

Remarks on Alajos Alois Unger's The Recapture of Győr 1598 (1840, Hungarian National Gallery) on the occasion of the 425th anniversary of the landmark event

Abstract

The oil painting *The Recapture of Győr 1598* (1840) is one of the two works by Alajos Alois Unger (Győr 1814-1848) in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery since the 1970s. It depicts a landmark event in the Ottoman Wars that had an immense impact on the whole of Christian Europe, but outside of Hungary it has been largely forgotten. In the past two decades, considerable insight was gained into the obscure painter Unger, his works, family and networks. Playing-card maker Mátyás Mathias Unger the Elder was his father and Alajos Unger must have been the designer behind the family's prized playing-cards. Unger was trained at the Imperial Academy of Arts in Vienna between 1833 and 1842, particularly under Leopold Kupelwieser and Johann Ender. All this new insight enables a more detailed interpretation of this history painting frequently displayed and its religious and political meaning. It is part of an unusual cycle of patriotic Hungarian artwork glorifying the House of Habsburg.

Keywords

Alajos Alois Unger (1814-1848); *The Recapture of Győr*; Hungarian National Gallery; 19th century painting; Habsburg Monarchy; Ottoman Wars; *Pietas Austriaca*

Alajos Alois Unger – whose life data still frequently is not stated correctly – was baptized in the Győr Belváros (Inner City) parish on October 29, 1814 and thus, in all likelihood, born the day before, on October 28, 1814 and died young of cholera in his hometown on 28 December 1848.¹ Győr (in German Raab, laurinum in Latin) is located in Western Transdanubia, Hungary, approximately halfway between Vienna and Budapest. Alajos Unger was the second eldest son of playing-card maker Mátyás Mathias Unger the Elder, who descended from an ancient, reputable burgher family originally of Hungarian

¹ Cf. Wunderlich, Claudia (2010): Eine ungarische Kartenmaler- und Künstlerfamilie des 19. Jahrhunderts: Die Győrer Unger.“ In: *Arrabona* 48/2. 139-158, 143f, 152, endnote 30-33. Unfortunately, Székely Zoltán (2011): Unger Alajos antik szobrokról készült akadémiai tanulmányrajzai. In: *Arrabona* 49/1. 299-322, 300 wrongly stated that the date of baptism was September 1814, and not October, as he had already written on the respective board in the exhibition curated by him in 2010 (Egy győri polgárcsalád a reformkorból: az Ungerek. Exhibition at the János Xántus Museum, (now Flóris Rómer Museum of Art and History), Győr, September 10 – Oktober 10, 2010. Unpublished exhibition tables, 2010), which were largely based on the research of the present author. He probably copied the wrong date from the manuscript for Wunderlich (2010). This is all the more regrettable since the same author already rendered the wrong birthdate (1815) in Zoltán Székely, “H./9. Unger Alajos (1815-?): Győr visszavétele.” In: (ed.), "Megvéttetett Győr vára" 1598-1998: Emlékkiállítás Győr török alóli felszabadulásának 400. Évfordulójára. Győr: János Xántus Museum. 64, which he had found in the brief, earlier literature on Alajos Unger without checking the local church records in the neighbouring archives. More recently on painter Alajos Unger and his playing-card making family: Wunderlich, Claudia (2012, appeared 2014): Későnazarénus, késő romantikus és kártyatervező: a Kupelwieser-tanítvány Unger Alajos újrafelfedezése. In: *Arrabona*. 50/2. 135–188. Wunderlich, Claudia (2012b): The iconography, design and manufacture of the 19th century playing-cards by the Unger family from Győr. In: *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*. 57/2. 263-284. 276, Wunderlich, Claudia (2022a): Egy régi kártyafestő polgárcsalád Sopronból: az Ungerek. 1. rész. In: *Soproni Szemle* 76./1. 2022. 50–66. Wunderlich, Claudia (2022b): Claudia Wunderlich: Egy régi kártyafestő polgárcsalád Sopronból: az Ungerek. 2. Rész. In: *Soproni Szemle* 76./2. 166-181. Wunderlich, Claudia (2022c): A győri Unger család: társadalmi szemiotika, politikai ikonográfia és a 19. századi játékkártyakészítés. In: *Ethnographia* 133./3. 440-463.

ethnicity from Sopron (in German Ödenburg), a town located approximately 90 kilometers (55 miles) west of Győr. He is one of the few Hungarian painters trained at the Academy of Fine Arts (then called Imperial Academy of Arts) in Vienna at the time and who actually died in Hungary. In Vienna he was much under the influence of his late Romantic and Nazarene teachers, but also shows influences of more realistic Biedermeier painters. His work is also rare because of the chosen Hungarian topoi with a powerful political and religious message.

The painting *The Recapture of Győr* is the one by this artist that has been most frequently shown in exhibitions in Hungary.² It was originally owned by the family of the artist, but came into Jewish hands in the first half of the 20th century and was looted in what is also referred to as the “Sacco di Budapest” during The Second World War and as such it was on the so-called Gold Train which also transported the art collection of the museum of Győr to Austria where it came to a halt in Werfen in 1945; from there Unger’s painting came into the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery in Budapest in 1970 for 1500 forints after an employee had claimed it in Austria.³

It is one of two paintings in the collection of the Hungarian National Gallery – the other is a family portrait.⁴ These were the only officially known works by the obscure artist until 2009, when not only a series of primarily study drawings by Unger resurfaced, but also a Holy Family painting was found by the author of the present article. A list of oil paintings has also been reconstructed, and various of these have been (re-)discovered, most of which are not only known from the personal testimonial of the descendants of the Unger family, but particularly from the will of Alajos’ brother Károly from January 1895, found when the author conducted research in the archives of Győr in April 2007.⁵ One of these paintings is *The Recapture of Győr*, the remarks on which here presented are based on the research particularly since then.

