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Recommended Citation

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**Abstract:** Steven Tótösy de Zepetnek, in his paper, "Imre Kertész's Nobel Prize, Public Discourse, and the Media," discusses aspects of media coverage in German-, Hungarian-, and English-language newspapers and magazines of the 2002 Nobel Prize in Literature, awarded to Imre Kertész. The perspective of Tótösy's analysis is to gauge the importance and impact of media coverage comparatively in the three cultural and media landscapes. Based on selected examples from newspapers and magazines with an international scope, Tótösy argues that the reception of Kertész's Nobel Prize suggests the convergence of the media (as the message) and the contents of the message within public discourse, resulting in Kertész's role as a public intellectual despite his reluctance to assume this role. Tótösy demonstrates that the media discourse reveals significant differences in the reception of the prize, pointing to different stages in democratic values in the context of the relevance of the Holocaust today. In addition, the media reception reveals how far a particular society accepts (Germany, the USA, and Canada) or rejects (Hungary) the historical relevance of Kertész's work as unique in the literature of the Holocaust.
In this paper, I discuss aspects of media coverage in German-, Hungarian-, and English-language newspapers and magazines of the 2002 Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Imre Kertész. The perspective of my analysis is to gauge the importance and impact of media coverage in the three cultural and media landscapes and comparatively. Attention to the processes and impact of media coverage of cultural products is of interest because of its obvious importance in the process of canonization, including book sales and general cultural, social, and political discourse (for an example of statistics of book sales after the award in Hungary and Germany, see H.Gy.-T.K.; Young). In particular, what interests me in Kertész’s reception in the media are aspects of the convergences of the media and the contents of the message within public discourse, resulting in Kertész’s role as a public intellectual. And this is not a given since Kertész pronounces repeatedly that he does not consider himself a public intellectual, while at the same time his works themselves and virtually all media items concerned with his work (or with him personally) he received, as well as his own words in interviews are contextualized in public discourse with special reference to the social responsibility of the writer per se, implicitly or explicitly. The reason for this, I propose, is the latent and since 1989 baffling explicit anti-Semitism with its parallel conservative-nationalist sentiment and, indeed, "program" of culture, apparent in public discourse, as well as -- in a more sophisticated manner -- in the policies and pronouncements of government such as the 1998-2002 government led by Viktor Orbán in Hungary. I should like to note that the publicly displayed anti-Semitism in today’s Hungary remains in Europe as well as in North America at best downplayed, as I experience(d) repeatedly in both Europe and North America (Canada and the US). The reception of Kertész’s work in his native and “literary” country, Hungary, in contrast to his position and reception where he feels at home intellectually, namely Germany, contextualizes and locates his own media statements and the public discourse in general in a political and ideological momentum. Kertész, I believe, is a public intellectual malgré lui and thus he is of great significance in the context of the above-mentioned problematic of Hungary, Central Europe, and, indeed, of the European Union, with regard to latent and currently explicit anti-Semitism and ethnic essentialism in Hungary: Comparatively, it is here where the media play a crucial role and where their impact is acutely discernable. Of course, the finding itself that Kertész, despite his reservations, is a public intellectual is no particular insight. What is interesting and worthy of study is, however, the description of the factors and processes of the controversy surrounding Kertész’s Nobel Prize in Hungary in its relationship with the media elsewhere, precisely because of the shrill and sharp anti-Semitic and nationalist discourse present in the country (on this, see Gerő, Varga, and Vince; Marsovszky; Young). In addition, the media reception of the Nobel Prize in the case of a minor language and literature may be of interest to those working in literary as well as in media