

# Description of Handwriting: Physiognomic Portraits in Nineteenth-Century Novels

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*The article examines a specific type of description: that of a character's physical features, or, in the broader sense, the possibility of ekphrasis in narrative. First of all, I focus on how the looks of persons—characters—are rendered in the nineteenth-century novel. Then I turn to the means and functions of describing handwriting. Recently corporeal narratology has emphasized that the representation of human bodies within a narrative is always determined by the fact that the body image is historically and culturally constituted. In the nineteenth century the key components of this cultural context were provided by J. C. Lavater writings on physiognomy. Relying on the terminology of Graeme Tytler I reconceptualize, in the language of narratology, the emergence of the post-Lavaterian portrait.*

Keywords: narratology / the novel / nineteenth century / narrative technique / physiognomy / handwriting / description / Lavater, Johann Kaspar

My paper discusses the potential of one specific type of *description*, the *ekphrasis* in its wider sense. Thomas Mitchell, relying on an early explanation by George Saintsbury, defines *ekphrasis* as a “[m]ore general application that includes ‘any set description intended to bring person, place, picture etc. before the mind’s eye’” (Mitchell 153). From these variants, I specifically focus on the description of characters in nineteenth-century novels, later exploring the methods used to describe handwriting, along with the array of functions we might attribute to this technique. More recently, representatives of corporeal narratology have put increasing emphasis on how the representation of human bodies within a narrative is always determined by the fact that the body image is at all times historically conditioned (Punday 9–17, Földes 6–12). In the case of nineteenth-century literature, an important constituent of this cultural context was the physiognomic literature of the modern period.

*Physiognomy* could be defined as an approach founded on the presumption that the external features of humans, like countenance and posture, form a valid basis for assumptions concerning personality and character; as a discipline, it is interested in the interrelationship between the soul and the body (Békés, *Mutasd* 58). The problems of definition lie in the difference one might observe in how various historical periods and cultural traditions define personality and character, or the external “marks” which somehow can be and should be “read.” What are we supposed to think about the body and the soul, not to mention the relationship between them? I have refrained from using the word *science* to describe *physiognomy*. The esteem of this form of cognition has profoundly changed in the last two hundred years. At the end of the eighteenth century, one of the most influential representatives of modern physiognomy, Johann Caspar Lavater still thought that physiognomy would soon turn into a proper science, sharing the status of mathematics (Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy* 37). However, the prophecy has never been fulfilled, and to some extent, it was precisely the criticism of his works which popularized the counterarguments calling the scientific nature of this endeavour into question. This is what one of his most important critics, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg referred to (Lichtenberg 19–52; Belting 113–122). The satire he wrote about the subject is the parodic example of the anti-physiognomic way of thinking (Craig 70), which makes Lavater’s examples ludicrous with the help of illustrations (for example, shadow images of pig tail and dog tail). According to Lichtenberg, Lavater’s concept of physiognomy represents at best an art or a skill (*Kunst*) and by no means a science (*Wissenschaft*) (Craig 61). The short triumph is recalled in Umberto Eco’s witty judgment, according to which physiognomy is an old science—if it is a *science* at all” (Eco 19, italics added). Nonetheless, Lavater’s observation that physiognomy was a part of everyday practice was left unchallenged by his critics. In his view, everyone makes physiognomic judgments in their personal exchanges even if they have never heard about the term itself (Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy* 32). The criticism of the tenets of physiognomy was summarised by Béla Bacsó in the following words: “[N]o one denies that we can indeed read and we do actually make judgement based on external features, however, the surface can only provide an insecure foundation for what we really have to comprehend and read” (Bacsó 66).

Eco’s text can hence be understood as the history of physiognomy turned into a satire with action, but that should not conceal the tragic interpretation of the story, as it is, in fact, connected to the history

of stereotypes. Cesare Lombroso's theory (Lombroso 36), inspired by physiognomy, but also relying on the results of phrenology, claims that the criminal instinct is hereditary, and it is reflected by corporeal anomalies. A good deal of composure is needed when reading Lavater's ideas about the limited intellectual capacity of women, or the features of national physiognomy. Moreover, it is clear that the "theory" of racism is also closely related to national physiognomy. The bad reputation of this type of discourse, however, is not rooted solely in the tragic events of the twentieth century. As Richard T. Gray puts it, "Lavater himself fell victim to coercive power of positivism and Enlightenment scientism" (Gray 4).

