

Myth, Propaganda, and Popular Etymology: János Hunyadi “White” or “Vlach” Knight?

SÁNDOR CSERNUS



Bishop Petrus Ransanus, the excellent humanist historian, sent as envoy from Naples to King Mathias' court, writes in his *Epithome rerum Hungarorum...* “(...) for every historian in our century is familiar with the name of János Hunyadi, whom peoples in the west usually mention by the name John White (Johannes Blancus) (...)” As far as we know this is the first reference in Hungary (although pointing to “peoples in the west”) that might refer to the existence of the myth of János Hunyadi as the “White Knight” rising in the second half of the fifteenth century.¹

As is commonly known, János Hunyadi is the first among the important lay figures of Hungarian history who, although neither a ruler nor the scion of a ruling family, was allotted a significant position in the historiography and historical literature of contemporary West European countries. All this is highly visible in French historiography, where the interest of historians, high in Hungary and in the affairs of the King of Hungary during the time of Sigismund of Luxembourg, following a transient abatement in the 1420s and 1430s, was rekindled in the middle of the fifteenth century.² As a result of the dramatic events in the struggles against the Turks in the eastern frontier of Western Christendom, from the 1440s, news about Hungarians found their way onto the pages of French historians again with increasing frequency and in an increasingly widening sphere.

¹ The Latin text of Ransanus (“... quem occidentalium nationum vulgus solet cognominare Johannem Blancum celeberrimum”) makes it obvious that the name cannot be interpreted exclusively on the basis of the logic of Latin (or Greek) – for had Ransanus meant to say “White”, he would probably have had to call Hunyadi *Albos* or *Leukos*: thus the source points in the direction of a Romance language (French, Italian, Catalanian). Cf. P. Ranzanus, *Epithoma rerum Hungarorum id est annualium omnium temporum liber primus et sexagesimus*, curam gerebat P. Kulcsár, Budapest 1977, 48.

² Hunyadi had two significant but unnamed predecessors among the palatines: French historians used the title *Grand Comte de Hongrie* for Leusták Jolsvai (in connection with the battle of Nicopolis), and the two Miklós Garais. The latter were even granted a coat-of-arms by the French king and received into the royal council. For their role, see P. Engel–Gy. Kristó–A. Kubinyi, *Histoire de la Hongrie médiévale, Tome 2. Des Angevins aux Habsbourgs*, Rennes 2008, 44–48, 64–65, 121–122, 125–127.; P. Engel, “Zsigmond bárói: rövid életrajzok,” [The barons of Sigismund: short biographies] in *Művészet Zsigmond király korában (1387–1437), I. Tanulmányok*, Budapest 1986, 416–420, 422–424. For the information French historians had on the Hunyadis, see S. Csernus, “Zsigmond és a Hunyadiak a francia történetírásban,” [Sigismund and the Hunyadis in French historiography] *Századok* 132 (1998), 47–127.

The attention was directed partly to efforts at Hungarian-French dynastic cooperation by then as good as traditional, but first of all to the Hunyadi family, which was protecting a realm increasingly exposed to the Turkish menace and at the same time Christendom as a whole.³

But how did Hunyadi become „White Knight”, did it have anything to do with information from Hungary, and what information on that he had become „White Knight” came back to Hungary? Where and how did this construction come into being? What were its sources? What course did the relevant information run? And how is it possible that in the time of the Hunyadis this valiant title and moral rank, apparently so usefully employable in party struggles, in fortifying familial authority, that is to say, in political propaganda, was unknown (or not deemed important or useful enough to know) in Hungary alone? Since I have scrutinized the issue myself from a number of viewpoints earlier, now in an attempt to sum up my research done so far, I am going to discuss mostly those elements only that have some significance with regard to the approach indicated in the title.⁴

³ Apart from that, the Turkish question played a role, in a peculiar context, in the planned marriage of King Ladislas V and the French Princess Madeleine. See S. Csernus, „Lancelot király, a Kereszténység pajzsa és védőfala,” [King Lancelot, shield and bulwark of Christendom] in *Az identitás régi és új koordinátái. Tanulmányok Anderle Ádám 65.ik születésnapjára*, eds. T. Berta-Zs. Csikós-F. Fischer-Á. J. Szilágyi-I. Szilágyi, Budapest-Szeged 2008, 161-174.; S. Csernus, „«Lancelot, roy de Hongrie et de Behaigne» - naissance et épanouissement d'un mythe au milieu du quinzième siècle,” *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis de Attila József Nominatae, Acta Romanica* 13 (1988), 93-116.

⁴ Although the data concerning the father and the son are naturally mostly connected in the sources, it is obvious that the two different personages from two different ages are presented by historians with different sets of mind (but often using identical data, indeed, data borrowed from each other) by foregrounding different aspects. The history of Ladislas V, closely connected to the careers of the Hunyadis and amply treated in the relevant sources, constitutes the third large group of information on Hungary in the era of Sigismund. The sources on the Hunyadis are the following: J. Chartier, *Chronique française de Charles VII, roi de France*, ed. Vallet de Viriville, Bibliothèque Elzévirienne, 3 vols., Paris 1858; G. Le Bouvier, *Les Chroniques de Charles VII*, ed. H. Courteault - L. Célier, Société de l'Histoire de France, Paris 1979; M. D'Escouchy: *Chronique*, ed. Fresne de Beaucourt, Société de l'Histoire de France, 3 vols., Paris 1863-64; J. Du Clercq, *Mémoires*, ed. De Reiffenberg, *Mémoires de Jacques du Clercq, es-cuyer, sieur de Beauvoir en Ternois*, Coll. de Mém. relatifs à l'Hist. des Pays-Bas, 4 vols., Bruxelles 1823, 1835-1836; G. Chastellain: *Chronique* (Kervyn de Lettenhove edition); J. Molinet, *Chronique*, ed. G. D'Outrepoint-O. Jodogne, Acad. Royale, 2 Coll. des anciens textes belges, 3 vols. Bruxelles 1935-1937; O. De La Marche, *Mémoires*, ed. M. Poujoulat, *Les Mémoires de Messire Olivier de La Marche, augmentés d'un estat particulier de la maison de du duc Charles le Hardy, composé du mesme auteur l'an 1474*, Nouv. Coll. des Mém. pour servir à l'Hist. de France, 1ère série”, Vol. 3: 311-603. and H. Beaune-J. D'Arbeaumont, *Mémoires et opuscules*, Société de l'Histoire de France, 4 vols. Paris and Ph. de Commynes, *Mémoires sur Louis XI.*, éd. par J. Dufournet, Paris 1979. I attempted to sum up the material concerning the Hunyadis earlier in a Hungarian and a French paper, and in a more comprehensive essay discussing the period from Sigismund to the era of the Hunyadis cited above. Cf. „Les Hunyadi vus par les historiens français du quinzième siècle”, in *Mathias Corvinus and the Humanisme in Central Europe*, eds. T. Klaniczay-J. Jankovics, Budapest 1995, 75-93. For the development of French historiography, see: S. Csernus, „Mutation de l'historiographie françaises et élargissement

What was needed first of all, was an historical situation favourable for the rising of a myth, as well as a given context in internal and international politics, and a cultural, inter-cultural, and linguistic medium to create the figure of the „White Knight”, and weave legendary elements around it.

Reading the western sources, one can see that a whole myth built up gradually around the figure of Hunyadi: a myth of a wise general, the saviour of Christendom, the indomitable “White Knight”, whose reputation alone fills the enemy with fear, and whose mission is to save Western Christendom. Thus, among the exceptional white knight heroes of chivalric culture – from *Lancelot*, most mysterious of those around the Round Table, through Charlemagne elevated into the sphere of legends to János Hunyadi, fictitious, legendary but believed to have been real – real historical persons appeared as nearly identical “white knights”, pursuing missions always possible to actualize, and gradually became part of the literature and thinking of the Middle Ages in Europe. The “white knight”, whoever he might be at the moment, the embodiment of the noblest ideals of chivalry, always appeared where the need to emphasize noble chivalric morals happened to be the most pressing, or where the Christian community, Christian values wanted protection.⁵

In order to answer the question raised above, we will have to make an attempt to define the sources of the various pieces of information relating to the “white knight” in Western, especially French, historical literature interested in the issue. It can be established that the news of Hunyadi’s successes and of his increasingly significant feats of arms reached the courts of Western Europe, which followed with worried attention the events of the struggle against the “infidel” through multiple channels and relatively quickly, considering the conditions of the time; these stories, at the same time, were received with great interest among the wider and lower circles of the population of Western Europe, also hungry for news from the “Eastern front”, encouraging or at least comforting for Christendom. The harbingers of news from “the eastern frontlines”, such as pilgrims, envoys, diplomats, merchants, visited the towns and princely courts of Western Europe one after the other. Their colourful and imaginative stories found response, re-echoed in liter-

de son horizon au 15e siècle, un exemple: „les Affaires de Hongrie”, *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis: Acta Historica* 87 (1988), 3–18.; S. Csernus, *A középkori francia történetírás és Magyarország (13–15. század.)* [Medieval French historiography and Hungary, 13th–15th centuries] Budapest 1999.

