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Masons and the Nation:
Political Languages and Community Concepts in János Nagyváthy's
1790 Pamphlets and Rival Constitutional Programs Contesting the
Freemasonic Space of the Kingdom of Hungary

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Author's Declaration

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Vienna, 27 May 2025

Botond Rudolf Pap

Abstract

This thesis examines János Nagyváthy's political pamphlets as interventions in the constitutional debates preceding the Hungarian coronation diet of 1790. Written within the ritual, symbolic and ethical world of freemasonry, it is argued that Nagyváthy's political writings contested Péter Balogh's ancient constitutional political language and echoed Ferenc Széchenyi's argument that the serf-question lay at the heart of constitutional matters. Through juxtaposing a number of political languages, primarily the language of ancient constitution, and the language of enlightened government, Nagyváthy articulated a vision of community grounded in moral equality and the common good and thereby advocated for the inclusive interpretation of the object of politics. It is argued that short of advocating for a radical egalitarianism, he nonetheless positioned equality as an issue central to the constitution, and hence the political community.

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Introduction

Stating the Problem, Topic, Questions, Scope, and Hypothesis

The problem my research aims to address is as follows. During and after the reign of the Habsburg Joseph II, in the late 1780s and between 1790 and 1795, amidst the politically turbulent years of the French Revolution coinciding with the death of one of the most controversial rulers of the Habsburg realms, in the Kingdom of Hungary a hitherto unprecedented volume of political writings were published.¹ Among these pamphlets were four anonymous writings, published at the “Magnanimitas” freemasonic lodge of Pest in 1790, which according to a 1791 letter of Ferenc Kazinczy (1759-1831), a freemason, one of the most connected men of letters of the time and leading figure in the Hungarian language reformation movement, were penned by János Nagyváthy (1755-1819), a fellow mason and later publisher of many agro-economic volumes in Hungarian.² However, given that the existing scholarship on Nagyváthy’s writings was written largely in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a substantive analysis of the speech acts encapsulated in Nagyváthy’s pamphlets are so far lacking. Previously, Nagyváthy’s writing was treated summarily and without appreciating our unavoidably diachronic reading of past political writings situated in their own historical, linguistic and discursive contexts. This approach has resulted in at least two, not entirely unproblematic readings of the pamphlets, one of democratic egalitarianism on the one hand, and the social-networker petit-noble apologia on the other. On the earlier democratic egalitarian

¹ A general overview of Joseph’s censorship policies, publishing and journalism in the period: Kosáry Domokos, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon* [Culture of XVIII. century Hungary] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), 525–71; Géza Ballagi’s seminal work on the political literature of Hungary puts the number of pamphlets released in 1790-91 to 500. in Géza Ballagi, *A politikai irodalom Magyarországon 1825-ig* [The Political Literature in Hungary until 1825] (Budapest: Franklin-Tarsulat, 1888), 283.

² Vörös Károly, ‘Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész [Chapters from the life of János Nagyváthy, Part I.], *Agrártörténeti szemle* 3, no. 1 (1961): 10–32.

reading, Nagyváthy is considered alongside the Josephist József Hajnóczy and the democratic thinker Alajos Batthány, “although in theoretical value poorer”³, without substantial analysis of the contents of the pamphlets.⁴ On the later Marxist reading, Nagyváthy is seen as egalitarian in as much as his class-interests necessitate this, and he is presented as the upwardly networking petit-noble in search of patrons to his agroeconomic work, whose political pamphlets serve as the entry ticket to the circles of literati and patronage.⁵ What is however lacking from both analyses is the treatment, beyond its appreciation in name, of either the freemasonic context of Nagyváthy’s works, and in the absence of this, also the analysis of Nagyváthy’s writing in relation to the particular political debate he engaged with.⁶

This thesis then aspires to fill in this gap, by first analysing the political pamphlets against the cultural significance and symbolic language of freemasonry; and then situating them among the specific political debate they were contributing to through the analysis of the political languages and speech acts encapsulated in the pamphlets. Consequently, the main question of my research is how János Nagyváthy’s political pamphlets should be interpreted in relation to the

³ Ballagi, *A politikai irodalom Magyarországon 1825-ig*, 334.

⁴ This egalitarian reading is characteristic of the literature until 1945: Ballagi, 334–46; Concha Győző, *A kilencvenes évek reformeszméi és előzményeik [The Reform Thought of the Nineties and Their Precursors]* (Budapest: Attraktor, 2005), 30–31, 67–69, 73–76.

⁵ The pamphlets’ reading as an upwardly-networking petit-noble apologia is proposed by Vörös, and it rests on the assumption that the primary interest of Nagyváthy was agroeconomics, as this has come to dominate his life in the years after 1791. Vörös, ‘Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész’; Károly Vörös, ‘Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből II. Rész [Chapters from the life of János Nagyváthy, Part II.]’, *Agrártörténeti Szemle* 3, no. 1 (1961): 389–431; Lukács Gábor, ‘A nemzeti felemelkedés reformgondolatai Nagyváthy János műveiben [The Reform-Ideas of National Rise in the Works of János Nagyváthy]’, ed. Demeter Gábor and Bodnár Erzsébet, *Állam és nemzet a XIX-XX. században: a 2006. március 31 – április 1-én megrendezett történetész doktoranduszok debreceni konferenciája előadásai*, 2006, 267–78; Vilmos Lázár, ‘Nagyváthy János Emlékezete [The Memory of János Nagyváthy]’, *Agrártudományi Közlemények* 7 (1955): 245–56; Nagyváthy is further mentioned by Kosáry in his treatment of the ‘estate enlightenment’, however without the space of intention of analysing his propositions. Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 336–38.

⁶ Lajos Abafi’s seminal work on Freemasonry treat Nagyváthy at considerable length in relation to the freemasonic context, however he goes only so far as to proclaim that the pamphlets need to be considered programmatic to the ‘Magnanimitas’ lodge. Characteristic of the 19th century scholarship, he too subscribes to the democratic-egalitarian reading, without going beyond a selective summary and a few quotes from the pamphlets. Abafi Lajos, *A szabadkőművesség története Magyarországon [The History of Freemasonry in Hungary]* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), 330–33; Éva H Balázs proposes in her study on 18th century freemasonry, that the specific masonic context needs to be explored to understand Nagyváthy’s political writings among others, however to my knowledge she did not follow up with a study to this end. Éva H. Balázs, ‘A Szabadkőművesség a 18. Században [Freemasonry in the 18th Century]’, *Világosság* 18. évf., no. 4. sz. (1977): 220.

synchronous political discourse. In order to tackle that question sufficiently, I will need to tackle the question of how freemasonic ritual practices inform the political debates of 1790 and within that Nagyváthy's political theory; how should the pamphlets' symbolic language be interpreted within the masonic context; how Nagyváthy's political language use situate his pamphlets within the political discourse of the 1790s, especially in relation to the community concepts encapsulated within, and doing so, what we can say about the political action that Nagyváthy executes. In other words, to paraphrase Quentin Skinner, what is Nagyváthy *doing*?⁷

I am going to show, how János Nagyváthy's political pamphlets need to be understood to have originated from the cultural and symbolic space of freemasonry, addressed to a freemasonic audience, contributing to and contesting the specific political discourse that has taken place among freemasons in the Kingdom of Hungary in the early months of 1790. Engaging with the rising ancient-constitutional political language, which has written the defence of noble privileges and the exclusive interpretation of the political community on its banners, a view which was actively propagated among masons by the Lutheran inspector and fellow freemason who emerged as the leader of the 1790 noble resistance, Péter Balogh from Ócsa (1748-1818) at the time, János Nagyváthy attempted to contest this activity of Péter Balogh. Using the rhetorical tools of the ancient constitutional political language, Nagyváthy was aspiring to drive his freemasonic audience towards the political language of enlightened government, translating ideas of the Viennese court's chief ideologue Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732-1817), likewise freemason, reminding his fellow masons of their constitutional commitment to friendship and equality, and putting forward a concept of the political community rooted in a wide understanding of the *communitas* encapsulated in the common good and tied together by reciprocal affectionate loyalty – without proposing either political or economic equality.

⁷ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 6.

This thesis then is situated at the crossroads of several historiographical topics: the cultural history of freemasonry; the history of political thought in the Kingdom of Hungary and the broader intellectual history of the Enlightenment (or enlightenments); the political history of the Habsburg enlightened absolutism; and specifically, the history of the 1790-91 Hungarian coronation diet. The scope of the thesis extends accordingly to aspects of the intellectual and political history of the Kingdom of Hungary from the Theresian reforms, through Josephism to the 1790-91 diet, with potential implications that spread all the way to our understanding of the Reform Era of the 1830s and 40s. Geographically, this thesis is not limited, recognising the wide ranging networks of international transfers and entanglements, although the primary theatre of events is located within the historical territory of the Kingdom of Hungary, as the entity over which the 1790-91 coronation diet was convoked, where the Draskovich observance of freemasonry was exercised and where the political debate surrounding the coronation diet was taking place. Necessarily, the research process was limited to documents which were written in Hungarian language, and translations to either Hungarian or English from their language of origin – mostly Latin, German, sometimes French – as I regrettably have not mastered these languages to a sufficient degree yet, for me to be able to work with original 18th century sources.⁸

Literature Review

Since Peter Gay's attempt to define the Enlightenment, historiography has increasingly challenged the diffusionist model of the Enlightenment first created by the participants of late 18th century discourses, not as a unidirectional flow from the sun, Paris, or may be a few other centres, with rays falling with ever decreasing intensity on the less fortunate parts of Europe

⁸ This is the point where I need to express my gratitude to Piroska Balogh for giving access to her Hungarian translation of the German text of the Constitution of the System of Liberty, commonly known as the Draskovich observance, and László Vári for sharing with me his copy of the English translation published by the Grand Lodge of Croatia.

and the world.⁹ In the place of this traditional view focusing selectively on the philosophical doctrine of a few great men, scholars like J. G. A. Pocock and John Robertson argue for a model of multiple Enlightenments, in which ideas and the corresponding vocabularies were utilised through diverse political, religious, and linguistic contexts, producing varied and often conflicting intellectual outcomes.¹⁰ Particularly illuminating for my research is László Kontler's work on the German reception of William Robertson emphasizing how 'Enlightenment' ideas and vocabularies were not simply received but actively translated and reconfigured to address the diverse ideological and linguistic contexts they came to enter.¹¹ This pluralistic and adaptive process was especially pronounced in spaces like freemasonic lodges, which Margaret Jacob has shown to have acted as subversive international networks as well as laboratories of enlightenments sociability and political education, bringing about the 'public space'.¹² Within this framework, the writings of János Nagyváthy, particularly his 1790 political pamphlets, emerge not as derivative echoes of French or German models, but as contributions in their own right to the political discourse broadly defined as 'enlightened' for its concern with betterment in this world, blending and bending the ideas derived from the

⁹ Kontler László, 'A fény árnyalatai - a felvilágosodás és Közép-Európa [Shades of Light - Enlightenment and Central Europe]', *Magyar Filozófiai Szemle* 67, no. 4 (2023): 123–34. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Science of Freedom* (W.W. Norton, 1996); Annelien de Dijn, 'The Politics of Enlightenment: From Peter Gay to Jonathan Israel', *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 785–805.

¹⁰ The counterpoint of this view is presented by Jonathan Israel, who in the place of the multiple enlightenments proposes to the definition of Enlightenments along their radical or moderate components. These views however come up against the reality of translation, that a moderate view in one place might represent a radical rapture elsewhere in time and place - a good example is Montesquieu and Rousseau in the Hungarian context analysed below. If we are to avoid the focus on the canonization of great thinkers - however wide the cannon might be - and focus on the practice of political thought, I believe we need to focus on the discursive practices of a given debate rather than how enlightened a certain thinker might be on this or that criterion. Jonathan Israel, 'J. G. A. Pocock and the "Language of Enlightenment" in "His Barbarism and Religion"', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77, no. 1 (2016): 107–27; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*, vol. 1, *Barbarism and Religion 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John Robertson, *The Case for The Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680–1760*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

¹¹ László Kontler, *Translations, Histories, Enlightenments. William Robertson in Germany 1760–1795.*, Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹² Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1991); Margaret C. Jacob, 'The Enlightenment Redefined: The Formation of Modern Civil Society', *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (1991): 475–95.

classics, the ritual and ethical languages of freemasonry, with the local political problems and social realities of the late 18th century Kingdom of Hungary.

Understanding eighteenth-century freemasonry as a central institution informed by and in turn constituting Enlightenment values, rather than merely a marginal curiosity underlines most of my research. Margaret C. Jacob's work remains foundational in demonstrating how masonic lodges provided ritualized spaces for the performance of civic virtue through constitutional practices, egalitarian ideals and cosmopolitan values, especially in contexts where open political discourse was restricted.¹³ However, more than a laboratory for the public space, as it is evident from David Stevenson's history of early freemasonry, at the centre of masonry are ritual and sociability – practices, which go a long way from a mere allegiance to a set of values narrowly defined as ideological.¹⁴ Building on this insight of masonry as a practice, Kenneth Loiselle's work on masonic friendship in France highlights how the lodges not only reflected Enlightenment values but helped to generate them through ritualizing affective bonds and performative speech acts.¹⁵ This insight reframes masonic culture as an active site of not only political articulation, but a venue for the re-education of affective relationships between men of the eighteenth century, something that I will argue to be quintessential to our understanding of Nagyváthy.

In the Hungarian context as well, research has begun to uncover the political implications of freemasonry's symbolic and institutional presence. Ambrus Miskolczy has emphasized its role in shaping the reform discourse and the character of the emerging public space, and associated masonry and specifically the Draskovich observance, the masonic rite developed in the Kingdom of Hungary, specifically in Croatia, with the beginning of the 'modern Hungarian

¹³ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*.

¹⁴ David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century, 1590 to 1710*, 1990.

¹⁵ Kenneth Loiselle, *Brotherly Love: Freemasonry and Male Friendship in Enlightenment France*, 1st ed. (Cornell University Press, 2014);

democratic culture’.¹⁶ Piroska Balogh has undertaken the analysis of the ‘anthropology’ of the Draskovich observance based on the ethical principles defined in the constitution, while Róbert Péter highlighted the esoteric aspects of masonic and Rosicrucian rituals in North-Eastern Hungary.¹⁷ Much of this research rests on the analysis of Éva H. Balázs of the constitution of the observance and masonic practice in the late 18th century, who has forcefully stipulated already in the 70s that the specific rite of the Draskovich observance is quintessential to our understanding of the mentalities of the generation of Nagyváthy, Hajnóczy and Berzeviczy.¹⁸ József Jászberényi’s analysis of masonic symbolism in the life and works of a number of Hungarian men of letters further underpins, how the masonic arcana came to define the thinking of a generation in the field of literature, with many of its themes congruent to the political space.¹⁹ This study builds on that opening, arguing that Nagyváthy’s political pamphlets must be read within the framework of masonic ritual culture, symbolism and sociability.

In doing so, this thesis contributes to a growing body of literature on political thought that seeks to situate political actors—both theoreticians and practitioners—within their immediate historical and discursive contexts. Rather than compiling retrospective canons, identifying the origins of successful political traditions, or, as has often been the case in Hungarian

¹⁶ Miskolczy Ambrus, *A modern magyar demokratikus kultúra ‘eredeti jellegzetességeiről’, 1790-1849* [On the ‘original character’ of the modern Hungarian democratic culture, 1790-1849] (Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2006); Ambrus Miskolczy, ‘A Szabadkőművességtől a Nyilvánosságig. Kazinczy Ferenc És Eszmetársai a Magyar Magántársasági Demokratikus Kultúra Hőskorában [From Freemasonry to the Public. Ferenc Kazinczy and his Comrades-in-Mind in the Heroic Epoch of the Hungarian Private Society Democratic Culture]’, *Századok*, no. 1 (2009): 3–36; Miskolczy Ambrus, *Orpheus világában avagy a magyar demokratikus politikai kultúra kezdetei* [In the world of Orpheus, or the origins of the Hungarian democratic culture], Kazinczy Ferenc útja a nyelvújítástól a politikai megújulásig, I (Budapest: Lucidus Kiadó, 2009).

¹⁷ Piroska Balogh, ‘The Constitutional Principles of the Draskovics Observance and its Influence on Cultural Networks’, in *Aufgeklärte Sozietäten, Literatur und Wissenschaft in Mitteleuropa* (De Gruyter, 2019), 319–31; Róbert Péter, ‘Different Attitudes towards Esotericism in the Writings of Leading Hungarian Freemasons of the Enlightenment’, in *Aufgeklärte Sozietäten, Literatur und Wissenschaft in Mitteleuropa*, ed. Dieter Breuer and Gábor Tüskés (De Gruyter, 2019), 304–18.

¹⁸ H. Balázs, ‘A szabadkőművesség a 18. században’; Éva H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800: An Experiment in Enlightened Absolutism*, New Edition (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1998).

¹⁹ Jászberényi József, ‘A szt. Sophia Templomában látom én felszentelve nagysádat’: *A Felvilágosodás korának magyar irodalma és a szabadkőművesség* [‘I see your greatness consecrated in the Temple of St. Sophia’: The Hungarian literature of the age of Enlightenment and Freemasonry], *Irodalomtörténeti Füzetek* 153 (Budapest: Argumentum Kiadó, 2003).

historiography, diagnosing what “went wrong,” this approach emphasizes the historically situated nature of political speech. Drawing on the methodological insights of the so-called Cambridge School, and within that particularly J. G. A. Pocock’s theory of political languages, József Takáts has mapped the available political languages of late eighteenth-century Hungary, republicanism, the ancient constitution, enlightened absolutism, and politeness.²⁰ While not all of these are equally attested in the surviving sources, as highlighted recently by Henrik Hönich, they serve as invaluable heuristic tools for accessing the synchronous semantic layers of political discourse in this period.²¹ Similarly, Attila Debreczeni’s research into the contested meanings of *patria*, patriotism, and nation illustrates how community concepts became sites of identity formation and political negotiation amid the debates of the late eighteenth-century.²² Moreover, Balázs Trencsényi, in his adaptation of linguistic contextualism to the Central European space, has argued that the political thought of East-Central Europe is best understood not as a linear development but as a history of ruptures, translations, and discontinuities.²³ Discourses, often developed elsewhere in conditions of organic succession, entered local debates in tension or opposition to one another, resulting in fragmentations and juxtapositions

²⁰ Takáts József, ‘Politikai beszédmodok a magyar 19. század elején: a keret [Political Discourses in the beginning of the Hungarian 19th Century]’, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 5–6, no. 102 (1998): 668–86; Takáts József, *Modern magyar politikai eszméletörténet [Modern Hungarian Political History of Ideas]* (Osiris Kiadó, 2007); Takáts József, ‘A csinosodás politikai nyelve [The political language of politeness]’, in *Politica philosophiai okoskodás: politikai nyelvek és történeti kontextusok a középkortól a 20. századig*, ed. Fazakas Gergely Tamás and Miru György (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete, 2013), 149–60; J. G. A. Pocock, ‘The Concept of a Language and the Métier d’historien: Some Considerations on Practice’, in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19–38; Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: Volume 1: The Renaissance*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Quentin Skinner, ed., ‘Motives, Intentions and Interpretation’, in *Visions of Politics: Volume 1: Regarding Method*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 90–102; Iain Hampsher-Monk, ‘The History of Political Thought and the Political History of Thought’, in *The History of Political Thought in National Context*, by Dario Castiglione and Iain Hampsher-Monk, 1st pbk. ed, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 159–74.

²¹ Henrik Hönich, *Ki az igaz hazafi?: közösségfogalmak és patriotizmus a 18. század végi Magyarországon: egy politikai értekezés és kontextusai [Who is a true patriot?: community concepts and patriotism in Hungary at the end of the 18th century: a political dissertation and its contexts]* (Budapest: Ludovika Egyetemi Kiadó, 2023), 40–44.

²² Debreczeni Attila, ‘Nemzet és Identitás a 18. század Második Felében [Nation and Identity in the Second Half of the 18th Century]’, ed. Kecskeméti Gábor, *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 105, no. 5–6 (2001): 513–52.

²³ Balázs Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, First Edition (Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

that defy the more coherent trajectories discernible in the English or French traditions.²⁴ These developments have forced the reconfiguration of the grand questions of historiography on the late 18th century: instead of looking for the roots of modern liberalism, democratic culture and the emerging reform era, towards the analysis of the ever-fluctuating political discourse, emphasising its raptures as well as its continuities whenever they arise, as evidenced most recently by the research of Henrik Hőnich on political literature from the 1790s.²⁵

By approaching the research in this way, I aim to contribute to the historiography of Habsburg absolutism and the Kingdom of Hungary by shifting focus away from earlier narratives that cast the 1790–91 Diet as another episode in a narrative of national awakening, liberation struggles, or anti-colonial resistance.²⁶ Instead, I emphasize the complex and often ambivalent interactions between the Habsburg court, the Hungarian nobility, and other social actors. Éva H. Balázs's work, particularly her analysis of the dialogue between court and political elites of the Kingdom, as well as the varied responses to Joseph II's increasingly erratic reform program, highlights the importance of negotiation and re-negotiation of political identities in this period.²⁷ Figures such as Ferenc Széchenyi, Ferenc Kazinczy, and Gergely Berzeviczy illustrate a heterodox spectrum of political positions that defy simplistic binaries of resistance and collaboration.²⁸ To situate Nagyváthy's political pamphlets meaningfully within the discourse

²⁴ Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*.

²⁵ Hőnich Henrik, 'A nyelv tétje: fogalmak és beszédmódok 1790-92-ben [The Price of Language: Concepts and Discourses in 1790-92] .', in *"Politica philosophiai okoskodás: politikai nyelvek és történeti kontextusok a középkortól a 20. századig*, ed. Fazakas Gergely Tamás and Miru György (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete, 2013), 161–73; The continuity debate is summarized by Ferenc Hörcher, 'Enlightened Reform or National Reform? The Continuity Debate about the Hungarian Reform Era and the Example of the Two Széchenyis (1790-1848)', *The Hungarian Historical Review* 5, no. 1 (2016): 22–45.

²⁶ Marczali Henrik, *Az 1790/I-diki országgyűlés [The Diet of 1790-91]* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1907); Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*; Benda Kálmán, 'A magyar nemesi mozgalom 1790-ben [The 1790 movement of the Hungarian nobility]', *Történelmi Szemle* 17, no. 1/2 (1974): 183–210.

²⁷ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*.

²⁸ H. Balázs.

of the 1790s, we must attend to these complex allegiances and the affective concerns that shaped individual political agency.

Methodology, Primary Sources and Thesis Outline

In my research I am going to utilise the insights developed in the previous section by contextualizing János Nagyváthy's political writings: first in the masonic ritual, symbolic and political space, then in the second chapter in the political debate of the 1790s taking place in that very masonic space.²⁹ Doing so, I am particularly looking for speech acts that Nagyváthy's audience could interpret in a directly political manner³⁰. As it shall be clear, some of these speech acts were executed by employing, omitting, rewriting and partially rewriting vocabularies and rhetorical tools of the generally available political languages. As I have already touched upon, in my research I am going to rely on József Takáts's characterization of the political languages of the Kingdom of Hungary, and by applying them as heuristic categories, I hope to contribute further evidence to the presence of the more contested languages of enlightened absolutism and that of politeness.³¹ In case of the symbolic language of freemasonry, these speech acts will be only available to a select few, who were previously initiated to the masonic ritual, which is nonetheless central to our ability to answer the question, what Nagyváthy is doing.

To be able to execute this research, I am going to analyse the political writings of János Nagyváthy, some of the available sources on freemasonry in the Kingdom of Hungary and the

²⁹ Pocock, 'The Concept of a Language and the Métier d'historien'; Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*.

³⁰ Particularly illuminating in this regard was Quentin Skinner's adaption of speech act theory to political discourses, understanding political writing as an action in its own right, not executed in an empty void, neither between philosophers situated centuries apart in most cases, but in the particular political discourses taking place in a given historical moment. Skinner, 'Motives, Intentions and Interpretation'; Quentin Skinner, 'Preface', in *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Repr (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), ix–xv; Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*; Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas'.

