

Miklós Szentkuthy



# Marginalia on Casanova

St. Orpheus Breviary

Vol. I



ST. ORPHEUS BREVIARY I.  
MARGINALIA  
ON  
CASANOVA

MIKLÓS SZENTKUTHY

*Selected Other Works by*  
Miklós Szentkuthy

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ST. ORPHEUS BREVIARY I.  
MARGINALIA  
ON  
CASANOVA

MIKLÓS SZENTKUTHY

TRANSLATED BY  
TIM WILKINSON



Contra Mundum Press New York

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Translation of Zéno Bianu's "Boudoir and Theology"

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First Contra Mundum Press edition 2012.

This edition of *Szent Orpheus breviárium*a: *Széljegyzetek*  
*Casanovához* is published by arrangement with Mariella Legnani  
& Mária Tompa

Originally published in Hungary in 1939 by Kecskeméti  
Hírlapkiadó

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Szentkuthy, Miklós, 1908–1988

[*Szent Orpheus breviárium*a: *Széljegyzetek Casanovához*. English.]

*St. Orpheus Breviary, Vol. I: Marginalia on Casanova* / Miklós  
Szentkuthy;

translated from the original Hungarian by Tim Wilkinson.

—1<sup>st</sup> Contra Mundum Press ed.

360 pp., 5×8 in.

ISBN 9780983697244

I. Szentkuthy, Miklós. II. Title.  
III. Bianu, Zéno. IV. Introduction.  
V. Tompa, Mária. VI. Afterword.

2012946494

Contra Mundum Press would like to extend its gratitude to the Hungarian Books &  
Translations Office at the Petöfi Literary Museum for rewarding us with a subvention  
to aid the production of this publication.



HUNGARIAN BOOKS  
AND TRANSLATIONS OFFICE





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INTRODUCTION  
BOUDOIR & THEOLOGY

**V**AST LYRICAL SELF-PORTRAIT, colossal historical scrapbook, odyssey of travesties, inventory of human feelings, polyglot entropy... hyperbolic phrases naturally surge to mind as soon as one risks a definition of the utterly unclassifiable work of Miklós Szentkuthy (1908–1988). Struck by a perplexing fascination, critics seem incapable of going beyond the level of enchanted stupor — and evoke pell-mell, by way of prudent delineation, the names of Rabelais, Proust, Joyce, Borges, or even those of Gadda or Lezama Lima. Szentkuthy, moreover, contributed greatly to impose this image of a demiurge, who intended in the sereneſt of manners to “melt all in a single universal time.” Solitary, ſplendidly isolated, long confined to silence, he continued building after the eruption of his fiſt novel, *Prae*, an emblematic constellation without parallel in European literature.

*Prae*, or general pre-figuration, or else alchemical precipitation. Published in 1934, this inaugural book contained the foundational elements of what we muſt call an *illuminated rhetoric*: a romanesque ſtructure promoted to the level of character, a burlesque marriage of all

antinomies, an exhilarating science of pastiche, dizzying culture deployed as rustling, haughty, and playful, “a classicism of dissemination” — in short, a completely fragmented narrative no less comparable to the dynamiting advocated some years previous by Joyce (whose work, incidentally, Szentkuthy introduced in Hungary). Despite the lucid support of some inspired criticism (László Németh, Antal Szerb, and Gábor Halasz), the “thing” — a monster block of six hundred dense pages, naturally published by the author — was declared by the good spirits of time as “unreadable,” and its major fault “non-Magyar,” that is: “cosmopolitan.”

But it was in 1939 that an even more unexpected fireball landed on Hungarian literary ground: *Marginalia on Casanova*, nothing less than the first book of the *St. Orpheus Breviary*, to which nine other volumes would be added: *Black Renaissance* (1939), *Escorial* (1940), *Europa Minor* (1941), *Cynthia* (1941), *Confession and Puppets* (1942), *The Second Life of Sylvester II* (1972), *Despair Canonized* (1974), *The Bloody Ass* (1982) and *On the Trail of Eurydice* (unfinished).

The careful reader will observe a break of thirty years in the accomplishment of this ambitious project. During these long years of suspension, mainly from 1947 to 1957, Szentkuthy adopts the mask of the “internal refugee.” Between the translation of a communist Greenland hack and the compulsory study of the *Grammar* of Stalin during joyful seminars destined to deaden thought, he wrote, according to the Hungarian expression, “for the

drawer." He published nevertheless some "invented biographies" — and as many veiled self-portraits — devoted to Mozart, Haydn, Dürer, Handel, and Goethe. The latter, brilliantly entitled *Face and Mask*, was well worth the wrath of his publisher, who criticized him — oh sweet retrospectives of history! — for not conforming to the image that the German Democratic Republic had of Goethe! For good measure, this professor of English, elected by his peers, peremptorily refused an important position at the university and chose — the thing is rare enough to be reported — not to write a single line honoring the regime up close or from a distance. So much for a minimal biography of this singular temperament: purity and stubbornness ...<sup>1</sup>

But let us return to the great work: *St. Orpheus Breviary*. Basically, this opus can be read as a long mythos of the *marginal*. From his room-library with some twenty-five thousand volumes, Szentkuthy annotates and revisits history. Mixing with ease and joy hagiography, literary study, fiction, narrative, the lyric poem and the aphorism, this *roman-cathedrale*, whose denomination "breviary" must not mislead, with the humor of his antiphrasis, offers an unprecedented recrossing as unheard-of as much as it is ironical of all literary and artistic forms cultivated by the West, from early times

1. For further consideration, the reader can refer to the magazine *Caravan* № 2 (1990), which published the first five chapters of the *Frivolous Confessions* — an extensive protean autobiography now being translated by Éditions Phébus.

to the twentieth century, with major milestones: Rome, Byzantium, Venice, the Italian Renaissance & the Spanish Baroque. As archivist buffoon, Szentkuthy feeds the extravagant theater with his rigorous bulimia of a thousand networks of burgeoning stories, palimpsests in abysses and apocryphal pitfalls. Appropriating countless masks, pacing the epochs, this emotional athlete has no other aim than to break time until it stills the whirlwind of history into one continuous present.

Lord of illusions or exhibitor of shadows, there is something of the devourer in this man, who cannot bear to live cramped in one body, one life, one language. He prefers to cultivate double replicas of being, invest all fates — saints, libertines, popes, musicians, emperors, writers, eunuchs, painters or biblical girls. “I always wanted to see everything,” he confessed, “read everything, think everything, dream everything, swallow everything.”

From whence the art and manner of travelling across languages and playing the Argonauts of Planetary Writing (is it a coincidence that Szentkuthy was the translator of both *Ulysses* and *Gulliver?*). In truth, this stubborn survivor of the Enlightenment seems motivated entirely by a furious encyclopedic desire. A simple glance at the table of contents of the *Breviary* suffices to show the profligacy of this inner odyssey, where a few characters who were never in search of an author marched pell-mell: Casanova, Mozart, Adonis, Toscanini, Turner, Rubens, Brunelleschi, Keats, Herodotus, El Greco, Pythagoras, Voltaire, Puccini, Ariosto, Tintoretto, Shelley, Abelard,

Monteverdi, Tacitus, Messalina, Theodora, Akbar, Lao Tzu, Palladio, Mary Tudor, Donatello, Philip II, Buddha, etc.

As many roles as Szentkuthy assumes in the manner of a comedian or an absolute dreamer, writing thus a sumptuous *catalogus amoris*. Here truly resides the infinite song of an Orpheus with Apollonian harmonies, god of metamorphosis, "being whose role it is to celebrate," in the words of Rilke.

In an age where anyone — even under the sign of the worst conformism — prides oneself on marginality, Szentkuthy appears, all in all, as the writer of the absolute margin. Throughout his life, he continued to write in the margins of his books, covering and recovering — maniacally, scrupulously — volumes, newspapers, journals, and other documents. An infinite mosaic of notes, footnotes, keywords and various doodles, continuous shuffling between reading and writing — one without the other is here inconceivable — interminable bubbling of the library-universe in the heart of the Opus Magnum. Borges reminds us: "Another superstition of those ages has come to us: that of the Man of the Book. On some shelf of some hexagon, we reasoned, there must exist a book which is the key and summary of *all the others*; there is a librarian who has read this book and who is like a god."<sup>2</sup> If there is a writer who is a Man of the Book, according to the wish of the Argentinean master, it is

2. "The Library of Babel," *Fictions*.

Szentkuthy, in relentless pursuit of a *magnum opus* that would contain and even restore all creation.

Such was his passion, and his method as well. A process inaugurated in the first book of the *Breviary*, precisely titled *Marginalia on Casanova*. Strangely — but can we talk of strangeness when discussing a man who claimed to “work in co-production with chance”? — the structure of this founding volume owes much to theology. In 1938, Szentkuthy read the *Römerbrief* of the famous Protestant exegete Karl Barth, a commentary that is based on an analysis, phrase by phrase, even word by word, of the Epistle to the Romans. Literally enchanted by the effectiveness of this method — “where, in his words, every epithet puts imagination in motion” — he decided to apply it on the spot to Casanova, whose memoirs (a German edition in six large volumes) he had just annotated with gusto.

Simultaneity of all epochs, anachronistic audacity, chaos erected into a system (“the order of the random,” as defined by the same author) — was what this flamboyant opus quietly gave to read. The reception? Actually, there was none, since as soon as it was published — and even though Szentkuthy dutifully went to the church to “give thanks to all competent authorities of Catholic Heaven” to have authorized this iconoclast publication — the Royal Hungarian Court condemned *Marginalia on Casanova* for blasphemous profanity and assault on decency. Enjoying the protection of a prosecutor of the crown, the accused barely escaped trial — but all

copies of the work were immediately confiscated. Thus was inaugurated the series of "Orpheuses" ...<sup>3</sup>

Let's measure once more the eternal stupidity of the censor. What are we really being told about in *Casanova*? Of literature, of metaphysics, and of sensuality ("the thought is as sensuous as the smell of a rose," T.S. Eliot already noted about the Baroque poets) — certainly all things scandalous, but that would not likely undermine the social order of the country, which stood so strong in the bounded zeal of the régime of the censors.<sup>4</sup> Our "blasphemer," known for his obsessive taste for transvestism, borrows in the space of a book the panoply of the Venetian, and makes a breathtaking inventory of forms dear to the eighteenth century. Through one hundred and twenty-three notes radiating around these cyclical themes (the mask, the ball, the bath, impossible youth, Venice, the boats, the night, autumn, lethal romanticism, intoxication, the asceticism proper to dandyism, gardens, opera, etc.), Szentkuthy reinvests, with his unique, playful, and tragic tone, the *Memoirs* of the perfect lover. Anxious to break down barriers between genres (here the scholastic treatise and the fashion magazine),

3. It was not until 1973, thirty-four years later, that the book finally saw the light of day, on the occasion of the reissue of the first six *Books of Orpheus*. An opportunity that Szentkuthy would take to re-compose and unify once more the *Breviary* by opening each volume with the "life of a saint."

