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***Gabriel the Victorious* and Hungarian Fiction in
Contemporary English Translation**

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Abstract

This thesis employs multiple methodologies in order to explore Hungarian fiction in contemporary English translation as a distinct body of literature. It comprises three interrelated contributions: a bibliography, three case studies, and a translation. A bibliography of English translations of Hungarian novels published between 2000 and 2016 is presented in Appendix A, and Chapter 1 contains an overview of contemporary Hungarian-to-English fiction translation based on the bibliographic data, including a description of the assembly process. Chapters 2-4 focus more closely on a selection of these texts, tracing publication histories as well as target culture reception and interpreting translation shifts. Chapter 2 considers the language of *Seiobo There Below* by László Krasznahorkai (2013, tr. Otilie Mulzet) in relation to the author's vernacular oeuvre, and offers meta-artistic commentary on the target text. Chapter 3 investigates the concept of corporeal writing in *Parallel Stories* by Péter Nádas (2011, tr. Imre Goldstein), arguing that the organising principle of the source text is compromised in translation, which produces a fragmented work. Chapter 4 uncovers and categorises translation shifts in *Journey by Moonlight* by Antal Szerb (2002, tr. Len Rix) as an example of a recently translated Hungarian classic. Chapter 5 connects the analytical section of the thesis with the creative component that follows it. It departs from traditional academic discourse and uses a more reflective, lyrical mode of writing to explore the subjectivity of the translator and introduce the new text to its English-language readership. Finally, my English translation of the 1967 Hungarian novel *Győzelmes Gábor* by György Méhes is presented under the title *Gabriel the Victorious*.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgement	vi
Epigraph.....	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
Introduction.....	1
Contributions and Methodologies.....	3
Practice-based Research	3
Benefits	10
Chapter 1. Hungarian Literature in Contemporary English Translation: An Overview.....	12
Studying Hungarian Literature in English	12
About the Bibliography	17
Generic Considerations and Other Parameters	17
Data Collection	21
What the Data Reveals.....	25
Probing the Canon-in-translation.....	29
Areas for Further Study	32
Chapter 2. László Krasznahorkai's <i>Seiobo There Below</i>	35
Krasznahorkai and His Translators.....	35
Negotiating the Language: <i>Seiobo</i> 's Exaggerated Experimentalism.....	38
Stylistic Considerations	38
Style and Meaning in the TT	41
Translation about Translation: <i>Seiobo</i> as Meta-text	46
Conclusion: How to Read <i>Seiobo</i> in Translation.....	50
Chapter 3. Péter Nádas's <i>Parallel Stories</i>	52
Close Reading Carnality: Gyöngyvér and Ágost.....	62
Chapter 4. Antal Szerb's <i>Journey by Moonlight</i>	70
A Hungarian Classic in Contemporary Translation.....	70
Introduction: Old Texts in New Translation.....	70
Antal Szerb, Cosmopolitan and Anti-Fascist.....	72
The Language of <i>Journey by Moonlight</i>	77
Mistranslations.....	77
Stylistic Shifts	80
Dialogue: Pragmatic Shifts	83
Interpreting Shifts: <i>Journey by Moonlight</i> in English	87
Archaisation and Overtranslation	87
Nostalgia and Foreignness	90
Concluding Remarks on the Case Studies	94

Chapter 5. Translating <i>Gabriel</i> : Reflections and Foreword.....	97
Appendix A. Bibliography of Hungarian Novels Published in English Translation 2000-2016.....	125
Appendix B. Bibliography of Published English Translations Subventioned by the Hungarian Books and Translations Office 2000-2016	129
Bibliography.....	130

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This thesis is dedicated to Colin.

Epigraph

Thank fuck it's over.

List of Abbreviations

BNB	British National Bibliography
HBTO	Hungarian Books and Translations Office [Magyar Könyv-és Fordítástámogatási Iroda]
HLO	Hungarian Literature Online
LAF	Literature Across Frontiers
P-a-R	practice-as-research
SC	source culture
SL	source language
ST	source text
STT	source text title
TC	target culture
TL	target language
TT	target text
TTT	target text title
WDS	Wischenbart Diversity Report

Introduction

Quick, name a Hungarian novelist. You get one point for Arthur Koestler and two points for the Nobel Prize winner Imre Kertész, who had two books (out of 12) translated into English before he won the prize, and now has five. Take another three points for Peter Esterházy, who has seven books in English, though he is better known in Europe than in the United States. (Smiley 2009)

The above quotation is from a review, published on *The New York Times* website, of *The Book of Fathers* (2007, *Apák könyve* [2000], trans. Peter Sherwood) by contemporary Hungarian novelist Miklós Vámos. The playful tone of the reviewer's opening gambit may not seem out of line with the usual informal register of online book reviews aimed at the general public, but its content, which will certainly baffle both the Hungarian reader and literary scholar, reveals something noteworthy about how Hungarian literature is perceived in the English-speaking world. Smiley's choice of the three Hungarian authors whose mention would score the reader points in a hypothetical quiz suggests the existence of a canon of Hungarian literature in English translation that is distinct from, although it overlaps with, Hungary's canon of its own vernacular literature.

To imply that the first Hungarian novelist that comes to the mind of an English speaker is Arthur Koestler seems bizarre from a Hungarian perspective, regardless of whether this is indeed the case. Although Koestler was born in Hungary as Köszler Artúr, and may have written his first published novel, *The Gladiators* (1939) in Hungarian,¹ he is not recognised in his home country as a Hungarian novelist – in fact, he is hardly recognised at all.² The mention of Péter Esterházy seems appropriate, however, as he is both well-respected in Hungary and widely translated. It is the contrast between his popularity in Europe and the United States, and indeed the rest of the English-speaking world, that stands out in this

¹ Whether *The Gladiators* was originally written in Hungarian seems impossible to verify. An article published on the Hungarian news site Index.hu makes this claim (Szalai 2008), but www.koestler.hu (accessed 9 September 2017) lists *The Gladiators* among Koestler's works unavailable in Hungarian, suggesting that the Hungarian manuscript, if it ever existed, was never published. The British National Bibliography and the Library of Congress Catalogue do not specify the source language of the 1939 English edition, but it was translated into English by Edith Simon, a German-born British artist and author.

² “Koestler's recognition and popularity in Hungary have still not reached the levels he deserves. For understandable reasons, engagement with his work in his homeland could not begin until just before the change of regime, when the 1988 publication of the Hungarian translation of *Darkness at Noon* brought about a dramatic change in his reception. The main strands of his oeuvre have since been incorporated into Hungarian culture, mostly through the work of translator Benjamin Makovecz, but, despite occasional praise from critics, Hungarian intellectual life remains largely unaware of Koestler's real significance, as well as of his Hungarian connections” (Holuber 2003). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Hungarian secondary sources are my own. Two years after Holuber's essay on Koestler's reception appeared, *Magyar tudomány* [Hungarian scholarship], the journal of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, dedicated an issue to Koestler's legacy. See *Magyar tudomány* 166, 9 (2005) at <http://www.matud.iif.hu/2005-09.pdf>, accessed 9 September 2017.

passage, in spite of it being a familiar scenario: generally speaking, while the translation of established Hungarian novelists into European languages is flourishing, the Anglophone world seems unreceptive in comparison (Füle 2013, 18). The reviewer's remark, therefore, highlights Hungarian as one of the lesser-translated European languages from an English perspective, which is perhaps why there is still relatively little known about the nature of Hungarian-to-English literary translation.

The aim of this study is to provide a systematic overview of contemporary English translations of Hungarian novels, which have not yet been analysed as a distinct body of literature in any depth. Existing works on the subject of Hungarian-to-English literary translation are restricted to brief surveys, such as Bernard Adams's 'Translating Hungarian' (2010); bibliographies, such as Ágnes Orzóy's 'Two Decades of Hungarian Literature in English Translation, 1988–2010' (2011);³ and case studies, such as Peter Sherwood's 'On the German and English Versions of Márai's *A gyertyák csonkig égnek* (*Die Glut* and *Embers*)' (2011). These, among others, have made significant contributions to the study of Hungarian literature, and could serve as an excellent basis for a work synthesising previous research findings in order to identify larger trends. However, to date there has been no comprehensive study of the selection of titles to be translated, funding policies, authors' or translators' oeuvres, and little critical examination of the strategies used in translating literature from Hungarian into English.⁴ The scarcity of literature on contemporary Hungarian-to-English translation practices, which would encourage self-reflection in both academia and the industry, is particularly concerning; hence the focus of this thesis on the twenty-first century.

As few critical works have addressed Hungarian-to-English fiction translations as a whole, many important questions are as yet unanswered. For example, it remains to be seen to what extent current practices favour canonical Hungarian authors (from a Hungarian perspective), and how or whether more obscure or emerging authors are represented. Political factors like gender and race also invite commentary: for example, the representation of female authors could be compared in translated (English-language) and non-translated Hungarian literature. Other questions concern the identity of the translators:

³ This bibliography was first published in 2010, and an updated and expanded version was published a year later (Orzóy 2010 and 2011).

⁴ Translation Studies writing in Hungary often has a linguistic focus, as most chapters in *New Trends in Translation Studies* do (Károly and Fóris 2005), and studies taking a more literary approach usually focus on translation into Hungarian, including the entire 'Literary Aspects' section of *Translation Studies in Hungary* (Klaudy et al. 1996).

are they mostly bilingual emigrants of Hungarian descent; did they learn or re-learn Hungarian for professional purposes? The ratio of contemporary vs. older STs also deserves some attention, as do the economic aspects of publication: which texts receive state funding, which ones are deemed commercially viable enough to be taken on by publishers without financial support, and what is the role of self-translation and self-publication? These questions can only be addressed once the first, most basic question is answered: which Hungarian novels have been published in English translation in the twenty-first century?

Contributions and Methodologies

In order to be as comprehensive as limitations of time and space will allow, this thesis combines multiple methodologies in its examination of contemporary Hungarian-to-English fiction translation, resulting in three distinct but interrelated main contributions: a bibliography, three case studies, and a translation. A new bibliography of English translations of Hungarian novels published between 2000 and 2016 is presented in Appendix A (hereafter referred to as the Bibliography), and Chapter 1, a commentary on the Bibliography, contains a description of the assembly process and data analysis. Chapters 2-4 are case studies exploring selected texts from the Bibliography in greater detail, and Chapter 5 introduces the creative component of this project, my English translation of the novel *Győzelmes Gábor* (1967) by György Méhes. The rationale for including a new translation alongside studies of existing translations is that this gives a more complete answer not just to the question of *what* is translated but also *how* this literature is translated. Since these questions are broad, especially the second one, it is useful to have analytical as well as practice-based tools at our disposal to answer them. Furthermore, the critical introduction of a new text offers an opportunity to respond to and challenge existing biases in the industry. Therefore in Chapter 5 I will reflect in more detail on my title choice in light of the findings presented in the earlier chapters.

Practice-based Research

One way to conceive of a project applying these methodologies and producing these outputs is as a combination of theory and practice. According to this logic, my translation constitutes the practical element of this thesis, which is closely related to and informed by the theoretical discussion that precedes it. However, I propose that instead of viewing this work as having a critical and a separate creative component, it should be construed as an organic practice-based or practice-led research project with the translator-critic's

subjectivity central to it.⁵ There are several arguments in favour of this conceptual framework. Firstly, it alleviates the well-documented struggle of Translation Studies to attain universality and objectivity, which underpins Lance Hewson's critique of various models of translation criticism put forward in his seminal work *An Approach to Translation Criticism: Emma and Madame Bovary in Translation* (2011). Hewson positions his work against previous models of translation criticism by Kitty van Leuven-Zwart (1989; 1990), Cees Koster (2000; 2002) and Antoine Berman ([1995] 2009), among others, highlighting the agendas implicit in terms like "shifts" and "deviations", the problematic relationship between the proposed micro- and macro-elements of analysis, and the epistemological instability of the concept of the *tertium comparationis*.⁶ He concludes that "the interpretative position of the critic, which constitutes the foundation of the critical act, requires a theoretical clarification and exemplification" (Hewson 2011, 16). "Interpretative position" is a key term that can be applied not just to textual analysis but in the presentation of hard data too: ultimately, even bibliographic data arrives mediated by the agency of the researcher to some extent – for example, a metadata professional may have specialist skills or training allowing them to extract information from databases not readily available to laypersons.

A second reason for abandoning a rigid theory vs. practice dichotomy in favour of a flexible framework with degrees of abstraction is that while this does not obscure the fact that relying on the translator-critic's subjectivity is in some ways a *practical* necessity,⁷ it acknowledges that it is a *philosophical* necessity too: the kind of insight that comes from documenting how a translator-critic engages with research materials, whether a text to be translated or a translation to be analysed, cannot be gained by any other means.⁸ The practice-as-research model applied to Translation Studies recognises that knowledge is produced through all translation-related activities, including reading for translation, translating, and reading translations: in other words, it allows for the interpretative nature of translation and criticism to be embraced. Using this framework has practical implications for the presentation of my research too, in the form of reflexive expression – using the pronoun 'I', referring to 'my research' – and argumentation based on the chronology of the research process.⁹ All this suggests that a conception of my own

⁵ "[T]he researcher's relationship to the object of study (material or mental) is of central concern in practice-based methodologies" (Barrett and Bolt 2007, 6).

⁶ For more on the *tertium comparationis*, see footnote 141.

⁷ For example, conducting extensive reader surveys is laborious and time-consuming, and measuring readers' neurological responses is rarely feasible.

⁸ See Barrett 2007.

⁹ For example, I will talk about initial assumptions being confirmed or subverted, rather than simply presenting my final findings, and allow a new critical focus to emerge from each individual reading.

translation as “the practical component” of this project is reductive: literary analysis constitutes practice in relation to literary theory, and the activity of literary translation constitutes practice in relation to literary analysis. This is a crucial point because Translation Studies should be open to engage with interdisciplinary questions that underpin its own emergence as an (inter)discipline.

Disciplinary Considerations and Interdisciplinary Challenges

While all chapters of this thesis are concerned with the study of translated literature, there is some variation in the tools they use. Peter Connor discusses approaches to translated literature commonly found in Translation Studies today in his essay ‘Reading Literature in Translation’, where he identifies “two mostly separate lines of inquiry” which, he argues, are “rarely found conjoined, and indeed constitute something of a scission within translation studies today.” These two approaches can be described in terms of a series of dichotomies: focusing on “process” vs. “product”, “aesthetic/literary” vs. “cultural/sociological”, or “source-oriented” vs. “target-oriented”. The first one of these is concerned with ST-TT correspondence, including the notion of equivalence, “specific challenges (syntactic, lexical, formal, cultural, etc.) facing the translator”, and “the solutions he or she has opted for.” The second considers the target text in its literary polysystem,¹⁰ and examines “social and cultural forces – systems of patronage and distribution, target audience, cultural authority, etc.” These approaches consequently differ in their methodologies, too, with the first one drawing on “hermeneutics, literary criticism, and linguistics”, and the second on “sociological methods” (Connor 2014, 427). The approach taken in Chapter 1 could be described as cultural in a broad sense rather than aesthetic, that is, concentrating primarily on extra-textual, rather than intra-textual, factors. Its emphasis is on overarching analysis rather than detailed discussion of particular textual mechanics and translation strategies applied. The chapters that follow focus more closely on a selection of individual texts, taking both context and substance into consideration and drawing on Hewson and Lawrence Venuti’s conception of translation as an interpretive act as well as Antoine Berman’s model of productive criticism and Jean Boase-Beier’s notion of cognitive poetics, all explored below.

While Connor gives no explanation as to why these approaches are not routinely combined in literary studies of translations,¹¹ one possible reason is that traditional academic

¹⁰ For an explanation of the term ‘literary polysystem’, see Even-Zohar [1978] 2004.

¹¹ He does, however, mention a few counterexamples, such as Lawrence Venuti’s *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (1998), and Hewson 2011 (Connor 2014, 435).

structures and training in general do not favour integrated interdisciplinary approaches. For example, a literary scholar able to carry out stylistic textual analysis might not feel comfortable conducting surveys about reading habits, or have sufficient knowledge of social-scientific research methods, including quantitative vs. qualitative analysis. Given the practice-led nature of my research explained above, it seems appropriate to acknowledge at this point the limitations of my own training and expertise and the consequent challenges posed by this research project. My academic background is interdisciplinary with a strong focus on literature. Although I have studied various languages as well as linguistics at university level, I am not a linguist, but I am aware that linguistic concepts and terminology cannot be entirely avoided in the close reading of translations, particularly in the description of shifts. Therefore, out of both awareness of my own limitations and consideration for my readers, I have aimed to either limit linguistic references to terms that are commonly used in the arts and humanities or give working definitions for more complex concepts.

In ‘The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,’ James Holmes observes that “there is much valuable study and research being done in the discipline, and a need for much more to be done, that does not, strictly speaking, fall within the scope of theory formation” (Holmes [1972] 2004, 174). I would argue against a narrow understanding of theory here, because strict speaking can ossify analysis and close down interdisciplinary pathways. In that spirit, it is important to note here that the primary aim of this thesis is not to construct a new theoretical framework for the study of translated literature, but rather to apply a selection of existing theories and concepts to an understudied body of texts. In this sense, it is theoretically informed rather than theory-oriented: a contribution to what Holmes refers to as “*descriptive translation studies* (DTS) or *translation description* (TD)” as opposed to “*theoretical translation studies* (ThTS) or *translation theory* (TTh)” (176), although it may also, of course, pave the way for the formulation of “area-restricted” (“partial”) theories (178-9).¹² However, like the difference between theory and practice, the dividing line between the various branches of Translation Studies in Holmes’s model is more fluid than fixed. He asserts that

the relation is a dialectical one, with each of the three branches supplying materials for the other two, and making use of the findings which they in turn provide it.

Translation theory, for instance, cannot do without the solid, specific data yielded by

¹² My wording is careful here because I am aware that the sample size is quite small (three texts), and therefore any attempt at theory formulation must be tentative.

research in descriptive and applied translation studies, while on the other hand one cannot even begin to work in one of the other two fields without having at least an intuitive theoretical hypothesis as one's starting point. (183)

Venuti goes further in the deconstruction of the dichotomy of description and theory, arguing that “Holmes [...] seems not to have recognized that a conceptual basis is necessary even to determine which textual features, translation strategies, and pedagogical practices can be classified as data” (Venuti 2013, 9). He reiterates this point in the introduction to the 2017 reprint of *The Translator's Invisibility*, critiquing the supposedly value-neutral assumptions of descriptive translation studies: “modelling translation research on the natural sciences fails to recognize that conceptual parameters determine which hypotheses are formulated, and which empirical data are selected to verify or falsify them while excluding different hypotheses, and data that may actually question the research” (Venuti 2017, x). For Venuti, as for Hewson, the solution is to treat both translation and reading as interpretive acts as opposed to seeing the former as the preservation or carrying across of an essence inherent in the ST: “I saw the source text not only as coming to the translation process as always already interpreted, traced with a cultural discourse, but also as undergoing a further, perhaps divergent inscription when translated” (Venuti 2013, 4). Venuti thus moves away from “the instrumental model of Schleiermacher and Berman” (2013, 3; cf. Schleiermacher 1813 and Berman [1985] 1999).¹³ From a practical perspective, then, embracing the interpretive nature of analysis as well as acknowledging that description itself is analysis become essential. This is not to say that Berman's line of thinking must be discarded altogether, but that applying his model of productive criticism – a concept I will return to in a moment – must be accompanied by “a theoretically based self-consciousness” of the reading subject (Venuti 2013, 10). In other words, such an approach necessitates mindfulness of and commentary on the provenance of what is presented as data in the case studies – my own reading of the texts.

In light of all this, my research question in the case studies that follow must be broadly formulated: my goal is the same as Hewson's, that is, “to examine ways in which a literary text may be explored as a translation, not primarily to judge it, but to understand where the text stands in relation to its original by examining the interpretive potential that results

¹³ In some ways, Venuti sees this line of thinking as a continuation of earlier theories: “the assumption of the instrumental model in Schleiermacher and Berman sets up an unexpected resemblance to the rather different thinking of theorists like Jerome and Eugene Nida, whose respective notions of ‘sense-for-sense’ translation and ‘equivalent effect’ continue to be widely influential” (2013, 3).

from the translational choices that have been made” (Hewson 2011, 1). This theoretical starting point and the reading strategy described below will then allow more specific foci to emerge in each case, with the case studies arranged and presented “to sketch the trajectory of my thinking about translation[s]”, as Venuti does in his 2013 volume of essays *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice*. Of course, my reading, no matter how open and non-judgemental it aims to be, cannot be conducted in a conceptual void, and is structured by, for example, the idea of cognitive poetics. Boase-Beier, a leading figure in the study of stylistics and translation, posits that in the early 1980s Translation Studies became disillusioned with structuralism and generative linguistics and “tended to turn instead to considerations of the ethics of translation [...] or the various issues of identity, politics or culture,” and that scepticism about the value of the study of style in translation – often, it is perceived, at the expense of context and interpretation – persists. Boase-Beier argues that “cognitive poetics, with its concern with what [textual] features suggest about attitude, world view, or ideology, can give a much more nuanced view of stylistic choice and effect” (2014, 396). In other words, cognitive poetics is a useful way of relating minute textual details to wider considerations such as the meaning of a text and its effect on the reader. This movement from the textual particular to the textual universal informs the structure of all three case studies presented here, although it is most clearly illustrated in the discussion of Antal Szerb’s *Journey by Moonlight* in Chapter 4. For example, my argument put forward in this chapter that the repeated use of the object-subject-verb structure reflects the translator’s “romantic” attitude to the SL, achieves an archaising and literarising effect, and results in a shift in the text’s nostalgic mode, illustrates cognitive poetic thinking.