³¹ Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszméletörténet*.

political writings of leading freemasons whose views on constitutional reform have been identified as programmatic to the political factions at the coronation diet: Péter Balogh from Ócsa (1748-1818), Count Ferenc Széchenyi (1754-1820), and to a lesser extent József Hajnóczy (1750-1795).³² To my fortune, the writings of the latter three has been translated and published in Hungarian by Gábor Pajkossy, while I gained access to Nagyváthy's pamphlets in the Budapest Collection of the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library of Budapest.³³ Out of these, I will mostly refer to the utopian pamphlet, *The Joyous Hours of the True Hungarian Patriot*,³⁴ as this is the pamphlet that presents the most programmatic summary of the views also presented in the other works. The *Red Frier*, the *Changing of Religion*, and the *L'Horoscope de la Pologne* are translations from German and French, and they treat individual issues: the first is about masonic myth building, the second concerns religious equality with the last one referencing issues of foreign policy and domestic reform in Poland, intended as a mirror for the Hungarian nobility.³⁵ While these discuss no less important issues, on the one hand I lack the language skills to be able to sufficiently compare them to their source documents, and hence this precludes an analysis of Nagyváthy's translational decisions. On the other hand, they are less central to the debate over the constitutional questions under analysis in this thesis. Hence, I will refer to them where they illuminate aspects of the *Joyous Hours* pamphlet.

³² Philip Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', in *A History of the Hungarian Constitution: Law, Government and Political Culture in Central Europe*, by Ferenc Hörcher and Thomas Lorman, ed. Ferenc Hörcher and Thomas Lorman (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 70–72; László Kontler, *A History of Hungary: Millennium in Central Europe* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 219; Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 338; Tevesz László, 'Adatok az 1790-es rendi mozgalom eszméletörténeti háttéréhez [Data to the Intellectual Historical Background of the 1790 Estates Movement]', in *"Politica philosophiai okoskodás: politikai nyelvek és történeti kontextusok a középkortól a 20. századig*, ed. Fazakas Gergely Tamás and Miru György (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete, 2013), 137–48.

³³ Gábor Pajkossy, ed., *Magyarország Története a 19. Században – Szöveggyűjtemény [The History of Hungary in the 19th Century – Reader]* (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2006).

³⁴ Nagyváthy János, *A' Tizenkilencedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái [The Joyous Hours of the True Hungarian Patriot Who Lived in the 19th Century]* (A Nagy Szívűségénél, 1790).

³⁵ Nagyváthy János, *A veres barát [The Red Frier]* (A Nagy Szívűségénél, 1790); Nagyváthy János, *Vallás-tserélés [Changing of Religion]* (A Nagy Szívűségénél, 1790); Nagyváthy János, *Csillagok-Forgásibul Való Polgári Jövendőlés Lengyel Országgra [L'Horoscope de la Pologne - for the Hungarians as a mirror]* (A Nagy Szívűségénél, 1790).

The second most important primary source under analysis in my thesis is the documents related to freemasonry. On Nagyváthy's freemasonic activity, I will largely rely on the works of Lajos Abafi, as after consulting the National Széchényi Library's archives, I uncovered only little additional information about his work. Furthermore, I was provided with two translations of the constitution of the System of Liberty, known as the Draskovich observance of freemasonry, translated to Hungarian by Piroska Balogh from the German version preserved in the Wien Stadt Archive and the English translation of the Latin document published by the Grand Lodge of Croatia.³⁶ Executing this research I was primarily utilising the Hungarian translation, for the simple reason that while I was aware of the existence of the Croatian publication, I found it nearly impossible to find it, until less than two weeks before the submission. In addition, I have consulted the published letters and poems of Ferenc Kazinczy and Ádám Horváth, especially in my attempt to reconstruct the symbolic languages of masonry, however in the final work only few references point directly to these works, as later in the research process I have found Jászberényi's extensive treatment of these.³⁷ Where it is not indicated otherwise, the English translations of these have been provide by myself.³⁸

The research faces a number of limitations. First of these is the limitation imposed by the linguistic scope, which due to my own shortcomings covers only a fraction of the available sources of the time and necessarily limits the research to Hungarian and English language sources. This shortcoming is further accentuated in the secondary literature: while a good number of the scholarship is written in the German speaking academia on freemasonry,

³⁶ Balogh Piroska, trans., 'Translation of the Constitutional System of Liberty Freemasonic Constitution (Unpublished)' (Budapest, 2018); Goran Krstić, ed., *240 Godišnjica Utemeljenja Draškovićeve Opservancije [240th Anniversary of the Drašković Observance Foundation]*, trans. Tracey Bernhard (Velika loža Hrvatske [Grand Lodge of Croatia], 2015).

³⁷ Attila Debreczeni, ed., *Pálóczi Horváth Ádám művei [Works of Ádám Pálóczi Horváth]* (DUPress, 2016), https://doi.org/10.5484/Paloczi_Horvath_Adam_muvei; Ferenc Máté Bodrogi and Attila Debreczeni, eds., *Kazinczy Ferenc művei [Works of Ferenc Kazinczy]* (Debreceni University Press, 2012), https://doi.org/10.5484/Kazinczy_Ferenc_muvei.

³⁸ It is here I need to note, that while no unedited section made it into the final product, I utilised Open AI's Chat GPT for the purposes of these translations and proofreading purposes.

enlightened absolutism, the Habsburg monarchy and the interactions of these, unfortunately I had rather limited access to these writings, an error which, though falls beyond my fault and lays with my capacities over these past two years, potentially qualifies the novelty and scope of my findings. The overwhelmingly Magyar ethnic focus of my research in what was a multiethnic and polyglot empire, I hope will be understood to be the result of these linguistic shortcomings, and not so much an anachronistic attempt of national historiography.

Outline

As I have already mentioned, the thesis is divided into two chapters. In chapter 1 I am going to argue that János Nagyváthy's 1790 political pamphlets, with special focus on the *Joyous Hours of the True Hungarian Patriot Who Lived During the 19th Century*, must be read not simply as the efforts of a petit noble to purchase his place among the politically engaged literati, but as deeply embedded within the symbolic, ethical, and ritual world of freemasonry, specifically that of the Draskovich observance. First, I am going to provide a brief historical overview of freemasonry in Hungary with special focus on the Draskovich observance, followed up by Nagyváthy's role within Freemasonry. It will be argued that the esoteric and affective aspects of masonic ritual should be considered in attempting to draw up Nagyváthy's trajectories, just as much as the networking possibility. In the second half of the chapter, I am going to analyse the symbolic language in Nagyváthy's pamphlets and the constitutional principles of the Draskovich observance to highlight, how the Nagyváthy's political writings should be interpreted not only to having taken place in the masonic public sphere, but that within them specific speech acts were executed dedicated to this very masonic public, and which undertook the interpretation and reiteration of the constitutional principles of the observance. It will be shown then that in contrast to earlier interpretations, such as Károly Vörös's view of Nagyváthy as an aspiring intellectual using political theorising for personal advancement, this chapter

proposes that the texts should be understood as intentional contributions to the masonic political discourse in 1790 Hungary.

Following this, chapter 2 examines János Nagyváthy's *Joyous Hours* as a text contesting rival interpretations of the Hungarian constitution circulating within the freemasonic space ahead of the 1790 Diet. Following a brief history of the Joseph II's reign and the unfolding crises of 1790, the chapter will analyse the political languages employed by the circular letters of Ferenc Széchenyi and Péter Balogh to show that the two should not only be understood to represent rival factions ahead of the 1790 diet, but also to be engaged in a specific argument with each other over the proper understanding of a constitutional question. Building on the analysis of the masonic space in the previous chapter, it is further argued that Nagyváthy's pamphlet is to be understood then as an intervention in this discourse taking place in the masonic space during the early months of 1790. Against Balogh's exclusive and historically rooted *communitas* concept, which defined the nobility alone as the political nation and considered the issue of serfdom private matters, Nagyváthy reframes equality as a constitutional question, grounded in natural law, divine purpose, and the social contract. While utilizing the ancient constitutional rhetoric, he repurposes them in service of driving his audience to the conclusions framed in the language of enlightened government that echo Joseph von Sonnenfels and the ethical commitments of freemasonry. In doing so, Nagyváthy asserts that the esoteric equality is foundational to any legitimate constitutional order and asserts just as Széchenyi that the question of serfdom is in fact the most important constitutional question.

Chapter 1 – János Nagyváthy and Freemasonry: Ritual, Symbolic Language and the Draskovich Constitution in Nagyváthy's political writing

The political writings of János Nagyváthy, surprisingly, tend to be interpreted at best as one that is influenced by freemasonry, with most historians only mentioning it in passing, and quickly move on to summarise his political pamphlets. Éva H Balázs and her students studying freemasonry have argued that the masonic practices, anthropologies and the specific requirements of the Draskovich Observance, the masonic system created in the Kingdom of Hungary by the Croatian Bán János Draskovich and István Niczky in 1775, have a strong explanatory force on the behaviour and ideals of the entire 1790 political generation – including Nagyváthy.³⁹ However, in the scholarship focusing specifically on Nagyváthy's political writings, this perspective is lacking. The most recent scholarship asserts that the time spent in the freemasonic lodge has exerted incredible influence on Nagyváthy's views, but largely neglects what these influences were, and how they manifested in his writings.⁴⁰ Less recently, Károly Vörös stipulated that the purpose of Nagyváthy's writing should be understood in his attempt to make inroads into learned circles, in which process political engagement was considered to be an important milestone.⁴¹ The necessary implication is that we are invited to view Nagyváthy's political writings to be only instrumental steps towards becoming the agronomist in the service of the aristocracy, and by conclusion, Nagyváthy's pamphlets to fall into the long tradition of the Hungarian nobility defending their own economic and political

³⁹ H. Balázs, 'A szabadkőművesség a 18. században', 220; Balogh, 'The Constitutional Principles of the Draskovics Observance and its Influence on Cultural Networks'; Piroska Balogh, 'The Institution of Draskovics Observance and the Masonic Anthropology of the Enlightenment', in *'Die habsburgische Variante des aufgeklärten Absolutismus': Beiträge zur Mitregentschaft Josephs II., 1765-1780*, ed. András Forgó and Krisztina Kulcsár, Publikationen der ungarischen Geschichtsforschung in Wien, Bd. 16 (Wien: Institut für Ungarische Geschichtsforschung, 2018), 325–36.

⁴⁰ Lukács, 'A nemzeti felemelkedés reformgondolatai Nagyváthy János műveiben', 268.

⁴¹ Vörös, 'Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész', 8–14.

interests by positioning themselves as if they were merely defending the interests of their serfs (who would eventually pay the costs).⁴² Even Lajos Abafi, the first historian of freemasonry in the Kingdom of Hungary failed to show how Nagyváthy's texts can be connected to masonry, despite considering the pamphlets to be official proclamations of the Magnanimitas lodge.⁴³ This chapter is an attempt at filling in this gap in our understanding of masonry in János Nagyváthy's political writings.

In what follows, I am going to show that the political pamphlets hitherto referred to as *Nagyváthy's* political writings should indeed be interpreted as deeply informed by masonic ritual practices and symbolic language. Moreover, through exploring the textual parallels between the goals and language of the pamphlets and the constitution of the Draskovich observance, I am going to argue that not only should Nagyváthy's writing be understood as being under the constitutions influence, but it should indeed be read as intentionally programmatic. However, to understand the space this program was originating from and was meant to be understood within, I am first going to summarise the history of freemasonry in the Kingdom of Hungary up until 1790 and introduce Nagyváthy's role within these local circles of masonic sociability, to better understand the positionality and context of the author. I am going to show how these political pamphlets are to be interpreted as speech acts taking place within the freemasonic space, before turning in the next chapter towards showing how Nagyváthy's work should be understood among multiple agendas contesting this very space.

Freemasonry in Hungary and Masonic Sociability

Following the establishment of the first grand lodge in London in 1717, and the publication of its Constitution in 1723 by James Anderson, masonry arrived into the Habsburg lands by the

⁴² Vörös, 14.

⁴³ Abafi, *A szabadkőművesség története Magyarországon*, 330.

1730s, and by 1743 the first lodge of Vienna had been established, the “Aux trois canons”.⁴⁴ The establishment of this lodge by the lodge of Wrocław on the orders of Frederick the Great of Prussia highlight the intricate political network construction at the very heart of freemasonry during the 18th century, while the membership of monarchs across Europe, including emperor Francis, husband of Maria Theresia, explain some of its appeal.⁴⁵ The membership of the slowly expanding first lodges attracted primarily the wealthiest of aristocrats and high court officials, however they were soon followed by burghers and intellectuals in their masonic ‘works’, that is the proper name for their ritual gatherings.⁴⁶ This ability of the masonic networks to bring together people from various social groups across geographic and societal barriers who could otherwise hardly engage in cordial conversation, let alone debate, has been cited as one of the foundational moments of the public sphere.⁴⁷ Albeit initially in secret, the ensuing political discourse encapsulated in the ritualised works has enabled the propagation and distribution of enlightened concerns in the Habsburg realms, just as it did across Europe and beyond.

Masonry’s ambiguous relationship with social rank, however, has not gone unnoticed.⁴⁸ On the one hand, one of the main appeals of masonry was to be found in it being open to all layers of society (provided one could afford the membership fees, was found virtuous enough etc. etc.). On the other hand, conforming with the sensibilities of the feudal minds, the initial three degrees of English masonry were quickly expanded into various systems of gradation to allow for the continental nobility to distinguish themselves from the petit-noble and intellectual membership. It is, however, important to note here that just as any other social practice, Masonry, too, was

⁴⁴ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 34–36; Abafi, *A szabadkőművesség története Magyarországon*, 12–13; Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 323–229; H. Balázs, ‘A szabadkőművesség a 18. században’, 217–18.

⁴⁵ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 36–37.

⁴⁶ H. Balázs, 36–41.

⁴⁷ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 20; Miskolczy, *Orpheus Világában*, 28; Robertson, *The Case for The Enlightenment*, 3.

⁴⁸ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 40–41; Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 16.

created by real people, living out the ritual practices while utilizing these very practices for their own purposes. Hence, masonry took distinct shapes and forms across the landscape responding to the distinct challenges it faced, and as we shall see in this section, within the Kingdom of Hungary, this manifested itself in the overwhelming and unique focus of masonry on economic, political and religious issues.⁴⁹ This character of the masonic sociability is what makes it particularly interesting for us here, as it is to be seen primarily as a ritual practice that shaped its members like Nagyváthy, just as much as its membership, through their active participation, shaped the practice itself.

Freemasonry entered the Kingdom of Hungary from multiple sources, Vienna being the least relevant of them, and by the 1770s there were a number of lodges throughout the country.⁵⁰ While based on the research of Éva H. Balázs, we must take note of the fact that the emerging freemasonic scene of the kingdom was unitary in its overwhelmingly protestant and over 70% noble membership, which also resulted in a certain unity in their views regarding denominational questions and their preoccupation with thinking about governmental structures and policies which they were otherwise excluded from.⁵¹ However, the political character of Hungarian masonry should not be overstated.

At least initially, the different lodges partially due to their secret operations, partially due to their different mother lodges, did not form one unified network. On the one hand, there were the lodges established in the Saxon cities of Transylvania, in Kronstadt (Brassó or Braşov) (est. 1749) and Hermannstadt (Nagyszeben or Sibiu) (est. 1764).⁵² On the other, there were the lodges that sprung up in the North-East of the country as a result of the activities of the Eperjes

⁴⁹ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 41–42.

⁵⁰ Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 324; H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 335–36.

⁵¹ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 40–42.

⁵² Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 323–24.

(Prešov or Preschau) lodge, which was established as the filial lodge of the Warsaw based “vertueux Sarmate” lodge around 1769 by Polish émigrés.⁵³ Many of the members of these northern lodges soon came to associate themselves with Rosicrucianism as well, which came to define the lodge activities as primarily alchemical and cabalistic.⁵⁴ In the extreme, the “Zum tugendhaften Kosmopoliten” lodge in Miskolc, the filial lodge of the one in Eperjes, explicitly prohibited not only religious but also political debates.⁵⁵

In contrast to these, the filial lodges of the Draskovich observance established by four Croatian lodges in 1775 under the leadership of Count János Draskovich and István Niczky took on a significantly more political stance.⁵⁶ The observance’s constitution, which I will analyse in relation to Nagyváthy’s pamphlet in the third section of the chapter, declared: “the main goal of our holy congregation is to promote the good of the human nation in every possible way”, to be followed by a long exposition on how masonic work is clearly imagined in the political realm, by mandating political thinking and preparation for action (even if in a somewhat comical fashion, action is conceived by the authors as a moment of further thinking):

“The Grand Master should often, both in person and in the conventions, paint in vivid colours the ills with which the human race is burdened, and should exhort the brethren with the greatest fervour and enthusiasm to render aid to them. He should speak of the lamentable effects of the superstitious veneration of tyranny and that of its unlimited power, of the oppression, maltreatment, persecution, and a thousand other miseries which result from it. He should explain, he should prove that

⁵³ Kosáry, 323–24.

⁵⁴ Péter, ‘Different Attitudes towards Esotericism in the Writings of Leading Hungarian Freemasons of the Enlightenment’.

⁵⁵ Annamária Lupták, ‘A miskolci szabadkőműves páholy(ok) tevékenysége [The Activities of the Freemasonic Lodge(s) of Miskolc]’, in *Tanulmányok az Eszterházy Károly Főiskola tudományos diákköreinek tudományos tevékenységéből (2011–2013)* (Eger: Eszterházy Károly Főiskola Líceum Kiadó, 2013), 600.

⁵⁶ Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 325; H. Balázs, ‘A szabadkőművesség a 18. században’, 222–24.

therefore our Order is the only body from which a wounded and almost everywhere trampled humanity can hope to find a safe refuge. We must not, therefore, let this hope be failed: therefore let the Grand Master furnish those who are of strong spirit and character with topics to work out, so that when the time comes for action, we may discuss them in further detail.”⁵⁷

The lodges of this observance hence emerged as significantly more political organisations, with their influence accentuated over masonry all over the country by the relocation of the country’s administrative centre from Pressburg (Pozsony or Bratislava) to Buda around the time of the emergence of “Zur Grossmuth” or “Magnanimitas” lodge in Pest (just across the Danube) under the leadership of Draskovich himself.⁵⁸

This political character of masonry has attracted ambivalent responses from the Habsburg court. On the one hand, the progressive elite network comprising of somewhere between 600-1000 masons was a valuable political resource in the initial years of Joseph II’s rule.⁵⁹ Key officials of the Viennese court, chief among them Karl von Zinzendorf, have been shown to have participated in the discussions leading up to the foundation of the Draskovich observance.⁶⁰ Later, masons, holding key offices throughout the country, from the counties to the central administration, were important allies of Joseph in executing even his most unpopular decrees.⁶¹

Éva H. Balázs shows in his research how “in the four years after 1780 freemasonry can be

⁵⁷ ‘a Főmester gyakorta, mind személyesen, mind a konventeken élénk színekkel fesse le, hogy az emberi nem milyen bajokkal terheltetik, és a testvéreket a legnagyobb hévvel és lelkesültséggel buzdítsa, hogy ezekre segínyt nyújtsanak. Beszéljen a zsarnokság babonás tiszteletének, korlátlan hatalmának, az ebből eredő sanyargatásnak, elnyomásnak, üldözésnek és ezer más nyomorúságnak gyászos hatásairól. Magyarázza, bizonyítsa, hogy ezért a mi rendünk az egyetlen olyan testület, melytől a megsértett, és szinte mindenütt porba taposott humanitás biztos menedékét lehet remélni. Nem szabad tehát hagynunk, hogy ez a remény megghiúsuljon: ezért azokat, akiknek szellemük és jellemük erős, a Főmester lássa el olyan témákkal, melyeket ki kell dolgozniuk, hogy majd, mikor a cselekvésre kerül a sor, ezeket részletesebben megvitassuk.’ in Balogh, ‘Draskovich Observance’, 24.

⁵⁸ Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 325.

⁵⁹ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 41.

⁶⁰ H. Balázs, 72–73.

⁶¹ H. Balázs, 273.

equated with Josephism.”⁶² The patent on toleration allowed the large numbers of protestant nobles to join the ranks of the administration, something previously reserved by the Carolina Resolutio (1731) for only Catholics.⁶³ The new district administration system was largely implemented by masons like Ferenc Széchenyi and József Hajnóczy despite the uproar of the county nobility.⁶⁴ Even the infamous 1784 language edict mandating German as the language of administration and criticized widely as an aggressive Germanizing device was swallowed, even by those like Ferenc Kazinczy, who later emerged as the most ardent defenders of the Magyar language.⁶⁵ On the other hand, masonry was no exception to Emperor Joseph’s centralising zeal, which resulted in his attempt at initially mandating the number of possible lodges per imperial regions together with the establishment of the Imperial Grand Lodge, followed by the Freemasonry Patent prohibiting the organization of new lodges outside of provincial capitals, and even there limiting them to three.⁶⁶ While masonic activities didn’t completely halt, as is evident from their sudden reemergence in 1790 once Joseph’s edicts were revoked, the position of what was now “Zur Grossmuth” (from the previous “Magnanimitas” as its language of operation shifted to German), being one of the three lodges of the provincial capital, is safe to assume to have further strengthened the influence of their practices on the rest of masonry.⁶⁷

It is in this context that the young János Nagyváthy was accepted as a member of the “Zur Grossmuth” lodge of Pest in 1789, where, by the next year, he emerged as one of the most

⁶² H. Balázs, 273.

⁶³ H. Balázs, 273.

⁶⁴ H. Balázs, 273–74.

⁶⁵ H. Balázs, 273.

⁶⁶ H. Balázs, 274.

⁶⁷ Abafi explains, how this was in fact the period when the lodge emerged as the leading lodge following the initial rise under Draskovich, which was interrupted by an ‘emigration’ of the membership to the Buda based lodges, only for the Magnanimitas to be re-established hastily once the news of the patent reached the masons of Pest, something Kosáry glosses over into one continuous story. For the ease of narrative, I followed Kosáry’s telling of the story, but this interruption should be noted. Nonetheless, by all evidence, by 1787, the Draskovich observance was back on the stage in Pest, as testified by the re-publication of its constitution here after the patent. Abafi, *A szabadkőműveltség története Magyarországon*, 274–78; Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 325; Balogh, ‘Draskovich Observance’.

active members of the lodge. Now, before we turn towards the analysis of Nagyváthy's writing, we need to account for the author's positionality within the masonic circles.

Nagyváthy's role in "Zur Grossmuth" / "Magnanimitas" lodge

While not all accounts agree on János Nagyváthy's activities prior to his joining of "Zur Grossmuth", most of the available evidence that is reviewed by Károly Vörös points towards the conclusion that after his education at the Calvinist college of Sárospatak, by 1785 Nagyváthy took on a teaching role in the college of Losonc (Lučenec).⁶⁸ In 1788 due to issues concerning his eyes, he moved to Pest for medical treatment, where he was admitted into the "Zur Grossmuth" lodge in the next year based on the reference of Baron Schaffrath.⁶⁹ Vörös's narrative, however, from this point on loses Nagyváthy's masonic life, stating that "we must take it only natural that in spite of his agrarian interests, Nagyváthy felt it to be his duty to put down his political-scientific contribution as an entry ticket to this [literati] circle."⁷⁰ We should not discount the role of elite networking within masonic sociability, neither should we do so in case of Nagyváthy's activities in 1789-1791. Without considering upward networking, it would be difficult to account for how the son of an albeit ennobled but unlanded carpenter of the city of Miskolc ended up as the governor of the Festetich estate, one of the largest domains in one of the largest counties of the country.⁷¹ However, as I hope to show below, Nagyváthy's activities as a freemason deserve more attention than historians usually pay to.

⁶⁸ The controversy regarding Nagyváthy's hypothetical military career and time in Vienna is detailed and resolved by Vörös clearly. I nonetheless mention it, because not all the literature I am citing in my thesis is posterior to Vörös. In my study, where necessary I am going to take Vörös's biographical summary to be instructive, while treat the work of Kálmán Nagyváthy (János's grandson) Színeyi and others recited in the works of authors prior to Vörös as outdated. Vörös, 'Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész', 15; Examples of these include: Vilmos, 'Nagyváthy János emlékezete', 247; Nagyváthy Kálmán, *Nagyváthy János Élete [The Life of János Nagyváthy]* (Bratislava: Stampfel, Eder és Társai Könyvnyomtató Intézet, 1890); Lukács and Lukácsné repeat the entire argument of Vörös. Gábor Lukács and Judit Lukácsné Pető, 'The Biography of János Nagyváthy - The First Hungarian Agricultural Writer', *Journal of Central European Agriculture* 2, no. 1 (1 March 2002): 34-47.

