

ADDRESS, SELF-ADDRESS

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Abstract

The paper takes as its starting point the premise that address can be understood as a speech act. It asks wherein lies the performative outcome and power of address and self-address, in particular with regard to the effect of the address on the addressee. The problem is put in a specific light by the lyrical figure of self-addressing, which the paper examines in the context of a close reading of Attila József's poem *Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat* (*Mercy Denied Forever*, transl. by Zs. Ozsváth and F. Turner), also commenting on Béla G. Németh's classical essay on self-addressing. Throughout the analysis, an important role is given to the ambivalent relations of person marking in the poem and to the ethical dilemmas implied in the figure of self-address. The paper also discusses those aspects of performative language (above all the speech act of the promise) that play a central role in the articulation of self-address. It seeks to interpret the ethical problems they reveal, especially in the closing section of the poem, within the philosophical framework provided by Derridian deconstructivism. The arguments drawn here help to make addressability understood as one of the guarantees of being a person the object of critical reflection.

Keywords: address, performativity, promise, self-address, testimony

1. Introduction

Anyone able to address him- or herself also runs the risk of confusing him- or herself with him- or herself, the questioner with the answerer, the addresser with the addressee. Bearing in mind that address is a specific, perhaps not even so specific, *speech act*, it is also necessary to clarify here what the person who addresses him- or herself does, what exactly (s)he does by addressing him- or herself. First, (s)he transforms him- or herself into a self – from another point of view: (s)he confronts him- or herself with his or her selfhood, reminds him- or herself of it – and consequently uses a technique of self-forming. The self that addresses itself convinces itself (and at the same time gets convinced about the fact) that it is indeed a *self*. The result is not, of course, a mere acknowledgement, since self-addressing also imposes a kind of burden, the burden of self-forming, in that the self thus becomes, in the very literal sense of the word, responsible for itself and towards itself as a subject. The orientation of the self towards itself makes it perhaps indispensable, perhaps cannot be realized otherwise than in the form of the production of an "ethical subject". This is a process, writes Michel Foucault, "in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to *monitor*, test, improve, and transform himself" (Foucault 1990: 28; *emph. added*). As the highlighted phrase suggests, the subject's turning towards itself can hardly be without a moment of self-knowledge. Is it the case that the one who addresses him- or herself does not – yet – know, does not know exactly, whom (s)he is turning to? It is easy to argue that self-addressing also inevitably entails confronting the fact that everything that makes a self a self and, thus, makes it addressable as a self (or formally here: a *you*), cannot be fully accounted for by the individual

him- or herself, simply because (s)he hardly has full control over the multiplicity of norms and structures which enable him or her to treat him- or herself as him- or herself and thus to be able to orient him- or herself towards him- or herself. Put simply, the structures that allow the self to recognize (and accept) itself as self, do not originate from it and are not born with it (see on this Butler 2005: 33–35). Is it even possible, from this point of view, or, if it were possible, would it still make sense to address the self on the assumption that for the addresser the addressee is already revealed and identifiable?

Lyric genres offer the most promising support for testing this question, not least because they are perhaps the most spectacular or concentrated in their ability to make the gesture of self-address (which may be present in epic texts in a dominant way, but rarely underpins their overall speech situation, see on this Fludernik 1993, Fludernik [ed.] 1994) into an organising principle, not only because in poetry *you* is the pronoun in which the need for identification is most acute (Waters 2003: 15) but also because poetry implies the image of a voice speaking to itself: a kind of the *soliloquy* John L. Austin mentions in a much-quoted passage immediately after the poetic utterance as an example of those communicative situations that invalidate speech acts (Austin 1962: 22). In reference to John Stuart Mill's famous definition (lyric is an overheard utterance), Northrop Frye describes the lyric speech situation thus: "the lyric poet normally pretends to be talking to himself or to someone else" (Frye 1957: 249), where the latter phrase, "someone else", is intended to indicate the apostrophic turning away, that is, the same seclusion from the actual addressee (the audience, the reader) that the speaker is performing. From this point of view, it can indeed be said that the actual addressee of a poem can only be the one who cannot read it (Agamben 2014). Is it, however, possible, even taking into account the considerations just mentioned, to be completely alone on the scene? Though this cannot be discussed in detail here, it is worth pointing out that the theory of performative language, or of communicative action in general, may raise well-founded doubts in this respect. In a context slightly different from Austin's, it can be stated, for example, that performative sentences cannot in fact be used in a monological frame (not even *in foro interno*, see Habermas 1985: 440). It can be argued with good reason that the moment of address and of coming to speech in general (can a real distinction be made between the two?), the moment when the speaker, breaking the silence, begins to speak, is in a certain sense already a response, because its manifestation cannot derive its performative force from itself alone, nor perhaps from a language posited as an impersonal set of rules, but only from the presence of another, even if it is not always worth thinking of the latter as an empirical presence: speech perhaps derives from the necessary difference manifested by the posited presence of the other (see on this Mersch 2003: 91-94). For would it make sense to speak if the other were not there? From this point of view, taking into consideration Niklas Luhmann's warning that the self cannot treat itself as someone who does not (yet) know what it knows, or whom it can only reach by coding and use of signs¹, self-addressing would not only not make sense² but finally would not be possible at all. And although this objection should (also) not be hastily dismissed (can one negotiate with oneself exclusively by formulating one's own words?; is it impossible to enter the dimension of a pre-symbolic, negative semiology, the terrain that Julia Kristeva once called "semiotic"?), there are equally strong arguments that the so-called inner speech – and thus also self-address – cannot exclude the exteriority that opens the way to the other, the non-identical, and without which the *you* of self-address would be at best a mere fiction (see on this Derrida 1973: 70).