There are potential arguments against silence and suppression, if we do not try to rehabilitate an inexcusable ideology. Rather we may perform a critical examination of the historical and aesthetico-historical contexts of a discourse type that responded to the emergence of physiognomic thinking by a revision and partial elimination of the external/internal, body/soul opposition. For historical studies, physiognomic literature is relevant as a body of *source texts* contributing to the interpretation of how humans are represented, which in turn facilitates the decoding of specific texts and works of art (Békés, *Pál* 381). This potential can be leveraged in verbal and visual representations alike. Familiarity with physiognomic literature can be harnessed in research within the disciplines of art history, literary history and historical studies. The connection between the history of the novel and physiognomy is particularly interesting in this respect. From the first third of the twentieth century, more and more interpretations relied on this method: the works of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola and Lermontov were frequently analyzed from this perspective (Graham 75–121). According to John Graham, physiognomic insight in the novel genre "was no longer a bit of esoteric information to be tossed into the stream of action, but it had become a primary method for determining the truth about the character" (Graham 82). The shape of the temples or a change in the complexion revealed the character's intellectual and moral capacities (Graham 82–83). Based on this approach, one could interpret the external description of characters in a system of *analepsis* and *prolepsis*, with special regard to the physiognomic canon developed by Lavater. In other words, the description of a character is judged in a different way, along different expectations by a reader who is familiar (or was re-familiarized) with the ideas of physiognomy. In Hungarian histories of the novel, this approach is completely absent, which makes a recent book-length study on the narratological bearings of physiog-

nom descriptions in nineteenth-century Hungarian novels a most welcome development (Kucserka 131–155).

As to the history of the European novel, Greame Tytler must be mentioned, whose vastly influential volume offered an overview of the connection between the physiognomic tradition and the nineteenth-century history of the novel. A whole chapter of his book is devoted to the examination of *description*, the methodology of character descriptions in epic genres. Of course, physiognomic description already played an important role in the presentation of characters well before Lavater. Based on Tytler's short summary, it can be asserted that as early as in the Homeric epics, appearance, the beauty or ugliness of characters, was endowed with moral meaning. In the world of ancient epics, characters make physiognomic judgments, the face gives away a noble parentage, and there are examples of zoomorphic representation as well. In medieval epic literature, the color of the hair is a source of moral judgment. Blonde people are virtuous, red hair is a sign of betrayers, black refers to diabolical figures. Christian heroes are beautiful, pagans are ugly. Beautiful pagans tend to convert. By the seventeenth century, two fundamental portrait types emerged. The idealized portrait (in the representations of female beauty), and the grotesque portrait, in the case of diabolical or eccentric characters (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 123–140). From the nineteenth century on, Tytler observes a departure from these types in European novels. The change, related to the spread of Lavater's ideas, was in part a quantitative transformation: the description of characters became remarkably more detailed. Besides the face, writers provide ample detail on stature, gestures, voice, handwriting, attire and the close environment, too. On the other hand, Tytler also claims to identify the traces of Lavater's physiognomic vocabulary in nineteenth-century novels—in phrases like contour and symmetry, as well as in extensive commentary of the impact of moral development on physical appearance. All this leads to a narratological shift, too: the character is not seen exclusively from the viewpoint of the first person or third person narrator, but from a dual perspective. This dual perspective of the narrator and the observing character lends dramatic features to the portrait. Thus, *descriptio* becomes fragmented, we see the same figure from the perspective of several characters, and there are even examples for the perspective of an imaginary physiognomist (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 166–181).

