian History* (2006), Anna Fenyvesi etd., *Hungarian Language Contact Outside Hungary: Studies on Hungarian as a minority language* (2005), and so on.

as a “forced exile” in the West, he could not ignore his marginal position in the West because he came from “Eastern Europe.”<sup>6</sup> The second reason is that Reményi’s ideas covered multiple contexts of minority regions, e.g., Tamasi’s Farkaslaka village identity as a local minority within the Szekely group, his County Udvarhely identity as a regional minority in Transylvania, and his Transylvanian identity as a Hungarian minority in Romania. These contexts are important for rethinking “minor literature”, especially to challenge Deleuze and Guattari’s “*littérature mineure*” from Central and Eastern European perspectives, and even worldwide. This is because they establish a foundation for a thorough explanation of the diverse challenges within a minority and marginalized group, as well as within a region teeming with various minority and marginal groups.

## 2. Redefining Minor Literature

In terms of “minor literature”, Deleuze and Guattari published *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* in 1975. It was translated into English by Dona Polan in 1986 as *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, and Deleuze and Guattari’s conception began to dominate minor literature studies. However, in treating his writings as minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari failed to properly address some of Kafka’s real literary concerns, as emphasized by Stanley Corngold (2004, p. 146):

What minor literature does Kafka actually have in mind? He gives the examples in 1911 of contemporary Yiddish literature in Warsaw – or as much as he knows

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<sup>6</sup> During the Cold War, the Eastern Bloc was simplified in two ways by those in the Western Bloc. One way was the simplification of the Eastern Bloc as “Eastern Europe”, which excluded “Western Europe”, and then covered the rest of Europe. However, Milan Kundera disagreed: “As a Czech writer I don’t like being pigeon-holed in the literature of Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe is a purely political term barely thirty years old. As far as cultural tradition is concerned Eastern Europe is Russia, whereas Prague belonged to Central Europe. Unfortunately, West Europeans don’t know their geography”; see Kundera (1977-11, p. 4). The other was the simplification of the Socialist Bloc literature as political propaganda. Kundera also emphasized that under Western eyes, Eastern European literature was defined as “indeed nothing more than a propaganda instrument, be it pro- or anti-Communist”, because there were only two kinds of Eastern European writers – either dissident or committed. Kundera proposed that this simplification by Western Europeans was no better than the censorship by Eastern commentators because “They [Western Europeans] murder [Eastern European] books by reducing them to a mere political interpretation. Such people are only interested in so-called “Eastern” writers as long as their books are banned. As far as they are concerned, there are official writers and opposition writers – and that is all.” (pp. 5-6).

about it from Lowy, one of the actors appearing in Yiddish plays in Prague that year – as well as “contemporary Czech literature”, as he has experienced it: “I stress: typical minor literatures for Kafka are Yiddish and Czech – and certainly not, pace Deleuze and Guattari, the literature written in the German of Prague authors.”

Deleuze and Guattari focused on Kafka’s minority identity as a German Jew in Prague but, as Lowell Edmunds (2010, pp. 353-354) pointed out, Kafka’s concerns had two layers, one of which was a Jewish minority, directly based on Löwy’s performance. Löwy, who came from Warsaw, was “an actor in a Yiddish theatrical group whose performances in Prague Kafka was attending in 1911.” The other was “not Jewish but simply Czech,” with the following rationale:

as Kafka proceeds, it becomes clear that he intends to speak of the literature of a small nation, such as the Czechs constituted within the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Kafka’s day, whereas the Jews of Warsaw were not a nation except metaphorically (Lowell, 2010, pp. 353-354).

Briefly, Kafka’s minority identity should be interpreted in multiple minority and related regional contexts, rather than a single context, as interpreted by Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, neglecting the intricate layers of minority and regional contexts would oversimplify minority groups and minor literature. For example, the minor literature studies of Eastern European intellectuals are problematic, as emphasized by Stanley Corngold (2004, p. 145):

This reading of Kafka as a local revolutionary figure further in the larger event of self-reflection taking place in Central and East Europe since the 1990s, where critics and writers have been displaying an acute awareness of the long-suppressed factor of national identity... For when Central and Eastern European intellectuals address questions of ethnic or national identity, they are commenting willy-nilly on Kafka’s now famous essay on the literature of small nations. This essay – a five-page diary entry written in 1911 – also occupies a central position in Deleuze and Guattari’s account of Kafka’s own work as the project of someone writing within the boundaries of minor literature. Both inside and outside Central and Eastern European countries, it is used to justify the claim that ethnic and linguistic difference can *as such* resist hegemonic powers, institutions, and discourses.

As accurately pointed out by Corngold, adopting Deleuze and Guattari’s perspective on Kafka for concluding minor literature would lead to two adverse consequences. On one hand, the interpretation and understanding of Central and Eastern European literature would

be distorted if reliant on Deleuze and Guattari's Western concepts and standards. On the other hand, the majority of Central and Eastern European scholars do not actively pursue or represent Eastern theoretical resources. The division of West and East and the unequal literary power under Western European cultural hegemony usually guided Central and Eastern European scholars to talk to the West, rather than have an internal conversation among themselves. Therefore, changing this situation involves urgently retracing their footsteps to the Central and Eastern European tradition to discover their own idea of "minor literature".