studies. An important issue -- while not discussed or reflected in the media, is, nevertheless, the “unwritability” of the Holocaust in fiction with regard to Kertész’s texts: It appears that most general readers and, indeed, the general public, finds Adorno’s dictum about the impossibility of poetry after the Holocaust the status quo, still. Although some -- including scholars -- would argue that fictional literature about the Holocaust is possible and even desirable and that Adorno’s dictum would be a matter not applicable any more, the verdict is not out. Important authors and thinkers such as Elie Wiesel, George Steiner, or Michal Borwicz have stated in forceful terms that “there is no such thing as a literature of the Holocaust, nor can there be” (Wiesel qtd. in Felman 4; see also Taterka 117). Kertész’s work in world literature is established with the Nobel Prize. However, as we know, the majority of writers who receive the Nobel Prize, while thus established in the canon, do not maintain visibility or a readership. In fact, most Nobel Laureates disappear from the landscape of reading shortly after receiving the award and remain, as well, little studied in scholarship. In the case of Kertész, this to-be-expected "disappearance" is the more acute because he writes in Hungarian, a minor language and a minor culture (I do not intend rehash the argument that Hungarian is a most difficult language, that it is un-categorizable and of unclear origins, and that it does not belong to the Indo-European family of languages, etc., but I would like to say that there is something true to these arguments, that is, how the language, because of the reasons mentioned, remains by definition marginal). I understand the Nobel Prize for Kertész as an award based on the particularity and specificity of his work, namely, the description of the terror in and the horrors of the twentieth century, the human condition of that century. I would like to add here that in comparison with the importance of the Laureate’s texts, among incisive writers in Hungary today, there is an author who deserves our attention, Péter Nádas, an author who writes about the universal human condition with thematics and a narrative in his fiction, which transcend any particularity yet represent perhaps more eloquently linguistically, thematically, and narratively the best of literature of today anywhere. However, Nádas, too, suffers the same problem as Kertész, namely being a writer in a minor literature and minor culture with all the drawbacks that go with that position. Other Hungarian writers of high currency are at best writers with a provincial or period flavor, such as Péter Esterházy -- who received, among other prizes, in 2004 the coveted German Friedenspreis -- and whose importance and popularity are based on his playing with a curious Central European type of irony and word play and on his passé status of an enfant terrible, or György Konrád, who is taken, mistakenly, for a writer of literature when, in fact, in my opinion he
is a public intellectual who excels in essay writing -- but not as a writer of fiction, or the poet Endre Kukorelly, who, similarly to Esterházy, was important before and shortly after the fall of "re-al socialism" in 1989 because of the politico-cultural impact and period-location of his writing. To use another example, the highly acclaimed novel of László Márton, Arnyas főutca (1999), gives me the impression of an author who wants to be clever: The narrative structure of his novel is not particularly innovative except, perhaps, in Hungarian. It is a copy (or adaptation) of the Memento idea (or, and I am not facetious, of the film Ground Hog Day with Bill Murray). While the topic of Márton's novel, dealing with Hungary before and after the war, is, of course, an important one for Hungary and in Hungarian literature, as literature in an international context it is not particularly impressive: Kertész's work is. I would like to add here, as a footnote: When it comes to innovation in Hungarian literature since the Second World War, the first and still best postmodern text is László Kemenes Géfin's Son of the White Stag (Fehérhéjtó) series of novels -- the first volume of which was published in 1978 in Montréal, as a representative text of diaspora/exile literature; and, unfortunately, even today, sixteen years after the demise of communism in Hungary, Hungarian scholarship pays no attention to the work of Kemenes Géfin, which neglect, in turn, is rooted in the same essentialist ideology why Kertész's work is not accepted in Hungary by many... (on Kemenes Géfin, see Tötösy, "Some Examples"; Comparative Literature).
