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Szilágyi, Anikó (2013) (*Translating*) book three of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark into Hungarian*. MPhil(R) thesis.

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(Translating) Book Three of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*
into Hungarian

Anikó Szilágyi

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of MPhil

School of Critical Studies

College of Arts

University of Glasgow

December 2013

Abstract

Sections 1 and 2 constitute the critical component of this thesis, and they serve to contextualise the Hungarian translation of Book Three of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, which follows them. Section 1 is a brief and very selective exploration of the history of Hungarian literary translation, which draws on Lawrence Venuti's concept of the translator's invisibility to highlight influences that may affect the contemporary Hungarian translator's work. In Venuti's Western translation model a transparent target text masquerades as non-translation and creates the illusion of access to an unadulterated original. East European translation has not been shaped by the same historical forces as its Western counterpart, and therefore its theorisation requires a different critical vocabulary, but the notion of invisibility remains relevant. East European literary cultures have been influenced by Communist politics, a collective sense of inferiority in relation to the West, and the need to construct a national identity through art, all of which has led to the development of a cultural paradigm that accords great importance to translation, and views it as a creative, rather than derivative, process. This approach to translation was particularly strong in Hungary in the first half of the twentieth century, when literary translators enjoyed great prestige and freedom in their treatment of source texts. Translations published in the literary journal *Nyugat* [West], including Dezső Kosztolányi's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven', reveal assumptions about the nature and purpose of translation that are very different from contemporary Western attitudes. Section 2 examines the problem of translating simple language into Hungarian. It starts with a discussion of translating *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the challenge the repetitive language poses for the translator. It then considers historical factors which may account for the place that the 'plain style' has come to occupy in English literary cultures, and contrasts it with the status conferred by linguistic complexity in Hungarian fiction. A close textual analysis of a passage from *Lanark* illustrates the problem of preserving the linguistically simple yet thematically complex nature of the source text without creating the impression of an oversimplified, unsophisticated and 'un-literary' translation. Further problems are explored in this section that emerged during the translation of Book Three of *Lanark*, and some choices regarding the translation of units of measurement and dialogue are explained.

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Introduction

The decision to translate *Lanark* (1980) into Hungarian needs little justification: there are many good reasons for undertaking this project. Alasdair Gray is an internationally recognised and surprisingly well-translated author whose works have been made available in twenty-two languages to date according to the Bibliography of Scottish Literature in Translation (BOSLIT).¹ He has featured in numerous anthologies of and guides to both Scottish and British literature, such as Ali Smith's *The Book Lover* (2008) and *Contemporary British Novelists* from the Routledge Key Guides series (2004). His international significance is illustrated by the fact that he has appeared in *Best European Fiction 2010* alongside 34 other writers writing in over 30 languages. He is a canonical writer who has been called 'the greatest Scottish novelist since Sir Walter Scott' by Anthony Burgess (Burgess 1987, 400) and 'one of the most important living writers in English' by Stephen Bernstein (Bernstein 1999, 17).

A quick look at the various translations of Gray's three novels that are generally regarded as his best gives a good idea of his popularity abroad.² *Lanark* has been translated into nine languages: Swedish (1983), Spanish (1990), Serbo-Croatian (1991), German (1992), French (2000), Portuguese (2001), Czech (2002), Bulgarian (2002), and Norwegian (2003). Selections from the novel are also available in Polish (1995) and Dutch (2004). *Poor Things* has been translated into eight languages: French (1993/2004), Russian (1995/2000), German (1996), Polish (1997), Greek (2001), Italian (2004), Serbian (2005) and Spanish (2006). Selections are available in Croatian (1996). *1982, Janine* has been translated into German (1984/89), Dutch (1988), and Russian (2005), with selections available in Polish (1987) and Lithuanian (1991). Translations of other prose and dramatic works by Gray include 'Problem' (French: 1985, Serbo-Croatian: 1987, Ukrainian: 1995), 'A New World' (French: 1986, German: 1990, Swedish [n.d.]), 'The Cause of Some Recent Changes' (Serbo-Croatian: 1987, German: 1990, Ukrainian: 1995), 'The Spread of Ian Nicol' (German: 1988/1990), *McGrotty and Ludmilla* (German: 1990), *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* (Russian: 1990, Swedish: 1991, German: 1994), 'The Start of the Axletree' (Serbo-Croatian: 1993), *Ten Tales Tall and True* (Japanese: 1993, German: 1995), 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire' (Italian: 1993, Russian: 1996), *Something Leather* (Spanish: 1993, German: 1993, Czech: 1999), unidentified short stories in Slovak (1994),

¹ The actual figure may well be higher than this, as BOSLIT is incomplete and the work on it is ongoing.

² All of this data is based on BOSLIT and may not be entirely accurate.

Italian (1995), Slovenian (2002), and Croatian (2003), ‘The Trendelenburg Position’ (Polish: 1995), ‘You’ (Italian: 1995), *The Comedy of the White Dog* (Czech: 1995, Ukrainian: 1995), *Unlikely Stories, Mostly* (Spanish: 1995, Romanian: 2001, Russian: 2003), *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* (selections in Polish: 1995), ‘Near the Driver’ (Russian: 1996), *A History Maker* (German: 1996, Spanish: 1999, French: 2003), *The Ends of Our Tethers* (Bulgarian: 2005), and *Lean Tales* (French: 2008).³

The past decade has seen the introduction of several Scottish authors – Iain M. Banks, Christopher Brookmyre, Isla Dewar, Jackie Kay, and so on – into the Hungarian literary scene. However, translation work has not kept pace with the demand for recent Scottish fiction which is accessible to a Hungarian audience.⁴ The fact that Alasdair Gray has not been made available in Hungarian, excepting one short story that appeared in the 1998 anthology *Marilynre várva* [*Waiting for Marilyn*], constitutes a major gap in the market. My translation of *Lanark*, Gray’s most widely translated novel, could be the first step to remedy this situation. Edwin Morgan started to translate poetry by Attila József ‘because he felt kinship with his social commitment and his “city lyric” depicting Budapest, finding it similar to his own industrial cityscapes of Glasgow’ (Szaflner 2006, 253). This parallel suggests that there is much in *Lanark* that would appeal to a Hungarian readership. Furthermore, *Lanark* is a strong candidate for translation in practical terms due to the relative absence of dialect in the text. Nor is there excessive reliance on wordplay, which makes the translation of novels such as *Poor Things* problematic.

In addition to the popular context, there has been an increased interest in Scottish literature in Hungarian academia. New academic publications in Scottish studies by Hungarian scholars suggest that the field is growing. These works include, but are not limited to, ‘The Postcolonial Topoi of Scottish National Consciousness’ and ‘The Emergence

³ Gray’s illustrations to his own works pose practical as well as theoretical difficulties for foreign editions, as they are organically connected to the stories and often contain English text. The frontispieces or titles pages of each book of *Lanark* are reproduced in Céline Schwaller’s French translation (2000), but while the titles all appear in French (‘Livre Un’ etc.), the rest of the text is not translated. For example, the title page of Book One features two columns with the inscription ‘Let Glasgow flourish by telling the truth’ (p. 147), which is left in English, perhaps in order to better preserve the reference to Glasgow’s motto ‘Let Glasgow flourish’. Similarly, the Bible verse at the start of Book Four appears in English, which reinforces the connection with Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. Interestingly, the volume frontispiece identifies the translator with the phrase ‘Traduit de l’anglais (Ecosse) par Céline Schwaller’ [Translated from the English (Scotland) by Céline Schwaller], a peculiar statement, since it refers to the country where the novel was written and published, rather than to its language. Bernd Rullkötter’s German translation (1992) is similar to the French in that it includes the original illustrations and ‘Let Glasgow flourish’ remains untranslated, but the rest of the English text is transposed, including the title page of Book Four.

⁴ Hungarian is not mentioned at all in the table summarising translations of Scottish fiction in minority languages before 2005 in Katherine Ashley’s study exploring the reception of Scottish literature abroad, even though it includes languages such as Catalan, Bulgarian and Lithuanian (Ashley 2007, 352).

of Mimic Forms of Identity during the Scottish Enlightenment’ by Gertrud Szamosi (both 2004), ‘A hegyvidék mítoszától a *Trainspotting*ig: a skót film felemelkedése’ [‘From the Myth of the Highlands to *Trainspotting*: the Rise of Scottish Cinema’] by Tamás Bényei (2006), and *Beyond Identity: New Horizons in Modern Scottish Poetry* by Attila Dósa (2009). Gray’s work features rather prominently within the relatively small field of Scottish studies, which is surprising considering the unavailability of his fiction in Hungarian bookstores. This body of criticism generally considers Gray in terms of either national identities or postmodernism. Examples include ‘Post-Modernist Manipulation in 1982, *Janine* and *Something Leather*’ (1999) and ‘Regional and National Identities in Hungary and Scotland: Péter Esterházy and Alasdair Gray’ (2000) by Gertrud Szamosi, and ‘Science fiction, Postmodern, Steampunk? Alasdair Gray: *Poor Things*’ (2005) and ‘Metafiction, History, Identity and Steampunk: Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things*’ (2007) by Norbert Gyuris.

The critical component of this thesis serves to contextualise the Hungarian translation of Book Three of *Lanark*.⁵ It is a documentation of the research process rather than a study in its own right; it does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of the topics discussed. Section 1 is a brief and very selective exploration of the history of Hungarian literary translation,⁶ which serves to highlight influences that may affect the contemporary translator’s work. It draws on Lawrence Venuti’s concept of the translator’s invisibility, which is widely used in Translation Studies to describe contemporary British and American translation (Venuti 2008 [1995]). This concept denotes a translation model in which a transparent target text masquerades as non-translation and creates the illusion of access to an unadulterated original. East European translation has not been shaped by the same historical forces as its Western counterpart, and therefore its theorisation requires a different critical vocabulary. East European literary cultures have been influenced by Communist politics, a collective sense of inferiority in relation to the West, and the need to construct a national identity through art, all of which has led to the development of a cultural paradigm that accords great importance to translation, and views it as a creative, rather than derivative, process. This approach to translation was particularly strong in Hungary in the first half of the twentieth century, when literary translators enjoyed great prestige and freedom in their treatment of source texts. Many notable translators of the time published in the literary journal *Nyugat* [West]. Their works reveal assumptions about

⁵ Although called Book Three, this is in fact the book that *Lanark* opens with.

⁶ For simplicity’s sake I will refer to literary translation simply as ‘translation’ for the purposes of this essay.

the nature and purpose of translation that are very different from contemporary Western attitudes. This translator-centred practice is illustrated by Dezső Kosztolányi's translation of Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Raven', while the debate surrounding the 1955 publication of the complete works of Shakespeare in Hungarian demonstrates a high degree of prestige accorded to translation.