Although the case studies use a mix of methodologies, close reading is an integral component of them all. The commonly understood meaning of the term is “close textual analysis”, but in this practice-based project the actual, literal reading process – my reading of three novels in translation – serves as the foundation of the critical enquiry. Antoine Berman’s ([1995], 2009) “productive criticism” offers a strategy to reconcile the “study of target-oriented norms” with comparative analysis that all too often “catalog[ues] the ‘defects’ of the translations without analysing the causes of these defects” (Massardier-Kenney 2009, viii).¹⁴ The reading strategy proposed by Berman takes into account the

¹⁴ While contemporary Translation Studies has, generally speaking, moved beyond such arbitrary cataloguing of defects, and indeed has come to question the very definition of a ‘defect’ in translation as well as notions of ‘fidelity’ and ‘loss’, the concept of translation as a ‘necessary evil’ goes back centuries and is still widely held today. There are countless examples in the history of translation that embody such a view, including the term *les belles infidèles* (Hurtado Albir 1990, 231; von Flotow 2007, 94), which

reader's initial, inevitable 'distrust' of the translated text,¹⁵ and therefore recommends starting the critical process with "reading and rereading the translation(s), *while completely setting aside the original text*" (Berman [1995] 2009, 49; emphasis in original). The purpose of this is to arrive at a "composed, 'patient,' and above all non-judgmental reading" (Connor 2014, 429) that has moved beyond compulsive comparisons of source and target texts. In other words, it is during the rereading that judgement of the translated text as a literary work in its own right becomes possible. Such a reading is invaluable to the present study, which is interested in both translation shifts and the ways in which translated literature might be received by readers typically unaware of these shifts. It must be noted, however, that my reading of texts in English translation is *quasi-monolingual*: even with no previous direct encounter with the ST, moments of suspicion arise that are a consequence of my knowledge of Hungarian.

Provided that the reader-critic meets certain criteria, such as the ability to engage with TTs initially without previous knowledge of their sources – as most readers of fiction in fact do – as well as the language skills required for reading texts in the SL, Berman's method offers useful tools for the analysis of translated literature. While modern literary criticism is often sceptical about both the possibility and the relevance of investigating the author's subjectivity, treating a TT as the creative output of (at least) two individuals can be an effective way to understand translations, especially when such an approach is complemented by paratextual readings that investigate broader socio-cultural forces impacting the translation process. Connor cites the publication history of Howard M. Parshley's 1953 English translation of Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949) as an appropriate object of study using the socio-cultural approach. Correspondence between the translator and the publisher reveals that many problematic shifts, including the cutting of certain passages and the mistranslation of terminology, were due to the demands of the

addresses the idea that a translation is either beautiful or faithful, but never both. It is not uncommon to find contemporary literary reviews reflecting unexamined assumptions about what a translation should and should not do. A case in point is a 2008 review by Tom Lathrop of Edith Grossman's translation of *Don Quixote*: "the translation sometimes misses the boat, such as when Ginés de Pasamonte says that demanding that the galley slaves go to El Toboso is 'like asking pears from an elm tree' (172) with similar variants of the same expression on pp. 726 and 799. Wouldn't 'trying to get blood from a turnip' be the best equivalent? Similarly, when don Quijote speaks of Durandarte, he says that he was 'of pure flesh and pure bone' (606)—wouldn't 'pure flesh and blood' be better? And as for 'Zamora was not won in an hour' (922), wouldn't 'Rome was not built in a day' be more logical?" (Lathrop 2008, 239).

¹⁵ To what extent such distrust characterises the general reader is debatable. While concerns about the authenticity and 'fidelity' of translations are often voiced within academic circles, it remains to be seen whether such concerns are shared by the general readership, who may not even be aware that they are reading literature originally written in a different language. For example, in my teaching experience, undergraduate Comparative Literature students at the University of Glasgow need to be reminded from time to time that the words they are reading are those of the translator, not of the author, and that they should bear this in mind when commenting on textual aspects such as word choice.

publisher rather than Parshley's autonomous decisions (Connor 2014, 433).¹⁶ In this instance, focusing on the translator's career history and individual writing style would be less helpful than considering the general cultural climate and the specific external pressures under which the translation process took place.¹⁷ Chapters 2 to 4 will therefore explore translation processes reflecting particular translational approaches as well as make reference, where available and relevant, to publication histories and paratexts – reviews and interviews – to address the TT's position in English literary culture(s).

Benefits

The potential benefits of the present study are manifold. In practical terms, a better understanding of how texts are selected, translated, published, distributed, promoted and received may facilitate a revision of current funding policies and publication practices and contribute to the increased visibility and popularity of Hungarian literature abroad (including non-English-speaking countries). It may shed light on particular genres, periods and individual authors in the SC that deserve more exposure. With the potential of the Bibliography in particular to encourage further research, it may also be seen as a small step towards placing Hungarian Studies on a firmer footing in the UK, where it is currently a largely neglected area of Modern Languages. But there are less immediate, less practical advantages, too. Translated literature – and this includes literature translated from Hungarian – is crucial to the global exchange of ideas. Esther Allen recognises this when she says, “literary writers have long strived to free themselves from the constraints of national and linguistic boundaries and participate in a global conversation without political, linguistic, geographic or temporal limits” (Allen 2007b, 12). Hungarian literature has much to contribute to this global conversation, and increased knowledge of it may well result in greater appreciation. On the other hand, if the English-speaking world continues to ignore or neglect important areas of Hungarian literature, this will have implications not just for native English readers but for other foreign literary markets, too, which rely on English translations from smaller languages in translating these works into their own. Allen calls

¹⁶ The 150 letters exchanged between Parshley and the founder of the publishing house Alfred A. Knopf, its vice president, and its editor-in-chief are preserved in the Smith College Archives, and are discussed in essays by Anna Bogic (2010a, 2010b, 2011). These show that various imprints of the same publisher may have different priorities, and the approach of individual editors can also influence the translation process.

¹⁷ Another case in point is *Apám halálának nyara* (2006) by Yudit Kiss, translated into English by George Szirtes as *The Summer My Father Died* (2012), from which several passages deemed unsuitable for an English-speaking audience were removed at the publisher's request. For example, Kiss's letters to her sister were considered to have too much local reference to be of interest (Szirtes, 13 February 2015, pers. comm.). It would be a mistake to explain these changes in terms of the translator's choices.

English “the strongest linguistic currency”, and points out that “English’s indifference to translation is [...] a roadblock to global discourse that affects writers in every language” (Allen 2007b, 23). This thesis represents an effort to keep this global discourse alive.

Chapter 1. Hungarian Literature in Contemporary English Translation: An Overview

Studying Hungarian Literature in English

There are at least three possible reasons for the scarcity of criticism on English translations of Hungarian fiction, two of which concern the TC. The Anglophone world's general and often lamented lack of interest in translated literature (Venuti [1995] 2008, Allen 2007a, Donahaye 2012) is likely one of them. Venuti describes the literary culture of Britain and the United States as "aggressively monolingual" and "unreceptive to foreign literatures," which is reflected in both the low number of translations published in English and "the prevalence of fluent domestication" (Venuti [1995] 2008, 12). Esther Allen comments, "when it comes to literature the global language does indeed behave more like an invasive species than a lingua franca, resisting and supplanting whatever is not written in itself, speaking in the loudest of voices while failing to pay much attention at all to anything said in any other language" (2007b, 11). The concept of translation as an aggressive, invasive act can be part of a theoretical framework that discusses translation in general, but the above quotations exemplify a common critical viewpoint whereby translation into English in particular is described as an attempt to dominate foreign SCs.¹⁸ In more practical terms, Literature Across Frontiers' (LAF) 2012 report on the publishing of translated literature in the UK and Ireland confirms that "the amount of translation into English [...] is small compared to translation in other countries, and the status and perception of published translations is low" (Donahaye 2012, 5). The situation is similar in the United States, where the University of Rochester launched the 'Three Percent' website in 2007 to draw attention to the marginalised position of translated literature on the American market. According to the website, "only about 3% of all books published in the United States are works in translation," and "in terms of literary fiction and poetry, the number is actually closer to 0.7%."¹⁹ What is clear is that translated literature is less read than literature produced in English, and therefore less studied, in both the United Kingdom and the United States.

¹⁸ George Steiner discusses the idea of translation as inherently aggressive in *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*: "After trust comes aggression. The second move of the translator is incursive and extractive. The relevant analysis is that of Heidegger when he focuses our attention on understanding as an act, on the access, inherently appropriative and therefore violent [...]" (1998, 313).

¹⁹ The University of Rochester, 'Three Percent', accessed 15 September 2017, <https://www.rochester.edu/College/translation/threepercent/>. Allen offers similar statistics: "A 1999 study of translation by the National Endowment for the arts gathered its figures from reviews published in all the country's literary magazines, no matter how small. The NEA study found that of a total of 12,828 works of fiction and poetry published in the United States in 1999 (as reported by Bowker), only

All of the above is exacerbated by the unfortunate position of Hungarian language and culture in English-speaking countries, and the scarcity of universities where these subjects are taught. According to the website of the Hungarian Cultural Centre in London, there are currently three universities in the UK that offer Hungarian courses at undergraduate and/or Master's level. These are University College London, the University of Glasgow, and the University of Westminster.²⁰ No UK university is mentioned on the website of the International Association for Hungarian Studies (IAHS), which lists Hungarian university departments in Europe.²¹ Hungarian Studies, where taught, is often affected by administrative divisions, as the example of the University of Glasgow illustrates. Central and East European Studies is based in the School of Social and Political Sciences, which itself is part of the College of Social Sciences, and where the focus is on the history, particularly political history, of the region. Languages and literatures, including Polish, Russian and Czech, are taught in the School of Modern Languages and Cultures in the College of Arts, but Hungarian is not offered in this school, leaving little room for the study of Hungarian literature.

Hungarian Studies is in a similar situation in the United States, too. IAHS names four American universities where Hungarian courses are offered: Indiana University; Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey; the University of Kansas; and the University of California, Los Angeles.²² Columbia University also has a long-standing tradition of teaching Hungarian (Vardy 1975, 96), and Cleveland State University offers beginners' and intermediate language classes.²³ The American Hungarian Educators Association (ahea.net) promotes Hungarian culture through annual conferences and the e-journal *Hungarian Cultural Studies*. Steven Bela Vardy's essay titled 'Hungarian Studies at American and Canadian Universities', although dated, provides an interesting historical perspective on the subject, including an extensive bibliography. In Canada, the University of Toronto offers an impressive range of Hungarian courses, and the Hungarian Studies Association of Canada (HSAC) organises annual conferences to draw researchers together

297 were translations – that is, only a little over 2% of all fiction and poetry published, and far less than 1% of all books published" (2007b, 25).

²⁰ For further information, see 'Education', Balassi Institute Hungarian Cultural Centre London, accessed 29 May 2017, <http://www.london.balassintezet.hu/en/education/>.

²¹ 'Department Profiles in Europe', International Association for Hungarian Studies, accessed 29 May 2017, <http://hungarologia.net/en/research-2/research/>. IAHS also has no British board members, although the Anglophone world is represented by American and Canadian members.

²² 'Hungarian Studies Worldwide', International Association for Hungarian Studies, accessed 29 May 2017, <http://hungarologia.net/research-2/departments-of-hungarian/>.

²³ 'Hungarian Studies', Cleveland State University, accessed 29 May 2017, <https://www.csuohio.edu/class/world-languages/hungarian-studies>.

across the field.²⁴ HSAC is also affiliated with *Hungarian Studies Review*, an international, interdisciplinary journal launched in 1974.²⁵

Due to the relatively limited opportunities to study and research Hungarian in an institutional setting, it is unsurprising that thus far, in the context of Hungarian-to-English translation, there has been little effort in the TC to explore translated Hungarian literature. However, one would still expect SC institutions, that is, academia and various literary and cultural organisations, to invest in research on this under-studied area of literary production. Most European countries have state-funded organisations dedicated to promoting the country's literature abroad as well as keeping track of translations of it and analysing publication data (Donahaye 2012, 6).²⁶ The most likely explanation for the lack of critical literature from the Hungarian side is its academic discourse, which lags behind its Western counterpart(s) in terms of translation theory. As Kinga Klaudy and Ildikó Józán have pointed out, there is very little criticism available on translation *into* Hungarian (Klaudy 1996, 7; Józán 2009, 26), despite the fact that, in theory, even monolingual Hungarian scholars should be able to comment on TTs. Józán is the first to attempt a comprehensive account of Hungarian literary translation theory (here meaning theories of translation *into* Hungarian) from the fifteenth century to the present day, but she is forced to acknowledge the near impossibility of this task once she reaches the second half of the twentieth century:

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. (Józán 2009, 171)

It would seem that, despite the long history of literary translation into Hungarian, critical thinking about the nature of translation and translated literature is underdeveloped in this particular area of Hungarian scholarship. Józán argues that the development of literary and

²⁴ HSAC maintains an informative website at <http://www.hungarianstudies.org/>, accessed 29 May 2017.

²⁵ The journal is freely available through the National Széchényi Library's electronic periodicals archive at <http://epa.oszk.hu/html/vgi/boritolapuj.phtml?id=00010>, accessed 29 May 2017.

²⁶ A list of these can be found in a report prepared by Literature Across Frontiers and The Budapest Observatory, *Survey of Key National Organisations Supporting Literary Exchange and Translation in Europe* (December 2012), accessed 29 May 2017, <http://www.lit-across-frontiers.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Survey-of-Key-Organisations-Supporting-Literary-Exchange-in-Europe-2012.pdf>. The Hungarian Books and Translations Office fulfils some of the functions mentioned above, and maintains a database of translations from Hungarian at <http://www.hunlit.hu/forditasok>, last modified 29 April 2016, accessed 29 May 2017.

linguistic theory in Hungary in the 1960s has not encompassed translation theory and the reception of translated literature, and that the concept of translation as secondary and derivative – an idea widely challenged by Translation Studies in Western Europe and the United States – have remained dominant (2009, 179). It is hardly surprising, then, that in an academic milieu that lacks a well-established theoretical framework for the study of translation, and pays little attention to the process through which it receives translated texts, translation into foreign languages (both process and products) remains critically neglected.

The history of the academic discipline of Translation Studies in Hungary is brief. Translator and interpreter training began in the 1970s at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest (Klaudy 1996, 28), and a Translation Studies doctoral programme was launched at the same university in 2003. Two major international Translation Studies conferences took place in Hungary in the 1990s, the first in 1992 in Szombathely with Gideon Toury and Anthony Pym among the plenary speakers, and the second in 1996 in Budapest with the participation of Eugene Nida, Peter Newmark and Mary Snell-Hornby, among others. Literary translation is taught at various levels through optional modules within English Studies and Modern Languages courses. While at first glance all of the above would suggest that Translation Studies in Hungary is flourishing, in reality its development is fraught with difficulties. In a presentation given in Vienna in December 2008, Kinga Klaudy and Krisztina Károly discussed the obstacles to the effective teaching of Translation Studies at PhD level in Hungary.²⁷ They divided the problems addressed into three categories: professional, financial and existential. In the first category, “differing discourse and research traditions” were mentioned, which limit publishing opportunities for students, and in the third, the “decreasing number of applicants” due to the lack of employment prospects and the resulting low morale. The second category is self-explanatory and by no means unique to the subject, although Translation Studies, due to its inherently international character, is perhaps more strongly affected by problems of funding than other disciplines. On a more theoretical level, the very name of the subject is contentious: the generally accepted term is ‘fordítástudomány’ [translation scholarship], which does not convey the range of discourses that Translation Studies covers.²⁸

²⁷ The presentation slides, accessed on 17 April 2015 at http://www.elteft.hu/f/File/TSDoc_Vienna_Klaudy_Karoly.pdf, were no longer available at this address on 29 May 2017.

²⁸ ‘Fordítástanulmány’ (singular) or ‘fordítástanulmányok’ (plural) would be the most literal translation of the term ‘Translation Studies’, but these are by no means widespread: a Google search on 17 January

Fortunately, recent developments in the field of Translation Studies and in the way Hungarian literature is marketed abroad have facilitated the study of Hungarian fiction in English translation. As I have argued elsewhere, “the twenty-first century has brought about new changes in the way translated texts are produced, published and read, as well as shifts in the discussions surrounding translation” (Campbell and Szilágyi 2014, viii). Edwin Gentzler claimed that there had been a surge in publishing translated literature in the United States in a talk entitled ‘The Translation Turn in Contemporary American Fiction’, delivered at The Literature, Travel, Translation Symposium at the University of Warwick on 13 December 2011.²⁹ Gentzler suggested that, contrary to common perceptions, translated literature is in fact popular among American readers, and many small publishing houses aim to satisfy this interest. In the United Kingdom, the percentage of translated poetry, fiction and drama increased slightly in relation to all poetry, fiction and drama published, as well as in relation to all translations published, between 2000 and 2008 (see Donahaye 2012). Stork Press, a London-based publisher specialising in new writing from Central and Eastern Europe, was founded in 2012, although it has since gone out of business. Among their first publications was the debut novel of Hungarian author Noémi Szécsi, *The Finno-Ugrian Vampire* (2012, *Finnugor vámpír* [2002], trans. Peter Sherwood). In terms of the study of translation, reports published by both non-profit as well as for-profit organisations on the current state of translated literature across the globe are helpful tools for the critical examination of this area of publishing.³⁰ These reports are informative but also serve the important function of highlighting what is not yet known about translation. For example, LAF’s ‘Three Percent’ report reveals that the exact number of literary translations published in the UK each year is impossible to determine. While the lack of reliable statistics makes it difficult to study the culture and industry of literary translation in the UK, awareness of the problem is a first step towards addressing it. The findings of the ‘Three Percent’ report will be discussed in more detail in the ‘Data Collection’ section of this chapter.

The visibility of Hungarian literature abroad is also increasing: Hungarian Literature Online (HLO, www.hlo.hu), an English-language website dedicated to the promotion of

2014 yielded three results for the former and only one for the latter. ‘Tudomány’ can mean ‘scholarship’ or ‘science’ in Hungarian; for a discussion of the implications of the term ‘translation science’ see Holmes [1972] 2004, 175.

²⁹ A podcast of the event is available at <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/podcasts/culture/138-literature-travel-translation/>, accessed 29 May 2017.

³⁰ Such reports include *To Be Translated or Not to Be* by PEN International and Institut Ramon Llull (2007), the Wischenbart Diversity Reports (Wischenbart 2008; Kovač and Wischenbart 2009; 2010), and *Three Percent? Publishing Data and Statistics on Translated Literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland* by Literature Across Frontiers (Donahaye 2012).

Hungarian literature, was launched in April 2004 as a sister site to the popular Hungarian-language Litera.hu. HLO publishes news stories, reviews and English translations of Hungarian literature, and it is one of the most important literary resources for researchers and readers who do not speak Hungarian. Hungary also has an organisation responsible for promoting and funding Hungarian literature in translation, the Hungarian Books and Translations Office (HBTO). The office's main activities consist of subsidising translations, representing the country at international book fairs, publishing funding reports and promotional materials, and acting as a point of contact for publishers, writers, translators and other literary organisations. Furthermore, 2013 saw the completion of a dissertation on the role of HBTO entitled 'A magyar irodalom külföldi marketingje és Magyarország fordítástámogatási programja' [The marketing of Hungarian literature abroad and Hungary's translation funding programme] by HBTO project coordinator Ágnes Füle. This work offers a history of the office, discusses its funding policies, and briefly and succinctly assesses the state of Hungarian literature abroad.

About the Bibliography

Generic Considerations and Other Parameters

The present study focuses on the translation of long fiction only, that is, novels and novellas. The reasons for this are manifold; some are to do with the practicalities of writing a PhD thesis in a relatively short space of time, as well as the difficulties inherent in building bibliographies of other genres, poetry in particular.³¹ Other considerations are less prosaic. The novel's exceptional status in contemporary Western reading cultures is evidenced by the fact that publishing novel translations can be a lucrative business venture, whereas this is almost never true for poetry and drama translation, which typically require some form of funding to survive (Füle 2013, 18). The view that novels lend themselves to translation particularly well has been implied by various literary critics, such as Mikhail Bakhtin, who claimed that "only polyglossia fully frees consciousness from the tyranny of its own language" (Bakhtin 1992, 61). Venuti alludes to the special place the novel occupies in Anglophone literary cultures in *The Translator's Invisibility*, where he argues

³¹ For example, tracing the ST publication histories of individual poems contained in an English-language anthology can be an extremely time-consuming – although, no doubt, worthwhile – task. Such problems are rarely encountered in the study of novels in translation, although occasionally the exact relationship between source and target titles is not immediately clear from catalogue entries. A case in point is László Garaczi's *Lemur, Who Are You?*, translated by Ildikó Noémi Nagy and published in English in 2002, which contains the translations of two novels originally published separately, *Mintha élnél: egy lemur vallomásai 1.* (1995), and *Pompásan buszozunk! Egy lemur vallomásai 2.* (1998). I am grateful to Ágnes Orzós for the clarification.

that the influence of scientific and technological progress and advertising has made “realism the most prevalent form of narrative and free, prose-like verse the most prevalent form of poetry” ([1995] 2008, 5). While the relationship between realism, itself a complex term, and the novel is anything but straightforward, it is safe to say that the two have long been associated in the English imagination.³² Furthermore, the study of Hungarian fiction in translation constitutes a relatively new area of criticism, because novels only became popular subjects of translation after the 1989 change of regime in Hungary. Judit Mudriczki points out that, “perhaps due to the significant role some Hungarian authors living abroad played before 1989, the translation of Hungarian literature into English was more poetry-oriented” (2013, 69). George Szirtes also affirms poetry as the main literary export in Communist Hungary:

The works of these poets were all, to a large degree, though not equally, formed by the history of post-war Hungary. They were the kind of writers likely to be gathered together in Western anthologies of Eastern European poetry as political-literary exemplars, examples of what poetry could do under pressure: poetry as morality. (Szirtes 2011, 1616)

The political transformation towards the end of the twentieth century opened up new possibilities not just for vernacular literary production in Hungary, but also for its translation and marketing abroad. It is no coincidence that Ágnes Orzóy’s (2011) bibliography, ‘Two Decades of Hungarian Literature in English Translation, 1988-2010’, concentrates on the period immediately following the change of regime, and that novel titles abound in its first section called ‘Literature’, here meaning fiction, poetry and drama.³³ That novels in translation sell better than any other genre, including short fiction, is evidenced by the various translations of Péter Nádas’s *Szerelem* (1979). While the ST is regarded as a short story or a short novella, and was never published on its own, the foreign-language versions – English, Italian and German, among others – are all marketed as novels.

³² For a discussion of the novel’s changing ‘realist claim’ over the centuries and including the present day, see Warner 2011.