¹ „Denn weder behandelt das Ich sich selbst als jemanden, der noch nicht weiß, was er weiß; noch als jemanden, der möglicherweise ablehnt, was er vorschlägt; noch als jemanden, der nur über Codierung und Zeichengebrauch erreichbar ist.“ (Luhmann 1986: 75)

² "Elmondanám ezt néked. Ha nem unnád" ["I would tell you this – I hope it won't bore you."] – the formula of the overture to Dezső Kosztolányi's poem *Hajnali részegség* [*Daybreak Drunkenness*, transl. Th. Kabdebo], which is difficult to read as a self-addressing poem, must be implicitly inscribed in every kind of self-address, as a way of self-justifying the lyrical utterance through excuse.

2. The “self-addressing poem type”

Attila József’s late poem *Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat* (1937; *Mercy Denied Forever*, transl. Zs. Ozsváth and F. Turner), which served as a paradigmatic example for Béla G. Németh’s category of the so-called “self-addressing poem type”, a figure discussed surprisingly rarely in the discourse of lyric theory,³ confronts this problem with striking poignancy right in the opening, in the very title of the poem (which literally reads: ‘you know there is no forgiveness’). And through this, of course, also with a host of further problems, e.g. with the question to what extent the self, represented in the poem by a series of addresses and calls, overlaps with, or to what extent it can be delimited from, the *you*, from the other (other?) self, from another *I*, which appears (almost exclusively) in its silence in the poem. Is it possible to say here, as Németh’s classical reading might suggest at certain points, that the speaker knows more, knows everything that the addressed you can know about itself, that there is therefore no difference in this respect, which would mean that in the dialogue, “of which we hear only one half”, “the whole process of the dialectic of the inner debate is essentially reproduced, relived”, and thus also the part that cannot be heard, that is not written down, is reproduced? (Németh 1982: 117) Or – in this direction Németh provides more support – is the self-address the very event in the course of which something (e.g. moral, challenging imperatives) is being produced that is not available in the knowledge of the self (i.e. the addressed you) without this speech act or prior to it? The addressee would thus be the “knowing intellect”, which, even if it does not separate itself from the “personality”, would nevertheless be at a distance, since, according to Németh (115), it can observe the latter “from the outside and from above”, from a somewhat analytical position? Németh seems to legitimise the whole possibility of the speech act of self-addressing in this event-like character, far beyond literature: “Everyone has addressed him- or herself. Experience shows that, almost unanimously, this happens when one realises, in a state of brooding, that one has made a mistake in some important personal matter, in one’s behaviour, that one should have behaved and acted in a different way” (114). In other words, when it has learned something that the person addressed itself does or did *not* know. Or is it even possible that the negative knowledge that Németh thinks can be detected on the part of the speaker (as a “crisis”) is in fact a kind of projection, the source of which is the tension or ambiguity in the speaker’s part, a kind of internal debate that could call into question the superiority of the speaker’s knowledge? (See on this Tverdota 2010: 189–191.) Or must it remain, in a certain sense, an indisputable condition of the self’s dialogue with itself? Roman Jakobson, using the example of Poe’s *The Raven*, thought it possible to demonstrate that “inner speech” is in a sense a “quasi-dialogue” in which the utterance (here realised as a question) is always the result of a temporal inversion, that is, of the fact that the speaker who addresses him- or herself already knows the answer: “the subject knows beforehand the reply to the question he will put to himself” (Jakobson 1987: 52; see also 53: “the question is dependent on the reply”). Recalling, however, a thought-provoking argument by Osip Mandelstam (“If I know the person I am addressing, I know in advance how he will react to my words, to whatever I say, and consequently, I will not succeed in being astonished in his astonishment, in rejoicing in his joy, in loving in his love” [Mandelstam 1997: 47]), it is far from self-evident that the formal permeability or exchange between addresser and addressee is a condition of identification: rather, Mandelstam seems to suggest that, paradoxically, it is precisely this that blocks access in addressing to the addressee.

³ Cf. nevertheless Schlaffer 1995: 44–46; 2015: 121–122. Schlaffer’s approach is guided by the assumption that the “genetic and structural centre” of lyric is constituted by speech acts and that this determines the behaviour of lyric persona, too (2008: 38). The Austinian sense of the validity deficit of lyric speech acts can be neutralized in the reception of poems because their understanding cannot take place without belief in the actual completion of the lyric speech acts (24). There is also a historical pattern at work in Schlaffer’s conception, which in a sense counts address among the more archaic techniques of lyricism, assuming that, in modern poetry – as shown by the growing popularity of impersonality – the dominance of first and second person pronouns is decreasing (2015: 24, 124). Of course, this diagnosis can only really be apt in relation to certain traditions of lyric modernity.

3. (False) witness

Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat – the Attila József poem begins, thus, with this address of a constative character, which then, in the following verse, confirms and reaffirms the constative emphasis of this message by means of a conclusion in the form of an impersonal statement (*hiába hát a bánat* ‘pain’s but a vain endeavour’). You know – how many modalities intersect here? There is even the vague one of questioning (you know?; you know, don’t you?), and a much stronger one of persuasion: you know, don’t contradict, don’t run away into illusions, because you know, so admit, confess (?) that you know! In fact, the objective subordinate clause, in a certain sense, leans back on this act of (self-)persuasion, acting as both self-reflexive explanation and consequence. There is no excuse, since you know what you know, there is no option of excusing (forgiving) on the grounds of not knowing. But on the other hand: since you know what you know, you know much rather than you don’t know, therefore – there is no excuse, no sense, no linguistic option for any excuse. Perhaps even more importantly, this opening statement of the poem also dramatizes the linguistic dilemma of the meaning or possibility of self-address discussed above. When a self addresses itself by saying *you know*, it calls into question – according to at least one possibility – the meaning and function of the whole address, of address itself. Since you know, you know what I know, it is in a sense superfluous to speak, both for *me*, the self, and for *you*. That the poem seriously reckons with this dilemma is clearly indicated on the lexical and grammatical levels (the adverb *hiába* ‘in vain’ appears in the very next verse, then in the second, and a little later in the same position in the fifth stanza: *hiába hull a könnyed* ‘weeping, vain self-abhorrence’, literally: ‘your tears falling in vain’; *s hiába könyörögtél* ‘you begged for pity, croaking, / in vain’; in both cases, therefore, referring to some kind of communicative – or at least expressive – gesture), and, on the other hand, quite simply, in the fact that the other voice (the part of the *you*) remains – apart from some not insignificant grammatical ambiguities to be mentioned later – silent in the position of the *I*. It would speak in vain. *De hát kinek is szólanék* (‘To whom, though, might their sound make sense?’), literally: ‘But whom could I be speaking to’), as the conclusion of another, somewhat earlier poem, *Reménytelenül* (*Vas-színű égboltban...*) (*Without Hope [In heaven’s ironblue vault...]*, transl. by Ozsváth and Turner) puts it. To whom? To myself?

