

Movement and Rhythm in the Literary Text*

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Abstract. When discussing the notion of rhythm, Emile Benveniste defines it as a manner of flow, an arrangement which is always subject to change. From the perspective of living organisms, on the other hand, rhythm becomes a fundamental concept because, in the history of the term, this change between the rapid and the slow was applied to the phenomenon of movement at a very early stage. This belonging together of movement and rhythm opens up the question how textual operations based on repetition are related to the automatism of movement.

Keywords: movement, rhythm; nature and culture; Szilárd Borbély

Cultivating and caring (*colere, cultura*) are a kind
of building. But man not only cultivates what
produces growth out of itself...

Martin Heidegger: "...*Poetically Man Dwells...*"¹

The definition of the notion of 'nature' in Western philosophy was traditionally in close connection with movement. As Aristotle observed, all natural things contain in themselves the source of their movement or rest, "nature is a source or cause of being moved and of being at rest."² But at the same time, movement seems to have established a relation with rhythm at an early stage in the history of the term. Talking about literary texts, this has special significance because the original connectedness of the terms 'movement' and 'rhythm' makes it possible to raise the question: In what ways can biological movement manifest itself in literature if we do not want to focus on descriptions or kinetographic representations? The following argument will

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1 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, 217.

2 Aristotle, *Physics*, 192b13-14.

hopefully demonstrate that the rhythm of language is an automatic operation that is productive and predetermines the organization of the text, and is already there prior to this process. Therefore, we can say that there is a relation between the automatic operation of rhythm and biological movement. The reason for this is that biological movement, as the history of the term makes it clear at an early stage, is defined in the philosophical tradition and its contemporary interpretations as something that happens independently from any outside effects. Rhythm, on the other hand, is always based on repetition, on iterative structures and, consequently, as Deleuze argues, always includes some kind of difference. This difference generates an inner tension, which may become the source of the text's further organizational process. The rhythm of language, or even the preceding structure of rhymes is responsible for such shifts, or motions of the text that are organized in this openness that keeps pointing forward.³ After discussing the relations of rhythm and movement in the present context, I will try to explain their interconnectedness in rereading relevant pieces of Szilárd Borbély's book of poetry, *Like. all. occasions* [Mint. minden. alkalom.]. In this book published in 1995, the automatic operations of language have a decisive role as they seem to have control over the text, while nature and culture, nature and language appear to be inseparable.

Matter moves without any external cause, and as a result, as Thomas Nail notes following many others, the basic feature of matter, that is always in motion, is that it swerves a little from its course.⁴ Nail, who is reading *On Nature* [De Rerum Natura], a philosophical poem by Lucretius emphasizes that swerving, the changes of movement are self-caused: "The atoms, as their own weight bears them down / Plumb through the void, at scarce determined times, / In scarce determined places, from their course / Decline a little—call it, so to speak, / Mere changed trend. For were it not their wont / Thuswise to swerve, down would they fall, each one, / Like drops of rain, through the unbottomed void..."⁵ The movement of matter is caused by the matter itself, by the weight of the atoms, and swerving this way happens necessarily. The changes of movement caused by matter are understood in Nail's above-cited interpretation as a kind of indeterminacy. This indeterminacy is in close connection with the openness of the literary text—an openness of repetitive, iterative structures that keeps pointing forward as repetition; iterativity is in operation already before the text. The basis, the source of the process when matter turns or develops into things is movement that swerves from its course, that is, as Deleuze emphasizes,

3 For this, see Mezei, *Mozgás és immanencia*, 52.

4 Nail, *Matter and Motion*, 40. Besides Nail's interpretation, that concentrates on the phenomenon *clinamen*, it is important to mention two other reflections: Greenblatt, *The Swerve* and Vardoulakis, *Spinoza, the Epicurean*, 16–17.