Tytler's work, after an overview of the historical background, provides examples for the new portrait type from English, French and German novels, and refers to it as the post-Lavater portrait. In his survey,

he avoids the evaluation of direct influence, although it must be added that Tytler's and others' later physiognomic analyses of specific authors and works do address this problem to some extent.<sup>1</sup> Thus, instead of a detailed presentation of these, Tytler talks about a "Lavaterian physiognomical climate" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 131). Of course, the extreme popularity of the author warrants this: by 1810, his fundamental work saw 15 French, 20 English, two American, two Russian and one Italian editions.<sup>2</sup> As John Graham puts it, the work was so popular that someone interested in literature could hardly avoid encountering it in some form. In Melissa Percival's view, the secret to Lavater's unparalleled success was the way he readily commented on several prominent problems of his times: the theory of knowledge, the question of language, and the relationship between moral and physical beauty. Apart from that, he found a unique language to convey his ideas (Percival 159–160). His methodology and vocabulary relied on different disciplines, including theology, natural sciences and arts. According to others, the "success of the *Fragmente* probably derived from the metaphysical and religious adornment of their scientific content. For Lavater, the human body was not merely a temporary earthly frame for the spirit, to be discarded after death, but a form capable of regeneration and endless transformation in the next life, according to the spiritual character and moral development of its owner" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 54–55). In what follows, based on Tytler's book and Lavater's works, I endeavour to sum up the most important developments in the case of (to use Tytler's phrase) physiognomical portraits in narratological terms.

In fact, physiognomical description employs a special system of reference. As I have already highlighted, in this description type, internal features can be inferred from "external" characteristics. The internal development of the characters (like their virtuous life) visibly impresses itself on the external appearance. This is the subject of Nelly Dean's physiognomic musing in Emily Brontë's novel, where she gives the following advice to the young Heathcliff: "A good heart will help you a bonny face, my lad ... if you were a regular black; and a bad one will turn the bonniest into something worse than ugly" (Brontë 82).

A spectacular example of this method appears in Miklós Jósika's work from 1836, where the figure of Olivér Abafi is characterised by the narrator as one whose "evil heart" is also reflected in his counte-

<sup>1</sup> For example, Tytler, "Physiognomy and the Treatment" 300–311; Tytler, "Physiognomy in *Wuthering*" 137–148; Tytler, "Faith" 223–246; Percival 159–187; Erle 134–164.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed bibliography see Graham 121–130.

nance, but who learns to master his passions, which in turn becomes visible on his external appearance (Jósika 34–35).<sup>3</sup> In other words, following the three areas of description as proposed by Philippe Hamon (name associated with the personality of the character, physical portrait, psychological portrait), it is safe to assert that in the physiognomic tradition, the latter two, the physical portrait and the psychological portrait, are closely connected. It follows then, that description does not only serve the purpose of “conjuring” a subject, but in some cases, substitutes the psychological portrait: for example, the recurring changes in Heathcliff’s body are also representative of his psychological development (Brontë 74–75; 112–113).

The change in narrative technique mentioned by Tytler also affects the problem of observation in relation to focalization, or, in Bal’s definition, the relationship between the described object and the vantage point. For the act of observation requires more than simple physical capture. Whenever we perceive something, we also immediately interpret it. In other words, description is a verbal rendering of the perceived object (or figure) (Bal 109–146). Based on Tytler’s book, the observing subject appearing in nineteenth-century novels can be conceived as the prototype of the physiognomer, into whose figure, Kevin Berland’s essay offers important insight. Lavater’s work represents the physiognomer through the discourse of sensitivity. The narrative persona emerging in the introductory chapter of the magnum opus offers a model of this sensitivity: “Sometimes ... at first sight of certain faces I felt an emotion which did not subside for a few moments after the object was removed; but I did not know the cause”<sup>4</sup> (Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente* I.7; Berland 31–32). Lavater trusts the intuitive power of such judgments. Physiognomic experience might even stimulate physical symptoms. His work is a result of physiognomic perception and observation, or in Kevin Berland’s words, a certain kind of sentimental quasi-empiricism (Berland 31–35). To provide an example from a novel: when we see the Abbé Pirard from Julien’s point of view in *The Red and the Black*, Julien’s subsequent swoon (Stendhal 236–237) is not a part of the description in a narratological sense, but in the nineteenth-century physiognomic tradition, it is a part of physiognomic experience. Therefore, the description becomes an integral part of the narrative in this case, too.