⁶⁹ Vörös, 'Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész', 15.

⁷⁰ 'természetesnek kell látnunk azt is, hogy még a mezőgazdasági érdeklődésű Nagyváthy is kötelességének érzi, hogy mintegy belépőjegyként e körbe, letegye a maga politikai-irodalmi obulusát.' in Vörös, 17.

⁷¹ Vörös, 14, 31.

To understand the role of freemasonry in the history of the political discourse of the 1790-1791 diet in Hungary, we need to first understand how masonic sociability manifested itself in the lives of those practicing it. Margaret Jacob's words are just as true for the interpretation of the pamphlets penned by János Nagyváthy, as they are for the Enlightenment at large: "The nature of masonic sociability has not been understood because historians have seldom looked at actual masonic practice."⁷² Freemasonry constituted a heavily ritualised mix of esoteric practices and prescriptions in the moral, ethical and political realm.⁷³ It was united in its focus on ensuring a mode of operation modelled upon the British constitutional system, and despite its aforementioned ambiguities towards social rank, it nonetheless created a space where even if inequalities of rank did not always cease to exist, interaction between social layers, by the sheer virtue of one's wish to interact, became possible.⁷⁴ The subversive nature of the possibility to imagine oneself to be in one organisation with Frederick the Great or emperor Francis on an equal footing or even as their de jure superior is often emphasised, and indeed should not be understated.⁷⁵ Importantly, the effect of this should not necessarily be looked for in the world of what people were doing, but in an intermediary emotive effect of the rituals – the analysis of which in the specifics falls beyond the scope of my study, should nonetheless be appreciated.⁷⁶ The ritualised 'work' of the lodges set in place to reaffirm this esoteric equality between the brethren certainly affected people to different degrees, nonetheless, we know of brethren

⁷² Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 15; In the following I will largely rely on Margaret Jacob, however the ritual and practice based approach advocated by her with regards to Freemasonry is echoed in word or practice by a wide literature on masonry, including but not limited to: Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry*; Ric Berman, *The Foundations of Modern Freemasonry: The Grand Architects: Political Change and the Scientific Enlightenment, 1714-1740* (Liverpool University Press, 2012); Specifically on the creation and execution of friendship: Kenneth Loiselle, *Brotherly Love: Freemasonry and Male Friendship in Enlightenment France*, 1st ed. (Cornell University Press, 2014); In the Hungarian context the practice of masonry is elaborated by Miskolczy, *Orpheus Világában*, 23–28; Jászberényi, *A szt. Sophia Templomában látom én felszentelve nagysádat*; On the role of esotericism in Hungarian masonry: Péter, 'Different Attitudes towards Esotericism in the Writings of Leading Hungarian Freemasons of the Enlightenment'; On how constitution mandated political behaviour: Balogh, 'The Institution of Draskovics Observance and the Masonic Anthropology of the Enlightenment'.

⁷³ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 22.

⁷⁴ Jacob, 15–16; H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 41.

⁷⁵ Miskolczy, *Orpheus Világában*, 40; Abafi, *A szabadkőművesség története Magyarországon*, 15–16.

⁷⁶ Loiselle, *Brotherly Love*, 7.

among the Hungarian masons for whom these triggered a lifelong commitment.⁷⁷ The example of Ádám Horváth and Ferenc Kazinczy should suffice here, who were captivated by rather different aspects of masonry, yet their letters betray that even in the early 1810s they actively sought masonic company and ritual, long after the prohibition of masonry and capital punishment of Kazinczy reduced to imprisonment for his secret society conspirations in 1795.⁷⁸

We know that János Nagyváthy did not only become a freemason in 1789, but at least in 1790-91 he was one of the most active members of the newly renamed “Magnanimitas” lodge. His name is one of the most frequent one that we can come across in the minutes of the lodge meetings starting from his volunteering to translate all lodge ritual from German to Latin following the decision to re-institute Latin as the lodge language.⁷⁹ He gave welcome addresses to new members, participated in performing financial duties, and, as evidenced by the publication of his pamphlets by the lodge, took an active role beyond administration as well.⁸⁰

Of course, it goes without saying that masonry was a networking opportunity. It is through the lodge works that Nagyváthy met Count Ferenc Széchényi, the chief patron of his agronomical handbook published in 1791, as well as many of the initial subscribers of his book like the intellectual József Hajnóczy – both of whom will feature in the next chapter, as well as Count György Festetich, his future employer.⁸¹ Not just masonic, any sort of sociability is unimaginable without the benefit of meeting people. However, as it is underscored by the research of Kenneth Loisel, masonic sociability extended interpersonal relationships well beyond the concept of patronage, and even in the political and patron relationships anchored

⁷⁷ For the story of less-than-committed masons see Olga Granasztói, ‘Szabadvőműves árulók: új felvetések a magyarországi szabadvőművesség 18. századi történetéhez [Freemasonic Traitors: New Propositions to the History of 18th Century Hungarian Freemasonry]’, *Helikon* 62, no. 4 (2016): 599–624.

⁷⁸ Jászberényi, *A szt. Sophia Templomában látom én felszentelve nagysádat*, 79–82.

⁷⁹ Abafi, *A szabadvőművesség története Magyarországon*, 330–33; See the minutes of the meetings of the Magnanimitas Lodge for 1790-91 in “Minutes of the Meetings of the Magnanimitas Lodge,” 1790, P 1134/5./523–536, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár (MNL OL), Budapest.

⁸⁰ Abafi, *A szabadvőművesség története Magyarországon*, 330–33.

⁸¹ Vörös, ‘Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész’, 30.

the concept of friendship to an affectionate, trust based and, morally speaking, equal relationship.⁸² Just as the French masonic constitution declares that “Masonry becomes the centre and the union of a solid and desirable friendship between individuals who otherwise have always been separated from one another”⁸³ so do testimonies of Hungarian masons and the Draskovich constitution underscore this point.

The constitution of the Draskovich observance elaborates in long detail over the ethical norms that are prescribed to all its members, and which the lodges are meant to induce through their works.⁸⁴ Among these, the idea of friendship and equality are second and third only to that of humanity, which the Grand Masters are mandated to foster. “It should be one of the special duties of the Grand Master to incite in the Brothers the desire for friendship, and not for a cold, formal friendship at that, which is obviously as if it would not exist, but for a confidential friendship based in trust and frequent contact.”⁸⁵ The constitution not only highlights the duty to foster friendship through the masonic work (which we need to note, includes dining, drinking and singing together, readily recognisable to the modern reader as well as forms of social bonding), but also specifies the move Loiselle’s research elaborates in the French case by highlighting the type of friendship that masonry aims to incite: confidential, based in frequent meeting, not a mere alliance.⁸⁶ The effects are clearly communicated by a letter of Ferenc Kazinczy, the poet and language reformer:

⁸² Loiselle, *Brotherly Love*, 3.

⁸³ Quoted in Loiselle, 5.

⁸⁴ Piroska Balogh elaborates in detail on the structure and relationship between these in multiple studies, highlighting the possibility of creating the anthropology of Hungarian masonry based on these. She was so kind and to make her unpublished Hungarian translations of the text of the Draskovich constitution available for me, as I read neither of the original languages of publication with sufficient security to be able to utilise them, for which I am eternally grateful to her. Balogh, ‘The Constitutional Principles of the Draskovics Observance and its Influence on Cultural Networks’; Balogh, ‘The Institution of Draskovics Observance and the Masonic Anthropology of the Enlightenment’; Balogh, ‘Draskovich Observance’.

⁸⁵ ‘a Főmester különleges feladatai közé kell tartoznia a barátságra való törekvésnek a Testvérekben való felszítése, mégpedig nem a rideg-formális barátságra, mely nyilvánvalóan olyan, mintha nem is lenne, hanem a sűrű érintkezésen alapuló, bizalmas barátságra való törekvésnek.’ in Balogh, ‘Draskovich Observance’, 25.

⁸⁶ On dinner: Jászberényi, *A szt. Sophia Templomában látom én felszentelve nagysádat*, 144.

“To me, Freemasonry is a society that makes a small circle of the best-hearted people; in which one forgets the great inequality that exists in the outside world; in which one looks upon the king and the lowest man as brothers; in which one forgets the follies of the world, and seeing that in every member a soul, i.e. the love of good, is at work, one weeps tears of joy, in which one finds much more sure friends than in the outside world;”⁸⁷

I do not endeavour to answer the chicken-or-the-egg question, i.e. whether Nagyváthy was seeking inroads to the literati and patron circles and hence he became a mason; or he became a mason and thus he forged bonds with these circles. Both are arguable, but in neither case should the masonic context be disregarded. As we have seen already before, the lodge was by constitution just as much a political intellectual workshop as it was a meeting place for people. As the previously quoted section of the Draskovich constitution mandated, the “talented” members of the lodge were prompted by the Grand Master to prepare their ideas, and even a set of questions was mandated for the consideration of certain members.⁸⁸ These included issues that, as we shall see in the ensuing sections of this thesis, were central to Nagyváthy’s pamphlets, like “What morals are salutary for a people devoted to the common good? ... What should be the primary aim of education? ... What should be the priority: to always preserve the once established constitution, or to change it to this or that form in accordance with the new state of things? ... Would a higher population density be necessary in Hungary as opposed to the current population? ... Is trade desirable for Hungary?”⁸⁹ The answers to these questions

⁸⁷ „Én nekem a kőművesség oly társaság, amely egy kis karikát csinál a legjobbszívú emberekből; melyben az ember elfelejti azt a nagy egyenlenséget, amely a külső világban van; amelyben az ember a királyt és a legalacsonyabbrendű embert testvérének nézi, amelyben elfelejtkezik a világ esztelenségei felől, s azt látván, hogy minden tagban egy lélek, t. i. a jónak szeretete, dolgozik, örömkönnyekeket sír, amelyben sokkal biztosabb barátokat lél, mint a külső világban;” in Kazinczy Ferenc, ‘Aranka Györgynek 1790. március 25. [To György Aranka 25th March 1790]’, in *Levelek*. ed. Szauder, Mária. Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó (Budapest, 1979).

⁸⁸ H. Balázs, ‘A szabadkőművesség a 18. században’; Balogh, ‘Draskovich Observance’; Balogh, ‘The Institution of Draskovics Observance and the Masonic Anthropology of the Enlightenment’; Balogh, ‘The Constitutional Principles of the Draskovics Observance and its Influence on Cultural Networks’.

⁸⁹ ‘Milyen erkölcsök üdvösek a közboldogságot elkötelezetten szerető nép számára? ... Mi legyen az elsődleges célja a nevelésnek? ... Mi legyen az elsődleges: az egyszer megalapozott alkotmányt mindig megőrizni, vagy azt a dolgok új állásához mértén ilyen vagy olyan formára megváltoztatni? ... Vajon Magyarországon a jelenlegi

were in large part informed by the ethical norms of humanitarianism, friendship and equality mandated in the constitution. However, by the act of them being read out loud and debated in the lodge and the convention of lodges, they also came to exert influence on the interpretation of these very ideas. The constitution continues after listing the questions:

“These treatises could be read and studied at fractional meetings, but all bitterness should be avoided in their discussion... Moreover, all treatises should be preserved in the archives of the lodge and shown from time to time to the visiting Supervisor, who, if he finds any more worthy of mention among them, should present them to the convention and, partly for the sake of example, partly so that the honest man may receive his due reward, publish them and arrange for their printing, as it were, for the satisfaction of the entire order.”⁹⁰

Moreover, from the start, the answers arrived at in these works were meant to provide for later legal changes and hence political reform: “If there is a more excellent treatise among these, there will be a way to enact it under public law and give the author the glory he deserves...”⁹¹ Note that through this ritualised debate of questions aimed at real world legal reform, unavoidably also meant a contestation and constitution of the interpretation of the ethical prescriptions of masonry itself.

This complex process of ritualised friendship and intellectual work taking place in the lodges coupled with Nagyváthy’s eager participation in lodge works should suffice to highlight the

népességszám szerint nagyobb népsűrűség lenne szükséges? ... Kíváncos-e Magyarország számára a kereskedelem?’ in Balogh, ‘Draskovich Observance’, 34–36.

⁹⁰ ‘Ezen értekezéseket részleges összejöveteleken lehetne átolvasni és tanulmányozni, távol legyen azonban ezek megvitatásában minden epe és kesernyesség, ... Egyébiránt minden értekezést a páholy levéltárában meg kell őrizni és időről időre megmutatni az odalátogató Felügyelőnek, aki, ha közöttük említésre méltóbbra akadna, azt terjessze a konvent elé, és részint példaadás kedvéért, részint azért, hogy a becsületes ember elnyerje méltó jutalmát, mintegy az egész rend elégtételére tegye közzé, és kinyomtatásáról gondoskodják.’ in Balogh, 36–37.

⁹¹ ‘Ha közöttünk valamely kitűnőbb értekezés akad, majd lesz már mód azt közjogilag érvényesíteni, és a szerzőnek megadni a kiérdemelt dicsőséget’ in Balogh, 36.

centrality of freemasonry to the analysis of Nagyváthy's pamphlets. Masonry was not only the context in which the pamphlets were born, but also a set of ethical prescriptions, a series of questions, and a contested public space, that as I will show in the next chapter came to react to the events unfolding in 1790 with heightened activity. Before we can move on however, in what's left from this chapter I will undertake the analysis of masonic symbolism and the Draskovich program in Nagyváthy's pamphlets, to show – if there was any doubt – that Nagyváthy's writing cannot be interpreted as parallel to his masonic activities. Masonic symbolism cuts through his writing, and the textual parallels with the Draskovich constitution are likewise striking.

The Sons of the Sun: masonic symbolism in the Nagyváthy pamphlets

As I have touched upon multiple times, the historian Lajos Abafi pointed out that the pamphlets coming out under the publishing seal of the “Magnanimitas” lodge should be considered as the lodge's official proclamations.⁹² Nagyváthy's activity as a freemason leaves little doubt as for the circumstances of his writing. Let me now turn towards the analysis of the writing, and within that to the question how masonic symbolism in Nagyváthy's *Joyous Hours* pamphlet delimits the pamphlet's audience and highlights how the pamphlet was meant to serve as a prescriptive argument for masonry itself in the first place. While these symbols were drawing on metaphors with widely understandable imagery, the symbolic language of the *Joyous Hours* invites the masonic reader to reflect on its content within the masonic public sphere and beyond that to read the pamphlet as prescriptive to the political behaviour of masons themselves. The author invokes a range of symbols that serves to remind the masonic reader of the shared ‘secret’,

⁹² Abafi, *A szabadkőműveliség története Magyarországon*, 331.

hence the community, and beyond that: locates his arguments within the intellectual landscape of that very community.

The pamphlet immediately starts with the metaphor of construction, which is followed by a reference made to Zoroaster's teachings and the Temple of the Sun, to close off the first, theoretical half of the pamphlet, discussing the restoration of equality, with the metaphor of the setting of the burning Sun-light and the rising of Evening star, that is Venus. Before delving into analysing each of these separately, it is worth highlighting that these symbols frame specifically Nagyváthy's deliberation on why a measure of equality is a foundational question to any constitutional debate, where inequality comes from, and what needs to be done to restore it to what he considers to be its proper place. In the next chapter I will analyse in depth the vocabularies and political languages employed by Nagyváthy and what speech acts his juxtaposition of these constitutes – or in other words, how we should understand what Nagyváthy is saying and why did it matter to say it in the specific historical context he was saying it in. Before I can do that, however, we first need to consider the audience Nagyváthy is talking to, and as it shall be clear in the following, at least one of the distinguished audiences of the *Joyous Hours* was his fellow freemasons.

The pamphlet starts with a motto employing a series of construction metaphors, dedicating the pamphlet to masonry, and reminding the masonic audience to read the work within the ethical maxims of the brotherhood. This of course takes a heavily symbolic form:

" Building can proceed wisely

Where levelling [as well as *equalising*] precedes it."⁹³

⁹³'Tsak ott mehet böltsen végbe az építés, / Az hol, leg-első az El-egyenésítés.' in Nagyváthy, *A ' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 2.

Borrowing terminology from the construction site is a standard masonic device to describe their activities. Freemasonry originates itself from the builders of the temple of Solomon, the so strictly guarded ‘secret’ itself being equated within their mythology with its mystical construction plans conjoining together material, cosmological and moral constitution of the world.⁹⁴ The terminology for God within masonic lore is equated with the ‘Supreme Architect’, while the visual symbolism of the order draws heavily on the tools of stone masons.⁹⁵ Their rituals themselves are called ‘work’, the theoretical presentations during these ‘drawing’, the memo ‘architectural drawing’ and the social activities, dining and singing, in its aftermath ‘plastering’ (*vakolás*).⁹⁶ While for the 21st century reader the above motto is of course self-explanatory, I am taking the time to chart out the vocabulary of the synchronous freemason, for in this context the motto meant more than a neat two-liner emphasising the need for equality at the core of society. ‘Building’ for a mason was at the heart of their association. In this sense, motto is more than a reminder of the importance of the idea of equality to politics – that much would be either readily available to all educated readers, or if it wasn't, I predict that they could decipher easily. Those in possession of the ‘secret’, on the other hand, could understand that the pamphlet is directly addressed to them. After all, their self-understanding was that they were the ones executing the construction, consequently the above lines serve primarily to remind masons of their own supposed egalitarian commitments.

This masonic dedication of the pamphlet is reaffirmed by the author on two more occasions, first when he summons Zoroaster, the ancient Persian prophet, to set up his naturalistic organicist vision of society. Nagyváthy writes:

⁹⁴ Jászberényi, *A szt. Sophia Templomában látom én felszentelve nagysádat*, 22.

⁹⁵ Jászberényi, 20.

⁹⁶ Jászberényi, 143–44.

“The Order of Nature shows what man can expect onto himself. One must divide up; room must be made for others; that everyone may share equally in the pleasures of life. Zoroaster also said that in Nature, all moral and civil actions should be so vividly depicted; that men, from the Images, can clearly define the things depicted.”⁹⁷

The figure of Zoroaster was a widely recited character of enlightened public sphere as an oriental wise man, featuring in a number of well-known works from *Orlando* to Mozart’s *Magic Flute*.⁹⁸ However, by invoking his figure already on the first page, Nagyváthy does significantly more than simply appeal to oriental authority. Just like his significantly more famous Viennese brethren in the *Magic Flute*, Nagyváthy too was tapping into masonic ritual practices and appealed to authority in a form that is only convincing to those well versed in the masonic ritual practices.

As in Mozart’s case, the image of Zoroaster invokes the authority of one of the ancient masters of the masonic craft, and “the embodiment of the height of human enlightenment.”⁹⁹ The views legitimated by the appeal to Zoroaster might be considered *interesting*, or metaphorically relevant to the contemporary discourse by anyone. However, those educated on the Protestant and Catholic religious teachings and classical Roman literature could only accept the authority of Zoroaster if the weight of masonic symbolism legitimated it for them. Zoroaster was highlighted as an ancient master of the craft by masons like the Scottish Andrew-Michael Ramsay (1686-1743), founding figure of masonry in France, and celebrated by Mozart, but also

⁹⁷ "A' Természet-Rende mutatja, mit várhat az ember-is magára. Meg kell osztattatni; helyet kell másnak is tsinálni; hogy az élet gyönyörűségébe egyenlő részt vegyen. Zoroáster is azt állította, hogy a' Természetbe, minen erköltsi, és Polgári tselekdetek olly elevenenn ki legyenek ábrázolva; hogy az emberek, az Ábrázatokból világosan meg-hatáorzzák az ábrázolt dolgokat." in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 3–4.

⁹⁸ Jenny Rose, “‘Es Lebe Sarastro!’: Zoroaster on Stage in 18th Century Europe”, in *The Reward of the Righteous: Festschrift in Honour of Almut Hintze*, ed. Alberto Cantera, Nicholas Sims-Williams, and Maria Macuch (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2022), 423–24.

⁹⁹ Rose, 431.

by Nagyváthy's fellow Hungarian brethren József Babocsay in his masonic apologia.¹⁰⁰ As Babocsay wrote: "Our society was brought to Egypt by Osiris, to Persia by Zoroaster, to Thrace by Orpheus, ... and was greatly exalted."¹⁰¹ For masons, Zoroaster was celebrated as the revealer of the cult of the Sun, where the Sun, as the largest source of light was understood to stand for knowledge and reason, and by inference then, Zoroaster was associated with the highest form of enlightenment.¹⁰² This association of Zoroaster with the cult of the Sun is made explicit by Nagyváthy on the next page:

"Fire, by almost all Nations, looked upon as the image of the Deity. Hence the Temple of the Sun, and its veneration; and not only among the Persians in Asia; but even in America, distant from us for uncertain reasons, in Peru, the Deity was represented by the Sun's Ball, and here, as there, the Common People worshipped the example, the Wiser the thing exemplified."¹⁰³

Echoing Voltaire's view on Zoroaster as "less foolish than other human superstitions, since they secretly worship the sun, as an image of the creator",¹⁰⁴ Nagyváthy invites his readers to consider the metaphor behind the cult of the sun, and consequently behind the teachings of Zoroaster. How central the imagery of the Sun is to masonic self-identification is betrayed by another pamphlet of Nagyváthy likewise published in 1790, the *Red Friar*, where Nagyváthy's appeals to the Knights Templar, another supposed precursor of Freemasonry, as the "Sons of

¹⁰⁰ Rose, 'Es Lebe Sarastro!'

¹⁰¹ Babocsay: "A mi társaságunkat Oziris Egyiptusba, Zoroaszter Persiába, Orpheus Thraciába, Minős Kréta szigetibe, Kadmus vagy mások szerint inkább Erechteus Görög országba vitték be és nagyra fel is emelték." quoted in Németh József, 'Babocsay József szabadkőműves apológiája', *Zalai Múzeum*, no. 16. (2007): 225.

¹⁰² Rose, 'Es Lebe Sarastro!', 429; Paul E. Kerry, "'Initiates of Isis Now, Come, Enter into the Temple!': Masonic and Enlightenment Thought in 'The Magic Flute'", *Brigham Young University Studies* 43, no. 3 (2004): 115.

¹⁰³ "A Tüzet, majd minden Nemzetségek úgy nézték, mint az Istenségnek képét. Innen a Napnak Temploma, 's annak tisztelete; még pedig, nem csak a' Persáknál Ásiába; hanem még a' töllünk bizonytalan okokból távol-levő Amerikába – is, Perúba, az Istenséget a' Napnak Golyóbisával ábrázolták, 's itt úgy, mint amott, a' Köz-nép a' példát, az Okosabbak a' példázott dolgot imádták." in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Voltaire's *La Henriade* quoted in Rose, 'Es Lebe Sarastro!', 428.

the Sun”¹⁰⁵. When appealing to Zoroaster and the Tempel of the Sun then, Nagyváthy should be seen to appeal to the teachings of an ancient master and masonry itself in his argument for equality, reaffirming the commitment of Freemasons to egalitarianism.

In similar fashion, Nagyváthy closes his theoretical arguments regarding equality and opens the following deliberation on further practical reforms with light symbolism. After declaring in the utopian imagery, that the “Noble Hungarian Patria” have resigned “even those rights that became nearly legal”¹⁰⁶ after considering the arguments laid out by Nagyváthy and analysed in the next chapter, the author exclaims:

“A stream of tears of joy flows down my tired face; when, after the burning Sun-light has said its farewells, when the reviving Evening star¹⁰⁷ rises faithfully, under the walls of my house, seated on my Law, that is the same age as me, I watch with a keen eye my fellow workers returning to the quiet night, to my spacious courtyard, amidst a joyful whistling.”¹⁰⁸

The section does not only reintroduce the narrative amidst the more theoretical argument and does not only indicate the passing of time. The audience, the masonic audience, is again reminded that the author didn’t forget about them. Nagyváthy positions his argument within the masonic symbolic and ideological space by invoking the image of the setting of the “burning Sun-light” – that is, as we have seen, the clearest expression of reason – after stating his

¹⁰⁵ ‘A NAP FIAItól’ in Nagyváthy, *A veres barát*, 26.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Ezt látván a’ Nemes Magyar Haza, még szinte Törvényé vált Jussairól-is önként lemondott’ in Nagyváthy, *A’ Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 11.