⁵ Information on János Hunyadi as the “White Knight” is included in a number of contemporary, especially French, Italian, and Aragonese sources. For Hunyadi’s connections with the West, see the relevant passages in N. Iorga, *Notes et extraits pour servir à l’histoire des croisades au XVe siècle*, Bibliothèque de l’École des Hautes-Études, fasc. 119., Paris 1896; C. Marinescu, *La politique orientale d’Alphonse d’Aragon, Roi de Naples (1406–1458)*, Barcelona 1994, 79–114, 143–152.; A. Eckhardt, *De Sicambria à Saint-Souci. Histoires et légendes francohongroises*, Bibliothèque de la Revue d’Histoire Comparée” 2., Paris 1943.; for his links with the Iberian peninsula, see Á. Anderle, *A magyar-spanyol kapcsolatok ezer éve* [Thousand years of Hungarian-Spanish connections] Szeged 2006, 34–40.; A. Áldásy, *Zsigmond király és Spanyolország* [King Sigismund and Spain] Budapest 1927, 117–118.

ature, and the information in them was regularly used by historiographers, too.⁶ Studies on the history of the press and the spreading of information put the rise of public opinion to the time of the Hundred Years' War. By the fifteenth century, the issue of the struggle against the Turks and the defence of Christendom had slowly become an important factor of influencing western public opinion. Expectations were great: Christendom was in a tight spot, and it needed a hero, a saviour, a champion who would be able to win the struggle.

From the mid-1440s on, Hungarian chroniclers presented the losses suffered and the promising successes achieved on the eastern front of Christendom at varying lengths and in differing detail, but usually very convincingly (and often greatly exaggerated). We know that the crusader terminology continued being used, and the concern for the future of Christendom, and the idea and spirituality of the need of joining forces, of joint European action also represented in the sources was present in the "*Ostpolitik*" of the countries of Europe; this mood is eminently reflected in the descriptions of the chroniclers of the French and Burgundian courts. All that followed from earlier crusading traditions, from the contemporary aspirations of the Holy See, from the propaganda of principal courts, as well as from expectations manifesting themselves in collective mentality.⁷ This would also explain why the figure of János Hunyadi, and the echoes of his triumphs in the struggle against the Turks was the subject that found itself included in the most important works of contemporary French and Burgundian chroniclers. It is in their works that one can read about the appearance of Hunyadi as a new chapter in the struggle against the "infidels", about the main chapters of his struggles against the Turks that became known in Western Europe, too, and about the myth of the "White Knight", unfolding almost simultaneously (but a little later) and in close conjunction with Christian hopes. Since the most frequently mentioned and most debated element of this issue in its Hungarian relations is the figure and myth of the "*Chevalier Blanc*", below we are going to focus mostly on the way that the avail-

⁶ Chartier himself mentions such messengers, among others in connection with collecting information on Hunyadi's wars. (Chartier used a special kind of source criticism: before he included the material brought by the messengers in his chronicle, "he had them swear upon the Holy Scriptures that all they had said was true..."), Chartier, *Chronique française*, 3: ch. 278., 66-69.

⁷ Reality and the objectives formulated in crusader phraseology were often at odds with each other. Cf. K. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, 2 vols., Philadelphia 1976-1978, especially 1: 224-475, and the relevant passages from Vol. 2. and Vol. 3. of the classical work of S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols., Cambridge 1995. All the mentioned French chroniclers contain examples of mentioning different variations of the "White Knight" motif. This same image appears later in the Italian and Spanish material, which shows that it was widespread all over the whole "Romance" area. As a chance example, without claiming completeness, we can quote the historical work of Bandello, a protégé of Beatrix of Aragón, who called János Hunyadi "*glorioso capitano Giovanni Uniade*" and "*Giovanni il Bianco*", see: F. Mály, "Matteo Bandello a Hunyadiakról és Kőszeg ostromáról," [Matteo Bandello on the Hunyadis and on the siege of Kőszeg] *Magyar Nyelv* 33 (1937), 219-229., or the Catalanian version, which left the greatest impact probably on Joanot Martorell's novel *Tirant lo Blanch* at the end of the fifteenth century. C. Marinesco, "Du nouveau sur 'Tirant lo Blanch'," in *Estudis Romànics*, publ. A. Aramon I Serra, Vol. 4, Barcelona 1953-1954, 137-205.; C. Marinescu, *La politique orientale...*, 143-152.

able sources reflect the different phases of the rise of that myth.

The first appearance of the figure of János Hunyadi in French historical writings, according to the texts known to us, can be dated to the first half of the 1440s.

"(...) János Hunyadi (Johannes de Hoignacq) ... voivode of Hungary, who since has been given the title White Knight (Blancq Chevallier) secured the advance guard ..." Burgundian chronicler Jehan de Wavrin wrote in his chronicle on the history of England, when he began to describe the part Hunyadi had played in the battle of Varna.⁸ Jehan created this part of his work on the basis of the relation of his nephew, Waleran de Wavrin, which was originally meant to be the history of a crusade (that of the "Burgundian" crusade, sent off at the orders of Prince Philip *le Bon* in order to secure the new campaign, launched with international cooperation, from the sea).⁹

In addition to Jehan de Wavrin, the appropriate parts of the following works by contemporary French historians can be used: the history of *Charles VII* by Gilles Le Bouvier, the *Chronicle* of Mathieu d'Escouchy, the *Chronicle* on the age of *Charles VII* by the "official" historian Jean Chartier, the *Memoirs* of Jacques Du Clercq, the *Chronicles* of Georges Chastellain, the *Memoirs* of Olivier de la Marche and Philippe de Commines, and the *Chronicle* of Jean Molinet. As we can see, these historians include both "pro-Burgundian" (Wavrin, d'Escouchy, Du Clercq, Chastellain, De La Marche, Molinet) and "royalist" (Le Bouvier, Chartier, and Commines, the latter once again as a separate category) figures. It is also apparent that the number of pro-Burgundian authors or historians in the court of Burgundy is larger than that of the other group, which perfectly squares with the fact that the court of the Dukes of Burgundy was especially sensitive to these issues. The idea of the "*Voyage d'Outre-mer*" as well as the belief in the "Eastern mission" had not been flagging since the venture at Nicopolis (despite, or precisely because of, the defeat), and would remain an important element of the communication of the princes until the end of the Duchy of Burgundy. In the library of the princes the literature on the "East" was registered separately under the heading "*Outremer*", including

⁸ J. de Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques et anchiennes istoires de la Grant Bretaigne a present nommee Engleterre*, ed. W. Hardy, *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores* 39., 4 vols., London 1864-1891, 4: 7-13.

⁹ For the circumstances of the campaign and the Burgundian efforts concerning it, see: Engel-Kristó-Kubinyi, *Histoire de la Hongrie médiévale*, 194-205.; O. Halecki, *Nouvelles observations critiques au sujet de la croisade de Varna*, Bull. International de l'Académie Polonaise des sciences et des lettres, Varsovie 1985.; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 82-107.; Y. Lacaze, "Politique méditerranéenne et projets de croisade chez Philippe Le Bon," *Annales de Bourgogne* XLI: 161/162 (1969), 6-18.; N. Iorga, *Les aventures „sarrazines” des français de Bourgogne*, Cluj 1927, relevant passages. For Wavrin's work, see L. Kropf, "Johan de Wavrin krónikájából. Néhány adat Hunyadi János török hadjáratainak történetéhez" [From the chronicle of I. de Wavrin. Some data concerning the history of János Hunyadi's campaigns against the Turks], *Századok* 28 (1894), 675-696.; N. Iorga, *La campagne des croisés sur le Danube en 1445 (commandée par Jean Corvin Huniade) - extrait des „Anciennes chroniques d'Angleterre"*, éd. nouvelle N. Iorga, Paris 1927, (introductory essay). The interest of Rumanian historiography for the subject in unbroken. Recently, see Constantin Antoché's very thorough work with an eminently useful bibliography: C. Antoché, "Les expéditions de Nicopolis (1396) et de Varna (1444): une comparaison," *Mediaevalia Transilvanica* 4:1-2 (2000), 28-74.

both works regarded as classics and the most recent chronicles and travel reports. The chapter in question of Jehan de Wavrin's Chronicle was also meant to enrich this section of the library while also, naturally, promoting the glory of a given family, the Wavrins.¹⁰

Perhaps the most interesting and most original part of Wavrin's chronicle is an inset of hundred and ten pages relating the story of the Burgundian fleet setting out to the Lower Danube under the command of the chronicler's nephew. The text was probably written directly after the events, that is to say, in the spring of 1446, and the narratives of Captain Waleran de Wavrin based on his personal experiences must have played an important role in its composition.¹¹ The failure of the crusading venture at the Lower Danube could probably be the reason why this story is not a separate work but merely a part of another work of history, about a completely different subject. For our purposes, however, what is important is that this part of the text in all probability "remained in the drawer" until the beginning of the writing of Wavrin's history of England, i.e. until 1455; at least there is no indication whatsoever that contemporaries knew the text. The original text was probably touched up by Wavrin – at least the remark mentioned above concerning Hunyadi would indicate that because it mentions János Hunyadi as one "(...) who **since** has been given the title White Knight (Blancq Chevallier)..." Wavrin first says Hunyadi was "captain of the Wallachians", whose estates, however, lie in "*Transilvane*", which is "the country between Hungary and Wallachia". After the first few pages, however, he settles on the title "Voivode of Hungary" ("in our language it means supreme or national commander", he writes), and uses it consistently for another hundred pages alternating with the family name (Hoingnacq, Hongnac) of Hunyadi.¹²

To sum it up: as for the texts left by Wavrin, they present a picture of Hunyadi in which "the Voivode of Hungary" appears as a great territorial prince, who actu-

¹⁰ P. M. De Winter, *La bibliothèque de Philippe le Hardi Duc de Bourgogne*. Paris 1985, 3–69.; G. Doutrepont, *La littérature française à la Cour des Ducs de Bourgogne*. Paris 1904, 413–455.; E. Bourassin, *Philippe Le Bon. Le Grand Lion de Flandres*. Paris 1893, 89–96.; *Charles le Téméraire. Exposition organisée à l'occasion du cinquième centenaire de sa mort*, Bibl. Roy. Albert Ier, Bruxelles 1977, (catalogue), 3–67.; Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, 1: (preface), XVI–XXX–II.