<sup>3</sup> This change is discussed in more detail in Kucserka 61–66.

<sup>4</sup> The edition quoted by Berland: Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*. III vols. Ed T. Holloway. Tran. Henry Hunter. London: 1789–1798. I. 7. Berland. 31–32.

Tytler's comment about the expansion of the elements of description can also be applied to Hamon's model. In Hamon's concept, description consists of the subject (for example, "house"), or the described object itself, and a series of different sub-subjects (like door, roof, room), that is, the components and conceptual subcategories of the described subject. These subcategories together produce the vocabulary related to the described subject (Hamon 465–485).<sup>5</sup> It means that when the subject is the human body, the number of possible subcategories sees a significant increase due to Lavater's influence. The popularity of physiognomic inquiry made the vocabulary for the description of the human body more wide-ranging and elaborate. The hierarchy of subcategories (like the order or the prominent role of the eyes, the temple, and the line of the nose in connection with faces) might also imply a physiognomic context.

François Berthelot, one of the founders of corporeal narratology, distinguishes three categories of features in connection with the physical body. Parts of the physical body are clearly defined material elements, but also skills, which are non-material in nature, but belong to the functions of the body, like the five senses, voice, and movement. Finally, there are the so-called basic features, like sex, age, and physical features including stature and weight (Berthelot 10). Of course, corporeal narratology offers an interpretation of these categories that differs from the physiognomic interpretation of the same (Földes 22–23). In fact, the latter works against categorization, and warrants the permeability of distinct features. In Lavater's thinking, one part of the body never contradicts another, but they are always interconnected, interdependent, and governed by the same soul. Next, we read that from one healthy part of the body one may infer the health of the whole body and a complete character (nature) (Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente* III.110). Analogy-based discoveries frequently appear in Lavater's physiognomic practice, too. One of his general rules is related to those "whose figure is oblique, whose mouth is oblique, whose walk is oblique, whose handwriting is oblique: that is, in an unequal irregular direction. Of him a manner of thinking, character and conduct are oblique" (Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy. Designed to Promote Knowledge and the Love of Mankind* 463).

Handwriting occupies a central role in Tytler's concept because its role within novels significantly intensifies around the beginning of the nineteenth century. This tendency is partially rooted in Lavater's

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<sup>5</sup> A criticism of the same: Bal 144.

physiognomic ideas. According to his confession in the *Physiognomic fragments*, as he compared more and more writings, he became ever more convinced of the physiognomic relevance of handwriting, which is determined by the writer (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.113). The use of handwriting as evidence in legal cases might seem to reinforce the authenticity of physiognomy, as each and every individual possesses a unique and inimitable (or at best scarcely and hardly imitable) handwriting. This insight might be related to the function of handwriting in novels, too. The most widely known example of this is Stevenson's novel published in 1886, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Here, the identification of the figure of Hyde and Jekyll is partly made possible by the similarity of their handwriting, but the fundamental difference between the two of them is marked precisely by the differing angle of their script (Stevenson 42). A similar function, that of identification, appears abundantly in nineteenth-century Hungarian novels.<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, Lavater's book goes further than identification, and in the chapter on handwriting, offers different approaches to the detailed physiognomic examination. Form, resilience, the height, length and position of the letters, the connection between them should all be considered (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.118). Not only the space between lines, but their level or oblique running is also relevant. The overall impression about the penmanship can be characterised by its clarity and ease or the lack of these features. However, our handwriting—just like our face—is prone to change over time, and might reflect our momentary state of mind. As Lavater puts it, “one's handwriting refers to the spiritual state and the disposition of the individual, as the same person using the same ink, same paper, committing the same mistakes, will certainly write differently in a state of anger than when he/she wants to be kind or to offer consolation for the reader. Who would deny that encountering a not frequently seen handwriting, we can judge if it was written in a relaxed or an agitated state?”<sup>7</sup> There is

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<sup>6</sup> E.g. Jókai, *Politikai divatok* I.180–181; Jókai, *Egy magyar* II 158; Jókai, *A tengerszemű* 117.