5 Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 2.219–21.

never something secondary, as it belongs to matter itself: “The *clinamen* has always been present: it is not a secondary movement, nor even a secondary determination of the atom’s movement which would be produced at any moment in any location. The *clinamen* is the original determination of the direction of the atom’s movement, the synthesis of movement and direction.”⁶ The movement, the resulting flow of matter, as Nail observes, “weaves different lengths and measures that make things, just like the *textum* of lines and metre in poetry.”⁷

The movement, or the flow itself, or following the Lucretius poem, the observation that “primeval atoms” are always present through their ever “shifting movements,”⁸ will be inevitable precisely from the perspective of iterative structures. Repetition, on the other hand, is fundamental from the point of view of the literary text as well, as this is an operation that determines how the text is organized. Many interpretations of the notion of rhythm emphasize that the Greek word *rhuthmos* comes from the verb *rheo* (‘to flow’).⁹ In the history of the term it refers to a manner of flowing. According to Emile Benveniste, it was Plato who applied it to movement and to the human body, making it possible to think about the rhythm of a dance, a step, and a song.¹⁰ This way movement and rhythm became strongly connected notions. Rhythm is understood as a configuration of movement that is measured, arranged, and organized in time; thus, our focus should be on the intervals in the process of movement. These intervals are continually reproduced and manifest themselves as empty spaces in the acoustic or visual layers of the text while they determine rhythm itself. The indeterminacy of movement resembles rhythm and the iterative structures organizing the literary text in general, because as far as their outcome or their continuation is concerned, they are always open. The openness that keeps pointing forward belongs to both movement as a biological phenomenon and rhythm as a fundamental operation of the literary text. This indeterminacy that keeps movement in the condition of change is relevant for rhythm as well, as rhythm cannot be fixed or stabilized, because it is always produced as a result of its relationship to other elements of repetition.

The unstable nature of rhythm, that cannot be fixed, the fact that it depends on repetition thus directs our attention to the intervals creating iterative structures. Discussing the term, it is precisely this aspect that Giorgio Agamben emphasizes, while he understands the interval itself, i.e., the moment when a continuous flow

6 Deleuze, *Lucretius and Naturalism*, 248.

7 Nail, *Matter and Motion*, 126.

8 Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, 4.27–28.

9 Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 281.

10 Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, 287.

is stopped, as a source of the aesthetic experience.¹¹ Rhythm, that functions in this interpretation as the original, as an essential structure of the work of art, serves as a foundation for the presence that makes perception possible through these intervals. According to Agamben, the perception of the work of art and the perception of landscape is accompanied by this stoppage in the flow of time; this presence that belongs to the work of art is the result of the interval. He describes this experience as follows: “We are as though held, arrested before something, but this being arrested is also a being-outside, an *ek-stasis* in a more original dimension.”¹² This state of being held,¹³ and being arrested, the state of being present belongs to rhythm, but it is not imaginable without an element of getting outside. This way “[r]hythm grants man both the ecstatic dwelling in a more original dimension and the fall into the flight of measurable time.”¹⁴ The unstable nature of rhythm from Agamben’s perspective, from the perspective of aesthetic experience is a consequence of the phenomenon that rhythm—as something that holds us, arrests us and, at the same time, grants us a presence in the work of art—forces us out of this presence. That is why this presence cannot be sustained. Intervals between the elements of rhythm, just like the elements themselves, can only be accessed through their relation to other elements, rather than on their own. They are not accessible in the momentariness of fixed, static, or finished phases, in the actuality of one given instant of a movement.

The notion of rhythm in Agamben’s interpretation, on the other hand, depends on the distance provided by aesthetic experience to show how this moment of presence manifests itself because it sets apart rhythm from the continuity of flowing or moving. As opposed to this, in the interpretation of Lucretius, movement involves intrinsically the shifts and changes that maintain the continuity of the process. This difference seems to be relevant in the present context, because if we accept the fact that movement and rhythm, as we have seen earlier, are closely related phenomena, then nature and culture, i.e., biological and textual operations, can only be understood as inseparable. Biological movement, the changes of which are self-caused by matter itself, and the rhythm of language that organizes texts on the basis of internal relations and by the tension evoked by repetition clearly show that these operations have much in common.

Falling out of rhythm, getting outside, or to use Agamben’s notion, “ecstatic dwelling” is an event of language that is very often present in Szilárd Borbély’s book,

11 Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, 102.

12 Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, 99.

