

The Double Life of Kertbeny¹

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I. Literature and (homo)sexology

Kertbeny Károly Mária was born as Karl Maria Benkert in Vienna on the 28th of February 1824 – and his autobiographical notes emphasize – “as a son of Hungarian parents” (Kertbeny, ca 1856:120).² In Hungarian literary history he is remembered as a not too significant translator and writer whose greatest literary merit was the enthusiastic intention to popularise Hungarian literature – especially the work of Petőfi, Arany and Jókai³ – abroad, particularly in German speaking countries.

In the 58 years of his life Kertbeny occupied himself with many things: he started his career in 1840 in the booktrade, followed by a short period of army service at the age of 19, in 1843. Then he “started to study medical sciences at the university and by himself” (Kertbeny, ca 1856:120).⁴

His literary aspirations can be dated from 1845 after becoming acquainted with Petőfi in Pest: “He spent his free time with Petőfi ... or in the Pilvax Café ... in the company of Petőfi, Jókai, Tompa Sárossy, Lisznyai ... or in the national theatre ... he regularly visited Eötvös and Lukács Mór, and Vörösmarty ... – In all these circles he got this idea to represent Hungarian literature in the world literature” (Kertbeny, ca 1856:120).

In 1846 he tried to start his own literary periodical titled as “Jahrbuch des deutschen Elementes in Ungarn” (Almanac of the German Elements in Hungary) because “it is an obligation and the duty of Germans of Hungary to build the bridge of understanding between Europe and the Hungarian political and intellectual movements” (Kertbeny, ca 1856:121).

His attempt to start a periodical did not succeed: after the publication of the first issue, he felt that his idea was misinterpreted and betrayed by both parties: “well, he stepped into nice quagmire. The German papers ridiculed and railed against the idea of being servants of Hungarians, and the Hungarian papers asserted that there were no grounds for any ‘German elements’ in Hungary. Neither of them understood Kertbeny’s conciliating ideas. Finally he decided to move on. On the 6th of May [1846] he left Pest. ... He went on foot with only ten forints and the poems of Petőfi, he went into the world. In Balatonfüred he met Ferenc Deák who encouraged him to go abroad and represent Hungarian literature there” (Kertbeny, ca 1856:121).

¹ I would like to express thanks to Henning Bech for asking me to try collecting archive data in Budapest about the connection between Hans Christian Andersen and Kertbeny, to Gert Hekma for having encouraged me for many years now, to Manfred Herzer for answering my silly questions, to Nóra Bessenyei for helping with “decoding” Kertbeny’s handwriting, to Sándor Borsos for sharing with me sources, especially his copy of Hubert Kennedy’s book on Ulrichs and to Chris Swart for editing my text.
² Kertbeny’s unfinished autobiographical notes can be found in the Manuscripts Archive of the National Széchenyi Library: No. OctGerm 302. The last notes dated from 1856 thus I assumed that these were written at about 1856.

³ Sándor Petőfi and János Arany, poets, and Mór Jókai, writer, were leading Hungarian literary figures in the 19th century.

⁴ The only thing that is clear about Kertbeny’s medical studies is that he started them. Márta Detrich, author of the most detailed Kertbeny biography, mentions only the following: “he enrolls to the medical faculty and he tries to make up for the missing previous studies as an autodidact” (Detrich, 1936:12).

After leaving the Hungarian kingdom Kertbeny criss-crossed Italy, then he fled to Switzerland from where in 1847 "by pawning his coat" he travelled to Paris: "he arrived on the 1st of February 6 o'clock in the morning in evening dress with neither money nor acquaintances". In Paris he met Heinrich Heine – to whom Kertbeny dedicated his first Petöfi-translation in 1849 –, Jozef Bem, Bakunin, George Sand, Alfred Musset and other celebrities: "From this time on Kertbeny decided to devote himself to the representation of Hungarian literature as a life aim. – But until now his name was still his family's name: Benkert. However, if he wanted to represent a Hungarian case, he needed a Hungarian name, too. Therefore he wrote home for a name change. The registration took place on the 23rd of September 1847 numbered 6613 and the permission arrived from the royal government on the 22nd of February 1848 numbered 8812" (Kertbeny, ca 1856:121).

In 1847 he sailed from Paris to London where he worked in the British Museum "in order to set the Hungarian books and manuscripts right". But by 1848 he was working in Berlin as a journalist. Here he got acquainted with "Alexander Humboldt, the two famous Grimm brothers and Goethe's lover, Bettina Arnim". Then he spent some time in several German cities and in the meanwhile he was busy with translating Hungarian folk songs, and the works of Petöfi and Arany into German (Kertbeny, ca 1856:122-23). In 1850 he was in Leipzig from where the police wanted to expel him because of his missing passport. He found a hiding place in the botanic garden, provided to him by the main gardener. He stayed here for ten months and in the meanwhile – as he pointed out – "studied botanics scientifically" (Kertbeny, ca 1856:123). At the end of 1851 he gave himself up to the Austrian authorities and he was imprisoned in Vienna for two weeks. "Finally the military tribunal cleared him but it was forbidden for him to leave Vienna and work as a journalist. He lived in misery" (Kertbeny, ca 1856:124).

However, according to the warrant published in the 1851 police reports of Koburg Kertbeny was wanted for more than just his missing passport: "He is said to be an excessive democrat (supporter of the people's government) who unites eloquence and acting with extraordinary talent, and is susceptible to intrigue and liable to commit vicious acts. In August, 1850 after a longer stay he left from here without paying his debt in the tavern. At about the end of November, 1850 he appeared in Leipzig, and succeeded in getting temporary papers from the Consulate of the Austrian Empire, valid for 4 weeks. When the Leipzig Police did not want to put up with him having no legal passport any longer, he disappeared by leaving behind his temporary papers and a debt of 60 tallers on the 16th of January 1851" (cf. Deák 1998a: 349).