¹¹ Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, 1: 3–119. It is common knowledge that the fleet carrying the Burgundian contingent was too late and the battle was lost. Under such circumstances it would have been difficult to include the campaign among the glorious crusading enterprises, and perhaps that is why it never had "a life of its own". Nevertheless, the Duke of Burgundy at least got as far as taking concrete steps. Bourassin, *Philippe Le Bon*, 267–296.; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 2: 1–160.; Lacaze, "Politique méditerranéenne," 5–42.

¹² The separate chapter was perhaps inspired by the parts that relate, on the basis of Froissart, the history of the crusade of Nicopolis, in an independent form. Nicolae Iorga, in the preface to the separate edition of Wavrin's text on the campaign along the Lower Danube (pub. 1929) relates the story of the "discovery", and what an "experience" it was for him to find such a precious addition to the history of Rumania and the Rumanian people. Iorga, *La campagne des croisés...*, (preface). The text actually had been "discovered" for Central European historiography much earlier by Lajos Kropf, whose opinion regarding the source value of Wavrin's text was somewhat more sceptical than that of Iorga. Cf. Kropf, "Johan de Wavrin," Waleran de Wavrin set out to

ally runs a kingdom, who is an extraordinarily valiant knight in combat, but a very careful and wise general, distinguishing himself in the struggles against the Turks, a capable and dedicated protector of his country and of Christendom. This is a realistic and authentic image. Here Hunyadi appears what he really was: warrior, statesman, and general, a hero of the "everyday struggle" against the Turks. What is important for our present investigation is that in that earliest part on Hunyadi there is no trace at all of idealization, the myth has not begun to surround his person; he is neither "White" nor "Knight", and there is no question at all of his being "White Knight". Thus, on the strength of Wavrin's work, it would seem probable that it was in a different time, as a result of the activities of other French historians, and most likely in accordance with the expectations of the 1450s that the controversial "White Knight" myth of uncertain meaning came to rise in connection with János Hunyadi, naturally moving the imagination of historians of later times.

The other Burgundian historian, who wrote his chronicle some ten years after Wavrin had commenced his own, and who also mentions Hunyadi's struggles against the Turks, was Mathieu d'Escouchy. Continuing the by then very rich tradition of the Burgundian school of historiography, d'Escouchy mentions the Turkish issue in connection with a letter dated to 1447 discussing the safe movement of pilgrims and merchants in the Turkish empire – he claims the letter was sent by the Turkish Sultan to King Charles VII of France. However, in the next part Turks appear as actual and tough enemies in a detailed and rather precise battle description, where the leader of the Christians, chief protagonist of the events before and after the battle fought on St. Luke's Day (October 18) was a certain "Blanc (indeed, with the definitive article, *Le Blanc*) de Hongrie". The title of the chapter is rather general, but leaves no doubt as to the assessment of the situation: "On how Blanc of Hungary (*le Blanc de Honrie*) triumphed in battle over a large army of Turks."¹³

Despite the title, the chapter is about a battle lost. The positive overtone in spite of the defeat is due to the summary, bearing traces of Hunyadi's previous and later successes, making the reader feel the terror and uncertainty of the Christian peoples directly exposed to the assault of the Turks (explicitly referred to by the text), as well as the hope, connected primarily to Hunyadi's person, and shared by

return home to Lille in December 1445. For the circumstances of his return in detail, see Wavrin, *Recueil des croniques*, 109–110, 116–117, 120–125., and see also the preface of the Hardy edition. (Introduction), XLII.

- 13 D'Escouchy, *Chronique*, 1: ch. XXI., 119., ch. XXII., 121–124., ch. XXVI., 139–143. A comparison of the available data shows that the battle placed in the focus of events was probably the so-called second battle of Kosovo (16–18 October 1448.), which, contrary to the chapter title of the story ended with the defeat of the Hungarians, and did not prove to be an episode without consequences as the source would have us think. J. Thuróczy, *A magyarok krónikája* [Cronica Hungarorum – Chronicle of the Hungarians] Tr. J. Horváth, Budapest 1980, 373–378.; Marinescu, *La politique*, 143–152.; Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 2: 97–107. The approaches and emphases in various later national histories are rather divergent, opposing one another on that issue as well. (What can be established is that János Hunyadi is the only "positive protagonist" of the events.) Our purpose here is not to "deliver justice", but merely to examine the context and the relationship of the names Blak/Blanc and Vallach in the texts. The essay of C. Antoche quotes all the versions. The outcome of the approaches is that no one owns up to the defeat. Antoche, "Les expéditions de Nicopolis," 59–74.

the worried chronicler, too. "And that is true that the said Blanc was in those days the greatest and most glorious general of all who waged war against the empire of the Turks and other heathen peoples."¹⁴

The environment had perceptibly changed in this passage, become more open for colourful and legendary elements: the figure of the *Blanc* – not "*Chevalier*" yet – is not "*Knight*" (and as we shall see he might not be "*White*" even) appears here in a context more suitable to creating a myth. (It also appears from the text that the author sees no connection whatsoever between "*Vallar*"-s, "*Vallach*"-s and "*Blanc*", thus it is not even hinted by the text that it was the glorious stand of the Vallachs/"blaks" that made János Hunyadi the "*White Knight*" – or perhaps an early "*Rumanian*" national hero...) *Blanc*, in this case, is not connected not only with *knight* as with Wavrin, but there seems to be no relation between the Vallachs and Blanc either.

Subsequently, d'Escouchy displaying remarkable familiarity relates the events leading up to the fall of Byzantium, using throughout his narration the designation "*Le Blanc*", but the more precise versions "*Jannus, Blanc de Honguerie*" and "*Blanc de Honguerie, nommé Janus*" also appear. Further pieces of information concerning Hungary come from the time of the siege of Belgrade (Nándorfehérvár) in 1456. The summary of the news in connection with the Christian triumph at Belgrade, the amount of data, as well as the spelling of the names so alien to French ears set a difficult task both for the authors and for the nineteenth-century French editor of the text. Thus, the triumph is connected to a place called "*Cuisermuseberg*", and is linked to the name of a certain "*Onidianus*", for whose fight a "*holy man*" called "*Capitianus*" won the help of God. Finally, the author expressly indicates the source, too: "These things, he writes, I have learnt from a copy of the letter of the said Onidianus, which he sent to the King of Bohemia, and which that king also sent to the King of France and other lords and princes of that kingdom; and these letters were then circulated in a number of good cities ("*bonnes villes*"), too..."¹⁵

These words would suggest that everyone tried to exploit the propagandistic possibility of the victory, and the good news was spread abroad in the widest possible circle. D'Escouchy's text does not indicate which version he used, nor can it

¹⁴ D'Escouchy, *Chronique*, 1: ch. XXVI., 143. The fact that the last event d'Escouchy provides referring to the source he used is the death of Emperor Iohannes Palaeologus VIII of Byzantium (1425–1448) would not only suggest that the document in the hands of the chronicler can be dated at directly after the battle of Kosovo, but that the other supplementing information cannot be later than the end of the decade, either. The original source "sent to the King of France and ... princes of that kingdom from Constantinoble" according to the chronicler, of which "I, the writer of these present have acquired a copy" is dated 7 December 1448. D'Escouchy, *Chronique*, 3: Pièces justificatives, X., 341–346. This is probably the same letter or a copy thereof that Henrik Marcza-li found while researching in the BN. H. Marcza-li, "Közlemények a Párisi Nemzeti Könyvtárból [Notes from the National Library in Paris] *Magyar Történelmi Tár* 23 (1877), 83–122., containing the description of the battle of Kosovo "Letter scripted en Constantinople le VII. de December 1448," 89–97.

¹⁵ D'Escouchy, *Chronique*, 2: 325–328. A note by the editor places the town rather erroneously to "the bank of the river Raab" and identifies it as "*Enisemusebercq*". The original letter was probably in German, and the original text might possibly have had "*Griechischweissenburg*", i.e. Belgrade.

be decided how many times the source of his relation had been re-written. Anyway, it never seems to have occurred to the author that the victorious *Onidianus* and the *Blanc* could be in any way connected, and he wants no explanation as to why that certain victorious Onidianus sent the news of his triumph to the King of Bohemia (Ladislav V). It would seem that d'Escouchy places priority on the fate of Christendom in his history, and that those who do the most for it are warriors fighting under valiant captains like János Hunyadi, who at that time, in d'Escouchy's case following the victory at Belgrade, already had the mythical elements developing around his person.