In this sense, Reményi's regionalism-oriented minority literature is beneficial for rethinking minor literature. In the past decades, how to redefine minor literature and challenge Deleuze and Guattari's pattern are the main concerns in minor literature studies. The new trend of these studies includes two directions: one is "ultraminor" (Berger Rønne Moberg and David Damrosch) or "minor within minor" (Theo D'haen) groups' literary rights and cultural identities, e.g., gay, female, Jewish, and Island people. The other is regionalism-centered, which includes the multiple layers of a region, e.g., small, like a village within a county, middle, like Harlem where African Americans from North to South gathered, or big, like Central Europe to Kundera. The similarity between these two directions is the uniqueness of both minority groups and their literature, different from Deleuze and Guattari, different from Kafka, even different from each other. Reményi discussed these differences both collectively and privately.<sup>7</sup>

In "Hungarian Regionalistic Literature" (REMÉNYI, 1937, pp. 416-418), Reményi delineates the collective distinction between Hungarians and the Hungarian literature in "the Succession States" and "at home" based on two perspectives. On one hand, the political situation differs because the former is "always under the control of censorship," which is more stringent than that of mainland Hungary. On the other hand, writers and poets in Hungary did not endure as much psychological and aesthetic strain as their counterparts in the Succession States. The latter always faced "the Damocles sword of an alien power is forever over their

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<sup>7</sup> This does not mean that Reményi discussed the full scope of "minority" because the definition of "minority" is complex since it includes culture, religion, language, race, gender, and so on. However, this complexity is necessary to find solutions, and my main point is that Reményi's theory of the multiple layers of "minority" and "regionalism" could solve this complexity.

heads,” and they also “sensed that socially they were not wanted.” These Hungarians quickly understood that they belonged to “a minority” group, whose “tomorrow was uncertain,” whose lives were under suspicion, creative freedom was under harsh censorship, and the “idea of being a Hungarian writer or poet seemed to be a hopeless task.” Therefore, even being “aesthetically honest cannot afford the luxury of caring for literature as the essential *raison d’être* of their existence.” (pp. 416-418).

Nevertheless, despite these challenges, Hungarian writers and poets in the Succession States persisted in writing and creating their regionalistic literature, depicting their distinctive living conditions. This regional literature exhibited two crucial features, the first being its connection to regionalism, particularly with the Hungarian language and patriotism. Despite the harsh new living conditions in the Succession States, they endured and navigated through the ensuing challenges as follows:

[...] neither poverty, nor opportunism, nor the *danse macabre* of ceaseless anxiety, can prevent the Hungarian writers and poets of Romania (Transylvania), Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia from seeking from for their versions, giving body to their dreams, keeping alive the music, suggestiveness and expressiveness of the Hungarian language (REMÉNYI, 1937, p. 416).

Furthermore, their creative work portrayed their will to live as “Hungarians in the Succession States.” Therefore, they produced regionalist Hungarian literature, not only “as a self-conscious realization of creative individuality”, but also to “reflect the general emotional and intellectual trend of a group.” (REMÉNYI, 1937, pp. 416-418) In essence, regardless of their subject matter, chosen methods, or the quality of their talent, these writers and poets steadfastly uphold the principle of regionalism. Simultaneously, they vehemently reject the accusation that their work merely reflects a provincial outlook.

Secondly, it was intertwined with the universality of humanism, particularly in the context of humans expressing their will to live. Reményi emphasized that the talented Hungarian poets and writers of the Succession States knew “the inevitable psychological difficulty of their geographical position and they wish to surmount it” even though “in regionalist literature, the atmosphere is much in evidence and themes are limited.” They did this in two ways. The first was their patriotism: “their creative work portrays the will to live of the Hungarians, as Hungarians in the Succession States.” (REMÉNYI, 1937, pp. 417-418) The other was their humanism, because “they did not cease to sing, to write, to express



their visions, sorrows and infrequent joys under the most impossible conditions”, nor did they lose “their will to live.” (p. 418) For example, Reményi analyzed Tamasi’s individual minority identity and collective human concern from the regionalist perspective. When introducing Tamasi, Reményi emphasized his extraordinary talent located in “his effortless expression of personal and collective moods and aims”, in “the paramount significance of the kind of regionalism” that “consists in its organic wholeness with reference to the spirit of the writer as well as to the spirit of the people.” (REMÉNYI,1946b, p. 139).

Briefly, as a regionalist, Tamasi’s concern included the Szekely people, Hungarian, Transylvanian, Hungarian-American, and people in general. Tamasi traveled to the Americas, where he found much to appreciate, including the economic and social advantages for immigrants, modern conveniences in the new world, and the absence of haunting memories for American-born children. However, despite these positive aspects, he found himself compelled to return to the poverty-stricken, politically unstable, and uncertain land of his ancestors, because “he did not wish to be a *déraciné*.” (REMÉNYI,1946b, p. 139) In short, Tamasi did not choose to emigrate, but this did not narrow his worldview.

According to Reményi, the three subtitles of Tamasi’s representative plays effectively elucidated his perception of the world he inhabited and the corresponding literature<sup>8</sup> he aspired to create. The first play, *Enekes Madar (Song Bird)*, was subtitled *Transylvanian Folkplay, it Could Take Place in Any Szekely Village at Any Time*. The second, *Tundoklo Jeromos (Radiant Jerome)*, was subtitled *A Folkplay, it Takes Place in a Szekely Village, but it Could Happen Anywhere*. The third, *Vitez Lelek (Brave*

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<sup>8</sup> In my view, it is crucial to reassess both the world and literature to effectively question the Western-centric paradigm of World Literature. Diverse individuals harbor distinct ideas about the world they inhabit and seek to construct for their lives. These varied worldviews significantly impact their writings and shape their definition of literature. The concept of the world possesses dual layers of significance. On an individual level, it represents a geographical region, ranging from a tribe, village, or city to a province, state, continent, or hemisphere. Universally, for all human beings, it constitutes a political community, predominantly categorized as a country, a nation, or an ethnic territory. Reményi’s conception of “regionalism” and a “small nation” encompasses both these layers concurrently. Consequently, in Reményi’s viewpoint, it is logical to categorize the world into three layers from a political and collective standpoint: minority groups, small nations, and large nations. However, given the impossibility of overlooking the geographical and individual distinctions within these three parts, it becomes essential to contemplate them from a regionalist perspective, akin to Reményi’s approach.