The recapture of Győr in the night to 29th March of 1598 was a landmark event that had a significant impact on the fate of the whole empire. It was part of the so-called Fifteen-Years’-War lasting from 1591-1606 and was also called the Long War during the Hungarian-Ottoman wars.⁶ Győr was called “Jaurinum – totius Christianitatis propugnaculum” (Győr – bulwark of all Christianity).⁷

After the city had been conquered by the Ottomans under Grand Vizier Sinan Pasha in 1594, without the victory of the army led by commanders Miklós Pálffy de Erdöd and Adolf von Schwarzenberg, the Ottomans might have conquered Vienna and ventured further into the Holy Roman Empire. Regensburg in Bavaria they could have reached quickly via the Danube and from there Nuremberg in Franconia, a, if not the, leading metropolis of the empire at the time, was at a stone’s throw and would have been in immediate danger, too. Thus, victory was of utmost importance and immense

² Cf. Wunderlich, Claudia (2020): *Eine alte Ödenburger Bürgerfamilie namens Unger: ihre Geschichte vom 16. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert*. Schweinfurt: Arbeitspapier Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften Würzburg-Schweinfurt. 2.

³ Cf. Mravik László (1998): *"Sacco di Budapest" Depredation of Hungary 1938-1949*. Budapest: Magyar Nemzeti Galéria. Székely Zoltán (ed.) (2005): *A harmadik aranyvonat győri kincsei*. Győr: Xántus János Museum. Dunai Andrea (2019): *Javak sosrsa. Az 1944/45-ben Magyarországról elvitt értékek nyomába*. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó. 251.

⁴ Wunderlich (2012): 139-141.

⁵ Cf. Wunderlich (2010).

⁶ Cf. Székely (1998); Pálffy Géza (1999): *A császárváros védelmében a győri főkapitányság története 1526-1598: a győri vár törektől való visszafoglalása 400. Évfordulójának emlékére*. Győr: Győr–Moson–Sopron Megye Győri Levéltára. Tóth Sándor László (2000): *A mezőkeresztesi csata és a tizenöt éves háború*. Szeged: Belvedere. On the recapture of Győr and the events related to it in 1598, cf. ibid. pp 281-298. Bagi Zoltán Péter (2016): „Az mikor az vaspléből csinált torony tetejére helyeztetett kakas megszólalna”: *Győr visszafoglalása 1598. március 28-29*. <http://real.mtak.hu/40190/2/Gy%C5%91r%201598%20jav..pdf>; last accessed 20 March 2023.

⁷ Pálffy (1999): 3.

relief was felt at the news of the success of Schwarzenberg's and Pálffy's men, who had taken the city in storm in a surprise ambush using a petard to blow up the Fehérvári gate to gain entry. After the victory, all across the empire, big celebrations were held including processions of triumph to rejoice at the victory against the Ottoman Empire and Emperor Rudolf II. ordered to have so-called Raab wayside crosses (Raaberkreuze) set up in commemoration.⁸ This fact has been largely forgotten outside of Hungary, where the memories are still kept up, especially at the local level. Nowadays, only some traces of this historic battle can be found elsewhere, mainly in the form of these Raab wayside crosses, especially in Lower Austria, commonly bearing the inscription: *Sag Gott dem Herrn Lob und Dank, dass Raab ist kommen in der Christen Hand.* (Praise and thank the Lord that Raab was returned into Christian hands).⁹

Additionally, commemorative coins were issued and the battle and its commanders have been featured in art frequently.¹⁰ The memory, certainly, has been the most alive in Unger's hometown Győr.

Alajos Unger, who painted Madonnas and Holy Families, also devoted himself to critical scenes from the history of Hungary, with history paintings still considered to be the highest form of art during his lifetime.¹¹ His earliest-known historical scene is this small-format oil on canvas painting that is *The Recapture of Raab/Győr* (47X65 cm (18.5X25.5 inches), signed A. Unger pinx. 840 in the lower left third, Hungarian National Gallery, inventory number: T 70.214). It was created when Unger was still a student at the Vienna Academy in 1840. The work depicts the recapture of Győr in the cloudy night of March 28 to March 29, 1598, when the commanders Miklós Pálffy and Adolf Von Schwarzenberg finally succeeded in reconquering the fortress after four years of Turkish siege.¹² The painting shows a wild, colourful turmoil of battle between the Habsburg army and the Ottomans. It remains not quite clear, however, which of the two commanders is depicted, Pálffy or Schwarzenberg.¹³

The scene is not depicted in its actual historical location, which is the former Danube Gate or Water Gate in the north after a petard had cracked open the Fehérvári Gate, the entrance opposite in the south, but rather in front of the Vienna Gate facing westwards.

A brief description of the painting based on the entry in an exhibition catalogue from 1972 mentions Peter Krafft's Zrínyi's *Charge from the Fortress of Szigetvár* as the model of the painting and proposes that the baroque Carmelite Church, with its adjacent monastery, was portrayed in the painting because in the past, the famous iron rooster had been attached to the roof of the church.¹⁴

More recently, a doctoral thesis has pointed out that the Lutheran writer István Bodroghy Papp, who had spent some time in Győr in the early 19th century, in his writing of interest for the purposes of local

⁸ Berger, Adolph (1866): *Das Fürstenhaus Schwarzenberg*. Oesterreichische Revue 4. Heft 11. 88. Pohl, Walter, Pohl, Brigitte, Vocelka, Karl (1992): *Die Habsburger: eine europäische Familiengeschichte*. Graz: Styria.182.

⁹ Cf. AEIOU-Österreich-Lexikon, <http://austria-forum.org/af/AEIOU>, accessed February 22, 2015, s.v. Raaber Kreuze.

¹⁰ Berger (1866): 88.

¹¹ Fastert, Sabine (2000): *Die Entdeckung des Mittelalters. Geschichtsrezeption in der nazarenischen Malerei des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin/München: Deutscher Kunstverlag. 9.