The picture emerging from the pen of Jean Chartier, the last representative of the said official stream of French historiography, is already more complete than the previous ones, focusing on Hunyadi's person differently and in some respect more strongly, and presenting the general in a more legendary form.¹⁶ He mentions Hunyadi himself only after 1453; the figure of the successful champion of anti-Turkish ventures is emerging as a natural component of the shock and the increasing international political activity following the Fall of Byzantium. Hunyadi now appears as the most important figure of the struggle against the Turks, and introducing him, the chronicler presents a mixture of his successful fights so far. Continuing and commenting on the information he has received, Chartier observes, "another report relates that a certain white knight, the marshal of Hungary, who was not a nobleman but earlier a "mareschal" by profession before he applied himself to warfare and became captain of Hungary, ..." commenced tough warfare against the Turks.¹⁷ This is followed by the description of a rather chaotic sequence of events, which include a poetic mixture of certain elements of Hunyadi's battles; among others a victorious battle is described, in which Hunyadi defeats the valiantly fighting Turks, and goes on to send the Pope, the King of France, and the Duke of Burgundy six Turkish prisoners each. Very probably, Chartier's source was oral, or he used a text based on oral narration.¹⁸

It is a well-known fact that after the fall of Byzantium Christian Europe was again flooded by considerable groups of refugees, who related horrifyingly and

¹⁶ Chartier, who wrote continuously, simultaneously with the events (and fit into his material according to the same principle the information he received from elsewhere and perhaps relating to earlier events) first mentions the increasing of the Turkish threat and Hungary in connection with the mission of 1451 (mentioned by others, too), and then he regards the fall of Byzantium as an event worthy of being mentioned in the "Grand Chronicles of France" Chartier, *Chronique française*, 2: ch. 225., 325-327.

¹⁷ Chartier, *Chronique française*, 3: 40-41. The French word for Hunyadi's status ("Maréchal") is one of Frankish origin, which has become a title, but the original Frankish word ("marshalk") actually meant "blacksmith". The parallel offered by the story of Johannitz (Kalojan, Johannes Asen, 1186-1207) also mentioned by Villehardouin and Clari is very interesting (by the way, Kalojan is mentioned in these sources as *Blak Joannes*). A possible analogy between Hunyadi's "blacksmith", "groom", "horse-dealer" (i.e. humble) origin and the similar status of Johannitz - Blak Joannes cannot perhaps be ruled out. Cf. Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, in *Historiens et chroniqueurs du Moyen-âge*, ed. A. Pauphilet, Paris 1952, 177, 181, 188.; Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, in *Historiens et chroniqueurs*, 50-52, 76, 79, 160.

¹⁸ Chartier, *Chronique française*, 3: ch. 268.; 66-69.; Lacaze, "Politique méditerranéenne," 10-11.

colourfully what had happened (especially to themselves), wrote down their shocking experiences, passed on the unnerving news. It was they who really brought home the sense of oppressive, imminent danger to all classes and kinds of the inhabitants of Western Europe, and it is perhaps not far-fetched to assume that their narratives provided the final push necessary for the development of the Hunyadi myth while sort of "exporting" the image of the hero by that time surrounded with legends by both Turks and Christians (with opposite attitudes, of course) in the parts of Europe bordering on the Turkish empire. The conditions were ripe for certain elements of earlier pieces of information, complemented with new ones, to unfold, under favourable conditions, the myth of the "White Knight", the saviour of Christendom.

It is known for sure that one of the characteristic parts describing the events found its way into Master Chartier's chronicle through oral communication, and possibly coming from Hungarians, too. The account mentions huge Christian occupations in Greece: 160 towns, 400 castles and other fortresses in Christian hands, knows about the Turkish Sultan being wounded, and puts the number of Turks destroyed at 200.000. In the relevant French historical literature, this is the only report on the circumstances of the death of János Hunyadi – erroneously, incidentally, since it says the "white knight was severely wounded with a lance thrust", and died of that wound. Thus, either the information was not correct, or perhaps death by a wound received in combat suited better the Christian champion of the victory won "with God's help".¹⁹

The next historian to be discussed both chronologically and logically is Jacques de Clercq, who lived in French Flanders, was close to the court of the Duke of Burgundy, discussed the events of 1448–1467 on the basis of contemporary notes, and collected a number of documents in the process. He often used Chartier's work when writing passages on Hungary, which, apart from the easily identifiable textual correspondences, he himself confirmed, saying that he had got his information studying the "*chronicle at Saint-Denys*". Thus he received his first pieces of information on Hunyadi from Chartier, so he also has the names "chevalier Blancq" and "Guillaume Blancq". Unlike Chartier, however, du Clercq continues the line of the struggle against the Turks, and discusses the decision of the Duke of Burgundy (Philip the Good) known as *Voeu du Faisan* (Pheasant's vow), made at Lille on February 17, 1454, and published with solemn ceremony, that he would *personally* take part in the fight against the Turks (which finally did not happen), and mentions the taxes levied to finance the military enterprise against the infidels. This is particularly important because with that context, he connects Hunyadi's struggles to the atmosphere of the Burgundian court surcharged with late chivalric spirituality.²⁰

¹⁹ "It happened at that time, in the year 1456 that the Hungarians made great destruction in the territory of Hungary among the enemies of the faith of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and captured great plunder with the help of a Brother Jean Capestran and a great, wide, and famous knight called 'Guillaume Blanc' (alias Blauk, the editor adds), and they successfully drove and forced out the Turks from the town of Belgrad." Chartier, *Chronique française*, 3: 66–70.

²⁰ Du Clercq, *Mémoires*, 2: 195–200, 206–209, 219–242.; Bourassin, *Philippe Le Bon*, 267–297. For a comprehensive discussion of the political significance and symbolism of the *Voeu du Faisan* connected with the fall of Constantinople in 1453, see Caron, M-T. – Clauzel, D. (textes réunis par): *Le banquet du Faisan. 1454: l'Occident face au défi de l'Em-*

At the same time, one source was not enough for Du Clercq: he himself mentions that he used two sources for recording the victory at Belgrade. One has been mentioned above with d'Escouchy – that is the copy of that letter from Prague, which his fellow chronicler may have seen, and that could be a further proof that the missile in question was circulated in the widest possible circle, according to the interests of the anti-Turkish propaganda in Western Europe. The other source was probably the text of Chartier's compilation based on oral information. Du Clercq, very logically, takes the texts in that order, and inserts them in his narration without any special commentary. Small and mostly insignificant differences occur, of course, in his text; what is certainly obvious from these that Du Clercq also had serious problems with the transcription and/or spelling of names. One of these misspellings might not be entirely insignificant, precisely from the aspect of moving the person of János Hunyadi to legendary figures. The person mentioned as *Onidianus* by Mathieu d'Escouchy is *Ovidianus* in Du Clercq, who achieved an enormous victory over the Turks at "*Grusseusseberch*". Ovidianus (Othovien, Octavianus) is an eminent figure in the histories of Eastern Christendom. All in all, Du Clercq's chronicle is a highly interesting document of the historiography, spirituality of the Burgundian court, and its parts "loaned" from somewhere else are also informed by the mentality of the court of Burgundy. That is also why he is more inclined to creating myth, and the part, a set of relatively dry and uncertain data in Chartier's relation, in Du Clercq's narration presents a much more colourful and fascinating version. Wavrin, d'Escouchy, Chartier, and Du Clercq brought together the data concerning Hunyadi and gradually placed them in a context that was clearly favourable for the rise of the "White Knight".

The *Chronicle* of Georges Chastellain, the justly most famous Burgundian historian of the fifteenth century provides valuable information concerning a number of issues relating to Hungary – and would certainly provide more as nearly two thirds of the chronicle not been lost.²¹ Thus Hunyadi first appears in the history with the victory of Belgrade, in the chapter entitled "On the memorable defeat of the infidels"²² News of the victory, due to divine intervention and regarded

pire ottoman, („Collection Histoire"), Arras 1997.

²¹ Starting to write his *Chronicle* probably after 1455, Chastellain was a talented, exacting and circumspect historian, and, as we have seen, truly reflecting the nascent and unfolding Burgundian state as a great power as well as the mentality prevalent therein. The work, including the events of the years from 1419 to 1475, has had significant parts, also in all probability important for Hungarian history, lost. Interestingly, the loss touches nearly every chapter of the chronicle almost equally, and from a Hungarian point of view especially the losses concerning the years 1422–1429, 1431–1452 and 1468–1470 are regrettable. For Chastellain, see: Bossuat, R.: *Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française du Moyen-âge*, (MBLFMA) Paris 1951 and its sequels (1955, 196.), and Favier, J.: *Dictionnaire de la France Médiévale*, (DFM) relevant passages, and Doutrepont, *op.cit.* 441–444.; Pérouse, G.: *Georges Chastellain. Étude sur l'histoire politique et littéraire du XVe siècle* („Acad. Royale de Belgique. Mémoires, 2e série", 7.). Bruxelles 1910, 3–160.

²² This part was probably written in the early 1460s. Chastellain's text also reveals that Bishop Guillaume Fillastre of Tournai (Fillâtre, *Guilhelmus Filastri*), one of the favourite diplomats of the Duke of Burgundy could personally vouch for the authenticity of the document from Prague used by Mathieu d'Escouchy (and later Jacques Du

as a miracle, as Chastellain says, was brought to the kings and princes of Christendom by people in the vicinity. Chastellain's sequence of events is identical in terms of content with that of Du Clercq and d'Escouchy, but it is more logical, and its style more elegant. Hunyadi appears in Chastellain under the name of *Onidianus*, and the chronicler also corrects the origin of the information he has received and inserted in his chronicle.²³ Besides the Chronicle's Onidianus, he has, however, another (just one) mention in Chastellain's poem "*Le Temple de Bocace...*", the subject of which is a fashionable topic of the age, the unpredictability of luck, and János Hunyadi is mentioned with another name in a passage in a parable. Chastellain in this poem mentions, among others, the case of "*Count Cil*" (Ulrich Cilli), who "was killed and beheaded at the side of his lord, the King of Hungary", and "*Blanc's son*", who "was the perpetrator of this deed, came to the same fate..." Thus Chastellain knew the name "*le Blanc*" used for János Hunyadi as early as around the turn of the 1450s and 1460s. What is more, he actually *used* it in 1463 writing the "*Temple*", and in an accurate historical context, at that.²⁴ However, it would seem from the extant fragments that (apart from the remark "*Blanc's son*" – and not "*Chevalier Blanc*" in *Temple de Bocace*) the elements of the myth of the "*White Knight*" found in Chartier, Du Clercq, and d'Escouchy are completely missing from Chastellain. This is all the more unusual if we consider that we are dealing with the greatest and best informed historical work of the Burgundian court, sensitive for legendary elements, and most susceptible for anti-Turkish struggles and chivalric glory in the "classic sense". We can get a really satisfying explanation to this problem if we examine the works of the historians who wrote in the second half or the last third of the fifteenth century, that is to say, represent the third generation of Burgundian historians writing in French. We shall have to consider, first of all, the writings of Jean Molinet, regarded as the successor of Olivier de la Marche of the *Memoirs* and the historian Chastellain, but the short remark in the portrait of Matthias by Philippe de Commynes will be interesting and important for our discussion.