*Soul*), was subtitled *A Serious Play*. The subtitle of the initial play signifies that “Tamasi sees the village from the inside,” (REMÉNYI,1946b, p.148) while concurrently introducing a cross-border dimension. This extends beyond the confines of a Szekely village to traverse both geographical and temporal borders. Similarly, in the second subtitle, Tamasi endeavors to transcend spatial limitations by crossing the border of a Szekely village to access anywhere. Furthermore, the protagonist Peter in the third play symbolizes not only the Hungarian spirit but also the collective spirit of the Hungarian people. Peter “buys a donkey, the symbol of humility”. In the villagers’ eyes, this is a “ridiculous” purchase, but Peter sees it as a “blessing” (p.148):

I bought a donkey because I wished to prove that even though beaten, a Hungarian can go on and he does not have to be the slave of anyone. I want to build a better world. For a beginning a donkey will do, as for a poor woman an egg is enough when she can't afford to buy anything. (REMÉNYI,1946b, p. 148).

The predominant characteristic of Tamasi’s writing could be characterized as “regionalism,” which Reményi described as the only option for “Hungarian culture in Transylvania after the First World War.” The “despondency of her writers and poets, the political barrier to the cultural development of self-reliance, were eventually balanced with regionalism as a principle by which writers and poets should be able to accomplish their creative aims.” (REMÉNYI,1946b, p. 136) Certainly, it is logical that Tamasi’s regionalism encompassed multiple layers, given the diverse levels of his regional perception. However, amid the numerous levels and layers, Hungarian literature served as the foundational pillar for Tamasi’s writing, reflecting his identity as a Hungarian. In essence, Reményi stressed that “literature in post-war Transylvania could act as a desirable blood-transfusion for all Hungarians, only if poets and writers expressed the essence of their environment.” Hence, writers and poets “recognized literature as the vehicle of national consciousness” in “the shipwrecked Hungarians of Transylvania.” (pp. 136-137).

The distinctive feature of Reményi’s theory on minority literature emerges through his examination of various collective and individual cases in a two-step process. Initially, he scrutinized the world inhabited by minorities, followed by a discussion on their corresponding literature and their conception of World Literature, all from a regionalist standpoint. In this regard, it can be contended that Reményi’s theory holds significance

for a nuanced reconsideration of minor literature and its intricate relationship with World Literature.

On one hand, the most apt approach to reconsider minor literature is to commence with an analysis of the unique significance of the world for specific minorities and marginal groups. Subsequently, the discussion should delve into the type of literature these minorities and groups have endeavored to create, along with their aspirations for the kind of World Literature they aim to construct or aspire to engage with. In this scenario, the dynamic between the writer and world literature can be elucidated as follows:

Writer → World → Literature → World Literature

In summary, Reményi's concepts pertaining to minority and marginal literature, encompassing the literature of Hun immigrants like Hungarian Americans and exiles in "Succession States" or elsewhere in Europe, have the potential to facilitate a comprehensive (re)reading and (re)interpretation of minor literature globally. Reményi not only clarified the nuanced layers within various minority and marginal groups within a region but also analyzed the similarities shared by a minority or marginal group living beyond a specific region or even a nation.<sup>9</sup>

By following Reményi's methodology, it becomes feasible to explore the commonalities among a minority or marginal group based on their ideological identity, such as socialism or Socialist Realism, rather than relying on biological standards like race or national criteria such as nationality. For example, following the triumph of Russia's October Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Union, numerous intellectuals, including Australian white scholars like Henry Lawson and Katharine Susannah Prichard, and African Americans like Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, opted to align themselves with Russia and Moscow-oriented Socialism. Subsequently, when Socialist Realism became the official cultural policy of the Soviet Union, intellectuals

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<sup>9</sup> For instance, while the majority of China's population belongs to the Han ethnicity, there are 55 minority groups. Traditionally, each minority group resided in specific regions, but due to urbanization and modernization, a minority group might now inhabit various locations throughout China, or different minorities and Han individuals coexist in a particular region. Additionally, the forces of globalization have led to the migration of many minorities to other countries, exemplified by communities like Chinese Americans and Chinese Australians.

worldwide engaged in the creation of novels adhering to the ideas of Socialist Realism, e.g., Alex la Guma of South Africa, Ousmane Sembéne of Senegal, Ralph de Boissière of Australia (but an immigrant from Trinidad), and Ning Ding, Shuli Zhao and Libo Zhou of China. Their novels remained, and continue to be, marginalized within the Western Europe-centered history of World Literature.

In addition, Reményi's Central European origins and his minority identity provide a robust challenge to Deleuze and Guattari's minor literature framework, which is centered around French literature. Based on Kafka's diaries, Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 16) stated that "a minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language." However, Corngold proposed that Deleuze and Guattari had misread Kafka, because for him, minor literature "comes from Yiddish and from Czech", and throughout his life, Kafka "was at work constructing a Jewish Prague literature, meaning to do so by heightening the idiomatic disparities of Prague German." (CORNGOLD, 2004, p. 154) Ultimately, Kafka's Jewish identity was rooted in Prague. It is only in this sense that it can be understood why Kafka, "as a Jew born in Prague" and "writing in German" had "an astute feeling of his intellectual predicament when he tried to speak for his nation." This, as expressed by Pascale Casanova, had endured "the major political preoccupation throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1850 and 1918." (CASANOVA, 2004, p. 120) This occupation failed to deter Kafka and his minority groups from employing their pens to advocate for their rights and amplify their voices, akin to what the Hungarians did in the Succession States. Nevertheless, in contrast to those Hungarians who found themselves estranged from their motherland and struggled to feel a sense of belonging in the face of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's collapse, Kafka and the associated minority groups were anticipating the emergence of a new independent nation. This is why Kafka determined to "describe small literature with a view to exposing the general mechanisms underlying the emergence of young national literature." (p. 198) This "young national literature" represented a new literary expression for a small nation, or as Reményi termed it, "small nation literature." This provided an avenue for reconsidering Kafka's idea of "klein" literature, challenging Pascal Casanova's "petite littérature," finding the plurality of Goethe's "*Weltliteratur*," adding "s" to Marx and Engels' "world literature," and deleting the singular "a."