This warrant was not mentioned in Kertbeny's autobiographical notes, nor did he mention that he offered his services to the Police Ministry in Vienna in 1854. According to the findings of Hungarian historian, Ágnes Deák, Kertbeny considered doing this because of his subsistence problems but was not actually very serious about it. With the financial support of the Austrian secret police he wanted to start a journal in Germany providing economic and political news as well as covering science and art of Hungary. In theory this job could have enabled Kertbeny to "obtain the confidence of the Hungarian national, intellectual and social élite which confronted the government, primarily the conservative aristocracy, which was committed to a strategy of passive opposition" (Deák 1998b:28).

According to Kertbeny: "besides providing a living, editing [the journal] would connect the agent with the leaders of all the national parties. This job would provide him with the attention and trust of patriots. And if a reliable, enduring, well-paying publishing house could be found, he could make himself independent ... and go on on his own..." (Kertbeny is quoted by Deák 1998a:348). This plan did not seem to be very promising for Protmann police commissioner of Pest and Buda either, who soon broke all contacts with Kertbeny. But for Kertbeny, as Deák points out, "the business had its uses, it did produce 50 florins which was not bad for a few pages of daydreams and beating about the bush" (Deák 1998b:33).¹ The seriousness of his spying attempt can also be questioned by the fact that a few years before his flirtation with the Austrian secret police, Kertbeny together with Mór Eisler, "using the pseudonyms Vasfi and Benkő, published *Hangok a múltból* (Voices from the Past), an anthology of Hungarian revolutionary verse, a favourite in the early 1850s, kept well concealed in most households." (Deák 1998b:29). In 1852 Kertbeny was active in Hungary: among other things he collected material about gypsy music for Franz Liszt and started to edit a festal album of the cathedral under construction in Esztergom (cf. Detrich 1936). In a letter of 1855 to his mother Kertbeny mentioned his plan to marry the rich widow, Baroness Matusiczky.² The marriage could not be realized partly because Kertbeny was thrown into debtors' prison: he did not finish the Esztergom album, yet he was unable to pay back the advance payment he had received for the work.

From the 1st of February 1856 he was again in Vienna working as a "journalist and correspondent of several journals and a critic in the *Burgtheatre* ... but his most influential activity of this year was to demand publicly the elimination of passports in the newspapers" (Kertbeny, ca 1856:125). Considering that he had a lot of trouble in connection with his passport, or more precisely, the lack of one, it was an important issue for Kertbeny. In his writings he tended to elaborate on topics which concerned him in a disadvantageous way. For example, he wrote about the elimination of the debtors' prison, too – without too much effect as he had to renew his acquaintances with this institution again in 1858 in Vienna, and later in 1864 in Brussels, too (cf. Detrich, 1936: 24).

Kertbeny stayed in Vienna until 1859, from where he fled to Munich at the outbreak of the Italian-Austrian war in order to avoid military service. He was banished from Munich because of his false passport. From there he arrived in Switzerland. Between 1860 and 1862 he stayed in Geneva where he met Hans Christian Andersen who allegedly asked for Kertbeny's advice in connection with a Danish Petőfi translation. After attacking the major of Geneva in his publications, he had to leave for Paris at the end of 1862. From Paris he travelled to Brussels during the summer of 1863 because of his eye disease: according to his doctors he needed a change of air (cf. Detrich 1936: 26-8).

Kertbeny considered his three and half year stay in Brussels to be one of the worst moves in his life. The members of the Hungarian emigration suspected him of being an Austrian spy, so he had to fight a lot of duels and write a lot of letters in order to clear himself. Like this one from 1864 to Baron Jósika: "True, the Austrians have often enough made me brilliant offers ... but I preferred to end up in a debtor's prison, or to starve in

¹ According to Ágnes Deák: "Kertbeny's record as an informer must have been pretty thin. Only two of his reports survived." (Deák 1998b:32)

² The letter of 1855 February 9 is referred to by Detrich (1936: 24).

the company of my old mother and kin and sooner got deeper into debt... it is the clearest witness and counterevidence against all those common and stupid accusations which, furthermore, are never expressed openly, but only whispered .." (Kertbeny is quoted by Deák 1998b:32).

He left Brussels at the beginning of 1866: via Düsseldorf and other German cities he arrived at Cologne, where instead of accepting the job offered to him by the Kölner Telegraph, he lived as a sales agent. After Düsseldorf he also lived in Hannover for a while, where among other things he wrote wine advertisements. In the summer of 1868 he arrived at Berlin where he stayed for eight years (cf. Detrich: 1936: 28-32). In Berlin he devoted himself mainly to literary work – primarily the translation of Jókai's novels into German – and became the correspondent of the Hungarian literary journal entitled "Hon" [Home] (cf. Szinnyi 1899). In 1869 he was elected president of the Hungarian Club of Berlin. During his stay in Berlin he often suffered from illnesses: in 1870 he got an apoplectic fit as a consequence of which his left side became totally paralyzed, thus he was temporarily unable to write – this is why there is a gap of one year [1870] in his diaries (Detrich, 1936:33).

Finally, with the help of a grant from the Hungarian government on the 15th of August 1875, at the age of 51, the old, ill writer could return to Hungary. He was provided with an apartment in the Rudas bath house by the city of Budapest in order to contribute to his recovery. Kertbeny died on the 23rd of January in 1882: he did not have any relatives so he was buried at the expense of the writers' mutual society. (cf. Szinnyi, 1899:136).

This could be called the official version of Kertbeny's life: the version that Kertbeny himself would probably have wanted to leave for posterity – apart from the police spy episodes –, and as it is accepted officially by Hungarian literary criticism. However, there is a part of Kertbeny's works that is even less well known than his literary activities – if not almost totally unknown – in Hungary.