4. At the time when the book appeared, Hungary was subject to the dictatorship of Admiral Horthy, a great admirer of fascism.

associating baroque crests flowing together like endless rows of pearls, multiplying the set pieces (we recommend the *l'“inédit”* of Abelard, namely the portrait of Heloise reconstituted in macaronic Latin, also a bewildering description of Tintoretto's *Susanna*), he locates the metaphysical ideal in Casanova, able to reconcile elegance and bestiality — or, if one prefers, boudoir and theology. In short, beautiful as the encounter of Leibniz and Gloria Swanson on the stage of the Fenice!

Zéno Bianu

*Tr. by* Rainer J. Hanshe

ST. ORPHEUS BREVIARY

I.

MARGINALIA  
ON  
CASANOVA

I.

*Vita (Life of a Saint)*

Alfonso Maria di Liguori (1696 – 1787)

Saint Alfonso died at the age of ninety-one, but at the age of eighty-three, after writing uncounted books and letters, he was prohibited from writing for health reasons, because, although he was able to formulate with the greatest ease, he never amended, or even tried to correct himself; thoughts and sentiment just poured out of him like incessant rain, now simply, now in a baroque fashion, but behind his matchless stylistic flair raged huge passions, both sorrows and joys, regarding the fate of God, the soul and unfathomable body of men, the purpose or unacceptable purposelessness of history. Scholasticism, Freudian discoveries, Marxist observations, existentialist desperations likewise tore his body and soul to shreds, like the winged beast of destiny Prometheus' liver, he was chock full of foot-tapping impatience and brain-dizzying fear that he was late with his autobiography, his portrait of God, his scrutiny of history, the writing of the *Summa Summarum* of his research into nature & the soul. And just when these favored topics had achieved a final maturity inside him in the unstable proportion of questions or answers, he was barred from writing.

This well-meant hygienic prohibition arrived from several quarters: on one occasion he had been feeding doves on the window-sill of his cell from a tin, but a dove did not wish to eat and alighted on his shoulder, and Alfonso, with sinful lack of modesty, was under the belief that the Holy Ghost-Muse had come in person to give him inspiration — not that there would have been a problem as regards the Holy Ghost, only it had not come to give him inspiration, but to snatch Alfonso's quill with its bill and carry it off for fun, perhaps like some kind of silver arrow of Venus to the dancing girls of the Catholic Parnassus among the boughs of the monastery garden. On another occasion, half the College of Cardinals, all *cardinale* in purple, turned up at his ice-cold studio (already wilted but still treasured tulips and bouquets huddled the same way in the ice box of the kitchen corridor) so as to prohibit him from writing, but those were more in the way of scarlet Tartuffes: they were not interested in Alfonso's health but in some of Alfonso's politically risky theses (of course, they also brought along doctors in fancy dress to expound their accumulated tommyrot of lengthy eras). And in any event they advised that Alfonso be excommunicated (therapeutic foresight lacking, alas, any effect either) as he occupied himself with the most fantastic facts of the whole body and the deepest soul, whereas (according to them) body and soul lie at an inexpressibly far remove from the philosophically circumscribed province of medicine.

Alfonso also noticed that the extraordinary intellectual tension evoked late temptations from his organism: the penitences of old penitents flourishing like the *Arabian Nights* in his imagination; adolescent memories were as if they had been the healthy spots of sick puberty in his soul, so that he (as the rascally lexicographers used to express it), “the greatest confessor of all confessors”: he himself went off to confess, but no one dared to undertake that holy operation until in the end — why had it not occurred to him before! — he trudged off, neck pulled into his chest, to one of his greatest foes, who then heard the catalogue of the senile Alfonso’s sins with Luciferian or barracks of Hades lust, took indescribable delight in proscribing writing, and, not feeling bound by any confidence of the confessional in “this special and typical case,” the company in the glass palaces of the Neapolitan king cranked out stale jokes about the doddering exhibitionist satyr which required no wit at all.

When he had still been at liberty to write, his head had ached so badly, he felt dizzy and fevered (damn & blast these not so rare conjunctions of radiant *raison* and all kinds of abominable morbidity), he would clutch an ice-cool marble tablet to his left temple with the aid of a contraption that was the brainchild of a nun’s head. He had acquired the marble tablet out of the lavish classical collection of Pope Benedict XIV from an ancient villa, and it depicted the scene when Orpheus has to leave his wife in the underworld — every thinker’s thought is his wife, and he always has to leave her behind in the

underworld —, and it stands to reason that Alfonso did not rest his head on the embossed side. In any case, he had several of these temple-cooling marble tablets, & when (having been forbidden to write) he piled these up in a corner and contemplated them in turn, in a fine symbolic act, in the manner of a philosopher and poet, in much the same way as one can suppose with the tilers of stoves, varying what can be varied: when he had done that, not giving a hoot for the thieving pigeon, the traveling political circus of cardinals and cynical slanderers, he declared in the Roman manner: “One doesn’t have to live, one has to write.” He summoned a very old, very intellectual ‘nun’ (a fairly alarming character sketch thus far) from whom heavenly & earthly beauty, ‘sacro-sexy’ features radiated along virtually angelic set-squares, and — sss! sss! ssss! — in a chapel in the woods, dictated to her in great secrecy — no question of any true or trashy storytelling Boccaccio novella, nor could or can it have been. And yet, something... but *not* in the aforementioned sense. That ‘something’ is (our story does not run to punch lines, so we can divulge the ends of several novels in advance): the nun was none other than the duchess whom Alfonso’s father had selected for his son “a century ago,” but, as we shall see, nothing came of the marriage, the duchess became an enemy of Alfonso’s forever (with jealousy being perhaps the least cause), and now here she was anew, a sham nun in sham costume, though lost time, ‘*temps perdu*,’ was her best disguise. It was to her that Alfonso

dictated the memoirs from which this present outline was prepared.

Alfonso and Casanova, unless my old head is calculating as badly as it normally does, co-existed for sixty-two years. When Casanova was born, Alfonso was already twenty-nine — while Casanova lived another eleven years after Alfonso died. They met in Italy under the most diverse imaginable circumstances, with each other's memoirs often being turned over in each other's heads, and if not always in the way that this *Breviary* demands, one can always shove the years forwards or back a bit in the interests of a symbolic moral. Which has nothing to do with either historical error, or the paltriest commercial anachronism, let alone with lying — just as the prodigal, pervading scent of elder in May or jasmine, drifting far and wide, is neither a lie nor a close-lipped kaleidoscope of perfumes, for after all the elder bushes stay in place, a solid positive (to someone who is a connoisseur), and even in those most far-lying areas the straying scent of elder is still that of — elder.

Casanova lived in the Bohemian castle of Count Waldstein, in Dux, between 1785 and 1798 as 'court' librarian; those were the last thirteen years of his life, from the age of sixty till his death. A librarian with every good reason, because, as you will be able to see in the following saintly reading, Casanova was (admittedly with slight St. Orpheus exaggeration) an intellectual of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: far more interesting than he was a sexually and otherwise oriented chameleon daredevil.

One would probably not be far off the mark in presuming that the count was not solely interested in the historiographer, philosopher, and mathematician in Casanova. He was solitary unto himself, working on his memoirs, though he never did get round to writing the remaining parts, and of what there was some fifty percent was lost — academic historicism loves to employ such episodes as the pedestals for broad-brimmed hypotheses, in diametrical opposition, of course, to our own methods. Now he is getting on for seventy. The library is partly composed of the interiors of huge, baroque churches, theatre auditoriums, and ballroom associations, with snaking balconies, sky-high windows overlooking the grounds, crushingly heavy velvet curtains cascading from a cornucopia, ceiling frescoes teeming with a potpourri of theology and mythology, the books themselves near-invisible — seeming like tiny organ pipes and panpipes behind soap-bubble glass doors. On the other hand: the library is also composed of the most intimate little boudoirs, the lascivious trysting rooms of the mind, with a tightly packed splendor of books instead of walls. The latter reminded Casanova of love, the former of the throne rooms of the Vatican and empresses. Now he is working in a large room, very hot, his upper body naked, though with the order of the Knights of the Golden Spurs hanging round his neck amidst the runnels of perspiration. (Was that where it was originally worn? Of what matter could that be to him in his old age, in this Versailles-like hall of mirrors!) The order of the Golden Spurs had

been bestowed on him by the pope, and this is important to us from the point of view of the *Breviary* because on the order, apart from the Maltese Cross and the spurs symbolizing sadism, is: an image of St. Silvester I — a life of whom can be read at the start of the seventh chapter of our prayer book. Pope St. Silvester I interested Casanova from a Voltairean angle because this pope (in the fourth century AD) almost had a stroke and became transfixed by the bronze gate of St. Peter's Church in Rome (it was painted bright green) when he saw that St. Helena, during her lengthy pilgrimage to Palestine to recover the True Cross, had nearly become an avowed Jew, so that Europe had been within an ace of converting to the Jewish faith, and St. Peter's Church of becoming a synagogue. Casanova has no great desire to reflect too much right now, in the heat, on the alternatives of Providence and Nonsense and would far rather gaze on the attractive marble relief inserted into the wall that he had been given by Cardinal Aquariva, combined with a splendid post, though he had been kicked out of the latter the next day on account of the routine amusements that he had committed during the unveiling of that very antique relief.

The title given to the relief in Count Waldstein's catalogue (Casanova reworked & explained away with the greatest solicitude) is "*Musikalische Unterhaltung*," or musical diversion, though, for all its Hellenistic-rococo charm, in it were lurking the most ancient myths of death & orgy, about which Alfonso wrote in the depth-

psychological book *Theologia Moralis*,<sup>1</sup> intended for those who take confessions, and which continues to live on — even today, as may be discerned with the greatest ease — in people, in children, in puzzling animals and puzzling flowers, in primitive peoples indeed in our Catholic ceremonies and the most formal court ceremonial — to say nothing of so-called neuroticism —, being covered by no more than a gossamer-thin shroud or by mendacious iron masks.

On the relief is an intimate bacchanalia — with beds, semi-wedding night consummation, mandolin-strumming hetæra, a homosexual lute-god in unmistakable ‘boy for sale’ pose, a Neapolitan lemon-cynic, the chest approaching the loveliness of a bodice. While writing the explanatory catalogue, Casanova often broke into gusts of laughter at the various descriptions of the world of Antiquity, its stillborn afterlives in various periods of Europe, in the circus Renaissance, neurotic romanticism, puritanical moralizing, and Biedermeier-bourgeois psychoanalysis. He found the most acceptable imitations in certain gargoyles of Gothic cathedrals and the art of his own Mannerist-rococo century, though the eternal clumsy, wholesale contrasting of art, comparative religion, myth, and rationalism bored him “*en gros*” (and whom do they not? when not? where not?).