¹⁰⁷ In Hungarian the term, „Esthajnal-tsillag”, that is Venus in our modern language use, invokes the image of both the Evening star, and the Morning star and reads „evening-morning-star”, doubling down on the imagery of renewal.

¹⁰⁸ “Az Öröm Könny-húllatásnak patakja zubok már alá meg-élemedett Ortzámonn; midőn az égető Nap-fény’ el-bútsúzása után- az meg-újító Esthajnal-tsillag’ hives fel-tet, szése idején Házam fala alatt, velem edgy-idős Törvényemre le-ülvén, orommal nézem Munka-segítő Társaimat, az éjjeli tsendes nyugalomra, tágas Udvaromba, vig fűgyörészés közt vissza-térni.” in Nagyváthy, *A’ Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 11–12.

theoretical proposition in the most explicit terms just on the previous two pages. It expresses that the arguments just stated, namely that inequality is contrary to divine purpose, the laws of nature as well as the social contract, should be seen to be in the very centre of masonic thought.

This is then followed by the reference to the time of the rise of the “reviving Evening- star”, again, not as a mere reference point within the narrative, but also as a metaphor, for the rise of masonry itself. The association of masonry with the symbol of the evening and morning star, expressed interchangeably in Hungarian as either ‘esthajnal csillag’, that is ‘evening-morning’ star or ‘hajnal csillag’ that is morning star, is scarce, and even in the masonic space is more elusive than that of the Sun, however, both in Nagyváthy’s *Red Friar* and Ádám Horváth’s letter to Ferenc Kazinczy its association with that of masonry is evident. As Nagyváthy’s lyric-self is overcome by melancholy amidst the ruins of the temple of the Templars, he exclaims:

“Wasn’t it here that for the first time it was seen,
That Morning-Star? which affected
With its renewing light, in the regions of Earth,
And took many souls to the knowledge
Of the Wise Maker? ...”¹⁰⁹

The association between the morning star and the Templars – and by self-association to Freemasonry – is reiterated where Nagyváthy turns to discuss the demise of the templars in France. Nagyváthy writes:

“So France too, has committed itself to this:
(From whose Motherly breasts burst forth
The milk once, like the Morning Star rose, ...)

¹⁰⁹ ‘Hát leg-elsőbenn-is nem itten láttatott / Amaz Hajnal-Tsillag? a’ mellynek ki-hatott / Újjító Sógára, a’ Föld’ környékére, / És sok Lelkeket vitt meg-esmérésére / A’ Bölts Teremtőnek.’ in Nagyváthy, *A veres barát*, 20.

That such an ORDER, ...

Has been murdered, Oh Murderous Massacre!”¹¹⁰

The morning star – or evening star in English – emerges here with regards to the Templars, just as in the *Joyous Hours* as the source of or at least the harbinger of revival, renewal, morning and light. The connection is further strengthened by a 1789 letter of Ádám Horváth, in which he expresses certain “secret sorrows” that he is going through but doesn’t want to put in writing to Ferenc Kazinczy, before he announces on a more joyful note that he will be taken to Pest by his friend Csapodi soon, where from he received favourable response to his query.

“But - it will not always be like this, since the Morning Star, which is beginning to illuminate me better and better, comforts me, and perhaps I will soon be able to travel with you and many other sons of light on the path of true happiness - on the 23rd of the present month Csapodi will go to Pest and take me with him; there, where I have already received a very favorable - - - to my application made by my Letter. He was there at the end of September, and did everything he could.”¹¹¹

We know from his previous and later correspondence with Kazinczy and the acceptance of Csapodi to the “Magnanimitas” lodge earlier that year that the application in question is his application to the lodge.¹¹² Here, too, the rise of the morning star – same as the Evening star - comes to be associated with the growing prospects of joining the “sons of light”, the masons. Based on these symbolic uses of the ‘morning star’ it appears then that in the *Joyous Hours* too, we need to interpret the temporal reference of “when the reviving Evening-star rises faithfully”

¹¹⁰ “‘S Magát még Frantzia Ország-is rá-atta: / (A” Mellynek Anyai Ölébe ki-fakadt / Tejéből, hajdan, mint Hajnal-Tsillag’ szakatt, / ... / Hogy illy RENDER ... / meg ölhetne? óh gyilkos Kontzolás!’ in Nagyváthy, 23.

¹¹¹ “De hiszen - nem lesz mindenkor így, osztán vigasztal a’ Hajnal tsillag, melly jobban jobban kezd világosítani előttem, ’s majd talám veled és több világosság fiaival nem sokára együtt utazhatok a ’ valóságos boldogság útján”⁹⁴ - Csapodi 23-a Praesentis fog Pestre menni, és engemet magával vinni; oda, a ’ hol már Levelem által tett jelentésem re igen fav o rab ilis----- kaptam. O most 7ber végénn volt oda, és m indent tett a ’ mit tehetett.” quoted in Jászberényi, *A szt. Sophia Templomában látom én felszentelve nagysádat*, 59.

¹¹² Jászberényi, 59.

as significantly more than a simple narrative tool to allow the author to discuss how the evening will look like on his homestead. Instead, the temporal reference is one that is only intelligible to the initiated ones: once the theoretical egalitarian reforms have taken place, whose discussion the author just concluded, and which are so central to freemasons the movement itself, or at least its ethical concerns will themselves rise.

This dedication of the pamphlet to a masonic audience takes place primarily in the first section of the pamphlet, framing the egalitarian theoretical exposition, and in the following sections it is abandoned. However, as I hope to have demonstrated, in this first section of the pamphlet, the author uses the symbolic clues to emphasise it to the masonic audience that the arguments and the takeaways of the pamphlet are to be understood not only within the masonic public space but should be considered to be central to it. In the next section, I am going to contrast Nagyváthy's pamphlet with the ethical prescriptions of the constitution of the Draskovich observance, to show how the ideas presented in the argument, and situated at the centre of the masonic space by the symbolic language, are in fact drawn from the very centre of the masonic life: the constitution.

Humanity, Friendship, Equality: Nagyváthy and the Draskovich Observance

In the previous section I have shown, how Nagyváthy addressed in a symbolic language his fellow masons in the *Joyous Hours* pamphlet, and how he situated his arguments at the very heart of freemasonry itself. However, until now, the substantive analysis of what those arguments might have been I have postponed, in order to be able to focus on establishing the context of authorship and the audience of the work. In what follows, I am going to show that in line with Nagyváthy's addressing of his work to his brethren, the ideas advocated for in the text

are also rooted in Freemasonry. Piroska Balogh has shown in her research how the constitution of the Draskovich observance put forward eight ethical maxims that the lodges' grand masters were meant to incite in their fellow masons, based on which she attempted to construct the anthropology of the observance.¹¹³ The constitution discusses these in order of priority, Balogh lists them as follows: "humanity, friendship, equality, silence and secrecy, enthusiasm in supporting the Craft, steadfastness, fervency and honesty."¹¹⁴ Below I endeavour to show how the first three of these, humanity, friendship and equality, in order of priority, form the theoretical backbone of Nagyváthy's *Joyous Hours*, the obvious consequence being that Nagyváthy's political writing need to be considered as a pamphlet not only produced in and addressed to the masonic context, but also an attempt at turning the ethical maxims of the observance – recognisable to all of the initiated – towards the practical execution.

Nagyváthy's precise argumentation revealing the nuances of his concept of equality will be elaborated on in the next chapter. At this point it suffices to see the conclusions he arrives at in his exploration of the problem of equality. The theoretical exploration which Nagyváthy begins with considering the teachings of Zoroaster, continues through situating his argument in the republican and ancient-constitutional political languages, and he concludes by stating that equality should be restored on the following three grounds, that inequality is "against Divine purpose, the Law invested in Nature and against the Contract of Societies."¹¹⁵ He goes on to expand on all three points as follows:

"I. The Creator, by equal Birth and Death, making all his creatures alike, did not make them the Lords or Servants of one another; but friends.

¹¹³ Balogh, 'The Constitutional Principles of the Draskovics Observance and its Influence on Cultural Networks', 323.

¹¹⁴ Balogh, 323; Balogh, 'Draskovich Observance', 23–44.

¹¹⁵ "a' maga tuladjon Bóldogsága munkálkodásába, a' Teremtőnek tzélja, annak a' Természetbe bé óltott Törvénye, és a' Társaságok' Edjezése ellen" in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 10.

2. The Law of Nature also teaches that one person may offer his service to another for a certain benefit, even until death: but his descendants, who are not yet living, and perhaps differ from him in their thoughts with regard to that benefit, can only be bound to the Society; but never to an individual Person.
3. The Contract of Societies also shows no differently; For, promising Security and Ease of Life to all Members: it would be a very sad thing if only a part of them could live with these.”¹¹⁶

The argument advanced by Nagyváthy, first and foremost, derives equality from friendship associated with divine purpose. The second point emphasises how hereditary perpetual serfdom is contrary to the laws of nature and establishes the social category his equality concept is interested in: the individual. Finally, in the third point he emphasises that the social contract mandates the consideration of all members of society under the umbrella of common good, something that authors formulating their point in the language of ancient constitutionalism, such as Péter Balogh featuring prominently in the next chapter, limited in their rhetoric to only the nobility.¹¹⁷ This way, without going so far as to address the questions of political and economic inequalities, Nagyváthy proposes a different understanding compared to the status quo: one where the legal category of ‘perpetual serfdom’ is abolished and instead agricultural work is based on the labour of the legal category of ‘free-movers’.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, he advocates a

¹¹⁶ "I. A' Teremtő az egyenlő Születés, és Halál által minden teremtsit egymáshoz hasonlóvá tévén, edjiket a' másoknak Urává, vagy szolgájává nem teremtette; hanem barátjává. 2. A' Természet Törvénye-is azt tanította, hogy egy személly, a' másoknak bizonyos haszonvételért szolálatját hóltig-is ajánlhattya : de még nem-is élő, 's talán azon haszonvételre nézve, tölle Gondolkozásaiba különböző maradékát, tsak a' Társaságnak; de egy különös Személlynek soha le nem kötheti. 3. A' Társaságok Edjezése-is nem mást mutat; Ugyan-is az, Bátorságot, és Élet-könnyebbséget igérvén minden Tagoknak: igen szomorú dolog volna, ha azzal tsak egy résznek lehetne élni." in Nagyváthy, 10–11.

¹¹⁷ Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 16–17.

¹¹⁸ Both the relevance and the limitations of this point I will discuss at length in the next chapter, when I am going to undertake to situate Nagyváthy within the 1790 discourse. However, a few things need to be noted immediately: first of, under the law, there was a single category of serfdom, which was perpetual. However, as we know from László Péter, the understanding of the law and of legislature was in constant evolution during the 18th century, and for much of the century it was considered to be not a mandate, but an interest reconciliation forum, which resulted in the huge legal terminological pluralism, Zita Horváth elaborated on in her research. The law

community concept where all members of the society are considered under the concept of the common good, and are themselves tied together by the relationship of friendship. He achieves this by declaring first the esoteric equality of all of humanity in the purpose of creation. Much of these ideas are formulated in the political language of enlightened government of Joseph II, and we can detect especially strong textual parallels with Joseph von Sonnenfels, one of the chief ideologues of the Habsburg strain of Enlightened Absolutism.¹¹⁹ However, an equally important source of Nagyváthy's ethical considerations, especially the role of friendship, can be found first and foremost in the constitution of the Draskovich observance.

I have explored the centrality of friendship to masonry, both as a theoretical concept and as a lived practice in the second section of this chapter. Here I have emphasised that it is important for our understanding of freemasonry to appreciate it as a lived experience, a ritual practice. However, the corollary is equally true: to be able to interpret masonic thought, the theoretical underpinning that constituted the practice and in turn was constituted by the practice itself is equally important. Tracing the speeches and political writings of Freemasons active in the French lodges, Loiselle highlights the impact of classical republican thinking on Freemasonry, especially that of Rousseau and Mably.¹²⁰ Loiselle argues, central to masonry was their

paradoxically, recognized the 'freemover' layer within serfdom from the 1720s onwards, while at the same time attempted to prohibit and curtail their emergence. Consequently, and this is the second point, Joseph II abolished perpetual serfdom in 1785. However, as I shall elaborate on this in the next chapter, this was done by decree, which in the emerging novel view of the legislature during the 1790 diet, essentially considering the diet a form of parliament in the modern sense, meant that as long as this decree was seen as not yet assumed the force of law. This of course meant, that the issue was debated, as also outlined by Kosáry, Tevesz and others, and this is the immediate context of Nagyváthy's political writings. However, more on this in the next chapter. Zita Horváth, 'Örökös és szabadmenetelű jobbágyok a 18. századi Magyarországon [Perpetual and Freemoving Serfs in 18th Century Hungary]', *Századok*, no. 5. (2009): 1063–1104; Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 339; László Péter, 'Montesquieu's Paradox on Freedom and Hungary's Constitutions 1790–1990', *History of Political Thought* 16, no. 1 (1995): 77–104.

¹¹⁹ On the language of enlightened government: Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszméletörténet*, 17–19; Zsolt Kökényesi, 'Kiváltságosok az állam és a közjó szolgálatában. Joseph von Sonnenfels nemesség koncepciójáról [The Privileged in the Service of the State and the Common Good. Joseph Von Sonnenfels on the Concept of Nobility]', *AETAS* 28., no. 3 (2013); László Kontler, 'Polizey and Patriotism: Joseph Von Sonnenfels and the Legitimacy of Enlightened Monarchy in the Gaze of Eighteenth-Century State Sciences', in *Monarchism and Absolutism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Cesare Cuttica and Glenn Burgess (Pickering & Chatto, 2014), 75–90, 5.

¹²⁰ Loiselle, *Brotherly Love*, 1–45.

arguments that friendship between virtuous men was constituting the backbone of the political community, something which unfortunately as a result of the pursuit of private goods was seen to be impossible outside of the boundaries of the masonic lodges.¹²¹

As it is evidenced by the already cited letter of Ferenc Kazinczy to his friend Aranka, an affective understanding of friendship was present on the turn of the 1790s in Hungarian masonic circles. Kazinczy explained to his freshly initiated brother and friend, György Aranka what masonry constitutes to him:

“To me, Freemasonry is a society that makes a small circle of the best-hearted people; in which one forgets the great inequality that exists in the outside world; in which one looks upon the king and the lowest man as brothers; in which one forgets the follies of the world, and seeing that in every member a soul, i.e. the love of good, is at work, one weeps tears of joy, in which one finds much more sure friends than in the outside world;”¹²²

However, in interpreting this letter most often the emphasis is placed on the egalitarian and constitutional socialisation, the emergence of a public sphere and its effects on the political agendas of this passage¹²³ while the question of friendship is most often neglected as an obvious component or exponent of that egalitarian socialisation. The two, however connected, have their own political dimension, which can facilitate our understanding of both the equality and community concepts of the *Joyous Hours*.

¹²¹ Loiselle, 1–45.

¹²² ‘Én nekem a kőművesség oly társaság, amely egy kis karikát csinál a legjobbszívű emberekből; melyben az ember elfelejti azt a nagy egyenlenséget, amely a külső világban van; amelyben az ember a királyt és a legalacsonyabbrendű embert testvérének nézi, amelyben elfelejtkezik a világ esztelenségei felől, s azt látván, hogy minden tagban egy lélek, t. i. a jónak szeretete, dolgozik, örömkönnyekeket sír, amelyben sokkal biztosabb barátokat lél, mint a külső világban;’ in Kazinczy, ‘Kazinczy Arankának’, 25 March 1790.

¹²³ H. Balázs, ‘A szabadkőművesség a 18. században’, 220; H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*; Miskolczy, *Orpheus Világában*; Miskolczy, ‘A szabadkőművességtől a nyilvánosságig. Kazinczy Ferenc és eszmetársai a magyar magántársasági demokratikus kultúra hőskorában’.

If we return to Piroska Balogh's anthropology of the Draskovich observance, one thing emerges immediately: the pursuit of friendship is highlighted in the constitution as of higher importance for the masons than equality itself.¹²⁴ As a reminder, the constitution defines friendship as a connection "to be sought in the mutual and benevolent agreement of souls", "not in the cold formal friendship"¹²⁵. Moreover, this "mutual and benevolent agreement" constituted not only a private good, but also a public benefit, that extended beyond the boundaries of the masonic lodge. In this view, the Draskovich constitution was in line with French masonic thinking and the friendship concepts of antique thinkers like Cicero who constituted part of the core curriculum of young noblemen.¹²⁶ As the constitution continues, if the lodge Master manages to motivate the brothers for friendship, then "this mutual goodwill will be spread in such a way that everyone, not only within the Order, will be linked by the closest bond of friendship."¹²⁷ The public good derived from the mutual goodwill is easy to understand, however, its true power emerges in its effects onto the community. The masonic friendship concept, through its elevation to the status of sanctity, comes to establish the closest community: "loyalty to friends should be so sacred that we would rather risk losing everything dear to us, even our lives and reputation, than break it."¹²⁸

If we inspect Nagyváthy's call again, how divine purpose is not to place one as servant of another but to be their friends, it becomes clear that within the masonic discursive field, the meaning of this divine command extends considerably beyond the initially advanced understanding of esoteric equality. It appears to ground a powerful, mutual bond of solidarity

¹²⁴ Balogh, 'The Constitutional Principles of the Draskovics Observance and its Influence on Cultural Networks', 325.

¹²⁵ 'mely a lelkek kölcsönös és jóakarató egyetértésében keresendő ... nem a rideg-formális barátságra' in Balogh, 'Draskovich Observance', 25.

¹²⁶ David Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, Key Themes in Ancient History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹²⁷ "ezt a kölcsönös jóakaratot úgy fogják terjesztetni, hogy mindenki, nemcsak a renden belül, a barátság legszorosabb kötelékével fog összekapcsolatni. " in Balogh, 'Draskovich Observance', 25.

¹²⁸ 'A barátok iránti hűség azonban olyannyira szent legyen, hogy inkább akarjuk vállalni minden drága dolog, akár életünk és megbecsültségünk elvesztését, semmint hogy ezt megtörjük.' in Balogh, 27.

that has the potential to extend well into the political realm, when Nagyváthy's utopian voice expresses his hope over "the Rich, the Poor, the Landlords, and their Co-workers, having become friends with each other, have divided both the Joys and the Sorrows among themselves, as if they were some inheritance."¹²⁹ For the masonic reader of his time, the hopes expressed here extended well beyond a mere harmony in society. By equating divine purpose with friendship, Nagyváthy appeals for an extension of empathy, an understanding of common interests and most importantly loyalty in mutual directions.

It is this sort of friendship that grounds Nagyváthy's concern with equality in the first place, not a concern with political freedoms or economic inequalities. After all, as I shall show in the next chapter, hierarchies, just as Sonnenfels, he recognises as a necessary feature of society.¹³⁰ As Cicero, one of the well attested sources of education of the Hungarian nobility, put it, "just as those who are superior in a relationship of friendship and association should equalise themselves to their inferiors, so too inferiors ought not to take it ill that they are surpassed in ability or fortune or station."¹³¹ However, while in the classical world friendship was predominantly understood as a utilitarian, political relation, and was extended by authors like Cicero towards a personal, affective relation, the mason of the late 18th century Pest was extending an emotive relationship towards the political realm.

Friendship is followed in order of priority by equality in the Draskovich constitution. Moreover, as we have seen, both the Draskovich constitution and Nagyváthy considers the latter to be

¹²⁹ "Nagy Gyönyörűség, azt mondanám, azt látni, hogy a' Világi Hazafiak, Gazdagok, szegények, Földes Urak, és azoknak munka-segitő Társai, egymás barátivá változván, mind a' Gyönyörűségeket, mind a' fájdalokat egymás közt, mint valami örökséget fel-osztyák. " in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 14.

¹³⁰ Kőkényesi, 'Kiváltságosok az állam és a közjó szolgálatában. Joseph von Sonnenfels nemesség koncepciójáról', 72.

¹³¹ Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World*, 135.

understood as being in the realm of friendship. The Draskovich constitution while declaring a program of equalisation, also declares the social order to be left unchanged:

“We have neither the opportunity nor the intention, however, to overthrow from the roots all the social order established by custom or law, but must use the only remedy that is at our disposal. And we can achieve this in two ways. On the one hand, by bringing the powerful down to our rank and order, and by raising the inferior to ours.”¹³²

This equalisation process is to be understood within the interpretative field of the order’s commitment to friendship, and not the factual abolition of the existing hierarchies. As they continue to explain:

“If, therefore, some have subordinates or servants, they should treat them kindly, and not only not make their lot, which is already difficult in the state of servitude, more bitter, but also alleviate it by treating it kindly. They should also strive to promote diligence, peace, and patriotism among them, so that all these subordinates may understand that in such a Brother they find not a master, but a caring father.”¹³³

Both the language and the image painted in the *Joyous Hours* about how the equal relationship actually looks like comes to striking proximity of the Draskovich constitution on this end: “I have not deserved, O God! to be called a Lord by my fellow-workers: I do not wish to be

¹³² ‘Sem alkalmunk, sem szándékunk nincs azonban arra, hogy valamennyi társadalmi rendet, melyet a szokás vagy a törvények megalapoztak, gyökerestől felforgassuk, hanem egyedül azt az orvosságot kell használni, ami kezünkbe adatott. Ahhoz pedig két úton-módon juthatunk hozzá. Egyfelől ha a hatalmasokat a mi rangunkhoz-rendünkhöz alászólítjuk, az alacsonyabb rendűeket pedig hozzánk felemeljük’ in Balogh, ‘Draskovich Observance’, 28.

¹³³ ‘Ha úgy adódik tehát, hogy egyeseknek alárendeltjeik vagy szolgálói vannak, velük kegyesen bánjanak, és ne csak ne tegyék keservesebbé sorsukat, mely a szolgaság állapotában egyébként is nehéz, hanem kegyes bánásmóddal enyhítsenek is azon. A szorgalmat, békességet, hazaszeretetet közöttük éppúgy igyekezzenek előmozdítani, hogy mindezek az alárendeltek megértsék: egy ilyenfajta Testvérben nem urat, hanem gondos atyát találunk.’ in Balogh, 29.

anything else among them; but a Friend, Father, and Leader of their Happiness.”¹³⁴ The continued hierarchy is implicit in the paternal imagery that is the consequence of equality in the pamphlet.

However, the existing social categories were considered not only in Nagyváthy's text, but also at the very foundation of the masonic movement to be affected by such individual, or in Nagyváthy's case collective actions on behalf of the nobility towards the serfdom. By introducing the idea of shared responsibilities and mutual loyalty and obligations towards one another between the nobles and serfs, these social categories were reconceptualised. In the place of previous corporate categories, Nagyváthy shifted the focus of politics towards one community under the common good. By employing the symbolic language of freemasonry in the pamphlet, Nagyváthy invited his fellow freemasons to consider this extension of the community to be grounded in the esoteric equality of friendship as a public good to ground their activities in “building” the edifice they were about to attempt to erect during the 1790 diet. In doing so, beyond the symbolic appeal to the authority of rituals, Nagyváthy was restating the ethical values in the very centre of the masonic movement of the Kingdom of Hungary – the constitution of masonry. What exactly Nagyváthy was *doing* with restating the Draskovich constitution in this way, what discourse was taking place within the masonic public of 1790, and how Nagyváthy's text related to it are the subjects of the next chapter.

¹³⁴ "Nem érdemlettem Uram! én at, hogy engem' Munkás-Társaim Uroknak nevezzenek : Nem is akarok hát én egyéb lenni közöttök; hanem csak Emberek' Baráttya, Atya, és Bölcsőségeknek Vezére." in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 14.

Chapter 2 – Whose equality of what? The Contestation of the Masonic Space Ahead of the 1790 Coronation Diet.