Until the second half of the 1980s it could only be assumed that Kertbeny was the author of the anonymous pamphlets entitled "§ 143 of the Prussian penal code of 14 April 1851 and its retention as § 152 in the draft of a penal code for the North German Confederation"¹ and "The general harmfulness of § 143 of the Prussian penal code of 14 April 1851 and its necessary cancellation as § 152 in the draft of a penal code for the North German Confederation"² – calling for legal emancipation of homosexuals (cf. Kertbeny 2000). The word homosexuality – "Homosexualität" – was first openly used in the first pamphlet. The author created the since then widely used hybrid term from the Greek *homo* and the Latin *sexus* and used it already in 1868 in a private letter, the sketch of which can be found in the Hungarian National Library. Thanks to the extensive research of Manfred Herzer it is now clearly proven that the author of these pamphlets and the coiner of the word was Kertbeny (cf. Herzer 1986, Féray-Herzer 1990).

Kertbeny coined not only "Homosexualität", but also the words monosexual, heterosexual and "Heterogen". The first three terms were probably inspired by

¹ §143 des Preussischen Strafgesetzbuches vom 14. April 1851 und seine Aufrechterhaltung als §152 im Entwurfe eines Strafgesetzbuches für den Norddeutschen Bund

² Das Gemeinschädliche des §143 des preussischen Strafgesetzbuches vom 14. April 1851 und daher seine nothwendige Tilgung als §152 im Entwurfe eines Strafgesetzbuches für den Norddeutschen Bund

"bisexual", the botanical term used since the beginning of the 19th century.¹ The fourth new term, "Heterogen" referred to sexual practices with other genus or genera, for example, animals.

According to Kertbeny monosexuality, i.e. masturbation, can be divided into "Onania" and artificial onanism. Homosexuality had four subtypes: platonism, i.e. love of older men directed towards younger boys, without any sexual practice and dirty thoughts; mutual onanism, i.e. mutual masturbation; tribadism, i.e. the female version of homosexuality; and the active or passive forms of "Pygismus", i.e. anal intercourse between consenting men. The "Heterogen" became the subject of activities previously referred to also as "Sodomia", while the person involved in "Fornikation", i.e. fornication was called heterosexual (cf. Kertbeny ca.1868/a:422).

Among the main sexual types which were classified according to the different kinds of "fulfilment of sexual drives": "monosexuality", "homosexuality" and "normal sexuality", i.e. heterosexuality, the latter one seemed to be the most dangerous form because of its "unfettered capacity for degeneracy":

"Both [heterosexual men and women] are driven by their nature to opposite-sex intercourse in so-called natural as well as unnatural coitus. They are also capable of actively or passively giving themselves over to same-sex excesses.

Additionally, normally-sexed individuals are no less likely to engage in self-defilement if there is insufficient opportunity to satisfy one's sex drive. And they are equally likely to assault male but especially female minors who have not reached maturity; to indulge in incest; to engage in bestiality and the misuse of animals; and even to behave depravedly with corpses if their moral self-control does not control their lust." (Kertbeny is quoted in Féray-Herzer 1990: 34-36.).

It is possible that this original meaning of heterosexuality was reflected in the word's first English language appearance in 1892 in an American medical journal (or it was simply misinterpreted). The author, James G. Kiernan referred to heterosexuality as one of the "abnormal manifestations of the sexual appetite" and listed it under the title of sexual perversions (cf. Katz 1995: 19-20.). However, the term as a reference to "normal sexuality" started its long career already in 1886 in the *Psychopatia Sexualis*, the medical-forensic study of sexual abnormalities, written by the Austrian psychiatrist, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (cf. 1926).

Before Kertbeny's invention of the "homosexual", the German jurist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, one of the forerunners of modern gay activism, tried to popularise his own coinage – inspired by Plato's Symposium –: the "Urning". According to Ulrichs' theory innate impulses driving men to love other men are associated with a certain kind of femininity of the soul,² thus men loving other men must belong to a transitional third sex or gender: "We make up a third sex. ... We are women in spirit." (cf. Kennedy 1988: 50). Ulrichs' starting point was therefore innateness when striving for the emancipation of people with same-sex desire.

It is important to note that for Kertbeny – who was in correspondence and was exchanging ideas with Ulrichs for years (certainly between 1864 and 1868) – the main issue was not whether same-sex attraction be innate or not, but that people ought to have

¹ Note that during 1850 Kertbeny was hiding for a few months in the botanical garden in Leipzig, where according to his autobiographical notes he "studied botanics scientifically" (Kertbeny ca.1856).

² "anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa" – a woman's soul confined by a man's body (Kennedy 1988:117)

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the right to be left alone by the state in their intimate lives. The word homosexuality was introduced in the course of the struggle for homosexuals' rights in a surprisingly modern human rights argumentation. Kertbeny did not seek biological arguments to use for the liberation of homosexuals, – i.e. a relatively small social group with limited power to further their own interests – instead, he made the point that the modern state should extend the principle of not intervening in the private lives of citizens to cover homosexuals, too:

To prove the innate nature [of homosexuality] is not at all useful, especially not quickly, what's more it cuts both ways, let it be a very interesting riddle of nature from the anthropological point of view. The legislation does not examine whether this inclination is innate or not, it merely focuses on the personal and social dangers of it, on its relation to society. There are, for example, people who are bloodthirsty, pyromaniac, monomaniacal etc. from birth, but they are not allowed to act out their inclinations, even if these are medically proven ones [...], they are still isolated, and in this way their extremes are isolated from society. Thus we wouldn't win anything by proving innateness. Rather we should convince our opponents that exactly according to their legal notions they do not have anything to do with this inclination, let it be innate or voluntary, because the state does not have the right to intervene in what is happening between two consenting people aged over 14, excluding publicity, not hurting the rights of any third party [...] (Kertbeny ca.1868/b:227; letter sketch from May 6, 1868 written by Kertbeny to – most probably –Ulrichs)

From the rival terms of the late 19th century denoting various forms of same-sex desire and experience, which are still popping up alternately in the early 20th century editions of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopatia Sexualis*, including Karl Westphal's "contrary sexual feeling", finally the homosexual became the most widely accepted – and later rejected – one. Probably the increasing popularity of the homosexual word in medical, especially psychiatric circles led to the fact that its original context – opposing paternalistic state intervention into people's private life – became overshadowed and seen as a means of medical control.