The silence on the side of the *you*, the addressee, led Németh’s interpretation, as is well known, towards the scenario of the call of conscience in *Being and Time*, or more precisely toward a somewhat specific application of Heidegger (esp. Németh 1982: 123-124; on Németh’s understanding of Heidegger see Bónus 2012: 46-49), which was a decisive step in his argumentation on the self-addressing poem type. This call, “Ruf”, is, of course, inherently silent in Heidegger: it calls its addressee – in Heidegger: “the summoned” (Angerufene) – to *its own self* precisely by saying nothing, “*speaking solely and constantly in the mode of silence*”, moreover, it is by this very not-speaking that it silences the addressee, since “it forces Da-sein thus summoned and called upon to the reticence of itself” (Heidegger 1996: 252-253; 1977: 373). For Da-sein, according to Heidegger’s diagnosis, cannot hear itself precisely from the surrounding speech (which is, of course, idle talk, “Gerede”). It seems, therefore, that the speechless address of conscience is rather the elimination of this sound disturbance, of noise – not forgetting, of course, that this silence remains still in the mode of speech, Da-sein is perhaps precisely drawn into language by this deprivation from voice.⁴ Since the “voice” of conscience in Heideggerian analysis is uncannily unidentifiable in its origin, it cannot in fact take shape as an instance of the *interrogation* of Da-sein, which could have the power to force it to give account, in a sense it even prevents it from taking up the position of a subject or even of a *self* in some public sphere. Conscience, from this point of view, is not the conscience of the self, since it is precisely the self that is silenced by the call of conscience. At a much later point in *Being and Time*, Heidegger reduces the *self* to an irrelevant accessory of the so-called selfhood, precisely in relation to the silent being here: “Da-sein is *authentically itself* in the mode of primordial

⁴ “Losing itself in the publicness of the they and its idle speech, it *fails to hear* its own self in listening to the they-self.” (250, see also 251). See on the above further esp. Agamben 1997: 97.

individuation of reticent resoluteness that expects (zumutenden) *Angst* of itself. *In keeping silent*, authentic being-one's-self does not keep on saying 'I,' but rather 'is' in reticence the thrown being that it can authentically be." (297; 427). Conscience perhaps rather calls into question the possibility of a self-testifying of the self as *self*, an address which, on the one hand, does not necessarily affirm the addressee, and at the same time seems to prevent it from being given voice. From this point of view, it could be said that when Németh's interpretation detects in Heidegger's call the possibility of textualization, it is perhaps only justified in that – by placing Attila József's poem in this context – it indirectly highlights the ungroundedness of the address that manifests itself in a kind of futility.

A grammatical playground similar to the one revealed in the opening verse opens up – as Németh also points out, thanks to the "unmarked relations" (Németh 1982: 141) – in the verse *Légy, ami lennél: férfi* ('be what you should be: manly'), i.e. in the gesture that initiates in the poem a series of addresses and even imperative calls, which can indeed be connected to the broader context of the stanza in consequential or contradictory and even further ways. Moreover, since the semantics of the phrase may even be citational or indirect ('what you should be': 'what you are supposed to be'), the imperative is also partly withdrawn, since it renders itself redundant, at least in the sense of calling into question or judging ineffective its illocutionary power to act, to produce, to change. No wonder, then, that the poem soon afterwards deploys a whole arsenal of prohibitive imperatives, calling for non-action rather than action. This occupies the whole of the third stanza (*Ne vádolj, ne fogadkozz, / ne légy komisz magadhoz, / ne hódolj és ne hódíts, / ne csatlakozz a hadhoz* 'Renounce self-flagellations, / promises, accusations, / both conquest and surrender, / the call of crowds and nations'; literally: 'Do not accuse, do not vow, / do not be nasty to yourself, / do not obey and do not conquer, / do not join armies'), and then partly the fourth (*ne lesd meg, ne vesd meg*; 'nor spy', 'do not corn' – the latter of course also partly mocked, ridiculed by a homonymic effect, since *nevesd meg* would mean *laugh at*; see on this Fried 2005: 52). It is important that these prohibitions are partly directed at explicit performative actions (*Ne vádolj* and especially *Ne fogadkozz*, i.e.: 'do not promise', 'do not swear', 'do not commit yourself towards a future – or past – , towards yourself'; this is unfolded and explained in a later "accusation": *Hamis tanúvá lettél / saját igaz pörödnél*; 'and bore yourself false witness / in your own trial's convoking'). On the one hand, the addressed self is advised against something that it – in the addresser's part – is persistently experimenting with, since in a moral sense it persuades, dissuades, and confronts itself with prohibitions. These gestures can be summarised, with some simplification, in the paradox of a forbidding speech act: *I forbid you to perform speech acts*. Moreover, it is precisely in this series of prohibitions that the self (in the position of the *you*), almost consistently silenced in the position of the addressee, emerges, speaks up, speaks back for the first time. *Ne vádolj*, here, because of the indefinite conjugation, is not only interpretable as referring to a general action without a concrete object, but also as a kind of retort, 'do not accuse me'. This is one of the passages in the poem where the self relates its speech to itself without objectifying and distancing itself as a *you*. The latent symmetry of the structure of the address may, however, rather emphasize here that this distancing is far from being suspended, it is merely reversed: the *you* speaks back – thus indeed announcing a kind of resistance not only by its silence, but also in this latent voice (see Balogh 2017: 188) – to the self that is continuously speaking to it. It does so in such a way that it confirms and countersigns the statement that opens the series of addresses (and of course the poem itself), which in a certain sense articulates a kind of evidence (*tudod, hogy*). The appealing, pleading modality it reveals reflects the relentless nature of the accusation (a modality made explicit by the poem itself through the characterisation of the almost but not quite silent *you*: *hiába könyörögtél*), *ne vádolj* 'do not accuse', the accused pleads, but *there is no forgiveness*. The prohibition in the next verse, *ne légy komisz magadhoz* 'do not be nasty to yourself', continues more or less the above-mentioned reversal (the series of addresses from the denial of forgiveness to the instruction to reject principles at the end of the poem is ultimately: nasty [see on this further Tverdota 2010: 188]), but here suspends the distance between self and *you*. This imperative seems to remind the self of its identity with or at least of its proximity to the *you* addressed (which, namely a certain degree of proximity, is perhaps a necessary product of address in the lyric genres).