Since Éva H. Balázs many have stipulated the centrality of freemasonry to our understanding of the political culture of the Josephine era and its aftermath.¹³⁵ It has also been widely argued that masonic networks were utilised by figures of the noble resistance movement of 1790 like Péter Balogh from Ócsa (1747-1818), Lutheran inspector and member of the *Tabula Septemviralis*, in order to gather support for their political programs, and even the potential dethroning of the Habsburg dynasty.¹³⁶ Building on my argument made in the previous chapter that the context of masonry both as a public sphere and a ritual practice is central to deciphering the speech acts executed in János Nagyváthy's 1790 pamphlets, in this chapter I am going to undertake analysis of these speech acts within the political discourse itself. I am going to show that János Nagyváthy's work should primarily be understood as a contestation of the masonic public space in conversation and debate with the propositions and rhetoric put forward by fellow masons like Péter Balogh, Ferenc Széchenyi (1754–1820) and József Hajnóczy (1750-1795), all of whom are considered to represent one or another faction of the 1790-91 diet.¹³⁷ In comparison with these texts, János Nagyváthy's pamphlets emerge as an attempt to contest the masonic public space against the propositions of Péter Balogh, while reasserting publicly the privately circulated ideas enclosed in Ferenc Széchenyi's letters.

¹³⁵ H. Balázs, 'A szabadkőművesség a 18. században'; H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*; Jászberényi, *A szt. Sophia Templomában látom én felszentelve nagysádat*; Miskolczy, *Orpheus Világában [In the world of Orpheus]*; Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*.

¹³⁶ Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 334; Tevesz, 'Adatok az 1790-es rendi mozgalom eszmetörténeti háttéréhez', 138; Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', 79.

¹³⁷ Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1'; Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 333–45; Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 219; Tevesz, 'Adatok az 1790-es rendi mozgalom eszmetörténeti háttéréhez'.

The legacy of enlightened absolutism

As discussed in the previous chapter, from its most enthusiastic supporters, freemasonry emerged during the late 1780s as one of the many critiques of the Habsburg's absolutist rule. However, this is far from saying that freemasonry presented a united front against the crown. In order for us to be able to successfully situate Nagyváthy's pamphlet among the masonic voices contributing to the political discourse of the 1790-91 Diet, we need to first take a few steps back to appreciate the political context in which the Kingdom of Hungary was preparing itself for a coronation diet in 1790.

Joseph II's decade long tumultuous reign was coming to an end less than a year after the French Revolution broke out in Paris. In the early months of 1790 it was evident that the Habsburg Empire was facing a major crisis as a result of a combination of decades of enlightened absolutist governance, economic hardships caused by the poor harvests of the late 1780s, war with the Ottoman Empire and peasant uprisings in Transylvania and Hungary and independence war in the Austrian Netherlands.¹³⁸ The situation was exacerbated by Joseph II having no direct heir as he passed away on 20th February, leaving behind few supporters anywhere, but specifically in the Kingdom of Hungary alienating practically all of layers of the polity except for a handful of intellectuals.¹³⁹ Eventually the unfolding political crises resulted in the emergence of the noble resistance movement showing early signs of national awakening, the rise of the political discourse centred around the ancient constitution, as well as the convergence of the positions of the strata characterised as enlightened nobility or intelligentsia and the

¹³⁸ Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 217–18; Benda, 'A magyar nemesi mozgalom 1790-ben'.

¹³⁹ Kontler, *A History of Hungary*; Benda, 'A magyar nemesi mozgalom 1790-ben'.

nobility focusing on maintaining the estates order.¹⁴⁰ Crucially, on the back of these debates the late 1780s and early 1790s saw the emergence of a new concept of the *communitas*.¹⁴¹ Even if it didn't always get that far in its conclusions, some of which at least departed from in the axiomatic belief in equality.¹⁴² Eventually, this was not all that obvious as Joseph II assumed power in 1780.

Initially Joseph II's rule was awaited with enthusiasm by many who were one way or another disadvantaged by the prevailing estates structures and Catholic domination. The overwhelmingly Protestant freemasonry of Hungary and the non-noble intellectuals like József Hajnóczy were a case in point.¹⁴³ They hoped, not without reason that Joseph's rule is going to bring significant improvement in their lot. The declaration of lasting and landmark decrees like the Patent on Toleration in 1781 and the Patent on Serfdom in 1785 presented them with ample enough evidence that they did not place their hopes in Joseph in vein.¹⁴⁴ As I have already discussed in the previous chapter, significant numbers of freemasons were participating in the Josephine administration in the early years of his reign, and some, like Hajnóczy whose service was enabled by Joseph's abolishing of the rank requirement to hold governmental positions, remained committed to serving the ruler all the way until his death.¹⁴⁵ Others, over time turned away from Joseph, especially following the patent on freemasonry and Joseph's attempt to levy taxes on the nobility.¹⁴⁶ However, that is not to say that they exhibited equal contempt for

¹⁴⁰ Kosáry forcing the Marxist historical-materialist understanding emphasizes the 'retrograde' vs. 'progressive' estates, where in his analysis the 'retrograde' nobility prevails. Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 333–45; Likewise, Kontler emphasizes the compromise over the pre-Josephine system, emphasizing the long-term impact of the committee works of the diet. Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 219–20; An emphasis on the proximation of views giving rise to a united national agenda can be found in Gábor Almási and Lav Šubarić, 'The New Discourses of Nation: The Origins of Nationalism in Late Eighteenth-Century Hungary (Part 1)', *Nations and Nationalism* 28, no. 3 (2022): 899–904.

¹⁴¹ Debreczeni, 'Nemzet és Identitás a 18. század Második Felében', 540.

¹⁴² Debreczeni, 540.

¹⁴³ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 270–73.

¹⁴⁴ H. Balázs, 270–73.

¹⁴⁵ H. Balázs, 270–73.

¹⁴⁶ H. Balázs, 270–73.

Joseph's rule, and some, like Gergely Berzeviczy later on expressed their regrets about turning their backs so soon to the progressive ruler.¹⁴⁷

It is nonetheless clear that the general sentiment in 1790 turned most of the (albeit limited) public opinion against Joseph, and the belief that the reforms had gone too far and the time had come to re-negotiate legal bases of the kingdom's political life – either by emphasising the unchangeability of pre-Teresian legal tradition or by pushing for its reforms – with or without the Habsburg rulers became the basis of the noble-national movement.¹⁴⁸ Joseph's refusal to crown himself king of Hungary (adding further salt to the wounds by moving the crown to Vienna from its traditional Pressburg repository), his continued refusal to consult the Hungarian estates in matters of recruitment and taxation, circumventing the counties' authority, and introducing German as the language of administration (instead of the customary Latin, but aggravating the Hungarian nobility to the extent of increased demands for the use of Hungarian), to name but the most important grievances of the Hungarian nobility, were all understood to be in blatant disregard of the customary law of the Kingdom.¹⁴⁹ The combined effects of shutting down all but a handful of masonic lodges and his failed attempt to levy taxes on the nobility culminated in the alienation of his hitherto loyal masonic supporters as well.¹⁵⁰ As a result of the wide scope of Joseph's reforms, the many grievances that before Joseph would have been understood to represent cases of individual breaches of individual laws came to be understood as amounting to one singular assault on the legal tradition as a whole.¹⁵¹ This whole by the late 18th century many came to regard, not independently of their reading of the Enlightenment classics, as the *constitution* of the kingdom, the breach of which had been

¹⁴⁷ H. Balázs, 301–2.

¹⁴⁸ Marczali, *Az 1790/1-diki országgyűlés*, 5–9; Benda, 'A magyar nemesi mozgalom 1790-ben', 194.

¹⁴⁹ Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 215–19; Benda, 'A magyar nemesi mozgalom 1790-ben'; Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', 68–70.

¹⁵⁰ H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 277.

¹⁵¹ Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', 63–65.

argued to warrant a breach of the contract between the country and king.¹⁵² Already before the ruler's death, some among the Hungarian nobility were putting out feelers towards a possible English or Prussian pretender and setting up *crown-guard banderiums* ('korona őrző bandérium') officially to celebrate the return of the crown to the kingdom. The Hungarian nobility was mobilizing itself for the eventuality of – the idea of revolution being yet to be used in its modern formulation – an armed revolt.¹⁵³

It wasn't for another 58 years, however, that the political tensions between the Habsburgs and the emerging national movement erupted in open armed conflict. As the poet Csokonai's (1773-1805) satiric *Dialogue onto the year 1790* between an egret and an owl exclaims, only the birds whose feathers were showcased as part of the national attire got caught up in the nobility's gun fire in 1790.¹⁵⁴

Instead, the understanding prevailed that the issues will need to be sorted out during the upcoming coronation diet convoked by Leopold (1747-1792), next in line for the Habsburg crowns, Joseph's brother and for now the Archduke of Tuscany. The coronation diet presented the estates with two crucial tasks and possibilities: on the one hand, the negotiations around the Diploma Inaugurale allowed them to fix certain privileges and obligations of king and of country; on the other hand it presented them with the opportunity of enacting or striking down the patents issued by Maria Theresia and Joseph II, for the first time since 1765.¹⁵⁵ The diploma

¹⁵² Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1'; László Kontler, '7 Political Ambition: The Concept in Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* and Its Reception in Hungary (1748–1848)', in *Parliamentarism in Northern and East-Central Europe in the Long Eighteenth Century: Volume I: Representative Institutions and Political Motivation*, by István M. Szijártó, László Kontler, and Wim Blockmans, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2022); Péter, 'Montesquieu's Paradox on Freedom and Hungary's Constitutions 1790–1990'.

¹⁵³ Benda, 'A magyar nemesi mozgalom 1790-ben'; Reinhart Koselleck, 'Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution', in *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, ed. Keith Tribe (Columbia University Press, 2004), 43–57.

¹⁵⁴ Csokonai Vitéz Mihály, *Prózai Művek [Works in Prose]*, ed. Vargha Balázs, vol. 2, Csokonai Vitéz Mihály minden munkája [Complete works of Mihály Vitéz Csokonai] (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1980), 5–9.

¹⁵⁵ István M. Szijártó, 'Texts and Discourse', in *Estates and Constitution: The Parliament in Eighteenth-Century Hungary*, 1st ed., vol. 30 (Berghahn Books, 2020), 209–10, 225–26.

represented a quasi-contractual agreement between king and country on the course the new king's reign was about to take, and consequently, what privileges, laws etc. were guaranteed in the inauguration diploma was one of the most important political questions of the coronation throughout the 18th century.¹⁵⁶ In parallel to this, the process of reviewing the patents issued since the last diet, many of which were seen to have violated that newly imagined ancient constitution of the country, presented a no less important task, and the two concern together were understood to represent the task of 'restoring' or 'strengthening' the 'constitution' of the country. Much of the political debates of the spring months of 1790 need to be understood to have cantered around these two simple questions: what should the coronation diploma and oath contain; and what of Joseph's and Maria Theresia's patents should be kept if any. The answer to these two questions hinged on one's interpretation of the constitution.

The Constitutional Debate: What is even a constitutional question?

Győző Concha's late 19th century work on the *Reform Ideals of the 1790s and their precursors* established at least four major points of debate ahead of the 1790 diet, centred around questions of denominational equality, egalitarian reform, community concepts and these three taken together: the debate over the question of the constitution.¹⁵⁷ More recently, the works of Attila Debreczeni, and Almási and Šubarić have also emphasised that political discourse underwent profound changes in the late 1780s and early 1790s, highlighting the emergence of a more egalitarian and inclusive *communitas* concept, one which Philip Barker argues, came into conflict with the hitherto existing concept of the noble nation now reinterpreted to have its roots

¹⁵⁶ Szijártó, 209–10.

¹⁵⁷ Concha, *A kilencvenes évek reformeszméi és előzményeik*, 66–76, 125.

in the historical understanding of law.¹⁵⁸ Based on these conceptual shifts the political agendas of the 1790-91 diet are traditionally divided into three categories, the moderate program of a small group of “mostly enlightened aristocrats”, the radical program of a “marginalised group of intellectuals”, and the middle-nobility seeking to reaffirm their liberties and privileges.¹⁵⁹ These programs respectively are analysed based on the reform proposals of three freemasons: the aristocratic patron of arts and sciences and later founder of the National Library and Museum, Count Ferenc Széchenyi; Széchenyi’s former secretary and Josephist *alispán*, the non-noble József Hajnóczy; and Lutheran inspector Péter Balogh.¹⁶⁰ In this section I am going to analyse the language use, rhetoric and argumentative positions of Ferenc Széchenyi and Péter Balogh from this trio¹⁶¹, to highlight the key points of contestation among them, before in the next section I can turn towards comparing their language use and positions to János Nagyváthy’s pamphlets. In doing so, I am going to rely on the works of József Takáts on the political languages of late 18th century Hungary, taking his languages of republicanism, ancient-constitution, enlightened-governance and politeness as heuristic tools, bearing in mind the constant juxtapositions and transfers between contemporaneous political languages.¹⁶² In the

¹⁵⁸ Debreczeni, ‘Nemzet és Identitás a 18. század Második Felében’, 524–26; Almási and Šubarić, ‘The New Discourses of Nation’, 903–4; Barker, ‘Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the “Ancient Constitution” at the Diet of 1790/1’.

¹⁵⁹ Barker, ‘Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the “Ancient Constitution” at the Diet of 1790/1’, 77; Marczali, *Az 1790/1-diki országgyűlés*, 80–99; Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 334–39; István Schlett, ‘Elszalasztott lehetőség vagy zsákutca?’, *Politika Tudományi Szemle*, no. 1 (1996): 24.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ I am going to make references to József Hajnóczy’s proposals where necessary, however at this point there is neither space for the analysis of his thought, nor do I find it justified to place him in general comparison to Balogh, Széchenyi and eventually Nagyváthy. The ideas phrased by him are largely incorporated by Széchenyi, save for his most radical propositions as highlighted by Barker, on the other hand, Hajnóczy’s near complete lack of rhetorical devices and extensive focus on the legal jargon yields itself less obviously to linguistic comparison. Barker, ‘Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the “Ancient Constitution” at the Diet of 1790/1’.

¹⁶² While I am going to make reference to the particular aspects of these languages that I am utilizing, the scope of this chapter does not allow for a detailed exposition of the typical cases of all four political languages. I hope to make up for the lack of it through summarizing them here: Republican language is considered to be the language of the 18th century classical education, the language of the law in practice (as opposed to ancient constitutionalism), with the result that community concepts of the ‘*haza*’, patria, Heimat – home country – encompassing in most cases the politically free, that is the nobility. Freedom is understood to mean political participation, and its chief goal to be the ‘*közjó*’, that is common good, and the ‘*köz-boldogság*’, common happiness or interest as positives, while the ‘*magános*’, that is private generally considered negative. It puts a strong emphasis on the decline of Empires, classical examples of Rome and the martial virtues and public service as the desirable human traits – ‘*virtus*’ and ‘*erény*’ that is virtues. Ancient Constitutional language is a variation on the theme of

Republicanism, however with considerable force of its own: emerging from the 1760s onwards (with some like László Tevesz arguing roots in the 17th century political thought) but achieving its first paradigmatic expression in the 1790 debates, this language elevates the customary law of the kingdom to the status of the *'alkotmány'* or constitution in an attempt to translate the political philosophy of Montesquieu's *De L'Esprit des Lois* and Rousseau's social contract to local political realities, with thinkers like Balogh Ócsai finding remarkable use for this possibility. By equating ideas of the populus with the nobility, they manage to argue that in fact the kingdom is to be understood on social contractarian basis, with political power resting in the unison of *'ország és király'* – king and country – represented by the crown. The quintessential core of the language is understood to be the belief, that this constitution, that is the customary law of the land, is not the possession of any one individual or generation, and it is the duty of every generation to pass it on protected and unchanged to the next generation – consequently it cannot be changed at least in its core characteristics. more precisely - whatever change occurs (and it should occur - incrementally and carefully - because of changing circumstances), it should only occur in order to preserve, even accentuate, the „original spirit” of the constitution. The *'arany szabadság'* that is golden liberty – the privileges of the nobility – are part of this core which is to be left unchanged. It takes its references from the Tripartitum of Werbőczy and beyond the Gesta of Simon of Kéza. Enlightened Governmental language is a third political language, that is primarily deriving its vocabulary and rhetoric from the Josephist court and its ideologues, Sonnenfels and Martini. It is under the influence of German iterations of Enlightenment thought, mostly Wolf and Pufendorf: it rests on natural law bases (as opposed to customary law) and believes that all are by birth equal which the laws should be adjusted to (and consequently it believes in the perfectibility of the laws). Even though its concept of order rests on social contract basis, it also advances a view of absolute rule – that is the people surrendered their liberties to a sovereign. The person of the ruler becomes unimportant in this rhetoric, and the chief end of government comes to be defined as *'közjó'*, common good, measured in the 1] creation of good laws – unbiased and rational that is; 2] good governance – including public services executed by the state, with special focus on road maintenance; and 3] the enlightenment of the public – through education. Nobility, on the views of people like Sonnenfels, do not have the privilege of governance, only merit of advancing these set goals can advance one to positions of government. The language of Politeness or *'Tsinodás'* is another emerging language of the late 18th century as the translation of mostly English and Scottish conservative Enlightenment of Adam Smith, Hume, Robertson etc. to the realities of the country. It puts the grand narrative of elevation out of barbarism to its center. It is essentially progressive, believes that on one end of the spectrum there are barbaric, savage, uncivilized communities, who live a scattered, nomadic, violent and self-sustaining lifestyle, while on the other end of the spectrum there are well-connected, civilized, non-violent, specialized and commerce-oriented societies engaged in polite sociability. Christianity is seen here as the first civilizer, but commerce as the most important step forward in a *'grádcisólt'* – gradual – process of advancing on the poltz – shelves – of society. It sets the modern England and France as exemplary states to be followed, and good examples to be adopted from the West, while also charts out *'igaz nemesség'* - true nobility as distinguished from feudal privileges and gives it rather a moral quality. Finally it is necessary to note, that while the existence of the Republican language and that of the Ancient Constitution is uncontested in Hungarian historiography, the languages of enlightened government and that of Politeness – although not without examples, according to scholars like Henrik Hőnich and Sándor Bene are yet to be established as political languages proper in the way Pocock establishes the term. That being said, this paper is also an exercise in the possibility of tracing these languages within the Hungarian discourse of the time, and I hope to show, how Széchényi's and Nagyváthy's language unquestionably goes beyond accepted republican modalities, and utilises ancient constitutional vocabulary and rhetoric only in as much as it sets out to negate the program behind this language. Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*; Takáts, *'Politikai beszédmodok a magyar 19. század elején: a keret'*; Takáts, *'A csinosodás politikai nyelve'*; András Kovács Ákos and Gábor Szűcs Zoltán, *'Hogyan olvassuk a 18. század magyar politikai irodalmát? [How should we read the political literature of 18th Century Hungary?]'*, *Korall*, no. 35 (2009): 147–74; Here I need to take note of the questions that arose over the presence of the language of enlightened government and the language of politeness in the Hungarian context by Hőnich. Without contesting his argument made regarding the less-than-well-attested presence of these languages to pass Pocock's checklist of when should we talk about a political language, I am going to employ Takáts's languages as the heuristic categories I can utilise to arrive at a proper understanding of Nagyváthy's use of political concepts, and which languages in turn Nagyváthy also constitutes by the fact of writing. I hope to contribute this way to future base-research that can focus on the presence of such languages on a wide enough scale to allow us to talk about them in these terms. Hőnich, *Ki az igaz hazafi?*; Fazakas Gergely Tamás, Miru György, and Történelmi Intézet, eds., *"Politica philosophiai okoskodás: politikai nyelvek és történelmi kontextusok a középkortól a 20. századig [Political philosophical smart-talk: political languages and historical contexts from the Middle Ages to the 20th century]"* (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Történelmi Intézete, 2013); Takáts definition of political languages are developed as an attempt to apply the linguistic contextualism of the so called Cambridge school of the history of political thought, while following him most of this paper is an attempt at utilizing the methodology of J G A Pocock, in asking the question 'what are these texts actually doing when they utilise certain

what follows, I am going to show, how the main points of contestation between Ferenc Széchenyi and Péter Balogh emerge from their differing views on what constitutes a constitutional question in the first place.

Ferenc Széchenyi's Impartial Thoughts

Amidst the rising tensions, one of the numerous Hungarian magnates who activated themselves in the political arena was Count Ferenc Széchenyi, a freemason and initially a supporter, and later withdrawn observer of Josephism. It was Ferenc Széchenyi, who acted as the chief patron behind János Nagyváthy's 1791 two volume agro-economic textbook, something worth keeping in mind when analysing the parallels between their propositions.¹⁶³ On behest of Primate Batthány, he participated in meetings with the government on the preparation of the upcoming diet in March, and according to his letters sent to József Hajnóczy, he already requested the opinion of his former secretary on constitutional matters on February 11th (the answer for which was the manuscript of Hajnóczy's *Gedanken eines ungarischen Patrioten über einige zum Landtag gehörige Gegenstände* pamphlet).¹⁶⁴ Eventually he came to summarize his own thought, differing most obviously from Hajnóczy's proposals in omitting the right of the non-noble to hold government offices. Széchenyi's views then on how the upcoming diet should

languages?' I believe it is necessary to take mention of Quentin Skinner's work here as well. John G. A. Pocock, 'The Concept of a Language and the Métier d'historien: Some Considerations on Practice', in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 19–38; Skinner, 'Preface'.

¹⁶³ Vörös, 'Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész', 28–32.

¹⁶⁴ This is in direct contradiction to both Fraknói and H Balázs, who both argue that Széchenyi was not actually politically active before the beginning of the Diet later that year. Fraknói Vilmos, *Gróf Széchenyi Ferencz : 1754-1820* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1902), 1439–141; H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 306–7; Benda quotes Széchenyi's letter to Hajnóczy, as well as cites Széchenyi's invitation to the government meetings. Kálmán Benda, *A magyar jakobinus mozgalom iratai [The Papers of the Hungarian Jacobine Movement]*, vol. 1, *A Magyar Jakobinusok Iratai, I* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1957), 49–50.

proceed were circulated in a memorandum to Anton von Spielmann on the Staatsreferendar and his fellow magnates Pálffy, Pászthory, Zichy and Primate Batthány.¹⁶⁵

In this memorandum titled *Unpartheysche Gedanken über den 1790 abzuhalten den Landtag* (Impartial thoughts on the diet to be held in 1790), Széchényi advocates for cautious reform of the constitution.¹⁶⁶ A supporter of Joseph until 1785, Széchényi departs in his argument from a rejection of the desirability of a new constitution, but also rejects the possibility of any previous status quo that the country could return to, and declares belief in the perfectibility of the constitution. He goes on to argue for the Diet to elect committees where the issue can be discussed. His proposition is formulated in republican fashion, focusing on the estate privileges and the corresponding grievances, however, he also departs from this language towards that of enlightened governance on occasions. He declares:

“Every nation proceeds wisely when they correct the shortcomings of their constitutions, which they recognize from experience; and in this regard, I believe, it was the late emperor who showed us where our constitution is lacking, and where all of our previous kings took the devices to infringe on our privileges.”¹⁶⁷

The duality of embracing Joseph’s analysis of the problem areas and the perfectibility of the constitution, while also maintaining the republican language emerges as he continues:

“These devices up until now were the objects concerning religion, the question of the peasantry, and the freedoms of protestants. These were up until now in the

¹⁶⁵ Interestingly, every paper thinks it is important to mention, that Batthány left his comments on the margins of the manuscript, mostly asking for legal clarifications, without drawing any further conclusions from this. I can only guess too, but I decided to follow this rather amusing tradition. Marczali, 84–85.

¹⁶⁶ Ferenc Széchényi, ‘Pártatlan gondolatok az 1790-ben megtartandó országgyűlésről (részlet) [Impartial Thoughts Regarding the Diet to be Held in 1790 (partial)]’, in *Magyarország története a 19. században - Szöveggyűjtemény*, ed. Gábor Pajkossy (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2006), 34–38.

¹⁶⁷ ‘minden nemzet bölcsen jár el, ha kijavítja az alkotmány fogyatékságait, amelyeket tapasztalatból felismer; és ebből a tekintetből úgy látom, a megboldogult császár maga mutatta meg nekünk, hol hiányos a mi alkotmányunk, és honnan vette összes királyunk az eszközöket előjogaink csorbitására.’ in Széchényi, 34.

country the causes of all war, all feuds, all mischief from the court... which from the above-mentioned reasons [the constitution], cannot be reestablished according to its state in the year 1764.”¹⁶⁸

He clearly advocates for reform, the central aim of which is to defend the estate privileges from the king, but the solution should be found in the problem areas identified by enlightened government, not in the return to the pre-absolutist legal situation. It is difficult to say whether Széchenyi was ‘fluent’ in the emerging ancient-constitutional political language at this point in time and if so, understood its implications given that it only emerged during the debates of the 1790s.¹⁶⁹ Nonetheless, as I hope to show with regards to Balogh Péter’s constitutional plans, their understanding of the constitution was in sharp contrast with one another. Contrary to the starting point of the political language of the ancient constitution, Széchenyi declares clearly that there is no earlier status quo to return to, even if he was not actively planning to push back against an emerging middle-noble tendency.