The sexual neology of the 19th century, part of what Foucault calls a "discursive ferment" concerning sex (cf. 1978:18), cannot be simply equated with the creation of new words. Instead it was increasingly recognised that there is a "new class of deviants" (Gilbert 1981:61) emerging in society: the group of men choosing their sexual partners from other men. Thus in a broader sense this new need for naming previously unnamed sexual forms also reflected a more general change: isolated sexual acts previously categorised mainly on the basis of their social functionality started to have a chance to become elements of lifestyle-creating sexual relationships.

II. Kertbeny's hidden life

Considering the secretly cultivated homosexual activities, a question can be posed about Kertbeny which was posed by himself, too: "How did I, a normally sexed individual, ever stumble onto the existence of homosexuality and its slaves, who, up to that point, I had no idea were present in human society?" (Féray – Herzer 1990:26). Kertbeny himself gave a story¹ that through a blackmailed friend he got into touch with

¹ The full story can be found in Kertbeny 2000:262-263.

the (homosexual) "sect" and he also referred to his "instinctive drive to take issue with every injustice" (Féray – Herzer 1990:27).

However, more detailed investigation of Kertbeny's diaries can provide us with evidence which places the above explanation in another light. The following section of my paper is devoted to hitherto overlooked notes of Kertbeny's diaries, revealing at least some parts of his hidden life.

A quite detailed picture of Kertbeny's life can be based on his autobiographical notes and diaries – besides the biographies given by Szinnyei and Detrich (cf. Szinnyei, 1899; Detrich, 1936). The unfinished autobiographical notes¹ I studied – and quoted extensively in the first part of my paper – were most probably written for public reasons: the author shows off by cramming the text full of references to famous, important people. The diaries,² on the other hand, were most probably written for private use: there are hardly any references here to famous personalities, nor Kertbeny's connections to them. In these diaries Kertbeny wrote short notes almost every day, about what time he got up; what the weather was like that day in the given city; how much money he had and to whom he owed money; what he had to leave at the pawnshop; whom he met; where he went; to whom he wrote letters and from whom he received or was waiting for letters; and at the end of the day the time he got home. From the period between 1864 and 1868 we can also find evidence of the regular correspondance between Kertbeny and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs.³

The first of the seventeen volumes, which can be found in the Manuscript Archives of the National Széchenyi Library, was written in Brussels, while the last one was written in Budapest in 1881. From the year 1870 there are no notes as he was unable to write in that year because of his illness. The first two volumes – from 1864 and 1865 – were written in Brussels, the third volume – from 1866 – was started in Brussels and finished in Cologne. The first three volumes are in German but include some Hungarian sentences. The fourth volume was written – in 1867 in German cities – almost completely in somewhat crooked Hungarian which also is the case in the subsequent 13 volumes. Therefore it seems that Kertbeny preferred to write his personal notes in Brussels in German, and after arriving at the German speaking places he preferred to change the language of his diaries into Hungarian.

This differential language use in his diaries could serve the purpose of secrecy. For example, the Hungarian sentences wedged into the German texts of the first three volume are mainly references to some unpleasant topics: "I have not a penny!"⁴; "call from the Ministry of Justice: come tomorrow!! What will that be again? Perhaps this is the end of everything!"⁵; "rudeness from the landlady, who gave notice to quit the

¹ Cf. Kertbeny ca. 1856 – Manuscripts Archive of the National Széchenyi Library: OctGerm 302

² Cf. Kertbeny 1864-1881. Volume I.-XVII. – Manuscripts Archive of the National Széchenyi Library: DuodH55/1-17.

³ For example, in the diary of 1864 the pseudonym of Ulrichs, "Numa Numantis" can be seen on the pages of June 21 as well as 22; in other places there is only "N.N." (1864 July) or "Numa" (1866 in August once, in September twice, in November four times); on 1865 September 19 there is mention of "Ulrichs"; finally I found the last reference to Ulrichs – "Numának arcképekkel" – on the page of October 21, 1868.

⁴ "Fillérem sincs!" (1864 February 4)

⁵ "az igazságministeriumtól felszólítás holnap átjönni!! Mi lesz az megint? Tán most vége mindennek!" (1864 March 22)

apartment";¹ "watch to the pawnshop for 40 fr";² "coat and tails to the pawnshop for 18 fr";³ "without a penny";⁴ "four policemen who stared at me ... I don't know what kind of presentiment dominates me in connection to something horrible".⁵

At the same time from the very beginning we find another topic popping up in the diaries which is about the private, intimate life of Kertbeny, including references to his acquaintances with other men. As these types of notes are very frequent in the period when Kertbeny was 40 to 45 years of age, before his serious illness in 1870, I primarily investigated the diaries before 1870. In connection with this topic – especially from 1865 to 1868 – subsequent patches of self-censoring crossing and blotting out became very frequent, under some of which the original words can still be made out.

Kertbeny's references to other men are noteworthy not only because of the amount of blotting out associated with them, but also because they are relatively common, while references to women are very rare. The first of these kind of Hungarian notes can be found in the volume of 1864: "2fr. handsome guy";⁶ "beautiful lad";⁷ or "Hubert, some beautiful boy".⁸

At the beginning of 1865 he mentions a man called Hubert several times.⁹ For example: "Hubert is not here for three days now";¹⁰ or "Hubert didn't come again!".¹¹ There are other references without names, too: "Beautiful boy, but not...";¹² "with that boy that thing is true";¹³ "I had a look at that beautiful boy".¹⁴ At the end of the year he complains about gonorrhoea: "then horror! The clap again!".¹⁵