The observation of the movement of the distance between the “parts” of the two pronouns inevitably leads to the question of what creates the link between the self, addressing itself and addressed self, or how this link is represented in the poem. While this relationship is not broken – it is hardly possible (or worthwhile) to set aside the identification of self with self – it is not entirely self-evident in the text. This may be emphasised, on the one hand, by the densely ironic, at some moments perhaps even scornful tone of the series of questions (see further Seregi 2001: 49–51), and, on the other hand, by the inherent characteristic of the poem that it repeatedly attempts to describe and characterise the relationship between the two voices or positions in some way. Here is, e.g., the *testimony* mentioned above. The addressed you, as mentioned earlier, rightly embodies this testimony, he even is the testimony itself, in that in his futile resistance, in pleading, projected even into the utterance of the voice that speaks for a moment, in the performative weakness, he confirms the initial statement of the poem. The fact that there is no forgiveness, and that *a bűn az nem lesz könnyebb* (‘Sin is beyond endurance’), is not revealed by some external, objective, referential proof, nor even from the position of a judging third, but by the structure of self-address itself. And since less than two positions are not enough to reveal this testimony, i.e., since the condition of becoming a testimony is the self-address and the self-duplication that formally establishes the former, it can also be said to be consistent that the testimony, which is identical with the you addressed, since it is embodied by that you, still does not originate in or come from him, but needs another, namely the addresser, to whom it remains indebted. The relentless imperative (*Hogy bizonyág vagy erre, / legalább azt köszönjed* ‘Even for this, be grateful, / warrant for your existence’; literally: ‘for this you are a witness, at least be thankful for this’) highlights this debt, which perhaps requires the countersignature of gratitude precisely because it can hardly expect a more emphatic compensation. The self-consciousness with which Attila József thought through this structure at this crucial point is clearly demonstrated by his decision to correct the earlier version of the verse (*Hogy erre van bizonyág* ‘for there is witness for this’) in this very respect (József 2005: 471). Then, of course, there is the imperative of *ne légy komisz magadhoz*. This time, the self-address reflects itself in a kind of mise-en-abyme, since here – assuming, at least, that the addressees really place the self in the position of the accused – the addressing self addresses not only the addressed self, but also itself, namely the self who performs the mischievous or nasty addresses, and moreover, in a way that is even more mischievous, since it does not obey itself! As will be discussed later, in characterizing the you, the poem constantly assigns an important role to an interpersonal structure, in most cases including its manifest linguistic aspects, too, which lacks the referential certainty provided or to be provided by a third, external or superior position. Or, where it, at least implicitly, assumes it, by alluding to the conventions of a legal procedure – most openly in the second half of the fifth stanza, which unfolds both the consequence and the cause of the futility of the plea: *Hamis tanúvá lettél / saját igaz pörödnél* – it highlights the credibility deficit of such a testimony. No matter how righteous this lawsuit, i.e., no matter how well-founded the testimony that applies for forgiveness by implying a counteraccusation of injustice is, it necessarily (at least potentially) becomes false testimony. For, it might be added, maintaining the identity of self and you, the accusation itself becomes in fact the testimony that a self can produce about itself. The testimony is in fact nothing other than the testimony of this perjury, and from this point of view the self has good reason to dissuade itself from testifying under oath (*ne fogadkozz*).

What does this testimony mean here? Its most important structural factor could be identified, following Derrida, in the fact that, to paraphrase the philosopher’s argumentation, which has been put forward in several places, testimony is necessarily performative in character, since it implies an action – e.g., an oath, a vow – which is made indispensable by the fact that the witness must convince the person (s)he is addressing. It becomes a witness, it is a witness only due to the fact that the addressee cannot bear witness to what it is reporting, to the knowledge to which it is committing itself, any more than the witness itself can bear witness to it, since when the latter becomes a witness, that is, when it testifies, it belongs no longer to the very present, to the scene it is giving account of. An oath, precisely because it is an oath and, further, because it is inextricable from the structure of testimony, thus implicitly assumes or manifests the burden of false witness. The one

who bears witness also bears witness to the fact that what (s)he says can also be insincere or a lie (see esp. Derrida 2000: 194-197). Moreover, the structure of testimony cannot go without a shift that is very significant in the text of *Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat*. The absurd condition that the witness, who is made a witness precisely because (s)he him- or herself, his or her becoming a witness, has no witness, cannot be witnessed, must nevertheless in a certain sense still be witnessed, must be recognized as a witness, at least the verbal occurrence of the act of testifying must be countersigned by someone else (200). Thus, when the self of the poem dissuades the person addressed from swearing and reminds him of the paradoxical turning false in his testimony, it also expresses the reluctance to stand by as a witness. Speaking as a self, he is averting the threat, the possibility of becoming a false witness, which he detects in the position of the person (the same self) he is speaking to. From this point of view, it could be said – at the risk of a certain paradox – that it is precisely this knowledge and the resulting reluctance that he verbalises by forcing the other voice in the dialogue to remain silent.