In any case, the central concern of Széchenyi in the memorandum goes beyond the constitution, and it is focusing on the question of social harmony. He again starts out from republican rhetorical devices, as he turns towards the practical execution of the reforms, which he sees impossible at the diet of 1790 in fact. He exclaims: “with these three points ... the individual

¹⁶⁸ This also seems to contradict Benda’s opinion, according to which Széchenyi wanted to return to the situation during Maria Theresa in all aspects, for which however he provides no support. ‘minden nemzet bölcsen jár el, ha kijavítja az alkotmány fogyatékokait, amelyeket tapasztalatból felismer; és ebből a tekintetből úgy látom, a magboldogult császár maga mutatta meg nekünk, hol hiányos a mi alkotmányunk és honnan vette összes királyunk az eszközöket előjogaink csorbítására. Ezen eszközök mindeddig azok a tárgyak voltak, amelyek a vallásüggyel, a parasztság mivoltával és a protestánsok szabadságaival voltak kapcsolatosak.’ Széchenyi, 34.

¹⁶⁹ Takáts arguing that while elements of the ancient-constitutional discourse go back to at least the 1760s, and it has its roots in the practical application of customary law all the way back to Werbőczy’s Tripartitum and through that the Gesta of Simon of Kéza, in effect the idea of a constitution, and necessarily its ancient character was only emerging as a result of Joseph’s policies, which went beyond individual grievances, and were perceived as a total attack against the very foundations of the Hungarian Kingdom’s customs. In reaction, as we shall see, the idea emerged that the constitution is not the individual property of any single generation, but that of the entirety of past present and future Hungarian populus (king and country that is nobles), and as a result no one has the right to change the fundamental aspects of this constitution. Takáts, ‘Politikai beszédmodok a magyar 19. század elején: a keret’, 674.

interests of the estates are all entangled, which would only give more opportunities for discord”.¹⁷⁰ The pursuit of partisan interests being associated in republican discourse with the fall of the polity, Széchenyi comes to call for the upcoming diet to be a platform for the election of representatives for the resolution of the constitutional matters by the diet of 1791.¹⁷¹ The task of the 1790 diet is merely to elect the representatives and to “proceed with example and guidance to these representatives, which encourages and obliges them to put harmony and accord as the goal of their work.”¹⁷² In other words, in typical republican fashion, Széchenyi is asking for the overcoming of self-interest and individual grievances to give space for the entertainment of the common good. However, the way Széchenyi proposes to achieve this highbrowed republican goal of harmony again steps beyond the boundaries of the language of republicanism. As seen below, by partially rewriting the republican idiom, he ventures on the linguistic territory of enlightened government.

Széchenyi identifies three crucial estates conflicts undermining harmony, that are unsurprisingly rather close to the quintessential constitutional questions he proposes to mitigate: between Catholics and Protestants, magnates and nobles, and finally between nobles and the peasantry. In case of the conflict of the first two, Széchenyi provides an essentially republican solution: with the common good in mind, the Catholic clergy should promise equality in matters of religion, in order to resolve the “most important and most common reason for internal war and internal inequality”¹⁷³. With regards to the second conflict, however, Széchenyi moves towards the language of enlightened governance, when he proposes that magnates resign “all

¹⁷⁰ ‘E három pont végül olyan természettű, hogy megfontolásuk annál is inkább időt igényel, mivel úgy tűnik, az egyes rendek saját érdekei is összefonódtak velük, így több alkalmat adhat a rendek közötti egyenetlenségre...’ in Széchenyi, ‘Pártatlan gondolatok az 1790-ben megtartandó országgyűlésről (részlet)’, 36.

¹⁷¹ Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmétörténet*, 14–15.

¹⁷² ‘példával, egyszersmind útmutatással kell szolgálniuk e képviselők számára, amely arra bátorítja és kötelezi el őket, hogy a harmóniát és az egyetértést tűzzék ki munkálkodásuk céljául.’ in Széchenyi, ‘Pártatlan gondolatok az 1790-ben megtartandó országgyűlésről (részlet)’, 36.

¹⁷³ ‘A jövőben nem szolgáltatják a belháborúk és belső egyenetlenségek legfontosabb és megszokásosabb okát’ in Széchenyi, 37.

their privileges, which they don't hold based on their merits, but their birthright, and hence return to the class of the knights", and all nobles should be able to hold offices "whoever is made suitable for whichever title by their merits."¹⁷⁴ Although Széchenyi states that the "privileges, which the law grants to this estate jointly" being the only privileges, an idea taken from Werbőczy's *Tripartitum* and also referred to by the ancient constitutional language as the 'golden liberty', or 'the one and the same liberty'¹⁷⁵, but whereas previously Széchenyi did refer to the constitution showing the availability of the vocabulary, here the usual wording is avoided, and he only refers to the laws. On the other hand, instead of the republican and ancient constitutional notion of virtues (*virtus* or *erény*), he emphasizes the merits (*érdem*) as the criterion for title holding, which contrary to the former two, are dependent on individual achievements. In this Széchenyi echoes Joseph von Sonnenfels, the chief ideologue of the Habsburg strain of enlightened absolutism, and the idea that the pursuit of common good, good laws and governance should qualify the title holder, not their birthright.¹⁷⁶

Széchenyi executes a second move away from the republican discourse, when in the final point he extends the commons of the common good away from the politically free, as understood in the republican discourse and hence the nobility, towards the subjects of the state.¹⁷⁷ He proposes for consideration the redemption of the insurrection (*insurrectio*) by "the nobility taking onto themselves in part or fully the taxes of the peasants that they bear for the maintenance of the army."¹⁷⁸ While the justification can be read against a republican reading – citing the need for

¹⁷⁴ 'az összes olyan előjogát, amellel nem érdemei, hanem a születés alapján bír, visszalép a lovagok osztályába és nem élvez más előjogokat mint amelyeket a törvény e renddel közösen neki juttat. Az eddigi mágnások gyermekeiből legyen alispán, személynök, stb., amint a nemesi rend fiaiból nádor, főispán, stb., kit milyen tisztségre érdemei alkalmassá tesznek.' in Széchenyi, 37.

¹⁷⁵ See for example 'minden főpap, báró úr és nemes a mentességnek és szabadságnak egy és ugyanazon előjogával él' István Werbőczy, 'Tripartitum', accessed 25 November 2024, https://www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~capitul/analecta/trip_hung.htm.

¹⁷⁶ Kökényesi, 'Kiváltságosok az állam és a közjó szolgálatában. Joseph von Sonnenfels nemesség koncepciójáról', 75.

¹⁷⁷ Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszmetörténet*, 14–16.

¹⁷⁸ 'a nemesség a parasszok adóját, amelyet ők a katonaság eltartására viselnek, vagy egészben, amennyire azt a felszótás megengedi, vagy részben vállalja magára' in Széchenyi, 'Pártatlan gondolatok az 1790-ben megtartandó országgyűlésről (részlet)', 37.

the nobility to contribute to the "common good" and the creation of harmony, this common good extends the community concept beyond the nobility, and together with the proposition itself being the dusting off of Maria Theresa's plans it also opens itself for a enlightened governmental reading: instead of the constitution and military virtues, it looks at insurrection – the noble military service – as a problem to be solved, and paying the war tax as an opportunity to decrease the burdens of the peasantry and increase the connectivity within society, "one with the other creates ever closer ties, we can hope and demand for more respect and attachment"¹⁷⁹ – that is it allows for more social control. The common good then is constituted of not having to do armed service, the peasants paying less taxes, and giving more social control to the nobility – not simply the republican reading of more external security. Széchenyi then has been seen to play a dual game: addressing his audience in the familiar idiom of the Hungarian noble politics, the language of republicanism, and not losing sight of the chief target of this strain of argument, social harmony and the security of the constitution, he goes on to lead his listeners towards active proposals which are formulated in the language of enlightened government, hence declaring allegiance for both reform and the Viennese court. However, it was not Széchenyi's views that came to provide the backbone of the program of the noble resistance movement during the coronation diet, for the cleavages in society apparently proved to be too wide to be able to be bridged that easily.

Péter Balogh's Ancient Constitution

Péter Balogh (1748-1818), a Lutheran inspector and member of the *Tabula Septemviralis*, just like Széchenyi, also put forward a constitutional reform proposal aimed at the strengthening of the constitution. However, the views advocated by Péter Balogh's proposals for how the nobility should prepare for the upcoming diet were in sharp and potentially direct contrast with

¹⁷⁹ 'mind az egyikkel, mind a másikkal szoros kapcsolatba lép, és több tiszteletet és ragaszkodást remélhetünk és követlhetünk tőle.' Széchenyi, 38.

Széchenyi's moderate plans. Péter Balogh's program circulated through his masonic networks throughout the spring of 1790 was a plan that set the "biztosítás" (securing) of the constitution at its heart, and although wasn't negating the possibility of reform completely, he relegated that to happen after the constitution's security has been achieved, and even then in quite a different form.¹⁸⁰ Most importantly, what Balogh considered to amount to a constitutional question and his *communitas* concept differed widely from Széchenyi's.

Balogh's writing is overwhelmingly structured around the question of the ancient constitution, which also determines his language. Speaking to his masonic audience, he starts out from the natural law-based idea borrowed from Rousseau¹⁸¹:

"The security of the constitution, since in every state it is so inter-dependent with the good of the citizens, that one cannot exist without the other, can only be secured completely where every citizen receives the greatest share of the birthrights of the people."¹⁸²

However, throughout the text it quickly turns out that his understanding of the *populus* is rather limiting, understanding only the nobility under the term.¹⁸³ He goes on to argue that the constitution is the result of a social contract, where the "people" need to be understood as the nobility: "the constitution, that is the fundamental laws, or contracts between the ruler and the people, might only be changed with the mutual agreement of the contracting parties."¹⁸⁴ This

¹⁸⁰ Péter Balogh, 'Ócsai Balogh Péter programja [The Program of Balogh Péter from Ócsa]', in *Magyarország története a 19. században - Szöveggyűjtemény*, ed. Gábor Pajkossy (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2006), 38–51; Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', 78–80.

¹⁸¹ Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', 79.

¹⁸² 'Az alkotmány biztonságát, mivel az minden államban oly mértékben összefügg a polgárok javával, hogy egyik sem létezhet a másik nélkül, teljes mértékben megőrizni csak ott lehet, ahol az ember vele született jogaiból minden egyes polgárra a lehető legnagyobb rész jut.' in Balogh, 'Ócsai Balogh Péter programja', 39.

¹⁸³ Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', 79.

¹⁸⁴ 'az alkotmány, vagyis az alaptörvények megállapodások avagy szerződések az uralkodó és a nép között, csak a szerződő felek kölcsönös egyetértésével változtathatóak meg.' in Balogh, 'Ócsai Balogh Péter programja', 41.

social contract that Balogh considers to ground the Habsburg house's right to inheritance, in fact appears to be the diploma inaugurale, phrased and accepted by only those sections of society who are present at the diet, consequently excluding the politically unfree sections of society. This exclusive *communitas* concept is present throughout the text, reducing the serfdom to be tenants of the nobility, or people who add even more danger to the body politique by their ignorance and land thirst. He writes:

“What the peasant wants, he himself might not be able to phrase that; or what is even more dangerous if he wants to hold the land without lord-servant conditions.”¹⁸⁵

However, contrary to Széchenyi's proposal, Balogh doesn't propose to solve the problem of discord that results from these conditions of the peasantry. Instead, while recognises in a republican language the vice of disharmony, possibly in direct response to Széchenyi, Balogh shows no sympathy towards the peasantry. He exclaims that “C. F.'s smart and elegant writing” – Pajkossy hypothesising C. F. to stand for Comes Franciscus, that is Széchenyi – should be considered only without “the specific proposals with regards to the taxpayers.”¹⁸⁶ Balogh concedes so much as that: “It should be promised to the taxpayers that their security in person and lease (*haszonbavétel*) will be proclaimed by law.”¹⁸⁷ However, as László Tevesz's most benevolent interpretation points out, this goes only so far as to confirm the patents of Maria Theresa and Joseph II in law. However, it is worth noting that Széchenyi's specific proposal was to include the solution of the peasant question in the constitutional reform, and in the meantime to propose the redemption of the insurrection through the nobility voluntarily taking

¹⁸⁵ ‘Hogy a paraszt mit akar, talán maga sem tudja megfogalmazni; vagy ami a maga nemében ennél is veszedelmesebb lehet, úr és szolgai feltételek nélkül akarja bírni a földet.’ in Balogh, 40.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Mindezt nagy mértékben elő fogja mozdítani, ha C. F. elegáns és okos írása (csak az adózókat illető specifickus tervezet elhagyásával) minél inkább ismerté válik.’ in Balogh, 41.

¹⁸⁷ ‘az adózóknak mind a személyi, mind a haszonbavételi biztonság törvényes kinyilvánítását ígérni lehessen.’ in Balogh, 41.

onto themselves to pay military taxes. Balogh returns to these “specific proposals ... with regards to the taxpayers” a little later, when he writes:

“In the Hungarian Constitution it is an unquestionable fundamental principle that the landlord holds the land by property. What prevents then, I ask, the landlords from providing in the diet certain favours to the beneficiary serfs without the agreement of the king, with the purpose that such a benefit that, by the way, any landlord may give, should become general? This law is therefore not a question of the constitution, and in like manner neither is the decree regarding the taxes... In the same manner, the fundamental principle is, in effect, that the nobility owes the defence of the country ... There is no reason therefore, why one might want to put the aforementioned – so be it: constitutional – issues’ execution and regulation into the diploma inaugurale and elevate it with the consent of the monarch to binding force, and why cannot the execution of the constitution be secured at the diet following mature consideration?”¹⁸⁸

László Tevesz rightly points out that what Balogh proposes here can be interpreted as an acknowledgement of the importance of the landlord-serf relations but as a private matter, which does not relate to the constitutional questions.¹⁸⁹ However, understanding Balogh’s text not in isolation but in conversation with the ensuing constitutional debate, and not forgetting about his exclusive use of the *communitas* concept being rooted in the historical rights of the nobility,

¹⁸⁸ ‘A magyar alkotmányban kétségtávol fennáll azon alapelv, hogy a földesúr a földet tulajdonjoggal bírja. Mi akadályozza meg, kérdem, hogy a földesurak a haszonélvező jobbágy javára a király beleegyezése nélkül bizonyos kedvezéseket tegyenek az országgyűlésen, abból a célból, hogy az ilyesfajta engedmény, amelyet egyébként bármely földesúr megadhat, egyetemes érvényű legyen? E törvény tehát nem alkotmányos, ahogyan nem az az adókról szóló határozat sem, melyet az országgyűlés és a konkurzus elé tételes törvény utal. Ugyanígy érvényben van az az alapelv, hogy a nemesség tartozik az országot megvédeni; ... Nincs semmi oka tehát annak, miért kell az előbb említett - legyen: alkotmányos - ügyek végrehajtását és szabályozását a hitlevélben sürgetni és azt az uralkodó egyetértésével kötelező erejűvé tenni, és miért nem lehet az alkotmány végrehajtásáról inkább az országgyűlésen érett megfontolással gondoskodni?’ in Balogh, 43.

¹⁸⁹ Tevesz, ‘Adatok az 1790-es rendi mozgalom eszméletörténeti hátteréhez’, 146.

Balogh's idiom appears in a different light. While he does move away slightly from the historical interpretation according to which lord and tenant affairs would be a private and individual matter, Balogh nonetheless reiterates the core principle behind this long standing argument of the nobility that tenancy questions are of no concern to the monarch, and hence a private and not a constitutional question.¹⁹⁰ It is telling that, on the one hand, Balogh finds it problematic to make any constitutionally obliging concessions to the serfdom in terms of their status or redemption of the insurrection (referenced through the connection of the reiteration of the right of insurrection and questions of taxation), while on the other hand neither topic resurfaces in the closing section of his writing, where he supposedly deals with the matters that are to be sorted out at the diet after the constitutional issues are settled. Instead, for Balogh, issues pertaining to the civic law continue to focus on the grievances, and he delegates the solution of these – instead of the issue of the constitution, as in Széchenyi – to committees to work on.

Balogh's argumentation being a paradigmatic case of the ancient constitutional tradition, despite the mentioning of natural rights in the beginning and the republican concern with harmony, draws its rhetorical tools from the power of the historical interpretation of law, with its exclusive *communitas* concepts. For him, unless it is the security of the constitution which requires a change to the constitution, it should be left unchanged. He declares that "It is to be made an unquestionable principle that the country's constitution that has stood the tests of centuries, should not be changed in any respect, except on the single occasion when it is the security and wider consolidation of the constitution itself which calls for such a change."¹⁹¹

However, having explored how land issues and insurrection is a private and not a constitutional

¹⁹⁰ Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 210.

¹⁹¹ 'Megdönthetetlen alapelv kell legyen, hogy az országnak az évszázadok gyakorlata által kipróbált alkotmánya egyetlen részében se másíttassék meg, azon egyetlen esetet kivéve, ha ugyanis maga az alkotmány biztonsága és szélesebb körű megszilárdítása követel ilyenfajta változtatást.' in Balogh, 'Ócsai Balogh Péter programja', 41.

question, Balogh goes on to provide a limited notion of what might warrant such a change. “The security of the constitution is most of all based in the right to decide in questions of war and peace” – which he clearly believes based on the 2nd article of the 1608. coronation and “reaffirmed by all coronation diplomas in condition 13.” – to be that “the ruler without the country’s knowledge and agreement of the country” – understood as the estates – “should not be able to initiate war.” In the opposite case, he argues again based on historical laws that “neither the country’s estates, nor the taxpayers” – highlighting the clear distinction between the two – should or can take on any tax or other burden.¹⁹² The internal inequalities of the country which Széchenyi observed as the cause of most bloodshed and hence endangering the constitution, in Balogh’s formulation are taken over by the right to wage war abroad, as the matter that truly qualifies a constitutional change. The reforms of enlightened government, in turn, are viewed as profoundly unconstitutional.

This is evident in the contrast with Széchenyi over their treatment of what they consider to be legal status quo in the first place. Contrary to the Count, who was arguing against the return to the legal status quo of Maria Theresa’s rule on the grounds that the problems within the constitution with regards to serfdom, the peasantry and denominations were part of the constitution since there is one, Balogh advocates against returning to the pre-Josephine era as he considers not only Joseph to have broken the constitution, but clearly also Maria Theresa, as he draws distinction between “the lawful” situation and the “actual situation during Maria Theresa’s reign.”¹⁹³ Based on this, importantly, Balogh goes on to exclaim that not only Joseph, but already Maria Theresa broke the ‘social contract’, and consequently the right to elect a new

¹⁹² „Az alkotmány biztonságának legfőbb alapja a háború és béke kérdésében való döntés joga, Amiért is az 1608. évi koronázás előtti 2. törvénycikket, melyet egyébként valamennyi hitvlevél megerősített a 13. feltételben, hogy tudniillik az uralkodó az ország tudta és beleegyezése nélkül Magyarországot vagy kapcsolt részeit érintő háborút ne indíthasson, ez alkalommal is meg kell erősíteni, világosan kiegészítve azzal, hogy ellenkező esetben sem az ország karai és rendei, sem az adózók semmilyen adót vagy más terhet az 1504. évi 1. törvénycikkben foglalt büntetés terhe mellett nem kötelesek vállalni, és nem is vállalhatnak.” in Balogh, 47.

¹⁹³ ‘nem a törvényes, hanem csak a Mária Terézia alatti’ Balogh, 45.

monarch returned to the ‘people’ that is the nobility of course.¹⁹⁴ It is worth noting that the ‘unlawful’ situation during Maria Theresa’s reign was created by the monarch not convoking the diet after the nobility rejected her requests in 1765, one of which was concerning the standardization of landlord-tenant relations, enacted in the end as a decree in 1767 in the form of the Urbarial Patent, raising at least some doubts over the interpretation of Tevesz that Balogh proposed the enactment of the Urbarial Patent at all.¹⁹⁵

The argument of the legal continuity allows Balogh then to return to the pre- Theresian legal situation alongside the implementation of reforms that serve the security of the constitution. This would, he hopes, allow the nobility to re-negotiate the coronation with Leopold from a position where they can continue to defend their privileges against enlightened government. The purpose of Balogh’s rhetoric is to create a sense of legal historical continuity, in which the “one and equal liberty” of the nobility, and “the principle that the landlord holds the land by property right” are unquestionable constitutional rights, as opposed to the nobles “giving favours (*kedvezések*) without the king’s agreement to the serf beneficiaries”¹⁹⁶ which is consequently a private matter of the estates, and as such should fall beyond the scope of the domain of *king and country*, pertaining only to the latter.¹⁹⁷ This of course needs to be understood in relation to the attempts of Maria Theresa as well Joseph II to push the curtailment

¹⁹⁴ Barker, ‘Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the “Ancient Constitution” at the Diet of 1790/1’, 79.

¹⁹⁵ Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 205–10.

¹⁹⁶ ‘alapelv, hogy a földesúr a földet tulajdonjoggal bírja. Mi akadályozza meg, kérdem, hogy a földesurak a hasznélvező jobbágy javára a király beleegyezése nélkül bizonyos kedvezéseket tegyenek az országgyűlésen, abból a célból, hogy az ilyesfajta engedmény, amleyet egyébként bármely földesúr megadhat, egyetems érvényű legyen? E törvény tehát nem alkotmányos’ in Balogh, ‘Ócsai Balogh Péter programja’, 43.

¹⁹⁷ That being said, in this thesis I only had a limited space to chart out the core ideas presented in Balogh Péter’s text, and while it employs a continuous and conscious language of ancient constitutionalism, the often intricate parallels between Balogh and Széchenyi – just as with Hajnóczy – show that the contrasting positions were, utilizing often contradictory languages and arguments, but nonetheless aiming at the inclusion of the other side of the debate. One specific example could be their joint acknowledgement of the problem of creating harmony, even though Balogh would delegate the questions relating to peasantry and taxation beyond the problem area of the constitution and would prefer the diet to focus on the establishment of different principles to govern it. Again, this is something which would require much longer and focused analysis, but I wanted to flag it here as a further trajectory of the research.

of the rights and privileges of the nobility, which were increasingly seen as being contrary to the interests of efficient government, but also the moral imperatives derived from natural law. As it will emerge from the next section, János Nagyváthy's political writings need to be interpreted against this background.

Debate over the Ancient Constitution: Péter Balogh, János Nagyváthy and the contested lodges

Péter Balogh's proposal written for masons tends to be associated with the political activities of the freemasons during 1790, while Széchenyi's approach is usually regarded to have circulated within the aristocratic circles.¹⁹⁸ However, as I have argued in the previous chapter, János Nagyváthy's *Joyous Hours of the True Hungarian Patriot* also needs to be interpreted within the masonic public. Not only that, but as it will be clear from the below analysis, this complex utopian political program needs to be interpreted against the context of the debate between Széchenyi and Balogh over what constitutes a constitutional question in the first place. Against this reading, the *Joyous Hours* emerges as a programmatic work published at the Magnanimitas lodge, with the clear intention to contest Balogh's attempts to spread his conceptualisation of the constitution within the masonic space, and to advance a moderate program akin to Széchenyi's. Just like Széchenyi and Balogh, the *Joyous Hours* too takes the problem of harmony at heart, but the dominance of republican language loses its pre-eminence, and instead the languages of the ancient constitution and that of enlightened government dominate the text, in a juxtaposition where the rhetoric of the ancient constitution is utilised to bolster the program of enlightened government. While Nagyváthy's text paints a rich plethora

¹⁹⁸ Barker, 'Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the "Ancient Constitution" at the Diet of 1790/1', 77–79.

of reforms, modelled in large part on the policy proposals of fellow freemason and Habsburg court ideologue, Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732-1817), in this chapter I am mostly concerned with the concept of equality Nagyváthy proposes and the political languages he uses to argue for it. Exploring Nagyváthy's language use and rhetoric will allow me to chart out both the point of contestation between him and Péter Balogh, and to make up for the most apparent shortcoming of the historiography by establishing what Nagyváthy was *doing*.