13 Jonathan Culler points at the effect of rhythm that holds us while reading Valéry, but in this interpretation, intervals do not have special relevance. Rhythm in this case has an impact on the body, that has its own biological rhythm: Jonathan Culler, *Why Rhythm?*, 22.

14 Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, 100.

Like. all. occasions. [Mint. minden. alkalom.], and the poems in it frequently refer back to these events. This level of reflection seems to be especially important in the present context because the strong flow, the stream of rhythm, the iambic metrical pattern that does not seem to run dry in this book of poetry is present as a continuous, monotonous operation – very often at the expense of syntax and grammar.¹⁵ Falling out of rhythm or the lack of continuity are not present here as the preconditions of getting out or being-outside, as rhythm seems to overwrite or cover the layers of grammar and semantics. Being-outside will nevertheless be an organic part of this ecstatic modality, but not because the aesthetic experience creating distance is still necessary, like in Agamben’s argument. Reading the text may hopefully show that it is because the lyrical I is searching for a possible place in this iambic flow of rhythm. And this quest has a fundamental significance as the lyrical I, as it repeatedly appears and cannot be situated outside the texts. As we can see already in the first line of the poem [*in this poem of the I* [az én e versében], “In this poem of the I, it’s a position...”,¹⁶ being outside does not belong to an experience of the presence that holds us back, that arrests us. This is because the flow of rhythm is unstoppable, and the “I” as a “position” is an empty place to be filled in, where poetic dwelling is possible. Thus, the “I” is necessary for the flow of rhythm as an occasional element of the metrical pattern, and so it will never have a fixed space:

The I so often helps iambic meter
inserts the I between some syllables
the I hyphenated impersonally
helps the rhythm when it’s necessary
the rhythm that sometimes refers to it...¹⁷

In this case, dwelling is not ecstatic for the same reason as in Agamben’s interpretation, where the consequence of facing presence is being outside, the falling out of rhythm. In this case, it is ecstatic because only in the realm of language can we understand it: the “I” appears only when it serves or “helps” the flow of rhythm. From the perspective of the possibility of dwelling, being outside is inherent, as the “I” can be an element of the rhythmic pattern only because it is “hyphenated impersonally”.¹⁸

15 Examples of the demolition of grammatical structures appear in Borbély’s later books as well. See: Kulcsár-Szabó, *Traumatizált grammatika Borbély Szilárdnál*. A Testhez, 49–65.

16 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 47. My translations. “Az én e versében csak pusztá helyzet...”

17 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 58. “Az én oly sokszor segíti a jambust / a szótagok közé az én beszúrja / az én személytelenné szótagolva / a jambusban ha kell kisegíti / a ritmust amely néha ráutal...”

18 The last poem of Borbély’s posthumous book entitled *Mourning Verse, on the Death of Lajos Szuromi* [Gyászvers Szuromi Lajos halálára] performs these insights through the relations of body and language: “There is no time in the body, therefore it is mortal. / Only speech is

The relation between the “I” that “helps” the rhythm as a syllable and the agent of inserting this “I” in the poem [*the I so oft* [[az én oly sok], on the other hand, is not easy to comprehend. In the Hungarian version, it is particularly so because the personal pronoun in the first three lines is not even once present as an object (*én-ént*), grammar as a victim of rhythm makes these relations highly ambiguous: We do not know, not even in the English version, whether the act of inserting has an object or not, even though this very act presupposes the state of being outside. The title, that in Borbély’s collection is always a fragmented version of the first line, refers to this, as it draws our attention to the multiplicity of the subject’s position. This way the relations between these positions are becoming gradually more ambiguous, and at the same time it is increasingly visible that this “I” is always taking shape when its help is metrically necessary. The state of being outside caused by self-reflection is an outcome of the rhythm and its automatic operation. Thus, rhythm seems to operate without the agency of the “I”, as it will be significant only when the number of syllables necessitates its presence and because this rhythm “sometimes refers to it”. Thus, it would be difficult to trace back the sources of this self-organizing operation of the text to any kind of agency other than the automatic operations of language based on the matter of the poem.