Section 2 examines the problem of translating simple language into Hungarian. It starts with a discussion of translating *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the challenge the repetitive language poses for the translator. It then considers historical factors which may account for the place 'plain style' has come to occupy in English literary cultures, and contrasts it with the status conferred by linguistic complexity in Hungarian fiction. The historical forces which shaped East European cultural communities during the twentieth century have produced literatures that view literary language as necessarily complex, which presents difficulties for translating from languages such as English, where 'simple prose' is sometimes viewed as a positive feature of literary texts. A close textual analysis of a passage from *Lanark* illustrates the problem of preserving the linguistically simple yet thematically complex nature of the source text without creating the impression of an oversimplified, unsophisticated and 'un-literary' translation. Two further problems are explored in this section that emerged during the translation of Book Three of *Lanark*, and some choices regarding the translation of units of measurement and dialogue are explained.

1. Invisible Authors and Other Illusionists: Hungarian Translation in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

1.1. Introduction

The question of what makes a good translation – and a good translator – has been debated for many centuries. Attempts have been made to develop a consistent, universal theory of translation, and the fact that some fifty years after the emergence of Translation Studies as a discipline in its own right we still have no such theory is an indication of how difficult this task is. All we can say with certainty is that translation norms and the status of translation – and, by implication, of the translator – change over time and differ across cultures at a given point in time. Therefore the best way to describe a good translator is someone who makes informed choices. In other words, a good translator is aware of the different possible approaches that can be taken in translating a particular text (these include the function of the target text, which can be different from that of the source text, cf. *skopos*theorie, Nord 1997, Vermeer 2000),⁷ and understands their own decisions. In order to do this, the translator must also be aware of the translation culture they are working in – by this I mean the translation norms of a literary culture as well as the position and prestige, or lack thereof, of the translator within it. Accordingly, the Hungarian translator of *Lanark* must understand Hungarian translation culture to produce a good translation. This does not necessarily mean that the translator should follow these norms; it only means that if the translator decides to translate differently, they should be aware that they are challenging existing norms, and should do so for good reasons.

As the scholarly field of Translation Studies is growing – illustrated, for example, by the recent launch of the Translation Studies programme at the University of Glasgow – understanding current translation norms is becoming easier. Literary translation into English is a particularly well-researched area, and Lawrence Venuti's seminal work *The Translator's Invisibility*, although first published in 1995, is still a must-read for anyone interested in contemporary translation. Venuti's analysis focuses on English and American translation into English, and the concept of the invisible translator is now widely used by

⁷ For the relevance of *skopos*theorie to literary translation see Hans J. Vermeer, 'Skopos and Commission in Translational Action', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti (London: Routledge, 2000), 221–232, p. 224.

critics to describe current translation practice in these parts of the world. However, recent scholarship has pointed out that the critical terminology used in the theorisation of ‘Western’ translation cannot adequately describe non-Western traditions (Baer 2011, 1). The latter include Hungarian translation, a field literary production that remains sadly under-researched. This is not to say that Hungarian translation has not been theorised, only that the material is scarce, usually unavailable in English, and difficult to access outside Hungary.

Books and journal articles on contemporary Hungarian translation are especially rare: Ildikó Józán’s *Mű, fordítás, történet* [*Work, Translation, History*] (2009) offers the only systematic survey of Hungarian translation to date that extends beyond the mid-twentieth century. Józán’s work is groundbreaking because she is the first scholar to censure Hungarian translation theory for its failure to keep up with literary criticism and for its consequent inability to view target texts as literary creations in their own right. However, her research into contemporary translation is inevitably limited, as she herself acknowledges:

We must admit that, when it comes to presenting post-1945 Hungarian translation history and theory, we are unable to apply even that minimally systematic method which we used in our attempt to describe the period before the beginning of the twentieth century. This is due, among other things, to the vastness of the material, as well as to it being largely unstudied.⁸ (Józán 2009, 171)

In addition to the problems of the sheer number of contemporary translations and the lack of critical material mentioned by Józán, her own chapter on contemporary translation theory is more concerned with poetry than fiction, which poses a further challenge for the researcher of twenty-first-century prose translation. Poetry translation seems to have been the main concern of all the contemporary theorists Józán discusses: László Kardos, György Rába and György Somlyó. Very little is said about the current state of translating fiction into Hungarian, although Józán deserves praise for pointing out the persistent belief in stable textual meanings that still characterises Hungarian translation theory (204-5), and the consequent significance attributed to source text – target text correspondence, which came to dominate the quality assessment of literary in the second half of the twentieth century (211).

⁸ All translations from Hungarian sources are my own.

Fortunately, the history of Hungarian translation before the Second World War is better documented. Knowledge of this history can help the translator to place their own translations in context, and realise what tradition(s) they are working in or against. Cultural differences notwithstanding, the Hungarian translator can also benefit from studying Western translation theories and practices. For example, interesting parallels can be drawn between Venuti's description of contemporary translation into English and Hungarian translation in the early twentieth century. Both traditions can be described as 'illusionist', although in a different sense, and both raise questions about who the translated text belongs to.

1.2. Illusionist Translation and the Invisible Translator

Writing in the 1960s, Czech translation theorist Jiří Levý (2011, 19-20) identified two methods of translation, 'illusionist' and 'anti-illusionist.' The former 'require[s] a work of literature to "look like the original, like reality"', much like illusionist theatre (Levý 2011, 19). The latter, on the other hand, 'boldly play[s] on the fact that [it is] offering the audience a mere imitation of reality' (Levý 2011, 20). Levý compares anti-illusionist translation methods to experimental theatre, where '[c]haracters on stage declare themselves actors, removing their masks', and to self-referential fiction, where the author 'abandons the epic illusion – he addresses readers and reaches an agreement with them on what a character is to do' (Levý 2011, 20). For Levý, anti-illusionist translations are 'parodies and travesties', and as such rank behind illusionist, 'realistic' modes, which better fulfil the function of "'captur[ing]" the source' (Levý 2011, 20). Accordingly, in *The Art of Translation* (Czech 1963, English 2011) he sets out to establish an illusionist translation theory, based on a contract between translator and reader – the translator will 'hide behind the original, as though they were presenting it to the reader directly rather than as intermediaries', and the reader in turn will be 'prepared to believe' that they are reading the original (Levý 2011, 20). Levý calls illusionist translation methods 'functional' from a linguistic perspective, and 'realistic' in aesthetic terms (Levý 2011, 20).

Levý's take on illusionist translation is optimistic – he upholds it as the only practical way to translate. Thirty years after the first publication of *The Art of Translation* this optimism was challenged by Lawrence Venuti in *The Invisibility of the Translator: A History of Translation*. Focusing on the 'invisible translator' in British and American translation theory and practice, Venuti critically re-examines the concept from economic,

aesthetic, political, and ethical perspectives. He draws attention to the status of ‘fluency’ as the single most important criterion by which translations are judged by English-speaking publishers, reviewers, and readers. Based on several contemporary reviews of translations, he concludes that

A fluent translation is immediately recognizable and intelligible, ‘familiarised’, domesticated, not ‘disconcerting[ly]’ foreign, capable of giving the reader unobstructed ‘access to great thoughts’, to what is ‘present in the original.’ Under the regime of fluent translating, the translator works to make his or her work ‘invisible’, producing the illusory effect of transparency that simultaneously masks its status as an illusion: the translated text seems ‘natural’, that is, not translated. (Venuti 2008, 5)

The above description of ‘fluent translation’, which in British and American practice is synonymous with ‘good translation’, is similar to Levý’s concept of illusionist translation methods. However, while for Levý there is no real alternative to illusionist translation, as its antithesis, ‘abstract, athenatic translation would in fact be an anti-translation’ (Levý 2011, 20), Venuti’s opposition to the dominance of fluency is implicit in his definition of ‘fluent translation’: ‘The concept of the translator’s ‘invisibility’ is already a cultural critique, a diagnosis that opposes the situation it represents’ (Venuti 2008, 13). For Venuti, illusionist translation is highly political, and the imbalance between the vigorous translation practice from English into other European languages and the rare and overly domesticating translations from other languages into English has had an adverse effect on the cultures of the United Kingdom and the United States. It has made them

aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to foreign literatures, accustomed to fluent translations that invisibly inscribe foreign texts with British and American values and provide readers with the narcissistic experience of recognizing their own culture in a cultural other. (Venuti 2008, 12)

According to Venuti, current British and American translation practice is unethical in more than one way. It marginalises the translator, denies them appropriate cultural and legal recognition, and forces them into economically disadvantageous arrangements.

Furthermore, it is

symptomatic of a complacency in British and American relations with cultural others, a complacency that can be described – without too much

exaggeration – as imperialistic abroad and xenophobic at home. (Venuti 2008, 13)

Venuti sees illusionist translation as a logical consequence of the rise to dominance of ‘plain styles’ in English-language literatures. He attributes the perceived value of fluency in contemporary literary (as well as non-literary) discourses to factors such as ‘the enormous economic and political power acquired by scientific research during the twentieth century’, developments in communication technology, and the rise of the discourse of advertising, which ‘valoriz[e] a purely instrumental use of language and other means of representation and thus emphasiz[e] immediate intelligibility and the appearance of factuality’ (Venuti 2008, 5). John Hinds identifies English as a ‘writer responsible language’:

[t]he desire to write or speak clearly in English permeates our culture. The point of view has even been made into an aphorism: “Tell ‘em what you’re going to tell ‘em, tell ‘em, then tell ‘em what you told ‘em.” It is the responsibility of the speaker to communicate a message. (Hinds 1986, 144)

It is important to note, however, that although the developments mentioned here by Venuti are relatively recent, the idea that translation is inferior to ‘original’ artistic creation, and the translator to the author, is much older:

[t]ranslation, so highly prized in the Middle Ages, had come to be seen as secondary and derivative by the seventeenth century, by the age that saw the rise in importance of the concept of the Original. (Bassnett 2011a, 4)

There is no doubt that Venuti’s ideas are useful in helping to understand contemporary British and American translation culture, but I believe they can do more than this. They can be applied to translation in literary cultures that have been shaped by different historical forces from the West. I will use Venuti’s concepts to discuss Hungarian translation in the first half of the twentieth century, and show that ‘illusion’, ‘invisibility’ and ‘fluency’ are very much at the heart of this particular East European tradition, although this context requires the introduction of the ‘invisible author’ to replace the invisible translator. Drawing on Brian James Baer’s analysis of East European translation, I will outline the main factors that have influenced the formation of a translation tradition unique to the region. I will then explore Hungarian translation in more detail, taking as an example Dezső Kosztolányi’s translation of Poe’s ‘The Raven’, published in 1913 in the literary

journal *Nyugat*. Finally, an overview of the debate surrounding the 1955 publication of the complete works of Shakespeare in Hungarian will reveal that in spite of changing attitudes to translation, it was still regarded as a highly prestigious activity in the middle of the twentieth century.