In his whole life Casanova only ever met one person who professed a similar notion, with similar undying irony and humor, not just about progressively tenacious and dormant Greek mythology, but also about Europe

stolen on the back of a cattle, and that one person was Pope Benedict XIV. If you by any chance glanced at the Table of Contents for this chapter before looking at this "Life of a Saint," then you may have seen the heading 'Benedict XIV: symbolic sculpture of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.'

The process before he was elected dragged out over six months (What a legal brainwave it would be were it to carry on until doomsday: could it be that even the Protestant issue might thereby possibly achieve some form of temporary resolution? — Casanova asked Benedict XIV, Falstaffian both on the outside and in). Precisely the opposite came to this soon-to-be pope's mind. When the electoral college of cardinals attended what happened to be a most joyous garden party in Tivoli (they were joyous because these were the ones who had no chance at all), the soon-to-be and still chuckling pope raised his glass to say: "Why the ridiculously long deliberations over the naming? If you are looking for a saint, there's Alfonso di Liguori — and he pointed towards the depths of the gardens, with respectful pantomime gestures to imitate eating roots, falling into a trance, rapture when praying, and chasing a squirrel under his arm. — If you are looking for an open-minded diplomat (though sometimes the narrow-minded type would be a better bet in this zodiac), then you have Aldobrandini, who by no chance at all contrived the world's sneakiest-snakiest labyrinth on the grounds of his residence. If you want a wise old head, a laughing Christian Democritus, then there's always me. Choose me." They elected him.

The Pontiff was very fond of the classics (Alfonso di Liguori, a researcher into souls and hormones in his confessional, never forgot the quote that the pope had cited from *Oedipus* at the Tivoli banquet: “I am who I am. Why should I fear to trace my birth? Nothing can make me other than I am.”). In the evenings, liberated from the daily run of religion and politics, he arranged great debates (using his own canon-law slippers to send fanatics to where such toads and howling monkeys belonged), and on one such he held a long discourse based on his experiences in Istanbul. Casanova spoke against Turkish fatalism (even though he was much attracted to it), whereas Alfonso presented a dramatic account about the death of a similarly fatalistic, theologically disposed Jansenist nun.

Our *Breviary* would fall into a sin of omission if we failed to remark that Benedict XIV wrote lives of saints — with Casanova delivering the political dirt in towering stacks of files and Alfonso his flowering bunches of legends. Both had free access to the pope at any time. The Vatican’s entire army and its Amazon horde of nuns did not dare go within ten rooms of Benedict’s studio (Hush! hush! the Holy Father is working!), meanwhile the pope could barely wait for someone, anyone, to enter and tell him a good joke with the relish of *genuinely* spiritual people.

Benedict’s teeth were set on edge, to use the vernacular, by the wrangling, like the braying of flea-bitten asses, that went on over the conversion of the Chinese

— maybe because he was far from convinced that this could be accomplished in practice, maybe because he did not consider it to be one of God's heavenly intentions: thinking of the main protagonist of the gospels, "Go into the world, and preach this unto peoples of all nations," he was not thinking of global population statistics or world geography, but with simple sketchiness meant only to spread the news, "insofar as it is possible, to the widest possible audience." There was also a particular reason for the irritation, in that here in Europe, with its frequent humbug, missionaries were attacked for making the *maximum* possible concessions to Chinese converts to retain much, a very great deal, of the ancient customs of Brahma, folklore, and Buddha. Yes, retain! That was applauded by enlightened Casanova — Alfonso: profoundly silent, because this did not particularly appeal to him, and (in this exceptional case, this is *not* an authenticated fact) the pope put his bishop's miter on an inkpot and crossed his legs in a Buddha-like pose.

Skipping the Buddha-like pose, Alfonso might have acted exactly the same when the pope allowed the Spanish king to confer bishops with their sees and other benefices (albeit in exchange for the king paying a huge church levy on the basis of a cross-eyed 'that makes us quits' law). Benedict explained as follows to the grimly black and blue Alfonso: "I would be crazy to reopen that sterile and bloody Investiture Dispute! An emperor bestows the tiara on the pope, the pope crowns the emperor, kiss of peace, murderous war to boot, emperor

chops tiara to bits, pope crushes crown, antipopes spring up like mushrooms. Ugh! There's been enough of that!" Whereupon Alfonso again turned hermit, Casanova clapped again (that's laid-back liberalism for you!), but five minutes later, out of defiance himself turned hermit because the pope delivered such a sound cuff to Venice, the state so loved by Casanova, that the whole Byzantine junk-dealer-antiquarium all but slid under water, along with St. Mark's, the ghetto, its Moorish palaces, its senators perching with faces like funeral weepers on their sacks of money.

Alfonso, like many of our saints, did not set off as a saint but a lawyer (Casanova's start was no different). In this brief *vita*, we can only touch on the mental nourishment: Casanova survived the French revolution by nine years, living in the baroque hermitic surrounds of Dux, whereas Alfonso died one year before the revolution. What manner of thoughts could have been going through the heads of these two lawyers, one cum-saint, one cum-adventurer, in the company of wigs crawling with lice and bishops' miters that resembled a leather-bound wine list? It is no surprise that a series of attempts were made to expel Alfonso from law school in his very first year, because he puzzled over the *foundations of law*, its final causes, which attracted general hostility from all university chairs and courts. What is the contribution of Christianity and the gospels to European law? What is the Roman heritage? What did the Goths and other Germans contribute to the mixture? How about those who

paved the way for the French Revolution? What about his father's grandee family? The money-grubbing, rapacious, sophistic shysters. Here *all* possible ethics had to be examined in space and time, and only *after* that could one slap an only half-legible skew-whiff stamp of a *nullus nullificatus* on an enacting clause (full of subclauses). When the father learnt about his son's investigations, viler than even the curse of leprosy, into 'final causes,' it was all he could do not to run him through in the university's assembly hall (a fine gentry comedy): whereafter Alfonso followed his intellectual dabbling in secret, in the same way as fellows pursued their sexual lives, and already as a law student he was an unbeatable legal adviser to a range of products across the social scale, from the Vatican to Don Quixote feudal puppets.

A big trial brought a decisive change in his life. In much the same way as physicians call spectacular operations carried out before a big public 'music-hall surgery,' this was a music-hall hearing, if only because millions hung on which way it went, with Alfonso's father himself being involved as well as, to add further romantic spice, the fabulously beautiful woman (picked by family) to whom Alfonso was affianced. In the trial Alfonso spoke on behalf of his father and his fiancée. He always spoke without notes, with a sea of documents, an ocean of tiny bills strewn before him on his table, but all he would do is occasionally point to one or another — knowing the whole thing off pat. In one of the 'boxes' was his father, now swollen up from barrel-size into an even

bulkier barrel in the knowledge of a certain win, while on another balcony was the fiancée, quite deliberately attired in such a stunning costume that, in its blossoming-bejeweled whiteness, it was hard to tell apart from a wedding dress, with its liturgical piquancy flickering from the Madonna of the myrtles to the maenads.

Alfonso cited from memory a last will and testament of around six hundred pages, as was his wont, but he stopped short at one particular article, thought about it, then unexpectedly tossed in four different directions the four paperweights which served to prevent the file from curling, and exclaimed — “back to the beginning!” — with almost a fishwife’s lack of grace, the thing being? the thing being what? The thing being that at that moment — he came to realize that he was representing a flawed and false case that, in all good reason and conscience, he held to be incompatible, and he stormed out of the courtroom, decorated as it was in the style of a Handelian opera.

Gigantic theatrical upheaval, and after the chorus and counterblast of bawling lawyers had calmed down slightly, a mercenary commander’s wolf howl — “After him!” — unleashed an even greater infernal chaos, and people did in fact rush out after him, like policemen on the tail of a regular gang of regicides, with the subtle difference that one of the groups (as it happened, the one in which the barrel-father was riding, and the fiancée, half-naked in rent garments of ‘seminude snaky curves,’ as twittering sculptors who are imagined to be

ultramodern are in the habit of labeling their half-baked jokes), well anyway: one of the groups did indeed come upon the decamping advocate in the Church of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem prostrated on the altar steps in front of the Most Majestic Holy Sacrament locked in the tabernacle. The halfway-trial-losing-halfway-winning horde stopped short, not daring to go as far as the altar, and the father rushed over to the priests flowing out from the sacristy, his sword clattering as it got caught up with the collection box, to demand that they drive his 'sacrilegious' (but then on what grounds?) son away from the altar.

The very next moment, however, the risk of 'sacrilege' drew perilously near: Alfonso ripped off the door to the tabernacle as if it were a badly glued gold-paper poster, then grasped the Sacrament with the strength of his sword-wielding ancestors and raised it on high above the paralyzed herd of legal eagles. "No question about it, here one must kneel," muttered a dwarfish lawyer with a head like a dried fig, and in a trice all that could be seen were bowed heads, in the manner of a Goya painting, and all that could be heard was the asthmatic, muffled holy-mother-of-God stirring that is part of the technique of kneeling. (Casanova as a lay child parishioner once preached in a church in Venice, as you will soon be able to read.)

If a very large portion of Christian medieval painting, or medieval biblical myths about the Jews, often the finest part, happened to treat topics which are *not* in the gospels or the canonical Old Testament, then this

*Breviary* too: for the sake of their novelistic or instructively symbolic delight, may also record similar *unofficial* data, in this case relating to precisely the trial in question.

Since by the time he was born Alfonso was already twenty-nine years old — the infant Casanova can play no particular part in the foregoing comedy. However, there is one apocryphal tale which maintains that while the discussion was in full swing Alfonso's duchess-fiancée (to take her mind off the excitement) played ball in the grounds with her woman friends — the nun-Astartes of Botticelli's *Primavera* —, and Casanova jumped over the fence, giving rise to the normal screams, the normal joy at having such a gallant playmate drop in out of the blue, and the normal amorous conclusion amidst the impenetrable scenery of the darkest bushes, the whitest statues, and the greenest fishpond mirror. When Alfonso unexpectedly flung a falsified law book at another wall — like Moses the tablets of the ten commandments —, and repudiated his role of 'defense' counsel in the suit, being pursued by his father & his fiancée, then — according to this unofficial version —, Alfonso did not race to any church, but his father grabbed him by the scruff of the neck (in all likelihood, just symbolically), took him home to his palace, and there, before the eyes of a huge throng, had it established by doctors of theology and medicine that his son had suddenly — been possessed by the devil.

When the exorcists who were on duty at the palace tried out various artifices on Alfonso in vain, in the most

unfrequented chamber, a jovial little, wise cardinal-Socrates whispered in the furious father's ear that these artifices were anyway poppycock with Alfonso, everybody knew that: a much smarter thing would be to lock up Alfonso with his glorious intended, this lady (learning greatly from the utility of Salome's dance) would persuade him to continue representing his father's and her own interests in the trials.