The occurrences of the “I” that are enabled by rhythm create a tension within this position that is easily detectable already in the title of the poem [*in this poem of the I* because of the possessive case and the definite article. The “I” that is only present to help out the iambic meter will have a limited scope: “it’s basically not I who controls it / how they talk in this poem of the I...” Consequently, all that remains is “just letting myself go with the flow”.¹⁹ The flow of the text that is self-organized without any external effects based on its matter and the shifts or changes creating textual variations point to the automatic operations of rhythm. These operations designate the position of poetic dwelling in this continuously changing textual space that is always in motion. The organization of the text is generated besides and as a result of rhythm by anagrammatic versions, accumulative repetitions of different words,²⁰ variative repetitions of structures, and textual versions. The shifts or changes

immortal. Well, that and the I: short-long. / Like an iamb, it throbs: that is naught but its own self: / the voice. Because speech contains form. Therefore it is immortal.” [“A testben nincs idő, ezért halandó. / Csak a beszéd halhatatlan. Na és az én: ti-tá. / Mint jambus azt dobogja, hogy ő csak önmaga: / a hang. Mert a beszéd: formatartó. Ezért örök.”] Borbély, *In a Bucolic Land* [Bukolikatájban], 101.

19 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkaalom.*, 56. “lényegében úgysem én szabom meg / az én e versében ahogy beszélnek”... “rábízni magam az áramlásra.”

20 It is noteworthy that the word declension (lt. *declinatio*) as the inflection of nouns comes from the Latin *clinare* (‘to bend’), so the operations of language and movement are deeply connected from the perspective of the Lucretian concept of the *clinamen*. I am grateful to Attila Simon for bringing this to my attention.

of movement or flow understood in the manner of Lucretius and the operation of rhythm that originates in these shifts and changes result in the fundamental role of variations as, in Borbély's book, poems are generated as variations of earlier pieces. In this perspective, the line "letting myself go with the flow" refers to relying on variations that take shape in this process. The manifestations of the "I" helping rhythm and creating a level of reflection, on the other hand, are manifestations of a dwelling that is still ecstatic and that is only occasionally enabled by the text. In this "crowding", where the positions generated after each other are producing difference, the "I" is "waiting in vain" for the host of the poem.

The occasionally generated empty spaces have an important role because the occasional positions of the "I" cannot be fixed, as their instability²¹ is rooted in a structure created by rhythm. The elements of rhythm that are accessible only in their relations to other elements rather than in themselves, are occasional because in this iterative structure and because of how this structure is organized, they cannot be identified, and they are not stable enough to have significance without the others. Rhythm, that is, as Nietzsche states, an attempt to become something, an attempt at individualization²² does not arrive at and does not result in singularity to enable the identification of the elements of repetition in themselves and to finish the process. One of the poems in the book where we can learn something more about this "impersonally hyphenated" position is entitled [*the I is th* [[*az én az a*]]. After defining the "I" as something "that which never resembles", the impossibility of the simile is performed by total negation—there is "no I"—on the other hand, it is explained by one: "enigmatic like an overblown flower".²³ The "overblown flower" as a simile that is withdrawn, unstable, that cannot point to a condition that can be fixed will be important in the present context because of its enigmatic, unidentifiable nature; the impossibility of the simile is a result of the other's absence—the other that could have a fixed position in its singularity. The "overblown flower" points to a process that cannot be stabilized in its momentariness and cannot be framed. It refers (just like '*elnyíló*' in the Hungarian version, though for different reasons) at the same time through the etymology of the verb to the process of blooming and to the end of this very same process: to the flower's decay, to the withered flower. When we get to this point of the text in the flow (or blow) that always generates changes, it can

21 The instability of the lyrical I has a central role in the reception history in many interpretations. See e.g.: Harmath, *Kacér romok*, 115–17; Széplaky, *Helyettesítő áldozat*, 234–35. These interpretations, on the other hand, do not focus on this instability through rhythm as a text-generating operation.

22 Nietzsche, *Werke*, 338. (KGA 2.3:338).

23 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 12. "Az én az ami sohasem hasonlít"... "nincsen én"... "titokzatos mint elnyíló virág."

no longer be reached in its singularity. The impossibility of the process of becoming something, of its taking shape, the instability of the image is what guarantees the occasional character of this position, the impossibility to finish this process and the invisibility of the simile. The automatic operation of biological movement and the automatic operations of language determining through rhythm the way the text is organized are both defined by the instability that results in the openness that keeps pointing forward.