wenn diese Romanfigur unansehnlich ist? Die Figur ist unsympathisch, und zufällig ist sie Jude. Aber in erster Linie ist sie Kritiker. Und die meisten Juden sind keine Kritiker" (Kertész qtd. in Radisch 45). The interviewer about the Walser affair ends the conversation with the remark: "You are terrifyingly pluralistic" ("Sie sind erschreckend pluralistisch") (45). Indeed. And what is of importance here is the fact that what Kertész bases partially his argumentation on not to censor Walser, namely that "And most Jews are not critics" would of course work less in the US and, thus, there, the negative prototype of the Jew as a cultural standard of a Eurocentric world would make Walser's task nearly anti-European. With regard to German-speaking writers, it is of course well known that in comparison with Canada or even the USA, the non-acceptance of the foreigner remains a serious problem (see, e.g., Bittrner; Terwery). In spite of the importance of the Radisch interview in term of its wide-ranging thematics with regard to Kertész and his work, it did not find its way into either the Hungarian nor the Canadian or US-American media. Critics in German-language media paid close attention to the question of ethics and morality in the work of Kertész and its relationship with the Holocaust (see, e.g., Steinfeld; see also Adorján and Minkmar). With regard to this problematic, of significance is the recognition apparent in media items that Kertész's work is understood as non-moralizing, and this was described in comparison with the work of German Nobel Laureate Günter Grass (see Steinfeld). The non-moralizing aspect of Kertész's work is often developed when he is discussed in the context of other recent Nobel Laureates: The 2001 Nobel Laureate Gao Xingjian (see, e.g., Lee <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vols/iss1/4/> as well as 2001 Nobel Laureate Naipul represent similar non-political and non-politicizing writing, where the task of a writer is understood as the writing of, foremost, littérature pure. But this understanding of writers such as Gao and Naipul is misguided when we take into account the role of media. In the media, the work of Kertész and his persona are perceived clearly as "in-between" and contrary to the status quo, and in this regard he is similar to Gao, to Naipul, to Coetzee, to Jelinek (see, e.g., Bandres <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol/iss1f/> and the forum of its publication in a German-speaking country, it is of course well understood that there is a substantial amount of theoretical as well as applied work on the marginal and peripheral status of Central and East European cultures; see Totósy, "Comparative Cultural Studies" <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/STotosy1.pdf>). What is interesting with Kertész in the context of the Nobel Prize is the fact that four consecutive laureates -- Gao, Naipaul, Kertész, and Jelinek -- are all "in-between" individuals, writers who live and write located in in-between cultures. This aspect of Kertész and his work has been recognized in the media. For example, critic Uwe Schmidt, in his article "Poeta laureatus. Der Literaturnobelpreisträger 2002," focuses on this specific aspect of Kertész, namely his cultural Heimatlosigkeit, but which is to be understood as a construct of culture that the author has developed to exist in in-between spaces, times, and cultures (see Schmidt). This aspect of existence in-between obtains higher importance in a situation when Kertész publishes in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung his essay "Ich bin der Spuk." The importance of Kertész's thought in the essay -- and the forum of its publication in a conservative newspaper -- lies in his argumentation to deprive meaning from the cliché that the root of identity resides in the mother tongue. This is the more important because Hungarian nationalism before and now argues for the tantamount importance of language for the maintenance of national identity: "The writing of die Holocaust-Narration, all that there is no language of the Holocaust and that there cannot be one. The survivor in Europe is able to tell his/her story only in a European language, yet this language is not his/her language nor is it the language of the nation from which he/she borrowed it for his/her writing" ("Der Schriftsteller des
Holocaust is also in the Tat in einer schwierigen Lage. ... daß es für den Holocaust keine Sprache gibt und keine Sprache geben kann. Der europäische Überlebende kann seine Leidensgeschichte nur in irgendeiner europäischen Sprache erzählen, doch diese Sprache ist nicht seine Sprache und auch nicht die der Nation, von der er sich die Sprache für seine Erzählung ausgeliehen hat") (Kertész, "Ich bin der Spuk" 46). A particularly sophisticated description of Kertész and the Nobel Prize is the article by Thomas Steinfeld in the Süddeutsche Zeitung, "Bescherung. Imre Kertész in Stockholm: Eine Selbstauskunft und keine." In the piece, Steinfeld analyses Kertész's acceptance speech, which presents his ideas on both his texts. Interesting is that Steinfeld accords Kertész an amicable personality that is tied to an intellectual sophistication worthy of the Nobel Prize. Steinfeld also proposes that the Swedish Academy and the audience at the acceptance speech did not, really, understand Kertész or his work. Steinfeld suggests that Kertész as an individual is deeply philosophical (in the context of understanding; on this, see Friedland) about the Holocaust and his own relationship with it, while at the same time in his work he comes to provoke an opposition -- his and in general -- to the postmodern notion that there is an author no more. Kertész argues, instead, for knowledge understood in the experience of the Holocaust. In Steinfeld's essay, the implicit and explicit criticism of the Swedish Academy and its not-fully understanding of the significance of Kertész's oeuvre is an exception in the otherwise positive accounts of Kertész's Nobel Prize in the German-language media.