³³ Orzóy’s work has been immensely helpful in the writing of this chapter. It differs from my own bibliography not just in terms of time periods (although there is an overlap), but also in that Appendix A lists first translations only, whereas Orzóy’s ‘Two Decades’ contains reprints of translations first published as far back as 1894. Some titles are marked as reprints, as is the case with *Eyes like the Sea* by Mór Jókai, translated by R. Nisbet Bain, whose 2004 version was reprinted from the 1894 publication. However, not all entries contain this information: although it is not clear from Orzóy’s bibliography, Lajos Zilahy’s novels *Two Prisoners* (1999, *Két fogoly*), *The Dukays* (2001, *A Dukay család*) and *Century in Scarlet* (2001, *A bíbor évszázad*) are in fact reprints of translations first published in 1931, 1949 and 1965 respectively.

In practical terms, the decision to focus on novels has necessitated further decisions on the inclusion or exclusion of individual titles that resist easy categorisation. Non-fiction or ‘borderline’ genres such as essays, biographies, memoirs and histories have all been excluded, although certain works do not fit neatly into any of these categories. *The Last Window-Giraffe* (2008, *Az utolsó ablakzsiráf* [1998], trans. Tim Wilkinson) by Péter Zilahy is one such example: although it is listed as a novel on the website of a major Hungarian bookstore chain, Libri (www.libri.hu), it is not assigned to the 800 range of the Dewey Decimal Classification system in the British National Bibliography (BNB). ‘Window’ [ablak] and ‘giraffe’ [zsiráf] refer to the first and last entries in a popular Hungarian children’s dictionary, further referenced in the content of Zilahy’s work, which recounts the story of the author’s participation in a 1996 demonstration against Serbian President Slobodan Milošević in a playful dictionary format. While neither the historical theme nor the unusual format would automatically exclude this title, since historical novels and, for example, *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984) by Julian Barnes, are still regarded as fiction, preference has been given to the TL classification here. This is in order to give preference to the Anglophone reception of Hungarian literature and ensure consistency with the BNB, one of the most important resources on which the Bibliography is based.

All the works featured in the Bibliography either have been or could be published as a separate volume, so novellas have been included, but short stories have not. However, this distinction itself is problematic: András Pályi’s *Out of Oneself* (2005, trans. Imre Goldstein) contains two novellas, each about sixty pages long. The lack of a corresponding volume in the SL further complicates the situation, because the novellas, *Beyond* (*Túl*) and *At the End of the World* (*A világ végén*), were not published together in Hungarian but as part of separate collections. In this instance, the title has been listed because the way the publisher has marketed it and readers have responded to it suggests that it is read as a single, cohesive work.³⁴ Simplified (re)translations for education purposes, however, have been excluded, such as Lídia Pálvölgyi’s new translation (2012) of *School at the Frontier* (*Iskola a határon* [1959]) by Géza Ottlik, published by Akadémiai Kiadó as part of its Bluebird Reader’s Academy series. Children’s literature (story books, picture books) has not been included, although young-adult fiction has, because its readership significantly overlaps with that of highbrow novels.

³⁴ See Twisted Spoon’s website, accessed 15 April 2015, http://www.twistedspoon.com/out_of.html, and readers’ reviews on *Goodreads*, accessed 15 April 2015, <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2611782-out-of-oneself>.

All the translations featured in the Bibliography are of texts originally written in Hungarian.³⁵ This corresponds with the generally accepted definition of Hungarian literature along linguistic, rather than geo-political, lines. Literature written in Hungarian beyond the borders of Hungary has been traditionally considered part of the national corpus, and referred to as ‘transborder literature’: Volume IV of *A magyar irodalom története 1945-1975* [The history of Hungarian literature 1945-1975], a six-volume guide to Hungarian literature published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, is dedicated to this area.³⁶ Therefore, in deciding what constitutes Hungarian literature for the purposes of the present study, the nationality and place of residence of the ST author have been disregarded, as has the ST’s place of publication. Similarly, all the TTs in the Bibliography are in English, although not all of them have been published in English-speaking countries: *Out of Oneself*, for example, was published in Prague by the American-Czech publisher Twisted Spoon Press, and *Own Death*, a novel by Péter Nádas (2004, *Saját halál* [2004], trans. János Solomon), was published in Göttingen, Germany, by Steidl. The main reason why no distinction has been made between English translations based on their place of publication is that, thanks to the internet and international commercial networks, most of these texts can be relatively easily accessed almost anywhere in the world.³⁷

The Bibliography lists translations first published in or after 2000, regardless of when the ST was published. While such cut-off dates are always arbitrary to some extent, in this case there are some good reasons for focusing on the new millennium. LAF’s 2012 survey suggests a turning point in the literary translation cultures of Central and East Europe, where most national organisations dedicated to the promotion of translated literature were founded around the year 2000 (LAF and The Budapest Observatory 2012b, 5).³⁸ Similarly, some of the findings of the 2010 Wischenbart Diversity Report (WDS) attribute significance to the turn of the millennium, particularly where translation from Central and East European languages into German is concerned:

The flow of translations from Central and Southeast Europe into Germany and Austria, as the region’s closest neighbors, and German serving as the preeminent transfer language for the region developed strongly in the 1990s, peaking at the end of the decade in highly successful promotion of Hungarian

³⁵ This excludes Hungarian expatriates writing in English, like Magda Selmeçi.

³⁶ I use the term ‘transborder’ to refer to Hungarian literature written beyond the borders of Hungary, corresponding to the Hungarian term ‘határon túli.’

³⁷ Another reason is that it is often difficult to determine whether a text was published in the United Kingdom or the United States, and many titles are simultaneously published in the two countries under the same target title.

³⁸ In Hungary’s case the date is slightly earlier: the Hungarian Book Foundation, the predecessor of today’s Hungarian Books and Translations Office, was set up in 1992 (Füle 2013, 4).

and Polish literary works as guests of honor at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1999 and 2000, respectively, but thereafter declining. (Kovač and Wischenbart 2010, 14)

This decline in interest has been noted elsewhere, although mostly anecdotally rather than as an interpretation of hard data. As Orzóy (2015) half-jokingly writes, “Hungary is not as sexy as it was in the 1980s and 90s – the frisson of 1956, the communist era and the years of the regime change is gone, and we have become just another country with initial high hopes but, ultimately, low performance.” While such assertions are not backed up by available data about translations into English – Orzóy herself lists 80 novels in her earlier (2010) bibliography, 24 of which were published or reprinted between 1988-2000, and 56 between 2000-2009 – it is shared by many, including Szirtes, who has formulated it more prosaically: “since 1989, Hungarian is a lot less interesting” (13 February 2015, pers. comm.).

The Bibliography does not list reprints of either pre- or post-2000 publications but includes all new English (re)translations published in or after 2000. A few of these texts exist in pre-2000 English versions: *Kaddis a meg nem született gyermekért* (1990) by Imre Kertész was translated in 1997 as *Kaddish for a Child Not Born* by Christopher and Katharina Wilson, and another translation appeared in 2004 under the title *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* by Tim Wilkinson. *The Door* (*Az ajtó* [1987]) by Magda Szabó also exists in two different English versions, one by Stefan Draughon (1994) and another by Len Rix (2005). In both these cases, only the later translation features in the Bibliography. The rationale behind this selection criterion is that contemporary translations (not necessarily of contemporary texts) reveal more about how titles are selected for translation in the twenty-first century than earlier ones. While a study of all Hungarian-to-English novel translations published or reprinted after 2000 would certainly be interesting, the implications of publishing a new translation, both economic and cultural, are different from those of reprinting older ones.³⁹

Data Collection

The first step towards a deeper understanding of Hungarian fiction in contemporary English translation is establishing what gets translated. As no comprehensive database of translations from Hungarian exists,⁴⁰ the lack of available data is keenly felt in this area,

³⁹ Publishing a new title is more expensive and involves a higher risk than reprinting a book that has already been well received.

⁴⁰ HBTO’s database mentioned in footnote 26 is incomplete.

although, as recent reports published by both non-profit and for-profit organisations observe, this problem characterises all literature translated into English to some extent. Allen laments “the very difficulty of finding reliable figures about what is translated into and out of the [English] language”, which is all the more frustrating because elsewhere in Europe “many governments have agencies that keep close tabs on the number of their books translated into their own languages” (2007b, 24). LAF’s ‘Three Percent’ report points out that as far as translations published in the United Kingdom and Ireland are concerned, “there has been no hard data to analyse and no simple means of accessing such data;” even though “in almost all other European countries such data is routinely gathered and analysed” (Donahaye 2012, 6). Interestingly, while this report suggests that this is a uniquely British, rather than European, problem, the 2010 Wischenbart Diversity Report on literary translation in current European book markets asserts that “even the most general statistical data on the number of translated works are missing for most parts of Europe, and those data that are available, such as the UNESCO *Index Translationum*, are difficult to compare to the book market” (Kovač and Wischenbart 2010, 7). LAF also surveyed 22 national literary organisations in Europe in 2012, and the results revealed that only two out of these 22 bodies listed “research and collection of information and data” among their functions (LAF and The Budapest Observatory 2012b, 9). This points to the lack of data about the publication of translations being a widespread phenomenon.

The biggest difficulty in assembling the Bibliography was the location of appropriate sources and the reconciliation of contradicting metadata. Since there is no single database that keeps track of Hungarian literature translated into English, the information has been drawn from a variety of sources: English-language library catalogues and databases, publishers’ websites, commercial websites, and existing bibliographies of Hungarian fiction in translation. One of the main sources for the Bibliography has been the BNB, an online database maintained by the British Library, one of the UK’s six legal deposit libraries. The BNB records printed publications since 1950 and electronic ones since 2003, and is “the single most comprehensive listing of UK titles” (Lowery 2015). While in theory the BNB includes all titles published or distributed in the UK since the above dates,⁴¹ in practice there are various problems with both how the data is collected and how it can be accessed. LAF’s ‘Three Percent’ report analyses in great detail the data trail from

⁴¹ For a list of exclusions see ‘The British National Bibliography Exclusions’, accessed 15 April 2015, <http://www.bl.uk/bibliographic/exclude.html>.

UK publishers to databases including the BNB, and highlights the difficulties of researching translated literature published in the UK.

The LAF report identifies five pieces of information that should be provided about translated works in comprehensive databases like the BNB: identification of the book as a translation, translator name, ST publication details (publisher, place, date), SL, and ST title (Donahaye 2012, 9).⁴² It then points out that, because often some of this data is missing from both the physical book and the marketing material for it, databases relying on data from publishers directly (through the deposited copies) or indirectly (through metadata service providers) will inevitably be incomplete. The situation is further complicated by for-profit metadata service provider Nielsen BookData offering publishers a free service with a limited number of data fields and an enriched paid-for service: “As the majority of publishers who publish translations in the UK and Ireland are smaller independent presses, they are less likely to subscribe to the paid-for service that Nielsen offers, and must therefore take the initiative in providing translation detail within the limitations of the fields in the free data submission form” (Donahaye 2012, 14).

There are further difficulties with accessing the data available. As Jasmine Donahaye observes,

if the data provided were complete and comprehensive, and maintained in its detail through each level and intermediary, the BNB [would still not be] wholly accessible to or usable by the general researcher without specialist help and time-consuming data acquisition and collation. Details on author or translator, on publisher or genre, on numeric trends and genre trends need to be easily accessed, compiled and assessed in order to acquire a full picture of the state of translation in any given year, or to develop policy. At present such research requires specialist knowledge of Dewey numbers, and multiple, arduous hours of compilation to combine the data and export it in useable form for analysis of detail or statistics. (Donahaye 2012, 16)

It is clear from all of the above that a comprehensive bibliography of Hungarian novels translated into English after 2000 cannot be based solely on the BNB, not just because it does not record English-language publications not distributed in the UK, but because of problems of accessibility and missing metadata. Nevertheless, the BNB has been essential for cross-checking information from other sources, including commercial websites like Amazon.co.uk. Other catalogues used include that of the Library of Congress, the legal

⁴² The report uses the terms ‘original publication’, ‘original language’ and ‘original title’, which are ideologically more problematic.

deposit library of the United States and the largest library in the world.⁴³ Although it does not retain every item deposited, its catalogue is still an invaluable resource for researching translations. Hungary's largest legal deposit library is the National Széchényi Library, whose catalogue has been used for information on the Hungarian STs.

Further resources consulted include UNESCO's *Index Translationum*, a 'World Bibliography of Translation' maintained with the help of various national libraries. It receives data on titles published in the UK and Ireland from the BNB, which, as explained above, is itself incomplete. Furthermore, due to technical difficulties there have been significant delays in the data flow between the two databases (Donahaye 2012, 11-12).⁴⁴ *Index Translationum* is still a helpful database with a user-friendly interface that enables searching for translations between language pairs in a given period. Data drawn from *Index Translationum* on Hungarian-to-English translations published in or after the year 2000 served as the basis of the Bibliography, which was then expanded with the help of other resources.

The websites of large retailers, such as Amazon.co.uk, Amazon.com and AbeBooks, are good starting points for gathering data on contemporary translations in particular. The Amazon pages, although they do not offer an option to search specifically for translations, are able to provide some initial pointers through author pages and recommendations. Unlike the BNB, commercial websites often list reprints (depending on their availability), which helps to assess a title's popularity in the TC. Metadata obtained from these websites is almost always incomplete and occasionally inaccurate,⁴⁵ and therefore needed to be checked against more reliable databases.

Although there is no comprehensive bibliography of contemporary Hungarian-to English literary translations up to the present day, Orzóy's 'Two Decades of Hungarian Literature in English Translation' covers a range of literary and non-literary genres between 1988 and 2010. This informative bibliography conveniently lists source and target titles, translator names, ST titles, and even ISBNs. Orzóy worked largely from the internet and through personal communication with Hungarian translators. The bibliography was published in 2011 by the Hungarian Book Foundation (Magyar Könyv Alapítvány), HBTO's

⁴³ Library of Congress, 'Fascinating Facts', accessed 15 April 2015, <http://www.loc.gov/about/fascinating-facts/>.

⁴⁴ I am not aware of reports of similar difficulties with the data feed from other libraries.

⁴⁵ For example, Bernard Adams's 2005 English translation of *The Noszty Boy's Affair with Mari Tóth* (*A Noszty fiú esete Tóth Marival* [1908]) by Kálmán Mikszáth is listed as a German translation on Amazon.co.uk.

predecessor. HBTO publishes lists of subsidised titles each year on its website, www.booksandtranslations.hu. These are useful not only because they record data on contemporary translations, but also because they enable a comparative analysis of subsidised and non-subsidised publications. A bibliography of HBTO-funded English translations of Hungarian novels published between 2000 and 2016 can be found in Appendix B. HBTO is the single biggest funding body for the translation of Hungarian literature and, as the bibliographies show, it has subsidised one in five novels published in English translation in this time period.⁴⁶

What the Data Reveals

As Allen (2007b, 12) and Füle (2013, 18) have pointed out, English translations are both rare and desirable from an author's perspective, as they open up a vast new market as well as possibilities of translation into further languages. Because English-language publishers are particularly risk-averse, authors are more likely to be translated if they have had English translations published previously or if they have been successful in other foreign languages (Füle 2013, 19). One would therefore expect to see established and internationally renowned novelists with multiple titles in the Bibliography. Füle identifies Péter Nádas, László Krasznahorkai, Noémi Szécsi and György Dragomán as the writers currently the most successful on the English literary scene (2013, 18), who are also among the most popular authors internationally (17). It is not, of course, possible to measure a writer's success on the basis of bibliographical data alone – in fact, it is difficult to measure it at all⁴⁷ – but the number of titles translated and the prestige of the publisher(s) are still important, if only partial, indicators of a writer's position in a foreign market.

Considering the relatively low number of translations into English, the data presents a surprisingly varied picture of authors, translators and publishing houses. The Bibliography currently contains 85 TTs, two of which have been published in the UK and the USA

⁴⁶ Although it does not directly subsidise publications, the Hungarian Translators' House (Magyar Fordítóház) offers residencies with stipends and training workshops for translators (see www.forditohaz.hu). The Publishing Hungary Programme, launched in 2012 by The Balassi Institute, is also aimed at promoting Hungarian fiction and non-fiction abroad, but its scope (particularly in relation to HBTO's) is unclear, and its website (<http://www.publishinghungary.balassiintezet.hu/hu/publishing-hungary-program/>) no longer live on 9 September 2017.

⁴⁷ "The simplest way to measure a book's success internationally or in a given country would be through sales figures, but publishers are reluctant to release these unless the book is exceptionally successful. Reprints and paperback editions also imply success. Apart from these, the best indicators are indirect: how often the author is invited to literary festivals and readings, what the critical reception is like, where the book is positioned in publishers' catalogues, and what awards it has won" (Füle 2013, 20).

under different titles.⁴⁸ Among the most widely translated authors are, as might be expected, Nobel laureate Imre Kertész (7 titles); Antal Szerb (6 TT titles); Sándor Márai (5 titles), whose international success took off in the late 1990s with the Italian translation of *Embers* (*A gyertyák csonkig égnek* [1942]) (Füle 2013, 17); and László Krasznahorkai (4 titles), the first Hungarian to have won the Man Booker International Prize in 2015. Bearing in mind that the Bibliography only lists post-2000 translations, and is therefore not an accurate reflection of a writer's overall popularity with English readerships, we might add to the above list of mainstream, canonical writers Péter Esterházy. While only two of his works have been recently translated into English, the various reprints of several of his novels attest to his lasting popularity.⁴⁹ Similarly, Péter Nádas only has three new titles, but these should be seen as a continuation of his literary career established in the Anglophone world in the late 1990s with *A Book of Memories* (1997, *Emlékiratok könyve* [1986]) and *The End of a Family Story* (1998, *Egy családregény vége* [1977]). These writers can be said to dominate the Hungarian-to-English literary scene not just in terms of the number of works translated, but also in terms of reviews and general awareness.⁵⁰ Their English translations have been published by major publishing houses in the UK and the US, such as A. A. Knopf, Vintage, Harvill Secker, Melville House, New Directions, Penguin, and Pushkin Press. All of this suggests that they constitute what could be seen as the core of contemporary Hungarian-to-English fiction translation.⁵¹

Moving away from the centre, a number of popular contemporary Hungarian writers are represented by single titles, including Ferenc Barnás, Attila Bartis, Ádám Bodor, György Dragomán, András Pályi, and Noémi Szécsi. While most of them have won several prestigious Hungarian national awards, their names are unlikely to be recognised by the English reader. Alongside recent works, some older classics have been published in

⁴⁸ Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2004; London: Harvill, 2005), *Fateless* (London: Vintage, 2006), trans. Tim Wilkinson. Sándor Márai, *Casanova in Bolzano* (New York, NY: A. A. Knopf, 2004), UK edition *Conversations in Bolzano* (London: Penguin, 2004), trans. George Szirtes.

⁴⁹ For example, *The Glance of Countess Hahn-Hahn* (*Hahn-Hahn grófnő pillantása*), first published in English in 1994, was republished in 2006, and *Celestial Harmonies* [*Harmonia caelestis*] was published in a new edition, and reprinted within two months, the year after its first English publication in 2004.

⁵⁰ While 'general awareness' is difficult to define, let alone measure, Wikipedia entries are useful indicators of a writer's current standing because of the online encyclopaedia's frequently updated user-generated content. All of the Hungarian authors mentioned in this paragraph have fairly substantial English-language entries. In contrast, entries about writers who are relatively well-established in the SC but have only been recently introduced into the English market, such as Ádám Bodor and Noémi Szécsi, are marked as 'stubs', that is, articles "deemed too short to provide encyclopedic coverage of a subject" ('Stub', *Wikipedia*, last modified 7 May 2017, accessed 2 June 2017, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Stub>). As of 2 June 2017, of the 43 novelists represented, 22 have full Wikipedia entries, nine have stubs, and 12 have no corresponding article.

⁵¹ The considerations mentioned above – number of translated titles, major publishers, substantial Wikipedia entries – along with literary awards, reviews, and accessibility through libraries and retailers all point towards the existence of a mainstream within contemporary Hungarian-to-English fiction translation.

English for the first time in the new millennium. These include novels that will be familiar from high school to all Hungarian readers, like the works of Kálmán Mikszáth and Zsigmond Móricz, but also some prestigious but perhaps less widely read STs from the early-to-mid 20th century, such as Miklós Bánffy's *Transylvanian Trilogy* (*Erdélyi történet I-III*) and various novels by Gyula Krúdy.⁵² In terms of publisher prestige, electronic-only, print-on-demand and self-publishing occupy the far end of the spectrum, and there are a number of examples of these in the Bibliography. For instance, Gabriel Timar, a retired Professor of Civil Engineering Technology living in Canada, has self-translated two of his novels written in Hungarian (Timár, 29 April 2013, pers. comm.),⁵³ and published one in 2007 with XOXO Publishing, a small Canadian company that has since disappeared from sight,⁵⁴ and the other in 2009 with e-publisher Wings ePress.

Two authors' publication histories set them apart from the rest. One of them is Magda Szabó, one of the three female novelists represented, who is among Hungary's greatest contemporary writers. She was extremely prolific and won many prestigious awards, including the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary in 2007, the year of her death. As such, her oeuvre in English should be comparable to those of László Krasznahorkai and Péter Esterházy, and in some respects, it is. Three of her novels have been published since 2000, two by Harvill Secker in George Szirtes's translation. The third, *Katalin Street* (2005, *Katalin utca* [1969]), was published print-on-demand by CCC Press/Kids 4 Kids Press, who do not currently have an online presence.⁵⁵ Given her position in Hungarian literary culture, and the fact she is one of the most widely translated Hungarian novelists, it comes as a surprise that so little of her work should be available in English. She is referred to as a "fairly recent discover[y] of English critics" in her obituary in *The Guardian* (Gömöri 2007), which is remarkable given that two of her novels appeared in English translation shortly after their first publication in the 1960s.⁵⁶ As mentioned above, she is one of the very few Hungarian authors whose work has been

⁵² It is difficult to say whether Bánffy and Krúdy are indeed less widely read in the SC than Mikszáth and Móricz without conducting reader surveys, but the latter are part of the national curriculum, and therefore even less avid readers are exposed to their work.