¹² Cf. footnote 6; cf also Mailáth Majláth, Johann János (1817): Raab im Jahre 1598. In: *Der Wanderer* 221, August, 1817. Vienna: Strauß, 881f (Google Books).

¹³ Cf. footnote 6.

¹⁴ Székely Zoltán (1998): Unger Alajos (1815-?). In: Székely (1998): 64. Krafft's Zrínyi was to justify the rule of the Habsburgs and already in 1821 Palatin Joseph had stipulated the representation of historical events in art, cf Tüskés-Knapp (2018): 300f.

history called *A Cseznek vára: Egy rege* also places the scene in front of the Carmelite Monastery.¹⁵ The manuscript kept in the museum of Győr since the 1980s is in the process of being published in book form at the time of writing this paper. The PhD thesis also mentioned Unger in this context, but does not explain why the author believes in a connection in the rendering of the scene between her author and Unger. Despite this possibility – and should she have sources proving this now would be the time to come forward – the most likely explanation in the humanities applying Occam’s razor is to assume that local folklore and traditions in the 19th century did indeed place the scene in front of this monastery whose baroque church sported the iron rooster, which prompted Unger to choose this location and not the historic one. The iron rooster played a pivotal role in the tale of the recapture, according to which the Turks set it up claiming they would only be defeated if it began to crow – which it eventually did as legend had it. But there is another important reason for the choice of scenery to be discussed. Unger certainly did not primarily paint the baroque church just because of the iron rooster, but rather because of its religious symbolism, which is ultimately in line with the creeds of the Nazarene tradition in which he was originally taught at the Viennese art academy promoting the Habsburg art policy.¹⁶

Consequently, here the historic event is blended with the subjective sensation of the artist and the religious in an epoch-spanning, idealistic way – much more strongly so than is the case in Peter Krafft’s painting (1824/25, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest), which had been criticized for not being authentic because of Zrínyi’s deviating physiognomy and depicting him in battle on a horse and not on foot, as had been the case in reality.¹⁷ In addition to this, the Ottoman about to fall from the bastion in Unger’s painting appears to imply a descent into hell.¹⁸ The time after this battle of European significance correlated with the counter-reformation and recatholization of Hungary as well as with the popularization of baroque piety, which is alluded to by the baroque church in the painting.¹⁹ This also corresponds to the ultimate goal of conversion typical of Nazarene art, which was an ideological underpinning, and the religious practices of the Habsburg monarchy, the *Pietas Austriaca*.²⁰

In the literature thus far, only Johann Peter Krafft’s Zrínyi’ painting, which he originally painted as a three-part cycle for the Hungarian National Museum, has been named as a model for Unger’s work.²¹

¹⁵ Nemesné Matus Zsanett (2019): *Irodalom és művelődés a reformkori dunántúlon: Bodroghy Papp István költészete*. Doctoral thesis at Péter Pázmány University. DOI: 10.15774/PPKE.BTK.2020.008. It is unfortunate that Nemesné, who personally attended the opening of the Unger exhibition in the museum of Győr in 2010 would simply cite Székely (1998) without mentioning the correct lifedata of Alajos Unger that has been published by the author since the late 2000s. She also does not attempt to explain how this parallel in rendering the recapture might have come to be.

¹⁶ Wunderlich (2022 b, c). The iron rooster, together with the Raab wayside crosses, was accepted into the local “értéktár”, the lowest level of a national treasure, which if deemed of importance at national level, is called “Hungarikum”. Homepage of the city of Győr: <https://gyor.hu/gyor/kultura/gyori-ertektar/gyori-ertekek/>. Last accessed 26 March 2023. The city still today considers the Recapture of Győr the most important event in its history and continues to commemorate it accordingly: *Győr visszafoglalása - megemlékezés 2022. március 28-án*. Youtube video by the City of Győr: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWPjKAhfb2g>. Last accessed 20 March 2023.

¹⁷ Vancsa, Ekkehard (1972): *Aspekte der Historienmalerei in Wien im 19. Jahrhundert*. Vienna: Phil.Diss. 150. endnote 8.

¹⁸ Cf. also Gleis, Ralph (2010): *Anton Romako – Die Entstehung des modernen Historienbildes*. Köln, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau. 99f.

¹⁹ Klimó, Árpád von, *Nation, Konfession, Geschichte – Zur nationalen Geschichtskultur Ungarns im europäischen Kontext (1860-1948)*. Munich: R. Oldenbourg. 97.

²⁰ Grewe, Cordula (2009): *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate. 319.

²¹ Székely (1998), Unger Alajos (1815-?). 64; for background information on Krafft’s painting cf. Werner Telesko, Werner (2006): *Geschichtsraum Österreich – Die Habsburger und ihre Geschichte in der bildenden Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau. 380-83.

Two smaller versions of Krafft's painting were extant during Unger's lifetime: One in the collection of the Austrian National Gallery (DBI 249, destroyed in World War II) and a second one owned by the Festetich family (now lost).²² It was also engraved by Franz Stöber (1795–1858) in 1836 as a *Prämienblatt* for the Vienna Art Association.²³ Krafft, in turn, had himself based his work on Rubens' *Battle of the Amazons* (1617/18, *Alte Pinakothek*, Munich). The latter had found his inspiration in Leonardo's *Battle of Anghiari* (1505, *Palazzo Vecchio*, Florence).²⁴ Krafft – who was widely received by other Hungarian artists as well – obviously was an important source of inspiration for Unger, but certainly not the only one, since the Turkish Wars – with Hungary as a bastion against the Ottomans – was an extremely popular motif of the time, originally to glorify the strength and might of the Habsburg rulers.²⁵ Krafft, like many other painters of his time, found inspiration in the writings of Josef Hormayr von Hortenburg (1781–1848), and in these, Hungary was to be reminded of its bond with the House of Austria, which was meant to help eradicate nationalism in the bud and promoted the so-called view of *Reichspatriotismus* or the idea of a unified country, ie *Gesamtstaat*.²⁶ Altogether, Krafft's painting was highly acclaimed by the public and his colleagues alike, and Nazarene artists also chose it as a model for their works; among them was Karl Stürmer in his fresco *Battle of Mühldorf am Inn, 25 August 1258* (Hofgartenarkaden, Munich, before 1829), which not only depicts a similar scene, but Stürmer literally adopted details from Krafft's work.²⁷ Nazarene painter Julius Schnorr Von Carolsfeld, who had once travelled to Rome with Krafft, also painted battles in his frescos for the Munich Residenz (destroyed in the Second World War and only preserved as cartoons).²⁸ Later on, Unger's Nazarene main teacher in Vienna, Leopold Kupelwieser, too, took Krafft's picture as a model for his frescos for the decoration of the Marble Hall (1848–50) in the former administrative buildings (*Statthaltereier*) for the Province of Lower Austria at Herrengasse 11 in Vienna.²⁹ However, it is more richly detailed and altogether, Kupelwieser used a style inspired by his colleagues in Munich, once the "hotbed" of Nazarene art.³⁰