Still glinting on the duchess, in an almost literal sense, were what from all quarters are recognized to be the dewdrops of love — so it was with natural merriment and like a juggler directing balls that she listened to the advice offered by the little cardinal-Socrates and, locking up (having herself locked up with) Alfonso, instantly set about a replay of the stage work that had been learnt from Casanova. But as, thank goodness, that was all in vain the duchess returned to Casanova in the park grounds, Alfonso showed up as a priest at the monastery and university, while his father was able to trifle for a time with lame apoplexy.

In the next episode factual truths and (one supposes) imagination commingled in the healthiest way; moreover they connect with the epic grace of an apoplectic fit. When Alfonso preached the sermon as an ordained priest, in a most tattered soutane, under the prayer-lined palmette vault of the Gothic vaulting of a church at day-break on Ash Wednesday, immediately after carnival: the father saw his son again for the first time as a beggar dragged out of a rubbish bin — whereas father and his

family, clad partly in Spanish royal costumes, partly still in the harlequin fancy dress of Shrove Tuesday, reeled half-drunk or else formed a guard of honor at the foot of the pulpit (a broad Italian stage made to run about on).

Grandeos detest that dissolute breed of clowns & virtuous proletarians (in his son's eyes he was now one of the latter and nothing more), so the father swooned away in aristocratic dismay, which was tantamount to an earthquake there, among the reed-thin columns with their vine-leaf capitals. After the homily: taking confessions (whether a person was of the street or quality or a drunken jester, just one church rule applied, and that was: join the queue), supposedly (out of diabolical vengeance and a perverse delight) the duchess also confessed unimaginable imagined sins to her ex-betrothed — with Casanova, in the disguise of a Capuchin friar, standing behind to prompt her. Apocryphally, that is where the idea of the *Theologia Moralis* occurred to Alfonso (this is the long-forgotten term by which 'Freudianism' was known in 18<sup>th</sup>-century rococo jargon). When, on one of his thousand missionary trips to a nunnery, Alfonso was received with evidently hostile feelings because a rumor had spread through half of Italy (true, by the way!) that on the occasion of that memorable confessional Alfonso had treated the jesters with much more forgiving tolerance than he did the so-called decent or honest folk.

The mother superior was the most vulgar combination of the customary princess plus sadism plus small-

mindedness plus sexual repression and set about Alfonso, the meekest of souls, like a bullying female figurehead, squawking out to him some tale of a French Cistercian convent (Port-Royal as it is referred to in guidebooks) where the nuns were so strict to their rule — fatalistic, deterministic, fanatics of eternal guilty conscience — that even the saintliest among them kicked the Holy Sacrament out of the window at the time she was being given extreme unction because she sensed that she was not in possession of salvation and divine grace — and she was still laboring in the original guilty conscience of original sin. “The lady was very much mistaken, indeed committing sacrilege — commented Alfonso with a drawing-room gesture of dismissal —, it’s good luck Jesus couldn’t care less about caviling bitches of her sort.”

One can just imagine the frame of mind in which, after the mother superior’s dogmatic yapping, both bes-tilly self-lacerating and therefore lacerating to others, he received the poor, meek, modest, and innocent little scullery-maid of a nun who (sincerely and by way of solace) recounted to Liguori by the washtub a vision she had had that he would be: a great saint, the founder of a great clerical order, a plumber of souls for the Church to outdo all the old theological doctors. To start with Alfonso flew into a hysterical rage but then gave the girl absolution at the end of the confession with a kiss of peace — she skipped out of the kitchen, a song on her lips: “In spite of everything, I know what I know!” — something of that sort was blazing in her stubborn, ironic eyes.

Alfonso did indeed become a founder of the order, but from beginning to end he just acquired enemies — evil men, imbeciles, dullards and interested parties (drovers and slaves of the Bloody Ass of fate) left him in the lurch, accused him, ridiculed him, denounced him, misunderstood him (it may perhaps raise a smile to learn that in the end even the old Casanova felt himself to be a martyr, some kind of awkwardly modern negative saint, especially after hearing Mozart's *Magic Flute*, in the cushioned womb of his curtained Viennese landau following an 'escape' from Dux).

Heretics reveling in the blind rigor of blind fate crowded against his infinite understanding — philosophers distorting an almost nihilistic anarchy out of the French enlightenment, lords with millions of acres to their name who saw worse in the saint of the poor than they presumed in Robespierre — the bigoted (which is to say cowardly-aggressive) adversaries of psychoanalysis, strict legal machine and geometry minds, presidents of Supreme Courts of the Judicature — the Vatican (Clement XIII and XIV) initially idolized him, but subsequently, the King of Naples, as a matter of policy, didn't give a damn for Liguori's tiara or beggar's clothes, & "in the Church's interest" unleashed what was almost a crusade on Liguori's Jesus and his congregation — a bunch of adventurers sided with Liguori, thinking that they would be able to procure rich pickings from his order — envious people who brewed a witches' cauldron of hatred almost just for the heck of brewing it, *l'art pour l'art*,

closet homosexuals who deemed to have hit upon a safe place, neurotic visionaries, tunnel dwellers, the superstitious.

When he nevertheless managed to cobble together his order, Clement XIII compelled him to accept a bishopric — and Alfonso embarked on his high pastoral activities (having demanded that much from the pope), having sold off all the treasures in the bishop's palace at a memorably Eyetalian-style auction (a play! novel! this *Breviary* has a job denying itself of this plum!) — he had the gates barred with huge locks and he put it under military guard while he moved into a more modest villa (though it was not so modest in its dimensions). It was not so much the high-key work of missions, more the gilded vilifications of diplomacy which made him ill, his distress over the shady sides of the human soul, the impending atheistic revolution ('deism' he regarded as an atrociously badly-cut mask of unbelief) and for now disenchantingly inept clashes of the extremes of pathologically rabid reaction, and his wish, his longing, to be back in what he imagined to be the beautiful, reformed congregation — those are what made him ill. He asked the pope to be allowed to return home, if necessary on a stretcher, by litter (the sweet coffin of a walker in woods?) — but taken back to his congregation to look at the heavens and write his memoirs.

Closing scene in the wood. Stout-hearted monks carried him slowly, carefully in the ceremonial litter of the resigned bishop ("if those crazy papists like drapes,

fasts, and mannerist opera scenery then, damn it all, let them feast their eyes on it; by now I will gladly be a flashily beribboned May Day nag for them”), when all of a sudden, amid the dark bushes, at the head of a small army, Queen Maria Carolina of Naples, Marie Theresa’s daughter, jumped out and began bawling & cursing and laughing hysterically like a hyena — all of this directed at Alfonso just when he was sleeping peacefully on his fevered bed-sheets. The queen & her spouse (Ferdinand IV, long a nervous wreck through orgying) lived more in fear and trembling of the French Revolution than possibly anyone else in the whole of Europe — with Ferdinand being the royal house’s domestic jester and alcoholic, now wasted into a harem-voyeuristic eunuch, his consort (who brought in women of any kind by the wagonload!) reigned in his stead and she fancied she could discern a French revolutionary spy network in, of all things, Liguori’s Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer.

On a playground suited to Jesus and children (a grassy clearing among the bushes), the queen barked that Alfonso had written his *Theologia Moralis* for the benefit of revolutionaries, and every piece of information that it contained regarding perversions (unfounded slanders, of course) had been drawn from the life of Ferdinand IV in order that Paris might snigger, gloat, and take up arms against Naples. Alfonso sat up in his bed, wove the ribbons of his miter into droll bows, and although his chin had long sunk to his chest, he was still able to

nod — for it seemed as if he was still nodding affirmatively after each and every shrieked charge. It was at this point that the Angelus bell rang out from a nearby village. With the assistance of two friars, Alfonso climbed from bed and kneeled in the grass (begging pardon of the blades of grass) and prayed, with the soldiers also kneeling because they saw a celestial light above Alfonso's head — whereas the queen in her fury flung one of her bloodied pencil-heeled shoes at Alfonso and raced off into a thicket. All along their way, Alfonso toyed with the shoe with childish and urbane expertise — before giving it to a peasant girl when they were at the monastery — “Royal sale! Look after it; it will be useful for the dowry. The reverend fathers will explain all. What are you loitering about for, *fratres et patres*? We'll be late for supper. Presto, presto.”

## *Lectio (Saintly Reading)*

1. He is a descendant of actors.

That is decisive and important before all else. When I was still such a child that I sought to pursue philosophy and physiology in German, the sort of book that I constantly had in my mind's eye had the title: *Innerste Theatralik aller Wesenheiten*.<sup>2</sup> The most primal principle of life is theatrical: the jellyfish in the fairylike-fatal underworld of the sea, the coconut periwigs in the Gothic fan-towers of palms, the fetid head of an embryo at the end of the umbilical cord, jasmine, horseradish, sicknesses: these are all theatrical, colorful, simulating and subterfuges. Not lies, just masks, mimics. That is what history is too; that is the darkest instinct of life. That and art. The darkest and also the loneliest. If I were not myself descended from an actor ancestor, I would not believe in my existence. Reality and theatre: unambiguous. Which is why it is so much an absolute law-book and Domesday Book that Casanova's memoirs open with that alpha and omega without which there is nothing: actor, actor, actor.

2. But the other 'ontological prelude' is also perfect — the fact that two things light our way: the name of Locke and *Hexerei*.<sup>3</sup> If you wish to live, then you can only be an actor, a comedian, like the gods and the cosmos; once you have started to live, then you must forthwith bear a duality of life, of humanity, that can never be elucidated: the clarity of meaning and the eternal hocus-pocus of meaninglessness, Locke and the witches, wise women, exorcists and evil spirits of the Venetian suburbs of Murano and Burano. That is the 18<sup>th</sup> century *par excellence*, but the whole of human life is eternal. This duality underlines Casanova's entire eroticism: the sobriety and commonsense grayness of the atheism of "*Experimentalphysik*," the spirit of the demons, Roman "*Irrlichter*,"<sup>4</sup> and ineradicable wizardry. But could man be intelligent any other way? Life can exist somehow without witches, but not 'human understanding.'

3. After that two-step humanist prelude, the *codex amoris* can begin. The first, the pre-love, pre-narcissism, pre-lust, pre-mind, pre-moral, pre-everything '*papillonage*':<sup>5</sup> young Bettina washes his legs, and she does so with such scrupulous thoroughness that little Casanova's semen is loosed for the very first time into the world. If we wished, we might choose this pre-love as an eternal fate. This clearness, cheerfulness, ignorance, creepiness without horror, delight without nervous pathos, this asexual, anonymous, pre-narcissistic narcissism. Light colors — everything is creamy white.

It is *morning*. This is so important in the whole of Casanova's youth — the all-obliterating victory of morning, dew's primacy over the night. Love is a morning activity, adventure, beatitude — a gift of the fading Moon and silver mists on the park. A white washbasin, then skinny white child's legs, white pillows, white towels, white children's stockings, white milk, white milk jug, white apron, white soap bubbles, white flowers in the garden, white moon, white pollen.