1.3. Invisible Authors: ‘Europe’s Internal Other’

In his introduction to *Contexts, Subtexts, Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, Baer writes that

[t]he exploration of alternative, non-Western translation traditions – largely Asian but recently African, as well – has become increasingly visible in recent years as a reaction to hegemonic Western models of translation and the general eurocentrism of contemporary Translation Studies. (Baer 2011, 1)

The problematisation of ‘the East’ has been a prominent dimension of literary and cultural criticism since the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978, and the undoing of the Orient-Occident dichotomy has been extended to the field of Translation Studies as well. However, Baer points out that although we no longer conceive of ‘the East’ as a monolithic entity, and the plurality of ‘Eastern’ translation models has been discussed by notable scholars such as Gayatri Spivak (2008), the heterogeneity of ‘the West’ from a Translation Studies perspective has not been adequately theorised (Baer 2011, 1).

Baer argues that a fixed notion of ‘Western Europe’ obscures the differences between individual European cultures which, much like Gayatri Spivak’s ‘pluralized Asias’ (Spivak 2008, 2, quoted in Baer 2011, 1), should be ‘examined on a case-by-case basis’ (Kothari and Wakabayasi 2009, 5, quoted in Baer 2011, 1). He draws attention to Eastern Europe as ‘Europe’s internal other’ (Baer 2011, 1), and claims that ‘[t]he examination of the role of translation in the cultural development of Eastern Europe and Russia has much to contribute’ to the field of translation studies (Baer 2001, 2). However, despite the fact that this collection of essays aims to ‘challenge [...] the romantic notion of Eastern Europe as a community of oppressed nations’ (Baer 2011, 2), Baer does acknowledge the existence of forces which give a certain degree of unity to the cultures discussed in the book. Among the factors that make it possible to talk about Eastern

Europe as distinct from Western Europe he cites the perception of East European countries as cultural latecomers, the cultural impact of Communism, and the shared imperial past.

The sense of ‘belatedness’ is the persistent idea that Eastern Europe needs to “‘catch up’ to a more developed West and [...] compensate for their belated entry into modernity,’ which ‘made translation a visible, often self-conscious, and much-discussed practice there’ (Baer 2011, 4). This perceived inferiority in relation to the West is strikingly illustrated by the fact that in Hungary the most influential literary journal that provided a platform for the intellectual élite in the first half of the twentieth century was called *Nyugat* [West], a name synonymous with ambition and cutting-edge literary production.⁹ György Rába opens his discussion of the *Nyugat* poets by emphasising the importance of translation as a socio-cultural force:

[t]his statement applies especially to the literary history of smaller Central-Eastern European countries that are lagging behind in terms of social development. Hungarian literary history attests to the fact that the appearance of powerful new ideologies has been followed by numerous translations transmitting these new ideas, and the advance of the Reformation by the proliferation of translated literature. (Rába 2008, 367-8)

But this desire to belong to and learn from a ‘more developed West’ through the reading of foreign texts only partly explains the historical prominence of translation within Eastern European cultural output. The legacy of Communism, which imposed literary censorship and a centralised cultural policy on the countries of Eastern Europe, affected translation practice in a way no doubt unforeseen by the political leadership. Translated works were generally less heavily censored than vernacular literature, which led to the fostering of ‘an intelligentsia that looked to world literature to express and preserve what it saw as eternal aesthetic and moral values’, and the turning of translation ‘into a vehicle for expressing alternative, if not openly oppositional, views’ (Baer 2011, 6).

⁹ Although sometimes described as a Central rather than Eastern European country due to its location, Hungary is firmly positioned within the cultural community of Eastern Europe. The title of *Nyugat* suggests that the country saw itself as a cultural latecomer compared to the West at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1867 and 1918, and was under Communist rule from the late 1940s until 1989. Part of the imperial legacy is the importance accorded to foreign languages, which have long been an integral part of all levels of Hungarian education, and functional multilingualism is common to this day. Therefore Baer’s analysis of Eastern European translation can at least partly explain the peculiarities of early twentieth-century Hungarian translation.

Although the reliance on Western ideas mediated through literature enhanced, and still enhances, translation activity in Eastern Europe, the purpose of translation has not always been simply to make texts accessible to an audience that for linguistic reasons would not be able to comprehend the original. In other words, East European translation does not always share the functionality of the Western (British and American) paradigm. The uses of translation in multi-ethnic, multi-lingual empires such as Austria-Hungary, the Soviet Union, or indeed present-day Russia, differ from the uses of translation in the West in a number of ways. Baer observes that ‘the nation-state remains a somewhat problematic concept throughout much of this region,’ and therefore literature, whether written in the vernacular or translated into it, has played an important role in the construction of collective identities (Baer 2011, 6). He describes Eastern Europe and Russia as ‘cultures of translation’:

the notion of a communal identity retrieved through translation served as a heroic metaphor representing a triumph over perceived backwardness and as a way to survive the onslaught – or flood – of foreign influences. (Baer 2011, 10)

Furthermore, the only way representatives of minority cultures within multilingual empires could advance was by learning the language of the dominant cultures, which produced a multilingual intelligentsia that was ‘often fluent in the administrative language of the empire, the “local” language(s), and the prestige language(s) of the West’ (Baer 2011, 7). They could read and understand foreign texts without necessarily having to resort to translations, which resulted in ‘an expectation that translations would function as independent works of art, not as mere conveyors of source text content’ (Baer 2011, 8). Unlike in the West, translation was seen as an art rather than a craft, and the status of the target texts was close to, if not higher than, that of vernacular literature (Baer 2011, 10). One way in which this approach to translated works was manifested is the inclusion of literary translations by writers and poets in their collected works (Baer 2011, 5). There is a fundamental tension, then, between the privilege of translated literature of being less closely monitored than vernacular artistic production under the Communist regime, and the consequent reliance of the intelligentsia on translation to communicate ‘dangerous’ – and ‘foreign’ – ideas, and the insistence that the target text is not simply equivalent to national literature, it is national literature.

1.4. *Nyugat*

This (now peculiar) attitude to translated literature as having an equal or higher status to vernacular literature was characteristic of Hungarian translation for a large part of the twentieth century. László Scholz cites as an example the editorial board and contributors of *Nyugat*:

[S]ince its founding in 1908, the *Nyugat* generation of translators developed and established a concept of translation that aimed to eliminate any indication of the relationship between the original texts and their translations, in order to make the original author disappear and to elevate the translations to the status of autonomous texts within the sphere of Hungarian literature (Józán 2003, 422-426). This attitude evidently led to a marked literarization of translations, placing the emphasis on the act of creation rather than transformation [...] which created a rapidly canonized paradigm that was maintained for decades. (Scholz 2011, 206-7)

Adopting Venuti's terminology, we could say that in contrast with the invisible translator of Western translation practice, Hungarian translation during the first half of the twentieth century made the *author* invisible, and instead brought the translator to the fore as the producer of valuable, artistic, and original work. Lőrinc Szabó's translation of 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' as 'Táncoló tűzliliomok' [Dancing Fire Lilies] (Szabó 2002 [1958]), a reference to the dancing daffodils described in the poem by William Wordsworth, is frequently cited as an example of the degree of freedom translators in this period enjoyed. By substituting fire lilies for daffodils, a common flower in Britain as well as Hungary, Szabó introduces an element of passion and exoticism not present in Wordsworth's text. Scholz claims that the approach to translation outlined above remained dominant 'almost monolithically for at least forty to fifty years' in spite of 'violent socio-political transformations', although politics did have an impact, albeit limited, on literary production in the post-war years through the 'declaration of the omnipotence of so-called socialist realism' and 'the elimination of all private publishing houses in the country' (Scholz 2011, 207).

The difference in historical attitudes to translation between Britain and Hungary is reflected in the strongly gendered nature of translation work. Bassnett (2011b, 95) observes that '[a] glance at the history of literary translation reveals a long history of gifted female

translators,' and proceeds to cite the examples of Lady Mary Sidney, St Thomas More's daughter Margaret Roper, Elizabeth I, Mary Wollstonecraft and George Eliot. Although there is much debate surrounding the question of why there have been so many women translators since the Renaissance, and it is unclear whether the phenomenon can be accounted for by the low status of translation in Western Europe (Bassnett 2011b, 95; Robinson 1995), it is certain that renowned female translators are conspicuously absent from Hungarian literary history. The fact that all translations of canonical works were undertaken by men may indicate the prestige accorded to translation in Hungary until the mid-twentieth century. Notable translators from the nineteenth century include poet Mihály Vörösmarty (1800-1855), playwright Ede Szigligeti (1814-1878), and poet János Arany (1817-1882), all of whom translated Shakespeare and were members of the most prestigious academic institution, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences [Magyar Tudományos Akadémia]. *Nyugat* was also a male-dominated scene, with prominent translators including Mihály Babits (1883-1941), Dezső Kosztolányi (1885-1936), Árpád Tóth (1886-1928) and Lőrinc Szabó (1900-1957) regularly contributing translations to the journal.

According to the history of twentieth-century Hungarian literature published by the Academy in 1966, *A magyar irodalom története 1919-től napjainkig* [*The History of Hungarian Literature from 1919 to the Present Day*], 'the outstanding poets of the [*Nyugat*] movement wished to establish the consciousness of more developed societies by naturalising contemporary literary trends and styles' (Szabolcsi 1966, 844). Translation played an important part in this, with 'faithfulness of form and content' as the ideal, but, as the authors explain, 'combined with a style alert to modern sensibility' (Szabolcsi 1966, 844). What exactly this combination meant is unclear from the vague wording, but the authors see it as an ambition that remained unfulfilled, as the next sentence reveals a discrepancy between theory and practice:

However, bringing translation into harmony with bourgeois taste and the naturalisation of the new sensibility, they put it in the service of the construction of their own lyric personalities. Even Babits, who generally remained faithful to the text, characterised his own early translations as follows: 'It was the Hungarian poem that mattered, not the English or the French. It was my poem that mattered, not that of the foreign poet. I often

changed the text simply because I liked something else better in the Hungarian.’ (Babits 1920, quoted in Szabolcsi 1966, 844)

The authors then proceed to explain what they term the ‘individualising aesthetic of poetry’, characteristic of the *Nyugat* generation’s pre-war poetry translations. It is defined as ‘a freer, experimental rendition of the original style’, and is combined with ‘faithfulness of form’ (Szabolcsi 1966, 844). Babits and Tóth’s translation style ‘moved towards the realist approach, complete faithfulness in form and content’ after the war, but not Kosztolányi’s, who ‘remain[ed] a “beautiful unfaithful” [“szép hűtlen”] all along’ (Szabolcsi 1969, 844).¹⁰