Hans von Aachen had also painted the Turkish Wars, and even the Battle of Győr and its commanders in the direct aftermath of the event.³¹ Also, in 1788, István (Stephan) Dorffmaister executed a fresco

²² Galavics Géza (1981): A Zrínyi kirohanása téma története. In: Júlia Szabó, F. György Széphelyi, Zsuzsanna Bakó, *Művészet Magyarországon 1830-1870, katalógus: kiállítás a MTA Művészettörténeti Kutató Csoport és a Magyar Nemzeti Galéria közös rendezésében*. Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, August – November 1981 Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Művészettörténeti Kutatócsoport. Tome 1. 61–65, 63.

²³ Tüskés Gábor (2010): A két Zrínyi Miklós ikonográfiájának megújítási kísérletei a 18.-20.században. In: Sándor Hites, Zsuzsa Török, *Építész a kőfejtőben -- Tanulmányok Dávidházi Péter hatvanadik születésnapjára / Architect in the Quarry: Studies Presented to Péter Dávidházi On His Sixtieth Birthday*. Budapest: rec.iti. 293. On the connection between Stöber and Unger's family painting cf. Wunderlich (2022c): 442. 451.

²⁴ Frodl-Schneemann, Marianne (1984): *Johann Peter Krafft, 1780-1856 -- Monographie und Verzeichnis der Gemälde*. Vienna: Herold. 69.

²⁵ Telesko (2006). 33, 380-83.

²⁶ Vancsa (1972): 148; Szentesi, Edit (2000): Birodalmi patriotizmus. Történelemszemlélet, történetírás, történeti publicisztika és történeti témák ábrázolása az Osztrák Császárságban 1828-ig. In: Árpád Mikó, Katalin Sinkó (eds.), *Történelem -- Kép. Szemelvények múlt és művészet kapcsolatáról Magyarországon. Geschichte – Geschichtsbild -- Die Beziehung von Kunst und Geschichte in Ungarn*. Kiállítás a Magyar Nemzeti Galériában / Ausstellung in der Ungarischen Nationalgalerie. March 17 – September 24, 2000. Budapest: Hungarian National Gallery. 73– 91.

²⁷ Vancsa (1972): 148.

²⁸ Artists of the World Online Database (AWO), s.v. Krafft, Johann Peter; Seeliger, Stephan (ed.) (1999): *Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld – Aus dem Leben Karls des Großen -- Kartons für die Wandbilder der Münchner Residenz*. Cologne: Albertinum Kupferstich-Kabinett u. Rüstkammer Staatliche Kunstsammlungen.

²⁹ Cf. Telesko (2006): 272-80.

³⁰ Vancsa (1972): 76; Grewe, Cordula (2007): Historicism and the Symbolic Imagination in Nazarene Art. In: *The Art Bulletin* 89/1. 82-107.

³¹ AWO, s.v. Aachen, Hans von.

with Zrínyi's battle in the dome of the parish church of Szigetvár.³² Unger's direct models, however, seem to be the nineteenth century representations by Krafft and his contemporaries active in Vienna: Those included Moritz von Schwind's drawing of *Zrínyi's Charge from the Fortress of Szigetvár* (1823/24, collection of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts), which was lithographed by Josef Kriehuber.³³ Leander Ruß' drawing showing *Count Zrinyi Saying Farewell to His Family at the City Gate of Szigetvár* (1828, engraved By J. Neidl), his oil painting *Storm of the Turks on the Löwelbastei 1683* (1837, *Österreichische Galerie Belvedere*), and his watercolour from 1843 depicting *Zrínyi's Outburst* (ÖNB Bildarchiv Pk 305011), Jan Osolsobie's drawings of *Zrínyi's Death* from the first half of the nineteenth century (lithographed by Eduard Gurk) and the *Storming of Buda* (lithographed by Gurk in 1825), Johann Nepomuk Hoechle's *Scene from a Battle against the Turks* (oil on canvas laid on canvas, date unknown)³⁴ as well as the illustrations in Johann Nepomuk Geiger's and Anton Ziegler's *Zyklus zur Österreichischen Geschichte* from 1839 also may have served as his sources of inspiration.³⁵ The Osolsobie-Gurk representation of Zrínyi's death appears to have been a particularly strong model for Unger. The Zrínyi battle motif was also found on Biedermeier picture clocks.³⁶ Overall, painters Karl Ruß and Johann Nepomuk Hoechle as well as the illustrations in Anton Ziegler's numerous historical works had a great impact on the art of the 19th century in the Habsburg Monarchy and copious inspiration in art was available for *The Recapture of Győr*.³⁷

Other than such pictorial inspiration, local traditions, remembrances, ceremonies, literary sources and theatre plays must have inspired Unger in his choices for the painting of the recapture, as did his religious and political creeds. Such sources to draw on were manifold. In his hometown, past publications have enumerated the literary and theatrical sources dealing with the recapture of Győr.³⁸

Generally, however, the historical writings of Joseph Hormayr strongly influenced Austrian history painting of the time.³⁹ He was the editor of various publications that served as a collection of material for patriotic artists, among them were the *Österreichischer Plutarch, oder Leben und Bildnisse aller*

³² Tüskés (2010): 292.