What is soap, what is body, what is flower? What is dream, what is morning butter? What is sin, what a tickling sensation? What is washing and what nuptials? What is a twinge of conscience and what is joy? What is innocence and what perversion? What is tiredness and what strength? What is virginity and what eternal breeding? All this, and more, is as yet unequivocal, all this anything at all — this bud, this one and only happiness, the threshold of thresholds, Casanova's youth codex is a book of nostalgia: by the time we first understand it, we are definitely no longer eight years old, and therefore we are excluded forever from the one and only paradise.

We are not youngsters anymore: this first melancholy underlining in itself already lends otherworldly magic colors to Casanova's first volume. '*Perdu*,' but so definitely and absolutely *perdu* that youth, that definiteness of non-existence, is already god. It is also symbolic that love, or præ-præ-præ-love: begins with a bath. The bathing is the secretive, spleen-sugared 'center' between love's form of anarchy & love's form of civilization.

This secretive 'center' is the essence of the whole Casanovan experience — for a moment an era, or perhaps even just one person, and he *perhaps* only in his book: managed to reconcile the animal and ceremonial sides of love. Love was never so depraved, so golden-aged, so libertine, as here — never so elegant, so neatly turned and masked, as here.

Nowadays one can sense only one thing: such animal protoromanticisms and protochaoses as feelings of love can only die, be lost in caricature agony within civilization. Though one may also suspect that it was perhaps just this very civilization that made it so chaotic and romantic — might love without civilization be a — platitude? It is true that there is no problem of that kind in Casanova — here people can 'bathe' blithely, naked that is to say, but they are playful, they can blithely mix up the Eve era with the era of Molière's doctors. The bath is an eternal European compromise-grimace: at times with nymphal charm, at times in desperation, but we can never renounce it as a compromise form of love. It is a hedging of bets, not a solution, even in Casanova's time; but as a hedging of bets it succeeded better with him than anyone else.

What a marvelous 'bath' scale it is — from the washbasin of boyhood, through the peasant girl's tub to the pool of the harem in Constantinople, where Turkish odalisques splashed in the nocturnal moonlight. The bath is cleanliness: at once baptism and hygiene. The bath is vanity: women use a lake's stilled surface as a mirror.

The bath disrobes and thus is an erotic game. Nymph myth and civilized hygiene frolic. How right medieval nuns were, to be sure, to consider cleanliness and love as being one and the same.

4. Casanova writes a note to his love. Will it truly always be so? Without letters, without the compulsion to write, would there be no love? Is the spirit always cowardly? Or will the body's archetypal erotic cowardice always pass itself off as mind, and this mind again as literature? Mind out of cowardice, literature out of mind: is that inevitable circulation not touching?

What precludes: unselfconscious body-zither-playing and love letter — some bodily ignorance, nervous error, and some *'littérature'* about the moonshine mind, dreams, myths. All literature 'as such' is charmingly here, but eternally and lethally compromised.

5. But this moment when the taste of the breakfast milk and diabolical sin still mingle in a single sweet uneasiness does not last long; even in the moment that is youth it is but a moment. The elements separate out; adolescents, whether girls or boys, make a start on the 'mind's' great paradox harvest. Very much in the grand style, very crudely. Raw nervous disorders, raw mythologies, raw lies make their appearance — and moral insanity makes an appearance in all its consistent vividness.

HISTORY OF THE GENESIS OF THE  
ST. ORPHEUS BREVIARY

Mária Tompa

I<sup>N</sup> THE SUMMER OF 1937 Miklós Szentkuthy made a trip around northern Italy, which was when the plan for his work about Orpheus was seeded. An exhibition in Venice of the whole *oeuvre* of Tintoretto left an extraordinary impression on him, plentiful traces of which are readily discernible in his work *Széljegyzetek Casanovához* [Marginalia on Casanova], which became the first part of the *Fekete Orpheus-füzetek* [Black Orpheus notebooks], completed in 1938 and published in 1939.

In his 1976 memoir *Recollections of My Career*, this is how he refers to it: "Among the huge amount that I learned from Antal Szerb I ought to list my real acquaintance with the eighteenth century. It was he who inspired the Casanova commentaries of Orpheus ... The *structure* of my commentaries was determined by the structure of the 1919 *magnum opus* of the Protestant theologian Karl Barth on the *Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*."

In regard to the physical form of the *Black Orpheus* notebooks he considered it important to note in the series of interviews published in 1988 under the title *Frivolitások és hitvallások* [Frivolous Confessions]. "I even con-

ceived of (but did not realize) an initial cover design for the *Black Orpheus* notebooks. I envisaged it as being of folio size, not knowing yet whether it would be a notebook or book. All I recall is that the inspiration for it were the very many relief tombs that could be seen on church pavings: a big rectangular marble or bronze in the center of which a deceased bishop was portrayed in relief with a legend running round in a rectangular frame. That was not what they became... but the big black notebooks do somehow tend towards my original idea... If anything inspired them it was utter simplicity: a few books put out by Jakob Hegner, the publishing house based in Cologne... on the spine of each of which, uniformly, was stuck a little vignette on which the title and author could be read. I felt that was extremely tasteful & elegant, and that was how I devised the cover of the Orpheus notebooks as well."

Given that this was a work about Giacomo Casanova, the infamous Venetian adventurer, the state censorship board and later the Hungarian Royal Court of Justice, condemned it virtually unseen, or at least only after a very superficial glance. Szentkuthy professed as follows in *Recollections of My Career*:

To start with, the first novel (*Casanova*) had barely come out when something else — an almost illegibly typewritten scrap of paper — made an appearance at the Madách Gymnasium, where I was working at the time as the most novice of probationary teachers. It was an official document which communicated the heart-warming fact

that the public prosecutor's office was "laying charges" against my *Casanova* specifically for offending against public decency and affronting religious sentiment. (It was no mean feat, after that had been delivered to my hands, to go on and give two English lessons on the poetry of Shelley and Keats.) How had I offended against public decency? By the following: "The streets in Venice are narrow, windows are vast and thus, in mystic comfort [...] it is possible to spy in on a woman, into her home, her boudoir, her soup and her washing basin." In what way had I trampled on religion? By way of introduction, I ought to mention that in point II of the book I write about how, when Casanova was a child, it was customary in Venice (at New Year?) for the sermon to be given, in memory of Jesus' own childhood, not by an ordained priest but by a Venetian child, which tickled me to no end. At the place where I was open to prosecution I expressed this by, among other things, the following: "We cannot help but think that Casanova was entitled to deliver the sermon, and that what is happening here is perfectly logical, quite free of hypocrisy. It is God's will that the sermon should be delivered, not by St. John, bearded and in the wilderness, but by a lovelorn rascal..." So how had the newfangled censor and the public prosecutor's office turned that against me? "M. Sz. is teaching Christian Hungary that the sermons in church should not be delivered by professional priests but scoundrels." In my naivety I rushed off to get a defense lawyer, and naturally could find no one who was willing to take on my case,

so that in the end the Attorney General's office had to appear on my behalf, a taking of my side that consisted of getting the charges against me dropped, but at the cost of having distribution of my book banned. In 1940-42, with the war in progress, I only had to submit to the censor a typescript of anything I wanted to publish, and to my no little surprise, they did not even bother looking at this but mindlessly slapped on, every 20 pages, the blue stamp authorizing publication, with the most eloquent "imprimatur" being given, for instance, to an imagined Chinese story that was a barely disguised scathing parody of Hitlerism!

Printed copies of the volume were impounded, so that it never reached bookshops, and nowadays only a few copies of it are to be found anywhere in the country... because, as Szentkuthy ironically remarked, those who knew that something about Casanova had been published but might be impounded quickly acquired it because they thought that it was some bulky and racy bestseller. In reality it is a reader's diary divided into 123 numbered sections that provides a picture of Casanova's personality extending to highly comprehensive, balanced, and minute psychological details. Szentkuthy gives an extremely detailed analysis not only with regard to his accomplishments in seducing women, but his intellectual and mental endeavors, his psychological and emotional stumbling blocks — much of it with great subjective vehemence.

Casanova wrote his memoirs in French but it was not possible to publish them in that language for several centuries and they appeared first in Germany (in six volumes, each of which was more than 600 pages long) before they were eventually published in France (1960–63). During the Thirties Szentkuthy was in possession of a German edition of the memoirs; that is what he read, and that is why so many German quotations can be found in *Marginalia on Casanova*.

The impounding and destruction of the work was not a calamity for Szentkuthy. His energy as a writer was undiminished. The next volume in the series appeared in 1939, and four more up until 1942, so that the six *Black Orpheus* notebooks comprised an independent part of the planned essay novel with the title *St. Orpheus Breviary*.

So that readers can more readily take stock of the position, what follows includes two programs for the entire work that Szentkuthy wrote (in 1939 and 1942, and a detailed chronology of the published parts).

The writing of the series of notebooks broke off in 1942 and it could not be resumed after the end of World War II due to the Communist dictatorship in Hungary under Rákosi. As a result, Szentkuthy had to wait until 1968 for an opportunity for a new edition of the *Orpheus* work. Csaba Sík, then the chief editor at Magvető Publishers, proposed to publish the books, but by then Szentkuthy already had as his aim publication of the entire work in a uniform edition, as originally intended in the 1939 program, with him writing the life of a saint

as a preface to each single volume. Each book therefore would consist of two sections: 1) Vita (Life of a Saint), and 2) Lectio (Saintly Reading). The six *Black Orpheus* notebooks did not as yet have the “Life of a Saint” sections. He only set about writing those for the first six parts around 1969, & in 1973 the first two volumes published by Magvető appeared in the originally planned form. In the life of Alfonso Maria di Liguori there is to be found a reference to St. Silvester I, a life of which can be read at the start of the seventh book of *Orpheus: II Szilveszter második élete* [The Second Life of Silvester II, 1972].

In the end all 10 parts of *Orpheus* made an appearance in five volumes. Thus, over a span of 44 years the 10 volumes of the *St. Orpheus Breviary* planned back in 1939 were accomplished within the framework of a substantial cycle of essays.

On the other hand, one book that figured in the original plan was a reading diary with the title *Ágoston olvasása közben. Szélgjegyzetek Szent Ágoston » De civitate Dei « c. művéhez* [While Reading Augustine: Marginalia on St. Augustine’s work *The City of God*]. He actually wrote that in 1939 but in the end, for unknown reasons, he did not incorporate it into the *Orpheus* cycle; it remained in manuscript and was published posthumously by Jelenkor Press (1993); soon after it appeared in French translation as *En lisant Augustin* (José Corti, 1996), and eventually also in Spanish (Subsuelo, 2013).