The impossibility of a fixed position and the impossibility of the simile, on the other hand, is present in Borbély's book not only because the "I" can only be accessed through language and because it cannot be fixed within it. The technological aspects of recording or creating archives are also significant in *Like. all. occasions.* The typical technological tool used for reproduction in the 1990s is the photocopier, which is to be noted in this context because of the conditions and possible objects of copying. In the poem [*I am copying* [[én fénymásolok], it is not only the texts and the finger of the lyrical I that accidentally reach the paper, or natural objects (leaves, a flower, a wing of a butterfly) found during a walk that are duplicated. Texts are copied into other texts, and the very poem we are reading is being simultaneously copied. The "I" that is an "impersonally hyphenated", an occasional and, according to the previous interpretation, a reproduced, multiplied signifier is a relevant example here, on the one hand, because the lyrical I makes the following statement: "I am distributed as a copy."²⁴ On the other hand, because the skin that belongs to the body's singularity and the palm will become accessible because it is technologically reproduced ("my palm is quite nice with the wrinkles"). Similarly to the body that cannot be recorded or fixed in its singularity, or the fingerprint that is suitable for identification ("my finger reaches into the texts"), the singularity of the texts produced by rhythm ceases to exist in this process. The pieces read here are generated by repetitions, as clearly shown by the statement "I copy thisandthat into texts". This way the texts themselves are present as partial copies or variations of each other. The poem that is being read here is present as a copy ("I am copying for you like this poem").²⁵ And this does not simply mean that the text is not accessible in itself; on the contrary, it emphasizes that recording is only capable of pointing at a given phase of the process when rhythm produces the text, a phase that belongs to the state of presence as Agamben understands it. In the context of the book, this phase can only be accessed through the subsequent position of the copy. Besides, it is not through the openness of rhythm or through the constant changes of movement that we can reach this phase, because it is a surface that we are dealing with, which means

24 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 29. "másolatban terjedek."

25 "a szövegekbe belelóg az ujjam"... "szövegekbe fénymásolok eztazt"... "fénymásolom neked mint ezt a verset."

that the text itself is present not in the continuity of rhythm, but as a visual unit in the spatiality of writing. Natural objects and organisms can only be seen through the operations of the photocopier creating surfaces and causing immobility. The wing of the butterfly is just as immobile as the leaf or the flower that, in this case, is not even overblown, as the wrinkles of the skin or as the copy of a handshake that is present without the movement of the two hands, without the singularity of body and event (“I copy for you / a handshake between the left and the right”).²⁶

Movement, on the other hand, cannot be understood as the opposite of *stasis* because, compared to others, even things that seem to be stationary are changing.²⁷ Unlike Agamben’s ecstatic dwelling or the position of being outside, the notion of movement in the Lucretian sense cannot be discussed together with the state of *stasis*.²⁸ Movement and rhythm cannot be fixed, are not accessible or recordable, either in the case of natural objects or in the case of literary texts that are generated by repetition and their own variations. And not only because they are mediated²⁹ by the technical operation of the photocopier, but rather because rhythm and movement cannot be suspended.

In *Like. all. occasions.* the mechanical nature of repetition is closely connected to the experience that fixed positions are impossible. Stations cannot be stabilized as images obtained from the window of the moving train, lamps are not seen in themselves, only as “sudden flashes and strips of light”.³⁰ Processes of movement and rhythm in these cases do not make it possible to reach the units of rhythm in their singularity, just like in the case of shopwindows, as the repetitive structures of staircases and elevators have to be learnt first: “It is loneliness that we should learn first / the staircases and the elevators...”³¹ The body that “sweeps along shop windows” becomes accessible in its singularity only after this learning process. Mechanical repetition is in operation in all structures of movement, in the image of the trams

26 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 28. “fénymásolok neked / egy kézfogást a jobbal és a ballal.”

27 Nail, *Matter and Motion*, 110.

28 It is important to note at this point, that Agamben in a different context uses the term *stasis* as “an element of political disintegration”, as—though he later questions this definition—“war within the family”, because it “designates the act of rising, of standing firmly upright” and this way it holds a sense of tension when it comes to political references. See: Agamben, *The Omnibus Homo Sacer*, 257–59.