In 1866 still in Brussels he refers to a "beautiful Berliner", but the end of the sentence is rendered illegible by crossing out (January 30). In February when Kertbeny is already in German-speaking area, first in Düsseldorf, then in Cologne, the crossed out parts become relatively frequent but there are some readable notes, too: "young barber lad";¹⁶ "beautiful barber";¹⁷ "*very much in love with the lad*"¹⁸ (crossed out) – and above it visibly: "I have done it";¹⁹ "the barber would go but I didn't want it";²⁰ Then he continues: "That clap completely obviously";²¹ "Still that clap.";²² "At the hairdresser's

¹ "gorombaságok a háziasszonytól, ki lakást felmondta" (1864 April 29)

² "órámát zálogba 40 fr" (1864 September 17)

³ "kabátom és frakkom zálogba 18 fr ért" (1864 November 22)

⁴ "krajczár nélkül!" (1865 szeptember 3)

⁵ "Nem tudom miféle sejtelem uralkodik bennem valami szörny véget!" (1865 szeptember 10)

⁶ "2fr. Szépfü" (May 15)

⁷ "gyönyörű legény" (July 16.)

⁸ "Hubert, valami szép fiú" (December 3)

⁹ On the 20th and 22nd of February and on the 3rd, 4th and 10th of March.

¹⁰ "Hubert már három napja nincs itt" (February 20)

¹¹ "Hubert megint nem jött!" (March 3)

¹² "Szép fiú, de be nem..." (crossed out note from April 29, Hotel Royal Brussels)

¹³ "azzal a fiúval igaz a dolog" (crossed out note from May 11)

¹⁴ "megnéztem azt a szép fiút" (August 21)

¹⁵ "aztán szörnyűség! Megint egy kankót!" (November 1)

¹⁶ "ifjú borbélylegény" (February 19 and 20)

¹⁷ "szép borbély" (February 21; crossed: February 24)

¹⁸ "szörnyű szerelmes a legénybe"

¹⁹ "Magam tettem." (February 25)

²⁰ "a borbély menne, de nem akarom" (April 2)

²¹ "Az a kankó egészen nyilvánosan." (April 3)

²² "Az a kankó mindég." (April 4)

the boy seduced! What will come of it?";¹ "Lajos came, we did it. 1 taller";² "Lajos did not come".³

From the end of August the crossed out parts are becoming increasingly frequent and – from this time on until the end of the year – almost every day there is reference to a certain János and later to a man called Jancsi (possibly the nickname of the same János): "János is not in a good mood";⁴ "János is here but it doesn't work";⁵ "János showed his ...";⁶ "János did it for me".⁷ From the middle of October the name Jancsi is not rendered illegible in a lot of places which are otherwise crossed out: "Jancsi *did it for me*";⁸ "Jancsi did not come, what is the matter? *What will come of it?* He came only at around 10".⁹ During November and December there is mention of Jancsi almost every day: "Jancsi *played for me*. Great fear that my neighbour, a lieutenant, noticed my morning games";¹⁰ "Jancsi *did it for me*";¹¹ "Jancsi [*unreadable crossing out*] It is a very dangerous situation, because you can hear everything from one room to the other."¹² In the first half of 1867 in Cologne Kertbeny refers to several problems in his diaries. In January he keeps mentioning Jancsi's clap almost every day: "[*crossing out*] horror, yes [*crossing out*] the poor boy is ill. What will be the end of it?"¹³

However, at the beginning of February another thing starts to worry him a lot: "Awful news! Numa was caught and was forced to do everything. What will come of it? Great fear!";¹⁴ "Awful days! [...] Horrible nightmares. I have burnt all the dangerous letters";¹⁵ "Awful days! Impossible that it wouldn't turn out!"¹⁶ – It seems that Kertbeny was very much afraid that in connection to Ulrichs' arrest something would turn out that could affect him, too. From this time on for several months almost every day he mentions how much he is afraid and the unreadable crossed out parts are becoming more and more frequent in his diary.

On the 16th of April he complains in the following way: „[*unreadable*] is lost, and has spoken of me in a bad way! My god, what will come of it? I am devastated” (16 April).¹⁷ The missing name in this note is most probably Ulrichs' as he was arrested the second time in 1867 at around the date of this note. Kertbeny mentions in his diary that Ulrichs was released on the 13th of July after "almost eighty-six days" (cf. Kennedy 1988:99) which makes the 18th of April an estimate for Ulrichs' arrest, though as we will

¹ "A fodrásznál a fiút elcsáb! Mi lesz belőle?" (crossed out, May 17)

² "Lajos jött, tettük. 1 tallér" (June 13)

³ "Lajos nem jött." (June 16)

⁴ "János nem jó kedvében" (crossed out, August 22)

⁵ "János itt, de nem megy" (crossed out, August 25)

⁶ "János f...t megmutatta" (crossed out, August 28)

⁷ "János nekem tette" (crossed out September 17)

⁸ "Jancsi *nekem tette*" (October 20) [I indicate the crossed out parts by writing them in italics.]

⁹ "Jancsi nem jött, hát mi a baj? *Mi lesz abból?* Csak 10 felé jött." (October 29)

¹⁰ "Jancsi *nekem játszott* Igen nagy félelem, hogy szomszédom, hadnagy észrevette reggeli játékaim" (November 1)

¹¹ "Jancsi *nekem tette*" (November 3)

¹² "Igen veszedelmes az állapot, mert egy szobából a másikba mindent lehet hallani" (November 7)

¹³ [...] szörnyűség, igen [...] beteg, szegény fiú. Mi lesz a vége? (January 14)

¹⁴ "Szörnyű újság! Numát befogták és mindenre vették. Mi lesz abból! Nagy félelem!" (February 4)

¹⁵ "Szörnyű napok! [...] Szörnyű rémképek. Elégettem mind a veszedelmes levelek" (February 5)

¹⁶ "Szörnyű napok! Lehetetlen, hogy ki ne stülne!" (February 6)

¹⁷ "[...] elveszett és rólam rosszul beszélt! Én istenem, mi lesz abból. Oda vagyok."

see at the beginning of 1868, Kertbeny gives the 23rd of April as the date of Ulrichs' arrest.