A curious situation has occurred in the German media in relation to Kertész, after and since the 2003 war in Iraq, one that demonstrates ideological fault lines within German-language media. As Kertész states in an interview in the magazine Newsweek, "We need to define a European identity that loves America, because Europe stands in America's debt" (Kertész qtd. in Thiel 96). Consequently, Kertész is critical of the German and French stand on the war in Iraq. For obvious reasons, namely because Germany's objection to the US war on Iraq, the German media does not report explicitly Kertész's views on the war. Instead, it printed the full speech of Imre Kertész that is duly registered in German media discourse. As to the problem of the European Union, the question of committed literature versus literature for the sake of literature, or censorship, the importance is understandably in the context of Germany's attention to matters relating to the Holocaust and his own relationship with it, while at the same time in his work he comes to provoke an opposition -- his and in general -- to the postmodern notion that there is an author no more. Kertész argues, instead, for knowledge understood in the experience of the Holocaust. In Steinfeld's essay, the implicit and explicit criticism of the Swedish Academy and its not-fully understanding of the significance of Kertész's oeuvre is an exception in the otherwise positive accounts of Kertész's Nobel Prize in the German-language media.

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atic of my interpretation with regard to the media reception of the Nobel Prize in Hungary, the German media appears to be unaware of the blatant anti-Semitic discourse in Hungary. To my knowledge, the first item about this appeared in the weekly Die Zeit in its 3 June 2004 issue, with an article entitled "Die versteckten Juden," with the explanatory paragraph below the title of the article: "Hungary is home of the fourth largest community of Jews in Europe. With the freedom came a newly acquired self assurance in the younger generation. Yet, if someone confesses to his/her Jewish faith, risks still today being vilified" ("Ungarn ist die Heimat der viergrößten jüdischen Gemeinde in Europa: Hier, in neues Selbstbewusstsein in der jungen Generation erwacht. Doch wer sich zu seinem Glauben bekannt, riskiert auch heute noch, angepöbelt zu werden") (Schneider 15). While the attention to the situation of Hungarian Jews in Die Zeit is clearly an important step for the recognition of the matter in Hungary, in my opinion the article itself is of a very tentative and accommodating tone. That is, the author of the article, Richard Chaim Schneider, while exploring some of the issues, does not appear to be aware of the seriousness of anti-Semitism and its discourse in the country. And, overall, the same can be stated about the US-American and Canadian media and their lack of attention to the situation in Hungary.

US-American media reacted to the Nobel Prize in Literature awarded to Kertész similarly to the situation when Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska received the 1996 Nobel in Literature, with a resolute "Who?" The title of Stephen Kinzer's review, "America Yawns at Foreign Fiction" in the New York Times, says it all. Kinzer's review of the situation of foreign authors, gauged on the echo of Kertész's Nobel, is interesting also from a statistical point of view. Kinzer writes that "Readers in other developed countries still have appetites for translated literature. German publishers, for example, bought translation rights to 3,782 American books in 2002, while American publishers bought rights for only 150 books" (A1). And the media response was no different in Canada. In addition to the marked non-interest of the general public in foreign literature, critics whose interests would perhaps include the proclaimed interests of the American media are few. The translated works of Kertész that received the Nobel show this clearly: Of the few reviews published in the US-American and Canadian media, most were by critics of Hungarian descent, such as the Columbia professor emeritus István Deák, who published an extended review of Kertész and his work in the New York Review of Books, or George Szirtes, who published the review "Nobel Laureate Who? Imre Kertész, That's Who" in the journal Maisonneuve: Eclectic Curiosity (see at <http://www.maisonneuve.org/index.php?