1.5. ‘A Hungarian trouvaille:’ Kosztolányi’s ‘The Raven’

Kosztolányi’s translations are generally regarded as notoriously arbitrary (Józan 2010), and this was the case even in a cultural milieu where faithfulness to the content of the original was not taken very seriously. His tendency to manipulate the meaning, conjure up new images, or even simply omit certain passages from the prose or a whole stanza from a poem, did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries. His translation of Poe’s ‘The Raven’, published in *Nyugat* in 1913, sparked an interesting debate in the journal about free versus literal translation and the duties and responsibilities of the translator. Kosztolányi’s version was neither the first nor the last in a long list of translations prepared by well-known literary figures. The first translation, by poet Károly Szász (1829-1905), was published in 1858 in the journal *Budapesti Szemle* [*Budapest Review*]. Tóth, another *Nyugat* contributor, also published his own translation in 1923. Nevertheless, Kosztolányi’s rendition was unique in its treatment of Poe’s text. It succeeded in preserving the musicality of the original, including the tight rhythm and many of the alliterations and internal rhymes. In terms of meaning, the correspondence was not as close, as can be seen from the following examples (stanza numbers refer to the source text, emphases added):¹¹

¹⁰ Ildikó Józan (2010) challenges the established view of Kosztolányi as a notoriously ‘unfaithful’ translator. A detailed analysis of the debate surrounding this complex issue is beyond the scope of this thesis. I will therefore use examples from Kosztolányi’s translations as illustrations of a Hungarian translation practice that permitted greater disagreement between source text and target text than would be acceptable today. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that ‘faithfulness’ is not a clear category, and that the several forms of correspondence – word-for-word, meaning-for-meaning, function-for-function, etc. – are often incompatible and cannot be ranked in any absolute order.

¹¹ All of my translations are purely functional and as close to the Hungarian wording as possible. I have made no attempt to retain formal characteristics such as alliteration or wordplay, as the translations serve no artistic purpose and are simply part of a theoretical discussion of translation.

5 Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before

A sűrű sötétbe nézek, álmodok vadat, merészet,
Mint az őrült, mint a részeg, bódorogva kétesen

[I look into the dense darkness, I dream wild, daring {dreams},
Like the madman, like the drunk, rambling doubtfully]

6 Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore

Csöndesülj szív, *tébolyult szív*, az okát megkeresem

[Calm down, heart, *frantic heart*, I will find the reason]

8 Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning

A szobámba már *fehéren* mentem vissza, *forrt a vérem*

[I returned to my chamber *white*, *my blood boiling*]

9 But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door

Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door –
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

A szobám szobrára lebben s úgy ül ott, *mint a lesen*,
Pallas szobrán mozdulatlan ül, csak ül, *mint a lesen*:
Nem történik semmisem.

[It perches on the statue of my room and sits there *as if preying*,
Motionless on Pallas' statue it sits, just sits, *as if preying*:
Nothing happens.]

11 “Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store”

“*Bamba szajkó*”, így beszéltem, “*nincsen egy ép sora sem.*”

[“*Dim parrot*”, I said, “*it does not have a single sane line.*”]

15 “Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil! – prophet still, if bird or devil!”

“Jós! felelj nekem”, könyörgök, “bármi légy, *angyal* vagy *ördög*”

["Prophet! Answer me", I beg, "whatever you may be, *angel* or devil"]

17 "Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting –

"Pusztulj innen a *pokolba*" ordítottam *fuldokolva*

["Go to *hell*" I shrieked *choking*]

It is clear from these changes that the translator is inscribing passions not present in the source on the Hungarian text, turning the dark and vaguely unsettling tale into a much more dramatic poem. The raven '[p]erched, and sat' in Poe's text, but 'sat as if preying' in Kosztolányi's rendition, adding an element of threat to the scene. When the bird refuses to explain his meaning, the narrator concludes that 'what it utters is its only stock and store', but in the Hungarian it also becomes a 'dim parrot' (lit. 'dim jay'), someone who mechanically repeats what they are told without comprehending any of it. The ninth stanza, starting with '[m]uch I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,' is omitted altogether from the translation.

Writer, translator and critic Artúr Elek was so unhappy with Kosztolányi's translation that he published a critique of it in a subsequent issue of *Nyugat* (Elek 1913). Among his many objections was the fact that Kosztolányi had made significant and – in his view – unjustifiable changes to the last stanza. I will quote the full stanza and its translation for comparison:

18 And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
 On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,
 And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
 And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
 Shall be lifted – nevermore!

És a Holló meg se moccan, néz reám meredve hosszan,
 A szoborról, a komorról tűz reám két tompa szem.
 Úgy ül, mint egy omladékon, mélyen alvó éji démon,
 A padlón a lámpa vékony sávja himbál csöndesen:
 Nő az éjjel, nő az árnyék, terjed egyre csöndesen
 S nem virrad meg - sohasem!

[And the Raven never flitting, looks at me staring at length,
 From the statue, from the stern {statue}, two dim eyes stare at me.
 It sits as though on a ruin, nocturnal demon fast asleep,
 On the floor the narrow strip of the lamp sways silently:
 The night grows, the shadow grows, it keeps spreading silently
 And it will never dawn – ever again!]

Interestingly, the first point Elek raises concerning Kosztolányi's translation is that he started from scratch instead of making use of his predecessors' work, meaning those who had translated 'The Raven' before him. 'Those who came later had every right to reach into the tool-shed of those before them, and make use of what they had already tried out', he writes (Elek 1913). Today's translators, readers, and critics would no doubt find the idea unusual that translators not only can but should appropriate sections of previous translations in their search for an ideal translation. Elek's concept of the sacred original that should not be tampered with, on the other hand, is a familiar one. Although he acknowledges Kosztolányi's talents and success in capturing the atmosphere of the original, he laments that the end product reads like a work of art in its own right, and not as a mirror of the original:

In vain does Kosztolányi's 'Raven', unlike all the other Hungarian translations before it, appear to be an original creation rather than a translation, this happy circumstance does not mitigate the charge. Because this translation appearing to be an original creation is in fact even further removed from its original, as in reality it does not present Poe's poetic style, but Kosztolányi's. (Elek 1913)

Part of Elek's argument here evokes Venuti. A translation masquerading as non-translation is unethical and deceitful because it pretends to be something it is not. Of course the two theorists differ on a fundamental point: while Venuti's assumption is that a translation by its very nature cannot reflect the original completely, and that translators should embrace this and inscribe themselves more on the text, thus becoming more visible, for Elek the translator's task is to hide the nature of his work by producing something so close to the original in every possible respect that it will not read like *an* original but *the* original, the source text. Venuti objects to the translator being made invisible, as this obscures the fundamental nature of translation. Elek objects to the author being made invisible, as this obscures the original work.

Kosztolányi replied to Elek's accusations:

it is not possible, and not allowed, to demand faithfulness to the letter from the literary translator. Because faithfulness to the letter is unfaithfulness. Languages differ in their material. (Kosztolányi 1913)

Kosztolányi revisits the well-known conflict of word-for-word versus meaning-for-meaning translation, and concludes that ‘the beauty, the music is more important in this poem.’ He also reiterates the point which summarises the *Nyugat* generation’s attitude: ‘My main ambition is to give a beautiful Hungarian poem, which is as close to the original as possible.’ His idea of a ‘beautiful Hungarian poem’ is one that is fluent, where the flow of reading is not broken by strange or foreign-sounding phrases: ‘It is prohibited, and a thousand times prohibited, to violate the Hungarian language’ (Kosztolányi 1913). Once again, an ‘immediately recognizable and intelligible, “familiarised”, domesticated’ translation is required (Venuti 2008, 5), but this time not because it gives readers ‘unobstructed “access to great thoughts”, to what is “present in the original”’ (Venuti 2008, 5), but because it offers an aesthetic experience in the reader’s own language of the *joint* work of author and translator. Kosztolányi is not prepared to relinquish credit and retreat into obscurity:

True, the poem shows the influence of my personality. If this poem is recomposed by a poet, the charge is always the same. But I see it as natural that I gave voice to ‘The Raven’ with words filtered through my blood [...] Because it was not only Poe’s name that appeared in the poem published in *Nyugat*, but mine, too. (Kosztolányi 1913)

Not only is Kosztolányi willing to acknowledge his active role in the translation process, he also conceives of the relationship between translator and target text as a highly personal one, even conveying a sense of sacrifice and almost organic harmony with the expression ‘words filtered through my blood.’ His defence of the changes he made to the last stanza is based on the claim that, in addition to the familiar observation that either form or content has to be prioritised over the other in translation, the needs and culture-specific frame of reference of the reader must also be considered:

The original says that the poet will never escape the shadow swaying on the floor. In the English the effect is astonishing. The Hungarian, however, sees eternal night as ‘it will never dawn’. This closure stems from the spirit of

our language, it is a Hungarian *trouvaille*, and I believe and confess that the Hungarian ‘Raven’ can only end in this way. (Kosztolányi 1913)

The underlying assumptions here are that the poem’s primary function is to create a particular effect on the reader, and that this effect should resonate with ‘the spirit’ of the reader’s language. The aesthetic of poetry is not only ‘individualising’ (i.e. the target text is not only mediated but influenced by the translator’s consciousness), but also culturally determined, building on pre-existing knowledge rather than introducing a new paradigm.

1.6. ‘Our Great Classics’: The 1955 Shakespeare Edition

Although *Nyugat* only ran until 1941, the legacy of their view of translation as a noble and prestigious pursuit, and the translated text as the translator’s very own creation, was still felt in the 1950s. Mária Borbás (b. 1930) is a renowned Hungarian translator of fiction. In an interview she talks about her participation in the publication of the complete works of Shakespeare in Hungarian in 1955, which was published for a second time with very minor changes in 1988 (Szele, n.d.). She relates her memories of the laborious editing process that preceded the publication of the 1955 edition, where a committee of prominent literary figures debated whether it was necessary to revise nineteenth-century translations by Arany, Vörösmarty and Sándor Petőfi (1822-1849). Although a similar volume had been published only seven years earlier, which was ‘extremely popular’, Borbás explains that ‘in 1950 or 1951 publishing houses were nationalised, and Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó [Belles-Lettres Publishing] began to consider the re-evaluation of Franklin’s edition of Shakespeare.’ This move was in line with the centralised cultural policy characteristic of Hungary in the second half of the century: no matter how popular the previous translations were, they were not canonical, and their value had to be reassessed by professionals. However, Borbás’s minutes of the meetings reveal conflicting approaches to translation.