Already in the early Seventies Szentkuthy wrote two other works that he intended to fit into the *St. Orpheus*

*Breviary* but which to the present day have remained unpublished (on the cover sheet he wrote: “of *St. Orpheus Breviary*, vol. IX and X: *Egyiptomi Mária és Amazonok római vadászaton* [*Mary of Egypt and Amazons on the Hunt in Rome*]”), though several excerpts from the latter were made available in journals.

Miklós Szentkuthy;

program set out in two prospectuses for the *Black Orpheus* notebooks

- a) on completing the writing of *Széljegyzetek Casanovához* [Marginalia on Casanova]  
(the year before its publication in 1939)

I started the prospectus for the first of the *Orpheus* notebooks with the following text:

The work, larger continuous installments of which will appear quarterly, comprises an interlocking essay series. At the beginning of each chapter there will be a longer or shorter life of a saint, and, appended to that, historical essays, extracts from a novel, short stories, lyrical poems, and aphorisms that are connected with aspects of the life and times of the saint who stands at the chapter head. The designation ‘Breviary’ in the title refers to this manner of composition. The name “Orpheus” expresses the underlying conceptual tone: Orpheus wandering in the

underworld is an eternal symbol of the brain straying among the dark secrets of reality. The aim of the work is, firstly, to portray the reality of nature and history with ever more extreme precision, and secondly, to display through variations in the history of the European mind an observer's every uncertainty, the fickleness of emotions, the tragic sterility of thoughts & philosophical systems. The reason for placing the epithet "Saint" before "Orpheus" is because the work seeks to portray both European history and the vegetative world of nature from an essentially religious, supernatural viewpoint. Although both the lives of the saints, as well as the other figures, famous books, and cultural manifestations of history are, in point of fact, nothing more than different features of a lyrical self-portrait, the various roles and masks of the author as it were, the work is in essence "religious," because from love to politics the emphasis throughout is on the battle of the body-politic of God and the body-politic of the world.

The part works, each approx. 100–150 pages in length, will not display the day-by-day arrangement of a breviary as this would pose technical difficulties with issuing what, as far as possible, will be notebooks of uniform length. One such notebook (in the same format as the present leaflet) will appear every three or four months at the price of Pengő 2.80\* per notebook.

*Széljegyzetek Casanovához* [Marginalia on Casanova];  
 (A picture of the literature, society, and art of the eighteenth century via the *Memoirs*);

the next three planned notebooks are:

*Ágoston olvasása közben* [While Reading St. Augustine]  
 (the antique myth, the Old Testament and Christianity,  
 and finally the balance of European history);

*Vázlatok Tudor Erzsébet ifjúkori arcképehez* [Sketches for  
 a Portrait of Elizabeth Tudor of England as a Girl]

*Orpheus tíz álarca* [The Ten Masks of Orpheus] (i.e.,  
 10 lives of saints)

b) on completing the writing of the last of the *Black Orpheus* notebooks: *Vallomás és bábjáték* [Confession and Puppet Show] in 1942

The aim of Orpheus is to find the human ideal and an acceptable lifestyle that a thinking cerebrum and a sentiment in search of happiness can wish for after the broadest possible circle of historical, the most universal religious, and the most profound natural historical experiences. The aim is thus an unmistakable humanist one: it seeks the man beyond every variant of cultures, all promise and failure of sciences and mythologies, the most distant periods and far-flung regions, the vast yet nevertheless finite shades of psychology. What remains

of the masses of experience left behind? What can be utilized in the future? What is the play of time and what is the indispensable essence and possibly a permanent positive? A commonplace simile illumines the method of Orpheus: just as a human embryo before birth as it were recapitulates stages of its evolutionary development that after birth, including adulthood, are unnoticeable, so it is with the author of this book, before reaching the new human ideal set as a goal, first it will run through the most characteristic political, artistic, and religious figures of preceding eras, will with dramatic gusto fuse with them (with playful balancing of historical objectivity and lyrical personality) in order thereby to arrive at his own age and be able to give an answer to what — after Gothic and rococo, Greek myth and Reformation, Chinese painting and Spanish politics — what should the new man be like, & what should he do? As that is the goal and the method, in point of fact it belongs to the old genre of the *Bildungsroman*, a novel of a person's formative years, uniting the leading genres of the present day, the essay, & the autobiography in a common big framework.

#### Editions of the *Saint Orpheus Breviary*

1939–1942: *Fekete Orpheus-füzetek* [Black Orpheus notebooks]: Részletek Szentkuthy Miklós “*Szent Orpheus breviariuma*” című készülő művéből / Ex-

tracts from Miklós Szentkuthy's work in progress under the title *Saint Orpheus Breviary*. Private edition, the six published notebooks of which were:

- 1) 1939: *Széljegyzetek Casanovához* [Marginalia on Casanova]
- 2) 1939: *Fekete Reneszánsz* [Black Renaissance]
- 3) 1940: *Eszkoriál* [Escorial]
- 4) 1941: *Europa Minor*
- 5) 1941: *Cynthia*
- 6) 1942: *Vallomás és bábjáték* [Confession and Puppet Show]

1973–1993: *Szent Orpheus breviáriuma*. Budapest: Magvető Kiadó (the prefatory Saintly lives were all written between 1969 and 1972).

1973: vols. I–2, for the six works published in this edition see 1939–42 + *II Szilveszter második élete* [The Second Life of Silvester II]

1974: vol. 3. *Kanonizált kétségbeesés ('Kétkedő' Szent Hugó, Grenoble-i püspök élete)* [Canonized Desperation: the life of 'Doubting' St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble].

1976: vols. I, 2 & 3 second edn. (700 + 732 + 458 pp.)

1984: vol. 4: *Véres Szamár, V, Szent Celesztin, lemondó pápa élete* [Bloody Ass: Life of St. Celestine V, the Pope who Abdicated] (568 pp.)

1993: vol. 5 (fragmentary): *Euridiké nyomában* [In the Footsteps of Eurydice] (149 pp.)

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Alfonso set out his ideals of gentle, direct persuasion, rather than rigor, in his celebrated *Theologia Moralis* (1753–5).
- 2 Inmost theatricality of all entities.
- 3 Witchcraft. It should be borne in mind that Casanova's *History of My Life* first saw print in a German edition, between 1822 and 1828, and that was the text used by Szentkuthy (hence the occasional German quotations).
- 4 'will-o'-the-wisps.'
- 5 'Butterflying,' craving for variety.
- 6 Phrase used in a remark by Edgar in *King Lear* (I.ii).
- 7 "I set out *masked*." The English translation, and what follow in the endnotes, are the equivalents taken from Giacomo Casanova, Chevalier de Seingalt: *History of My Life*. Tr. Willard R. Trask. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967, indicated in this particular instance: English vol. 1, Chapter 4, p. 102. (Masks were customarily worn during the theater season in Venice, from roughly late October to Carnival.) The German quotations (as in the very first published version of the *Diary*, which was written in French) are as they originally appear in Szentkuthy's *Szent Orpheus breviariuma*, I. *Széljegyzetek Casanovához*. Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1973.

- 8 Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725 – 1805) won great popularity, especially for his pretty heads of young girls.
- 9 Also known as the "marble church," Santa Maria dei Miracoli is one of the best examples of the early Venetian Renaissance including colored marble.
- 10 "I must... I must..." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 128.
- 11 "The murmur of water struck by the oars of a gondola..." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 112.
- 12 Downgoing, or decline, as in Spengler's *Decline of the West* (*Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, 2 vols., 1918 – 22).
- 13 "I had read Plato." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 8, p. 205.
- 14 "Metaphysics... for this I don't care." Eng. vol. 3, ch. 10, p. 195.
- 15 "outcast forever, abandoned forever, destroyed forever be all ties of nature, rejected, abandoned & destroyed forever be all ties of nature..." (Act II, Scene I).
- 16 "Sleep and Poetry" is a 400-line poem, published in 1817 by John Keats, towards the end of which can be read the lines:

"Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,  
Starts at the sight of Laura; nor can wean  
His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they!  
For over them was seen a free display  
Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone  
The face of Poesy: from off her throne  
She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell.  
The very sense of where I was might well  
Keep Sleep aloof..."

- 17 "...then fantasy finds new pleasures."
- 18 "delights of remembrance."
- 19 "Drunkenness and fear." "Eleven nights."
- 20 *The Complaint: or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality*, better known simply as *Night-Thoughts*, is a long poem by Edward Young published in nine parts (or "nights") between 1742 and 1745.
- 21 "True love always makes one reticent." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 124.
- 22 "This metaphysical curve seemed to me to be against nature..." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 132.
- 23 Eng. vol. 1, ch. 5, pp. 136–137.
- 24 I.e., dry.
- 25 "with my two angels" and "my first love." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 147.
- 26 Cf. Eng. vol. 1, ch. 10, pp. 289–293.
- 27 Cf. Eng. vol. 4, ch. 7, pp. 109–125.
- 28 This inverts a tag from Cicero's *De oratore: historia est magistra vitae*.
- 29 "The packet contained a piece of wax on which was the imprint of a key..." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 143.
- 30 Dózsa (1470–1514) led a peasants' revolt against Hungary's landed nobility in the year of his death. On capture he was executed by being made to sit on a smouldering-hot iron throne with a heated iron crown on his head and a heated sceptre in his hand.

- 31 A “night-light with a dial.”
- 32 The episode is recounted in Eng. vol. 1, ch. 5, pp. 144–146.
- 33 “My final act excitement.”
- 34 “I buried myself in the woods to ruminate my grief.”  
Eng. vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 149.
- 35 “Grief”— in experimental physics? And “to ruminate”—
- 36 “And the flower which alone could raise me to the rank  
of gods...” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 149. This translates a line  
from Ludovico Ariosto’s long poem *Orlando Furioso*: “*e  
il fior ch’in ciel potea pormi fra i dèi*” (canto 8, stanza 77).
- 37 “...I rejoined the lively company in the garden.” Eng.  
vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 150.
- 38 ‘See-sawing.’
- 39 “...the prelate who was perhaps to set me on the road  
to the Papacy.” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 162.
- 40 Eng. vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 163. Szentkuthy reads this as “Liu  
family,” though the notes to the English edition sug-  
gest that Casanova is actually referring to “Girolamo M.  
Lin (born 1690), member of a prominent Bergamese  
family that was given Venetian patrician status in 1681.”
- 41 “still a disciple of the demon of Socrates.” Eng. vol. 1,  
ch. 6, p. 164.
- 42 “...he inspired feelings of the strongest friendship in me.”  
Eng. vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 168.
- 43 “The wick is submerged in oil.” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 171.
- 44 The Teatro SS Giovanni and Paolo, owned by the Gri-

mani family, was the venue for the premières of Monteverdi's trilogy of operatic fantasies — *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1639–40), *Le nozze d'Enea* (1640–41), and *Poppea* (1642–43).