April 1867 was also the time when Ulrichs' house in Burgdorf was searched by the police and certain interesting material was found there, including "everything relating to 'Uranismus', ... all his correspondence, and a list of Urnings (which included 150 names in Berlin) ... [which] were sent to the Ministry of the Exterior in Berlin" (Kennedy 1988:99-100). At the end of April Kertbeny refers to Ulrichs' arrest: "Numa is caught again. Now I am devastated." (27 April).¹ Three days later there is again a nervous reference most probably to Ulrichs and the result of searching his house: "This mad man brings on me the most horrible danger. All the papers are found." (30 April).²

The 1868 volume of Kertbeny's diaries starts with a short review³ of what were probably the most important events of the previous year. Here we can find the following notes: "February 4. - Numa is caught again; [February] 5. - I burnt my writings; [April] 18. - I saw [*Jancsi*] Groonen last time; [April] 23 - Numa is arrested again. I wrote to Numa!; [April] 27. - Beginning of the horrible days until the 28th of May; May 1. - Most horrible bad time and fear."⁴

On the 1st of May, 1867 Kertbeny describes his situation in a very negative way: "This is probably the most horrible May in my whole life - losing the home country, Mother, good reputation, my life, the fruits of twenty years of work. And as an innocent one, only because of this bad crazy one! Awful, awful!"⁵ Here it should be noted that "losing [...] Mother" does not mean the mother's death, but it can refer to her illness. Kertbeny's mother died in a year time: on the 7th of May, 1868. According to Kertbeny's notes it was the "most tragic day in my life! This morning my mother died in Vienna in her 68th year."⁶

Later in May, 1867 he is expecting a letter from Vienna that doesn't want to arrive, and in the meanwhile he keeps worrying: "Awful days! [...] Are they already keeping back my mail? Awful!"; "Horrible days!"; "Nightmarish days".⁷ Finally on the 25th he seems to be a bit more relaxed: "Maybe today it will turn out. It turned out! Not! At noon the answer came. It seems that from this great suffering good luck will come out. The writer of the letters is Steinmann, the Prussian royal police chief. Out to him to Hannover. I am going there."⁸

Unfortunately, it is not really clear from Kertbeny's notes what exactly worried him so much in connection to Ulrichs' arrests and the confiscated "Uranismus- and

¹ "Numát újra befogták! Most oda vagyok!"

² "Ez a veszett ember a legszörnyebb veszedelembé hoz. Mind a papírosok megtalálták."

³ "Az 1867ik évnék kronikája"

⁴ "Febr.4. Numát újra befogták; [Február]5. Elégettem írásaim; [Április] 18. Groonen [*Jancsi*] utolsó láttam; [Április] 23. Numa újra fogság. Numának írtam!; [Április] 27. A szörnynapok kezdete, egész 28ik májusnak; május 1. Legsörnyebb rossz idő és félelem"

⁵ "Ez nekem tán a legszörnyebb május lesz egész életemben, elvesztvén a hazát, az anyát, a jó hírt, az életem[e]t, és husz évi fáradságnak gyümölcsei[t]. És mint az ártatlan, csak ezen rossz bolond miatt! Szörnyű, szörnyű!"

⁶ "Életemnek legszomorúbb napja! Ma reggel meghalt édesanyám Bécsben 68. évében." (May 7, 1868)

⁷ "Borzasztó napok!" [...] Tán visszatartják leveletem már? Borzasztó!" (May 19); "Rettenőt napok!" (May 21); "Rémnapok" (May 22).

⁸ "Tán ma kistüni fog. Ki is sült! Nem! Délben a felelet jött. Úgy látszik végre jó szerencse kistül az egész jajból. Steinmann por.k. főrendőrségi igazgató a leveleknek írója. Magához ki Hannoverbe. Oda megyek" (May 25).

Urning-files". It is not perfectly clear either why Kertbeny described the month between the end of April and the end of May, 1867 as a horrible, nightmare-like period: perhaps he was being blackmailed or simply afraid of having another case with the police. However, the above detailed notes with references to "dangerous letters", "found papers" and burning of his own writings can reveal Kertbeny's personal involvement in "the Urning matters".

Interestingly, in June, 1867 the diary with its usual style and topics reflects a much more relaxed state of Kertbeny's mind in comparison to the previous months: "Lajos. Showed it whole. Beautiful." (8 June);¹ "It doesn't go such ... We should take care!" (9 June);² "Lajko. Kissing." (15 June);³ "... but the lad didn't want it" (27 July);⁴ "Lajko. I played." (3 August);⁵ "Lajkó did not come!" (11 August);⁶ "Lajkó has the clap. What will come of it?" (17 August);⁷ "Lajkó. Beautiful." (7 September).⁸

It is only in the middle of September when Kertbeny seems to worry again: "... a police soldier was here. What will come of it? Maybe something worrisome!" (17 September)⁹ – but after this until December only the regular references to Lajkó go on. In December Kertbeny follows the lawsuit of Feldtmann, theater director in Bremen with attention. Feldtmann was already arrested in October "along with three nineteen-year-old men with whom he was alleged to have practiced 'sexual crimes against nature'" (Kennedy 1988:111). One of the three men tried to blackmail him, and finally denounced him to the police. Kertbeny's comments on the case were the following: "Today poor Feldtmann was sentenced, one year in prison, the impertinent bastard got four weeks, the other two could walk free" (20 December);¹⁰ "Today is the horrible day when poor Feldtmann is being sentenced in Bremen, at least for a year! Unless some other lousy trick won't come of it!" (21 December).¹¹

Finally here is his last note of the year (this is the full note that can well illustrate Kertbeny's diary writing style): "Sunny morning. I got up at 9. Troubled days again – fearful, what will come of this Bremen courtcase. Lajkó didn't come again! The tailor Heller sent trousers and leibli. 11 ½ I took a coach to the Roman bath. I was well scrubbed. To hairdresser and barber. At 1 in the Rhéna yard. In the Borsenklub there is nothing yet from Bremen. Home. At 7 to the theatre, Rulf as Robert. I didn't really like it ... [unreadable]" (22 December).¹²

¹ "Lajos. Egészben megmutatta. Gyönyörű."