### III. FROM WORLD LITERATURE TO WORLD LITERATURES

On January 31, 1827, when he was reading the Chinese novel entitled *Haoqiu Zhuang*,<sup>10</sup> Goethe (2014, pp. 212-213) articulated the concept of “Weltliteratur,” characterizing this Chinese novel as “remarkable” and asserting that “the Chinaman thinks, acts, and feels almost exactly like us,” but “without great passion or poetic flight.” After comparing the Chinese novel with his “Hermann and Dorothea,” “English novels of Richardson,” and “Chansons de Béranger,” Goethe concluded “national literature” as “an unmeaning term,” because “everyone” should welcome “the epoch of world literature.” However, he stressed that only some foreign literature should be regarded as the pattern and “we must not give this value to the Chinese, or the Servian, or Calderon, or the Nibelungen.” Because “if we really want a pattern, we must always return to the ancient Greeks,” and “all the rest we must look at historically, appropriating to ourselves what is good.” (GOETHE, 2014, p. 213).

Then, on July 15 that same year, Goethe expressed his enthusiasm for “a common world literature,” original words: “eine allgemeine Weltliteratur,” because the “intercourse is now so close between the French, English, and Germans, that we shall be able to correct one another,” which highlights “the great use of a world literature” (GOETHE, 2014, p. 270) in a singular manifestation. Similarly, in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels (2010, [s.p.]) underscored the pivotal terms “socialist literature” in a singular form, alongside another crucial term, “world literature”: “from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature [eine Weltliteratur],” ([s.p.]) also in a singular form. At the First Soviet Writers Congress in 1934, Karl Radek emphasized “the split in world literature” as “bourgeoisie literature” and “proletarian literature,” once again within a singular context. The question then arises regarding the plurality of “socialist literature” and “world literature.” Consequently, the inquiry arises regarding the plurality inherent in “socialist literature” and “world literature.”

#### 1. Nationalism, Small Nation Literature and Small Literature

Reményi frequently mentioned “small nations’ literature” in many articles, such as “A Survey of Hungarian Literature,” “Hungarian

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, there are different opinions about the novel that Goethe read at that time, please see Leslie O’Bell’s (2018 - Issue 2).

Literature During Three Decades, 1925-1955”, and so on. Then, his coined term formally surfaced in “Literature of ‘Small Nations’” (REMÉNYI, 1953, p. 119) when Reményi posed three pivotal questions: What defines a small nation? How does a small nation, along with its literature, face domination from larger nations? And, most crucially, how can the injustices suffered by small nation literature be addressed, and why is this imperative? Reményi believed that small nations were “politically and geographically less important nations”, as well as “culturally negligible,” (p. 119) and “at present politically, economically, socially, and culturally shut off from the West.” (p. 126) Hungary, Romania, and Czechoslovakia were the nations he specifically includes in Central Europe, Poland<sup>11</sup> and Ukraine<sup>12</sup> in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia in Southern Europe, and Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland in Northern and even Western Europe. Briefly, to some extent, Reményi’s small nation is equal to a “small country” (REMÉNYI, 1948, p. 263), even though he emphasized that “it is unwise to speak in a geographical sense about the ‘smallness’ of nations like Poland and Romania” (p. 263). Reményi does not explicitly define big nations, but he alludes to those countries associated with “Fascism, Nazism, Bolshevism”<sup>13</sup> (REMÉNYI, 1948, p. 262) in the West.<sup>14</sup>

To elucidate Reményi’s concepts of small and big nations, it is essential to examine the political structure of a world comprising minority groups,

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<sup>11</sup> In Reményi’s words “in fact Poland geographically and in matter of population should not be called a ‘small country’ at all”. However, it is still a “small nation” because it was dominated by the Soviet Union, even though Polish literature “has such exponents in the field of the novel as Sienkiewicz and Reymont who were awarded Nobel Prizes”. See Reményi (1953, p. 124).

<sup>12</sup> Reményi mentioned that “although the Ukraine, the granary of Russia, is not a ‘small country’, her literature, considered essentially as regionalistic, is treated according to such attribute”. See Reményi (1953, p. 124).

<sup>13</sup> In the article “Modern European Literature in the Classroom”, Reményi (1948, pp. 259-264 e 262) mentioned that, when teaching modern European literature in American colleges and universities, it was necessary to discuss two questions: (1) “what is the difference between literary ‘fellow travelers’ and pronounced propagandists”? (2) “what differentiates Soviet totalitarianism from that of Nazism or Fascism”?

<sup>14</sup> Reményi mainly connected the “West” with Western Europe and America, e.g., when he discussed the purpose of literature of “small nations”, he wrote it “is not a definite presentation of factual details, but to dispel doubt in those who do not seem to notice the culturally important contributions of the known and less known foreign writers, or who seem to think that all their works represent opposite poles to western European and American letters. The truth is that they have antecedents comparable to those of the West”. See Reményi (1948, p. 125).

small nations, and big nations. In this context, William E. Rappard's definition of Small States and Great Powers can be amalgamated with Halvdan Koht's Small Nations and Great Powers. According to Rappard (1934, pp. 544-545):

[Small State's] smallness depends neither on population nor area. Nor does the status of a Small State stand in any relation to its place in history, to its neutrality or belligerency in the World War, to its geographical situation, to its form of government, to its possession of colonies, to its degree of civilization, to its per-capita wealth, nor to its aggressive or pacific policies. In fact, the so-called Small States within the League of Nations have nothing in common which distinguishes them from others, except that they enjoy no permanent representation on the Council. And they are deprived of this privilege because they are not so-called Great Powers. And they are not so-called Great Powers because they are not considered such. And they are not considered such because in the history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they have not been militarily dominant or at least prominent.