- 45 “My sensitivity was so refined at that time.” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 177.
- 46 The *Charities* (or *Gratiae* in Latin) were the personifications of Grace and Beauty.
- 47 “...Thinking of reality and imagination, I gave the latter the preference, for the former is dependent on it.” Eng. vol. I, ch. 6, p. 197.
- 48 “I set off for my home with a joyful heart, regretting nothing.” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 201.
- 49 Phryne (c. 340 B.C.) was a celebrated courtesan in ancient Athens. She served as model for, *inter alia*, the ‘Aphrodite Anadyomene’ of Apelles and the ‘Cnidian Aphrodite’ of Praxiteles.
- 50 “Angel of the Orient.”
- 51 “Orient,” “night,” “balcony.” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 8, p. 213 & 215.
- 52 Mozart’s 1782 opera *Abduction from the Seraglio*.
- 53 The phrase comes from Pope Pius XI’s attempt in 1938 to distance Italians from their country’s new anti-Semitic official stance on the grounds that a civilised country should not ape the barbarian German legislation, and he also attacked the Italian government for attacking the papacy: “Anyone who eats from the pope is dead!” (*Confalioneri*, 352)

- 54 The invented German title translates roughly as ‘The World as a Turning Septemberish.’
- 55 “Nothing made an impression on me.” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 8, p. 230.
- 56 Eng. vol. 1, ch. 8, p. 231.
- 57 The Greek islands of Kythera and Kephallenia.
- 58 Queen Plaisance of Cyprus (ca. 1235 – 61) was a daughter of Bohemund V of Antioch. She became Queen regent of the Kingdom of Cyprus and, until her death, acting Regent of the Kingdom of Jerusalem for her son Hugh II.
- 59 Mélisande de Lusignan, Princess of Antioch (1200 – after 1249), was the youngest daughter of Queen Isabella I by her fourth and last marriage to King Amalric II of Jerusalem.
- 60 Catherine Cornaro (1454 – 1510) was Queen of Cyprus from 1474 to 1489.
- 61 Theodora Tocco (née Maddalena Tocco) (d. 1429) was a daughter of Leonardo II Tocco, Lord of Zante, who was a younger brother of Carlo I Tocco, Count of Cephalonia and Leukas. She was the first wife of Constantine Palaiologos, who became the last Emperor of the Byzantine Empire.
- 62 Don Joseph Nasi (c. 1505 – 79) was in close touch with Rabbi Moshe Hamon, the personal physician of the great Sultan Suleiman, and moved to Turkey, becoming close friends with Selim II. When the latter met the Sultan on the death of Suleiman, one of his first

- official acts was to repay his faithful Jewish friend for his services by making him Duke of the isle of Naxos.
- 63 Eng. vol. 1, ch. 8, pp. 234–6. This refers to a famous manufactory of arms in Naples.
- 64 At this point in the text Casanova writes: “The morning after I arrived in the capital of Calabria [i.e., Cosenza], I hired a small carriage & proceeded to Martorano. As I traveled I fixed my eye on the famous *Mare Ausonium* [i.e., the southern part of the Tyrrhenian Sea] and rejoiced in being in the centre of *Magna Græcia* [i.e., S.E. Italy], which Pythagoras’ sojourn had rendered illustrious for twenty-four centuries.”
- 65 Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72), a humanist polymath, in 1452 published a detailed work, *De re aedificatoria* (Ten Books of Architecture), which covers a wide range of topics, from history to town planning, and engineering to aesthetics.
- 66 “...he would be delighted to have me take chocolate with him in his library any morning...” Eng. vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 261.
- 67 Casanova’s affair with someone named Bellino, a *castrato*, is interesting inasmuch as it was believed at the time that Bellino was a man, though from the start Casanova was convinced that Bellino was a woman; indeed, he eventually learned that she was actually a beautiful young girl called Teresa Lanti, who was posing as a *castrato* (cf. Eng. vol. 2, ch. 1, pp. 5–23).
- 68 Felice Salimbeni (1712–51), a *castrato* who sang some of Handel’s roles, taught Bellino (cf. Eng. vol. 2, ch. 2, p. 26).

- 69 Marco Ingegneri (c. 1545–92) was Monteverdi's master. He published several books of church music & madrigals.
- 70 Cf. Eng. vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 267.
- 71 Lucrezia engages Casanova's attention from p. 250 to p. 296 in vol. 1 of Willard Trask's translation.
- 72 "In the most enchanting disorder."
- 73 "Look at that *little* demon."
- 74 "Secret of nature" and "protecting or tutelary spirit."
- 75 "I am convinced, there is a God..."
- 76 "...we penetrated the labyrinthine alleys of the Villa Aldobrandini." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 279. Trask's translation at this point (Eng. vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 279) is at considerable variance with the German text used by Szentkuthy; thus the English wording used here matches the latter. The Villa Aldobrandini, near Frascati, was built around 1600 for Cardinal Aldobrandini, a nephew of Pope Clement VII.
- 77 Domenico Zipoli (1688–1726), who briefly studied under Alessandro Scarlatti in Naples, is remembered as the most accomplished musician among Jesuit missionaries of South America. He composed, among other pieces, a Pastorale in C Major for organ.
- 78 The close assonance in French, but not in English ("Temple of Time"), is used in the poem "Le cimetière marin" in Valéry's 1922 collection *Charmes ou poèmes*.
- 79 "The emergence of historicism."

- 80 "The individual thing is ineffable, cannot be expressed in words," which derives ultimately from Aristotle.
- 81 "*Les langueurs tendres*," Wq. 117/30 (H. 110) is a keyboard composition by C.P.E. Bach, which has recently been found to have been alternatively catalogued as "*Memoire raisonné*."
- 82 "At the end of two hours, enchanted with each other and looking most lovingly into each other's eyes." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 280.
- 83 This quotes the opening of the second epistle of Alexander Pope's 1714 work *An Essay on Man*, composed in heroic couplets: "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; / The proper study of Mankind is Man."
- 84 "The birth of tragedy out of the spirit of *gossip*."
- 85 "What a situation!"
- 86 "A new lust in obedience." Eng. vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 305.
- 87 "I stayed with them until nightfall. Then I went." Eng., *ibid*.
- 88 "Then I went?"
- 89 "this situation."
- 90 "... I must go to Constantinople!" Eng. vol. 2, ch. 2, p. 34. It needs to be borne in mind that in the Middle Ages Venice became extremely wealthy through its control of trade between Europe and the Levant, and it expanded into the Adriatic Sea and beyond. The Venetian fleet was crucial to the sack of Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade in 1204. As a result of the ensuing partition of

the Byzantine Empire, Venice gained much territory in the Aegean Sea, including the islands of Crete and Euboea. Later, in 1489, the island of Cyprus, previously a crusader state, was annexed to Venice.

- 91 "superstition" and "destiny."
- 92 The Old French device ('*Plus ultra*' in Latin), meaning 'further beyond,' was an ancient name given to the Strait of Gibraltar.
- 93 "The moment of happiness has arrived." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 1, p. 11.
- 94 "ragged philosophers."
- 95 "purses stuffed with money" and "vast horizon." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 1, pp. 14–15.
- 96 "Freak of nature"? Eng. vol. 2, ch. 1, p. 7.
- 97 "...when we are happy, the thought that our happiness will be followed by misery never comes to trouble us." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 2, pp. 36–37.
- 98 The quotation is from "To a Skylark." In English in the original.
- 99 "Greeks, Jews, astrologers and exorcists." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 4, p. 65.
- 100 "My curiosity to see Cerigo, which is said to be the ancient Cythera." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 4, p. 64.
- 101 "This magnificent *view* was the cause of the *end* of the Roman Empire." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 4, p. 68.
- 102 'magnificent' view & 'fate.'

- 103 Reference to Muhammad XI (aka “Boabdil” and “El Chico,” or “The Little One”), Sultan of Granada (ruled 1487–92); he surrendered Granada to Ferdinand and Isabella and was thus the last Moorish ruler in Spain.
- 104 Evidently a reference to a volume containing Chapter xxxvii of *The History of the Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire*, in which the name of Leandro is briefly mentioned. The passage runs: “Leovigild, the Gothic monarch of Spain, deserved the respect of his enemies and the love of his subjects: the Catholics enjoyed a free toleration, and his Arian councils attempted, without much success, to reconcile their scruples by abolishing the unpopular rite of a second baptism. His eldest son Hermenegild, who was invested by his father with the royal diadem and the fair principality of Baetica, contracted an honourable and orthodox alliance with a Merovingian princess, the daughter of Sigebert, king of Austrasia, and of the famous Brunchild. The beauteous Ingundis, who was no more than thirteen years of age, was received, beloved, and persecuted in the Arian court of Toledo; and her religious constancy was alternately assaulted with blandishments and violence by Goisvintha, the Gothic queen, who abused the double claim of maternal authority [...]. Love and honour might excite Hermenegild to resent this injurious treatment of his bride; and he was gradually persuaded that Ingundis suffered for the cause of divine truth. Her tender complaints, and the weighty arguments of Leandro, archbishop of Seville, accomplished his conversion; and the heir of the Gothic monarchy was initi-

ated in the Nicene faith [...]. [Hermenegild] invited the orthodox barbarians, the Suevi, and the Franks, to the destruction of his native land: he solicited the dangerous aid of the Romans, who possessed Africa and a part of the Spanish coast; and his holy ambassador, the archbishop Leandro, effectually negotiated in person with the Byzantine court."

- 105 "all that Yusuf had said to me concerning the essence of God..." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 4, pp. 80–81.
- 106 "I then took a violin and played the tune." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 4, p. 90.
- 107 A *furlana* was originally a lively peasant dance from Friuli which became fashionable among Venetians in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- 108 Roscelin (born c. 1050; died c. 1120), French medieval philosopher and theologian. Taught liberal arts in Compiègne and later in Loches, where his pupils included Abelard. Only one of his works has survived.
- 109 Alruna (or alraun): a word etymologically connected with runes and used to denote a witch in ancient times; nowadays it denotes a herbal root found in human form (e.g., mandrake), or carved to be, and used as a magic talisman.
- 110 Literally "love always slays love, the heart of the heart tears out my life..."
- 111 "The shadow of a tree is more treelike."
- 112 An extremity, peak.

- 113 Presumably William, archbishop of Tyre (c. 1130–86), a medieval chronicler (his work is sometimes referred to as the “History of Jerusalem”).
- 114 Before taking up a post at the cathedral school of Notre-Dame in 1113, Abelard was taught for a while as a student of theology at Laon by the venerable Anselm of Laon.
- 115 “a storm and stress after unreality.”
- 116 It should be noted that Tintoretto’s *Susanna and the Elders* is held by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, and the most important exhibition on the artist’s work in the past century was held at the Palazzo Pesaro, Venice, in 1937.
- 117 Presumably refers to the Castle of Miramare (*Schloß Miramar* in German) near Trieste, N. Italy.
- 118 Literally ‘uncoupling’ (i.e., R & R).
- 119 Pseudo-Heideggerian term translating roughly as ‘instances of the world growing to conform to the truth.’
- 120 Émile Verhaeren (1855–1916), Belgian poet and realist writer who wrote in French, greatly influenced by Zola. His critical writings on art included at one time widely read works on Rubens and Rembrandt.
- 121 The Venice International Film Festival (Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografica della Biennale di Venezia), the oldest film festival in the world, was founded in 1932 and held annually on the island of the Lido.
- 122 “deepest worldliness.”