<sup>7</sup> This passage seems to be missing from English editions, the translation is mine. “Denn eben aus dieser Verschiedenheit erhellet, das sieht die Handschrift eines Menschen nach seiner jedesmaligen Lage und Gemüthsverfassung richte. Derselbe Mensch wird derselben Tinte, derselben Feder, auf demselben Papiere seiner Schrift einen andern Charakter geben, wen er heftig zürnt—und wenn er liebeich und brüderlich tröset. Wer will's läugnen das man's nicht oft einer Schrift leicht ansehen könne, ob sie mit Ruhe oder Unruhe verfaßt worden” (Lavater, *Pysiognomische Fragmente* III.112–113).

some inconsistency between how the meticulous system of observation is described, and how in the analyses of actual handwritings whose copies were included in the *Physiognomic Fragments*, Lavater often fails to venture beyond physiognomic judgment (Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente* III.115–118).

According to Tytler's assessment, in nineteenth-century novels, handwriting contributes to the shaping of character: "For example in *Vanity Fair* the reference to Rowdon Crawley's 'schoolboy hand' emphasizes his immaturity, just as something of George Osborne's arrogance is suggested when the narrator speaks of a letter of his to Amelia being couched in his 'well-known bold handwriting'" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 218). In *Pride and Prejudice*, Miss Bingley praises Darcy's swift, straight handwriting (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* 40), and in this case, it is more characteristic of the observer than the subject of the observation. The dialogue concerning handwriting in Jane Austen's *Emma* is considered as essentially inspired by Lavater:

"I have heard it asserted," said John Knightly "that the same sort of hand-writing often prevails in a family ... Isabella and Emma, I think do write very much alike." ... "Yes"—said his brother hesitatingly, "there is a likeness. I know what you mean—but Emma's hand is the strongest." (Austen, *Emma* 264–265.)

Later Emma thinks of Frank Churchill's handwriting as the most beautiful male handwriting, but Mr. Knightley again expresses his disagreement: "It is too small—wants strength. It is like a woman's writing" (Austen, *Emma* 265). In Tytler's interpretation, "[t]hus we see how skillfully the author manages, first of all to characterize Emma through Knightley's judgement of her handwriting, and, secondly, to suggest his interest in the heroine as well as his jealousy of Frank Churchill" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 219).

Besides the function of fashioning of character, one must also count with a potential ironic reading of Lavater's physiognomic ideas in nineteenth century novels. In the opening parts of *Great Expectations*, lonely Pip makes a physiognomic judgment based on his parents' epitaph and speculates about physical features not on the basis of handwriting, but that of engraved letters: "The shape of the letters on my father's [tombstone], gave me an odd idea that he was a square, dark man, with curly black hair. From the character and turn of the inscription, 'Also Georgiana Wife of the Above' I drew a childish conclusion that my mother was freckled and sickly" (Dickens 21).

The most widely known example of a change of handwriting, however, must be Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. First, we read in the assis-

tant's postscript about Otilia's slowly and stiffly running handwriting (Goethe, *Elective Affinities* 30). Later we read that Charlotte "changed her pens for others which had been written with, to teach her to make bolder strokes in her handwriting" (Goethe, *Elective Affinities* 51). Where Charlotte's technical assistance could not help, love triumphed. In a memorable scene of the novel, Otilia is copying Eduard's text, and after finishing, an interesting change occurs:

She put down the original and her transcript on the table before Edward. "Shall we collate them?" she said, with smile. Edward did not know what to answer. He looked at her—he looked at the transcript. The first few sheets were written with the greatest carefulness in a delicate woman's hand. Then the strokes appeared to alter, to become more light and free—but who can describe his surprise as he run his eyes over the concluding page? "For heaven's sake" he cried, "what is this? this is my hand." (Goethe, *Elective Affinities* 105)

In this scene, we see Otilia's handwriting, but the focalizer is Eduard. His vocabulary about the male and female nature of the handwriting, its closed, easy and liberal features can be familiar from Lavater's works. Even more important, however, is that Eduard reads this change as a sign of love. In Tytler's analysis, the identical handwriting represents the truly Lavaterian aspect of the passage: "[T]hrough this poetic treatment of an essentially Lavaterian idea Goethe manages to convey the close spiritual bond between the lovers" (Tytler, *Physiognomy* 219). The description of the handwriting thus signals the beginning of the mutually accepted phase of the relationship between Eduard and Otilia.