³³ Galavics (1981): 64. Cf. also Sinkó Katalin (2000): Zrínyi kirohonása Szigetvárból. In: Mikó/Sinkó (2000): 531.

³⁴ The painting was sold at auction at Palais Kinsky in Vienna on March 2, 2010.

³⁵ Galavics (1981): 64. Vancsa (1972): 75. Ziegler 1839. Cf. also Geiger, Johann Nepomuk (1861): *Historische Handzeichnungen von Johann Nepomuk Geiger. Mit erklärendem Texte von Gustav Adolph Schimmer*. Vienna: Hof- und Staatsdruckerei. 84-86. Basics Beatrix (2001): A budai várpalota ostromainak ábrázolásai. In: *Tanulmányok Budapest Múltjából XXIX*. 169 --183, 177. Unger's teacher János Hofbauer from Győr also collaborated with Eduard Gurk at one point and provided Hungarian landscape drawings, for example of Pest-Buda.

³⁶ Mészáros Ágnes (2010): Idő-kép zenekísérettel. Jellemző képtémák és ikonográfiájuk 19. századi képórákon. In: Anna Tüskés (ed.), *Ars perennis. Fiatal Művészettörténészek II. Konferenciája. 2nd Conference of Young Art Historians Budapest 2009*. Budapest: CentrArt Egyesület. 110-114, http://www.centrart.hu/letolt/arsperennis/19Ars_perennis_Meszaros.pdf, accessed July 12, 2013; Tüskés (2010): 292.

³⁷ Vancsa (1972): 77. On images of the recapture of Győr and those related to it, cf. Galavics Géza (1986): *Kössünk kardot a pogány ellen: Török háborúk és képzőművészet*. Budapest: Képzőművészeti Kiadó.

³⁸ On the local situation and sources, cf. Székely (1998). Furthermore: Mohl Adolf (1942): Győr elestének és visszavételének irodalma: második, befejező közlemény. In: *Győri Szemle*. 5. 447-461. Lám Frigyes (1942): Győr a magyar regény- és novellairodalomban I. In: *Győri Szemle*. 13. 76-79. Vöcelka, Karl (1981): *Die politische Propaganda Kaiser Rudolfs II. (1576–1612). Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Geschichte Österreichs, vol. IX*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

Grábics Frigyes (1991): Színjáték a reformkori és a forradalmi Győrben. In: *Arrabona* 26-30..91-94

Bana József (1996): *Győr eleste és visszavétele*. Győr: Győr Megyei Jogú Város Levéltára, 1996.

Mónus Imre (2000): *Győr elestének és visszavételének bibliográfiája*. Győr: Győri Tanulmányok Füzetek. Tudományos Közlemények 3/1999.

³⁹ Fastert (2000): 69.

Regenten und der berühmtesten Feldherrn, Staatsmänner, Gelehrten und Künstler des österreichischen Kaiserstaates (1807-1814) and the *Vaterländisches Taschenbuch* (co-edited with Alajos Aloys Mednyánszky, 1810-1822).⁴⁰ Additionally, Nazarene painter Julius Schnorr Von Carolsfeld, for example, was also greatly influenced by Eduard Maria Lichnowski's (1789--1845) *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg* (1836), but his main source was Hormayr's *Plutarch* indeed.⁴¹

Among the well-known literary sources that Alajos Unger may also have known are Alajos Alois Mednyánszky's *Erzählungen, Sagen und Legenden aus Ungarns Vorzeit* as well as János Johann Mailáth's – another close collaborator of Hormayr's -- description from 1829 of the recapture of Győr in the Viennese newspaper *Der Wanderer*.⁴²

Moreover, most likely Alajos Unger was also prompted by the theater play *Schwarzenberg und Pálffy oder Raabs Wiedereroberung aus der Gewalt der Osmanen* by Carl (Károly) Haffner, who had been influenced by Mednyánszky, which was performed in Győr in the presence of the Hungarian King Ferdinand V. (the Austrian Emperor Ferdinand I.) on June 10, 1839.⁴³ This impression is reinforced by the fact that Alajos Unger also painted *The Baptism of Vajk*, the later Saint King Stephen I. of Hungary, as discussed below. On June 14th, 1839 August von Kotzebue's drama *King Stephen* with incidental music by Beethoven was performed in the theatre of Győr, also in the presence of the king.⁴⁴ The performance only began after the entire audience had finished singing the imperial anthem *Gott erhalte*.⁴⁵ Since Unger's Biedermeier picture clock and his painting *The Baptism of Vajk* have a literary and musical links as well, this does not appear to be a coincidence here, either. What makes Unger's painting rather unique, however, is the strong Hungarian and local orientation, which is reflected in the various details of the townscape and local lore in the picture. This must have to do both with the fact that it was his hometown, but also that there had been a tradition of school plays, for example by law students of the local Royal Academy and priests in training in Győr, which he must have witnessed as a child, songs and processions.

The fact that Alajos Unger had attended the Benedictine Grammar School – the Benedictines had taken it over from the Jesuits in the late 18th century and continued various of their traditions -- in Győr as well must also have played a significant role. Furthermore, local author and likewise former pupil of the Benedictine Grammar School, Pázmándi Horváth Endre, wrote a play in three acts in 1836, *Győr visszavétele. Eredeti hősi játék, 3 felvonásban*.⁴⁶ The already mentioned Bodroghy Papp may have watched this play, too, as may have Unger.⁴⁷ At any rate, the Jesuits did indeed propagate the motif of St. Mary, the Ottoman Wars and re-catholization: In his writings, the famous Jesuit priest Pétér Pázmány thus linked the idea of the *Patrona Hungariae* with the topos of the deliverance of the Ottomans as well as recatholization.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ Ibid.: 103.