- 123 "But do not call things by their actual names, that is what matters." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 5, p. 139.
- 124 "That is the most essential."
- 125 These are two persons who are encountered in Vienna c. 1767: Campioni (cf. Eng. vol. 10, ch. 10, p. 237 & 246), a man, and La Vestris (ibid., pp. 259–262), an actress married to the dancer Gaetano Appollino Baldessari Vestris.
- 126 "death" and "tenderness," "all pledges of affection," and "trifles." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 5, pp. 161–162.
- 127 "Do not betray love and truth!"
- 128 Cf. Eng. vol. 2, ch. 6, p. 172.
- 129 The theater opened in 1656 and operated continuously until a fire in 1747. A new structure opened in 1748 and in that century became increasingly associated with opera and ballet. The famous financial difficulties forced the closure and sale of that in 1770.
- 130 Presumably the more notable of two Marcello brothers — Alessandro (1669–1747), a composer, poet, philosopher, and mathematician, rather than Benedetto (1686–1739), a lawyer, writer, teacher, and minor composer.
- 131 "the approaching fine season."
- 132 James Thomson (1700–48) was the most celebrated Scottish poet of the 1700's until Robert Burns. "The Seasons" was composed 1726–30 and revised 1744–46.
- 133 Cf. Eng. vol. 5, ch. 5, p. 107 *et seq.* Jeanne Camus de Pontcarré, by marriage Jeanne de la Rochefoucauld, Marquise d'Urfé frequently styled Madame d'Urfé (1705–1775).

She had three children (b. 1727, 1732, and 1733) but her husband died in 1734, after which she spent a fortune on various alchemical and occult ventures, becoming involved with the likes of the Comte de Saint-Germain and the Comte de Cagliostro, and a series of other con-men as well as Casanova (1757–63).

- 134 Casanova became involved with a Steffani de Bragadin (born Giovanni Francesco Steffani, 1723–?), who was a simple clerk. He was at the time a member of the Rosicrucians and their occult beliefs, letting the parents of a dead girl believe he was in touch with her via a guardian angel he called Paralís (cf. Eng. vol. 2, ch. 8, p. 225 *et seq.*).
- 135 One of the impostures by which Casanova cheated Mme d'Urfé was getting her to believe that she could be transformed into a man by accepting the soul of a young Count d'Aranda (cf. vol. 5, ch. 8, p. 180, ch. 10, pp. 225–26, vol. 8, ch. 1, pp. 3–8, ch. 3, p. 51). Casanova writes about the failure of the first attempt: "...I thought it wiser to make the oracle reply that the operation had failed because the youthful Count d'Aranda had seen the whole performance behind a screen. Madame d'Urfé was in despair, but I comforted her by a second answer, in which the oracle told her that what it had been impossible to accomplish during the April moon in France, it could be accomplished outside of the kingdom during the May moon, but that she must send the prying youth. Whose influence had been so adverse, a hundred leagues from Paris..." (vol. 8, ch. 3, p. 51).

- 136 "Enlightenment."
- 137 "My three friends [their Excellencies Signor Dandolo, Signor Barbaro, and Signor Bragadin] were like the Holy Fathers [: seeing the divinity of my answers... they believed that my oracle was animated by an angel]." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 6, p. 197. The equivalent German text used by Szentkuthy does not include the phrase that he specifically cites: "[*Meine drei Freunde schienen den Kirchenvätern zu ähneln.*] Sie waren Leute von Geist, jedoch abergläubisch [und durchaus keine Philosophen. Indessen waren sie doch, indem sie meinen Orakelsprüchen vollen Glauben beimaßen [...] meine Antworten lieber für die Eingebungen eines Engels zu halten.]" (Hu, p. 112).
- 138 Cf. Eng. vol. 2, ch. 8, p. 207. A *zecchino* (also called a sequin) was a gold coin minted in Italy.
- 139 "nobility, pain, and those innocent of virtue." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 8, p. 208.
- 140 Cf., Eng. vol. 2, ch. 6, p. 212.
- 141 Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–87). Swiss jurist and anthropologist, who developed theories of the role of ancient 'Mother right' or Hetaerism (matriarchy) and The Dionysian (patriarchy).
- 142 Elissa is an alternative name used by some sources for Dido, Queen of Carthage before the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.
- 143 "Oh, how art will always be inferior to nature."
- 144 "Fall."
- 145 "Her virtue obliged her to portray it, as if it wished to tell her that despite her follies she had never strayed from virtue." Eng. vol. 2, ch. 8, p. 229.

- 146 The German text: “*Nachdem wir bis zur Erschöpfung alles durchgekostet hatten [...] meine junge Gräfin [...] zog ihre Schuhe an und, indem sie ihre Pantoffeln küßte, sagte sie, sie werde sich gewiß nur im Tode von ihnen trennen,*” which in English translation runs: “After dressing she put on her shoes, and she kissed her slippers, which she was determined to keep for the rest of her life” (Eng. vol. 2, ch. 8, p. 230).
- 147 A cothurn or buskin is a half-boot or, more specifically, a thick-soled boot worn by tragic actors in the Athenian theater.
- 148 “The last lover that this single woman, through the excess of pleasure, brought to death.” Eng. vol. 2, ch. 8, p. 233.
- 149 “After putting my jewels & my papers back in my trunk.” Eng. vol. 2, ch. 10, p. 280.
- 150 This is the grandmother of a ballet master and actor named Antonio Balletti, whom Casanova befriended in Mantua (cf. Eng. vol. 2, ch. 10, pp. 290–291). By coincidence the woman was an actress with whom Casanova’s father, Gaetano Giuseppe Casanova, was involved as a young actor some time before meeting C.’s mother, Zanetta Farussi, the year before he had been born (cf. Eng. vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 42).
- 151 Viz. Eng. vol. 2, ch. 11, p. 293.
- 152 “The gods themselves fight against esthetically conditioned symbols.”

- 153 Metternich thought of the son of Napoleon I Bonaparte by Marie Louise of Austria (created Duke of Reichstadt in 1818) as the Eaglet. The matters in question were dealt with by Edmond Rostand in a play entitled *L'Aiglon* (The Eaglet, 1900).
- 154 "The body is unwilling."
- 155 The phrase is taken from Lord Byron's long poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*:
- There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore,  
 There is society where none intrudes,  
 By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:  
 I love not Man the less, but Nature more,  
 From these our interviews, in which I steal  
 From all I may be, or have been before,  
 To mingle with the Universe, and feel  
 What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.
- 156 *The 15 Joys of Marriage* is an anonymous late 14<sup>th</sup> or early 15<sup>th</sup> century French prose satire about the rows and deceits which may beset the married state.
- 157 "My philosophical system, which I thought was proof against any assault, lay in ruins; I recognized an avenging God who had lain in wait for me there to punish me for all my misdeeds & thus end my unbelief through — *annihilation*." Eng. vol. 3, ch. 1, p. 5.



## COLOPHON

MARGINALIA ON CASANOVA was typeset in InDesign 5.0.

The text & page numbers are set in *Adobe Jenson Pro*.

The titles are set in *Charlemagne*.

Book design & typesetting: Alessandro Segalini

Cover design: István Orosz

MARGINALIA ON CASANOVA

is published by Contra Mundum Press

and printed by Lightning Source, which has received Chain of  
Custody certification from: The Forest Stewardship Council,  
The Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification,  
and The Sustainable Forestry Initiative.



Contra Mundum Press New York

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Contra Mundum Press

P.O. Box 1326

New York, NY 10276

USA

<http://contramundum.net>

## PUBLISHER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gratitude is due to that fateful night when, in a bar in Jyväskylä none too reminiscent of *Sátántangó*, we first learned of Szentkuthy Miklós, *Prae*, the epic *St. Orpheus Breviary*, and all else — the *cselezövés* all began then, in silence...

Now, thanks are due to Maison Gai Saber, Carole Viers, Andrea Scrima, and Cecile Rossant. To Filip Sikorski, we would like to express our *wdzięczność*.

Contra Mundum Press is especially grateful to Fenyvesi Kristóf, Szolláth Dávid, & Nicholas Birns for their magnanimous assistance with this publication, & to Orosz István for his *noblesse oblige*.

Finally, to Madame Fortuna, the benevolent ship that carried us through the dark ~

☞ *Marginalia on Casanova* is the first volume of the *St. Orpheus Breviary*, Miklós Szentkuthy's synthesis of 2,000 years of European culture. St. Orpheus is Szentkuthy's Virgil, an omniscient poet who guides us not through hell, but through all of recorded history, myth, religion, and literature, albeit reimagined as St. Orpheus metamorphosizes himself into kings, popes, saints, tyrants, and artists. At once pagan and Christian, Greek and Hebrew, Asian & European, St. Orpheus is a mosaic of history and mankind in one supra-person and veil, an endless series of masks and personæ, humanity in its protean, futural shape, an always changing function of discourse, text, myth, & *mentalité*.

Through St. Orpheus' method, disparate moments of history become synchronic, are juggled to reveal, paradoxically, mutual difference and essential similarity. "Orpheus wandering in the infernal regions," says Szentkuthy, "is the perennial symbol of the mind lost amid the enigmas of reality. The aim of the work is, on the one hand, to represent the reality of history with the utmost possible precision, and on the other,

to show, through the mutations of the European spirit, all the uncertainties of contemplative man, the transiency of emotions, and the sterility of philosophical systems."

*Marginalia on Casanova* relives the spiritualization of the main protagonist's sensual adventures, though it is less his sex life & more his *intellectual mission*, the sole determinant of his being, which is the focus of this mesmeric book. Through his own glittering associations and broadly spanning array of metaphors, Szentkuthy analyses & views the 18<sup>th</sup> century and its notion of homogeneity from the vantage point of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the full armor of someone who was, perhaps, one of the last Hungarian Europeans. While a commentary on Casanova's memoirs, it is also Szentkuthy's very own philosophy of love.

Passion, playfulness, irony, & a whole gamut of protean metamorphoses are what characterize *Marginalia on Casanova*, a work in which readers will experience both profundity and a taking to wing of essay-writing that is intellectually radiant and as sensual and provocative as a gondola ride with Casanova. *℞*

"The greatest enterprise in scope, in worth? — undertaken in the Hungarian novel."

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|  Contra Mundum Press<br>ISBN 978-0-9836972-4-4 |
| <br>9 780983 697244                            |
| WWW.CONTRAMUNDUM.NET  |