In essence, the smallness of Small States stems from “their relative weakness,” and this vulnerability “provides reassurance for their more powerful neighbors.” (RAPPARD, 1934, p. 545) Consequently, during that period, China and many other countries would not be considered as big nations:

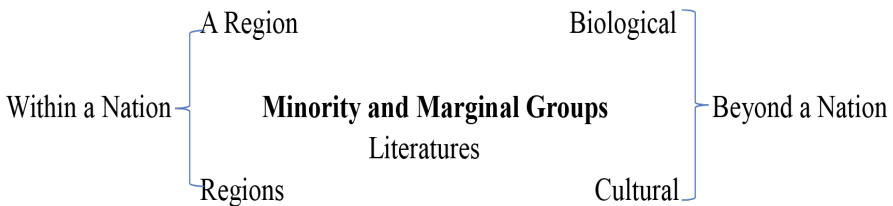
China, with a population about ten times as great as that of France or of Italy, is a Small State. Brazil, with an area ten times as large as those of France and Italy combined, was until discontented with her status as such, a Small States member of the League. Spain, Poland, India, Australia, Canada, are counted as “small members” of the League, as are Sweden, Holland, Luxembourg, Albania, Belgium, Hungary, Denmark, Switzerland, Liberia and Panama. (RAPPARD, 1934, p. 544).

Likewise, Koht (1943, p. 152) declared that “geography is not everything in the life of nations” because “the real life is in the growth of common institutions and traditions, very often breaking and crossing what military geography might call ‘natural’ frontiers.” (Koht, 1943, p. 152) Japan and China serve as illustrative examples. From the standpoint of geography and population, Japan was (and still is) a small nation. However, its invasion of China in the 1930s and 1940s, coupled with its contemporary influence among Great Powers, demonstrates that Japan was (and still is) not a small nation. In essence, big nations are synonymous with Great Powers. Small nations are not characterized by geographical proximity or small populations but are defined by their military, political, economic,

and cultural orientation towards weakness and smallness. This inherent weakness and smallness similarly dictate the literary space and rightful place of small nations in World Literature.

In the context of literary space, Casanova employed the term “small literature” to characterize the diminutive stature of a “small nation” and “small country” in World Literature. According to her, the reason for choosing small literature, rather than minor literature, was because the original word Kafka wrote in his diary on December 25, 1911, was “klein,” meaning “small” in German. Deleuze and Guattari’s term is derived from a “wrong translation.” Casanova (2004, p. 183) used “five keywords: smallness, poverty, backwardness, remoteness and invisibility” to depict the characteristics of small literature. However, her small literature does not differ much from Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature. There are two layers to Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature, one of which is minority orientation that specifically focused on Kafka’s case, while the other is related to “the revolutionary force for all literature” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1986, p. 19) based on the cases of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Casanova’s small literature tries to focus on small nations but, in many cases, she incorporates minorities such as Joyce, Beckett, Kafka, and Kundera, many of whom grapple with intricate national and cultural identities.

In brief, the concepts of Deleuze, Guattari, and Casanova encompass both the literature of minority groups within a nation or country and the literature of small nations. However, their selection of distinct terms has resulted in confusion between minor literature and small literature, a confusion that Reményi’s theories have the capacity to resolve. On one hand, minor literature should be delineated according to Reményi’s concept of minority and marginal groups’ literature, as this idea encompasses multiple layers of minor literature, as follows.



On the other hand, small literature should be specified to denote Reményi’s “small nation literature,” which is characterized by a focus on



national and nationalism-oriented themes. Reményi not only exposed the imbalanced literary system between big and small nations but also provided an effective solution for small nations to advocate for their literary rights and cultural identities. To a certain extent, his solution remains relevant for contemporary small nations from three perspectives. Firstly, Reményi utilized Charlton Laird's *The World Through Literature* (1951)<sup>15</sup> as an exemplar of the cultural hegemony wielded by big nations. According to Laird, Hungarian literature is "the bibliography of Slavic literatures," which "includes Fredrick Riedl's *History of Hungarian Literature* and Watson Kirkconnell's translation, *The Magyar Muse*". However, Reményi could not agree with Laird, because "the Hungarians are a Finno-Ugrian people", so "it is a serious defect to mention them in a bibliography of Slavic literatures."<sup>16</sup> (REMÉNYI, 1953, p. 120) In addition, Reményi regarded Hungary as a small nation within the Soviet Union, subject to "terrible indignities as an Iron Curtain country" after World War II, but "she certainly is not a Soviet satellite by volition or by a desire for uniformity based on the tenet of dialectical materialism." (MOLNAR, 1964, p. 30) Rather, it was Russia's "unscrupulous schemer of Machiavellian politicians and of social upheavals whose threat hovered over" (p. 30) Hungary and dominated it thereafter.

Secondly, Reményi delved into the challenges surrounding the translation and interpretation of literature from small nations. In terms of translation, "the most prominent literary works of the 'big nations' are not only translated into the languages of the 'small nations', but as a rule they have several different translations." (REMÉNYI, 1953, p. 121) For interpretation, writers of small nations were usually named after

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<sup>15</sup> According to Wolfgang Bernard Fleischmann, the purpose of *The World Through Literature* was "to promote international understanding by placing essays on the world's great literature side by side and to have each of these essays, in turn, reveal something of the individual nations' 'thought, temper, and essential nature'". The contributors to this book were "specialists in the different literatures write comprehensive essays on their particular field". That is why this book "is a kaleidoscopic maze of approaches, styles, and points of view", also "the literary quality of the contributions ranges from excellent to very poor", and "the scope of the essays from all embracing to minute". See Fleischmann (1954, pp. 84-85).