29 “[...] the event of change constituting the “movement without aim” in an inaccessible way can be grasped and interpreted only as an occurrence that can be perceived through medial substitutions, and this is why it is uncontrollable.” Kulcsár Szabó, *Literary Movement-Images*, 8.

30 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 69. “felvillanások, elnyúlt fénycsíkok.”

31 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 48. “A magány az amit meg kén tanulni / a lépcsőházakat a lifteket...”

going round and round, appearing again and again, following each other,³² as well as in the case of the revolving door and the paternoster. Due to the mechanical repetition, the lyrical I “does perceive space in a different way / like someone who is lurking crossfading”.³³ The continuity of movement, that is understood as homeliness in the poem [*lately* is parallel with the state of being thrown into these spaces: “he throws himself into the zebra crossing, / elevator, revolving door, pater, / he feels at home in all kinds of spaces / that is how he fights dissolving space-time.”³⁴ The lyrical I, who, again, lets himself go with the flow, understands his lurking, hidden crossfading between phases of movement as an experience of dissolution concerning the relations of time and space—a dissolution that goes together with the impossibility of a fixed position that may be present, with the openness of the process that keeps pointing forward, and the instability of the lyrical I.

The image of the butterfly’s wing that is accessible only as a photocopy, rather than in or through the process of movement calls our attention to the fact that the simile is not only impossible with respect to the “I”, that is never identifiable or even grammatically compatible with the living. Natural creatures are generally incomparable, because any attempt of recording seems to be problematic—in this perspective, the movement of the living and the flow of language are parallel operations. The poem [*the’ as if’* can be read as a possible definition of the simile. In this case, the process of comparing is understood as “enigmatic”, just like the previously cited retracted simile of the “overblown flower”. The first line of the poem—that can be interpreted even in itself as a list of the linguistic signs necessary for comparison—suggests that the simile can only be understood through other similes: “The simile is like for example”. This figure of speech, according to the next line does nothing other than comparing similes, which means, that the simile is interpreted as aimless, impossible, something that retracts itself: “the color rose similar to the rose / I compare to the rose one more time”.³⁵ And this enigmatic operation concerns everything that is a subject to change: “the handwriting, the face, the red flower / and the smile so let’s say all that’s changing / and all that is passing the like.”³⁶ The process of handwriting, the above-mentioned changes of the flower and of the body that is always in motion—the continuity of movement and repetition does not have one given point that could be recorded without the effacement of this continuity. That is why there seems to be a need in a later piece of the book entitled [*I am looking for that* to make

32 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 31.

33 “a térérzékét másképpen használja / mint aki lappang rejtve áttűnik.”

34 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 24. “ahogy magát a zebrába veti / vagy liftbe forgóajtóba práterbe / meg mindenféle térbe otthonos / így harcol ő a bomló téridőbe.”

35 “a rózsához hasonló rózsaszínt / hasonlítom a rózsához megint.”

36 “a kézírás az arc egy piros virág / meg a mosoly szóval a változás / minden ami elmúló a mint’.”

the simile itself redundant: “I am looking for that which is itself / not just a function not a simile / not the one that simply substitutes some”.³⁷

The incomparability of natural organisms and the incomparability of the human body are especially relevant in the present context, where the relations of nature and culture seem to gain significance as well, because these relations are not ecomimetic. The language of literature here does not try to evoke or represent nature³⁸ that is always in motion, that is always changing while images cannot be stabilized. Instead of ecomimesis—aiming, in accordance with Timothy Morton’s definition, to avoid the aesthetic dimension, trying to achieve immediacy—what became central in the present context is that nature is always mediated and cannot be recorded. The strong connections of movement and rhythm, on the other hand, point to automatic operations of language and nature that are based on their own materiality. The structure of rhythm based on repetition also resists generating similes and mimetic relations in general, because as Deleuze argues at the very beginning of his book, repetition and resemblance are radically different in kind.³⁹ As we have seen in Borbély’s poems and as Deleuze argues when reading the Nietzschean statement quoted earlier, repetition leads to the dissolution of the self.⁴⁰ In this perspective, repetition happens without identification and resemblance. This is exactly why it can be a source of bringing forth, growing, and movement that is always independent of *stasis*,⁴¹ the stability of identification, and a source of generating texts. Repetition generating the language of poetry, for example rhyme “is indeed verbal repetition, but repetition which includes the difference between two words and inscribes that difference at the heart of a poetic Idea, in a space which it determines.”⁴²

