

Róbert Hász: Venus's Migration

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The conjunction of the Sun and Venus in 1768 was observed by several scientists all over the world. The protagonist of Róbert Hász's fifth novel, János Sajnovics, a young Jesuit astronomer departed with Miksa Hell, the court astronomer from Wien through the main European cities to Vardø, the northernmost inhabited city on the continent, next to the Arctic Ocean. Their journey reveals the complicated ideological-political, intellectual-cultural relations system in Europe in the 18th century, with the raptures that indicate the birth of a new era. The events and experiences reflect and evoke János's inner journey, meetings, and attempts to find his path, which – unlike the orbits – are accidental, unexpected and unpredictable. To depict these, Hász uses the great traditions of the psychological novel and the Bildungsroman.



“He closed the lid of the box and hung the key-ring on his belt. “I am afraid, János, I fear the future. Sometimes I can hear the junctures of our world creaking and crunching around us. I am afraid that our century, which has brought so much new to the human sense, will die in pain and suffering and also be the forerunner of terrible times. No matter if our scientific discoveries dissolve the darkness around us, each of our steps brings us closer to a different kind of darkness which will be much crueler than the previous one, because at the bottom of it merciless rationality is waiting for us, not childish superstitions. The scientific brightness has brought intellectual chaos, and in the cacophony that fills everything it is sometimes difficult to tell the genius from the fool. There are self-appointed prophets at every corner propagating their truths, upsetters in the disguise of science are destroying the old order and do not offer anything else in return only the vain promise of false freedom.” He grabbed János's arm. “We can easily make a mistake when we too quickly suppose that something is good just because it is new. The age of chaos is lurking around and will soon cover over humanity.” (An excerpt from the novel)

Róbert Hász was born in Doroszló, Yugoslavia in 1964. He moved to Szeged, Hungary in 1991. He is the editor in chief of *Tiszatáj*, a literary periodical. He has published seven books, some of them in German, Italian and French, too.

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