⁵³ It is worth noting that the English version of *A fegyverek árnyékában*, titled *Aura of War*, "has the same content as the Hungarian original, but is not a word-for-word translation" by the author-translator's own admission (email from Gabriel Timar, 29 April 2013, my translation).

⁵⁴ As the Internet Archive shows, their website has not been live since 2013. Accessed 15 April 2015, <http://web.archive.org/web/20120501000000/http://www.xoxopublishing.com>.

⁵⁵ Len Rix's new translation was published in 2017 by New York Review Books.

⁵⁶ These are *The Fawn* (1963, *Az őz* [1959], trans. Kathleen Szász, London: Cape), and *Night of the Pig-Killing* (1966, *Disznótor* [1960] trans. Kathleen Szász, New York: A. A. Knopf). Budapest-based Corvina also published one of Szabó's children's novels in English as early as 1963, *Tell Sally* (*Mondják meg Zsófikának* [1958], trans. Ursula McLean).

retranslated into English and – even more of a privilege – made into an English-language film in 2012 (*The Door*, dir. István Szabó). Because of these recent successes, one would expect a flurry of novel translations, but this is perhaps only a matter of time. George Szirtes' translation titled *Iza's Ballad* (2014, *Pilátus* [1963]) received state funding through HBTO.

Another remarkable revelation of the bibliography is the new-found interest in the work of Jenő Rejtő, or P. Howard.⁵⁷ Rejtő represents a markedly different genre from most of the literature listed: pulp fiction. The biggest Hungarian publisher of English-language books, Corvina, brought out two new translations in the 2000s, and has republished both *The Blonde Hurricane* (2003, *A szőke ciklon* [1939], trans. István Farkas) and *Quarantine in the Grand Hotel* (2005, *Vesztegzár a Grand Hotelben* [1939], trans. István Farkas) several times since. 2014 saw the publication of two further novels, one by the small American publisher Etalon Press, and another by CreateSpace, an on-demand publishing company owned by Amazon.⁵⁸ Most recently, Corvina also published a new translation of *The Fourteen Carat Car* (*A tizennégy karátos autó* [1940], trans. Márk Baczoni).⁵⁹ This brings the total number of new translations of Rejtő to five, placing him near the top in numerical terms. However, his position is clearly different from that of mainstream writers like Antal Szerb or László Krasznahorkai, both with four ST titles. In addition to Rejtő's published works, a manuscript translation of *Az elsikkasztott pénztáros* (1938) [The embezzled bank teller] is available online, although it has no ISBN or date and does not appear in any library catalogue, including that of the National Széchényi Library.⁶⁰ This quasi-publication illustrates this writer's liminal position perfectly: peripheral in terms of publication platforms (with the exception of Corvina), but held in high enough esteem by an enthusiastic fandom to be translated by non-professionals and self-published.⁶¹

⁵⁷ For simplicity's sake I will refer to the author throughout this thesis by his real name, Jenő Rejtő, even though he originally published under the pseudonyms P. Howard and Gibson Lavery.

⁵⁸ As of 1 January 2014, Rejtő's original works are in the public domain, which may explain the timing of these translations.

⁵⁹ A different translation had previously been published by Corvina in 1967 as *The 14-Carat Roadster*, trans. Patrícia Bózsó.

⁶⁰ The document was added to the National Library's electronic collection in 2003 and removed in 2012 (*Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár*, accessed 15 April 2015, <http://mek.oszk.hu/01000/01063/cimkes.html>). As of 15 April 2015, a PDF of the translation is available at <ftp://ontologia.hu/Language/Hungarian/Crawl/MEK/mek.oszk.hu/01000/01063/01063.pdf>. The title page states that the work was translated by Enikő Bene and revised by Paul Speed. Because the manuscript does not appear to have gone through the publication process in the classical sense, and its discoverability is limited, I have not considered it as published for the purposes of this study and it does not appear in the Bibliography.

⁶¹ Looking at online reader reviews is one of the simplest ways of gauging TC interest in a novel, so as a quick experiment, I have compared user ratings of *Quarantine in the Grand Hotel* by Jenő Rejtő and

Probing the Canon-in-translation

As pointed out earlier, a small number of renowned authors seem to dominate the market of contemporary Hungarian-to-English fiction translation. The 2010 WDS, which analysed data about published European translations of living European authors “to develop a more structured, data-based understanding of the patterns and driving forces of the translation markets across Europe”, confirmed “as a trend with great momentum [...] that the few authors and books at the very top, in terms of sales and recognition, expand their share of the overall reading markets with remarkable vigor” (Kovač and Wischenbart 2010, 3). Kovač and Wischenbart introduce an international literary elite here, in terms of both prestige and number of works translated, which includes Nobel laureates and other well-known names who regularly win awards and appear at festivals and in the media (2010, 17).⁶²

A small number of twentieth-century writers – award-winning and popular at home and abroad, taken up by major publishers, and well-reviewed – featuring most prominently in the Bibliography is therefore in line with the findings of the 2010 WDS. As its authors write, “at first glance, the universe of literature looks exactly as one would expect, as it mirrors a pantheon of big names who are all familiar to the cultured reader” (Kovač and Wischenbart 2010, 17). However, they also note that “not every author who is highly regarded – and translated – in some languages will automatically be picked up for further dissemination” (18). Given the relatively marginal position of translated fiction in English markets, Hungarian authors who do become successful in English deserve further scrutiny. Those writers who break into the highly competitive English-language market can be seen

Celestial Harmonies by Péter Esterházy on Goodreads. These two English translations were published a year and a half apart (2005 and 2004). Different as they might be in terms of their content and style, the user ratings do not differ as much as expected. As of 14 April 2015, *Quarantine* has an average rating of 4.27/5 based on 211 ratings, and 9 reviews. *Celestial Harmonies* has an average rating of 3.67 based on 272 ratings, and 30 reviews. It would seem that the distinction between highbrow literature and pulp fiction does not necessarily translate neatly into a centre-periphery dichotomy in terms of popularity or readability.

⁶² It is worth noting that of the nine authors mentioned by name among the European elite of literary translation, two are Hungarian (Imre Kertész and Péter Esterházy). This may be statistically less significant than the hard data the report presents, but suggests a remarkable level of success considering the size of Hungary and the number of Hungarian speakers. An online survey conducted in 2015 as part of the AHRC-funded project ‘Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations’ also demonstrates a considerable level of interest in Hungarian literature among UK readers. The last question read, “Tell us in your own words about a good experience of reading translated literature. How did you discover the book? What did you enjoy most about it? Were you then inspired to read other authors from that country or area of the world?” Of the 187 self-selecting readers who responded to this question, which required a narrative answer, six mentioned Hungarian, five mentioned Finnish, and one mentioned Polish and Czech. Of smaller European countries, Hungary finished second, after Scandinavia as a group, for this question. I am grateful to Dr Rajendra Chitnis for sharing these data. For the full report, see Chitnis et al. 2017.

as occupying a hyper-central position within the larger landscape of literary translation. For reasons explained above, even the core of Hungarian literature in English translation is underexplored in terms of, for example, comparative textual analysis. The task of the chapters that follows is, therefore, to investigate this canon-in-translation of Hungarian fiction translated into English in the twenty-first century through three case studies.⁶³

Despite the apparent success of Hungarian literature in contemporary translation compared to other European languages, there is a sense that the world market is missing out on important works, evidenced by comments such as Josh Cook's: "Unless American readers do some digging, it might be hard to come up with a list of great Hungarian writers—or any Hungarian writers, for that matter. English translations are sparse" (2016, 189). Cook, who is contextualising his analysis of László Krasznahorkai's fiction in English translation, goes on to mention "Péter Nádas's gargantuan, intricately structured *Parallel Stories*" (189) as an example of the few Hungarian masterpieces that have been made available to English readerships. Krasznahorkai and Nádas are two of the four most prominent Hungarian writers on the English market identified by Ágnes Füle (2013, 18). Both have been awarded many prestigious national and international prizes, with *Parallel Stories* longlisted for the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize in 2012 and *Seiobo There Below* winning the Best Translated Book Award for fiction in 2014. They also represent, as will be demonstrated through the case studies, strikingly different strands of prose writing. While W. G. Sebald famously wrote that "the universality of Krasznahorkai's vision rivals that of Gogol's *Dead Souls* and far surpasses all the lesser concerns of contemporary writing" (quoted in Krasznahorkai and Szirtes 2013), Nádas can easily be seen as an example of Hungary's "stronger tendency to foster [...] 'local heroes'" (Kovač and Wischenbart 2010, 45). Such differences notwithstanding, these two novelists unquestionably fall into the category of "the most translated authors" as defined in the 2010 WDS, a group made up of "branded authors [...] with a lasting and paramount presence in usually all of Europe's markets for at least two or, more frequently, even several decades" (Kovač and Wischenbart 2010, 21). Krasznahorkai and Nádas's prominence is further evidenced by their consideration for the Nobel Prize in 2015 (HVG 2015a). Analysis of the English translations of two of their major works will shed light on,

⁶³ 'Canon-in-translation' is distinct from 'translated canon', the latter referring to the translation of already established canonical texts, and the former describing texts that became (newly) canonised through the process of translation. There is, of course, a lot of overlap between these two groups: SC success is almost a prerequisite for a title to be picked up for translation. In temporal terms in particular, however, there can be discrepancies: for example, a number of early-twentieth-century Hungarian writers were translated into English near the end of the century, decades after becoming established in their SC (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016).

among other things, the relationship between their respective thematic focuses and their shared interest in linguistic experimentation.

Similarly to the questions of what gets translated and why, what makes a work or an author successful in translation is a complex matter. While discussing the factors that lead to foreign-language publication, Füle cites good translators or “literary ambassadors”, active publishers or literary agents, previous international success, and national funding bodies (2013, 19). She also points out that the success of a given publication is difficult to measure (20), all the more so because, although the Hungarian Books and Translations Office plays an important role in getting works published, it does not have the capacity or the means to track their success (Jeney et al. 2016). The 2010 WDS’s description of the operating mechanism of mainstream literary translation also emphasises the importance of extra-textual factors, such as marketing: “represented by powerful international literary agents, these authors have every new book instantly translated into dozens of languages immediately, if they are not, in a recently evolving habit, newly released simultaneously in several languages, with carefully orchestrated international promotion campaigns” (Kovač and Wischenbart 2010, 17). This suggests that without a powerful commercial machinery, literary quality itself is often insufficient for achieving fame. It is worth noting here that translator prestige, as distinct from translator skill, is also conducive to commercial success: László Kúnos, the head of Corvina Publishing House in Hungary, explained in an interview that Szirtes taking up translation into English transformed the industry because of the level of trust foreign publishers had in his work (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016).

Although it is easier for contemporary authors and texts to meet most of the above criteria, it is also possible, if less common, for older works to achieve success in translation. The third text that will be examined here, Antal Szerb’s *Journey by Moonlight*, is an example of a non-contemporary work in contemporary English translation. In terms of the number of novels published in English since 2000, Szerb (1901-1945) is head to head with Krasznahorkai (four ST titles each) and ahead of Nádas (three titles). The recent English publication of Szerb’s *Reflections in the Library: Selected Literary Essays 1926-1944* (2016, selected STs, trans. Peter Sherwood) is a hopeful sign that academia is waking up to his merits as a literary critic, and augurs well for greater scholarly interest in his fiction.⁶⁴ My contribution to this anticipated discovery is an exploration of his best-known

⁶⁴ A one-day symposium was held at the University of London on 8 June 2017 to celebrate the launch of the volume.

Hungarian novel in Len Rix's 2001 English translation, with special attention to the challenges stemming from the time gap between the ST and TT publication dates.

Areas for Further Study

While established texts are clearly significant both in terms of status and popularity or number of readers, the Bibliography shows considerable variation in genres, authors, publishers, publication methods and discernible TC success, providing a rich ground for further study. For example, the conspicuous underrepresentation of women calls for further socio-cultural investigation as well as critical attention to the few women writers whose work has been translated into English. According to the Bibliography, only four of the 44 recently translated fiction writers are female, that is, around 9%. While gender inequality in literary spheres is itself nothing new,⁶⁵ this figure is extremely low, even taking into consideration the critical neglect of female Hungarian writers in their SC (Menyhért 2013). Regarding translators, the situation is slightly more balanced, with 10 out of 28, that is, just over a third of translators being female.⁶⁶ The complex reasons behind the near-absence of female voices in translation are certainly worth investigating, and further questions relating to translation and gender in a Hungarian literary context are also raised: are translated texts recognisable as having been written or translated by women? Is there such a thing as female language in translation? What are the ethical implications and practical consequences of men translating women's writings, and of women translating men's? To what extent are representations of gender culturally embedded and linguistically coded? These questions could be answered by looking at female novelists' and translators' works, and by considering novels to which questions of gender are central, such as Noémi Szécsi's *Finno-Ugrian Vampire* (2012, *Finnugor vámpír* [2002], trans. Peter Sherwood). Szécsi's Hungarian novel problematises gender through its androgynous narrator, which in turn poses a challenge for translation into English where pronouns are gendered, creating an explicit homoerotic reading. The implications of a male translator mediating the voice of a female author could be discussed through the oeuvre of Magda Szabó, the only female novelist who has had multiple works recently translated into English by men.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ A 2013 article in *The Guardian* confirms that "male authors and reviewers continue to take a disproportionate slice of the literary pie" (Flood 2013).

⁶⁶ These figures do not take into consideration how prolific individual translators are.

⁶⁷ The reverse also happens: the translator of Krasznahorkai's *Seiobo There Below* is Otilie Mulzet, and most of Péter Esterházy's works have been translated by Judith Sollosy, including *Celestial Harmonies* (2010, *Harmonia caelestis* [2000]) and *Not Art: A Novel* (2010, *Semmi művészet* [2008]).

The Bibliography also reveals that most foreign (non-Hungarian) publishers who publish Hungarian fiction in English translation concentrate on contemporary fiction with some notable exceptions, such as Antal Szerb's works published by Pushkin Press.⁶⁸ Hungarian publisher Corvina, on the other hand, specialises in translations of older works that are unlikely to be selected for publication abroad. As Kúnos put it, "if we don't publish these, they will never be made into books" (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016). The time gap and the slim chance of such titles being picked up by foreign publishers distinguishes Corvina's output in fundamental ways from that of foreign publishing houses, and raises questions about various stages of the process between title selection and dissemination. These questions are worth examining because, regardless of how and to whom these texts are marketed, ultimately these translations belong to the collective body of literature translated from Hungarian that is at least in theory available to an English-speaking readership.⁶⁹ Foreign publishers taking on older Hungarian material is also noteworthy. Since returning to classics is, generally speaking, economically less viable than marketing living authors, when earlier material finds its way into the current English-language book market, the same process of selection to dissemination deserves scholarly attention. As well as the timing of these translations being of socio-cultural interest, the strategies translators use to render dated language in English would be a worthwhile subject of stylistic enquiry.

Expanding our notion of translation to include what Roman Jakobson termed 'intersemiotic' (2004, 114) opens up further avenues of interdisciplinary research. Hungarian novels that have been adapted into films accessible to an English-speaking audience are the result of multiple translation processes – language to language, text to screen – and their study could therefore draw on literary criticism, Translation Studies and Adaptation Studies. The transmodality of this kind of artistic production is worthy of literary-aesthetic consideration, and it also has socio-cultural relevance: if a case can be made for film adaptations being an effective tool for bringing marginalised texts into mainstream culture, then films like *Fateless* (2005) and *The Door* (2012), based on novels by Imre Kertész and Magda Szabó, respectively, may have the power to make more

⁶⁸ *Journey by Moonlight* (2001, *Utas és holdvilág* [1937]), *The Pendragon Legend* (2006, *A Pendragon-legenda* [1934]), *Oliver VII* (2007, *VII. Olivér* [1941]), and *The Queen's Necklace* (2009, *A királyné nyaklánc* [1943]), all translated by Len Rix.

⁶⁹ Corvina no longer actively disseminates its publications abroad; in fact, some of them are intended as samples with the hope that a foreign publisher will eventually pick them up, and their copyright pages include the clause "for sale in Hungary only" (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016).

accessible a body of literature commonly considered niche and therefore peripheral in terms of popularity.

There are many further ways of meaningfully categorising and thematising contemporary Hungarian-to English fiction translations. For example, the works of Jewish-Hungarian writers Imre Kertész, Antal Szerb and György Konrád, or translated Hungarian novels that investigate Jewish identity, could be discussed together. Placing the oeuvres of translators, rather than primary authors, at the centre of scholarly investigation could produce valuable contributions to the study of style in translation. Retranslations can reveal much about the changing literary landscape of a target culture, so the different versions of Magda Szabó's *The Door* and Imre Kertész's *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* could be examined in great comparative detail. Of course, literary texts do not fall neatly into separate categories, however carefully they might be formulated. But overlapping categories are not necessarily undesirable. Rather, they affirm the existence of a literary system of translations with a multiplicity of textual intersections.⁷⁰ Further, properly contextualised case studies could highlight various cross-category connections between texts and deepen our understanding of the intertextual network of contemporary Hungarian-to-English translations.

⁷⁰ As Mark Shuttleworth has noted, the Formalist notion of system is “a multi-layered structure of elements which relate to and interact with each other,” which conceives of “not only individual works, but also [of] whole literary genres and traditions – and ultimately even the entire social order – as systems (or even ‘systems of systems’) in their own right” (1998, 176).

Chapter 2. László Krasznahorkai's *Seiobo There Below*

Krasznahorkai and His Translators

In the fiercely competitive world of literary translation into English, it is rare for a writer in any language to win three major awards in consecutive years. László Krasznahorkai's recent international recognition, which has included two Best Translated Book Awards, awarded by the University of Rochester, in 2013 and 2014, and culminated in winning the Man Booker International Prize in 2015, places him unequivocally among the most successful Hungarian – if not European – writers in translation. Apart from the sheer number of literary awards, there are many aspects of Krasznahorkai's oeuvre that make it unique: while it is unusual for an author to win the same prize twice in succession, it is even less common to accomplish this with the help of two different translators.

Krasznahorkai, who holds his translators in high esteem and takes every opportunity to acknowledge them in interviews,⁷¹ has had four of his novels rendered into English by two award-winning translators: George Szirtes, who translated *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1998, *Az ellenállás melankóliája* [1989]), *War and War* (2006, *Háború és háború* [1999]), and *Satantango* (2012, *Sátántangó* [1985]); and Otilie Mulzet, who translated *Seiobo There Below* (2013, *Seiobo járt odalent* [2008]).^{72,73} Furthermore, as well as being a prominent literary figure, Krasznahorkai has achieved considerable renown through his long-standing collaboration with director Béla Tarr (b. 1955). Krasznahorkai has co-written the screenplay for five of Tarr's films, including the notorious seven-hour-long adaptation of *Satantango* (1994),⁷⁴ which, according to one reviewer, "remains one of the most gruelling and rewarding items on any cinephile's bucket list" (Martin 2015).

⁷¹ "In my interpretation, the real author of a translation is the translator. At book launches and spoken word events I often hold up a copy of the original work, which was written by me, then the new work created through translation, which was written by them, Heike Flemming, Adan Kovacsics, Szirtes. For a new work to be born, it is not enough for the translator to find equivalences" (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012). "The translated work is the work of the translator, not the author. [...] I have marvellous translators" (Krasznahorkai and Szirtes 2013).

⁷² The most recent translations from Krasznahorkai are *Destruction and Sorrow beneath the Heavens* (2016, *Rombolás és bánat az ég alatt* [2004], trans. Otilie Mulzet), which is classified and marketed in English as non-fiction, and a collection of shorter fictional pieces under the title *The Last Wolf* (2016, *Az utolsó farkas* [2009], 'Herman, a vadőr', 'A mesterségnek vége' [1986]).

⁷³ As Szirtes explained, "I had intimated to New Directions that I would not be doing any more. So they asked the excellent Otilie / Rachel, then I changed my mind (at least for one more book). But that worked out well since I am responsible for his Hungarian-themed apocalyptic books and Otilie for the more mystical ones after his interest in Japan. So that is a clear divide" (13 April 2016, pers. comm.).

⁷⁴ Krasznahorkai refers to these as "films by Tarr and Krasznahorkai" rather than adaptations: "The relationship between cinema and literature is much easier, since the films that are based on my works are not adaptations. They are films by Tarr and Krasznahorkai. *Satantango*, even though it follows the text of my novel faithfully, is an autonomous work, an autonomous film. I don't believe in adaptations,

As László Kúnos has pointed out, unlike most contemporary Hungarian writers, who typically enter international circulation through translation into German first, Krasznahorkai's road to fame began with Szirtes's English version of *The Melancholy of Resistance* (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016). Although the earliest translation of Krasznahorkai's work is into German, and he began to be recognised in Germany long before he rose to prominence in the Anglophone world, the case of *The Melancholy of Resistance* illustrates how the translator is crucial to the success (and sometimes the failure) of a book in a number of ways. Kúnos recalls joint attempts by himself and London-based publisher Quartet to convince Szirtes to take on the work. The first Krasznahorkai translation was the only one to be published in Hungary and the UK simultaneously: as Kúnos puts it, "from then on there was no need for us;" the Anglophone world had discovered the author, and his career in English had begun (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016). When the decision was made to have *Satantango* translated into English, it was the author himself who insisted on Szirtes: "I could tell that my texts would be able to speak in the language he used" (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012). The enormity of the task resulted in a strange time lag of translation, where Krasznahorkai's first Hungarian novel, published in 1985, appeared in English as late as 2012.⁷⁵

The story of Otilie Mulzet becoming one of Krasznahorkai's translators is also revealing. As she recounts in an interview for *The Paris Review*,

We corresponded, and I mentioned I'd be willing to take on the translation of *Seiobo*. Krasznahorkai was understandably a little hesitant at first, given the extraordinary complexity of the work. But I translated *Animalinside*, which was met with a very positive reception and went into a second printing fairly quickly. The following spring, I sent a sample chapter of *Seiobo* to New Directions. (Mulzet and Stivers 2014)⁷⁶

What is striking here is the initiative required of the translator in the first instance, and the importance of the author's trust. Neither of these is an uncommon requirement: *Journey by Moonlight* was also picked up by translator Len Rix before any expression of interest by a

[the term] is meaningless in relation to an already existing literary work; a misunderstanding" (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012).