Regarded as the last historian of the age of chivalry, Olivier de la Marche was indeed susceptible mostly to the moral values, spectacles in connection with chiv-

Clercq) because at the time these events took place he was staying in the court of "*King Lancelot*" (Ladislas V.) as the envoy of the Duke of Burgundy, what is more, he himself walked under the walls of Belgrade ("*Bellegarde*") after the siege. This part in this form must have been written between 1461 and 1467 since Guillaume Fillastre (Fillâtre, *Guilelmus Filiastri*, c.1400–1473) mentioned as the "*Bishop of Tournai*", was probably the illegitimate son of the famous cardinal (member of the College of Cardinals at Constanza, which confirmed the right of patronage of the Kings of Hungary), the "second chancellor of the Order of the Golden Fleece" (the history of which he wrote), Bishop of Verdun in 1437, of Toul in 1449, became Bishop of Tournai in 1461, and Philip le Bon, mentioned as *alive*, died in 1467. Favier, *DFM*, 413.

²³ Chastellain, *op.cit.* 3: 113–114. These are the letters bringing news of the victory, which Hunyadi and Capistrano wrote (separately) to Ladislas V., the Pope, and to other royal courts directly after the triumph. Cf. Teleki J.: *Hunyadiak kora* [The Age of the Hunyadis], II., Pest 1852, 439–441.

²⁴ Chastellain, *op.cit.* 7: 94.

alry, as well as the smallest details of chivalric life.²⁵ Master Olivier, however, does not even mention János Hunyadi as the legendary "White Knight", neither does he mention the victory at Belgrade. His silence, nevertheless, is eloquent, and he himself refers to that in the *Prologus* of his work, which he wrote in 1490 for his memoirs already completed, in which he calls the attention of Grand Duke Philip to the rights that were his due, and in which he calls János Hunyadi the "white knight of Valachia" in a context not very sympathetic to Mathias.²⁶ The explanation lies in the intertwining of the Austrian and Burgundian dynasties through the wedlock of Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy, and in the deep and by that time generational sharp conflict between the Habsburgs and the Hunyadis. Post-Burgundian historians cultivating Austro-Burgundian traditions were not really enthusiastic about the Hunyadi family, and they especially did not care for Mathias Hunyadi.²⁷ It would seem, therefore, that the previously favourable reception of János Hunyadi's struggles against the Turks ultimately fell victim to the dislike that met the subsequent rise of the Hunyadi family. The basic attitude of the last historians in the Burgundian court to the Hunyadis was defined by a strong pro-Habsburg bias and propaganda, which had no room for a positive "White Knight" myth connected to a Hunyadi. The same attitude is perceptible at least equally strongly with Jean Molinet, who as "official historian" succeeding Chastellain, after the death of Charles the Bold, wrote (or at least completed) his *Chronicle* treating the events of the last third of the fifteenth century in the service of Maximilian Habsburg and Mary of Burgundy. He mentions János Hunyadi only once, in connection with Matthias's death, when he says, "... Mathias, son of Blanc, who was said to be knight, and who gained several great victories over the infidels through the valour of his arms, ..." Obviously, the difference between "Blanc, who was said

²⁵ He left behind the most colourful description of the „*Voeu du Faisan*” ceremony. A faithful adherent of the Burgundian-Hapsburg dynasty, towards the end of his career he was engaged educating Duke Philip the Fair (later Philip I of Castile), and he intended his memoirs for the edification of his charge. De La Marche, *op.cit.* 478–489. For the function of the „*Voeu du Faisan*” (Lille, February 17–19, 1453.), see Bourassin, *Philippe Le Bon*, 267–296.; see also the relevant passages from Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Payton, J., Chicago, 1996; De Mérindol, Ch.: *Le Banquet du Faisan. Jérusalem et l'esprit de croisade hors de la Bourgogne à la veille de la prise de Constantinople*, in Caron-Clauzel, *op.cit.* 71–84.

²⁶ De La Marche, *op.cit.* 304, (preface), 307–352.

²⁷ For the copious literature on the conflicts between Matthias and the Habsburgs and the age of Matthias, see: P. E. Kovács, *Mathias Corvinus*, Budapest 1990, 111–130. (especially 196–197); K. Kisfaludy, *Mathias Rex*, Budapest 1983, 95–108, 125–143. (bibliography: 205–206.), see also the bibliographies in a publication connected to the programmes of the "Renaissance Year" of 2008, P. Farbaký–E. Spekner–K. Szende–A. Végh, eds. *Hunyadi Mátyás, a király. Hagymány és megújulás a királyi udvarban (1458–1490)* [Matthias Hunyadi, the king. Tradition and renewal in the royal court (1458–1490)], Exhibition catalogue, Budapest 2008, 544–597.; Á. Mikó–M. Verő, eds. *Mátyás király öröksége. Késő reneszánsz művészet Magyarországon (16–17. sz.)* [The legacy of King Matthias. Late Renaissance art in Hungary (16th–17th c.)] 2 vols., Budapest 2008, 221–254.; F. Földesi, ed. *Csillag a holló árnyékában. Vitéz János és a humanizmus kezdetei Magyarországon* [Star in the shadow of the raven. János Vitéz (Vitéz) of Zredna and the beginnings of humanism in Hungary], Budapest 2008, 234–246.; E. Csukovics, ed. *Mátyás és a humanizmus* [Matthias and humanism], („Nemzet és emlékezet”), Budapest 2008.

to be knight" and "White Knight" (even if the role played in the wars against the Turks could not be questioned) was not one of word order or chronology: it clearly reflected the views of the *political rivals*, and the expression again is meant to refer to the low origin of the Hunyadi family. Anyway, at least that is what transpires from these texts; the Burgundian historians were not moved by the words of many Italian humanists praising and glorifying Matthias and/or the Hunyadi family, but, in perfect accordance with earlier experiences, they were definitely influenced by the political interests and emotions of their own princes.²⁸

The only different approach in the French material is represented by the *Mémoires* of Commynes.²⁹ Not influenced by any commitment or sympathy against the Hunyadis, or for their enemies, for that matter, Commynes spent a significant part of his years serving as statesman and diplomat in Italy and in close connections with Italian princes, and provides a witty and realistic image of the selected great princes of his age. Without going into details, here he sums up the struggles of Hunyadi against the Turks, too, describes the conflict between Ladislas V and the Hunyadis, the subsequent fate of the Hunyadi brothers, Matthias' election King of Hungary and then his reign. He calls János Hunyadi "*Chevalier Blanc*" with complete ease, his narration has no trace of the reserve so typical of the court historians of Burgundy. As he writes, "The said King Matthias was the son of a very noble knight, who was called White Knight and came from Wallachia: although a simple nobleman, he was a most virtuous and clever man, who had governed the Kingdom of Hungary for a long time..." Indeed, he goes further than that when attributing Matthias' election king to divine intervention, which he explains by saying that "perhaps Our Lord found pleasure in the services his father had performed." Thus, János Hunyadi is introduced, not coincidentally in the memoirs of Commynes, as a realistic figure of fifteenth-century political life, presented in a well-balanced manner, and all that despite the fact that Commynes – who often firmly took a stand against the values of chivalry, which he regarded as outdated – was the one to apply most clearly and most unambiguously the name "White Knight" to him, although that is originally closer to the chivalric ideal. It might seem a paradox, but Hunyadi becomes "White Knight" clearly and naturally in

²⁸ Molinet, *op.cit.* II. 182.; Doutrepont, *op.cit.* 447–451.