⁴¹ Ibid.: 69.

⁴² Mailáth (1817).

⁴³ That Haffner's play must have had an impact on Unger is also likely because his play was called *Die Erstürmung Raabs* in German – the exact same title that Alajos Unger's brother Károly mentioned in his will as the name of the painting. To refer to the recapture of Győr in this way in German was not exclusive to Haffner, though. Cf. Schlechter, Adalbert (1876): *Carl Haffner. Eine biografische Skizze von Adalbert Haffner (pseud.)*. Self-published. No page numbers (Google Books).

⁴⁴ Lám, Frigyes (1935): A győri német színház története 1821–1849. I. In: *Győri Szemle* 6. 16-34. 32.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Pázmándi Horváth Endre (1836/1987): *Győr visszavétele. Eredeti hősi játék, 3 felvonásban*. Győr: Kazinczy Ferenc Gimnázium.

⁴⁷ Nemesné (2019): 60. 97.

⁴⁸ Tüskés–Knapp (2018): 539.

And what has been observed more generally for the function of the baroque theatre play of the Jesuits also applies to this painting of Unger's: Die Aussagen [...] beziehen sich auf den Krieg gegen die Feinde des Christentums beziehungsweise der katholischen Kirche, in dem die rechte Partei mit der Hilfe Gottes siegen wird. Garant für diesen Sieg ist die habsburgische Dynastie, die vor allem durch ihre „pietas“ den Sieg erreichen wird.⁴⁹ This also implied the ongoing fight for the right religion, i.e. Catholicism. This also alludes to the crusades and the idea of holy warriors. This presentation of the “miles christianus” to fight for the right faith entails the cult of St Mary and the religious mission of the Habsburg rulers to strive to not just keep up but actually enlarge their empire as part of the Pietas Austriaca/Hungarica:

Pietas austriaca involved the conviction that the Archducal House of Austria had long-ago been in trusted by the Almighty, with the mission of guiding the two and only-soul-redeeming Catholic religion to victory. Not least with the sword: in times of religious schism, the church had to be a militant one, an *ecclesia militans*. Relationship between God and the dynasty was based on reciprocity: the House of Austria worked to increase the glory and honor of God and his church in the world; in return, God bestowed his blessing on the dynasty and ensured that its fame grew steadily, along with its temporal power.⁵⁰

Despite her absence, Unger's painting *The Recapture of Győr* thus evokes the Virgin Mary because already in the Battle of Lepanto against the Turks in 1571 she had been credited with the victory (and titled Maria de victoria and there is an overlap between the Patrona Hungariae cult, according to which St King Stephen of Hungary had devoted his country to the patronage of Mother Mary, Regnum Marianum.⁵¹

This also elicits Habsburg Spain and the history of the dynasty and its great figures including Rudolf I, Emperor Charles V and the already mentioned Ferdinand II who meant to recatholicize his entire country as well as Ferdinand III who continued this mission in the footsteps of Aeneas and Augustus.

The Pietas Mariana, as part of Pietas Austriaca, was used to recatholicize the country within the symbolic protection of a Victorious Mary and Emperor Ferdinand II made Mary the Commander of his army, Mary became “patron of the Christian armies and countries” (my translation, CW) and Ferdinand III considered Mary not only the protectress of his family, but of his peoples and his country; at the age of the Ottoman Wars and Counter Reformation, Mary became an important factor in politics too and also took on an anti-Habsburg connotation in Hungary.⁵² However, despite the strong patriotic Hungarian orientation of the painting *The Recapture of Győr*, this is not the case with Unger, whose works, despite his strong patriotic Hungarian stance, constitute an apotheosis and glorification of the dynasty and could therefore be characterised as examples of the Pietas Hungarica as proposed by Ducreux based on the seminal work on the Pietas Austriaca by Anna Coreth:⁵³ As Ducreux summarized: Coreth approached her topic through four aspects: worship of the Eucharist, devotion to the Blessed

⁴⁹ Krump, Sandra (2003): Aus gegebenen Anlass... Habsburgpanegyrik in Jesuitendramen der Österreichischen Ordensprovinz. Aufgezeigt an zwei Dramen des Passauer Jesuitentheaters. In: Herbert Karner, Werner Telesko (eds.), *Die Jesuiten in Wien: Zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte der österreichischen Ordensprovinz der „Gesellschaft Jesu“ im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 165–179. 170.

⁵⁰ Barbara Stolberg-Rängler (2022): *Maria Theresa: The Habsburg Empress in Her Time*. Translated by Robert Savage. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 566.

⁵¹ Knapp-Tüskés (2018): 509-527. Cf. Also: Mínguez, Víctor (2022): Pietas Austriaca y política mariana : del Rosario a la Inmaculada. In: Manfredi Merluzzi et al., *Vergine contesa : l'Immacolata Concezione e l'universalismo della monarchia cattolica (secc. XVII-XIX)*. Rome: Viella. 105-121.

⁵² Tüskés – Knapp (2018): 505-507.

⁵³ Ducreux, Marie-Elizabeth (2011): Emperors, Kingdoms, Territories: Multiple Versions of the Pietas Austriaca? In: *The Catholic Historical Review*. 97/2. 276-304. DOI:10.1353/cat.2011.0048.

Virgin, confidence in Christ's Holy Cross, and veneration of selected saints. These have been viewed as special manifestations of Habsburg piety and the fundamentals of their sovereign rule, from Ferdinand II (1619-37) to the mid-eighteenth century and particularly during the Counter Reformation.