⁷⁵ "Szirtes started translating the book ten years ago, but stalled after the first few chapters. He tried to continue several times but was unable to move on. The book stood on his shelf like an exclamation mark, and as the years went by, the insoluble task became more and more depressing. It weighed on his flat like a depressing burden. As Szirtes put it, 'the room dented at the scene of the crime.' Years went by, and the untranslated novel became more and more depressing. It all seemed hopeless when he suddenly took a deep breath, got his head down once more, and completed an excellent translation" (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012).

⁷⁶ New Directions is a high-profile publishing house founded in 1936 and headquartered in New York. It publishes both American and international literature with an emphasis on experimental writing.

publisher (Rix and Tóth 2010, 43), and even George Szirtes, most of whose prose translations have been commissioned, agreed to translate *The Summer My Father Died* (2012, *Apám halálának nyara* [2006]) following a request from its author, Yudit Kiss (Szirtes, 13 February 2013, pers. comm.). While there are differences between how Krasznahorkai's two translators came to be involved – Szirtes, already a renowned poet in his own right, was approached by the publisher and chosen by the author; Mulzet volunteered for the job – it is clear that in the small world of Hungarian-to-English literary translation, personal relationships matter a great deal.⁷⁷

This personal aspect also extends to the translation process with Krasznahorkai, who likes to be actively involved and considers it “important for these professional relationships to turn into friendships” (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012).⁷⁸ This kind of authorial participation must not be underestimated, as it can actively shape the TT.⁷⁹ Since recent international recognition has brought both Krasznahorkai and his translators into the spotlight, their artistic production is relatively well-documented in interviews.⁸⁰ Consequently, *Seiobo There Below* is an excellent reminder of the TT being more than the sum of the translator's decisions, and invites a critical reading that highlights the author's and the translator's sometimes conflicting approaches and their joint participation in meaning-making. As we will see, there exists a stylistic clash between the language of the TT and the stated aim of Krasznahorkai's language. However, while such major shifts are certainly worth highlighting, I will argue that their result in the case of *Seiobo* is the enrichment of the text's interpretative potential.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Szirtes and Kúnos became close friends before Szirtes started translating Hungarian fiction (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016).

⁷⁸ As Krasznahorkai explains, “I am in a lucky position, because I have a personal relationship with all my translators. I talk to them a lot; many questions arise in the course of the work that need clarification. When the German translation [of *Satantango*] was being prepared, the publisher put us together in a hotel, and we remained locked up in there until we had discussed every question and problem that had arisen” (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012). Mulzet has also commented on the close professional relationship with the author: “Krasznahorkai and I communicate a lot by email. If I have any questions at all, he is absolutely wonderful about answering them” (Mulzet and Stivers 2014).

⁷⁹ As Mulzet explains, “there are times when [Krasznahorkai] issues explicit instructions. For example, he didn't want any of the foreign words in *Seiobo* italicized, and I could understand why, because they're even more disorientating when they're seemingly innocently integrated into the text” (Mulzet and Stivers 2014).

⁸⁰ I approached Mulzet for an interview on 2 July 2015 but unfortunately she was unavailable.

⁸¹ In Hewson's view, this is the task of translation criticism: it “attempts to set out the interpretative potential of a translation seen in the light of an established interpretative framework whose origin lies in the source text” (Hewson 2011, 6).

Negotiating the Language: *Seiobo*'s Exaggerated Experimentalism

Much like literary prizes, positive reviews are important signs (and, often, requirements) of success. *Seiobo There Below* has received unanimous praise, with reviewers calling it Krasznahorkai's "latest and most luminous book" (Martin 2015), "brighter and more open than some of his earlier works [...] utterly natural and utterly relevant" (Farago 2013), "a meditation with nuances of literary testament, unlike any other in modern literature" (Avramut [n.d.]), and "one of the great acts of world literature" (Esposito 2013). Yet, perhaps contrary to what some of these comments would suggest, *Seiobo* is an extremely challenging read. Although often referred to as a novel, it resembles in many ways a collection of short stories with disparate settings and characters. The chapters are numbered according to the Fibonacci sequence, a subtle reference to the structured patterns that emerge from Krasznahorkai's painstakingly, almost scientifically accurate descriptions of the world. Like the golden spiral ubiquitous in nature, the novel reveals the ordered beauty of the universe inhabited by man. Krasznahorkai clearly drew inspiration from his travels to the Far East, particularly the many months spent in Japan in 2000 and 2005; hence *Seiobo* of the title, the Japanese name of an ancient goddess associated with immortality, also known as the Queen Mother (Cahill 1995). While the text seems at first disjointed, even disorientating, there are overarching themes that connect the fragments into a whole: it can be read as a creative survey of pan-European art history, and an exploration of the human and the transient versus the divine and the eternal, art versus craft, and original versus copy. These themes take on a particular significance when studied in the context of literary translation. Along with the instantly recognisable language the author has developed and the translators have striven to recreate, the meta-artistic commentary – "Krasznahorkai's observations on the *process* of observation itself" (Mulzet and Stivers 2014) – constitute the most remarkable aspects of this translated text, and it is these that will be explored here in greater detail.

Stylistic Considerations

Any reader of Krasznahorkai, whether in Hungarian or in English, is bound to immediately register the peculiarities of the writing style that has become the author's trademark and is constantly commented on in interviews and reviews. Szirtes has described it as a "slow lava flow of narrative, a vast black river of type" (quoted in Krasznahorkai and Szirtes 2013), while interviewers refer to it, slightly more prosaically, as "Krasznahorkai's long

sentences.” In fact, the unique language is such an integral part of Krasznahorkai’s work that instead of being called “Krasznahorkai’s language”, it is sometimes referred to as “Krasznahorkai language” or “Krasznahorkai-language,” as if it was indeed a code of its own.⁸² It is characterised by sentences that can extend over as many as 14 pages, often with no punctuation other than commas. The following quotation from a 2013 interview in English with Krasznahorkai both highlights the importance of this stylistic device to the author and exemplifies it:

When you want to convince somebody about something, if you speak in a way, in that way, you use only long sentences, almost always just one sentence, because you didn’t need this dot, this is not natural if you speak in this way, if I want to convince you about something, that the world is such and such, then it’s a natural process for the sentences to become always longer and longer because I needed less and less the dot, this artificial border between sentences, because I didn’t use, I don’t use, now, for example, I don’t use dots, I use only pauses, and these are commas, this is not my usual tone because I try, especially in English because of my poor English, to make pauses, and that’s why my tone goes a little bit down, but it is not a dot, what I found there, it is a comma [...] (Krasznahorkai and Cardenas 2013)

The style illustrated above poses some serious challenges for the English translator. Not only is the English language regarded by many as unsuited to long sentences; even if one disregards assumptions about the ability or willingness of English-language readerships to process complex syntactic structures, there remains the problem of making long Hungarian sentences grammatical in English. Hungarian and English differ greatly in how they express grammatical relationships, the former relying much more heavily on suffixation and the latter on relatively fixed constituent order.⁸³ Hungarian also has no grammatical gender in its nouns system and no gender-distinguishing personal pronouns, and in many contexts the subject need not be explicitly stated, so it is possible to encode a degree of semantic ambiguity that can be difficult to reproduce in English.

These challenges must be taken on because sentence length in Krasznahorkai’s work is non-negotiable: its function is to serve naturalness. Responding to a question about his iconic writing style, he once said, “my so-called long sentences don’t come from any idea or personal theory, but from the spoken language” (Krasznahorkai and Castillo 2012). This

⁸² “For me, there is one thing that makes a good translation different: whether it is able to authentically preserve the expression of my writing, and create the German, English, Spanish, Japanese, Hebrew, or French **Krasznahorkai-language**” (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012, my emphasis).

⁸³ This is a complex area of linguistics. Hungarian is sometimes described as a topic-prominent language, meaning that the topic-comment structure of a sentence determines the order of the constituents. See Kenesei et al. 1998, 172.

simple statement carries enormous significance for a translator willing to collaborate with the author on the translation, as Mulzet has done with Krasznahorkai. In another interview, Krasznahorkai further emphasises the real-life aspect of his style:

The sentence structures that I use result [...] from an internal process. I generally spend my days alone, I don't talk much; but when I do, then I talk a lot and continuously, never ending a sentence. Many people are like that. You may notice that the majority of people talk the way I write. (Krasznahorkai and Dömötör 2012)

It is worth noting here that the author talks about speech rather than thought, which distinguishes his discourse from stream-of-consciousness modernism. Speech is more orderly than thought; Krasznahorkai's language is elaborate and precise, and relatively easy to process despite the scarcity of full stops.

The translator of *Seiobo There Below* is, of course, aware of fundamental grammatical differences, and formulates these rather poetically when she talks about “the unbelievable elasticity of Hungarian—it's like a rubber band. It can expand and expand, until you think, Well [*sic*], this rubber band is going to break at any moment now, or it can shrink into just a few sparse words, where all the most important parts are left out and you just have to know” (Mulzet and Stivers 2014). Furthermore, Mulzet articulates her mission statement clearly: “I don't want blood, sweat, and tears from Krasznahorkai's English readers, but the absolute otherness of a language like Hungarian immediately puts us in a position of discomfort. Can the translation preserve this discomfort—troubling, weird, yet in the end perhaps edifying and salutary?” (Mulzet and Stivers 2014) Mulzet's manifesto chimes with the reference to the “sheer linguistic exuberance” of Hungarian fiction made by one reader in the AHRC survey mentioned earlier.⁸⁴ Mulzet goes against a long and often-commented-on tradition of changing the text to fit TC expectations when she says “I want the reader of the English version to feel the same shock I felt when reading the original. I don't want to make it easy or acceptable, or to over-domesticate the text” (Mulzet and Stivers 2014).⁸⁵

As far as avoiding ease and acceptability goes, Mulzet has certainly been successful, as evidenced by phrases in reviews such as “pyrexia prose” (Sturgeon [n.d.]), “unparagraphed prose of endlessly revolving, implacable sentences” (Avramut [n.d.]), “tireless, tiring”

⁸⁴ See footnote 62.

⁸⁵ Anecdotal evidence suggests that she defied editorial expectations, too, because New Directions initially wanted to have the TT sentences shortened.

(Wood 2011), “seemingly endless sentences that challenge the limits of patience and, sometimes, comprehensibility” (Martin 2015), and “a dynamic paralysis in which the mind turns over and over to no obvious effect” (Wood 2011). This seems to be in line with the translator’s desire to “preserve as much of the complexity as I could—there are parts of the book, even in the original, where the reader can feel like he or she is lost in a maze, and I wanted to keep that” (Mulzet and Stivers 2014). As a bilingual reader coming to the English text without a previous encounter with the Hungarian, I too felt the unease and disorientation that Mulzet claims to have aimed for. However, whether the production of this writing style in English qualifies as ‘preservation,’ as Mulzet suggests, or even ‘recreation,’ is a different, and no less important, question. The following examples of and comments on some translation shifts may serve to highlight differences between the SL and the TL reading experience as well as ST and TT meanings.

Style and Meaning in the TT

It could be argued that making the TT, put simply, ‘difficult to read’ is not only justifiable from a moral perspective (Venuti 2008 and Berman [1995] 2009), but especially appropriate in the case of a novel like *Seiobo*, where the linguistic and the thematic complexities are inseparable. The potential for an interpretation of the text as self-reflective is, after all, present in the source as well as the translation. Art, *Seiobo* tells us, is laborious, time-consuming, and requiring effort, attention, skill, and will, but is ultimately worth it for the glimpse of the divine that is to be gained. The infamous long sentences, the often repetitive language and the lack of a clear connection between the individual stories make the novel a challenging read, quite apart from the emotional difficulties involved in engaging with the apocalyptic vision Krasznahorkai is known for. Reading the book is perhaps meant to reflect the creation of a work of art like this book. The text is about art as work or craft, but reading itself is work, and the same way as viewing and appreciating art can be difficult but rewarding, reading requires commitment and an effort. The following passage from the story of the restoration of a Buddha statue is an illustration of both the novel’s thematic concern with commitment and effort, and of the translator’s meticulous reproduction of it in the English language:

[...] na, és persze tudják, hogy így figyeli őket, most is, úgyhogy valóban nagy az óvatosság, még akkor, ha ez az óvatosság fennállna nélküle is, hisz különleges lelkiismerettel megáldott restaurátorok ők itt mind, az ország legjelentősebb régiszobor-restaurátorműhelyének valamennyi, különleges képességű és különleges képzettségű dolgozója, aki tudja azt magától is, mi az, hogy egy porszem a Heianból. (59)

[...] and so, well, of course they know that he observes them in this spirit too, so the level of caution is particularly high, a caution that is sustained even in his absence, for all of the restorers in this workshop are blessed with a special quality of conscience, all are from the nation's most important workshops for restoration of ancient statuary, craftsmen with specific talents and specific training, who know full well, without any prompting, the significance of a speck of Heian dust. (58-9)

These quotations reveal something of the grammatical complexity the translator of *Seiobo* had to grapple with over 426 pages of text. They also exemplify the frequent need to expand the source because of the properties of English: “régiszobor-restaurátorműhelyének” is one word that becomes “from the [...] workshops for restoration of ancient statuary.” These are the instances Mulzet refers to when she says, “you have to struggle to make sure the sentences don’t seem too jam-packed with information, and yet [...] you have to test the boundaries of English, with [...] having to have all your indicators in place” (Mulzet and Stivers 2014). A bilingual reader might object to having “a caution that is sustained even in his absence” instead of “although this level of attentiveness is sustained even in his absence,” where the latter, with its explicit acknowledgement of a contradiction, could be argued to follow more logically from the context: the restorers know that they are being watched and therefore work to a high standard, but they work to the same high standard anyway, so it is not, after all, something to do with being watched. This distinction is fairly minor, and unlikely to influence the readability of the English in any significant way outside the artificial setting of comparative bilingual reading for scholarly purposes.

Other instances, however, suggest a level of TT complication that may distract from the content. Consider the following:

A legmélyebb gyűlöletből indult, és oda is érkezett, nagyon lentről és nagyon messziről, olyan lentről és olyan messziről, hogy akkor még, a kezdet kezdetén, halvány fogalma sem lehetett, hová jut el ezen az úton [...] (159)

He set off from the deepest of hatreds and arrived, from deep below, and from far away, from so far below and so far away—that then, at the beginning of the beginning, he had not the slightest idea where he was heading [...] (165)

This is the opening of Chapter 21, titled ‘A Murderer Is Born’, where a new character-focaliser is introduced (the story about him is told from his perspective but not in his voice). Here, it would seem, the Hungarian sentence has not been disentangled and reproduced in a similarly readable way to the ST. The Hungarian is not particularly

complex syntactically, although the non-standard punctuation (commas instead of full stops and semicolons) becomes noticeable as the sentence continues for another eight pages. There is also some philosophical depth to the start of this long sentence, ‘messziről’ meaning ‘from far away’ both in a geographical and a metaphorical sense. This instance marks a semantic shift, with “from below” in the TT conveying a sense of geographical, rather than mental, space. The English word ‘low’ can convey the meaning of being “in a poor, miserable, or unfortunate condition; not flourishing or advanced” as well as “without morals; despicable, ignoble; base,” both of which would be appropriate interpretations here.⁸⁶ However, “from below” is a less obvious reference to a metaphorical place of dejection or immorality, and can potentially cause confusion for the English reader. Furthermore, the verb ‘arrived’ is missing an adjunct in the English translation. ‘Arrived’ can stand on its own in English, as in the sentence *My friends just arrived*, but the Hungarian here translates as “arrived back there” or “arrived at the same place,” meaning the character-narrator returned to a metaphorical place of hatred. This is a significant shift not only because the meaning of the sentence changes, but also because there is a sense in English that an adjunct will follow the verb eventually, which inhibits the cognitive processing of the rest of the sentence.

When Mulzet talks about “English, with its rigid subject-verb-object structure” and trying to get it “to do something it’s not really meant to do,” she is resisting the temptation to perform what Antoine Berman called “ethnocentric translation”, which “generally under the guise of transmissibility [...] carries out a systematic negation of the strangeness of the foreign work” (Berman [1995] 2009, 5). The difficulty of this resistance lies in determining what properties of the SL are interesting or relevant enough to be preserved or reproduced. Mulzet’s explanation of her approach shows a commendable internal consistency given that she articulates the desired foreignness of the TT explicitly in terms of “the same shock I felt when reading the original,” but it is worth noting here that Mulzet is not a native speaker of Hungarian: she learned the language as an adult to connect with her Hungarian heritage (Mulzet and Stivers 2014). The question this raises, then, is how representative this ‘shock’ is of the general ST reader response. We have already seen an example of how markedness in the ST is carried across to the target with the author instructing the translator not to italicise foreign words in the English text. This is, of course, foreignness in relation to the ST, not a property of the ST that seems foreign only from an English perspective. The question of constituent order is more problematic in this

⁸⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “low,” accessed 28 May 2017, www.oed.com.

sense, because the two languages differ greatly not only in what is grammatical or possible, but also in what qualifies as grammatical but non-standard, unusual, or strange (marked).⁸⁷

The following sentence fragments occur later in Chapter 21:

mert abban nem lehetett biztos, mint ahogy nem is volt az, hogy vajon a labirintusszerűen elhelyezett termek másik irányában, a végén, ahol most jár, van-e kijárat, (172)

because one could not be certain, as he was not, that there was, at the opposite end of the series of rooms arranged like a labyrinth, an exit; (178)

The natural spoken-word-like flow of the Hungarian is compromised in the English not only because of inaccuracy (“as he was not” would read better as “as indeed he was not”), but also because of the attempt to partially retain the Hungarian word order here. This fits with Mulzet’s stated aim of making English “do something it’s not really meant to do,” but conflicts not only with the idea of reproducing the SC reading experience and creating equivalent effect, but also with the author’s stated aim. Mulzet’s insistence on long sentences in English must be applauded; however, in the vernacular Krasznahorkai language there is no sense of deliberate difficulty: the word order in the example above is entirely natural in Hungarian, whereas in English the word ‘exit’ would normally come after the verb (“that there was an exit”) rather than at the end of the sentence with additional information inserted between the verb and the subject.

All this suggests that the reading of the TT requires greater intellectual and cognitive effort from the English reader than the ST does of the Hungarian reader, and that this is at least partially at odds with what the author claims to have intended.⁸⁸ This observation is not meant to serve as a basis for quality assessment: it could be argued, for example, that a more challenging TL register enhances the meta-textual aspect of the novel explained above (reading and art as work). My last examples illustrating shifts in meaning and style are from Chapter 8, ‘Up on the Acropolis,’ which describes the unnamed focaliser’s visit to the monument on a hot summer day:

⁸⁷ Basil Hatim defines linguistic markedness as “opting for a form or meaning that is less ‘preferred’ or less ‘normal’ than a comparable form or meaning potentially available in a comparable context” (Hatim 2004, 230).

⁸⁸ As illustrated by the quotations in footnotes 74 and 79, for Krasznahorkai, the TT is a separate literary work from the source, but he also aims to retain some control over the text in the TL.

Magán a Vouliszon ment be a Plaka negyedbe, és még tényleg csak néhány száz turista bolyongott vele szemben, mellette, vagy hagyta le éppen, úgyhogy akár még szerencsésnek is mondhatta magát, (132)

He went along the Voulis into the district of Plaka, and in reality only a few hundred tourists were wandering towards him, beside him, or leaving him behind, so he could have even described himself as lucky; (135)⁸⁹

The English sentence is grammatical and similarly easy to parse to the Hungarian. The small semantic difference between “in reality” and “tényleg”, the latter of which translates into English as ‘really’ or ‘indeed’, is unlikely to be registered by the general reader. Nevertheless, with the former implying contradiction and the latter confirmation of something previously said, this translational decision does have an impact on the internal logical consistency of the chapter. In an exchange with locals prior to the visit, the character is advised to set out immediately on foot:

elmagyarázták neki az utat, azt javasolván, hogy bár meleg van, de inkább gyalog menjen, mert részben még nincs olyan sok turista, részben meg akkor a Plakából is lát valamit, a régi városrészből (130-1)

they were explaining the route to him, advising him that although it was hot, he should go on foot, because there wouldn’t be so many tourists, and then, he could see something of the Plaka, the old city (134)

My literal translation is as follows:

they explained the route to him, advising him that although it was hot, he should go on foot because, for one thing, there wouldn’t be many tourists yet, and for another, he would then be able to see something of the Plaka, the old part of the city

This passage exemplifies how small semantic differences greatly affect the readability of the TT: the missing word ‘yet’ obscures the meaning of the advice to set off immediately, since later on it would get busier. The verbal prefix ‘el-’ in “elmagyarázták” denotes a completed, as opposed to a continuous, action; this is usually translated into English using the simple past rather than the past continuous. But the greatest obstacle to understanding the passage quoted earlier is the rendition of “indeed” as “in reality,” which implies a conflict with the locals’ advice where there is none.

⁸⁹ I am grateful to a translator, who will remain anonymous, for drawing my attention to this passage.

A comparative close reading of the two full texts side by side would confirm whether these examples are isolated cases – in other words, whether the markedness of the English text is comparable to the markedness of the Hungarian. However, I would argue that findings from my TT-guided reading, especially when considered alongside reviewers’ assessments, are sufficient evidence of the different reading experiences the two audiences are likely to have, difficult as this difference would be to quantify without more extended close reading and reader surveys. Such reviewers’ comments as feeling “suspended in grammatical unreality” (Cook 2016, 192) are diametrically opposed to Krasznahorkai’s assertion that his literary language is rooted in practice – only in the practice of speech, not writing. Mulzet’s award-winning translation is a self-proclaimed “troubling [and] weird” rendition of a ST that is uncomfortable and disorientating, but at the same time familiar and natural-sounding. This does not, in itself, detract from the literary merit of the TT: in fact, the existence of this text-in-translation can be viewed as creating a concrete new meaning, something which is not encoded either in the ST or in the TT if read as a piece of vernacular (non-translated) English literature.