4. Testimony, trust, and faith

Since, as Németh has observed, the moral vocabulary that defines the lexicon of the language of the poem “takes on repeatedly legal, even judicial traces” (Németh 1982: 158), the structure of testimony is also worth bearing in mind where the characterisation of the (linguistic) attitude of the you does not employ strictly legal categories. *Hittél a könnyű szókknak* (‘You trusted words’ illusions’) – this, in the light of the preceding stanzas, sounds like a convincing accusation (what else can one do who can only speak as a false witness in his own true trial?), and moreover, since these are ‘easy words’, i.e. words without credibility, there is perhaps no real alternative but to trust (and this, ultimately, can again be extended to the context of the whole poem, the whole series of addresses, which the you can only resist in exceptional cases). Nevertheless, the progression of the sentence that forms the stanza modifies this pattern somewhat. The good will of trust is not confirmed by the words: *s lásd, soha, soha senki / nem mondta, hogy te jó vagy* (‘but no one ever trusted / the goodness of your visions’; literally: ‘and see, never, never did anyone say that you are good’). This subsequent testimony has some factual basis this time: no one has said it, this seems to be verifiable and reasonable (see, there is no such quotation, these words have never been uttered, as the text emphasizes by the repetition), so how can one who trusts words, gives credence to words, know whether (s)he is good or not. In the sentence, however, trust is directed not only to these easy “words” but also to the further extension attached to them, *fizetett pártfogóknak* (‘paid comforters’ delusion’; literally: ‘patrons’), which indicates some ambivalence. Trusting in paid patrons – this happens to be rather a kind of calculable credit, where trust can be rooted in some economical kind of transaction, a kind of pre-programmed trust that is not really trust, since it is calculable. The one who grounds and exchanges his faith for (credited) certainty (testimony) in this way does not in fact believe, and, more importantly, does not believe in faith, it is precisely faith s(he) does not trust.

Megcsaltak, úgy szerettek (‘They loved you by their lying’) – this is the second passage where the self comes to word (or, to put it another way, the self speaks not only by addressing *you* but also addressing itself). As with the unmarked or unspecified subject of the imperative *Ne vádolj*, the text allows here for two grammatical amendments: this statement can be applied to the self (‘they loved me by betraying me’) in the same way as to the addressee (‘they loved you by betraying you’). With the relation of betrayal and love in the second verse of the eighth stanza (*csaltál s így nem szerethetsz* ‘your lying killed your loving’), which is thus arranged in a chiasmus, a variant of the opposition between trust in easy words and paid, calculated trust revealed in the previous stanza comes to the fore, this time between the (destroyed) certainty of love, led astray by easy words, and the lie, conceived here as a kind of calculation that discredits and makes love impossible by pointing to the falsehood (betrayal? mimicking? delusion?) at its core. And perhaps it is precisely this negative dialectic that Attila József breaks with the possibility of a literal interpretation. In fact, he himself, as the reader of his own poem, prescribes this reading, since the verse here too is a result of the revising of an earlier version of the text: *Megcsaltak, nem szerettek* (‘I was / you were

betrayed, not loved'), which he has rewritten in the final, paradoxical formula. I/you was/were loved precisely by betrayal – that Attila József seriously considered this impossible possibility can be seen, among other things, in the similar paradoxical formulations of the somewhat later poem (*Az Isten itt állt a hátam mögött...*) ([*God was standing here, behind my back*], transl. by L. A. Kery): *Ugy segített, hogy nem segíthetett* ('He helped me by not helping from above'); *Ugy van velem, hogy itt hagyott magamra* ('Fact is He left me, I'm all alone, bereft'; literally: 'he is by my side by having left me here alone'). In the context of *Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat*, this may perhaps turn the attention to the threatening, destructive power of the paired structures on which the very speech act of self-address relies incessantly. The operation of self-address, which posits the closest possible proximity of the self to itself, deceives, since in it or through it the self betrays its alliance with his very same self, betrays itself – if such a thing is possible, which is not entirely self-evident (see on this Derrida 2002a: 67). And perhaps it is precisely in the exposure of the betrayal, of the self-address as betrayal, that a kind of solidarity manifests itself towards the one targeted by the self-address, namely by expelling him from the imposed structure. The performance of the address here seems to be a destructive, and yet in this destruction somehow rescuing or excusing, catastrophic turn, to borrow a category from Derrida: *cat'apostrophe* (Derrida 1997: 151, 174). The call for suicide (*Most hát a töltött fegyvert / szorítsd üres szívedhez* 'therefore the pistol-barrel / aimed at your blank heart dying') in fact sums up the destructive series of addresses, as it were turning the gun into a metaphor for addressing. The loaded (*töltött*) weapon, as the poem puts it, can deliver to the heart what it lacks: the heart is blank, empty, it has nothing in it, in a sense it is lifeless. Its destruction thus implies, in a particular sense, still a coming to life, perhaps a life over which subjectivity, which produces and controls itself through legal, moral, linguistic, performative means, has no power. However implausible this conclusion may seem, it has nonetheless to be considered that, unlike an earlier version of the poem, which, according to the recollection of a contemporary (Illyés 1987: 49-50), ended at this point, the final text still contains a stanza.