Difference, that in this perspective may be understood as the source of generating texts, is a phenomenon that determines iterative structures while it moves forward the whole text. In *Like. all. occasions.*, it is present not only in the repetitions within the texts, but in the entire book, as the structure of the book is determined by a structure based on texts that start with the same lines, structures, and the variative repetitions of these structures. Difference that necessarily appears in these repetitive structures provides the tension that is very much there in the way these texts are taking shape. Repetition, that always brings in itself the one that is repeated—and this is one of the reasons why they cannot substitute or resemble each other—happens

37 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 41. “Azt keresem mi pusztán önmaga / nem funkció és nem hasonlata / nem az ami helyettesít vala.”

38 Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 33.

39 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 1.

40 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 11.

41 Nail, *Matter and Motion*, 109.

42 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 21.

in the constant presence of the different. Rhythm and movement that does not stem from *stasis* are processes that cannot be fixed and are deeply connected to the impossibility of leaving behind what is repeated and the inaccessibility of the given phases of these processes. The automatic operation that is based on materiality and is independent of outside effects is decisive in both cases. Concerning rhythm, this operation is the outcome of the tension that is constantly produced by the necessary differences in language.

While many of the poems in *Like. all. occasions.* reflect on the impossibility of repetitions based on resemblance as, for example, the very first poem, repetition itself works as an effective operation generating texts all through the book.⁴³ The opening lines of [*like I'm already* refer to both these aspects:

Like I'm going here now
I have gone many times
still how I'm going now
isn't the way I mostly do...⁴⁴

The word “now”, that occurs twice in these four lines, refers to states that are not comparable. Even though the very same word appears in the first and third lines, the poem does not only raise the question whether they are similar or not, but what remains uncertain is how they relate to each other and the extent to which this can be determined on the basis of similarity. The word “now”, as it appears for the first time, could still refer to some kind of a singularity, to the presence of the event,⁴⁵ but the word “like” makes it impossible to interpret it in itself. As far as spatial references are concerned, the impossibility to find a fixed meaning for the word “here” provides general validity; as the event itself cannot be understood concretely, the line does not point to any kind of singularity in spatial or temporal terms either. The second line of the poem makes it evident that we have to exclude any interpretations based

43 Hajnalka Halász focuses on the role of repetition in post-1970 Hungarian poetry through the poetry of Imre Oravecz, Dezső Tandori, György Petri, Endre Kukorelly and through reading *Like. all. occasions.* According to her interpretation, “here and now”, just like the “I” referring to solitude and to a state of standing in itself, will both become repeatable and quotable in the poems of Borbély's book. See Halász, *Die Wiederholung kehrt zurück...*, 95–118. In Borbély's oeuvre we have to mention an other book published in 1993, entitled *Long Day Away. Dramatic Iambs. (Hosszú nap el. Drámai jambusok)*, where rhythm and repetition seem to determine what is said.

44 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 7. “Ahogy most itt megyek / már sokszor mentem itt / most mégsem úgy megyek / mint máskor menni szoktam.”

45 The possibility of repetition, that is always already there in the singularity of the event is interpreted by Tibor Bónus through Derrida's insights in the context of life and death. Bónus, *Élő halál*, 69.

on singularity, thus understanding already the opening of the poem as a repetition. From the very first line, there is no point in the book that is not part of an iterative structure. Finding a fixed point, underlining given units of the iterative structure that could stand on their own is impossible, the text cannot leave behind the range of repetition that is determined by the automatic operations of rhythm.