&page_id=12&article_id=88>). While Kertész was an unknown writer even among scholars of literature, let alone to the general public in Canada and in the US before and when he received the Nobel, since then the moderate interest generated by the Nobel Prize has ebbed to a barely noticeable trickle and remains perhaps only among scholars interested in Holocaust literature (and where this interest includes Hungarian-language primary texts; the call for papers for the present volume on Kertész's work in the PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America and on several listserves resulted in moderate interest on the English-language landscape of scholarship: it would be unthinkable, in another case, to receive in total twenty-one papers for a volume on a Nobel Prize winner). Among the very few items in US-American print media on Kertész's Nobel, it is Stefan Thiel's one-page interview with Kertész, "A Voice of Conscience" in Newsweek that is the most comprehensive. Of particular interest to me is Thiel's question to Kertész about the currency of terrorism and the divergence of Europe and the USA. As introduced above, Kertész's response is one of mitigation between the two opposing positions -- and the Thiel interview took place before the invasion of Iraq -- where Kertész says: "We need to define a European identity that loves America, because Europe stands in America's debt" and continues with a clear and forceful warning that "We [Europeans] might be growing back together economically, but there are a lot of psychological traumas we haven't dealt with. The old nationalisms that exploded in the Balkan wars are a example of that. And Eastern Europe doesn't trust the EU, which waited much too long after 1989 to reach out. Back then we were all enthusiastic about a reunited Europe, and what happened? Instead we all watched powerless as Europe let genocide happen once again" (Kertész qtd. in Thiel 96). I read Kertész in Thiel's interview as Kertész's indictment of Europe, based on his epistemological, psychological, and historical understanding of western modernity as an era of totalitarian horrors and on his understanding and verdict about the response to these horrors by the United States. Together with his view that "let's not forget that America is built upon the most beautiful of Europe's ideals," Kertész as a writer and here as a public intellectual expressing his views in the press comes through with a powerful message both Europe and the USA -- policy makers as well as the public -- could or ought to appropriate. Here, the medium is not only the message but the message is contained without the medium...

In my selection of items from the Hungarian press I focus on pro-Kertész items because of the context and contexts the award in which his work is discussed and because anti- Kertész items are of lesser interest, owing to their un-differentiated and blatantly anti-Semitic and/or conservative nationalist ideologies (although, at the same time, these items are of course most important because of their existence per se; on the aspects of the conservative-nationalist and anti-Semitic reception of Kertész's Nobel, see Marovszky; Young). As I suggested previously, although publications in either in content or with regard to their numbers -- of anti-Kertész items in Hungary did not reach the other interest in German-English-, or French-language of Kertész, after these items suggest is that anti-Semitism in Hungary exists to an unacceptable level today (see Marovszky; Young). In the context of Hungary's joining the European Union in 2004, the level of anti-Semitism that in public discourse in the media in Hungary ought receive due attention as an omi-
nous situation that is unacceptable: The reception of the Kertész's Nobel Prize in the Hungarian media -- pro and con -- becomes a matter of importance for the European Union, de facto (and perhaps even de jure). Overall, the reception of the award in the Hungarian press is complicated to gauge because of the social and intellectual self-divide, increasingly so in the last several years, of the country into pro- and anti-Semitism that is played out in full force in the media (for a positive item in the Hungarian media, see also Böhm, Vári, Koltai, and Várnai; with regard to the situation of populist right-wing matters in Central and East Europe, see Chiantera-Stutte and Pethó).\footnote{http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol5/iss1/6/}

In the Hungarian media, Gáspár Miklós Tamás's article "Kertész Imre magyar író Nobel-díjas. Zsidó" ("Hungarian Writer Imre Kertész, Jew, Receives the Nobel Prize") published in the daily Magyar Hírlap on 11 October 2002 -- one day after the announcement of the prize by the Swedish Academy -- was the first article in the war of words and ideologies (see at <http://www.maisonneuve.org/index.php?page_id=128/article_id=88>). Tamás -- a well-known liberal philosopher and, since 2004, a representative of Hungarian in the European Parliament -- predicted in his article the coming onslaught of a national debate, which has played out and is still playing out two years after the award in Hungarian media. In newspapers and magazines with right-center or outright right-wing ideologies the award received brief but scathing criticism, as George Szirtes's states laconically, "The political resonance of Kertész's prize is shown by the way parts of the Hungarian press have treated it. Although the distinction of the Nobel Prize had long been sought and might have been wildly welcomed as an overdue recognition of Hungarian writing, the main nationalistic right-wing paper reduced the news to a paragraph" (Szirtes).