²⁹ Commynes, *op.cit.* 522–524., Bossuat, *MBLFMA* (relevant passages and Favier, *DFM.*, 293. This process was analyzed in comprehensive studies by Dufournet, J.: *Destruction des mythes dans les Mémoires de Philippe de Commynes* („Publications Romanes et Françaises”), Genève 1966., and J. Blanchard, *Commynes l'europpéen. L'invention du politique*, („Publications Romanes et françaises” 216.), Genève 1996. Commynes gives a large scale comparison, and his tableau includes Charles the Bold (1467–1477) Duke of Burgundy, King Edward III. of England (1327–1377), King Louis XI. of France (1461–1483), Sultan Mehmet II. (1451–1481) of the Turkish Empire, the "Conqueror", as well as Matthias (1458–1490), King of Hungary. Commynes, *op.cit.* (Dufournet), ch. XII. 514–527. The influence of the familiarity with Italy is easy to detect throughout his analysis. Although the second, large part of his work is taken up mostly by the description of events in Italy, the diplomatic experiences acquired in Italy can be felt in the attitude of the whole work. For its Hungarian aspects, too, see S. Csernus, *A reneszánsz fejedelmükrök forrásvidékén: Philippe de Commynes, a „francia Machiavelli”* [At the river-head of Renaissance mirrors of princes. Philippe de Commynes, "Machiavelli of the French"], *Századok* 133 (1999), 125–144.

the text of Commynes, who is usually viewed as the destroyer of medieval chivalric myths, but this "*Chevalier Blanc*" has little to do with the myths of the knights of old, but rather fits into Commynes' comments of "divine intervention". It is hardly questionable at the same time, that it was the "*Mémoires*" of Commynes that has created the greatest publicity for the identity of Hunyadi as the White Knight since the sixteenth century.³⁰

To sum up, it would seem that the news about Hunyadi, on account of his successes in the struggle against the Turks, appeared on the pages of the works of French historians from the mid-1440s to be mentioned there with some regularity in the subsequent years mostly as a result of the increasing activity of the Duke of Burgundy in Mediterranean politics and the efforts of the Holy See to encourage cooperation against the Turks. Apart from his historian relative, nobody seems to have used the first pieces of news in the account of the younger Wavrin. (If the account of the campaign at the Lower Danube made some impact that might have been in Chastellain's chronicle, but as we have seen, the story of the years 1432 to 1452 are missing from it.) Gilles Le Bouvier, traveller, diplomat, and historian, writing approximately contemporaneously with the events, provided information of the struggles against the Turks, but he is far from associating the successes to any person, let alone one single person. Since the earliest account, Wavrin's, found its way into works of history only later, it would seem that Hunyadi was "introduced" to historical literature in French by Mathieu d'Escouchy in his chronicle. The occasion for that was provided by an account of the Battle of Kosovo ("*Cossova*"), which found its way to France. The next dynamic appearance of János Hunyadi was connected to the general shock, alarm, and hope for a saviour in the wake of Constantinople. Thus, his presence is continuous in Mathieu d'Escouchy in the material concerning the Turks until 1456; with Jean Chartier (and with Jacques De Clercq) it is connected rather to the new great event, the victory at Belgrade, and the parts surviving in Chastellain's chronicle associate him exclusively with that event.

Hunyadi was only referred by his own name in the earliest fragments (Wavrin: "*Joannes de Hoignac*" and "*Huniade*"), and never more. The versions by the so-called "first generation" historians, who concentrated mostly on the first half of the fifteenth century, all used deformed, or deformed and invented names, such as: "*le Blanc*", "*Jannus, Blanc de Honguerie*", and "*Blanc de Honguerie, nommé Janus*" (d'Escouchy); "*Onidianus*" (d'Escouchy, Chastellain), "*le chevalier blanc*" (Chartier), "*chevalier Blancq*" (from the previous, with a Picardian -q at the end), "*Guillaume Blanc/Blancq*" (Chartier, Du Clercq), and "*Ovidianus*" (Du Clercq).

The situation is somewhat different with the "second" generation of great French and Burgundian historians (Commynes, Olivier de la Marche, Jean Molinet), who if uncertainly, somehow appropriated the name "white knight", and all the three of them discuss János Hunyadi in connection with Matthias. It is Commynes who uses the label in the clearest sense, and as we have seen, he mentions him simply as "*Chevalier Blanc*". While one of the Burgundian historians (Olivier

³⁰ Cf. J. Liniger, *Le Monde et Dieu selon Ph. De Commynes*, Neuchâtel 1943., Dufournet, *op. cit.* 309, 486-490., Blanchard, *op. cit.* 164, 167, 285. The work had ten editions in six languages (Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, French, Flemish) in the 16th century.

de la Marche) says "*le blanc chevalier*" (and not "*chevalier blanc*", and uses low case initials, that is, he is not using it as a nickname), the other (Jean Molinet) keeps perhaps a greater distance giving the version "*Blanc, chevalier comme l'on disoit*", and this formula does not suggest the most positive approach, is hardly suitable for creating myth, neither is that his intention... However, it suggests indirectly that such a process exists because this formula implies, and is an obvious opposition to, a "commencing" intent of myth creation, existing on an embryonic level at least.

The identification of the place of origin of the information (or the data capable of generating this myth connected to him) concerning the "white knight" could be useful in a number of respects in explaining the rise and further development of the "Hunyadi myth". As mentioned above, news from the eastern parts of Christendom could arrive in French territories with through a number of possible media but mostly following two routes: a northern (along the valley of the Danube) and a *southern* (the Balkans-Lombardy-Rome-Rhône valley, or from the eastern Mediterranean via Byzantium-Venice-Rome-Genoa on sea) information route. The "southern" route had been functioning for centuries, and was obviously more colourful, vivid, and active than the other. The more detailed material concerning Hunyadi probably also came to the range of the French historians' vision from the Balkans (mostly Byzantium) and Italy, and in all probability certain elements of the myth of the "white knight" (descriptions of the battles fought against the Turks, the *Blanc*, or the *Blancus*) also originated from the Balkans.³¹ At the same time, activities and political propaganda concerning Burgundy (and the Netherlands), and connected to the Luxembourg- and then the Habsburg dynasties gradually gained strength, and rendered the northern route (i.e. from Central Europe to France and the court of Burgundy) of the information flow more efficient.

Anyway, at least according to the data we have, the news coming from the "northern side" do not know about any "white knight", and if they use the label *Blak-Blanc* at all, they do it without the intention to create a myth. This, of course, does not rule out the names in the information moving westward from "north", such as for example "Onidianus" (*Hunyadius*, *Hunyadianus*, indeed, perhaps "*Hunyadijános*"...) making legendary associations of ideas possible in France, the like of which one can see in Du Clercq (Onidianus - *Ovidianus*).³²

Thorough analyses thus support the view that both versions (the northern "Onidianus" - "Ovidianus" and the southern "Blanc" - "Blancq"), if not to the same extent, could be suitable for generating and nurturing a myth of the "white knight" type, if it found a "prepared background" and a sufficiently "susceptible environment". The name "Onidianus" easily fits among the heroic figures (Othovien, Octavianus...) in the romances mostly about the successful recapture of Je-

³¹ A good example for that is the information material sent to royal courts in Western Europe on the battle of Kosovo (or later with the mediation of Byzantium), sent regularly by Christians in the East to inform Western Christendom, to create cooperation, and to encourage crusades. *Ibid.* 96-97, see also J. Richard, *La Bourgogne des Valois, l'idée de la croisade et la défense de l'Europe*, in Caron-Clauzel, *op.cit.* 15-28.

³² For the Latin versions of Hunyadi's name, see: G. Fejér, *Genus et incunabula et virtus Joannis Corvini de Hunyad, regni Hungariae Gubernatoris, Argumentis criticis illustrata*, Buda 1844, 16-17.

rusalem. The "Blanc", who achieved his sensational victory at Belgrade (that is, on the walls of Nándorfehérvár, Nanderalba), logically connects to the image of the most glorious knights fighting the infidels, who were champions of Christendom clad in (bright) white (perhaps white armour) – ranging from the archetypical Charlemagne to the rather *atypical* Frederick III, nevertheless presented by Olivier de La Marche as a knight.³³

The birth of the "White Knight" myth and its crystallizing around the person of Hunyadi is probably due to the "intellectual cooperation" between the Balkans and the Romance language speaking countries of Western Europe, and its first tentative appearance in time, at least on the strength of the sources at our disposal, can be put to the years 1449–1453, and it culminated, in concord with real historical events, in the general terror generated by the offensive of the Turks, and then in the euphoria caused by Christian successes, at the time of the victory in 1456. The "interference" between Blak and Blanc can be an interesting and less than customary example of the presence and functioning of popular etymology in this field.

By that time, Hunyadi's figure, thanks to the available information on him and to the expectation of the receiving medium, was eminently suitable to have a real myth rise around it. However, there seem to have been other components to be considered in the mechanism of the birth of the "White Knight" myth. For we do know that the receiving medium was especially inclined to transforming and interpreting foreign names expediently, and it was charged with information.³⁴ In the case of the Hunyadi-White Knight there was probably also a step, where such a "name-transformational" logic started functioning. We have seen above that the coupling "Chevalier Blanc" came into existence with difficulties: Hunya-

³³ The white rider/knight coming to the rescue is a widespread, strong motif, going back to the biblical prophecies. Cf. the Gospel according to John, *Revelation* 1:14, 19:8, 11, 14, 15. The word "white" (*blanc*) in French is of Frankish origin, and its first recorded occurrence is in the *Chanson de Roland* (c.1080: meaning "blank", that is to say "bright", "splendid") in connection with Charlemagne, who had "his beard shining white". When meeting the Saracen envoys he is sitting on a "white rug", and the "Saracen is dazzled by the sight of Charlemagne, who is white, shining white", but the Christian champions, lining up for the battle against the Saracens, also wear armours "shining dazzling white". A.-J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français, jusqu'au milieu du XIVe siècle*, Paris 1987, 72. On the celebration of the "Voeux du Faisan" whiteclad knights stood in line. Cf. Bourassin, *Philippe Le Bon*, 85–86, 274–275. For the «nominally» but not «functionally» «white knight», see Ch. V. Langlois, *La vie en France au Moyen Age de la fin du XIIe au milieu du XIVe siècle d'après les romans mondains du temps*, Paris 1924, 323–329. The image of the white knight leading Christians does not exist only in the context of the conflict of Christianity and Islam since it is connected also, for example, to the legend of St. Olaf (1015–1030) by Snorri Sturluson (1178–1241), inspired probably by the story of St. Demeter. See: M. Gyóni, "Les variantes d'un type de légende byzantine dans la littérature ancienne-islandaise," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 4 (1956), 295–311.