² "Nem megy oly f...! Vigyázni kell"

³ "Lajko. Csokolás."

⁴ "... de legény nem akart"

⁵ "Lajko. Játszottam."

⁶ "Lajkó nem jött!"

⁷ "Lajkó igen kankós. Mi lesz abból?"

⁸ "Lajkó. Gyönyörű."

⁹ "...egy rendőrségi katona itt volt. Mi lesz abból? Tán félni való!"

¹⁰ "Ma elítélték szegény Feldmann[t], 1 év börtön, a pimasz fat[t]yut 4 hétre, a másik kettő szabadon kimentek."

¹¹ "Ma a szörnyű nap, hogy elítélnék szegény Feldmann[t] Bremenben, legalább egy évre! Ha csak más disznóság nem lesz belőle!"

¹² "Napfényes reggel. Kelttem 9kor. Megint bajos napok, félelmetteljes, mi fog a bremai perből kiszülni. Lajkó megint nem jött! A szabó Heller nadrágot és leiblit küldött. 11 1/2 a római fürdőbe kocsiztam. Jó lekeféltek. Fodrász és borbélyhez. 1kor rhénai udvarban. A Borsenklubban még semmi Brémenből. Haza. 7kor színházba, Rulf mint Robert. Nem igen tetszett [...]"

According to the notes of 1868, Kertbeny frequently exchanged letters with "N.N." – i.e. Ulrichs –, to whom his last letter was sent on the 21st of October. After this, the correspondence seems to be broken off. The last reference to "N.N." can be found among Kertbeny's 1869 notes in connection with the Zastrow case, most probably – i.e. the case of Carl Ernst Wilhelm von Zastrow, painter and former militia lieutenant who was arrested and charged with unnatural rape and attempted murder of a five-year-old boy on the 17th of January, 1869 in Berlin (cf. Kennedy 1988:136-7). However, Kertbeny's notes reflect a somewhat distorted crime story: "I read the horror that was committed on Saturday. The father with his own nine-year-old son."¹ (19 January); "It is a month ago now that that awful crime was committed with his own son"² (17 February). A few days later Kertbeny again announces in his diary that "I burn the papers"³ (23 January). Finally, at the beginning of February he refers to Ulrichs: "In the paper N.N. is finally brought into this scandal." (6 February).

During 1868 Kertbeny is in frequent correspondence with Hermann Serbe, a publisher in Leipzig with whom Kertbeny wanted to publish his "Sexualitätsstudien", i.e. studies on sexuality. This book has never been published and was probably not even finished. Though Kertbeny's later notes indicate that he was at least entertaining himself with the idea of this work for years: "I was writing the Monosexuality and Homosexuality I."⁴ (8 May 1871); "I started to write for the sexual studies"⁵ (15 January 1874). It can be also known from a letter of Serbe written to Kertbeny on the 5th of July 1868 that Serbe waited in vain for the following parts, after receiving a certain "historical introduction" (cf. Féray – Herzer 1990:29). It is possible that Kertbeny should have been more motivated financially by Serbe: on the 8th of July, 1868 Kertbeny writes the following angry note: "Nice letter from Serbe! He sends shit, not money! And someone peeped in through the window while L. was here!"⁶ Kertbeny also visited Serbe in Leipzig on the 4-5th of August, 1868 but he left with disappointment: "With this impertinent guy nothing can be done!"⁷ (5 August).

In 1868 Kertbeny also mentions several times a certain "GJ", most probably the abbreviation of the name of Gustav Jäger, professor of zoology from Stuttgart: "the pamphlet from GJ" (1 April 1868); "... said something about the pamphlet I wrote for GJ" (7 April); "letter from GJ, very boring commission" (11 April); "No money, no prospect, and this fatal task from GJ" (12 April).⁸ – Unfortunately, it does turn out from the notes what this pamphlet was or what "fatal task" he was commissioned to do by GJ. Later, between 1879 and 1882 there was intensive correspondence between Kertbeny and Jäger in connection with the publication of Kertbeny's sexual studies manuscript, which was in parts inserted into Jäger's book, the "Discovery of the Soul". According to a letter of Jäger written to Kertbeny on the 28th of August, 1879 the chapter on homosexuality had to be left out from the book because of the publisher's rejection. Still, the "Discovery of

¹ "Olvastam a szörnyűt a mit elkövettek szombaton. Kilencéves fiával a saját apja."

² "Ma egy hónap, hogy az a szörnyű bűn szegény fiával cselekedett"

³ "Elégetem papirosokat."

⁴ "Írtam Monosexualismust és Homosexualismust I"

⁵ "Kezdettem s sexualstudiomok végett írni"

⁶ "Szép levél Serbetől! Szart küldi, nem pénzt! És az ablakba valaki bekukka[n]t, mikor L. itt volt!"

⁷ "Ez utolsó pimasszal semmit sem lehet tenni."

⁸ "GJtől a röpirat"; ... "valamit mondott a röpirat iránt, mit G.J.-nek írtam"; "levél G.J.-től, igen unalmas komisszió"; "Nincs pénz, nincs kilátás, és ez a fatális feladat G.J.-től!"

the Soul" includes several parts of Kertbeny's manuscript as "expert opinion of a mysterious Dr.M." (cf. Féray – Herzer 1990:37-8).