On the most recent formulation in the historiography, Nagyváthy is understood to be a thinker who does "not radically change the existing social categories, ... he thinks lords and peasants will always exist, only their relationship will change."¹⁹⁹ This is in sharp contrast to previous understanding of Nagyváthy's thought as one of the radical egalitarian, even democratic works of the period.²⁰⁰ A linguistic-contextual analysis of the pamphlet's egalitarian vocabulary however, allows for a more nuanced understanding of both what the pamphlet has to say about equality, the argumentative strategies used to achieve this, and the reasons why Nagyváthy does so, while also shedding light on some of the roots of the interpretative confusions. In the work Nagyváthy juxtaposes a wide array of political languages to support conclusions that broadly fit the position of Joseph von Sonnenfels's, and the language of enlightened government. The way he achieves this, however, at times appears to be confusing exactly because of the juxtaposition of the various political languages. In other words, although Nagyváthy juxtaposes republican and ancient constitutional political languages in the work with languages of politeness and enlightened government, the latter ones prevail in his positive propositions. In this way, Nagyváthy levies arguments that reiterate and bolster the hitherto privately propagated views of Ferenc Széchenyi, while his use of the ancient constitutional rhetoric in support of these conclusions seem to be targeted against the arguments of Péter Balogh outlined above.

¹⁹⁹ Lukács, 'A nemzeti felemelkedés reformgondolatai Nagyváthy János műveiben', 271.

²⁰⁰ Ballagi, *A politikai irodalom Magyarországon 1825-ig*; Abafi, *A szabadkőművesség története Magyarországon*.

Furthermore, drawing on the previous chapter by looking at János Nagyváthy as one of the most active members of the Magnanimitas freemasonic lodge of Pest at the time of the writing, below I am going to show that in fact the pamphlet's inclusive interpretation of the membership of the political community should be considered as the direct contestation of the views circulated by Péter Balogh.

Coronation question

First of all, let me highlight the issues Nagyváthy clearly doesn't concern himself with, because in the context of a coronation diet, this is clearly telling: the monarch and the coronation. While Balogh and other freemasons like Berzeviczy levy arguments for the dethronement of the Habsburgs and apparently were reaching out to foreign pretenders, from Nagyváthy's utopian retelling of the story of the 1790 diet the monarch is almost entirely missing, let alone the method of selection. In line with the moderate tone of Draskovich's masonic constitution, when Nagyváthy does make mention of the Habsburg rulers – almost half-way through the text– the utopian tone of telling the future's past allows him to paint a cordial picture of a monarchical government governed with the consent of the nobility:

“Who would not live happily and with courage, where the Head of all Patriots, the King himself, lives with them, and shares the burden of the Country with them, and gladly allows himself to be moved by the Patriots to advance the Happiness of the Country. Or if the Country were to find itself discouraged, against its own Happiness, it would not want to make it happy by force; since Happiness is in its feelings. Rather, it communicates its intended intention to its loyal Patriotic

Companions, and wishes to make its Efforts reasonable, not by force; but by reasons.”²⁰¹

However, despite the cordial tone, one cannot overlook the criticism of Joseph’s rule behind Nagyváthy’s lines, and even the implicit demand included in his writing corresponding to that of Péter Balogh that the next king should reside in the country. That being said, Nagyváthy doesn’t concern himself with the Habsburgs’ right of inheritance, and he highlights the “joyful memory” of Maria Theresa, suggesting that contrary to Balogh, Nagyváthy’s implicit criticism of Joseph is not extended towards the Empress.²⁰² Moreover, in another pamphlet, his translation of *L’Horoscope de la Pologne*, dedicated “to the Hungarians as mirror”, Nagyváthy translates the warnings against the Polish nobility’s attempts to invite foreign help and foreign rulers. After the extensive descriptions of the intricacies of Prussian, Russian, Austrian and French foreign policy being self-interested and contrary to the Polish interest, Nagyváthy’s translation concludes:

“It is in vain that the Free Societies and the Monarchies promise their helping hands to keep up the idol Head of the Polish Kingdom, which your conquerors have already half trampled under their feet. Nothing is needed to know the secret for Europe, which is so unhappy that Poland does not feel its own situation. So do not expect any useful events from the Outsiders.”²⁰³

²⁰¹ "Ki nem lakna örömet, és bátorságba, a' hol a' Hazafiaknak Feje, maga a Király, velek edjütt lakik, 's velek az Ország terhét fel-osztja, és magát örömet fel-engedi indítani a' Hazafiaktól az Ország' Boldogságának előmozdítására. Vagy pedig ha az Haza tsüggedezni talál, a' maga Boldogsága felől azt akarja ellen, kényszerítéssel nem-akarja boldoggá tenni; minthogy a' Boldogság, tsak az annak érzésébe áll. Sőt inkább el-télt szándékát, hűséges Hazafi Társaival közli, 's Igyekezését, nem erőszakkal kívánja jó-esmértetni; hanem okokkal." in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 19–20.

²⁰² Nagyváthy, 20.

²⁰³ "A' Szabad Társaságok, és az Egyedül-való-uradalmak, hijjába ígérk segítő karjaikat a' végére, hogy Lengyel Országának bálvány Fejét, a' mellyet, már Meg-győzőitek félíg le-tapodtak lábaikkal, fenn tarthassák. Tsak egy semmi kívántatik arra, hogy Európának éz a' titok tudtára adódjon, a' melly-is igen boldogtalan, hogy a' maga Fekvését nem érzi. Ne várj hát a' Külsőktől semmi hasznos Tröténeteket." in Nagyváthy, *Csillagok-Forgásibul Való Polgári Jövendőlés Lengyel Országára*, 72.

The two pamphlets read together, it appears that while Nagyváthy, too, has some criticism towards Joseph's rule, overall, he attempts to caution his fellow masons working on the dethronement of the Habsburgs, warning against the meddling of other powers in the internal affairs of the country. Instead, in the *Joyous Hours* just as in *L'Horoscope de la Pologne*, Nagyváthy identified the problem of equality, drawing on the masonic constitution analysed in the previous chapter, as the central problem that freemasons would need to trouble themselves over.²⁰⁴

The Constitutional Question: Equality

Nagyváthy begins the *Joyous Hours* by declaring at the very beginning of the text the centrality of equality to the constitutional question. He declares the "maintenance of the measure of Equality" to be the foundation of the "Constitution of the Great World... which is looked upon as the Small World's, that is the Human Society's living image."²⁰⁵ This reference to the constitution, although never to return in the text, posits the pamphlet in direct negation of Péter Balogh's program, and as it shall be seen bellow, re-states Ferenc Széchenyi's language of enlightened government, alongside with some of his direct policy proposals. Moreover, this sentence following up the motto analysed in the previous chapter, the author not only contests Balogh Péter's claims and arguments among the public but directly addresses the freemasons. He does this by referencing Zoroaster, one of the supposed ancient masters of the masonry, and by exclaiming in the motto of the text that equalisation is the first step before any construction – that is the main activity of masonry, can take place:

²⁰⁴ An extensive summary of Nagyváthy's translation, which surprisingly for the epoch, based on my rather rudimentary French appears to be a true translation, can be found in Ballagi, *A politikai irodalom Magyarországon 1825-ig*, 343–45.

²⁰⁵ "a' Nagy Világ' Alkotmánya, az Egyenlőség'-mértéke' meg-tartásánn áll; és azt úgy nézi, mint a' Kis Világnak, t. i. az Emberi Társaságnak eleven ábrázattját " in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 3.

"Building can proceed wisely

Where levelling [as well as *equalising*] precedes it."²⁰⁶

Following his introduction positioning the pamphlet in the masonic space, Nagyváthy akin to Balogh also translates the ideas of Rousseau, but rather different parts of it. Nagyváthy focuses on Rousseau's republican argument that the striving for private interest created inequalities:²⁰⁷

"The Lord of Nature has inextricably woven into the human heart the tireless striving for happiness. Yet, people did not cease until they invented all manner of illusory forms of deceptive happiness, among which the division of ranks was deemed the most powerful"²⁰⁸

Building on this republican rhetoric, echoing the ethical principles of the Draskovich constitution which reads: "it is a plain fact that all people are equal among us by nature and all inequalities are a result of human acts and ambitions"²⁰⁹, Nagyváthy moves on to present the particular process of how inequalities emerged specifically in the Kingdom of Hungary. In doing so, he utilises the language of ancient constitution by referencing 'our Book of Laws and our national writers from the beginning' as the source material of his arguments. In this manner, contrary to Balogh's use of the historical justification of the nobility's privileges, however, Nagyváthy focuses on the problem of inequality:

²⁰⁶ 'Tsak ott mehet bõltsen végbe az építés, / Az hol, leg-elsõ az El-egyenésítés.' in Nagyváthy, 2.

²⁰⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality A Discourse on a Subject Proposed by the Academy of Dijon: What Is the Origin of Inequality Among Men, and Is It Authorized by Natural Law*, trans. G. D. H. Cole, Primary Sources in International Affairs (International Relations and Security Network, 1754), 35.

²⁰⁸ „a' Természetnek Ura, kifejthetetlenül bé-szõtte az emberi Szívbe, a' Bõldogságra való fáradhatatlan Tõrekedést: nem szüntek-meg mind addig, míg mindenféle szemfényvesztõ Bõldogságának tsalóka Nemeit ki nem-találták, a' mellyek közül a' Rang osztás leg hatalmasabbnak esmértetvén, a' Szentséges Igazság' természeti kiszolgáltatóit, tzifra nevezetekkel, 's néha a' Társaságot meg-erõtelenítõ Kints-osztogatásával-is meg-vakitották, 's e' képen õket, telhetetlen Kivánságaiknak hatalmas eszközeivé tévén, az egyforma sárból, az Istenség' Képére gyúratott emberi Nemzetet, egymástól el-szagatták; midõn ennek nagyobb részét örökös szolgaságra kárhoztatván, némelleyeket Polgárságra uttatván, kevesebbeket Nemesi Méltóságokkal meg-ajándékozván, egynéhányakat pedig Bárói, Grófi, Hertzegi Póltzokra emelvén, magokat Egyedül Uralkodóvá tették" Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Örõm-Õrái*, 6.

²⁰⁹ Krstić, *240 Godišnjica Utemeljenja Draškovićeve*, 166.

“If we review our Book of Laws and our national writers from the beginning, we will find clear evidence that our forefathers were all equally free men — so how could it be that among them, some became free again, and others Barons, Counts, or Dukes? For it is simply true, according to nature that just as there is nothing straighter than straight, so too can no one be freer than free. Thus, it was from foreign lands that our Kings, chosen from foreign houses, brought these distinctions among us.”²¹⁰

This exposition might still be interpreted within the ancient constitutional political language as an argument for abolishing the rank differences only within the nobility, something both Balogh and Széchenyi advocated for. However, Nagyváthy goes further than that, and in sharp contrast to Balogh’s ancient constitution, and echoing Széchenyi in extending the recognition of the problem area, argues that in fact, on a historical view of customary authority, it was “the harshness of times”²¹¹ that brought serfdom upon the residents of the kingdom:

“It can only be called the harshness of times, because there can be no right to that: *either for the part* of the inhabitants who could not go to plunder, since at home the captured goods, according to the evidence of our historian, had to be protected not only with weapons against the enemy who often wanted to take them back: but also,

²¹⁰ "Ha Törvényes Könyvünket, 's nemzeti Iróinkat eleitől fogva fel-hánnnyuk: helyes nyomaira fogunk annak találni, hogy Eleink mindunyján egy forma szabad Emberek lévén, mikeppen lehettek közülök némellyek, újjra szabadok, némellyek Bárók, Grófok, Hertzegek : mert tsak igaz a' természet szerint; hogy valamint az egyenesnél enegyesebb; úgy a' Szabadnál, szabadabb senki sem lehet. Mind a' Külső Országokból hozták hát ezeket a' külső Házakból választott Királjaink közzénk." in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 8.

²¹¹ The whole passage parts of which is quoted here reads: "Úgy van: nem-is lehet különben nevezni; hanem idők mostohaságának: mert Jus ugyan egy tényényi sem lehet ahoz; hogy a' Lakosoknak, vagy az a' része, a melly rabolni nem mehetett, minthogy oda haza, az el-foglalt Jószágokat, Historikusaunk bizonyítása-szerint, nem tsak Fegyverrel kellett gyakorta a' vissza foglalni kívánó Ellenség ellen óltalmazni: de még, hogy a' Tabornak lenne mit enni, gazdálkodni-is szükség vólt: vagy pedig az a' része, a' melly, az az előtt itt lakott Nemzetségből, a' bátorságos-megmaradás, és az Élet-könnyebbsége végett, Vitéz Eleinknek barátságába, 's társaságába ajánlotta; magát; a' született szolgaságnak szomorú tsörgésű lántzára kárhoztattatván a' maga tulajdon Bóldogsága munkálkodásába, a' Teremtőnek tzelja, annak a' Természetbe bé óltott Törvénye, és a' Társaságok' Edjezése ellen, meg-akadályoztattathatnék. " in Nagyváthy, 10.

so that the camp would have something to eat, it was necessary to farm also; *nor for the part*, from the nation that had previously lived here, who for the sake of their security and the ease of life, offered themselves to the friendship and company of our Valiant Forefathers, to be condemned to the sad, clanging chains of servitude by birth, to be hindered in their working on their own Happiness, against the purpose of the Creator, against the Law inscribed in Nature, and against the Social Contract [emphasis added by the author].”²¹²

In reasoning this way, Nagyváthy steps out of the limits of the ancient constitutional language and partially re-writes the rhetoric to inject elements of the language of politeness and the that of enlightened government into the past. Contradicting the standard narrative of the Hungarian nobility derived from Simon of Kéza that serfdom was the punishment of those who refused to bear arms and those conquered, Nagyváthy turns around the martial virtues of the classical republican and ancient constitutional languages as mere “plundering” which also necessitated to stay at home, to fend off the revengeful counterattack. This way, Nagyváthy highlights the refusal to join the military campaigns as an act of virtue.

In like manner, he also historicises the inclusion of the conquered not as matter of conquest, but as “The Nation that had previously lived here, for the sake of its safe survival and ease of life, offered itself to the friendship and society of our Valiant Elders” - highlighting the voluntary act of association as a form of social contract instead. This way, Nagyváthy counteracts the ancient constitutional narrative without outright denying the validity of deriving authority from

²¹² "nem-is lehet különben nevezni; hanem idők mostohaságának: mert Jus ugyan egy tényényi sem lehet ahoz; hogy a' Lakosoknak, vagy az a' része, a melly rabolni nem mehetett, minthogy oda haza, az el-foglalt Jóságokat, Historikusaunk bizonyítása-szerint, nem tsak Fegyverrel kellett gyakorta a' vissza foglalni kívánó Ellenség ellen óltalmazni: de még, hogy a' Tabornak lenne mit enni, gazdálkodni-is szükség volt: vagy pedig az a része, a' melly, az az előtt itt lakott Nemzetségbül, a' bátorságos-megmaradás, és az Élet-könnyebbsege végett, Vitéz Eleinknek barátságába, 's társaságába ajánlotta; magát; a' született szolgaságnak szomorú tsörgésü lántzára kárhoztattatván, a' maga tulajdon Bóldogsága munkálkodásába, a' Teremtőnek tzélja, annak a' Természetbe bé óltott Törvénye, és a' Társaságok' Edjezése ellen, meg-akadályoztattathatnék." in Nagyváthy, 10.

the historical understanding of the law – instead, squaring the Draskovich constitution's seemingly contradictory statements that “it is a delusion to believe that laws prevented oppression of the weaker”²¹³ and that “the obligation toward the homeland is to obey and defend the laws and customs of the Country”²¹⁴, the author historicises natural law principle and particular interpretation of the social contract as formulated on the language of enlightened government.

By appealing to universal, and atemporal categories, Nagyváthy turns the ancient constitutional rhetoric into an argument for core concepts of the language of enlightened government: he arrives at the conclusion from his ancient constitutional arguments that the inequalities need to be (or in the narrative of his utopian story, as a matter of fact were) abolished on the basis of the historical lack of right to people's oppression into serfdom, neither those refusing to bear arms nor those who have joined the social contract following the conquest. This being “against Divine purpose, the Law invested in Nature and against the Contract of Societies.”²¹⁵ The first two of these three, as already highlighted in the previous chapter, reiterate in their assigned hierarchical order of the ethical principles of the Draskovich observance, Divine purpose being associated with friendship and equality understood here as the law of nature. Nagyváthy then is seen to contradict Balogh's argument for the ancient constitution as a defence of privileges specifically in the masonic space, by making his point in the clearest language of enlightened government, appealing to the masonic principles' universality. Based on this universal characteristic of these virtues he argues that these had been equally binding moral laws in previous ages, rendering the historical understanding of privileges indefensible.

²¹³ Krstić, *240 Godišnjica Utemeljenja Draškovićeve*, 166.

²¹⁴ Krstić, 170.

²¹⁵ "a' maga tulajdon Bóldogsága munkálkodásába, a' Teremtőnek tzelja, annak a' Természetbe bé óltott Törvénye, és a' Társaságok' Edjezése ellen" in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 10.

Where Péter Balogh argues that the infringement on the privileges of the nobility originated from the foreign rulers, Nagyváthy rallies the principles of the Draskovich constitution formulated in the language of enlightened government to utilise them in the historical domain, attributed to the ancient constitutional language to bolster his argument for equality as part of that ancient constitution. However, what sort of equality Nagyváthy has in mind is only emerging from his deeper elaboration on what divine purpose, the law of nature and social contract might be. What is immediately evident, and what the historiography also notes, Nagyváthy being true to the Draskovich constitution's principles, it doesn't mean the abolition of hierarchies.

What sort of Equality?

In describing the moment of liberation, Nagyváthy invites his audience, "the Nation adorning themselves with their ancient character," through the utopian telling of the future's past, to having had

"considered with open hearts that their Valiant Forefathers having been all equally free men, consequently one cannot say more than the other to be born more of a noble, they exterminated all inequalities from among their fellow residents that have crept in through the changes of time, and measuring all Estates against the meter (*öl*, unit of measurement) of Equality, they restored them to that Equality in which the Field Worker the Burgher, the Burgher the Nobleman, the Nobleman the Baron and the Count, considered the other to be superior to themselves according to the number of their good and noble deeds."²¹⁶

²¹⁶ "ez a' törsökös vóltával ékeskedő Nemzettség, egyenes-szívűséggel megfontolván azt, hogy az ő Vitéz Elejek mindnyájan egy forma szabad emberek vóltak; következésképen edjik, a' másiknál, magát nemesebben születettnék, nem mondhatta, minden az Időknek változásival bé-tsúszott egyenletlenséget Lakos-társai között, nemes meg-gondolása után ki-irtott, és minden Rendet az Egyenességnek öléhez mérván, arra az Egyenlőségre

This is a crucial moment in the interpretation of equality in the *Joyous Hours* for a couple of reasons. First, here Nagyváthy engages in a partial rewriting of the concept of the nation. Here the nation is understood, speaking in the ancient constitutional language, in the exclusive understanding of the Noble Nation of course. Nonetheless, if the statement is considered in relation to the subject matter, “valiant forefathers” of the nation, necessarily have to be also the valiant forefathers, as it emerges from the closing section, also of the “Field Worker” and the “Burgher”. Otherwise, the consideration of the equal freedom of their ancestors would not warrant the extermination of inequalities. However, this way the author invites the audience to reconsider the exclusive understanding of the nation as well. Based on this of course, it might seem that what Nagyváthy takes issue with is the very fact of the nobility, and what is advocated here is a radical extension of republican political freedom through abolishing the very idea of social hierarchies. However, while Nagyváthy is in debate with Péter Balogh, just as the masonic constitution refuses to overtly challenge social rank, his understanding of the problem of equality also appears to be much closer to Ferenc Széchenyi’s moderate proposal, maintaining social hierarchies, than that of József Hajnóczy, denying the political prerogatives of the nobility.²¹⁷

The Draskovich observance exclaims: “It is not our intention to discard all generally accepted thinking and abolish a lawfully established social system.”²¹⁸ And neither is it the intention of Nagyváthy. The passage of the *Joyous Hours* quoted above leaves open the interpretative possibility for the pamphlet not to challenge the existing hierarchies openly, and allows the author to advance views akin to Joseph von Sonnenfels that these existing hierarchies should be grounded not in ancient privileges, but the merits of those alive today, and by inference their

viszsza-állított, a’ mellyben a’ Mezei munkás, a’ Polgárt, a’ Polgár a’ Nemest, a’ Nemes a’ Bárót, és Grófot, jóságos, ’s nemes tselekedetei számához képest tartya magánál Elsőbbnek.” in Nagyváthy, 7–8.

²¹⁷ Barker, ‘Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the “Ancient Constitution” at the Diet of 1790/1’, 70–72.

²¹⁸ Krstić, *240 Godišnjica Utemeljenja Draškovićeve Opservancije*, 166.

utility to the community.²¹⁹ Additionally, it also seems that Nagyváthy's above statement can be read at least two ways: permissively and descriptively. On the one hand the sentence can be seen as permitting the peasantry to surpass the nobility in hierarchy if they happen to have more merits than the latter – a rhetorical turn, which if conscious, could be considered to be informed by József Hajnóczy argument for doing away with the idea of nobility and basing all social hierarchies on land ownership.²²⁰ However, there is also another reading, in which the author merely descriptively notes that in fact the nobility's priority is retained, because as a matter of fact they have more merits.

While the author leaves open both interpretations, he also nudges his audience towards the more conservative conclusion as we move further along in the pamphlet. Past the theoretical exploration of equality and turning towards the question of “construction”, the topics and concerns of the text undergo major changes, while retain others in a form that change their meanings. First, throughout the text, the only active political agents are the nobles. This pattern is broken only on a few occasions, and except for the priests, who occupy a grey area, and for the king, as a promoter of commerce on a single occasion on page 33 out of 40, all other active agents are negative characters of Nagyváthy's narratives. Thus the author gives agency to those he hopes to caution his audience against, those “making themselves sole rulers”²²¹ and most importantly, the peasants who decided to step inside the realm of politics. Nagyváthy describes this way the ringleaders of the most recent Horea-Closca revolt of the ethnic Romanian

²¹⁹ Kőkényesi, ‘Kiváltságosok az állam és a közjó szolgálatában. Joseph von Sonnenfels nemesség koncepciójáról’, 75.

²²⁰ Barker, ‘Resurrecting the Past, Reshaping the Future: The Rise of the “Ancient Constitution” at the Diet of 1790/1’, 78.

²²¹ ‘magukat egyedül Uralkodóvá tették’ in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 6.

peasantry, who are mentioned alongside those of the Dózsa rebellion, responsible for the ‘original sin’ of the peasantry in the ancient constitutional rhetoric, justifying their servitude.²²²

This lack of agency of the non-nobles in the section dealing with equality was easily explained by the fact that momentarily it was within the powers of only the nobility to act. But it becomes a telling sign in the section detailing further reform where the author continuously refers to the “Noble Hungarian Patria”, “my sweet Hungarian Nation” and the “Hungarian Nobility” interchangeably as the agents of that action, while the peasantry at best becomes the object of that action, if not the agent of threat to act against. In the section, where the author turns towards the non-noble, neither the political nor the economic priority of the nobility comes to be questioned, and this very priority of the nobles comes to be celebrated as a service, executed towards and for the benefit of the ignoble themselves: “Is it not the Nobility, who, for you

1) In the Counties as well as in the Diet acts as your spokesperson and patron? (...)