All of these aspects disclosed the central component of the Habsburgs' scheme of theological politics: the process of salvation stressing Christ's human presence on earth through incarnation and its outcome; the Eucharist; and the Sacrifice of the Cross, in which the prince embodies the mediation between this world and the heavenly one and thus represents God on earth. Yet from the introduction of her book, Coreth made clear that the whole system of the *Pietas Austriaca* rested on the sovereign's virtues. These virtues were inherited from ancestors, especially from Rudolph I (1218-91), as Coreth noted."⁵⁴

The same piety became a holy, binding heritage, which had to be faithfully followed and constantly renewed as the destiny of the house depended upon it.⁵⁵

Their dynasty was chosen by the Almighty to rule a world empire due to their ancestor Rudolph I paying respect to a cleric with the Holy Eucharist.⁵⁶ She further states that not only was *Pietas Austriaca* "a set of shared beliefs [but it] was a system for sacralizing and sanctifying the legitimacy of the dynasty through representations [...]."⁵⁷ She thus pleads for a "broader reading" of the *Pietas Austriaca*, incorporating "local nuances" that not only portray the Habsburgs as rulers chosen by the grace of God, but also stress the Virgin Mary's function as mediator, which is also related to the idea of a victorious Mary in a war or battle.⁵⁸ The frequently rendered myth of the Habsburgs going back to Rudolph I is in competition with other regional accounts and thus the Habsburg kings were linked with the Kings St. Stephen as well as Ladislas, while the worship of St. Ladislas has not been sufficiently noted in relation to the Habsburg sovereigns yet.⁵⁹ This is also noteworthy in the context of Alajos Unger

⁵⁴ Ducreux (2011): 277.

⁵⁵ Ibid.: 277.

⁵⁶ Ibid.: 283.

⁵⁷ Ibid.: 279.

⁵⁸ Ibid.: 282. Knapp-Tüskés (2018): 505:

⁵⁹ Ducreux (2011): 286, 290. Cf. Wunderlich (2012) and the literature cited therein. Tüskés-Knapp (2018): 545f also similarly elaborated: *Durch die Devotion der Nationalpatrone haben sie die regionale Variante der international verbreiteten Idee von Maria und den Heiligen als Landespatrone aufgegriffen, in der Form Ungarn – Regnum Marianum weiterentwickelt, in den Dienst ihrer eigenen Vorstellungen gestellt und damit zur Herausbildung eines ungarischen Nationalbewusstseins neuen Typs wesentlich beigetragen. Nach der Verwendung im antitürkischen und antiprotestantischen Kontext wurde die Idee bzw. die Kultform am Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts mit antihabsburgischen Bestrebungen verknüpft und auch noch im 18. Jahrhundert wirkungsvoll weiterentwickelt. Neben der Verbreitung von spanischen, italienischen und süddeutschen spi rituellen Strömungen waren die Jesuiten am Aufbau der Pietas Austriaca maßgeblich beteiligt. Sie haben die typischen Frömmigkeitsformen der Habsburger, die zum Teil auf spätmittelalterliche Traditionen zurückgingen, auch in Ungarn gefördert. Hierher gehörten vor allem die Eucharistieverehrung (z. B. vierzigstündige Anbetung), der Kult der hl. Dreifaltigkeit, die vielfältigen Formen der Pietas Mariana, insbesondere die Verehrung von Maria als „acies ordinata“ (geordnetes Schlachtenheer), als Maria de Victoria und der Kult der Immacula ta Conceptio. Im Rahmen der Heiligenverehrung ist der Kult des hl. Josephs und der Ordensheiligen hervorzuheben. Vor allem durch die Jesuiten wurden auch die regelmäßige Beichte, die gemeinschaftliche Erstkommunion der Kinder und die häufigere Teilnahme an der Kommunion propagiert.* For Bavarian influences on the cult of St. Mary and the *Pietas Austriaca*, cf Samerski, Stefan (2004): *Maria zwischen den Fronten. Bayerische Einflüsse auf die Pietas Austriaca und die*

ungarische Eigentradition in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts, in: *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 27. 359-371. On the Cult of the Maria de Victoria in the German Marian Congregation in Győr in the 17th and 18th century, cf Székely Zoltán (2017): *A győri németek Győzedelmes Mária-kongregációja és annak albuma. Kutatási beszámoló.* In: Fazekas István, Kádár Zsófia, Kökényesi Zolt (eds.), *Jezsuita jelenlét Győrben a 17–18. században. Tanulmányok a 375 éves Szent Ignác-templom történetéhez.* Győr: Szent Mór Perelség. 335-363. On the *Pietas Austriaca* and

because he also painted St. Ladislav. Other than his works, family lore and heirlooms back this this interpretation of his paintings.

Unger's copy of Cesare da Sesto's *La vierge au bas-relief* is therefore closely related thematically and it is thus – despite it being a copy – certainly no coincidence that Unger would have chosen a holy family depicting the patron of the Habsburg family, ie St. Joseph, also considered one of the saints venerated within the Pietas Austriaca, who also happened to be a saint of craftspeople.⁶⁰ St. Joseph is also strongly linked with the Carmelite Order and Unger's copy of *La vierge au bas-relief*, when viewed from such an Austrian and Hungarian angle, also represents the patron and high protectress of the Order of the Starry Cross, which was founded by empress Eleonora de Gonzaga in 1668.⁶¹ Therefore, two other works by Unger already publicly discussed, the *Baptism of Vajk* and his picture clock with a view of Venice can be considered to form an unusual cycle of works representing this form of Pietas Habsburgica or Hungarica, as does the painting displayed in Pest in 1846 at the exhibition of the Art Association of Pest, *King St. Ladislaus sees Salomon*. His *Baptism of Vajk* painting depicts Pietas Eucharistica, but first and foremost the Fiducia in crucem Christi.⁶²