The word “now”, on the other hand, as it appears for the second time already involves the difference generated by the simple fact that it is doubled, as leaving the repeated behind is impossible. It does not simply refer back to events that happened before the time of the poem, but even to the first appearance of the word “now”—this way there is a relation already between these two producing difference and reflectivity. This repetition or duplication does not let them stand on their own, as both of them maintain a momentariness that extinguishes the momentariness of the other. The tension produced between the two words thus eliminates their ability to stand on their own and creates an empty space that catalyzes the poem and determines the way it is generated. The word “now” that comes up repeatedly in every second line culminates in an agrammatical ending of the poem, necessarily overturning the temporality of the text and totally withdrawing the actuality, the presence of the event: “still now I am going / that I didn’t go no more.”⁴⁶ The way the poem is organized is determined by this vacancy because the openness that keeps pointing forward makes it, again, impossible to fix any phases or units of repetition. Because of this impossibility, the relation between the words repeated again and again, the repetition always referring back to what is repeated while unsettling both positions and the tension produced by their necessary differences are generating the automatic operations of rhythm. Similarly to the automatic operations of movement, the flow of matter here is generated by shifts or changes independent from any external effects as a result of the internal relations of textual materiality. The way visually and acoustically identical words are repeated is determined by whether they can help out the iambic meter, or they operate as rhymes, similarly to the “I” that is only a “position”, an empty space that can be occasionally filled and that cannot be fixed either. The acoustic, automatic operations of the poem make it perceptible that the source of the text’s flow is its own materiality.

This will become especially emphatic as we get to the poem [*the way I am*, that is generated as a variation of the opening text. After the first few lines that are the products of variative repetition, in this text grounded on materiality only, the (mostly) iambic meter, rhymes and the empty structure of the simile remains stable, grammatical, semantic, and syntactic relations seem to be overwritten by acoustic operations and by rhythm: “if I go the way I / like this way maybe now / then I don’t

46 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 7. “most mégis úgy megyek / hogy többé sose mentem.”

go the way / like this any more now.”⁴⁷ The openness of the text that keeps pointing forward and is established by the rhyme scheme and the iambic meter does not point any more towards the generation of semantic variations. Words used many times previously and taken from the text itself turn up—or are left behind—only because they fit, or fail to fit, the structure of rhythm. As the previously quoted poem entitled *[I am looking for that]* makes it clear, the texts of the book are searching for something that stands in itself, but it cannot happen, as this need cannot be fulfilled on the basis of similes (“I am looking for that which is itself / not just a function not a simile”). In this repetitive structure, semantic similarity will not guarantee the production of the texts. The necessity of identification, to find “that which is itself” that becomes clearly expressed at the end of the first line cannot be answered by a simile; the foundation of the poem and the way it is generated cannot be similarity, only the difference that necessarily arises in repetitive structures, even though we are dealing with homonyms. The repetition of the word “itself” would not mean anything other than showing the impossibility of creating a fixed version, as neither rhythm nor repetition can fulfill the need for identification.

The flow of the text in *Like. all. Occasions*, therefore, presents an openness that keeps pointing forward, the text that is generated by the iambic meter and a rhyme scheme cannot produce a unit of rhythm or rhyme that could close this process while fulfilling the needs expressed by the text. Since neither semantic similarity nor homonymy can provide a solution, the only possible continuation relies on the automatic operation of rhythm. The continuity of the text flow is based on this automatic operation generated by necessary differences. In this openness that keeps pointing forward, rhymes and repetitions that are embedded in an iterative structure necessarily create a tension based on difference; while producing variations, they enable the flow of the text generated by shifts and changes. The text is organized by this tension that is present from the opening lines and is always there in literary texts based on the operations of rhythm that makes iterativity necessary. Similarly to movement understood in a biological context, the rhythm of language has a productive, automatic operation that stems from its internal relations and materiality. The “shifting movements” of nature as sources of the productive operation bringing forth something out of itself is just as fundamental as the productive role of the rhythm of language creating differences because of its iterative structure. Nature that “produces growth out of itself,” that is “woven into things” as matter flows can thus be placed beside the language of poetry, beside *textus* that is organized and generated by rhythm and repetition.

47 Borbély, *Mint. minden. alkalom.*, 40. “ha úgy ahogy megyek / mint így talán, hogy most / akkor nem úgy megyek / ahogy mint már így most.”

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