<sup>16</sup> Wolfgang Bernard Fleischmann also mentioned the problems of Slavic literature in *The World Through Literature*: "Slavic literature is discussed by Professor Posin, with emphasis on more modern literary productions and their sociopolitical background, an unfortunate division of chapter headings will make the reader feel, for instance, that Tolstoy and Dostoevsky were concerned only with the quarrel between 'Westernites and Slavophiles', Turgenev only with 'Economic and Agrarian Problems'". See Fleischmann (1954, p. 85).

some big nations, e.g., “Otokar Březina in Czech and Lajos Kassák in Hungarian literature, although possessing their own poetic personality, are sometimes called the Walt Whitmans of their own nation.” (p. 121) It was clear that this type of interpretation was “for the benefit of those who, with an uncensored illusion of superiority, assume that the critical intelligence of these nations [small nations] is inadequate or inferior.” (p.121) In essence, the equilibrium in translation and criticism between literature from small nations and that from big nations is disrupted in two ways. In translation, the focus is consistently oriented towards big nations since literature from small nations is seldom translated into major languages such as English and French. In interpretation of small nation literature, it is often deemed insufficient or inferior.

Thirdly, Reményi’s proposition for addressing the complexities associated with small nation literature and its ongoing significance emanates from a humanistic standpoint, acknowledging the need for a dual-sided perspective. Small nations should be mindful that the perceived boundaries of a “small nation” should not constrain the expansiveness of their creative intellect beyond the factual limitations of their national existence. Furthermore, they should recognize the subsequent considerations:

[...] [they] have writers who produce exceptional novels and plays and introduces us to deftly drawn characters; they have poets whose works are enjoyable in the truest sense of the word, they have *littérateurs* who excel in textual criticism, literary histories, and monographs (REMÉNYI, 1953, pp. 119-120).

Regarding big nations, there are at least three points they should uphold. Concerning nations themselves, “each nation is great in the light of its own history and small in its human frailties and foibles,” (REMÉNYI, 1953, p. 121) and every nation encompasses both “superior and inferior writers.” In terms of individuals themselves, “a man of small build is not less of a human being than a giant.” Similarly, for small nation literature itself, small nations consistently generate literary works that, in their artistic or didactic significance, “reject the limits of political and geographical boundaries.” (pp. 122-125) In essence, it is unjust to comment on the “smallness” of any nation in consideration of human dignity. Moreover, when certain writers and poets create works in the language of small nations, their writings should be acknowledged as possessing “not only racial and national characteristics” resulting from historical and ethnic factors but also an “aesthetic distinction of universal

significance.” (REMÉNYI, 1948, p. 263) In the pursuit of equality between small and big nations, Reményi underscored that he did not intend to assert equal literary greatness among the more and the less advanced nations. Instead, his aim was to eradicate misunderstanding and disorder, employing “an aesthetically sensitive and intellectually objective approach to the literature of small nations.” (REMÉNYI, 1953, p. 122) In this regard, Reményi’s small nation literature provides an expansively suitable framework to address the injustices inherent in the world literary system and numerous associated issues that remain unresolved, a task that the concepts of Deleuze, Guattari, and Casanova have fallen short of accomplishing.<sup>17</sup>

The issue of small nation literature remains pertinent as the situation has not improved over the past six decades since Reményi’s “Literature of ‘Small Nations.’” As observed by Pisac (2012, p. 195), so-called globalization and international literary festivals, created by big nations, are simply new means of exerting dominance over small nation literature. In reality, the underlying truth behind many literary events and festivals is that they all convey a similar message, characterized by three key attributes. The first is that small nation literature is “largely perceived as an ethnographic, educational, and exoticised text” that “offering a rich context of cultural specificities and peculiarities,” and “the more exotic, bizarre, estranging, the better.” (p. 195).

The second characteristic is that non-Western small nation literature is inherently political, because “only non-Western countries *need* literature to be political, and they need it to be *political* in the same way.” (PISAC, 2012, pp. 190) The third characteristic is that “small nations practically have no right to literature, only to sociology.” According to Pisac, the so-called World Literature events create an illusion that “small nations dominate world literature” and contribute to “the new meaning of the concept” of world literature. This illusion implies that “migrants, exiles and émigrés from small nations make up the majority of voices perceived to be representative of their ‘culture.’” For example, so-called World Literature events “featuring travel writing” like “The Other Europe,” are “conducted by writers who were either Westerners travelling ‘on the edges of Europe’ or were native East Europeans who lived in exile.” However, the

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<sup>17</sup> While the concepts of Deleuze, Guattari, and Casanova may offer partial solutions for certain small nations and minority groups within Europe, they lack the capacity to address the challenges faced by numerous small nations and minority groups beyond Europe.

reality is that small nation literature is often regarded more as sociology than as literature. As Pisac highlighted, the distinction between small and big nations' literature lies in the tendency to read small nations' literature through the lens of their rich repertoire of particularities, while "big nations' literature 'allowed' the humanistic universalism Goethe advocated so many years ago." (pp. 190-198) Hence, Reményi's theories on small nation literature remain relevant and effective in aiding small nations to assert their literary rights and counter the hegemony of World Literature imposed by big nations.

## 2. Internationalism and World Literatures

Reményi put forth two approaches to reconsider World Literature: internationalism and World Literatures. In "Nationalism, Internationalism and Universality in Literature", Reményi (1946a, pp. 44-46) underscored the importance of this concept, stating that while "great literature is essentially universal," it does not necessitate the "destruction of national roots." Instead, great literature should be grounded in "internationalism," characterized by "an intelligent recognition of the interrelation of nationalism and universality," as well as an "intelligent recognition on a world-wide scale," serving as a "creative force" in literature. However, he emphasized that "there is no international literature, only an understanding of the national qualities and the universal values of literature." (p. 46) In other words, literature from big nations is not considered international literature, nor should it be equated with World Literature.