The two stanzas just discussed are, in a sense, a rewording of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz, who in his famous poem from 1803 addresses a similarly exhaustive series of addresses not to himself (indeed not?) but to an allegorical figure, Hope. The gravitational point of intertextual contact in Csokonai's poem is the conclusion of the first stanza, which is echoed in the seventh and eighth stanzas of *Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat*, further in the first verse of the fourth (*maradj fölöslegesnek* 'Avoid another's uses'): *Csak maradj magadnak! / Biztatóm valál; / Hittem szép szavadnak: / Mégis megcsalál!* (*A Reményhez*; 'Stay far and fair beyond my reach, / as first my soul you greeted! / I had depended on your speech'; literal: 'I trusted your beautiful word, / but you have ever cheated'; *To Hope*, transl. by W. Kirkconnell). What may be of particular importance from the present point of view is that this, that is, the Csokonai intertext introduces the notion of hope, along with those of faith, trust, and love, into the last stanza of the Attila József poem, in which the triad of the Pauline virtues – faith, hope, love – is thus brought together. The alternative to suicide, revealed by the rejection of principles (an unconditional condition, one may add), is expressed in this triple concept, to which trust is added. [*S*] *még remélj hű szerelmet, / hisz mint a kutya hinnél / abban, ki bízna benned* ('hope true love yet will flower, / doglike, you'd trust whoever / trusted you for an hour'). It is still to be remembered that here the self is sending an instruction (*remélj*) to itself addressed as *you*, although it would be difficult to eliminate from the performative tone of this a kind of doubt, a kind of resignation: hope for love that (perhaps?) is faithful, this can only follow after the moral judgment that can be drawn from the principles (*elvek*) has already been made and after it has become clear that the only person who can really hope is the one who is loved only by betrayal, or even who cannot love (*nem szerethetsz*). However, the conjunction *hisz* ('since, because') which introduces the final verses of the poem offers a different explication: there is reason to hope, which, somewhat tautologically, follows precisely from faith. You have faith (though it seems to have a condition: trust), and *therefore* you are allowed to hope.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to overlook the tautology that pervades the entire stanza in the last three verses. It is also striking, in terms of the performative aspects evoked, that the actions that are listed here, while far from being identical, basically share a structural feature. To hope, to

believe, to trust (love, although more difficult to formalise within the frames of performativity, is perhaps also relevant here): in all three operations or attitudes, it can be observed that, whatever the degree of linguistic articulation, they are linked to a fundamental condition of commitment, namely a commitment to a future for which no common referential testimony is available or can be obtained. The one who hopes anticipates, triggers, or presupposes something, in affirmative form, which has not yet appeared, does not exist, or has not occurred, just as the one who believes or the one who trusts. In many respects, this central feature also evokes the structure of testimony discussed above, with the difference that here empirical certainty is explicitly unavailable to the one who performs the operation and who could thus at least expose his or her own experience to the threat of perjury, and of course with the similarity that, at the same time, he is subject to the same kind of confirmatory countersignature as the witness itself. Indeed, at the very heart of trust, hope, faith and, yes, love, is the need for such a countersignature, which is in fact underlined by Attila József's poem: the object of hope is trustworthiness, a true love, while faith is faith in someone (*abban*), and so is trust (*bízna benned*). And such an orientation is in fact rooted in the performativity presupposed in or by language, for without it, i.e., without the belief, hope or trust that 1) speech can produce something or bear witness to something, on the existence and knowledge of which it cannot rely, and 2) that this ability or this activity will be reconfirmed as such, there can be no performativity. The basic structure is of course carried by the prototype of all speech acts, the promise. Without promise, trust is not possible, since trust, in its very essence, can only be anticipated, and it can only be received as the consequence of a kind of promise. For example, someone who is said to be trustworthy, carries a promise, the promise that (s)he will not disappoint those who trust (this promise can, of course, be detached from and turned against the person who made it – for an example in Kleist's novella *Die Marquise von O...*, see Lőrincz 2016: 243). Nor can faith, the appeal to faith, to credibility, be conceived without a promise: in order to establish itself, faith (which is therefore understood here as "faith without dogma" [Derrida 2002b: 57]) must presuppose a promise, and of course, in order to verbalise or in any way manifest itself, it must also promise. This relation, moreover, while in a sense implying radically unconditional speech acts, is also mutually conditional: no promise can fulfil its status, it will not be a promise if it is not trusted, not given credence. What is more, the address itself, which from this point of view is (also) always, necessarily, self-address, and even the preverbal experience of the relation to the other, or the renouncing of address, cannot ground itself as such without appealing to trust, which is easy to see in the case of explicitly promising addresses, but also beyond that: without trust or faith, without the implied imperative of 'believe me', any structure of address would not be given.⁵ The statement *Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat* is in a sense nothing more than a covert version of 'believe me, there is no forgiveness'. Finally, the possibility itself, without which to believe, trust, hope, love (and promise) would be meaningless, that is, the assumption that what these (speech) acts are directed at is not exclusively non-existent, cannot renounce the structure of promise either: the possibility of the promise, Hamacher warns,⁶ is always also a promise of possibility, a promise is only possible by positing, affirming what is (only) possible, and in which one, thus, must hope, trust, believe.

These performatives, which are represented by (since not performed, but referred to: imperatives, statements) or form the subject of conditional assertions and which appear very frequently in the poem's closure, in a certain sense repeat, reproduce or mirror each other. This performative

⁵ "No to-come without some sort of messianic memory and promise, of a messianicity older than all religion, more originary than all messianism. No discourse or address of the other without the possibility of an elementary promise. Perjury and broken promises require the *same* possibility. No promise, therefore, without the promise of a confirmation of the yes. This yes will have implied and will always imply the trustworthiness and fidelity of a faith" (Derrida 2002b: 83; see also: 80–81). See also Derrida 1999: 250–251.