Translation about Translation: *Seiobo* as Meta-text

My analysis of *Seiobo There Below* has thus far focused on the TT as a piece of literature and its relationship with the ST. The former is a legitimate object of study in its own right: discussions of TC success, as reflected, for instance, in reviews or translation prizes, do not need to extensively reference the source or the translation process at all; in fact, reviews themselves rarely do. Given that the vast majority of readers of English translations have no access to the sources, and some of them may not even be aware that they are reading translations, an investigation into how TTs are received, what comments are made about them by academic reviewers and the general public, and what aspects of it are deemed worthy of a literary prize, is a worthwhile scholarly endeavour. Nevertheless, as I argued above, comparative analysis can reveal instances where significant shifts occur in the translation process, and this may go some way towards explaining TC reception. In the case of *Seiobo*, I have shown that a degree of defamiliarisation occurs in the translation which may not be entirely justifiable based on the source, but which can nevertheless produce – and, judging from Krasznahorkai’s international acclaim, has produced – a successful TT. I have also argued that this defamiliarisation may in fact be conducive to a meta-textual reading of the target, where parallels between reading as work and art as work are highlighted. This metaphoric interpretation can be developed further by completely shifting the focus from the source to the target: as I will demonstrate, reading *Seiobo* as a

translation, with no reference to what it is a translation of, extends the metaphor of ‘reading as art’ to ‘translation as art’.

Whether it is describing an ancient statue of the Buddha being restored, the life of a museum guard at the Louvre, visits to the Acropolis or the Alhambra, or an elderly architect giving a lecture about music to an audience of eight, the novel is permeated by anxiety about authorship, originality and interpretation of art. The art historian’s obsession with the identity of the painter in Chapter 5, ‘Christo Morto’, echoes concerns about authorship in translation, particularly when the ‘shocking’ revelation is made that the painting is the work of more than one artist. One of these turns out to be the accomplished fifteenth-century artist Giovanni Bellini’s assistant, a certain Vittore di Matteo, who finished a picture his master had barely begun. These concerns are not entirely arbitrary, because it is the name that sells, both in art and in literature: “he knew well that he could sell it as a Bellini painting for a huge sum anywhere and anytime, whereas an unfinished Bellini, actually a hardly started Bellini [...] wouldn’t get him anything” (109). The lesser artist having added his name then painted over it can be seen as reflecting the translator’s desire to be identified and acknowledged, yet not to distract from the ‘genius’ of the author which will sell the artwork.⁹⁰

As James Holmes points out in ‘The Name and Nature of Translation Studies,’ translation has been variously described as ‘art’ and ‘craft’ in multiple languages over the years (Holmes [1972] 2004, 174). These often-conflicting definitions identify the translator as artist or craftsman, an idea that keeps recurring in *Seiobo There Below*. Some of the activities depicted are more art-like than craft-like, with the figure of the artist embodying a Romantic ideal of creative genius. A case in point is Fra Lippi in Chapter 2, ‘The Exiled Queen,’ who grows from a sickly, sensitive child into a great artist who manages to impress Botticelli himself, or the talented restorer in Chapter 3 who alone among the “craftsmen with specific talents and specific training” (59) is able to capture the mysterious quality of the Buddha’s eyes. Others, like the obnoxious and brusque restorer of Chapter 5, completely lack the sublime and noble character often associated with high art. The concept of painting as both art and craft is further reinforced in Chapter 21, ‘A Murderer Is Born’:

⁹⁰ On a more sceptical note, it could be argued that Dr Chiari’s certainty that the revelation will bring the painting into the spotlight, and subsequent disappointment when there is no response other than an article published in an obscure journal, parallels scholarly assumptions that the world beyond academia cares about the minutiae of translation.

not only was it necessary to take within a hair's breadth the measure of the outline of the figures and all the items depicted in the icon, not only did he have to study the forms, the sketching, the placement, and understand the colours and the proportions, but he had to be able to pledge himself to the task for he must have been aware, while in the midst of contemplating the icon, the dangers inherent in the task: if word got out about someone, even about Dionisy himself – this celebrated icon-painter of the fifteenth century – that he was not worthy of the preparation of the copy of the Radonezh original, for surely Dionisy knew better than anyone else that if the soul did not feel what Rublev did in that time, then he himself would certainly end up in Hell, and the copy would come to nothing, because it would be just a lie, a deceit, a mystification, just an ineffectual and worthless piece of trash [...] (198)

Here, the iconographer must prove himself worthy of copying or reproducing a great work of art. As in the translation of literary masterpieces, there is much at stake: if the copyist fails to demonstrate artistic qualities, which include the ability to identify with the creator of the original work, the copy, too, will fail.⁹¹ Not only is there similar pressure on literary translators to replicate the SC success of the translated work, there are similarities with the artistic process described as well, with the translator having to study every detail of the text to be able to recreate it in the TL.

Anxiety about the hierarchical relationship between original and copy is not restricted to concerns about one's own ability to successfully recreate a work of art. Spectators and critics are lost in attempts to pin down the difference and reliably distinguish between different versions of artworks throughout the text. The superiority of the original is repeatedly affirmed: "everyone comes for that, everyone comes across that door, and I can see right away that they're disappointed, well of course I would be too, because the Rublev, the real one, is something else" (185). Yet only a few lines later the impossibility of meaningfully distinguishing between multiple versions is acknowledged: "the original, the Rublev, that was something else altogether, it was too difficult even to say where this very difference lay, because as even he could see, the figures, the contours, the composition, the measurements, the placement all corresponded near perfectly to the original Rublev" (185). But originals are not always what they seem: as it turns out, all icons – including the famous Rublev – are "very frequently repainted, restored, or simply painted over" (186), in much the same way as texts are reworked, edited, translated and retranslated. Ultimately, the focaliser decides that "he could just delight in this copy, for it

⁹¹ The idea of identification through feeling what the original artist felt brings to mind Stanislavski's system, whereby the character's emotions must be experienced by the actor for a believable performance (Carnicke 1998), adding a further interdisciplinary dimension to the metaphor.

was beautiful, wasn't it?" (187), an assertion that could be a motto for the anxiety-free reading of literature in translation.

Finally, moving beyond acceptance of the secondary creation as aesthetically valuable in itself, the epistemological starting point is questioned as a result of the process of consecration, a term that is used in religious writing and practice as well as literary theories of canon formation. The same way literary canonicity can be conferred on a work in translation, in the realm of iconography "if a copy was created from an icon, and then this copy was consecrated by the bishop, it was then accordingly acknowledged as genuine, and from that point on the very same sanctity would emanate from the copy as from the original" (188). The copy is thus elevated to the status of the original, with no knowable distinction for the spectator. This is articulated in the last sentence before a paragraph break, the scarcity of which in Krasznahorkai's writing makes it all the more significant: a conclusion has been reached, that "the world should just look at this copy, and then try to figure out which one was real" (189).

The vocabulary of *Seiobo*, the constant mentions of original and copy, the assertion that "everything begins with the commission, with the patron" (269)⁹² all reference concepts familiar to the Translation Studies scholar, but the overarching translation metaphor can be appreciated by the general reader, too. Nowhere in the book is this metaphor expressed more poetically than in the chapter about the Alhambra, 'Distant Mandate'. By this point, the parallel between restorers or artists and translators has been firmly established. Nothing is ever created alone, the work tells us:

if the creator of the Alhambra was solitary, he had something to rely upon, if however both of them took part equally, then they were also not alone many times over, because until that thought, the thought of the Alhambra, could reach Granada, it had to make its way through an enormous cultural space, spanning continents, countries, and epochs [...] (304)

Similarly to how, regardless of the identity of its creator(s), the Alhambra cannot be called an original construction in the sense of being without precedent, no literary text is ever truly original, as Julia Kristeva's work on intertextuality reminds us (Kristeva 1969). The Alhambra is proof that "something infinite can exist in a finite, demarcated space" (309), a truth well known to translators working with texts finite in form but with multiple possible interpretations, which they must seek to reproduce. In his search for the true history and

⁹² See André Lefevere's concept of patronage in Translation Studies (Lefevere 1984).

meaning of the Alhambra, the focaliser comes to the conclusion that it “does not demand comprehension but rather continuously demands that it be comprehended” (311), much like the single ‘true meaning’ of a text is impossible to capture, which therefore must be retranslated and re-interpreted by each new generation.⁹³ Finally, the chapter ends on a positive note, hinting at the possibility that a text – even a translated text – can be sufficient in itself, and knowledge of its source and history is not necessary for it to convey meaning: “There is the Alhambra. That is the truth” (311).

Conclusion: How to Read *Seiobo* in Translation

In his discussion of *The Melancholy of Resistance*, James Wood suggests that “Krasznahorkai mischievously dangles the possibility that the circus is a difficult art work, that it was simply misread by everyone as an agent of apocalypse, in the way that all revolutionary and obscure art works are misread (by implication, this novel included)” (Wood 2011). I have argued here that *Seiobo There Below* invites a similar meta-textual reading of itself as a translated text, although no authorial intention can be automatically assumed. While the search for meaning in art, which is both a theme explored in the novel and an outward-pointing reference to the reading of it, is present in both the ST and TT, new meanings emerge from the English version as a text-in-translation. The museum guard’s frustration about the Venus de Milo having “no meaning” because “the world had changed over the past two thousand years” (337) brings to mind classical texts, the translation of which raises similar questions about meanings shifting over time, or about the possibility of rediscovering meaning that has been lost. Like the painting in Chapter 5, the novel is the work of two artists, author and translator. Instead of chasing ‘the original meaning’ like the museum guard and the visitor of the Alhambra does, the reader could just “delight in this copy” (187).

Paradoxically, the critical acclaim that met *Seiobo There Below* has something to do both with its universality and its strangeness. There is very little in the novel that is recognisably Hungarian: no political engagement or local colour is necessary for it to appeal. This has broadly been acknowledged by the author, who said in an interview that “what matters now is not that you are Hungarian but how you write – your Hungarianness is the cherry

⁹³ This constant recreation through reinterpretation is the central idea in Chapter 987, ‘The Rebuilding of the Ise Shrine,’ where a Western character attends the ceremony called the *Misoma-Hajime-sai*, the 71st ritual rebuilding of the shrine. When he enquires “whether the new shrine is similar to the old one or is the same,” he is told that “the new building is the same as the old one... because the deity who resides there, Amaterasu Omikami, is the same” (413). In other words, the ‘essence’ of the original work has been transferred to the recreation, which is one way to conceive of successful translation.

on top of the cake” (Krasznahorkai and Marton 2012). Krasznahorkai has also commented that people are drawn to *Satantango* because of a certain familiarity: they “don’t want to escape from life but to live it over again, to know that they have a life, that they have a part in it, and have a preference for the painfully beautiful” (Krasznahorkai and Szirtes 2013). One can easily imagine the same expectations applied to *Seiobo*, and yet the strangeness of its language also seems to fascinate readers. I have argued here that at least some of this strangeness is generated by Mulzet’s particular approach to the translation, something recognised by Josh Cook, who observes that “writers such as Esterházy, Nádas, and Krasznahorkai, who are often said to revel in stylistic experimentation, don’t necessarily experiment at all. They embrace their language, albeit with books that are long, dense, and strange” (Cook 2016, 189). Mulzet’s rendition is perhaps best described as embracing the Hungarian language, which also means pushing the boundaries of English. This constitutes a significant, and not necessarily undesirable, shift from the character and meaning of the ST. There is hope, after all: even if the reader, like the characters, will “never be able to understand that which is great” (439), they can work their way through the novel with the same patience and resilience that are required for the making of art, and perhaps even give up the pursuit of authenticity that hampers enjoyment.

Chapter 3. Péter Nádas's *Parallel Stories*

The intricate and dense stories, distant in time and space, of *Seiobo There Below* have captivated readers in many languages across the world and, together with *Satantango*, earned László Krasznahorkai a place among Europe's foremost contemporary writers. Péter Nádas, another award-winning novelist regarded as one of the giants of twenty-first-century Hungarian literature, has enjoyed a similarly successful international career, starting with the German publication of *Emlékiratok könyve* (1986) in 1991 (*Buch der Erinnerung*, trans. Hildegard Grosche; English *A Book of Memories*, 1997, trans. Ivan Sanders and Imre Goldstein). While the primary foreign readership of Nádas's works has always been German, his oeuvre is a remarkable example of how far and wide Hungarian literature in translation can travel, best illustrated by the conference held at the Hungarian Translators' House in Balatonfüred on 28-29 September 2014. The event, titled *A párhuzamosság széülete* [Dizzying parallelism], brought together translators of the novel *Párhuzamos történetek* (2005, English *Parallel Stories*, 2011, trans. Imre Goldstein) into languages ranging from Croatian to Chinese (but not including English) as well as scholars interested in the analysis and the reception of Nádas's novel at home and abroad.⁹⁴ The transcript of the talks delivered offers a fascinating insight into the mechanics of these challenging translation projects.⁹⁵ Some translators took the audience through a series of textual examples explaining their choices and strategies regarding the translation of place names and personal names, references to historical events, and syntactic structures problematic in the TL. Others approached the subject from a more philosophical angle, commenting on their personal experience of grappling with the 400,000-word text and articulating mission statements where translation theory and practice converge, such as Krisztina Virágh's assertion that "I have to understand not just what the author says but also what he wants to say" (Virágh 2014, 4).

Although Imre Goldstein, the English translator of *Parallel Stories*, was not in attendance, the conference discussion is of unquestionable relevance to the study of the English translation. Many of the issues explored are, to some extent, universal translation

⁹⁴ *A párhuzamosság széülete: Konferencia Nádas Péter Párhuzamos történetek című regényének fordítóival* [Dizzying parallelism: conference with the translators of Péter Nádas's novel *Parallel Stories*], Balatonfüred, Hungary, 28-29 September 2016. Participating translators: Xenia Detoni (Croatian), Yu Zemin (Mandarin), Christina Virágh (German), Erzsébet Kari Kemény and Ove Lund (Norwegian), Maria Ortman (Swedish), Adan Kovacsics (Spanish), Anamaria Pop (Romanian), Marc Martin (French), Marjanca Mihelič (Slovenian). Judit Görözdi discussed the late Juliana Szolnokiová's Slovak translation.

⁹⁵ The full transcript is available on the Hungarian Translators' House's website at www.forditohaz.hu/dokumentumok/mfha1415.doc, accessed 4 June 2017.

problems, including that of culturally embedded content in a historically accurate novel. However, Goldstein's absence, which in practical terms was simply accidental (Péter Rácz, pers. comm.), can be seen as ironic given the status of literary translation into English referred to in the earlier chapters of this thesis. Generally speaking, English translations are both highly prized (from the ST authors' perspective, in terms of prestige and monetary gain), and probably more likely to be consulted, and thereby influence subsequent translations of the same ST, than translations into any other language. Yu Zemin, the Chinese translator of *Parallel Stories*, reminds us of this practice when he recounts his correspondence with Nádas over a particularly problematic passage. Unsure about how to interpret the implied subject(s) of different clauses, Zemin contacted the author for help with disentangling grammatical relationships in the ST only to find out from Nádas's slightly frustrated response that the English translator had, in fact, got the subject wrong in this instance.⁹⁶ As well as highlighting the cross-linguistic significance of English TTs where multiple translations exist, this incident serves to illustrate the difficulties posed by grammatical and semantic ambiguity in Hungarian and foregrounds it as a potentially problematic aspect of the English translation.⁹⁷

The *Dizzying Parallelisms* conference is one of several extra-textual indicators of the significance of *Parallel Stories* as a translated text. Another is the publication of two collections of critical essays in languages other than Hungarian. The first of these is the Slovak *Priestory vnímania - O tvorbe Pétera Nádas* (2011), which came out of a conference held in Bratislava in 2010 dedicated to Nádas's Central European reception (Görözdi 2014, 25). The second, the German *Péter Nádas lesen: Bilder und Texte zu den Parallelgeschichten* [A Péter Nádas reader: images and texts for *Parallel Stories*] (2012), is essentially the German version of an edited volume published in Hungarian later in the same year, *Párhuzamos olvasókönyv* [Parallel reader].⁹⁸ Nádas's works have been made available in a wide range of European languages, and there has also been a substantial critical response to his works in the SC in the form of numerous reviews and analytical

⁹⁶ The passage in question is in Volume I: "Ha nem tudott újra elaludni, akkor Erna asszony meggyújtotta a lámpáját, olvasott, gyakran hajnalig. De nem volt hét, amikor ne próbálta volna meggyőzni a fiát, hogy költözzenek el" (273). "When he couldn't fall asleep again, Lady Erna would turn on his light and he would read, sometimes until dawn" (202). Nádas explained to Zemin that it is Erna, not her husband, who turns on her own lamp and reads until dawn (Zemin 2014, 46).

⁹⁷ See Peter Sherwood's analysis of a key passage in George Szirtes's translation (1991) of *Édes Anna* (1926) by Dezső Kosztolányi: "Here incorrect use of the tracking devices 'he' and 'she' (there is no gender distinction in the third person pronoun in Hungarian, and in any case it is used only for disambiguation, contrast, or emphasis) leads to the suggestion that it was Mr Víz trying to escape from the murderer, whereas the reverse is the case" (1998, 37). In other words, Anna is depicted as wanting to kill both Mr and Mrs Víz, even though in the ST she only targets the woman.

⁹⁸ Emese László explains the precise relationship between the two volumes (László 2012, 993).

essays. Hungarian critics have been mostly impressed, and occasionally baffled, by the three-volume novel that took 20 years to write (Nádas and Károlyi 2005), with the notable exception of eminent scholar István Margócsy, who in a 2005 article called the novel “a failure; a huge failure of a great author” (Margócsy 2005).⁹⁹ As we will see, with his acknowledgement of the sheer ambition of the project and ruthless critique of the sense of incompleteness and the absence of any kind of narrative or philosophical resolution, Margócsy anticipated much of the criticism levelled against Nádas by English-speaking reviewers following the publication of Goldstein’s translation in 2011.

Parallel Stories emerged as one of the texts deserving further scrutiny early on in the present research project due to Nádas’s SC significance and international standing, the contrast between the reception of this novel and his previous English-language publications, and the challenges of making accessible a historically embedded narrative in the TL, among other factors. It soon became clear, however, that examining this translation required a modified methodology due partly to its sheer bulk (the 2012 Jonathan Cape edition is 1133 pages long).¹⁰⁰ Engaging with the TT before turning to the source or to criticism remained the cornerstone of my approach in line with Berman’s idea of productive criticism ([1995] 2009), as explained in the introduction. As in the case of *Seiobo There Below*, this crucial step in the reading (that is, the research) process allowed me to identify instances of markedness in the English text that might have been glossed over in a less target-focused, comparative reading, while simultaneously creating a quasi-monolingual experience of the text that is closer to that of the primary intended audience (English-speakers who do not speak Hungarian) and can therefore reveal something of the way in which the TT might be received as literature in English.¹⁰¹ In terms of identifying specific areas to focus on, however, it was not just the length of the novel that presented a difficulty but its ambitious historico-temporal and socio-cultural span as well. A staggering

⁹⁹ “The author’s magnitude, the respectable vastness and all-encompassing will of the enterprise is felt in each chapter, each paragraph, often even in standalone sentences, but the work *as a whole* appears to be grievously unresolved, and it raises many questions, both during the reading process and afterwards, which sadly remain without any kind of answer in the text” (Margócsy 2005).

¹⁰⁰ *Parallel Stories* was first published by New York-based Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Founded in 1946, it specialises in world literature, children’s literature, and American poetry. See <https://us.macmillan.com/fsg/about> (accessed 17 September 2017).

¹⁰¹ Quasi-monolingual meaning that I am a bilingual reading monolingually. My bilingualism affected how I read, for example, the translator’s repeated use of the verb phrase ‘fall asleep’ in Chapter 2 of Volume I, ‘The Creator Wanted It This Way’. The confusion stems from the multiple meanings of the Hungarian verb ‘elalszik’, which can indeed mean ‘fall asleep’ but in this instance it is used in the ST in the sense of ‘sleep in’. Although my feeling is that this usage jars in the English (it makes much more sense for the character Döhring to claim he is running late because he slept in than because he had ‘fallen asleep’ that morning), understanding where the misunderstanding lies highlights these occurrences as errors rather than manifestations of an unusual ST style.

multiplicity of individual and social narratives intertwine in *Parallel Stories*, set in various, mostly German and Hungarian locations between the 1930s and 1989. It is easy to lose track of the multitudes of major and minor characters who come and go in this kaleidoscopic novel, which is truly impressive in its scope: as one translator observes, she had to research the topics of “forestry, wood production, mining, pharmacology, local history, etc.” as well as familiarise herself with “forensic, botanical, mineralogical, sociological, economic historical, architectural, and eugenic literature” and “track down contemporary (not exactly public) materials about the day-to-day operation of death camps in Hungary” (Detoni 2014, 21).

It can be difficult to find an appropriate lens through which to examine such a multi-faceted and (in every sense of the word) substantial text in a relatively limited space, but in the case of *Parallel Stories*, the predominantly critical English reviews themselves as well as the striking differences between the average SC and TC assessment provided a useful starting point. Combined with my own experience of the novel as a challenging read in English, the critical response hints at the possibility of significant translation shifts and raises questions about the particularities of the translation, which may be answered through focused textual analysis with a comparative element. Although both novels discussed in this thesis thus far have won awards in translation,¹⁰² in contrast to the unanimous praise for *Seiobo There Below*, the English-language reviews of *Parallel Stories* are mixed at best. As an unintended collective sign of the near impossibility of finding a comfortable interpretation and reducing the plot to a single meaningful paragraph, the reviews display considerable variation in their summaries of the novel. Benjamin Moser, writing for *The New York Times*, claims that the work “is centered, very roughly, on a Budapest apartment building designed in the early 20th century by a fussy Jewish architect with an annoying voice” (Moser 2011), while according to Tibor Fischer, “there are three or four major characters: the German Döhring, who discovers the corpse, the singer Gyöngyvér Mózes, the truly dodgy ‘secret agent’ André Rott” (Fischer 2011; only one of these characters has a direct connection with the aforementioned apartment building). Thomas Marks sees the text as primarily a combination of “the political, sexual and emotional histories of two families, the Hungarian Lippay Lehrs and the German Döhrings” (Marks 2011), and Scott Esposito – somewhat ironically – remarks that “for all its daunting size and ambitions,

¹⁰² The English translation of *Seiobo There Below* won the Best Translated Book Award in 2014. I am not aware of any awards for *Parallel Stories* in English, but the German translation by Christina Viragh was awarded the Europäischer Übersetzerpreis Offenburg, the Leipzig Book Fair Prize, and the Brücke Berlin Prize in 2012.