³⁴ Several examples can be mentioned for that on a similar subject by the chroniclers in question, such as the pairings „László – Lancelot" and „Ladislas – Laudislas", as well as „Constantinople – Constantinoble" or „Belgrade – Bellegarde", especially in Chastelain, Du Clercq, Chartier, and the Latin document made in connection with the mission of Ladislas V. Csernus, „Lanselot...", 107–108.

di was Blanc, Blancq, Blauk, le Blanc, le Blanc chevalier before transforming into "Chevalier Blanc". In the case of the information from the Byzantine Empire and/or Southern Europe it is justifiable to assume that its sources were aware of the identity of Blak/Vlach, what is more, as we saw earlier (with the case of Blak Johannes / Johannitza / Kalojan), János Hunyadi was not the first to appear in French works of history under a similar name (he was called János/Joan, came from Wallachia), with a reputation of a great general, and playing a significant historical role in the Balkans.

Thus, on the basis of a more thorough scrutiny, comparison of the sources and the examination of the mentions in their real contexts, we can say with increasing confidence that prior to the forming and inveteracy of the glorifying nickname, the adjective thought to be "white" did not mean white in the first compounds. It is more probable that the designation, initially not necessarily meant to be flattering (indifferent, at best), and then accepted simply as fact originally came from the ethnonym "blak", i.e. Vlach/Valach, and originally also meant "Blak". What proves that is that initially Hunyadi was not, even for the French chroniclers, either "Blanc", or even less "Chevalier Blanc", but merely, at best, a valiant knight. However, the success of his battles against the Turks, the *real* role of the actual knight, awaited "all over Christendom" as a saviour, and the messianic faith accompanying his arrival together changed "Blak" (*vlach*) and "Blancq chevalier" (Vlach knight) usually not meant as a flattery, into "*Chevalier Blanc*", the champion of Christendom. That also gave a meaning to the designation "Blak/Blancq", difficult to interpret by the French (and other Romance) media unfamiliar with the origin of the source. Anyway, the transformation of the positively charged image of Hunyadi into "white knight" very probably took place in a French (and perhaps Catalanian, this time outside the scope of our investigation) civilization environment. In that transformation and development of the Hunyadi-image, the intellect of certain French and Burgundian historians particularly susceptible in that direction, and the mentality of the Burgundian ducal court in general, enthralled by the later age of chivalry, probably played important roles. It is well-known that the "first generation" historians connected to the Burgundian court were particularly sensitive to these issues (especially to the struggle against the Turks), and followed with close attention all events and subjects that assumed special importance with regard to the autonomy of the Burgundian branch of the Valois dynasty and the increasingly unfolding Burgundian "national" identity.

Thus, the myth of the "*Chevalier Blanc*" was born in a medium susceptible to the idea of the later crusade, where it "spontaneously" had a favourable reception. For us, the most interesting aspect of this myth is its spontaneity: for it would seem that the "White Knight" myth, at that time anyway, was not the result and function of a direct propaganda with determined objectives (as the myth of Matthias would be later), but rather the expression of one of the widespread notional components rooting strongly in the collective mentality of Western Christendom. At the same time, the sources clearly display the transition, the process of the ethnonym becoming a personal name, then becoming independent of it because the sources can and do distinguish between Blanc/Blancq, the Blancq chevalier and the Vlach. This is especially so in the letter describing the battle of Kosovo and in

the chronicle texts derived from it, where "le Blanc" means Hunyadi, and "Val-laques" mean the ethnic, and nothing indicates that the two had anything to do with one another.³⁵

On the other hand, it cannot be ruled out that the greatest obstacle before the survival of the myth will be the lack of consciousness and/or of actual political interest: in French territories, it did not have a clearly formulated, "deliberate" purpose or aspiration – well definable by the French or Burgundian court, and supported by same for political reasons – develop around it which could have promoted its further unravelling. The conditions for its survival did not improve. On the contrary, it was within the range of French linguistic, cultural, political, and civilizational medium that groups or persons sufficiently interested in the survival and/or sustenance of the "chevalier blanc" myth connected to Hunyadi were absent, while both important courts, the royal court in France and the court of the Duke of Burgundy, had a number of mostly pro-Habsburg factors, directly or indirectly *counter-interested*, emerge. The spontaneity of the development of the myth meant, at the same time, the limited character of the possibilities of its further development. Actually, the glory of János Hunyadi as "White Knight" could have been exploited later (much later ...) by the church, by the pope, by humanist propaganda, and especially by King Matthias Hunyadi for constructive purposes, that is to say, for propaganda supporting their own political goals. However, Matthias Hunyadi, as we have seen, did not adopt this designation. The political interests, on the other hand, linked to the sustenance of the Hunyadi myth in the territories belonging to the French civilization medium cannot be documented – not at least in the second half of the fifteenth century.³⁶

It was probably also a factor not to be neglected that the kings of Hungary after Sigismund (and following in his steps) consistently articulated aspirations which alarmed the dukes of Burgundy, namely, they laid claim to the territories that, although drawn under the control of the Duke of Burgundy, were regarded as imperial, or belonging to the Luxembourg family, in particular to the Duchy of Luxembourg, which was strategically important for Burgundy. As shown above, the dukes of Burgundy and/or the Burgundian power developing on the borders of the Kingdom of France and the Holy Roman Empire had a number of jealous enemies. Its relations with the kings of France (Charles VII, Louis XI) were mostly tense, and were not always free from troubles with either Emperors Sigismund and Frederick III, or the heir apparent (Ladislav V) of the imperial crown; but relations were not really good between Matthias Hunyadi and Philip the Good or Matthias and Charles the Bold, either. (It is true even if common objectives against Emperor Frederick sometimes moved the latter two to temporal and superficial

³⁵ „Le victorieux chevalier, nommé le Blanc, lequel est vaivode de Hongrye, qui vould autant a dire mareschal...”, the texts says about Hunyadi and it applies the terms «Vallaques», and «ceux de la Valaquié» to those coming from Rumanian principalities. The identification of the two names („Blanc” and „valaque”) is not easy “dramaturgically”, either, since the Blanc lost that battle because of the betrayal of the valaques. Marczali, „Közlemények,” 89-91.

³⁶ Th. Basin, *Histoire des règnes de Charles VII et de Louis XI*. éd. J. Quicherat, 4 vols., Paris 1855-1859, I. (Introduction) and 241-249.

rapprochement, indeed, to alliance.)³⁷ What is more, as we have seen, the mistrust of the dukes of Burgundy was later more forcefully and in an ultimately anti-Hunyadi manner burdened by the conflict between the house of Austro-Burgundy and Matthias – the outcome initially not too happy for Frederick III. Thus, the way things were, those around the French king, and the dukes of Burgundy, separately, cooperated with powers (often against each other) that at the same time worked against the cooperation with Matthias Hunyadi, and, therefore, they could not really do anything with János Hunyadi, the “White Knight”.

Thus, the domestic breeding ground had disappeared (or at least did not remain fertile in that respect), there was no political intention, neither did new and sufficiently forceful external impulses emerge that could have worked towards the preservation or continuation of the “white knight”-myth in French speaking territories. The legendary elements of the anti-Turkish fights of the “white knight” survived easier in Italy, much more vulnerable to Turkish threats, and in the Iberian peninsula, where the struggle of the *Reconquista* were continuing, especially in Aragon, which had connections earlier with János Hunyadi, and was more recently linked to Matthias with dynamic political and dynastic relations, as well as in the cultural and political medium of Catalonia than in France engaged building domestic power structures and constantly in conflict with Burgundy. At the same time, in other areas of Christendom, a new kind of Matthias-myth was forming on humanistic foundations, which could develop in relationship with the earlier myth of the “White Knight” (although it never got into direct contact with it). However, the humanistic myth of Matthias seems to have had no connections with French literature or historical literature. On the strength of all this it would seem that the Matthias-myth is basically an intelligently built, humanistically charged construction by intellectuals, while the myth of the “white knight” is rather the expression of popular expectations and hopes inspired by mediaeval chivalry.³⁸

Nevertheless, having surveyed all the available material, we are of the opinion that in the “White knight” problematic the basic elements of *pro*-Hunyadi(s) and *anti*-Hunyadi(s) propaganda are laid together and sometimes overlap so that occasionally the result does not square with the original purpose. The contemporary French sources received the data on “*Blak*” from Eastern Europe with either indifferent or deprecatory, contemptuous emphasis. The role, however, that Hunyadi played in the narratives was placed at a very high level in the Western European scale of values; and since everything that Hunyadi “functionally” did was completely consistent with the very positively charged expectations of the receiving medium, *Blak*, which was anyway impossible to interpret in a wider circle, let us

³⁷ For the international aspirations of the Duke of Burgundy and Matthias, see the relevant passage from W. Paravicini, *Karl der Kühne. Das Ende des Hauses Burgund*, Muster-schmidt-Göttingen-Frankfurt 1976.; K. Schelle, *Charles le Téméraire*, Paris 1979, 196–197, 308–310., for their role in the planned international cooperation against the Turks as the result of the activity of the Holy See: Setton, *op.cit.* 2: 231–270, 271–313.; Engel-Kristó-Kubinyi, *op.cit.*, 252–263.; K. Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III und das Reich*, München, 1975 et 1989.; E. Kovács, *op.cit.* 97–153.