‘We had extremely heated debates’, Borbás recalls. The main question was ‘whether it is a sacrilege to revise classical translations’, and opinions ranged from heavy opposition through the advocating of minor changes to that of heavier editing. There was a sense of two competing values, that of the sanctity of the original (Shakespeare), which had to be communicated as faithfully as possible, and the almost equally high status of the prestigious translations. Poet, writer and dramatist Gyula Illyés was in favour of revision, as the translations were not ‘Petőfi’s or Vörösmarty’s original thoughts.’ He stated that ‘[t]he problem is not that Arany’s Shakespeare-manuscripts have burned away, it would be

a bigger problem if even one of his poems was missing' (Szele, n.d.). Illyés had a very specific vision for the new translations: 'We would like to create a literary past at last; let us have permanent poles, usable, good Shakespeare translations.' There is an interesting paradox inherent in his argument: existing translations are not sacred, and therefore can and should be changed to create what *will* be 'permanent poles', unchangeable, canonical works that will be read by all subsequent generations. 'Let us have perfect translations in our literature, let us stage them, the most important thing is usefulness', he continued. 'It is a great service to Vörösmarty and Petőfi that their translations will be the eternal Hungarian Shakespeare.' When someone suggested that *King Lear* should be translated anew by Lőrinc Szabó, he protested: 'We are trying to save Vörösmarty, if Lőrinc Szabó translates it, we can bury Vörösmarty' (Szele, n.d.). Although he clearly prioritised the source texts that translations try to capture for 'students and workers who want to enjoy Shakespeare, not literary gossip', he also saw this as a means to protect 'our classics,' the translators' work.

There was also some disagreement over what new translations to include in the publication. A translation of *Othello* by Dezső Mészöly was considered and discarded because, although theatrical circles preferred this translation to the alternatives, 'it is Shakespeare we want to publish and not Mészöly' (Szele, n.d.). Borbás provides an explanation for this, pointing out that 'Mészöly was not yet fully accepted in "more elegant" literary circles' (Szele, n.d.).¹²

Borbás finishes the interview with an amusing yet revealing anecdote: when the proof-sheet was presented to the director of the publishing house, he was infuriated and demanded that the names of 'our great classics' – Arany, Vörösmarty, Petőfi – appear in bold to distinguish them from 'ordinary' translators. The desperate Borbás turned to Gábor Devecseri, translator and Major in the People's Army. He put on his uniform, visited the director and 'defended' the rest of the translators, so in the end all the names were printed in the same font (Szele [n.d.]).

This plurality of opinions regarding the status of particular translations, as well as the function of translation in general, signals a changing theory of translation in the 1950s. Attempts to preserve canonical originals through translation had to be reconciled with the desire to make these originals available to a wider audience through modernisation as well

¹² Mészöly later became vice president of the Hungarian Shakespeare Committee and received ample recognition for his work, including one of Hungary's most prestigious awards, the Kossuth Prize, in 1999.

as the desire to preserve the translations that had become canonical themselves. What is clear from Borbás's account is that the individual translator's reputation was crucial in the assessment of the translation itself, that being a translator was considered a privilege and as such only the best – or the most prestigious – could partake of it as far as state-controlled publications were concerned.

1.7. Conclusion

Hungarian translation in the first half of the twentieth century was very much translator-centred. In critical terms this can be described as a reversal of Venuti's model of the invisible translator, and while this approach was epitomised by the *Nyugat* generation in the early twentieth century, it continued well into the 1950s. It was still dominant in 1955, although other concerns, such as preserving the original work of the author, also played an important part in the discussions surrounding the 1955 Shakespeare edition. The Revolution of 1956 brought about a paradigm change: as all literature was supposed to serve one goal, the good of society, clarity became a fundamental requirement for translations: 'an artistic work that contained elements that were difficult to define or understand were [*sic*] considered unpublishable' (Scholz 2011, 208). There was no room left for innovation, playfulness, experimentation or self-reflection. Attention was turned to the classics, because they offered 'authority, continuity, legitimacy, and education for the people, and, above all, they efficiently restrict[ed] the notion of progress' (Scholz 2011, 208). The *Nyugat* generation's concepts of faithfulness and creative approach to translation gave way to a critical framework which praised source text – target text correspondence above all, and which, ironically, resulted from 'the one-sided interpretation (canonisation) of *Nyugat*-type translation theories' (Józán 2009, 211).

Communism in Hungary came to an end in 1989, but, as Józán points out, Hungarian translation theory remained resistant to change in the second half of the twentieth century, more so than other areas of literary criticism (Józán 2009, 205). As I mentioned earlier, there has been no systematic analysis of contemporary Hungarian translation theory or practice to this day, although there are signs suggesting that contemporary Hungarian translation has moved closer to the English and American paradigm. In a 2011 interview Borbás explains that

[u]sually the translator receives very little feedback. They are glad if their name appears at all, say, on a cover, or if they are mentioned in a review.

These days I keep getting reviews of new books from Bookline¹³ – the translator’s name is never ever indicated. So feedback is haphazard, shall we say. The reception of a book is really the publisher’s joy or pain. The translator is always the last on the list. (Anon. 2011)

Borbás’s words evoke Venuti’s assessment of the situation of the marginalised translator in British and American cultures. This suggests a literary milieu very different from that in which Kosztolányi proudly announced that he had rendered ‘The Raven’ in Hungarian ‘with words filtered through my own blood.’ In her analysis of the Hungarian translation of the *Harry Potter* books, Márta Minier calls the translator, Tamás Boldizsár Tóth, ‘an exception to the general tendency of the invisibility of the translator’ (Minier 2004, 154). Contemporary Hungarian translators are as badly paid and excluded from reviews as Venuti’s invisible translators. However, it remains to be seen how much actual translation practice – the translator’s approach to the source text, as opposed to the translator’s place in literary culture – has changed. Close readings of twenty-first-century translations would reveal whether fundamental differences between Hungarian and English translation still exist, and whether Hungarian translators still inscribe their personalities on the text at the expense of making the author visible.

¹³ A Hungarian bookstore chain.

2. Translating Book Three of *Lanark*: Simplicity and Other Problems

2.1. Introduction

Translating Book Three of *Lanark* as part of a research degree meant that I was undertaking two parallel projects simultaneously. Not only was I engaging in practical translation and working towards a clearly defined end product – a text made accessible to a new readership – but I was also pursuing a theoretical enquiry into the nature of translation in general, and Hungarian translation in particular. This meant that while I approached the text already with specific theoretical issues in mind – the ever-present tension of ‘free’ versus ‘literal’, foreignisation versus domestication, and so on – the translation process raised further questions along the way. I was not constrained by commercial considerations that would influence a commissioned translation, although, since I hope to publish my translation of the whole novel eventually, I had to take into account the needs as well as the limitations of my hypothetical readership. However, as a theorist I was interested not only in producing a translation that fits into existing paradigms, but also in critically examining these paradigms, and possibly revising them through my translation.

In the previous section I talked about the historical tendency to literarise Hungarian translations. This tendency is significant because the literarising past can have a discernible influence on contemporary translation into Hungarian, and this influence is something I experienced as a translator while working on a Hungarian translation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Although as a text *Alice* is very different from *Lanark*, some of the challenges I first encountered while translating the former recurred during my translation of the latter, including the perceived need to literarise the source text. In the following section I will explore this need in relation to both texts, starting with *Alice*, and I will argue that the temptation to literarise must be resisted in some cases, especially in translating *Lanark*. I will then discuss a similar practice which, in my opinion, needs to be revised, before proceeding to explain the problem of choosing the appropriate second person singular pronoun in the target text.

The following analysis requires the introduction of the concept of practice-as-research, a term commonly used in the performing arts but not nearly as widely in literary

discourses, with the possible exception of creative writing.¹⁴ It denotes a type of enquiry that is both process and product, that is, a type of research that is conducted through the medium of practice.¹⁵ I would argue that the translation projects discussed here *themselves* constitute research, because research questions both arose *during* the translation process and were partially answered *through* it. While practice-as-research is a little-studied method in the areas of literary production and criticism, its relevance to Translation Studies, a subject that combines theory and practice, is undeniable.¹⁶ A detailed exploration of the practice-as-research method itself is beyond the scope of this work, but I must mention briefly the subjective and personal element which is always central to it, and which explains the necessarily personal and self-reflective style of writing and use of the pronoun ‘I’ that the following section of this dissertation exemplifies.¹⁷

2.2. Translating *Alice*

I translated *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* into Hungarian in 2009. It was an enlightening experience: I had had very little formal training, and my idea of translation was one where word-for-word correspondence was the aim, only to be broken where it would make the Hungarian text ungrammatical or change the meaning of the source text. Unsurprisingly, my first draft sounded rather clumsy.

As a text that has been translated and retranslated again and again over the 86 years that have passed since the publication of its first Hungarian translation,¹⁸ *Alice* is a very interesting example of how translation norms change over time. It is particularly interesting for the researcher of contemporary Hungarian translation, and an ideal basis for practice-as-research. Questions emerged during the translation process about the process itself, and I sought answers to these questions and modified my translation according to my

¹⁴ See, for example, Gaylene Perry’s chapter on creative writing as research in Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, eds., *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

¹⁵ For a good introduction to practice-as-research see Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts* (London: Sage Publications, 2005).

¹⁶ Nothing illustrates this better than a recent practice-as-research conference organised by students from the University of Glasgow (including myself), ‘Processes, Outcomes, Pathways and Products: a Scottish Practice-as-Research Symposium’ (21-22 November 2012, CCA, Glasgow), which featured a keynote presentation on Translation Studies by Georgina Collins.

¹⁷ “[Bordieu] suggests that reflexivity in such research involves not only a focus on the validation of data and outcomes, but also the positioning of oneself in relation to other fields in order to reveal the character and sources of one’s interest. [...] Since the researcher’s relationship to the object of study (material or mental) is of central concern in practice-based methodologies, they are in accord with Bordieu’s notion of reflexivity.” (Barrett and Bolt 2007, 6)

¹⁸ The first Hungarian *Alice* appeared in 1927, translated by Margit Altay as *Alice a Csodák országában* [*Alice in the Land of Wonders*], Budapest: Pallas.

findings. The final version of my *Alice*, published in 2013 by Everttype, is therefore a result of practice-based research.¹⁹ The practical problem that first made me think about translation theory is best illustrated by the following passage:

‘Please would you tell me,’ said Alice, a little timidly, for she was not quite sure whether it was good manners for her to speak first, ‘why your cat grins like that?’

‘It’s a Cheshire cat,’ said the Duchess, ‘and that’s why. Pig!’

She said the last word with such sudden violence that Alice quite jumped; but she saw in another moment that it was addressed to the baby, and not to her, so she took courage, and went on again:—

‘I didn’t know that Cheshire cats always grinned; in fact, I didn’t know that cats COULD grin.’

‘They all can,’ said the Duchess; ‘and most of ‘em do.’