9) Is it not him, who being satisfied with your *Urbarial* work, leaves the ninth (Nona) for you in times of good and bad harvests alike?”²²³

Echoing the already existing practice of the day of 1790, the author fixes the existence of the *urbarial* work, that is the service that all agricultural workers owed to their landlords in

²²² Nagyváthy writes: “Dósa György, Bot, Törő, Hora, and Klotzka, who turned the internal-security upside down in such an evil manner.” / ‘a’ Belős-Tsendességet is, melyet néza napján Dó’sa Györögy, Bot, Törő, Hora és Klotzka olly undokúl fel-forgattak,’ in Nagyváthy, 24; The source of inherited perpetual servitude of the serfdom of Hungary is in fact rooted in the Dózsa rebellion of 1514, following which the peasants were tied to the land and were forbidden to hold arms. Mentioning this by Nagyváthy in relation to the Hora-Closca rebellion of 1784, the most recent, fearsome and bloody reminder of the Dózsa rebellion highlights multiple dimensions of the issue at the same time for his readers: simultaneously the danger and the consequences of both of the oppression of peasantry as well as their political activism. A general introduction to the topic can be found in Kontler, *A History of Hungary*, 134, 217; In detail, the Horea-Cosca rebellion is treated by H. Balázs, *Hungary and the Habsburgs 1765-1800*, 213–22.

²²³ ‘Avagy nem a’ Nemesség e’ az! a’ ki, néktek / 1.] Mind a’ Vármegyéken, mind az Ország-Gyűlésen, Szószóllótok, Pártfogótok? ... 9) Nem ő e’ az a’ ki, meg-elégedvén Urbáriális munkáddal, nem-tsak; a’ sük esztendőbe: de a’ bőv aratás idején-is, a’ kilentzedet (Nonát) neked engedi?’ in Nagyváthy, *A’ Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 22–23.

exchange for their lands as well as the lack of political representation for the peasantry,²²⁴ before the conclusion is drawn: “It is not so bottomless after all, this Inequality”²²⁵.

At this point, it needs to be emphasised that in the discourse of the late 18th century it is not evident where exactly the boundaries of serfdom and servitude were drawn vis-à-vis that of free agricultural labour. The heterogeneity of the legal basis of tenancy as understood by the tenants and the lords throughout the country even after Maria Theresa’s Urbarial Patent in 1767 make it a rather difficult task to decipher what a given author means by these terms exactly, and what his readers might have concluded from that.²²⁶ Most crucially, in some parts of the country, the free-moving peasantry’s self-understanding was clearly that they are not serfs unless they are bound to the soil as well, while elsewhere this was not the case.²²⁷ For instance, while Maria Theresia’s Urbarial Patent regulated the maximum service throughout the country, József Hajnóczy in his manuscript to Ferenc Széchenyi argues that all tenancy should be based on contract-based service.²²⁸ Now, this claim does not necessarily mean the abolition of robot, which the modern reader associates among the first things with the idea of serfdom, as we know that whether the basis of a serf’s obligation was contract, *ubrarium*, or *usus* – that is customary law, it had no absolute bearing on what the conditions of their obligations were.²²⁹ As a result, this claim of Nagyváthy too is rather difficult to decipher, because the existence of urbarial services were universally understood to represent any tenant relationship – irrespective of what kind of serfs those tenants were considered to be in the first place. This is a point I will return

²²⁴ Vörös, ‘Fejezetek Nagyváthy János életéből I. rész’, 14.

²²⁵ ‘Nem olyan Feneketlen hát, az az Egyenletlenség;’ in Nagyváthy, *A’ Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazáfinak Öröm-Órái*, 24.

²²⁶ Horváth, ‘Örökös és szabadmenetelű jobbágyság a 18. századi Magyarországon’; Horváth Gergely Krisztián, ‘A magyarországi jobbágyság felszabadítás végrehajtása és történelmi percepciói [Historiographical Preceptions of the Hungarian Serfs’ Emancipation]’, ed. Tingli István et al., *Történelmi Szemle* LXIV., no. 2 (2022): 251–67.

²²⁷ Horváth, ‘Örökös és szabadmenetelű jobbágyság a 18. századi Magyarországon’, 1078.

²²⁸ József Hajnóczy, ‘Egy Magyar Hazafi Gondolati Néhány, Az Országgyűlésre Tartozó Dolgról [The Thought of a Hungarian Patriot Regarding a Few Things Concerning the Diet]’, in *Magyarország története a 19. században - Szöveggyűjtemény*, ed. Gábor Pajkossy (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2006), 30.

²²⁹ Horváth, ‘Örökös és szabadmenetelű jobbágyság a 18. századi Magyarországon’.

to later, but it is just important to note the ambiguities here. Nonetheless, it suffices to say here that it is a clear testimony of the economic inequality not being at the heart of Nagyváthy's concerns.

This exclusion of the peasantry from the groups described with political agency, and one whose economically most relevant conditions appear to continue to remain unchanged is further underlined by the narrowing of the terms that describe the political community. In the sections detailing equality, the author, while still confining political agency to the nobility, often uses terms that are inclusive of the entire population. The author refers to the community inclusively as “Human Nation”, when he writes “the Human Nation molded on the image of God, was torn apart from each other”²³⁰; and even opens such an interpretation with the term “Nation” in the previously quoted section when he writes “the Nation adorning themselves with their ancient character, having considered with open hearts that their Valiant Forefathers having been all equally free men, consequently one cannot say more than the other to be born more of a noble (...)”²³¹ By elevating the “forefathers’s freedom through customary law to apply to the modern times, he invites the extension of the concept of the nation itself. These open interpretations rely often on the context of continued concern with the liberation of those “fellow residents, tied by the severity of the times”²³². As he turns towards the section detailing his policy proposals, the collective term of the “nation” becomes “noble nation” and the antecedent of the “forefathers” becomes “the Hungarian Nobility”, narrowing the focus on the nobility.²³³

²³⁰ “az egyforma sárbúl, az Istenség Képeire gyúratott emberi Nemzetet egymástól el-szaggatták” in Nagyváthy, *A’ Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 6.

²³¹ „ez a’ törsökös vóltával ékeskedő Nemzettség, egyenes-szívűséggel megfontolván azt, hogy az ő Vitéz Elejek mindnyájan egy forma szabad emberek vóltak; következésképen edjik, a’ másiknál, magát nemesebben születettnek, nem mondhatta, minden az Időknek változásival bé-tsúszott egyenetlenséget Lakos-társai közzül, nemes meg-gondolása után ki-irtott” in Nagyváthy, 7.

²³² ‘az Idők mostohasága által meg-kötött Lakos Tásait’ in Nagyváthy, 10.

²³³ For instance, see Nagyváthy, 20–21.

Equality in the common good

What sort of equality is meant then by Nagyváthy? So far it appears that the idea of a republican political equality is excluded, and instead we are to look for an explanation within the vocabulary of the language of enlightened government. This is further evidenced by the three arguments for equality cited above that Nagyváthy makes as he turns to conclude his rejection of the ancient constitutional argument that serfdom would be justified by customary law.

Most importantly, as opposed to the ancient Hungarians, who are customarily in the republican and ancient constitutional tradition characterised as equally free in the political sense (“one may not be more free than the other”²³⁴), in the argument, that divine purpose, natural law and the social contract grounds equality, equality is delegated to the sphere of morality, individual (as opposed to corporate) agency and it is realised through the extension of the scope of the common good onto the entire population. As Nagyváthy writes:

“I. The Creator, by equal Birth and Death, making all his creatures alike, did not make them the Lords or Servants of one another; but friends.

2. The Law of Nature also teaches that one person may offer his service to another for a certain benefit, even until death: but his descendants, who are not yet living, and perhaps differ from him in their thoughts with regard to that benefit, can only be bound to the Society; but never to an individual Person.

²³⁴ ‘a Szabadnál szabadabb senki sem lehet’ Nagyváthy, 8; On Takáts’s account the Republican and Ancient Constitutional languages are connected, and their understanding of liberty is that of political liberty - on the latter, that of the nobility, on the earlier that of the citizens. Takáts, *Modern magyar politikai eszméletörténet*, 14–17.

3. The Contract of Societies also shows no different; For, promising Security and Ease of Life to all Members: it would be a very sad thing if only a part of them could live with these.”²³⁵

The expression of divine purpose being friendship and not servitude delegates equality into a moral space central to freemasonry, and beyond that, towards a sense of community built in loyalty and mutual concern, grounded in affective relationship, as I have already explored in the previous chapter, certainly stepping beyond the republican understanding of political freedom. As has been argued, this moral virtue of friendship within masonry is seen by Nagyváthy as well as the Draskovich constitution as pre-eminent to the virtue of equality, equality being only the consequence of it. Likewise, I have pointed out in the previous chapter, how this friendship is not necessarily contradictory to hierarchies, and not only in classical accounts, but Nagyváthy’s own formulation it is also associated to a paternal relationship, which then in turn was seen to necessitate self-equalisation. Why this is so central to Nagyváthy’s argument about equality, is highlighted by the Draskovich constitution, and the closing remarks of the circular of Ferenc Széchenyi. The constitution highlights the strong loyalty inherent in the idea of friendship:

“Loyalty to friends must be a sacred thing. We shall rather suffer the loss of the most valued thing, even the loss of life and honor, than to let down a friend.”²³⁶

In a rather similar idiom centred around the communal loyalty, Ferenc Széchenyi closes his proposals for including among others, the non-nobles in the constitutional question by stating

²³⁵ "I. A' Teremtő az egyenlő Születés, és Halál által minden teremtsit egymáshoz hasonlónak tévén, edjüket a' másoknak Urává, vagy szolgájává nem teremtette; hanem barátjává. 2. A' Természet Törvénye-is azt tanította, hogy egy személy, a' másoknak bizonyos haszonvételért szolálatját holtig-is ajánlhatta : de még nem-is élő, 's talán azon haszonvételre nézve, tölle Gondolkozásaiba különböző maradékát, csak a' Társaságnak; de egy különös Személynek soha le nem kötheti. 3. A' Társaságok Edzése-is nem mást mutat; Ugyan-is az, Bátorságot, és Élet-könnyebbséget ígervén minden Tagoknak: igen szomorú dolog volna, ha azzal csak egy résznek lehetne élni." in Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilencedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 10–11.

²³⁶ Krstić, *240 Godišnjica Utemeljenja Draškovićeve*, 166.

that this would be the “impenetrable warrant of the constitution, because nine million people defend it, who have the same homeland and whose hearts beat with the same rhythm.”²³⁷ The central concern then of Nagyváthy as well as Széchenyi appears to be the formulation of a community that is bound by mutual and reciprocal loyalty. The consequence of the reciprocity is the elites equalising themselves through the extension of moral equality.

This moral equality then, is played out in the physical world in two ways. On the one hand, by the invocation of natural law, Nagyváthy seems to argue for the abolition of hereditary perpetual serfdom, by arguing that contractual bonds should not be inheritable (other than the social contract), and hence that all agricultural labour should be executed by freemovers. In principle, this would mean that Joseph II’s Patent on Serfdom would be reinforced as a law, something that was also included in the instruction of the Pest-county delegates as a result of the efforts of fellow freemasons.²³⁸ Nonetheless, it is clear from Nagyváthy’s language that he characterises this as a major shift in their status, as a result of which serfs cease to be ‘servants’ and become ‘field workers’.²³⁹ While Balogh clearly doesn’t consider this as a constitutional principle, in this much, he too was in at least theoretical agreement with Nagyváthy, even though Balogh dedicated less urgency to the matter.

On the other hand, in the third point, Nagyváthy reveals his most important point relating to why and how equality emerges as a constitutional question, and this is where his disagreement with Balogh surfaces most clearly. His interpretation of the social contract is different from Balogh’s ancient constitutional principle, and echoes Sonnenfels in almost direct quotation: the social contract is not the guarantee of freedom to participate in the political realm, or the guardian of privileges. Instead, in agreement with the language of enlightened government, the

²³⁷ Translated and quoted in Hörcher, ‘Enlightened Reform or National Reform?’, 36.

²³⁸ Kosáry, *Művelődés a XVIII. századi Magyarországon*, 339.

²³⁹ Nagyváthy refers to them from here on, as ‘mezei munkás’ or ‘munka segítő társam’. Nagyváthy, *A’ Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 13.

social contract is about the concrete services that the society, hence attained, should provide to its citizens: security and ease of life. As Sonnenfels put it: “The ultimate end of civil society is security and convenience, from whose union arises the general welfare.”²⁴⁰ The utterance formulated this way in the language of enlightened government, in the masonic space emerges as the direct consequence of the reciprocal affective loyalty, friendship. It is the direct consequence of the metaphysical equality encapsulated in friendship, nurtured in the masonic lodges, and it is in this sense that Nagyváthy takes on Péter Balogh’s understanding of the constitution that is based on privileges.

Finally, to round off his argument, Nagyváthy also comes to redefine the previously floated republican freedom into the language of enlightened government, by stating that “to obey wise laws is the sweetest of Freedoms.”²⁴¹ Choosing to engage with a rather different part of Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* than Balogh and those engaging in the ancient-constitutional rhetoric tend to focus on, the separation of powers and the very idea of a constitution, Nagyváthy squares the circle of his theoretical reflections on the necessity of equality: it is necessary to be equally subjected to the laws, and to be considered as the beneficiaries of those laws.²⁴²

Some Practices of Equality

Following the first half of the *Joyous Hours* pamphlet elaborating his arguments on why equality should be considered a constitutional question – answered by the need to establish reciprocal loyalties between the different layers of society, which necessitates the extension of

²⁴⁰ „Der Endzweck der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft ist Sicherheit und Bequemlichkeit aus deren Vereinigung die allgemeine Wohlfahrt entspringt” quoted in Kökényesi, ‘Kiváltságosok az állam és a közjó szolgálatában. Joseph von Sonnenfels nemesség koncepciójáról’, 67.

²⁴¹ ‘Böls Törvényeknek engedhetni, leg-édesebb Szabadság.’ Nagyváthy, *A’ Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, 9.

²⁴² ‘Liberty is a right of doing whatever the laws permit, and if a citizen could do what they forbid he would be no longer possessed of liberty, because all his fellow-citizens would have the same power.’ Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, trans. Thomas Nugent (Batoche, 2001), 172.

the common good to the entire population -- in the second section of his work, Nagyváthy goes on to elaborate on the practical policies that this extended common good he recommends would bring about. While I don't have the space here to discuss these in depth, I have to mention one key policy proposal, that has already appeared in the Széchenyi circular as well as in Balogh's constitutional plans, to highlight the textual parallel between Széchenyi and Nagyváthy, and furthermore to show how this extended community concept was indeed in the centre of the contestation of the masonic space.

Széchenyi's impartial plans proposed that the nobility taking onto themselves the military tax should redeem their right of insurrection. Nagyváthy repeats in large part Széchenyi's rhetorical play of introducing the problem in a republican language, but immediately re-writing it to fit his proposal, which appears in the idiom of enlightened government and the language of politeness. Nagyváthy writes:

“Who would be afraid, where, from the first patriot to the last, all are ready to preserve their lives, and to sacrifice a portion of their wealth — as a recoverable possession — for the maintenance of public safety?”²⁴³

By incorporating in an almost comical manner the preservation of one's life among the aims of the patriot (*hazafi* here understood as noble), and transferring the heroic character of the sacrifice of one's life to the sacrifice of one's wealth, Nagyváthy injects the clearly republican discourse with the anti-martial and wealth oriented elements of the politeness discourse, to produce a compelling argument for his fellow noblemen for the adoption of taxation. He continues to execute the same infusion of patriotic republicanism with the language of enlightened government in the next paragraph as he writes that the nobility being “not content

²⁴³ Nagyváthy, *A' Tizenkilentzedik Században Élt Igaz Magyar Hazafinak Öröm-Órái*, "Ki félne ott? az hol a' Közbátorság-megmaradására, kész minden, az első Hazafitól fogva, utolsóig, Életét meg-tartani, 's Vagyonának egy részét, mint vissza szerezhető Portékát, fel-áldozni!" in.

that only one part of the nation should shed its precious blood in the market square of execution while the rest merely watch without feeling it”, nor should “they accept that the same part should alone pay for the soldiers who gladly risk their lives on the battlefield.” Drawing on the martial virtues of the republican language commending the participation in the battle for all the nation – crucially here understood inclusively for the entire country – Nagyváthy invites the previously argued extension of the common good in the language of enlightened government to the entire population, while transferring the logic of patriotic virtue to the question of taxation – one of the most contested policies of the Habsburg court. The continuation of the argument draws further republican arguments which are in striking similarity to that of Széchenyi’s point, namely that this serves social harmony, as the “defending force relates to the *Haza*; it takes its oath onto it; since it gets its pay and office from the *Haza*, and harming a benefactor is an unnatural abomination.”²⁴⁴ Underscoring the benefits of setting reciprocal loyalty in friendship at the heart of the political community, which also necessitates the extension of the common good, this way Nagyváthy highlights the benefits of his arguments to his fellow noble men. This further underscores the contest with Balogh being centred around this extension of the common good, as exactly it was this reciprocity vis-à-vis the non-nobles, which was dismissed from Balogh’s argument regarding the question of the insurrection and military, when he was maintaining that the nobility had the right of insurrection, demanded the oath to be taken on the patria, but without proposing any commitments on behalf of the nobility to take at least the financial burden onto themselves.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ "Tsak nints olly nemesen gondolkozó Nemzetség, mint a' Magyar Nemesség ! mert ez, meg-gondolván azt, hogy a' Nemesség leg-többet bír, 's ha veszít; leg többet veszít, a' Bátorságos-megmaradásra nézve, a' külső Erőszak ellen, nem elégszik-meg azzal, hogy tsak egy rész áldozza-fel betses Véret, az Hóhérlásnak piatzán, és a' másik nézze; de ne érezze, 's ugyan azon egy rész fizesse is, az Ütközetnek Tsatáján Életeket örömet vesztegető Vitézeit; annyival is inkább, hogy az Oltalmazó Erő, az egész Hazát illeti, ő neki esküszik-meg; hogy fegyverét Hazafi véribé nem keveri: minthogy a' 'Sóldot, a' Tisztséget az Hazától veszi. Jóltévőét bántani pedig természet ellen való Undokság. " in Nagyváthy, 19.

²⁴⁵ Balogh, 'Ócsai Balogh Péter programja', 47.

This section is then followed by further elaboration on policy proposals that pertain to increasing the population density, encouraging commerce, restructuring the penal system to put prisoners to useful work and structuring education along the lines of professions, just to name a few of his close parallels to Sonnenfels's *Polizei* and which provide direct answers to the questions raised by the constitution of the Draskovich observance.²⁴⁶ These are often formulated along similar patterns, where the initial address is provided in the republican language, but then the substantive propositions are charted out in an idiom that falls closest to Takáts's language of politeness and that of enlightened government. The common thread connecting these, and this is the final point to be made in this chapter, is that they are all ideas, which build on Nagyváthy's egalitarian argument in the first section of the pamphlet: they are policy proposal on how the nobility can, beyond the abolition of the perpetual serfdom, execute in practice the extension of the concept of the common good, and engage in a government that caters to the needs of the population at large.

As it has been shown in this chapter, this extension of the community behind the common good has been the central proposition of Ferenc Széchenyi's pamphlet, by incorporating the peasants in the constitutional question, which Péter Balogh's language of ancient constitutionalism has rejected as a private matter. János Nagyváthy's *Joyous Hours* in turn, undertook to levy arguments that reiterate Széchenyi's proposal, by turning Balogh's ancient constitutional language at the service of his propositions formulated eventually in the language of enlightened government. The purpose of this, was to contest the masonic space, where Balogh's proposal was circulated. Rooted in freemasonry and uttered to sway the masonic public to his side of the debate, Nagyváthy argued that far from tenant relations being a private matter that the nobility

²⁴⁶ Kontler, 'Polizey and Patriotism'; Kökényesi, 'Kiváltságosok az állam és a közjó szolgálatában. Joseph von Sonnenfels nemesség koncepciójáról'.

can deal with on its own, the reinstitution of a measure of equality into society, be it esoteric, is the most fundamental constitutional question that a freemason should strive for, exactly, because this is how the reciprocal and affective loyalties which were considered to be a crucial public good within society can be ensured. This move in turn maintained social hierarchies of course, but at the same time radically expanded the object of politics, inviting governmental policies in various fields, that I only managed to touch upon here shortly.

Conclusions

In this thesis I have ventured to show, how János Nagyváthy's political writings and in particular the *Joyous Hours of the True Hungarian Patriot Who Has Lived During the 19th Century* not only need to be interpreted to have originated from the freemasonic space but executed numerous speech acts that aimed to contest the ethical principles of this very space. I have shown in the first chapter, how Nagyváthy's participation in the masonic rituals and friendship circle needs to be interpreted to be central to the interpretation of his act of writing itself, following which I have analysed how his use of masonic symbolic language and utilisation of the Draskovich observance's ethical principles position his pamphlet not only to have originated from the masonic practice, but was also geared to be primarily convincing to the masonic audience. In the second chapter then, I turned toward the analysis of the political debate Nagyváthy's pamphlet engaged with. After showing how Ferenc Széchenyi and Péter Balogh put forward proposals which utilise political languages pointing towards contradictory directions, I analysed the political language use of János Nagyváthy in relation to them. I showed how he situated the constitutional and practical propositions of Ferenc Széchenyi in the language of enlightened government to be able to successfully counteract the ancient constitutional propositions of Balogh. By juxtaposing the expansion of the community concept to be grounded in reciprocal and affective loyalty, friendship, and thus bringing about the expansion of the common good to the general population with appealing to the historical validity of universal ethical principles, Nagyváthy was showed to present arguments against Balogh's ancient constitutional rhetoric defending the narrow community concept defined around the nobility and its privileges. From this then, as a matter of practical propositions, Nagyváthy was argued to have advocated for the abolition of the inherited perpetual serfdom,

the introduction of the military tax for the nobility as proposed by Széchenyi, and other ideas derived from the chief ideologue of the Habsburg court, Joseph von Sonnenfels.

Not all of these propositions have been sufficiently explored. I was trying to limit myself to the issues that emerged in direct contestation between Széchenyi, Balogh and Nagyváthy, to be able to highlight how Nagyváthy's text, and by turning around the argument, likewise the work of Péter Balogh, needs to be understood to fall within this political debate over the consequences of the ritual and ethical principles of freemasonry. Other points, like their concern for religious equality, were omitted in this thesis, as the proposals under analysis have presented a most united front in matters of religion, advocating for free worship to all Christian faith, may be Nagyváthy going beyond the others by including Judaism in his argument as well.

Of course, this is not to say that either Nagyváthy, or Balogh has in the final analysis swayed the masonic public, and considering how the political manoeuvres of Leopold II rapidly closed the window that was perceived in the early month of 1790 as a political opportunity by many in the estates, these differences were quickly rendered irrelevant in the sphere of immediate political action. By 1791, the situation have changed so much that many of the leading figures of the political discourse of 1790 have withdrawn from politics, including Nagyváthy who has taken up the position of governor of the Festetich estates, and with the rapid demise of Leopold II and the succession of Francis in 1792, the political history has shifted towards a completely different direction than foreshadowed by the enthusiastic constitutional discourse of 1790.

Nonetheless, I hope to have answered the challenge of Éva H. Balázs in this thesis by showing that if we are to reconstruct the stakes and the spaces of the particular political debates that played out in the Kingdom of Hungary during the late enlightenment, the public space that has been created by freemasonry, as well as the ethical norms mandated by the Draskovich constitution and constituted by masonic ritual, needs to be factored into our analysis. A wider

investigation of how the masonic public space constituted the political discourses of the late 18th century of course have to be delegated to future research, as here I had neither the space, nor as discussed in the introduction the necessary linguistic skills to be able to undertake such an endeavour. It would be particularly productive in my view to execute a focused survey of particular lodges, especially “Magnanimitas” in Pest, and the so called American lodge of Buda, highlighting both converging and diverging political views, in our quest to better understand how freemasonry constituted the late 18th century political discourses, and how these in turn constituted masonry. In like manner, eventually I also had to delegate the questions regarding the long-term impact of this masonic debate taking place in 1790 to a later date. Adherents of the ‘continuity thesis’ argue that the reform debates of the 1830s that culminated in the 1848 revolution and the full force of nationalism equating the political subject with the ethnic nation had their roots in the 1790 discourses.²⁴⁷ If we accept at least the potential validity of this thesis, situating the particularly non-ethnic, yet nonetheless affective, friendship based community concept and its consequent expansion of the common good to the entire population in the unfolding negotiation of the vocabularies of the Hungarian political modernity could provide important insight into our understanding of the ‘less successful’ cases of history.

²⁴⁷ Hörcher, ‘Enlightened Reform or National Reform?’, Miskolczy, *A modern magyar demokratikus kultúra ‘eredeti jellegzetességeiről’, 1790-1849.*

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