It was probably not the influence of Lavater, but the success of *Elective Affinities* that made the assimilation of the woman's handwriting to that of the man an example of the transformative power of love in Hungarian literature, too. One of the examples for this is the correspondence between the prominent Hungarian poet of the nineteenth century, Sándor Petőfi, and his wife, Júlia Szendrey. An expert in textuality in the 1930s claimed that the similarity between the two hands is rooted in imitation. Indeed the already present similarity between their handwriting became even stronger after the marriage between Júlia and Petőfi, and she started to "consciously imitate Petőfi's handwriting, as witnessed by manuscripts by Júlia from the 1860s, which were so similar to Petőfi's writing that it called for experts to separate them" (Mikes-Dernői Kocsis 257).<sup>8</sup> A later example, the confession of Alaine Polcz (Miklós Mészöly's wife) is so far not supported by philo-

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<sup>8</sup> On the edition by Lajos Mikes see Gyimesi 83–84.

logical arguments, but strengthens the myth of love. In her memoirs, she twice mentions that Mészöly's and her own handwriting became similar from time to time (Polcz 67–68; Mészöly and Polcz 864–865).

My final example is also philological in nature, and might be characterized as the act of re-inscribing an original handwriting. The correspondence of the outstanding figure of Hungarian Neology, Ferenc Kazinczy, contains a remarkable source from 1828: Karolina Gyulay's only surviving letter to Kazinczy. Karolina was the daughter of Kazinczy's former lover, Zsuzsanna Kácsándy. The curiosity of the letter is summed up by Mariann Czifra in the following words:

The letter is unique in that it is written by two hands, so that the original fading ink is thoroughly rewritten with a tint of stronger color. The hand in stronger tint follows Karolina Gyulay's handwriting, but one can still identify Kazinczy's own writing. Kazinczy leads his pen over each and every word, letter, and line by Lotti. There is an unadorned answer to this: probably Kazinczy did this simply because of the fading tint. However, this still does not account for the selected method, since if the letter was so important, it could have been simply copied. Furthermore, there is no other example of this overwriting method in Kazinczy's literary estate. (Czifra)

In this letter Karolina Gyulay expresses her sorrow over the death of her mother. From Kazinczy's perspective, on the other hand, it deals with the loss of his former lover (Szauder, *Veteris vestigia* 347–433; Szauder, *A kaszai* 90–114). The critic characterizes this gesture in the following words:

As the loving child transforms her grief over the absence of her mother into sentences, the nearly 70 years old man leads his pen over the same sentences; as the dear daughter draws the memory of her mother with tint, it is overwritten by the loving man, thereby creating a monument for Susie, because even if all love inevitably ends, some loves leave everlasting traces." (Czifra)

What is the proper context for Kazinczy's unique practice? Can we see this as a sort of preparation for the act of imitation as quoted from *Elective Affinities*? Even though Kazinczy's enthusiasm for Goethe is well-known, he never made a reference to this novel, though an indirect familiarity with the text cannot be excluded. In all likelihood, he acquired his knowledge of Lavater's idea second hand, too, yet many sources claim that he was aware of the fundamental principles of physiognomy (Tóth 37–39). A deep "imprint" of Lavaterian concepts seems to be at work when he uses similar techniques judging the portraits in his *Hungarian Pantheon*: "Kajdacsí was endowed by God with a face from which the eyes turn away in horror, and as I gather, even his hair