‘I don’t know of any that do,’ Alice said very politely, feeling quite pleased to have got into a conversation.

‘You don’t know much,’ said the Duchess; ‘and that’s a fact.’ (Carroll 2000, 61)

Apart from the question of how to render ‘Cheshire cat’ in Hungarian, this extract seemed fairly unproblematic when I first encountered it. I soon realised, however, that a literal translation of the passage somehow does not sound right in Hungarian. *Alice* was originally written for children; its language is simple but not unsophisticated. There is no sense that the writer did not have a good grasp of the English language. A literal Hungarian translation, on the other hand, sounded awkward and un-literary, as though the translator was lacking the necessary skills for a ‘proper’ translation.

After further textual analysis I noticed that the word ‘said’ appears six times in this short extract. There is a close equivalent to ‘said’ in Hungarian, ‘mondta’, although it cannot refer to questions, only statements. I had still included this word in my translation wherever it was grammatically possible, and this caused problems. It seemed that Hungarian could simply not cope with the level of word repetition present in the English source. I had to revise the translation and domesticate the text by ‘literarising’ it, that is, by replacing recurring words with synonyms and thereby increasing the lexical complexity.

Why this literarisation was necessary may be explained by the history of Hungarian literary culture discussed in the previous section. Put simply, Hungary is a small nation

¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of this translation see the foreword in Lewis Carroll, *Aliz kalandjai Csodaországban*, trans. Anikó Szilágyi (Cathair na Mart: Everttype, 2013).

with a difficult history, and vernacular literary production served for a long time to ‘build a national literature’ and boost the nation’s self-esteem in the face of adversities and oppression, whether real or perceived.²⁰ As Scholz has pointed out, this attitude manifested itself, among other things, in ‘the marked literarization of translations’ (Scholz 2011, 206). The fact that this attitude has survived to an extent into the twenty-first century is shown by my personal experience of translating *Alice*: I had to rework the text because Hungarian ideas of literariness are still related to elaborateness, and this is a sense in which Hungarian culture differs from English-speaking cultures.²¹ This also means that linguistic simplicity, including simple syntax and word repetition, has different stylistic connotations in English and Hungarian.

2.3. A Different Literariness: Plain English

One of the most important truths that translating *Alice* revealed is that English and Hungarian fiction differ in the value they place on simplicity. If the peculiarities of Hungarian literature can be explained by its history, then the same can be done with English fiction. As mentioned before, in his discussion of translation into English Venuti cites a number of factors that have contributed to the emergence of ‘plain styles’:²² ‘[t]he enormous economic and political power acquired by scientific research during the twentieth century, [and] the postwar innovations in advanced communications technologies to expand the advertising and entertainment industries and support the economic cycle of commodity production and exchange’ (Venuti 2008, 5). However, in order to fully understand the current position of plain English in both literary and non-literary discourses, we need to go further back than the twentieth century.

The history of plain English has been well documented, but perhaps the best introduction to, and summary of, the style is to be found in a booklet containing the transcript of a speech titled *The Plain Style in English Prose*. The author, Sir William Rees-Mogg, was president of The English Association at the time, and his speech is useful to the researcher of the plain style for at least two reasons. Firstly, it gives an overview of

²⁰ A perfect example of such a perceived need is the rhetoric of Viktor Orbán, Hungary’s current prime minister. The attempts of his government to enhance artistic production on a national level by limiting art worthy of state funding to Christian, conservative and nationalistic art verge on the ridiculous.

²¹ Although generally speaking practice-as-research produces a different kind of knowledge than more traditional types of research, and therefore complements them, in the case of contemporary Hungarian translation strategies the method of practice-based research takes on particular significance due to the aforementioned lack of ‘traditional’ critical material on the subject.

²² Also called ‘plain English’, ‘low style’, ‘scientific style’, ‘simple style’ and ‘plain language’.

the use of the plain style from Thomas More to William James, including examples not only from literature but from politics, religious writing, economics, science, and even architecture and design. Secondly, the speech discusses the cultural connotations of the plain style from a slightly personal and subjective angle, which makes the discussion itself an interesting object of study that can help to reveal the ideological framework of plain English. Rees-Mogg's rhetoric displays a peculiar mixture of humility and arrogance, as he first establishes that a more ornamental style is just as legitimate a form of expression as the plain style (Rees-Mogg 1984, 1), but this is followed by a strongly critical and elitist comment: 'I must say that the number of people who are pretty well masters of a tolerable narrative style could be counted on the fingers of one hand, nowadays and perhaps at any other time' (6).²³

Rees-Mogg identifies Sir Francis Bacon, whose name is associated with the creation of empiricism and the scientific method, as 'the first of the masters' of the plain style (Rees-Mogg 1984, 3). Bacon offers a critique of the Ciceronian rhetoric in *The Advancement of Learning*:

men began to hunt more after words than matter; more after the choiceness of the phrase, and the round and clean composition of the sentence, and of the sweet falling of the clauses, and the varying and illustration of their works with tropes and figures, than after the weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument, life of invention or depth of judgement. (Bacon 1965, 24)

For Bacon, the problem with the Ciceronian style is that emphasis is placed on eloquence at the cost of substance; put simply, words matter more than their meaning. Rees-Mogg sees Bacon as the first 'fully-fledged' representative of the plain style, influenced by Renaissance writers like Thomas More and Erasmus (Rees-Mogg 1984, 4). Although Rees-Mogg makes no reference to Ben Jonson, writing roughly at the same time as Bacon, the poet and playwright may also be considered 'a master of the plain style': Wesley Trimpi notes the 'the sympathy [...] for the antirhetorical reaction against florid stylistic

²³ A similar sentiment is expressed by Ronald Englefield in *Critique of Pure Verbiage*, in a chapter entitled 'The Hazards of Fine Writing': 'Language serves many purposes: it expresses the emotions, it is used to terrify and intimidate, to excite and to bemuse; and also to give a sober description of facts. This last function would be much better served if the instrument were less well adapted to the others.' (Englefield 1990, 14)

models' Jonson shared with Muret, Lipsius and Bacon, and identifies Jonson's rhetoric in the *Discoveries* as 'essentially the classical plain style' (Trimpi 1962, vii).²⁴

Rees-Mogg cites two further examples of plain English prose writers from the seventeenth century, George Herbert and John Locke. Rees-Mogg claims that Herbert's prose is 'perhaps undervalued because his poetry is valued so highly', and quotes a passage from *A Priest to the Temple*, a treatise on rural ministry, to illustrate Herbert's 'precision', 'sense of detail' and 'avoidance of rhetoric' (Rees-Mogg 1984, 5). Locke's style, Mogg argues, is 'the style of the English scientists, [...] of the English philosophers, [...] of the English economists' and it is 'written with the most powerful intelligence concentrated on the meaning of language' (Rees-Mogg 1984, 6) – a claim that echoes Bacon's preference for 'weight' over 'copie' (Bacon 1965, 24).

Moving into the eighteenth century, Rees-Mogg mentions Daniel Defoe and his use of the plain style in journalism; Thomas Addison, 'a master of plain style – with perhaps a little bit too much sugar on it'; and Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, 'a novel written with a beautiful and limpid quality of style' (Rees-Mogg 1984, 7). Jonathan Swift is referred to almost in passing, but for others, he exemplifies plain English prose at its best: Hugh Blair writes that '[t]o a writer of such genius as Dean Swift, the Plain Style was most admirably fitted. Among our philosophical writers, Mr Locke comes under this class; perspicuous and pure, but almost without any ornament whatever' (quoted in Williams 2012, 212). Rees-Mogg also cites David Hume and Adam Smith as Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, and successors of Locke, who produced 'precisely written' work 'of the highest quality' (Rees-Mogg 1984, 8).

The nineteenth century saw the separation of scientific discourse and the arts: what had been called 'philosophy' or 'natural philosophy' began to be divided into the two distinct categories we would now describe as 'philosophy' and 'science' (Heilbron 2003). This notwithstanding, plain English remained an important style in imaginative literature, exemplified, among others, by the work of Anthony Trollope (Rees-Mogg 1984, 9). Another advocate of plain English literature is Nathaniel Hawthorne, who in 1851 wrote the following in a letter to an editor:

²⁴ *Discoveries* is the short title of Jonson's commonplace book, published posthumously as *Timber, or Discoveries made upon men and matter, as they have flowed out of his daily readings, or had their reflux to his peculiar notion of the times*, and is therefore not dated.

I am glad you think my style plain. I never, in any one page or paragraph, aimed at making it anything else, or giving it any other merit – and I wish people would leave off talking about its beauty. If it has any, it is only pardonable at being unintentional. The greatest possible merit of style is, of course, to make the words absolutely disappear into the thought. (quoted in Turner 1961, 267)

As far as non-literary discourses are concerned, Rees-Mogg highlights two writers: Walter Bagehot, ‘who wrote everything he wrote well’, and Charles Darwin, whose *Origin of Species* is characterised by ‘clarity of exposition [and] straightforward words used in a straightforward way, that [sic] makes it extremely powerful’ (Rees-Mogg 1984, 9-10).

George Orwell is perhaps the most well-known defender of the plain style from the twentieth century, who complains in his controversial 1946 essay ‘Politics and the English Language’ that ‘[m]odern writing at its worst does not consist in picking out words for the sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer’ (Orwell 1968, 134). This is further evidence of the persistence of the idea that words should be used primarily for their meaning, rather than for some kind of aesthetic or rhetorical purpose. Rees-Mogg quotes William James, brother of Henry James, to illustrate a mastery ‘not only in his ideas, but also in his language, of the plain and direct mode of writing prose’ (Rees-Mogg 1984, 10). Venuti also notes the influence of plain English on literary discourses, referring to the process, in Charles Bernstein’s words, as ‘the historical movement toward uniform spelling and grammar, with an ideology that emphasizes nonidiosyncratic, smooth transition, elimination of awkwardness, &c.—anything that might concentrate attention on the language itself’ (Bernstein 1986, 27, cited in Venuti 2008, 5) and concludes that ‘[i]n contemporary Anglo-American literature, this movement has made realism the most prevalent form of narrative and free, prose-like verse the most prevalent form of poetry’ (Venuti 2008, 5).

The historical position of Britain as a world power, and consequently of English as an international language, has also influenced its usage: Edmond Weiss points out that in written communication much emphasis should be placed on reducing the burden on the reader (Weiss 2005, 63). As far as non-fiction is concerned, the current dominance of the plain style is clear from the proliferation of writing manuals such as Martin Cutts’ *Oxford Guide to Plain English* (2009), Harry Blamires’s *The Penguin Guide to Plain English*

(2000), and William Strunk and E. B. White's older but still very popular *The Elements of Style* (1959).²⁵ It would seem that plain English, whose 'authority [...] was achieved over several centuries', is not only an acceptable literary style, it is a much praised and recommended one (Venuti 2008, 5). This is one of the fundamental historical differences between English and Hungarian literary discourses, and I will show that awareness of this difference is particularly relevant to a translation of *Lanark*.