\footnote{http://www.magyarhirlap.hu/Archivum_cikk.php?cikk=57200&archiv=1&next=60} Indeed, media resonance in Hungary to Kertész's Nobel has been controversial and divided along ideological lines (for discussions on the current situation of nationalism and anti-Semitism in Hungary, see, e.g., Gerő, Kövecses; Suleiman; Tóth; and the Újság).\footnote{http://www.magyarhirlap.hu/Archivum_cikk.php?cikk=57200&archiv=1&next=60} The dividing lines are of course not simple but multi-level and multi-voiced, although I propose that in the anti-Kertész camp there are two -- at times overlapping and coinciding, at times not -- ideologies: One that is anti-Semitic of the first order and the other that is nationalistic in the best tradition of Hungarian self-referentiality, where the concept of and adherence to nation is understood as a co-referent of language, including literature. Here is one example: "Fatelessness is the work of the first order. Only, it is not Hungarian. Which is a problem, because Nobel Prize recipient Imre Kertész receives the Prize. In turn, for the literary canon this means that now he is the greatest Hungarian writer. He, who does not consider himself Hungarian" ("A Sorstalanság zseniális alkotás. Csak nem magyar. Ami azért baj, mert Kertész Imre nobeldíjas kap díjat. És ez a kánon szempontjából aztat jelenti, hogy mostantól Ő a legnagyobb magyar író. Ő, aki nem tartja magát magyarnak") (Waltraute qtd. in Székely 7). The essentialist equation nation = culture, and, in the case of Hungary, nation = language & literature (this goes back to one of the greatest figures of Hungarian history, the nineteenth-century aristocrat István Széchenyi, who coined "it is in its language where the nation exists" ["nyelvében él a nemzet"], a credo of Hungarian nationalism ever since) has proponents also among pro-Kertész critics (see, e.g., Pallagi), although there are others who consider the award to be that of or for Kertész in the first instance and to be that of or for literature in the second nation, and then with the addition of "Hungarian" only as a last and accidental instance (see Bánó). Of course, the problem and unsavory in the opinion by the e-mail correspondent "Waltraute" is the blanket assumption that Kertész himself would claim that he is not Hungarian and the correspondent's belief that a Hungarian can be of one type -- the essentialist type -- only. Unfortunately, this belief is shared by a substantial number of the population in today's Hungary.

An important item is the article "Az eredendő történelmi bűn" ("The Original Sin of History") in the culture magazine Kritika by Ákos Szilágy, who reads Kertész not as a Holocaust author but as an author of a post-Holocaust world which, in turn, is impregnated by and is based on the Holocaust understood as the human condition of modernity (as does Kertész himself). Szilágyi reads Kertész's texts as an interpretation of this human condition, the "mythology of nothingness" ("a semmi mitosza") as represented by the Holocaust (Szilágyi 7). And the world can exist only as a livable world if we recognize the universality of the Holocaust. Whether this view and opinion is in contradiction to the in many quarters accepted opinion that the Holocaust is unique in the history of humanity remains an open question, and further analysis of the Nobel Laureate's work is needed to come to an understanding of this problematic. Nevertheless, Szilágyi's analysis of Kertész's texts underlines what I propose to be the importance of the media reception of Kertész's works and the Nobel Prize, namely that Kertész and his work are unique because, despite their author's insistence on non-engagement, his merit is, precisely, the results of public discourse in the media about the un-speakability of the Holocaust in an innovative and until now un-explored way. This is the case especially in comparison with the majority of authors who write in fiction, in documentary, in autobiography, or in fictional autobiography, or who write about the Holocaust in the second generation of Holocaust victims or survivors. A further consequence of this public discourse in the media is the importance of the process from author to public, and per se, thus demonstrating the "power" of the media. Despite itself, there is poetry after the Holocaust, and Kertész shows us how in a new and innovative ways. Kertész's work is thus significant and needed not only as a text of literary, cultural, and social relevance, in the study of literature and culture, in Holo-
caust studies, and in history: His work is an eternal mark in Western culture, along with Wiesel, Lévi, Borowski, Nyiszli, Ember, Frank, (the just discovered) Némirovsky, and so many others (for a survey of literary texts about the Holocaust including Eastern European writers, see Várnai).


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