Parallel Stories is not a difficult book to sum up” before asserting that “it is grounded in 1961, in which we find friends Hans won Wolkenstein, Ágost Lippay Lehr, and Andras Rott exiled together in a Budapest bathhouse and discussing the future of ‘a Budapest where the world had been shut off for good like a dripping faucet’” (Esposito 2011).

In terms of evaluating Nádas’s work, a clear sense of dissatisfaction emerges across the English-language reviews. Similarly to Margócsy’s response, many reviewers admire the knowledge and writing skill manifested through the novel while expressing frustration and disappointment with the reading experience: Adam Langer claims that “though the writing is virtuosic throughout [...] it can also be mind-numbingly repetitive,” and that “even during the finest passages [...] the pleasures tend to be more intellectual than emotional” (Langer 2011). Moser echoes similar sentiments when he writes that “though at times masterly, the book is too maddening to be called a masterpiece [...] it] is all cul-de-sac and no street,” and that “unfortunately, in *Parallel Stories*, one is too often merely lost” (Moser 2011). Michael Arditti calls the novel “both unfulfilled and unfulfilling,” lamenting “the lack of narrative coherence” and concluding that this is, combined with the lack of “a philosophical kernel[,] an insurmountable flaw” (Arditti 2011). Esposito argues that the “sex scenes are poorly served by language that frequently drops off into a dull mediocrity,” and that *Parallel Stories* “instructs more than inspires,” doing so “with occasional pedantry” and lacking “the incandescent verve of Nádas’s fellow Hungarian, Laslo [*sic*] Krasznahorkai” (Esposito 2011). The harshest critique is articulated by Fischer, who calls the relentless sex “exasperating” and the novel itself “a mess” in which the “disjointed vignettes don’t add up to much” (Fischer 2011). The critical consensus appears to be that although the book poses an intellectual challenge, there is not enough reward for the reader willing to meet it, and that the narrative is so confusing and directionless that no satisfying conclusion can be drawn or meaning can be found.¹⁰³

The general unease with which, as the above would suggest, *Parallel Stories* was received by the English-speaking world is far from replicating its critical acclaim in the SC.¹⁰⁴

While Hungarian reviews of the novel tend to be more analytical than evaluative, most detailed analyses constitute an overwhelmingly positive response in terms of their content

¹⁰³ It is worth noting that the only review I have come across that is genuinely complimentary about Goldstein’s translation is by Ivan Sanders (2012), Nádas’s other English translator.

¹⁰⁴ Considering only professional reviews and not general reader response has its limitations, but the former are valuable sources of information given the practicalities of the present project as well as the highbrow status of the novel under discussion.

and also, arguably, their very existence.¹⁰⁵ Although the novel is not seen as unproblematic in the SL,¹⁰⁶ its features that English reviews are typically dismissive of, such as the (apparent) lack of structure or meaning, have been the subject of much scholarly debate in the SC. It is difficult to compare such quantitatively unequal bodies of paratexts in qualitative terms, but there are a number of fairly consistent differences that are worth mentioning in preparing the ground for primary textual analysis. In some instances, there appears to be cross-linguistic disagreement about certain aspects of the novel, such as the presence or absence of an organising principle other than chaos, and of final resolution. For example, József Keresztesi's assertion that "in spite of the proliferation of narrative threads, [the novel] is not shapeless, not a 'monstrosity' [...] an obviously precise structure is being built over 1500 pages, on a gigantic scale" (Keresztesi 2005) directly contradicts Fischer's claim that "it's a great historical soup, with bits of this and that bobbing around, seemingly thrown in randomly by the chef" (Fischer 2011). In other cases, the disagreements seem to boil down to differences between interpretations of function: while Arditti sees what he terms "language that frequently drops off into a dull mediocrity" as an irritant (Arditti 2011), Endre Bojtár argues that "the (occasionally deliberately-parodistically sloppy) short sentences" serve to hold the narrative fabric together (Bojtár 2013).

The altogether less favourable rhetoric of English-language reviews is perhaps unsurprising. As Miklós Takács observes, "out of the German and English translations of *Parallel Stories*, both published in 2012, the former gained more exposure, which is no coincidence" (2015). Takács points to the German settings and historical events as "counterpoints in the text interpreting the Hungarian 20th century as well as objects of the same interpretive effort," suggesting a lesser cultural distance and more relatability than in the case of the English translation.¹⁰⁷ Virágh also asserts that "translating *Parallel Stories* into German is in some sense probably easier than into any other language," identifying the German locations and character names, Hungary's historical German minority, the two

¹⁰⁵ In the sense that extensive analysis is a sign of interest in and engagement with the literary work, regardless of how critical it is of certain aspects of the novel. However, it would be a mistake to attribute the brevity and relative superficiality of engagement of English-language reviews to the reviewers' carelessness or some other shortcoming. Miklós Takács's comment on the German reception may be relevant here: "We must, of course, note that in addition to the temporal disadvantage, the German reception is also faced with a generic constraint, namely that over there only daily and weekly newspapers publish reviews with no platform for more extensive analyses, and more substantial studies in the academic sphere are yet to be published" (Takács 2015, accessed 12 September 2016).

¹⁰⁶ E.g. Károlyi remarks that "the novel is not an easy read and not unproblematic" (Nádas and Károlyi 2005).

¹⁰⁷ Takács quotes translator Wilhelm Droste claiming that "the German-language reception has the traditions and sensibility necessary for engagement with the work" (quoted in Takács 2015).

countries' shared historical past, and lexical and morphological similarities between the two languages as the main reasons (Virág 2014, 1). According to the novel's Croatian translator, Xenia Detoni, "the work being embedded in a Central European context reduces the distance from the Croatian and the Croatian-speaking Serbian, Bosnian or Montenegrin audience, because the more or less similar or comparable experiences do not require explanation if the transposition is precise" (Detoni 2014, 21). In light of all this, it is reasonable to suggest that an English readership might require more by way of additional information on culturally embedded content, whether in the form of footnotes, endnotes, or in-text explication, than Central or East European audiences. However, it would be a mistake, or at least an oversimplification, to infer from the English reviews' insistence on this widely translated and internationally acclaimed novel's defects, with only reluctant admission of its merits, that *Parallel Stories* is the kind of work that does not lend itself to translation into English.

It is tempting to try to explain the novel's comparative lack of success in terms of inherent qualities of the ST. However, the general assumption that would have to be made – that English-language audiences are less receptive to fiction dealing with Central European history, or less patient with bulky novels, or more resistant to existentialist modes of writing and accompanying linguistic or formal innovation – is easily challenged through the example of Nádas's novel. Fischer's contention that "a knowledge of Hungarian history and culture well beyond that of the average Anglo-Saxon reader" does not help to make the novel more accessible or enjoyable confirms my own impression based on a quasi-monolingual reading.¹⁰⁸

It is repeatedly asserted across reviews that it is not the concept but the execution that is objectionable, and Nádas is compared to a host of Hungarian and European writers who pursue similar projects but deliver them better: for Fischer, these are Miklós Bánffy, Lajos Zilahy, Albert Wass, Attila Bartis, and Noémi Szécsi; for Moser, Marcel Proust, Victor Hugo and Rebecca West; comparisons with Tolstoy also abound (Arditti 2011, Esposito 2011, Marks 2011). Given that Krasznahorkai's experimental and intellectually challenging prose, with its exotic subject matter and cosmopolitan sensibility, has enthralled English readers, I would argue that the reason for the differing SC and TC receptions must be sought elsewhere.

¹⁰⁸ See footnote 101.

The striking difference between Hungarian and English critics' sense of wholeness and coherence or lack thereof raises the question of whether something important shifts on a linguistic level that should generate or clarify narrative meaning in the TT as it does in the ST. In other words, there is a possibility that something specific to the fabric of the TT hinders enjoyment and understanding, which can be explored through close reading. Although impressions of fragmentation and disjointedness seem to be cross-cultural to an extent, it is also clear that ultimately the ST is generally perceived as being tied together structurally, thematically and linguistically, which is where the TT seems to fall short of expectations. The language of the TT has received considerably less critical attention than that of the ST: reviewers are understandably reluctant to comment in great detail on stylistic issues without access to the source. Where the translator's role is acknowledged, assessment varies considerably across reviews: some remarks address linguistic positioning on the foreignisation-domestication spectrum, such as the tone "not [being] aided by Imre Goldstein's translation, which seems to be more sensitive to the rhythms of Hungarian than of English prose" (Arditti 2011), or the language "constantly remind[ing] us we are reading a text that has been imported from another language and culture" (Marks 2011). For Ivan Sanders, it is the quality of the writing that is of importance: "Imre Goldstein's English is clear, crisp, unfailingly on target. I would go as far as saying that his feat is almost as formidable as that of the author who is indeed in the masters' league" (Sanders 2012).¹⁰⁹ Since such comments reveal very little about how the language of the TT operates and, specifically, how its operation may be different from that of the ST, it is the exploration of the cognitive poetics (Boase-Beier 2014, 396) of the ST that can provide the best framework for an investigation and evaluation of the target textual fabric.

Although several organising principles have been proposed to explain what Romanian translator Anamaria Pop has termed "organised chaos and finite infinity" in *Parallel Stories* (Pop 2014, 16), for the purposes of assessing translation shifts in terms of translation strategies, the most relevant structural features are the ones operating at a linguistic (syntactic, morphological and lexical) level. Bojtár posits that "the serial embedding of the novel's individual parts not just at chapter but paragraph and even sentence level creates a dense semantic web located exclusively in the fiction – the characters and the plot" (Bojtár 2013). While he does not elaborate on, or give examples of, how this embedding is manifested linguistically, Gábor Csordás dedicates an entire

¹⁰⁹ As usual, the language is often commented on without acknowledgement of translation, e.g. "his precise and dense prose is [...] breathtaking" (Zuckerman 2011, 240).

essay to the link between writing and meaning in the novel; more specifically, the relationship between bodies *in* the text and the body *of* the text, which he terms “corporeal writing.” Placing “the recording and conveying of bodily states” at the centre of his investigation, Csordás defines corporeal writing drawing on Zsolt Bagi’s analysis of *A Book of Memories* in his monograph *A körülírás* [Circumlocution] (2005):

in the novel every event, in the first instance, is an event of bodies that act upon one another, preserving one another’s actions and yearning for one another’s actions. The text itself thereby becomes corporeal because the bodies’ ceaseless actions on, and relations to, one another come to incorporate synecdochically their entire story and further ramifying system of relations, and every experience and situation thereby falls directly into a complex system of relationships of the novel’s localities, characters, and historical contexts. (Csordás 2006)

While sex and sexuality are clearly a central concern for Nádas, as is apparent from the extended graphic sex scenes, the presence of bodies specifically as agents and vehicles of knowledge in the novel has also been noted by a number of critics. In an early interview with Nádas about *Parallel Stories*, interviewer Csaba Károlyi remarks that “the characters are present in their bodies in every instant, and their bodies are constantly signalling something, not just sexual desire but all kinds of other things, as in real life” (Nádas and Károlyi 2005). Although Nádas at first refuses to give a justification for his reliance on eroticism and graphic depictions of sexual encounters, he later explains that “if we collectively and by consensus refuse for several centuries to discuss the body or the deterioration of the body, the operation of the body and bodily functions, then we are also refusing to discuss a lot of other connections” (Nádas and Károlyi 2005). Keresztesi highlights some possibilities of a broader network of meaning when he writes that “in the absence of civilisation working as gut instinct, we are left with nothing but the disciplinary power of culture. This disciplinary power is extrinsic and therefore constantly exposes itself to risk. This risk is sensual in nature. There is no situation where the knowledge of our pricks/cunts does not work” (Keresztesi 2005). It is in this semantic context that Csordás’s investigation of corporeal writing must be considered.

The idea put forward by Csordás that the narrative structure of *A Book of Memories* mirrors the functioning of bodily memory is also applicable to *Parallel Stories*. His observation that “evocative memory arranges the moments into the structure of a personal perspective, while bodily memory incessantly shifts, dissolves, breaks through, disperses, or suspends that perspective” suggests an organising principle that would account for the seemingly disjointed sequence of individual narratives (Csordás 2006). These might

initially be read as randomly or superficially connected but are in fact structured according to the logic of bodily memory or bodily knowledge, which may provide a degree of coherence that counteracts the non-linearity and helps to create meaning. A case in point is the chapter titled '*Le nu féminin en mouvement*', where we see Erna Demén, an elderly, wealthy Jewish woman, on her way to the hospital with her son's lover to visit Lady Erna's dying husband. Erna has mixed feelings towards Gyöngyvér, which include homoerotic desire: she feels admiration for her female body and contempt for her person, and "her persistent physical attraction to the young woman sometimes [...] confuse[s] her" (146). Some of her internal monologue is difficult to interpret at this stage, such as her insistence that "she must be restrained, self-possessed; no use asking why she couldn't lose her mind, spin out of control just one more time" (147). The temporal plane later seamlessly transitions into events from Erna's youth:

She had to press her knees close together to keep from feeling in her vagina this rapid little slipping across the seat as the powerful, rhythmic slippings of the night before. It was still sore. Just as it was back then, years later, when with her knees apart she sat on the hard Dutch chair suckling the baby [...] But under the gaze of the other woman she did not press her knees together. (163)

The physical sensation of riding in the taxi and Erna's lust for Gyöngyvér trigger memories of an earlier episode of sexual experimentation with another woman. A similarly emotionally complex situation, the encounter between Erna and Geerte von Groot is narrated in a language that suggest bodily impulses contradicting and overriding conscious inhibitions:

What are you doing, Geert, for god's sake, moaned Erna reproachfully, beseechingly, her modesty deeply insulted; what are you doing, please don't, yet her entire body, with shuddering waves of hot and cold, showed its approval. (171)

Bodily knowledge, then, underpins social interactions without the help of mental awareness, and progresses the narrative from one scene to the next, as observed by Csordás.¹¹⁰ For this hierarchical knowledge to be manifested, a third-person narrator has to be introduced into the equation: "Everything that the novel's protagonists necessarily disregard can only become part of the textual world through an observer" (Csordás

¹¹⁰ "Whatever the situation, the body always spots and understands what another body is communicating and responds appropriately. Repression is manifested in the fact that we do not admit to our consciousness what the other body has apprised our body of (and as a result we usually take no cognizance of the motives that actually control our actions)" (Csordás 2006).

2006).¹¹¹ In corporeal writing, movement back and forward in time is anything but random, and third person narration – or at least the narrative perspective occasionally shifting away from the characters – is essential for the reader to gain access to bodily knowledge.

Close Reading Carnality: Gyöngyvér and Ágost

While the characters' sexual thoughts and bodily descriptions are ubiquitous throughout the novel, they are brought sharply into the focus in the depiction of a sexual encounter between Gyöngyvér Mózes, a kindergarten teacher of low birth, and Ágost Lippay-Lehr, a secret agent from a wealthy bourgeois family, at the end of Volume I in the chapters 'Through the Entrance to His Secret Life' and 'The Quiet Reasons of the Mind'. As with the rest of the narrative, it is difficult to establish a temporal anchor because the characters' lines of thought are followed as they reminisce or have flashbacks to their past lives; it is repeatedly suggested that the scene is mediated through Gyöngyvér's memories in a particular fictional moment as she sits in a taxi on her way to the hospital (pp. 195 [264], 219 [296]). The role of focaliser keeps shifting between the two characters as details of past traumas are revealed both explicitly in conversation – for example, Ágost suggests at one point that his parents sent him to boarding school abroad because they hated him, and Gyöngyvér disagrees (223-4 [301-2]) – and through internal flashbacks and memories. As we will see from the examples below, there is a sense of identities melting into one on multiple levels in the ST: bodies are physically intertwined, voices merge in the absence of focaliser shift markers and speech marks, and the sentences are typically characterised by coordination and a preference for the comma over other punctuation marks.

The idea of physical boundaries dissolving in an almost transcendental way is highlighted as Gyöngyvér watches Ágost masturbate: “Gyöngyvér szinte érezte, valamelyest átélte a makk alatt megbúvó kantár feszültségét” (299) | “Gyöngyvér seemed to sense, indeed identified with and lived the tension of the frenum hiding under the bulb” (221). This mystical connection persists for the remainder of the scene, evident from descriptions such as, “konok dühe nem volt átélhetetlen, hiszen őt is megfeszítette a tombolás vágya” (299) | “she could identify with the stubborn fury, because the desire to rage made her tense too” (221). However, the implication of a connection beyond strictly sensory perception of each other's bodies is lost in the English as the paragraph progresses. When the two bodies come into physical contact, Gyöngyvér is described as “seeing and feeling” penetration

¹¹¹ In contrast, *A Book of Memories* is narrated in the first person.

(221), whereas in Hungarian “belátta és átérezte” (299) has connotations of comprehending, acknowledging or admitting something beyond the physical, and specifically of identifying with someone else’s position or feelings, similarly to the meaning of ‘sympathise’. Seeing and feeling are commonly used verbs denoting everyday sensory perception and thereby reducing the encounter to an ordinary, if unusually lengthy and graphic, sex scene. There is some confusion around the implied subject, with “as she continues to rave” (221) being interpreted by the translator as referring to the woman, when in fact in the ST this is a word-for-word repetition of the “stubborn fury” of the cock (“konok dühében tomboló fasznak,” 299).

Later in the scene the perspective of the third-person narrator is undermined, which, as Csordás has shown, would be a requirement for corporeal writing to be authentic. Since the ideological basis is that characters’ bodies possess knowledge that their consciousnesses do not, it should fall to the narrator to reveal this knowledge. Consider the following passage:

Kétszer azért voltam a Balatonnál, suttogta vissza Gyöngyvér fintorogva, s ez már igen nagy dolog, nem szabad elfelejtened. Fintorgásaival olyan hatást keltett, mint akinek szégyenkeznie kéne, ám ezzel valójában büszkélkedik. Bevallja, valami hiányzik az életéből, a hiány azonban kivételessé teszi a létezését. (307)

I’ve been to Lake Balaton twice, though, Gyöngyvér whispered back, making a face, and that was really a big thing in my life, don’t forget. Making faces gives the impression of being afraid of something, but she actually meant to boast a little. She admits, she said, that something is missing from her life, but this lack makes her life unique. (227-8)

Gyöngyvér’s attempt to compensate for her perceived inferiority is in line with earlier hints at her lack of intelligence and education. The reader has learned by this point that Ágost “enjoyed seeing the uneducated woman’s recurring embarrassment” (223), and Gyöngyvér has been shown not only to be aware of her (perceived) intellectual limitations but to willingly self-identify as inferior, probably as a protective measure: “I only know what you tell me, and I don’t even understand that completely because I’m silly, a very silly girl” (227). The translator’s insertion of “she said” into the last sentence of the paragraph therefore jars, since Gyöngyvér should not be capable of this level of articulate self-analysis, and neither should, in fact, the rest of the characters. This (mis)representation of Gyöngyvér is made more ironic by the directly preceding admission that she has never been abroad, and could be seen as an example of misdirected explicitation. The middle sentence, a literal translation of which would be “her grimacing created the impression of

someone who was supposed to be ashamed but was in fact boasting,” exemplifies a similarly unhelpful shift in the narrative perspective: the English narrator switching to the present tense before returning to the past would suggest a generalisation that not only makes little sense in English (there is no reason why making faces should be associated with fear, and there is also no obvious reason in this instance for Gyöngyvér to be afraid, although her feeling ashamed would be entirely justified) but also obscures the narrator’s role of interpreting bodily expressions for the reader as the narrative unfolds. A similarly problematic semantic shift occurs a few pages later where Gyöngyvér is described “as if she were both interested in everything and bored by each new piece of information” (228). Once again, the emotional logic of the sentence does not stand up to scrutiny: according to the ST, Gyöngyvér seemed “*burdened* by all information” (“s ugyanakkor terhére volt minden információ,” 307, my emphasis), an understandable reaction given her sense of insufficiency. Here, too, the confusion around meaning is related to perspective: while to Ágost it may seem as if she were bored, the narrator’s privileged position should enable them to understand and explain underlying emotional processes.

Corporeal writing is predicated on differences between body and mind that concern not only levels of knowledge but also conflicting desires, manifested in the novel in, for example, “the heightened interest in bodily anomalies” (Keresztesi 2005). As we have already seen, Erna’s relationships with Gyöngyvér and Geerte are both characterised by contradictory emotions. Intimacy and revulsion, or even hatred, often go hand in hand in *Parallel Stories*, as illustrated by unspoken judgements on the part of both protagonists in the sex scene: “he thought the woman was common, her idea primitive” and “such a pampered little idiot shouldn’t try to teach [her] lessons” (228).¹¹² In this context, no individual sexual act is gratuitous but signals, as pointed out in Károlyi’s interview with Nádas referenced above, psychological states or processes (even if there is contradiction between what the characters’ minds and bodies want to do) and ultimately drives the plot forward according to the logic of corporeal writing. These parallels are meticulously highlighted in the ST not just through explicit commentary on the characters’ emotional states, as in the examples above, but also, for instance, in the vocabulary through repetition, ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning, and in the syntax through periphrasis

¹¹² This is, in fact, another example of the translator getting the implied subject wrong. The TT reads “such a pampered little idiot shouldn’t try to teach *him* lessons” (my emphasis), but interpreting this as coming from Ágost makes no sense either in the broader context of the story (Gyöngyvér is anything but pampered; she was abandoned by her mother as a child and was forced to rely on prostitution to scrape a living together as an adult) or in relation to the preceding sentence: “Let me, don’t reject me, Gyöngyvér giggled into his hesitant sentence, which he had meant to be somewhat instructive” (228). It is Ágost, not Gyöngyvér, who is trying to teach the other a lesson.

and ellipsis.¹¹³ Consequently, one of the translator's tasks is to trace these connections and carry them across to the TL to ensure its coherence. The following comparative passages show the breakdown of the ST semantic structure in the TT (my emphasis):

Ezek szerint gúnyolódni is tud velem, gondolta Ágost meglepetten. **Szívott és lökött**, valójában az érzelmességét fedte volna el. Mint aki **nyelvének csapásaival** teszi jóvá, ami a férfival történt vagy történhetett, s amit egyáltalán nem látott olyan szörnyűnek. Amiből olyan melegség és közvetlenség is áradt, hogy a férfi nem térhetett ki előle, hiába idegenkedett. (308)

This means she can also be sarcastic with me, Ágost thought, surprised. **She sucked in her lips and thrust them forward**; what she wanted to do was conceal her sentimentality. As one making amends **with her tongue** for what had or could have happened to the man, which she did not see as having been all that bad – behaviour radiating such warmth and candor that the man could not ignore it, despite his aversion. (228)

This takes place after a discussion of Ágost's formative experience of boarding school, his first encounter with foreign languages and the abuse he received for making mistakes.¹¹⁴ He is both traumatised by and obsessed with memories of this time, and it is in this context that he remarks, "a foreign tongue, you know, is paralysing and alluring" (228). "Foreign tongue" carries a double meaning here that is obvious to both protagonists; hence Gyöngyvér's response, "come on, let's have that paralyzing foreign tongue of yours" (228). As is predictable from previous psychological portrayal of her, she is moved by his opening up and overwhelmed by desire, and in this setting sexual contact offers relief and comfort. A change in the sexual dynamic – an end to her passivity – is signalled by her "working herself more and more frantically into the situation" (228) in a preceding paragraph. The ST has her "sucking and pushing" ("szívott és lökött") with the object (Ágost's body) implied, which in the English is expanded to "sucked in her lips and thrust them forward," a gesture that is barely interpretable in a sexual context and one that is irreconcilable with her eagerness to give in to passion in order to "conceal her sentimentality." In the TT she makes amends "with her tongue" rather than "with the *strikes* of her tongue," a missing word that in the ST introduces negativity – in the SL it is the same word as the ten biblical plagues – and refers back in the ST to the idea of 'rough

¹¹³ "Periphrasis [...] comes about when, for instance, transitive verbs are lined up in a lengthy sequence of sentences without an object being specified in the whole sequence. [...] Strictly speaking, of course, what is at work in this example is the other rhetorical figure of *ellipsis*. Nádas virtually never utilizes *periphrasis* in the classical form; in most cases he creates the effect of circumlocution by other means (thus, the principle of *periphrasis* extends to *periphrasis* itself)" (Csordás 2006).