2.4. *Lanark*: De-literarising Hungarian Translation

If translating simple literary language into Hungarian is problematic because Hungarian texts have to be elaborate and sophisticated to qualify as 'literary', then the translator of *Lanark* is faced with a significant challenge. Literarisation can lead to an unnecessary uniformity in translations, as Scholz (2011) has shown in his essay on translations from Spanish under the Communist regime. This is particularly relevant to *Lanark*, as the language of this thematically complex novel is anything but flowery or overly sophisticated. Consider the following passage (word repetition is underlined and demonstratives and pronouns referring back to the previous sentence appear in bold):

It ran along a viaduct among the roofs of a city. Rainclouds covered the sky and the day was so dull that lamps were lit in the streets. They were broad streets, and crossed at right angles, and were lined with big stone buildings. I saw very few people and no traffic. Beyond the rooftops were rows of cranes with metal hulls among them. The train travelled toward **these** and crossed a bridge over the river. It was a broad river with stone embankments, cracked khaki-coloured mud on the bottom and a narrow black stream trickling zigzag down the middle. **This** worried me. I felt, and still feel, that a river should be more than this. I looked down into a yard where two hulls stood. **They** were metal cylinders with rusty domes on top, and a rattle of machinery inside suggested they were being worked on. (Gray 2007, 17)

The writing style is more or less that of a school pupil and the subject is completely prosaic, except the claim that 'a river should be more than this', which has some philosophical depth. The syntax is straightforward, and the last word of a sentence

²⁵ *Strunk & White*, as it is colloquially referred to, has a deceptive title: it claims to be a book about style in general, but it is in reality about *one* particular style, plain style. The equation of style with plain style here is further proof of the dominance of the latter in English cultures.

is often then modified in the next one: ‘dull lamps were lit in the streets. They were broad streets’, and ‘crossed a bridge over the river. It was a broad river’.

My first translation of this extract is as follows (word repetition underlined):

Egy viadukton haladt végig, háztetők között. Esőfelhők borították az eget, és olyan erős szürkület volt, hogy az utcán meggyújtották a lámpákat. Széles utcák voltak, derékszögben találkoztak, és nagy kőépületek sorakoztak rajtuk. Nagyon kevés embert láttam, és alig volt forgalom. A háztetők mögött daruk sora látszott, köztük itt-ott fém hajótestek. A vonat ezek felé tartott, és közben áthaladt egy hídon a folyó fölött. A széles folyómedert kövezett rakpart szegélyezte; repedezett, zöldesbarna sár borította az alját, és a közepén keskeny, fekete patak csordogált. Ezt aggasztónak találtam. Úgy éreztem, és most is úgy érzem, hogy egy folyónak többnek kellene lennie ennél. Lenéztem egy telepre, ahol két hajótest állt. Rozsdás tetejű fémhengerek voltak, és a belsejükből jövő csörömpölés azt sejtette, folyik rajtuk a munka.

And the back translation into English:

It ran along a viaduct, among rooftops. Rainclouds covered the sky, and there was such a strong dusk that in the streets they had lit the lamps. They were broad streets, met at right angles, and were lined with big stone buildings. I saw very few people, and there was hardly any traffic. Beyond the rooftops rows of cranes were seen, here and there metal hulls. The train travelled toward these, and meanwhile crossed a bridge over the river. The broad riverbed was lined with stoned embankments; cracked, khaki-coloured mud covered the bottom, and a narrow, black stream trickled down the middle. I found this worrying. I felt, and still feel, that a river should be more than this. I looked down into a yard, where two hulls stood. They were rusty-topped metal cylinders, and the rattle coming from their inside suggested they were being worked on

Even for someone who does not read Hungarian it is clear that the stylistic features of the source text have been changed. Word repetition is eliminated apart from

‘utcán’ and ‘utcák’. An attempt has been made to ‘fix’ what might seem like stylistic problems in the English text.

In some cases it could be argued that translating plain English into eloquent Hungarian is a necessary form of domestication to do with markedness, that is, the idea that if a textual feature (e.g. simple syntax) is not noticeable in the source text but would be noticeable in the target text then that feature should be changed (and vice versa). Here, however, the problem of style is not restricted to the realm of translation but is also part of a thematic level debate within the source text. This passage is written by the eponymous Lanark, who is a child-adult and has just begun his new life, much like Bella Baxter in *Poor Things*. He takes up writing because his self-appointed mentor Sludden suggests that that is the only thing he is capable of. His work receives a merciless critique from Sludden: ‘It’s dead. [...] Two pages showed me that your prose is totally flat, never departing an inch from your dull experiences. If a writer doesn’t enjoy words for their own sake how can the reader enjoy them?’ (Gray 2007, 25) Lanark replies to these allegations: ‘But I do enjoy words – some words – for their own sake! Words like river, and dawn, and daylight, and time. These words seem much richer than our experiences of the things they represent’ (Gray 2007, 25). It is obvious that if Lanark produced elaborate prose in the Hungarian translation, this conversation would make no sense. Furthermore, this passage is a result of much deliberation on Lanark’s part. When he first decides to give writing a try, after several failed attempts he realises that ‘half the words had no definite meanings, having been added to make the sentences sound better than they were’ (Gray 2007, 15). He then decides to ‘score [...] these words out and cop[y] the rest onto the remaining pages’ (Gray 2007, 15). His style may seem unsophisticated and naïve, but it is not thoughtless, and it is an important part of who he is as a character.

After considering the above I modified my translation accordingly (word repetition underlined, lexical simplification in relation to the first translation in bold):

Egy viadukton haladt végig, háztetők között. Esőfelhők borították az eget, és **olyan sötét volt**, hogy meggyújtották a lámpákat az utcán. Széles utcák voltak, derékszögben találkoztak, és nagy kőépületek sorakoztak rajtuk. Nagyon **kevesen voltak az utcán**, és alig volt forgalom. A háztetők mögött daruk sora látszott, köztük hajótestek **voltak**. A vonat ezek felé tartott, és közben áthaladt egy hídon a folyó fölött. **A folyó széles volt, és** kövezett rakpart szegélyezte. **Repedezett**, zöldesbarna sár borította **a meder** alját, és a

közepén keskeny, fekete patak csordogált. Ezt aggasztónak találtam. Úgy éreztem, és most is úgy érzem, hogy egy folyónak többnek kellene lennie ennél. Lenéztem egy telepre, ahol két hajótest állt. Rozsdás tetejű fémhengerek voltak, és a belsejükből jövő **csörömpölésből arra lehetett gondolni**, folyik rajtuk a munka.

The same in English:

It ran along a viaduct, among rooftops. Rainclouds covered the sky, and **it was so dark** that they had lit the lamps in the streets. They were broad streets, met at right angles, and were lined with big stone buildings. There were very few people in the streets, and there was hardly any traffic. Beyond the rooftops rows of cranes were seen, among them **there were** metal hulls. The train travelled toward these and crossed a bridge over the river. The river was broad, and had stone embankments. Cracked, khaki-coloured mud covered the bottom of the riverbed, and a narrow black stream trickled down the middle. I found this worrying. I felt, and still feel, that a river should be more than this. I looked down into a yard, where two hulls stood. They were rusty-topped metal cylinders, and the rattle coming from their inside **made one think** they were being worked on.

As a Hungarian translator I am constantly resisting the temptation to literarise. Sometimes it is necessary to do so, as in the case of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, for the appropriate effect – Carroll's language is simple but not simplistic, and the translation should reflect this. *Alice* is also very concerned with 'proper expression', so it makes sense for the Hungarian text to comply with Hungarian standards of writing 'properly', unless of course Alice makes a blunder that is supposed to make the reader laugh. But the general tendency to literarise must be reconsidered, and the translator's anxiety to show their skills by producing a sophisticated translation must be overcome. Venuti calls for more foreignising translations, and embracing simplicity in literary translation into Hungarian would be a step in this direction. In the case of *Lanark*, as I have shown, literarising can substantially distort the source text.

2.5. Units of Measurement

Lanark uses the imperial system, which would be vaguely familiar to Hungarian readers, but few of them would be aware of the actual conversion rates. This notwithstanding, the current practice is to translate these units of measurement as the exact Hungarian equivalents ('mérőföld' [mile], 'láb' [foot], 'hüvelyk' [inch], 'font' [pound], 'uncia' [ounce], rather than 'kilometre', 'centimetre', 'kilogram', and so on. I have not been able to find a Hungarian equivalent for 'stone'). There are good arguments to support this practice: firstly, the fact that this is how it has been done for a long time and readers are used to it; secondly, that it conveys a sense of 'foreignness' and authenticity. These are important considerations, especially where keeping the imperial unit does not inhibit the understanding of the situation, as in the following example:

And now, about a **mile** away, where the streets reached the crest of a wide shallow hill, each was silhouetted against a pearly paleness. (Gray 2007, 11; emphasis added)

[Körülbelül egy **mérőföldnyire**, ahol az utcák egy széles, alacsony domb tövéhez értek, hirtelen sápadt gyöngyházzsínben tündöklött fel kétoldalt az ég alja.]

It is clear that the Hungarian reader is not at a disadvantage in any sense, as the exact distance of the hill to the narrator is irrelevant, and the little used 'mérőföld' creates an atmosphere appropriate to the 'magical' moment in the source text. This is not the case in the following passage, where Lanark is being measured at the security place in Chapter 3:

I was 5 feet 7¾ inches high and weighed 9 stone 12 pounds 3½ ounces.

- a. [5 láb 7¾ hüvelyk magas voltam, a súlyom 9 stone, 12 font és 3½]
- b. [171 centi és 1 miliméter magas voltam, a súlyom 62 kiló 68 deka és 5 gramm.]

Both (a) and (b) manage to preserve the ridiculousness of the whole procedure – that a person's height and weight should be measured so accurately in an absurdly bureaucratic system. However, there is an important aspect of the source text that is lost in the first, more literal translation: that Lanark is a person of more or less ordinary height, slightly shorter than the average. This may seem like an unnecessary piece of information unless viewed in the context of previous and subsequent chapters, which reveal that Lanark is a

rather dull character with a flat writing style and absolutely nothing exceptional or exciting about him.

The following two examples illustrate situations where the units of measurement carry less actual meaning and can therefore be left unconverted in the target text:

Without moving his limbs he suddenly slid **an inch or two** toward Lanark along the polished floorboards, and then the light went out. (Gray 2007, 32; emphasis added)

[Hirtelen mozdulatlan tagokkal előrecsúszott **néhány hüvelyknyit** Lanark felé a vikszelt parkettán, majd kialudt a villany.]