³⁸ See the relevant passages from T. Klaniczay-J. Jankovics, eds. *Mathias Corvinus and...*, T. Klaniczay, *A keresztieshad eszméje és a Mátyás-mítosz* [The idea of crusade and the myth of Matthias], („Reneszánsz Füzetek” 28.), Budapest 1975, offprint.

say, "for a simple Frenchman or a Catalanian", gradually became *Blanc*, understandable and clearly carrying *values*. It was however later that it could become a legendary white knight, during which process the identification *blak-vlach* meant to be pejorative was replaced by the value-bearing *blanc*, and the "knight *Blak*" became in the later interpretations "*Chevalier Blanc*". Anyway, a more thorough analysis of the sources reveals that although a basically positive Hunyadi-Chevalier Blanc image developed during the fifteenth century in the French speaking territories, but it did not really strike roots, nor do we have information of the appearance of the elements of a Matthias-myth constructed with propagandistic purposes.³⁹ On the other hand, it is obvious that his father's military and political successes were beneficial for Matthias' authority, just as the assessment of János Hunyadi in the eyes of contemporaries had been, naturally, significantly influenced by the career and politics of Matthias by the last third of the fifteenth century.

It is not surprising either that South-Eastern Europe, where fighting the Turks gradually became an everyday problem, still needed the legendary heroes of a previous age, like János Hunyadi or Giovanni da Capestrano. This whole process might have had something to do with Ransanus saying as a fact of János Hunyadi that peoples in the West usually mention him by the name *Johannes Blancus* (although he does not actually call him "knight"). According to Ransanus' text, and as the result of the humanistic intention and with wishing to please the prince (Matthias in this case), the myth of the "*chevalier blanc*" made the journey backward too, returning to where its fertilizing components had started, where it was probably needed the most, and where, better than ever, it was probably received by a responsive medium and fertile soil. It seems, however, that this is not what happened since Ransanus' attempt in Hungary remained an isolated incident, an initiative without response. Matthias and his environment, possibly infected by the mood of the frustration over the "low" origin of the king, and the concomitant compulsion to prove, apparently did not "buy" the "White Knight" version, that is to say, the connection of *Johannes Blancus* - *Chevalier Blanc* to János Hunyadi. Of course, in the Hungarian court everyone knew or at least guessed that *Blanc* was actually *Blak*, and therefore *Blancus* was actually *Blachus/Vlachus*, and that in this form probably irritated Matthias, who could be best infuriated by references to his low origin, as Bonfini tells us.⁴⁰

It would seem that the Roman descent established by Bonfini, as well as the story of the paternity of King Sigismund also originating from him but elaborated in the text of Gáspár Heltai, were the result of that collective frustration, too.⁴¹ We can say with confidence, however, that the pro-Habsburg propaganda, which was not above calling the Hunyadi family running such a splendid

³⁹ Marinescu, *Du nouveau...*, 136-164, 164-173.

⁴⁰ For that, it is enough to read the relevant passage in Bonfini: Antonius De Bonfinis *Rerum ungaricarum* decades. Ediderunt I. Főgel et B. Iványi et L. Juhász. Tomus III. Leipzig 1936, 224 (3.9).

⁴¹ An excellent historical analysis of the issue is given by R. Lupescu, „Az ősökötől a hatalom küszöbéig” [From the ancestors to the threshold of power], in *Hunyadi Mátyás, a király*, 35-51. See also M. Zrínyi, *Mátyás király életéről való elmélkedések* [Meditations on the life of King Matthias], in *Zrínyi Miklós hadtudományi munkái* Budapest 1976, 258.

course "*Blakk*", ultimately missed its target through the prism of popular etymology gradually and somewhat surprisingly, and the nickname intended as pejorative and derogatory received a positive charge thanks to the positive context and the actual role of the protagonist. Perhaps it can also be added that even if there is a connection between *vlach*, *blak*, *blancq*, *blanc* and „*Chevalier Blanc*“, it does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the designation *chevalier blanc* “ tried to express the exceptional valour and anti-Turkish mission, “already realized”, of the Vlach-Vallach (let alone the Rumanian) people. (Contemporary French historians have only bad things to say about the Wallachs, and in a summary manner, while one can read mostly only good things about the Blak/Blanc knight, which was sometimes again probably due to the propaganda of pro-Habsburg or anti-Hunyadi groups in Hungary. Therefore, it would seem that Constantia Marinescu is probably right saying that “*Blanc*” is a name derived from the words Vlach/Blak, but its projection back to the contemporary people (*Vlach*, *Vallach*, *Valaque* – much less *Rumanian*) is a construction of later historians impossible to support with sources.

Under whatever name, the French texts, sometimes mentioning his “Walachian” origin, definitely connect Hunyadi to Hungary, to the Hungarians, to the Kingdom of Hungary (and/or Transylvania). Nothing, however, can prevent posterity from regarding János Hunyadi as he was regarded by his contemporaries. Hunyadi was an eminent general and statesman, who protected contemporary Christendom, chivalrous and humanist values, fought valiantly and successfully in the front-line of Christian Europe, united and valorised the forces of various peoples, who in later histories and on the basis of historical facts was proved to have been of Wlach origin, but he can be the hero of two (or more) peoples, the outstanding champion of the whole community of Western Christendom, who was at the same time, on the strength of his military and political career as well as his reputation at the time clearly and without doubt associated with the Kingdom of Hungary.

In that context, therefore, the interpretation of the myth of the “White Knight” in France remains a fascinating example of an attempt at myth-creation strongly tied to “spontaneous” medieval traditions and values, an integral part of the widely known late medieval world of the chivalric ideal populated by exceptional heroes, while it never really could take root in that form in Hungary, which was much less influenced by the system of values and the imagination of the culture of chivalry.

We have also seen that French speaking territories, in France and especially in the “Burgundian provinces”, there was no longer a political and propagandistic interest that could have provided further living space for the myth of the “White Knight”. As is well-known, the court culture of Burgundy “melted” in the Habsburgs’ sphere of interest, but it certainly survived in the court of Spain, which became a vast empire during Emperor Charles V. The interest survived and had a fertilizing effect in one area: Aragon, showing increasing interest in Hungary, in the fight against the Turks, and especially in Southern Italy. There, the elements of the myth of the “White Knight” linked to Hunyadi are included certainly with good reason among the factors inspiring the romance of chivalry written later (and

influencing, among others, Cervantes) with the title *Tirant Lo Blanc*.⁴²

Finally, the question asked in the title above can be answered in the following way: at the rise of the myth of the "White Knight" all the said components were present and interacting with each other. Myth, propaganda, counter-propaganda, popular etymology, the given historical context, and of course the concrete historical function of an exceptional person all played a part simultaneously in the transformation of János Hunyadi, initially identified neutrally as "Vlach", or detracted by his political rivals by the same epithet (as has been shown, through several transfers) from "Vlach/Blak Knight" into the "White Knight" of Romance cultures.

We have also shown that this myth was not received directly favourably in Hungary (perhaps for the above mentioned reasons), and it had no real future, either. It would seem that in this part of the world, in this culture, and in the political context of the given time, the myth and later the cult of the Hunyadis and especially of Matthias did not really need the myth of the "White Knight", which had developed and spread in Western Europe.⁴³

On the strength of the above it seems safe to say that the pieces of information of the "White knight" myth connected to Hunyadi appear in fifteenth-century French, Italian, and Catalan texts in the best possible contexts (which also means, naturally, that the negative political propaganda mentioned above - whether it was Clio's grimace or, as Commynes would have us believe, the result of "divine intervention" - missed its target). Be as it may, the figure of Hunyadi-"White knight" has integrated in the intellectual world of Western Christendom among earlier, legendary, heroic "white knights". Thereby, it received a special function (one could also say it fulfilled its mission) since it had a definite impact on the changes of the image of Hungary in the Europe of the late middle and early modern ages.

It was furthermore suitable for inspiring interest and sympathy for Hungary, as well as for formulating and mediating that collective role and/or mission that designated Hungary in late medieval and early modern times (and in later centuries) in the Western half of Europe as the "Protective shield in the East of Christendom". Thus, this mission role, regarded as an important component of Hungarian national consciousness, was confirmed along that line in the collective consciousness of Western Christendom.⁴⁴

⁴² De Courcelles, D.: „Le roman de *Tirant lo Blanc* et le Voeu du Faisan: le pouvoir de la parole entre politique et littérature”, in Caron-Clauzel, *op.cit.* 173-186. also links automatically Hunyadi's being a „vallach”, his glorious struggles against the Turks and the figure of the White Knight, the chief protagonist of the novel. It is a pity that he believes his sources that Hunyadi won a great victory over the Turks in 1448 and that he died of the wounds he received during the siege of Belgrade. *Idem.* 179-180.

⁴³ B. Köpeczi, *Histoire de la culture hongroise*, Budapest 1994, 57-58.

⁴⁴ S. Csernus, S.: „La Hongrie, le rempart de la Chrétienté, naissance et épanouissement de l'idée d'une mission collective,” in Ch. Delsol-M. Maslowski-J. Nowicki, eds. *Mythes et symboles politiques en Europe Centrale*, Paris 2002, 107-123.; *Id.*: „Une idéologie à l'épreuve de la modernité. L'idée de la Croisade en Hongrie à la fin du Moyen-âge”, in De Cevins, M. M. dir. *L'Europe Centrale au seuil de la modernité. Mutations sociales, religieuses et culturelle*, Rennes 2010, 57-74.