⁶ See his comments on the Derrida passage cited in the preceding footnote: "Everything, in short, begins with the possibility – with the possibility of projecting possibilities in the promise and of confirming these possibilities, repeating and transferring them. The possibility of the promise is already the possibility of its repetition" (Hamacher 1999: 203). Promise, thus, is not a figure but the promise of a figure (188).

congestion, the throng of promises that almost intersect, though never uttered, must necessarily leave their mark on the semantic level of the text. Without the semantic proximity of the verbs that populate the stanza (*remél* 'hope', *hisz* 'believe', *bízik* 'trust'), there could hardly be any contact between their performative aspects. Moreover, Attila József draws attention to this proximity in a particularly spectacular way: he extends it to the non-verbal domains of the stanza's vocabulary, in such a way as to reveal, through etymological connections, the infinitely tautological organisation of the closing verses. Not only the adjective of hoped-for love (*hű* 'faithful') can be traced back to the verb *hisz*, but also the conjunction that opens the third verse, *hisz* 'since', which is the abbreviated form of *hiszen* (which itself goes back to the singular first-person verb form of the verb: *hiszem* 'I believe'; see Benkő [ed.] 1992: 562–563). By this shortening, the phrase here also establishes a homonymic relationship with the mentioned verb (see on this further Fried's reading attentive to the puns in the poem: Fried: 55–57), which in fact doubles the simile in the third line: *hisz mint a kutya hinnél* may be interpreted as both 'believes like a dog' and as 'like a dog you would believe'. By basically repeating the same animal simile in this way, the verse naturally draws attention to the challenge posed by its interpretation. The appearance of the animal is not surprising, since it logically follows from the anticlimactic sequence of the levels of being listed and addressed in the poem, which leads "downwards" (this is summarised in the sixth stanza: first Father and God, then man, then kiddies: *romlott kölkök* 'wicked children'). In Németh's interpretation, the dog simile, which would obviously replace the trust in easy words and paid patrons, is in fact a non-real alternative, an "animal alternative", which would suggest that the remaining possibilities for the self are outside the realms of social existence, moral agency, and human intellect (Németh 1982: 146). One may further raise the question what animal faith or trust is based on, whether there is any difference between the two at all. Is it relevant from the dog's point of view to understand, as sociological approaches sometimes do, trust as a kind of complexity reduction tool, which identifies trustworthiness in the coincidence between a person's actual behaviour and what he or she consciously or unconsciously communicates about himself or herself (Luhmann 1979: 40–41)? Or is it to be conceived merely as the obedience of the submissive or the vulnerable?

At least as interesting is the above-mentioned proliferation of the verb *hisz* throughout the text of the stanza, including its semantic proximity to the neighbouring verbs and even to the concept of love (if its relevant meaning here is determined by its opposition to betrayal and deception, which is what the preceding stanza prescribes, then it also enters into a synonymous relationship with faithfulness and belief) which outlines a completely self-referential, tautological pattern, that almost monomaniacally argues for the possibility of faith, confesses its faith – in faith. The stanza is constantly asserting faith. It is worth noting that this kind of homonymic tautology is already apparent in the opening verse of the stanza (see on this again Fried 2005: 58–59): *vess el minden elvet* ('cast out doctrine's power', literally: 'reject/throw away all principles'), where *elvet* (*elv*, 'principle' in accusative) is homonymous with the indicative third person singular form of the verb *elvet*, which appears as an imperative in the verse, as if the impersonal voice of an interposing dramatic instruction were to acknowledge the obedience of the you (*vess el* 'throw away' – *elvet* 'he/she throws away')! If only for the sake of play, it is worth attempting, despite the not insignificant differences, to replace all those phrases in the three closing verses of the poem with the verb *hisz* and its derivations, which are semantically related to it. Roughly, such a paraphrase would emerge: 'And still believe in faithful belief, I believe that you would believe like a dog in the one who would believe in you'. On the one hand, this monomaniac repetition of the testimony of faith implies a kind of unconditionality: 'believe in me, do not set conditions for what I say' (tells the self to the you? or is this how it characterizes the you's attitude?). Yet it also manifests, precisely through tautological repetition, a kind of doubt, if only a doubt that would compensate for the ungroundedness of belief through performative practice. Somebody who constantly says (s)he believes may indeed begin to believe, according to the Pascalian pattern paraphrased by Louis Althusser (*Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe*; Althusser 1971: 169; cf. the 250. *Pensée* in Pascal 1958: 73; see further: Pepper 1995).