His ear was **an inch** from a thick brown curtain separating his sofa from where they sat and clearly they had no sense of being overheard. (38, emphasis added)

[Lanark füle **egy hüvelyknyire** volt az üzletembereket tőle elválasztó, vastag, barna függönytől, és azoknak nyilvánvalóan fogalmuk sem volt róla, hogy valaki hallgatózik.]

However, precisely because the measurements do not indicate exact distance and simply mean something like ‘a little’ or ‘very close’, converting them to the metric system in the target language would perhaps enhance the reading experience, as there is nothing unusual or puzzling for the Hungarian reader about centimetres, and they would not break the flow of reading. Returning to the idea that the target text should reflect the markedness, or lack thereof, of the source text, I propose the following solutions:

[Hirtelen mozdulatlan tagokkal előrecsúszott **néhány centit** Lanark felé a vikszelt parkettán, majd kialudt a villany.]

[Lanark füle **néhány centiméterre** volt az üzletembereket tőle elválasztó, vastag, barna függönytől, és azoknak nyilvánvalóan fogalmuk sem volt róla, hogy valaki hallgatózik.]

2.6. Formal and Informal ‘You’

Hungarian resembles many Indo-European languages in that it has two different second person singular pronouns, a formal (‘Ön/Maga’) and an informal one (‘Te’), and two

corresponding conjugation patterns. The second would indicate a closer relationship, for example, between friends or family members, while the former would be used in more formal situations or between strangers. As social situations change or relationships progress, people may switch from one mode to the other: this would be similar to two English speakers beginning to call each other by their first names, and, similarly to English cultures, the switch tends to occur from formal to informal, and very rarely the other way around.²⁶ The use of the two pronouns and conjugation patterns also tends to be symmetrical, except between a child and an adult or a young person and an elderly person, but in these cases a third mode would be used in addressing the person of higher status (the informal mode would be the same).

The existence of this distinction in Hungarian is a common problem in translating from languages that only have one second person singular pronoun. Every time someone is addressed in the source text a decision has to be made, and while often there are clues in the source ('Call me Mark' would usually indicate that the characters are about to switch to the informal way of addressing each other), this is not always the case (for example, the common Hollywood scenario of a man and a woman who have thus far been repressing their sexual desire by constantly fighting suddenly starting to kiss and tear each other's clothes off clearly signals a paradigm change in their relationship, but when exactly should their speech begin to reflect this? Before, during or after sex?)

There is a lot of dialogue in *Lanark*, and interesting choices to be made. Book Three, which takes place in a bizarrely allegorical version of Glasgow, can hardly be called realistic, which means that the fictional social situations have to be assessed by different criteria from what we would apply in real life. In order to decide how Lanark should address others and how he should be addressed, his character and status in the fictional worlds (I consider Unthank and the Institute as two separate worlds with their own rules) need to be analysed. My main guiding principle was that Lanark is polite and well-meaning and has low self-esteem, therefore he would normally use the polite 'you', especially considering that there are very few people that might be called his friends. Characters like Sludden, on the other hand, obviously wield power in their own little empires and feel free to dispense with formalities. Accordingly, Sludden uses the informal 'you' the first time he addresses Lanark ('Megtaláltad, Lanark?'), and in this instance I

²⁶ In Hungarian it is possible to address someone by their first name but using the formal conjugation pattern, e.g. 'Jöjjön be, Péter!' ['Come in, Peter!']. In fact, using the person's surname with the polite conjugation pattern ('Jöjjön be, Nagy Úr' ['Come in, Mr Nagy!']) would sound less natural in most everyday situations.

made Lanark reply in the same mode – he is probably unable to identify what social situation this is, so he responds in a manner appropriate to the first address (‘Mit találtam meg? Mire gondolsz?’). After such a start Lanark would be unlikely to switch to the formal pronoun, so all the characters address each other informally until Lanark and Rima part in Chapter 2. Lanark’s landlady, Mrs Fleck, is probably elderly and old-fashioned, so I made them use the polite mode with each other. Gloopy, who comes to Lanark’s help in Chapter 3 but whose intentions are questionable, uses the informal you – he is cheeky enough to impose on Lanark even though they had never met before, so an inappropriately casual mode seemed suited to his character.

The rest of the encounters are perhaps less surreal and therefore less interesting until Lanark meets the protesters in Chapter 6. This is clearly an unusual situation: Lanark walks in and opens with ‘I’m frightened of what’s happening to me’ (Gray 2007, 43) – no greetings, no introductions, only something one would normally say while lying on their psychologist’s sofa. The woman behind the counter replies: ‘Yes! No wonder. If you’ve been looking around you’ll see we haven’t much time’ (43). There is a clear sense of urgency in this mysterious reply, and a reference to a cause that will unite people: there is no need for formalities. The dialogue in this scene is therefore asymmetrical in my translation: Lanark is formal and the protestors informal. This reflects the psychological setup: Lanark is confused and insecure, he is not sure what is happening to him, whereas the protestors are focused and passionate, and know, or at least claim to know, what they want. This asymmetry is of course very strange in the target text, and resembles no real-life situation, but the scene is strange in the source text too, even though this is not manifested on a linguistic level.

When Lanark reaches the Institute at the end of Chapter 6, the setting becomes even more surreal. The Institute is a kind of hospital, yet different rules apply: patients (of low status) quickly become doctors (of high status), and there is an unstable hierarchy among the staff. When Munro first comes to see Lanark, he acts doctor-like: this scene resembles an actual visit, and both characters assume their respective roles and address each other in a formal yet friendly manner in the target text. This is a sign of respect on the part of Munro, who shows Lanark some kindness during his stay at the Institute, and an indication of his personality.

Perhaps the most interesting and problematic character of Book Three is Professor Ozenfant. He is an unconventional villain, and only emerges as such towards the end of the

book, although he seems to make Lanark feel uncomfortable from their earliest encounter. He asks Lanark a series of personal and seemingly irrelevant questions ('What instruments do you play? [...] Do you play any games, Lanark? [...] Have you a religion, Lanark? [...] How would you describe yourself?') (Gray 2007, 65-7). He is inquisitive, insensitive and intrusive. He is not openly hostile to Lanark at first, and refers to their relationship as a 'friendship', but Lanark's insistence on curing his first patient makes him lose his temper and show his real nature. I felt that his addressing Lanark in the casual mode would be a good expression of his feigned friendliness on the one hand, and the assertion of his status as higher than that of Lanark on the other, since Lanark, who is talking to his superior, has to remain formal throughout. However, I also felt that Ozenfant was a temperamental man, and that his anger could be as dangerous as his patronage could be useful. To emphasise this, I made him suddenly switch to the formal mode when he delivers his invective in Chapter 10:

Ozenfant began speaking in a quiet voice which grew steadily to a deafening yell: 'Dr. Lanark, you have been allowed very special privileges. You use a public ward as a private apartment. You employ my name in lifts and they take you everywhere direct. You ignore my advice, disdain my friendship, sneer at my food and now! Now you deliberately ruin the recording of an immortal harmony which might save the souls of thousands! What other insults do you plan to heap on me?' (Gray 2007, 87)

The formal 'you' is a clear indication in the target text of Lanark's fall from grace. This switch would not occur in a real-life situation, but this is obviously not one. Ozenfant's character has to be peculiar to address Lanark informally in the first place, and this switch is in line with the fraught nature of their unusual relationship from the beginning.

2.7. Conclusion

Following a brief and necessarily selective account of the development of Hungarian translation theory in the twentieth century in Section 1, Section 2 discusses my translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which, much like my translation of *Lanark*, constitutes practice-as-research. Translating *Alice* revealed that linguistic simplicity, including simple syntax and word repetition or lexical simplicity, have different connotations and effects in English and Hungarian prose.

This realisation necessitated an investigation of the history of the plain style in English-speaking cultures in order to provide a historical explanation for these differences between English and Hungarian literary cultures. I have not proposed a universal solution to the problem of translating simple language in English fiction into Hungarian, but argued that the nature of the translated work will determine what translation strategy should be adopted. In the case of *Alice*, the elimination of stylistic features that would sound strange, foreign or ‘un-literary’ in the target text is recommended; in other words, a domesticating strategy is suggested in order to produce a target text that matches its source in terms of markedness. In the case of *Lanark*, however, I have proposed a strategy that involves resisting the temptation to literarise the source text, and which, in this sense, can be seen as challenging current translation norms.²⁷

I have argued that a literarising Hungarian translation of *Lanark* would lead to a misrepresentation of the character of Lanark, and that linguistic simplicity is not merely a tool used for articulating meaning but an important theme in the source text. Through the analysis of a passage from chapter 2 I demonstrated that reproducing the syntactic and lexical features of the source text, even though this would sound unsophisticated in the target language, is the most accurate way of transposing Lanark’s writing style, which is meant to reflect his personality and his thought processes. I have also examined the established practice of translating imperial units measurement into Hungarian using a foreignising strategy, instead of converting them to the metric system, which is more familiar to the Hungarian reader. I concluded that in cases where a sense of foreignness is appropriate to the context it is beneficial to adhere to this practice, but in others, where markedness would interfere with the reading experience or where the understanding of quantities is important for the plot or character portrayal, conversion is advisable. Finally, I have commented on the choices made necessary by the existence of a formal and an informal way of addressing someone in Hungarian, and argued that because certain characters and situations in *Lanark* are intended as surreal, it is paramount that this is reflected in conjugation patterns in the target text that would sound absurd in a non-fictional context in the target culture.

²⁷ I have not been able to find criticism to support my claim that literarising Hungarian translations is still the norm, so I have had to rely on my personal experience as a translator, and assume that because I was brought up, educated and trained as a translator in Hungary, my approach to translating is representative of general practices.

I have focused on three problems I encountered while translating Book Three of *Lanark*, linguistic simplicity, units of measurement and politeness, but there are many more. Individual words can present seemingly insurmountable obstacles. How to render ‘crimson’ and ‘scarlet’ in Hungarian, a language that does not always distinguish different shades of red, in ‘a crimson carpet covered the floor, the chairs were upholstered in scarlet’? (Gray 2007, 1) What to do with the word ‘cultivate’ when Lanark, pondering on his disease, says ‘what else can I cultivate’ (Gray 2007, 40)? It is a reference to his lonely and empty life, but in Hungarian one cannot ‘cultivate’ friendships. Are ‘Turk’s Head Forge’ (Gray 2007, 30) and ‘Turks Road Forge’ (Gray 2007, 47) different forges, or is this just an oversight on Gray’s part? This translation is of one quarter of a novel; when the rest is done, this will have to be revised. Further problems will emerge that may shed new light on the issues discussed here. Translating *Lanark* has been and will be an exciting project, and offer countless opportunities to critically examine and, if necessary, challenge current Hungarian translation norms.

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