In *World Literatures* (1956), Reményi (1956, p. 251) not only redefined "the meaning of world literature" but also reconceptualized the singular World Literature as plural World Literatures. In his words, World Literature is "the expressive and expressed rhythm of similarities and differences on a level that transcends individual, class and national frontiers", and is "one of the several ways of introducing man to himself." (p. 251) This is because literature involves an understanding of life, constituting a creatively expressed imaginative interpretation or recreation of life. It encompasses the writers and poets' internal and external struggle with the knowable and unknowable records about man's fundamental relationship to human destiny. In essence, literature serves as a profound lesson in compassion and irony, mitigating or disarming man's inclination to forsake his human responsibilities. Based on internationalism and humanism, Reményi (1951, pp. 243-249) concluded that "whatever applies to literature, applies to

world literature,” and “no literature can be divorced from world literature”, because “in true literary works the particular becomes universal, the local transcends its limitations.”

Hence, Reményi (1951, p. 250) advocated for the inclusion of Socialist Literature as a component of World Literature when he expressed that “Soviet writers and poets, admittedly propagandists of a new social order, must be included into the universal realm of world literature.” He further asserted that even if not regarded as literary artists, they “must be included as literary exponents of anti-capitalistic frenzy and tactics, called socialist realism.” (p. 250) In summary, while there is no obligation to agree with their conceptual form, one must acknowledge the necessity of form “when they write for literary, and not exclusively for political and sociological reasons.” (p. 250) This is the reason Reményi edited *World Literatures*, the first book written in English to reassess World Literature by a small nation within the Socialist bloc, marking a pivotal moment for remapping World Literature into World Literatures from the Socialist Side.

The reconsideration of World Literature has garnered significant attention in recent decades, primarily following in Goethe’s footsteps by emphasizing the national context as crucial for approaching world literature. However, the national context may not be applicable to many cultural groups, e.g., exiles like Kundera, emigrants by choice like Reményi, or Hungarians in “the Succession States”. Consequently, they possessed a distinct sense of the nation or country they were residing in, varied concepts of the national literature they were producing, and diverse definitions of the World Literature they aspired to engage with and shape. Therefore, I chose to use Reményi’s theory to rethink World Literature for three reasons. To further elaborate, as Reményi suggested, the context of World Literature should be primarily divided into three layers: minority and marginal groups, small nations, and big nations, each necessitating a distinct approach to reaching World Literature. Additionally, World Literature was consistently oriented toward Western Europe and capitalism as a singular entity, but Reményi was determined to transform it into World Literatures from Eastern European, Central European, and socialist perspectives from the 1930s to 1950s. Hence, he opened a cultural window for scholars from Central Europe, Eastern Europe, China and worldwide 1) to rethink their Socialist Literatures from 1917 to the Cold War age; 2) to challenge mainstream World Literature domination; 3) to relocate their literary rights and cultural identity in the

contemporary literary space of World Literatures; 4) to map another kind of World Literature from a Socialist perspective; and eventually 5) to shift the singular World Literature to the plural World Literatures.

Furthermore, within Socialist World Literature, it is crucial to consider the plurality of Socialist Literature. For example, Reményi (1956, p. 13) tried to locate Hungarian literature in the West to prevent it from being a “Soviet satellite”. He emphasized that, “despite the ethnically eastern heritage of the Magyars”, it is “logical to assume that Hungary’s place is in the realm of western civilization.” (p. 13) Because “Hungary’s literary traditions are Western European,” and “what Hungarian men of letters ardently desired was an acceptance of their ‘good Europeanism’, enriched by the indigenous qualities of their national ethos.” (REMÉNYI, 1956, p. 13) Similarly, and every literary school of the West had its protagonists in Hungary: Expressionism, Surrealism, Futurism, New Objectivism, Activism. In essence, Hungary and Western Europe were “equal partners” before the Trianon Treaty, but after the Treaty, its “geographical position, squeezed between the East and West, made it easier for the Bolsheviks to bleed her unmercifully.” (p. 16) In addition, after World War II, Hungary was dominated by the East: “with the increasing relentlessness of the Communists who finally ‘governed’ the country, it was demanded of the writers and poets that they follow the ‘party line’ and use its clichés.” (p. 18)

Reményi’s attitude toward the Soviet Union underwent a significant shift. In the early 1950s, he advocated for World Literature to incorporate Socialist Realism in 1951. However, by 1953, Reményi expressed a critical view, stating that the Soviet persecuted Estonian exiles and noting that regions under Soviet rule produced very little worthwhile literature. This marked a notable distinction between Hungary and the Soviet Union, particularly evident in the events of 1956.<sup>18</sup> Put simply, Reményi uncovered

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<sup>18</sup> It is easy to connect this change from Stalin’s death on March 6, 1953, with de-Stalinization and reconstruction from 1953 to 1956. Just like George Gömöri’s opinion of imposed “socialist realism”: “with the forced introduction of Zhdanovist cultural policy about 1949, many pretended conversions to Marxism or became fellow travelers. But it was clear, even to the casual observer, that under the veneer of Socialist unity old animosities remained. It was possible to detect in at least one of the major literary debates of the early fifty’s strong reminiscences of the old populist-urbanist controversy (‘country lads’ versus ‘young gentlemen’), and in some initial reservations of Communist writers to Imre Nagy’s program in 1953, a fear that the ‘populist domination’ of Hungarian literature was evident. In this period, some of the old anti-urban sentiments reappeared in stories by the ex-peasant writer Péter Veres, who censured the town for its frivolous bourgeois morality”

an internal split in Socialist Literature, or Soviet literature to be more specific. Noticing this split was important, because it shifted Marx and Engels' singular Socialist Literature to the plural Socialist Literatures. Hence, it is possible to not only explore the diversity of Socialist Literatures within and beyond the Soviet Union, but also to include worldwide Socialist Literatures as Socialist World Literature.