5. Conclusion

Is this, then, the animalic alternative that Németh referred to and, finally, however, *threw away*? The autosuggestion of a faith renouncing the referential confirmation of one's own confession and speaking position by the other? Is it here, through the manifestation of an unconditional faith, that the self could escape from the authority of the paired structure imposed by self-address? Even if this alternative announces itself, the poem's closure suggests that it must ultimately be reinscribed in a conditional structure.⁷ [*H]isz mint a kutya hinnél / abban ki bízna benned*, a condition is still formulated here, even if in an almost self-reflexive form. You would believe in, you can believe only in the one who trusts you, who believes in you, this is almost as if the lyric voice were saying that it can believe only in itself, in the self that is confirmed as trustworthy, as a reliable self. The importance of this structure for the late Attila József is attested to by the opening of the slightly earlier *Kész a leltár* (*Inventory Closed*, transl. by Ozsváth and Turner), which combines a psalm paraphrase with an animal analogy: *Magamban bíztam eleitől fogva – / ha semmije sincs, nem is kerül sokba / ez az embernek. Semmiképp se többbe, / mint az állatnak, mely elhull örökre* ('I trusted in myself from the beginning – / If nothing's there that's worth the cost of winning, / there's nothing left to lose. Our death's no heavier / than that of voiceless beasts, who cease forever'). But how can a self consider itself *trustworthy*? (S)he who has nothing cannot trust but him- or herself – this is easy to see, since trust makes one a debtor, it imposes the burden of a debt to be paid, which presupposes the ability to give. At the same time, of course, the one who *gives* trust inevitably makes a weapon of this referential vulnerability, since his or her trust can be imposed as a norm on the actions of the one (s)he has judged trustworthy (see on this Luhmann 1979: 43–44; to consider trust as something that could be justified or deserved would lead to epistemological problems: 79) and who thus becomes subordinated or dependent on the very trust (s)he has appealed to. Trust, moreover, in its cognitive and interpersonal conditionality, is of course not identical with faith. When X trusts or even trusts in Y to do something, this implies a kind of interpersonal dependence that is not implied by the case when X believes or even believes in Y to do something. Trust in any case implies faith, but not necessarily the other way round (for a meticulous analysis of the grammatical and logical structures underlying the concept of *trust* which applies also to the equivalent use in Hungarian, see McMyler 2011: 113–141). 'I trust that Z will not misinterpret Attila József's poem' is not the same as saying 'I believe that Z will not misinterpret Attila József's poem'. The interpersonal relation on which trust is built is also a relation of responsibility, of being held accountable. If X trusts Y, (s)he also makes him or her responsible, the guarantor of his or her faith. Consequently, when the self, turning to the addressee makes the judgment that the latter would believe in the person who would trust him, he is also saying that he subordinates his belief to a relation which makes this belief dependent on another who can be called to account. The inversion of the verbs – 'you would trust in the one who would believe in you' – would yield a more open, looser, but more contradictory structure, at least insofar as, logically, it is trust that presupposes belief and not vice versa. The belief of the addressee in *Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat*, and thus the possibility of unbinding the testimony of the self from the deathly grip of self-addressing interrogation and accusation, becomes impossible, since it turns conditional the very moment it gets tied to the interpersonal relation of trust and thus inscribed in the structure of responsibility. Faith thus becomes nothing more than a quid pro quo in exchange for a trust (self-trust or self-confidence) of which, however, the series of self-addresses throughout the poem has provided rather negative examples – being nasty, false witness, easy words, deceitful love – and whose fragile status is recalled by the sceptical rhetorical question hidden in the poem's conclusion, yet made visible by the abbreviated form of the relevant pronoun: *ki bízna benned?*, 'who would trust you?'. The destructive machine of self-address cannot be neutralised here either. There really is no forgiveness.

⁷ This compositional principle, which is thus fulfilled in the return, is also reflected in the metrical scheme (AAXA; the return of the initial couplet's rhyme after the unrhymed third verse at the end of the stanza) that dominates most of the stanzas.

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Appendix

Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat	Mercy Denied Forever	Literal translation:
Tudod, hogy nincs bocsánat, hiába hát a bánat. Légy, ami lennél: férfi. A fű kinő utánad.	Mercy denied forever, pain's but a vain endeavour, be what you should be: manly. Grass in your footsteps ever.	You know there is no forgiveness, so the sorrow is in vain. Be what you would be: a man. Grass will grow after you.
A bűn az nem lesz könnyebb, hiába hull a könnyed. Hogy bizonyág vagy erre, legalább azt köszönjed.	Sin is beyond endurance, weeping, vain self-abhorrence. Even for this, be grateful, warrant for your existence.	Sin won't get easier, your tears falling in vain. For this you are a witness, at least be thankful for this.
Ne vádolj, ne fogadkozz, ne légy komisz magadhoz, ne hódolj és ne hódíts, ne csatlakozz a hadhoz.	Renounce self-flagellations, promises, accusations, both conquest and surrender, the call of crowds and nations.	Do not accuse, do not vow, do not be nasty to yourself, do not obey and do not conquer, do not join armies.
Maradj fölöslegesnek, a titkokat ne lesd meg. S ezt az emberiséget, hisz ember vagy, ne vesd meg.	Avoid another's uses, nor spy into abuses. And do not scorn the human: you are what it produces.	Remain superfluous, Do not spy the secrets, Since you are a human, do not scorn this humankind.
Emlékezz, hogy hörögtél s hiába könyörögtél. Hamis tanúvá lettél saját igaz pörödnél.	You begged for pity, croaking, in vain, remember, choking, and bore yourself false witness in your own trial's convoking.	Remember how you rattled and pleaded in vain. You have become false witness in your own righteous trial.
Atyát hívtál elesten, embert, ha nincsen isten. S romlott kölkökre leltél pszichoanalízisben.	You sought a father, even on earth, if not in heaven. In Freud the wicked children you found, still unforgiven.	You called a father in despair, a man if there is no god. An found perverted kids in psychoanalysis.
Hittél a könnyü szóknak, fizetett pártfogóknak s lásd, soha, soha senki nem mondta, hogy te jó vagy.	You trusted words' illusions, paid comforters' delusions, but no one ever trusted the goodness of your visions.	You trusted easy words, paid patrons and see, never, never did anyone say that you are good,
Megcsaltak, úgy szerettek, csaltál s így nem szerethetsz. Most hát a töltött fegyvert szorítsd üres szívedhez.	They loved you by their lying, your lying killed your loving, therefore the pistol-barrel aimed at your blank heart dying.	They loved you by betraying, you cheated and so you cannot love, so now point the loaded gun at your empty heart.
Vagy vess el minden elvet s még remélj hű szerelmet, hisz mint a kutya hinnél abban, ki bízna benned.	Or cast out doctrine's power, hope true love yet will flower, doglike, you'd trust whoever trusted you for an hour.	Or throw away all principle and hope still for faithful love, since like a dog you would believe the one who would trust you.
	(trasl. Zs. Ozsváth – F. Turner)	