In the meanwhile the notes are full of male names. Until the end of July 1868 almost every day there is reference to "L.". Between the beginning of August – when Kertbeny moves to Berlin – and October, "L." is temporarily replaced by a certain "Pali" or "Palkó" (Paul) but afterwards the notes with "Lajkó" are back.¹ At the same time there are also references to other men, for example: "having lunch at the garden of Zenning where the waiter is beautiful but the food is bad"; "to Zenning, to watch the beautiful boy"; "on foot to the swimming pool. There a beautiful English(man)".²

On the basis of Kertbeny's private notes it can be assumed that there is a certain level of practical involvement in the background of his theoretical interest in homosexuality. His interest in men seemed to exceed platonic attraction in the line of close bodily contact. Many of the notes written about men were tried to be rendered illegible: this self-censorship can also indicate that Kertbeny did not want to leave any trace which could expose his close interest in men publicly, but especially not in front of the police. This intention of Kertbeny is understandable in view of the increasing hostility of his social environment: the unification of the German empire in 1871 also meant the introduction of a stricter legal punishment of sexual relationships between men.

In the second half of the 1860s there was regular correspondence between Kertbeny and Karl Henrich Ulrichs, who became famous – and infamous – for his public struggle for the rights of men who love men. When Ulrichs is arrested, Kertbeny becomes very worried: during these "days of horror" he acts like someone who is afraid of exposure. In a letter sketch of 6 May 1868 – from which I have already quoted the part on human rights argumentation – Kertbeny writes most probably to Ulrichs the following: "Only because of being personally threatened I became obliged to occupy myself with elementary legal studies as well"³ (Kertbeny ca.1868/b:228).

It should also be noted that Kertbeny in his non-literary publications often stood up for issues that concerned him personally. For example, he proposed the abolition of passports as well as that of the debtor's prisons as he kept having problems with authorities of many countries because of his debt-management and – the lack of – his passport (cf. Kertbeny ca 1856:125; Detrich 1936). Thus we can also assume that in these cases personal involvement made his "instinctive drive to take issue with every injustice" even stronger and more active.

Probably we can fit his writings on homosexuality also into this line though he has never published anything in connection with "sexual studies" under his own name. He tried to avoid leaving any public traces about his authorship⁴ – a strikingly "modest" attitude of a person who tended to overvalue his own talents, roles and achievements in almost every aspect of his life. Therefore I must agree with Manfred Herzer who concluded about Kertbeny that "it appears unlikely that a sexually normal man would

¹ From the diary notes it cannot be ascertained whether "L." and "Lajkó" are references to one or more persons.

² "ebédelni Zenning kertjébe, hol szép pincér, de az étel rossz" (8 August 1868); "Zenninghez, a szép legényt nézni" (9 August); "gyalogosan az uszodába. Ott szép angol" (10 August).

³ "Csak személyes fenyegettség által lettem arra rákényszerítve, hogy még jogi alaptanulmányokkal is foglalkozzam. – Translated by Nóra Bessenyei.

⁴ There is only one known exception: Kertbeny's own bibliography from 1873 where the 340-page long *Sexual studies* is listed under the subtitle "Manuscripts to be published". (cf. Herzer 1986)

write such an unconditional defense of homosexuality at that time, and the assertion of his own sexual normality without giving up the protection of anonymity speaks rather for its personal relevance to him than for a purely disinterested love of justice." (Herzer 1986:12). However, I can also agree with Kertbeny who defined himself as sexually normal – by adding that this concept of normality must have included not only the love of justice but also the love of men

III. Conclusion

Kertbeny was born in Vienna, his mother tongue was German, but he declared himself Hungarian: "I was born in Vienna, yet I am not a Viennese, but rightfully Hungarian", he wrote in a letter in 1880 (cf. Kertbeny 1880). In another letter of 1875 he calls himself a Hungarian writer: "I feel entitled to call myself a Hungarian writer since my whole activity was purely along the Hungarian line ... the aim of my whole life has been to make the Hungarian nation known" (Kertbeny is quoted by Deák, 1998b:30).

Kertbeny clearly had great literary ambitions, but in anonymously published political pamphlets he broke a lance for the rights of homosexuals and constructed a whole theoretical system around the case for homosexual emancipation. He determined himself on several occasions – perhaps overly so – as a „normalsexual“, i.e. heterosexual. However, according to his personal diaries he was certainly not insensitive to male beauty. The tracks he left are difficult to trace, since – in the words of Hungarian writer, Ferenc Móra – "With him *Wahrheit und Dichtung* [reality and fiction] are very much mixed up: he is often mistaken when talking about others but he is least reliable when referring to himself" (Móra 1936: 88-89.).

According to Hungarian literary critic Lajos Hatvany, Kertbeny did not only have a double name but also a double nature: „He was born effeminately sensitive, soft, believing, fair, open minded and enthusiastic for beauty. He loved to love, and loved to be loved. He loved only the beautiful and he wanted the love of the best. Mária! – An old, vain, swindling, naughty, clownish, thick skinned, envious, literary adventurer became of him: Károly, poor, Károly!" (Hatvany 1917).

Kertbeny's figure was distinguished by these dualisms. His adventures can be interpreted as multiple identity seeking attempts that he could not avoid because in the era of 19th century monolithic identities, due to the lack of social acceptance, he was not Hungarian enough, not literary enough, and probably not even "normalsexual" enough. Kertbeny wanted to be successful and create something lasting in literature. However, nowadays we can remember him primarily because of the novelties in sexual terminology he created: he was the one who coined the expressions *homosexual* and *heterosexual* in the late 1860s, as first uncovered by the German researcher, Manfred Herzer. Today, many perceive the word *homosexual* to be a medical term, mainly because of the fact that from the late 19th century until the 1970s this expression was monopolised by the medical approach interpreting same-sex attraction to be a pathology, degeneration or illness. Still, it is important to remember that Kertbeny introduced the word homosexual in the course of the struggle for homosexuals' rights in a surprisingly modern human rights argumentation. Kertbeny did not seek biological arguments to use for the liberation of homosexuals, – i.e. a relatively small social group with limited power to further their own interests – instead, he made the point that the modern state should extend the principle of not intervening in the private lives of citizens to cover homosexuals, too.

Looking back almost one and a half centuries we can state that the case made by Kertbeny helped a significant, modern social movement – the struggle against the discrimination of those who enjoy same-sex relationships – to emerge.

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