Overall, the parallel with depictions of Rudolf von Habsburg and the priest by Franz Pforr, for example, is remarkable, which is also because of its religious and ideological implications.⁶³ When Pforr turned to the thirteenth-century figure of Rudolf von Habsburg in 1808, the Austrian dynasty was widely perceived as the chief defender of German independence against Napoleon. It also had the reputation of being particularly pious, and for centuries, the Habsburgs had carefully nurtured the myth of a specific Pietas Austriaca, also to legitimize their power in the new Habsburg Empire after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nation in 1804/06, which had led to a legitimization crisis.⁶⁴ This concept of Pietas, dynastic rather than national, rested on the assumption that God by his grace had purposely chosen the House of Austria as the protector of the Catholic Church and Holy Roman Empire and had done so because of the merits of its ancestors. The founder of the Habsburg dynasty, Rudolf of Habsburg, played a pertinent role in this construction. His exceptional Christian piety, firm belief in the power of the holy cross and devotion to the Eucharist were legendary. The last aspect, the Habsburg's exceptional Eucharist piety, was a core element of the Pietas Austriaca and, according to the dynasty's mythos, the basis for the House's blessedness.⁶⁵ The most effective topic

also its relation to the Spanish Habsburgs cf. Mínguez, Víctor – Rodríguez, Immaculada (eds.) (2018): *La Piedad de la Casa de Austria. Arte, dinastía y devoción*. Somonte-Cenero: Ediciones Trea.

⁶⁰ Pörnbacher, Hans (2013): Pietas Bavarica. In: Alois Schmid, Hermann Rumschöttel (eds.): *Wittelsbacher Studien: Festgabe für Herzog Franz von Bayern zum 80. Geburtstag*. München: C.H. Beck. 305-309. 306. Penz, Helga (2023): *Die Tüchtigkeit der Frauen: Die Wiener Barmherzigen Schwestern und die freie Wohlfahrt von 1832 bis 1945*. Wien, Köln: Böhlau. 81.

⁶¹ Samerski, Stefan (2006): Hausheilige statt Staatspatrone. Der misslungene Absolutismus in Österreichs Heilighimmel. In: Mat'a, Petr u. Winkelbauer, Thomas (eds.): *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1620 bis 1740. Leistungen und Grenzen des Absolutismusparadigmas*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner. 251-278. 262 f. Koloch, Sabine (2015): *Kommunikation, Macht, Bildung: Frauen im Kulturprozess der Frühen Neuzeit*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag. 361-365.

⁶² Wunderlich (2012): 146-158.

⁶³ This topos was extremely popular from the beginning of the 19th century. Other painters depicting the scene included Ludwig Ferdinand Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1828, Belvedere Gallery) and Joseph von Führich (1870, Belvedere Gallery). Cf. Telesko (2006): 257. Haarmann (2012): 109 found evidence of 28 such representations.

⁶⁴ Telesko, Werner (2006): 255f. On Rudolf von Habsburg and the priest in the context of the formation of the Habsburg myth in the 19th century, cf. Haarmann, Daniela (2012): *Die Entstehung des habsburgischen Mythos im 19. Jahrhundert*. Vienna: University of Vienna: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/11599674.pdf>. Last accessed 20 March 2023.

⁶⁵ Grewe (2009): 47f. On the pietas eucharistica as well as the link between the Habsburg rulers and the faith in the cross of Christ / Fiducia in crucem Christi, cf. also Coreth, Anna (2004): *Pietas Austriaca*. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press. 13-36.

of the Habsburg Pietas Eucharistica was the encounter of Rudolf with a priest carrying a viaticum (the Eucharist administered to the dying), a legend that Josef Hormayr had proposed to painters in particular.⁶⁶

Thus the parallel between the Vajk painting and the depictions of Rudolf can be encountered at another level as well: The representation of the Pietas Austriaca or Habsburgica, as already described above.⁶⁷ This particular form of piety exercised by the Casa d'Austria developed into a highly symbolic system, which had spread especially after the victory of Ferdinand II. in the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, with the purpose of promoting the recatholization of Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and the County of Glatz.⁶⁸ Thus, the house of Habsburg changed its personal and dynastic piety into a public religious rite involving specific ceremonies and processions, and this way created a new ideological framework for their subjects, and consequently a new *raison d'état* as well as state mystic linked with a particular theological doctrine.⁶⁹ From this was derived the Habsburg's divine right to power (Gottesgnadentum). Further evidence for the connection between the Rudolf depictions and Unger's Vajk painting is provided by Stefan Malfèr in his analysis of the cycle of images in the stained glass windows in the church of Vienna Breitensee.⁷⁰ There, not only Rudolf von Habsburg, but also, for example, King Saint Stephen, King Constantine, Wenceslas of Bohemia, Saint Leopold, and others are portrayed. Therefore, it is not a coincidence, either, that Alajos Unger chose as one of his models Piero della Francesca's fresco cycle.

This also explains the connection between The Baptism of Vajk and the already mentioned painting of Saint Ladislav by Unger. The fact that the old local kings were simultaneously kings and saints strengthened their individual veneration, and thus prevented the Habsburg monarchy from having its political identity represented by only one single ruler.⁷¹

With *The Recapture of Győr* and other works, Alajos Unger thus created a cycle of images representing the Pietas Habsburgica to glorify the House of Habsburg, and yet was a fervent, patriotic Hungarian. He promoted his ideas not in a national, but cosmopolitan way in line with the art policy of the Danube Monarchy promoting the idea of a *Gesamtstaat* up until the Revolution of 1848.⁷²

⁶⁶ Ibid. Telesko (2006): 255.

⁶⁷ Coreth (2004): 13-36. Ducreux (2011): 276-304.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 280.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 277, 279.

⁷⁰ Malfèr Stefan (2011): *Kaiserjubiläum und Kreuzesfrömmigkeit – Habsburgische "Pietas Austriaca" in den Glasfenstern der Pfarrkirche zum heiligen Laurentius in Wien-Breitensee*. Vienna et al.: Böhlau.

⁷¹ Ducreux (2011): 302.

⁷² Cf. Wunderlich (2022c).