is red. Sándor Császár's head properly reflects his soul, while Bittó's visage suggests something bad according to Lavater's precepts."<sup>9</sup> At the same time, Kazinczy seems to suggest a degree of irony when he is recounting anecdotes about people confusingly similar to each other, where the reasonable conclusion would be that people similar in appearance share the same internal characteristics, too (Kazinczy, *Pályám* 220). Therefore, Kazinczy's remarks reflect a contradictory assessment of the ideas he considers Lavaterian. The same structure appears in those passages of Goethe's autobiography<sup>10</sup> (read by Kazinczy) which reflect on Lavater, and provide an insight into the far-reaching popularity of the latter. The Swiss minister is represented as a sociable person, who "was gifted with an insight into persons and minds by which he quickly understood the state of all around him" (Goethe, *The Auto-biography* 157). However, later he also mentions jokes directed against Lavater, and recalls how people tried to deceive the master of physiognomy by mixing up portraits and signatures. For example, a painter from Frankfurt misled Lavater by sending him the portrait of Bahrtdt, while it was a portrait of Goethe that he originally ordered. Goethe himself suggests that Lavater did not enjoy universal popularity: "The number of those who had no faith in Physiognomy, or, at least, regarded it as uncertain and deceitful, was very great" (Goethe, *The Auto-biography* 152). There is only one area where Kazinczy expresses no doubts in connection with physiognomy: the area of handwriting. As he puts it in a letter to Károly György Romy, "Ich glaube, Lavater hat recht, wenn er aus der Handschrift an den Mann schliesst" (Kazinczy *Levelezése* XV. 40.). In the preface to his autograph collection, he writes: "The manuscripts of famous or infamous people are worthy of our attention, just like their portraits: exactly how, we do not understand, but we feel that we are brought closer to them, to the unknown by a look at their portraits and by touching the sheet on which their hand had rested."<sup>11</sup>

Kazinczy's passion for collecting and copying autographs can be interpreted—following Attila Debreczeni's lead—as the sign of a cul-

<sup>9</sup> "Kajdacsit az Isten olly arcczal bélyegozta meg, a'melytől borzadva fordul—el a szem, s a' mint hallom, neki a haja is veres. A Császár Sándor feje mutatja melly lelkű, a' Bittóé pedig a' Lavater tanításai szerint rosszat gyanítat." Kazinczy Ferenc—Gr. Dessewffy Józsefnek. 1827. szeptember 11 (Kazinczy, *Levelezése* XX. 355).

<sup>10</sup> On the relationship between Goethe and Lavater: Moore 165–193.

<sup>11</sup> "A' jól vagy rosszul nevezetes emberek' Kéziratai a'szerint érdemlik figyelmüket mint az ő arczképek; magunk sem értjük mint esik, de érezzük, hogy hozzájuk, a' nem ismertekhez, közelebb tétetünk, midőn képeiket látjuk, midőn illethetjük a' papirost, mellyen kezek nyugodott ..." MTAKt. Földrajz 4.r. 3. 107a.

tic worship of relics or a practice of museology (Debreczeni, *Kazinczy, a dokumentátor* 281–289; Debreczeni, *Kazinczy emlékállító* 226–247). On the other hand, we might have to bear in mind that the nineteenth-century Hungarian writer was profoundly influenced by the physiognomic tradition, and for him, the study of handwriting was an important insight into character. Probably the—literal—overwriting of Karolina Gyulay’s letter also fits into this context.

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## Opis pisave: fiziognomski portreti v romanih devetnajstega stoletja

Gljučne besede: naratologija / roman / 19. stoletje / pripovedna tehnika / literarni liki / fiziognomija / pisava / opis / Lavater, Johann Kaspar

Pričujoči prispevek se ukvarja s posebno vrsto opisa, namreč fizičnih potez literarnega lika in, širše, možnostmi opisa podobe (*ekphrasis*) v pripovedi. Najprej raziščem, kako se videz oseb – *likov* – odraža v romanu 19. stoletja. Nato preučujem sredstva in funkcije opisovanja pisave. Korporealna naratologija je nedavno izpostavila, da reprezentacijo človeških teles v pripovedi vedno določa dejstvo, da je podoba telesa zgodovinsko in kulturno konstituirana. V 19. stoletju je o ključnih prvinah tovrstnega kulturnega konteksta v svojih spisih o fiziognomiji pisal J. C. Lavater. Ob naslonitvi na terminologijo Graema Tytlerja v naratološkem jeziku rekonceptualiziram pojav postlavaterskega portreta.

1.01 Izvirni znanstveni članek / Original scientific article  
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