In conclusion, Reményi's theories are useful for rethinking minor literature, small literature, and World Literature. For minor literature, Reményi's "regionalism" and "humanism" establish a platform to analyze the multiple layers of "minority and marginal groups", such as minority groups like Hungarian Americans, African and Chinese Americans, individual minorities like Kundera, Tamasi, Reményi, and socialist writers all over the world. For small literature, Reményi's "small nation literature" clarifies the confusion between the "minor literature" of Deleuze and Guattari and Casanova's "small literature" and offers some solutions for small nations like Czechoslovakia and Hungary to fight for their literary rights. For World Literature, Reményi's idea of "world literatures" represents a crucial shift between the Socialist and Capitalist perspectives of World Literature. Given that World Literature was capitalist-oriented, this cultural hegemony, coupled with the intensity of the Cold War, buried Socialist Literatures and persisted in doing so even in the post-Cold War age. Therefore, it is important to consider two key facts when reconsidering World Literature.

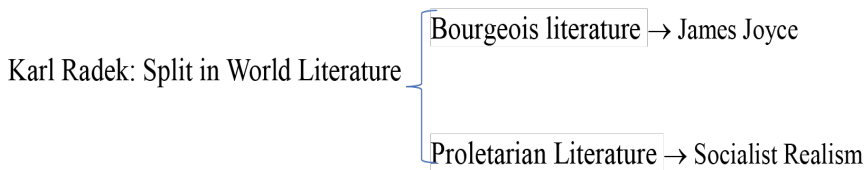
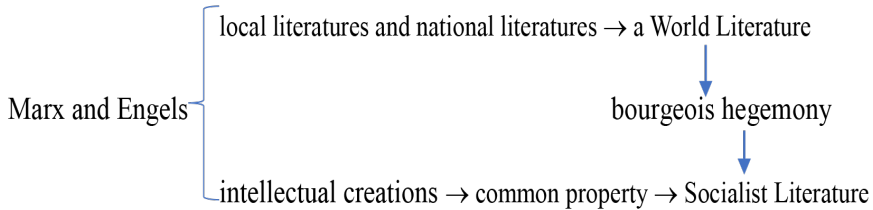
The first pertains to the reality concealed within the so-called Western/European-centered World Literature, which excludes the Central and Eastern European aspect of World Literature. Nonetheless, in their endeavor to challenge the cultural hegemony of the "West & Europe," many contemporary studies on minor and small literature overlook the fact that, during the Cold War era, Central and Eastern Europe were never truly perceived as part of the West or Europe from the Western perspective. Moreover, to effectively challenge World Literature, it is imperative to identify the authentic theoretical sources and texts of minor literature, small literature, and World Literatures within the Socialist Side. This will truly allow Eastern and Central European scholars to "talk to each other", rather than just "talk to the West". It is in this sense that Reményi's theory

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(GÖMÖRI, 1966, p. 156). Also, the unequal relationship between Hungary and the Soviet Union, with "Hungary's semi-colonial dependence on the Soviet Union" (p. 157). See Gömöri (1966, p. 151-164).

should be reinterpreted and revalued by comparing them with those of Goethe, Marx and Engels, and Radek, as follows.

Goethe → beyond national literature → a World Literature → Greek as the center



Nonetheless, it is important to note that Reményi’s concepts may not possess the complete theoretical capacity to elucidate all the intricacies of “minor literature,” “small literature,” or “world literature.” For example, as a proud immigrant, Reményi was, in fact, a cultural bridge between the *West* and the West, more precisely between Western Europe and America. Therefore, Reményi called Hungary an “equal partner” of Western Europe and defined Hungarian literature as the heir of Western literature. This



definition did not alter the reality that Hungarian literature remained excluded from the Western-dominated canon of World Literature during the Cold War era. The issue with the World Literature canon is that it predominantly represents Western European and American literature. Moreover, acknowledging Hungary's position as a small nation within the Soviet Union is crucial in understanding the historical status of Hungarian literature as Socialist Literature. Attempting to place Hungary within Western Europe does not alter its essential identity as literature from a small nation. Indeed, the distinction between literature from small and large nations lies in the fact that the literary works of small nations are consistently interpreted through the diverse array of their distinctive characteristics, while big nations' literature is allowed to be "the humanistic universalism Goethe advocated so many years ago." (PISAC, 2012, p. 198)

However, Reményi's theories are still useful when remapping Hungarian literature as World Literature because they described the problems and realities of Hungarian literature from the 1930s to the 1950s, and some problems still matter in contemporary Hungarian literature, such as Hungarians in Transylvania, in America, and worldwide. When rewriting minor literature, small literature and World Literature, Reményi not only demonstrated the plurality of these literatures, but also the internal diversity within each literature. In building Socialist World Literature by reinterpreting Reményi, more theoretical texts like Reményi's could be discovered in ex-socialist countries and groups, and contemporary socialist countries like China and Cuba. It is crucial that these texts be made visible because they could have a similar capacity and potential to challenge the Western European- centered canon. It is also essential to bear in mind that these texts are not confined solely to the Socialist Bloc or the capital of Socialist Literature-Moscow. They are not limited to the Global North, where Reményi lived, but also extend to the semi-periphery and periphery, as well as the Global South, including Australia, Africa, and South America. Additionally, they can be found in the North Periphery, such as the Caribbean, either as neighbors or perceived as "the backyard" of the United States. Therefore, the primary aim of this article is to inspire a meticulous tracing of the historical trajectory of Socialism and Socialist Realism literature in the aforementioned countries and regions, and to lay the groundwork for a re-envisioning of the history of World Literature in the 20th century from the Socialist Side.

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Recebido: 20/4/2023

Aceito: 6/8/2023

Publicado: 3/4/2024