¹¹⁴ "For a mistake in pronunciation, he received one slap in the face, for grammatical errors, three slaps. [...] He could redeem ten mistakes with some service" (225).

play’ (“she was being deliberately rough,” 228) as well as the aggression and cruelty associated with (foreign) language (tongue) use in Ágost’s school. Pleasure given by “strikes of the tongue” would capture a similar constellation of conflicting notions as “warmth,” “candor” and “aversion” in the last sentence, but as with the example above where Gyöngyvér merely “see[s] and feel[s],” the broader meaning is lost in the TT: that desire is far from being unambiguously positive, that the body itself is the site of contradictory impulses (attraction and repulsion), and that bodily gestures constitute primary interactions and foreshadow and explain social interactions. This shift leads to the semantic fragmentation (incoherence) of the TT, which makes it difficult to read in a way that the ST is not, despite all its complexities.

It would seem that the tenuous connection between some of the plotlines (both in the ST and the TT) is exacerbated by the disjointed nature of the TT on a more granular level. While the main aim of the present study is not to judge the quality of the translation but to uncover semantic and stylistic differences and the relationship between them, it must be noted that the level of fragmentation could be reduced if, for example, pronouns were not repeatedly switched around in the TT, as illustrated above. However, other shifts are not so easily avoided or so unambiguously misleading. As Slovenian translator Marjanca Mihelič has pointed out, mirroring ST grammar in *Parallel Stories* is a considerable challenge: “during the translation process it is revealed whether parallelism can be exhibited in the form – in sentence structure and clausal coordination. The conceptual (dizzying) parallelism is infused into the text itself” (Mihelič 2014, 39). Parallelism in the linguistic sense – stacked modifiers and parataxis, for example – complements the embedded or intertwining multiple story structure and tropic parallels such as doubling or split selves, but reproducing these in the TL may be impossible or come at a high price, resulting in a style that is sometimes pejoratively referred to as ‘translationese’.¹¹⁵ Peter Sherwood addresses the problem of parataxis in English in his review of Zsigmond Móricz’s *Relations* (1997, *Rokonok* [1932], trans. Bernard Adams):

The question of how to render Hungarian parataxis [...] is a complex one. Is it possible to give e.g. “Lina sírt, megtörülte a szemét” as “Lina wept, wiped her eyes” (p. 91 of the translation)? The answer to this question should really be based on analyses of comparative literary corpora that have not, to my knowledge, been undertaken so far, but my guess is that the English of this

¹¹⁵ *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* defines parataxis as “the absence of relative or dependent clauses (subordination), as in ‘I came, I saw, I conquered’” (Birch 2009).

sentence is ungrammatical in a way that the original Hungarian is not, and that therefore such a rendering falsifies the translation. (Sherwood 2009, 144-5)¹¹⁶

Whether certain forms of parataxis, such as the comma splice,¹¹⁷ are ungrammatical in English is less pertinent here than the question of markedness from a cognitive-poetical perspective. In Sherwood's examples above, where the TT mirrors the ST grammar and punctuation, the former certainly reads less naturally than the latter. The translator of *Parallel Stories* is faced with such challenges at every turn, since, as Mihelič observes, parallel linguistic structures are organically connected to other tools of meaning-making in the text. Mihelič also discusses her methodology involving decisions on a case-by-case basis checked by two experienced copy-editors (Mihelič 2014, 39), further highlighting the difficulty of establishing a consistently applicable rule, especially one that would apply across languages. Goldstein seems to have had a similarly flexible approach to dealing with what might be summed up as coordination on various linguistic levels. A sentence already quoted above to illustrate the underlying tension between the lovers can serve as an example of parataxis being reproduced: "he thought the woman was common, her idea primitive" (228), as can Ágost's protestation on the next page: "what hatred, I don't have any hatred in me, none" (229). In a number of other instances, however, the assumed requirements of the English reader seem to take precedence over leaving ST structures intact. The following are examples of partial and complete erasure of coordination in the TT, respectively (my word-for-word translation of the ST in italics follows the TT fragments):

Egyszer, kétszer, gyorsan, jól egymásba koccant a foguk éle. (307)
Once, twice, their teeth knocked quickly together. (228)
Once, twice, quickly, forcefully the edges of their teeth knocked together.

bele a tétova, oktató jellegű mondatába (307)
into his hesitant sentence, which he had meant to be somewhat instructive
(228)
into his hesitant, instructive-like sentence

In both these cases, linguistic parallelism is reduced in the TT, weakening the overarching principle of parallelism – thematic *and* structural. The final example below is an instance

¹¹⁶ In a later email exchange Sherwood revised and clarified his position, conceding that 'falsify' was probably too strong a word: "The reason we need comparative corpora is precisely to see what the 'equivalent(s)' of such punctuation items as commas might be, in the same way as the corpora would suggest 'equivalents' of words. Semicolons, for example, are virtually never used in Hungarian, colons seem to be rare, and dashes of various kinds are far more common, perhaps employed partly when English might have brackets" (27 January 2016, pers. comm.).

¹¹⁷ The comma splice is the violation of Strunk and White's elementary rule no. 5, "do not join independent clauses by a comma" ([1935] 2000, 17).

of explicitation through punctuation, where the exclusive use of the comma in the ST fragment, apart from one full stop, is replaced by a combination of comma, dash and semicolon:

Honnan tudnád, nem tudod. Kíméletlenül el tud téged nyelni, el tud utasítani, folytatta volna az előbbi témát, mert nem volt egészen jelen, még mindig ott tehetetlenkedett a régi zuhanyozó síkos farácsán. (307)

How would you know, you don't know. It can swallow you up mercilessly, it can reject you — he would have continued the earlier subject because he wasn't quite in the present; he was still back there trying to cope with the situation in the old shower room on the wet wooden grating. (228)

Here, Ágost is still talking about “foreign tongues” with Gyöngyvér while wrestling with memories of abuse he received in the communal shower of the boarding school. The altered punctuation separates the temporal planes and the two voices – Ágost's and the narrator's – more firmly, thereby interfering with the merging of timelines, persons and perspectives alluded to earlier, which directly relate to some of the novel's big questions: is there such a thing as an individual as opposed to a product of history, and is the present really distinct from the past? Perhaps it is a legitimate criticism that the characters “all have very similar voices” (Arditti 2011), but only if the language obscures the bigger picture: that individualism is an illusion.¹¹⁸

From the perspective of an English-language readership, it is entirely understandable that the names of Krasznahorkai and Nádas, both hyper-central European writers from Hungary, should keep appearing alongside one another in reviews. After all, both are among the literary elite of their SC as well as widely translated, and both have made a name for themselves in the Anglophone world with earlier works, most notably *Satantango* and *A Book of Memories*. And yet, while Krasznahorkai continues to consolidate his status as an international literary superstar with two new English publications since the winning of the Man Booker International Prize in 2015 and another forthcoming,¹¹⁹ the 2011 English translation of Nádas's epic *Parallel Stories* appears to have been a disappointment to its readers. Having initially approached the text using the same methodology – a “composed, ‘patient,’ and above all non-judgmental reading” (Connor 2014, 429) – as elsewhere in this thesis, I used the differing SC and TC critical responses as reflected in reviews as guidance for further textual analysis in order to establish possible reasons for

¹¹⁸ “Nádas's passionate investigation is centred on the conflicting relationship between sensuality and culture, [...] the foundations of personality where individualism no longer applies” (Keresztesi 2005).

¹¹⁹ See footnote 72. Otilie Mulzet's English translation of *Báró Wenckheim hazatér* (2016) is forthcoming.

the TT being less successful in terms of reported reading experiences as the ST. My assumption was that the difficulties posed by translating culturally embedded content and the implied English-language readership's lesser knowledge of the Hungarian historical context could not in themselves account for the comparatively negative reception of the text, and that further explanation should be sought at a linguistic level. In searching for possible translation shifts that could negatively impact the TL reading, I identified an extended passage for close reading toward the end of Volume I, which exemplifies what Csordás has termed "corporeal writing". Comparative analysis of the sex scene between Ágost and Gyöngyvér confirmed the hypothesis that the ST organising principles of corporeal writing and parallelism on multiple levels are diluted in the translation, which hinders the understanding and enjoyment of the TT by clouding connections between characters and between stories. In conclusion, the sense of disconnectedness in the TT is at least partially created through this particular translation, a phenomenon that would repay further exploration in tandem with the novel's numerous other translations.¹²⁰ As it stands, the reader may well concur with Deborah Eisenberg's comment that "Nádas can actually make you experience what it is to feel or think two mutually exclusive things at once" (2008). Eisenberg was referring to *A Book of Memories*, but conflicting impressions certainly seem to characterise the general response to *Parallel Stories*, mostly in the form of respect for its literary merit and desperation that it might never end.

¹²⁰ It is worth bearing in mind that the translator is never a fully autonomous agent, and the role of gatekeepers such as editors must always be acknowledged.

Chapter 4. Antal Szerb's Journey by Moonlight

A Hungarian Classic in Contemporary Translation

Introduction: Old Texts in New Translation

Hungary's change of regime in 1989 led to a profound transformation of the cultural arena, including the country's literary landscape. Unsurprisingly, Hungary's literary relationship with other countries changed too. As pointed out earlier, Hungarian-to-English literary translation lost its almost exclusive focus on poetry (Mudriczki 2013, 69) and began to discover fiction.¹²¹ Without giving figures or naming sources, Mudriczki briefly comments that post-1989, "the authors whom British readers have found most worthy of attention are Imre Kertész, Sándor Márai, Antal Szerb and Miklós Bánffy" (2013, 69). One cannot help but notice that, except for Kertész, all of these writers were active in the early-to-mid-20th century and could no longer be considered contemporary even in the 1990s.¹²² László Kúnos, the head of Corvina Publishing who witnessed the impact of political shifts on the translation of literature from the privileged position of working in the English-language publishing industry in Budapest from 1987 onwards, elaborates on this phenomenon as follows:

The change of regime meant that Hungarian literature started to become like other literatures, so it lost its political piquancy and entered the world of literary normalcy and consensus, so to speak. This is why it was at this point that the world discovered a lot of older Hungarian writers. Kosztolányi, Antal Szerb, Márai were discovered from previous periods and generations simply as writers of good quality. (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016)

Kúnos then proceeds to explain that with the end of the Communist regime, the marketing slogan (metaphorically speaking) of Hungarian books in the English-speaking world moved from political emphasis to "the discovery of lost treasures from an unknown world", that is, to emphasis on literary merit. In Kúnos's view, this was manifested in a German-led European interest in contemporary Hungarian writing on the one hand, and the long overdue recognition of early 20th-century classical Hungarian literature on the other, which he describes as "fascinating, part Modernist, part very traditional, very witty, and very readable" (Kúnos and Szilágyi 2016).

¹²¹ Mudriczki quotes George Gömöri remarking in 1976 that "looking at the Hungarian literary scene of the diaspora, we find that fiction is its weakest domain" (Gömöri 1976, 305, quoted in Mudriczki 2013, 69).

¹²² Miklós Bánffy: 1873-1950, Antal Szerb: 1901-1945, Sándor Márai: 1900-1989.

From a translation history perspective, these Hungarian texts entering European circulation more than half a century after their original production present interesting research material both at macro- and micro-levels. George Cushing opens his 1979 survey of Hungarian literature in English by referencing a book entitled *Hungarian Background* by Adam de Hegedus, published in 1937, in which the author posits a rather pessimistic view of the current state of Hungarian-to-English literary translation. Hegedus's scepticism about the usefulness of trying to explain Hungarian literature to an English readership can be traced back to his perception of the English as uncultured and unreceptive as well as his idea of what constitutes, as he puts it, "real English literature" (quoted in Cushing 1979, 37).¹²³ Lamenting the commodification of vernacular English literature and the low quality of what does get translated, Hegedus remarks "England has not a general culture like our educated men's, or those of Germany or France" (quoted in Cushing 1979, 37). This view is relevant to current research not because it would be acceptable to discuss the difficulties of cultural transfer in such simplistic terms today, but because when he talks about "such ignorance of contemporary Hungarian literature" (Cushing 1979, 38), Hegedus is referring to a body of literature some of which did eventually break through to the English-language book market, as explained above, albeit with considerable delay. Even Cushing, who ends his essay on a more optimistic note about the future of Hungarian literature in English, acknowledges that some of Hegedus's reservations are still valid forty years later, such as the concern that "the subject-matter and style are unsuited to the tastes of the English public" and that "there are difficulties of translation [–] no good English writer would regard mere translation as any part of his work" (Cushing 1979, 38).¹²⁴ Elaborating on the first of these two considerations, Cushing observes that

Anyone who views Hungarian literature from the outside must soon realize how very inward-looking it is. There are good historical reasons for this; it is nothing to be ashamed of, but it does imply that the foreign reader must be prepared to come to terms with its background. (Cushing 1979, 38)

¹²³ The preferred term now would be 'highbrow', as opposed to 'middle-' or 'lowbrow'. Hegedus's examples of the former include Virginia Woolf, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, and he puts translated works by Bús Fekete, Molnár, Harsányi, Körmendi, Madarassy and Jolán Földes in the latter category (Cushing 1979, 37).

¹²⁴ Although this has probably changed to some extent, historically there was a difference between the prestige accorded to translation as creative work in an East European and in the Anglophone world. I discuss this in greater detail in my MPhil thesis, referencing Brian James Baer's work: "Unlike in the West, translation was seen [in the early 20th century still] 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)" (Szilágyi 2013, 16.)

Even though another four decades have passed since Cushing's above assessment, concerns about how well texts can travel across languages *as well as* through time are very much with us today. Translator and critic Adam Z. Levy beautifully articulates this unease from the TC's point of view in a 2013 essay on contemporary Hungarian literature in English translation:

We were discussing a translation project that I had begun, a novel written in the late 1920s, which had twice gone out of print, only to be given life again several years ago. In translation, a novel like that looks strange when it gets to its feet, many decades later, like an old man who arrives in a modern city wearing monocle and top hat. His name is unfamiliar, and although he may carry himself like those whose initials we have stitched on the inside of our collars—our Tolstoy's, our Woolf's, our Flaubert's—we still feel entitled to mistrust him. Even if we come to grow fond of his appearance or the sound of his voice, even if we come to adore him, he has nevertheless arrived alone, deprived of context, without predecessors or successors. He has lost something along the way, only we do not know what it is. (Levy 2013, 18-9)

It would seem that bridging the tempo-cultural gap through translation remains a daunting task today. This notwithstanding, even a cursory glance at the bibliography of post-2000 fiction translations will cast some doubt on the perceived difficulty, if not impossibility, of successfully translating and marketing early-to-mid-20th-century Hungarian works in English.¹²⁵ But if one was to select a single Hungarian author to serve as a counterexample to the projected failure of such an enterprise, it would have to be Antal Szerb, whose enduring recognition in his SC, coupled with unparalleled popularity in the English literary scene,¹²⁶ mark him out as one of the greatest classical Hungarian novelists in translation.

Antal Szerb, Cosmopolitan and Anti-Fascist

Szerb was born in 1901 into an assimilated Jewish family in Budapest. He was a novelist, essayist, literary theorist and university lecturer who remains highly regarded in Hungary to this day for both his creative and critical work. He was highly educated and well-travelled, and an expert in Hungarian and English Studies and on theories of the novel. His impressive scholarly output includes a pocket history of English literature (*Az angol irodalom kis tükre*, 1929), a history of Hungarian literature (*Magyar irodalomtörténet*, 1934), a volume about the modern European and American novel entitled *Hétköznapi és*

¹²⁵ Out of the 83 STs, 43 are pre-1989 and 27 are pre-1950.

¹²⁶ In terms of the number of titles translated as well as the number of translations of *Journey by Moonlight*: tr. Len Rix, 2001; *Traveler and the Moonlight*, tr. Peter Hargitai, 2016; *Journey by Moonlight*, tr. Peter V. Czipott, 2016. Peter Sherwood explains that Hargitai's translation was completed in 1994 but completely reworked for its 2016 publication (Sherwood 2016, 133).

csodák [Workdays and Wonders] (1935), and a history of world literature (*A világirodalom története*, 1941). He was also a regular contributor of poetry and short fiction to *Nyugat*, and later of critical pieces to *The Hungarian Quarterly*, a journal founded in 1936 whose launch, according to András Beck, “was a [...] gesture towards the Allied powers” (Beck 2008, 63). Szerb also contributed to an English-language publication, *A Companion to Hungarian Studies* (1943), “which expressly called itself the single-volume 1942 edition of *The Hungarian Quarterly* more than a year after the latter had been discontinued” (Beck 2008, 64).¹²⁷ Szerb’s career as a novelist spanned less than a decade, with his first novel, *A Pendragon legenda*, published in 1934 (English *The Pendragon Legend*, 1963/2006),¹²⁸ and his last, *VII. Olivér*, in 1941 (English *Oliver VII*, 2007).

Two themes that emerge clearly even from this brief biography are Szerb’s special relationship with the English-speaking world as a devoted Anglicist, and his resistance to oppressive ideologies. He travelled to Britain several times and spent a year in London on a scholarship in 1929, a few years before the publication of *The Pendragon Legend*, which is set in London and Wales. His second novel, *Utas és holdvilág* (1937, English *Journey by Moonlight*, 2001), features an English character living in Italy, Doctor Ellesley, whom the (anti)-hero of the book, Mihály, bonds with over their shared love of the country in passages infused with melancholic nostalgia:

They talked a lot about England, Doctor Ellesley’s other home, which he greatly missed. Mihály too was very fond of England. He had spent two very serious, dreamy years there, before going on to Paris and home. [...] He loved the appalling London weather, its foggy, watery softness, in which one can sink as low as the temperature in solitude and spleen. “In London November isn’t a month,” he said, “it’s a state of mind.” (Szerb 2013, 100)¹²⁹

Although England itself occupies a special, symbolic place in this text, Szerb’s interest in Anglophone culture can be seen as part of a more general outward-looking attitude or cosmopolitan literary sensibility, which is highlighted in many contemporary Hungarian reviews of *Journey by Moonlight*. The novel’s initial reception was mixed, and its crafty

¹²⁷ Beck describes three of Szerb’s typewritten, unpublished pieces found between the pages of a copy of *A Companion to Hungarian Studies*: one untitled, another entitled “‘New Hungarian Literature’, by A. Szerb,” and the third “headed ‘Hungary in the Older English Literature’ with Antal Szerb’s full name in pencil” (Beck 2008, 62). Beck posits that the third piece was written for publication in *The Hungarian Quarterly* (Beck 2008, 65).

¹²⁸ Tr. Lili Halápy 1963, Len Rix 2006.

¹²⁹ Unless otherwise indicated, all subsequent quotations from *Journey by Moonlight* are from the 2013 edition.

Europeanness often described in less than complimentary terms. One reviewer wrote in 1938 that

With the passion of a philologist, this certified expert on the modern European novel strives to make available to the Hungarian public all the great accomplishments of the contemporary Western novel at once. The result is awkward: the novel can only convey a faint image of Szerb, the excellent writer with a unique style and an English sense of humour [...] The reader is thus shown everything that is new about Huxley's, Cocteau's, Lawrence's, Proust's and Powys's innovations; he is introduced to the theories of Károly Kerényi and Heidegger, but gets nothing of Szerb. (Wágner 2000, 320)¹³⁰

The names of the same great European writers keep recurring throughout the collection of contemporary reviews of Szerb's works published in 2000 under the title *Tört pálcák*.

György Rónay and Endre Illés's assessments in the volume are in a similar vein:

Cocteau, Lawrence, Kerényi: many theories and "tricks", and others who are more knowledgeable could come up with more names, modern English and French, writers and philosophers, poets and scholars. *Journey by Moonlight* dangerously resembles some kind of a "novelistic encyclopaedia", an extraordinarily colourful collection of examples; there is a strange dryness to it that stems from extensive erudition, so the reader, emerging from the darkness of his excitement, is almost inclined to put a label on it: "Behold the modern novel." (Wágner 2000, 321-2)

and

For instance, how easily detectible are the foreign building materials in Antal Szerb's new novel: each chapter reveals Cocteau, or Mann, or Huxley. (Wágner 2000, 316)

While the above reservations about the book are mostly aesthetic, Szerb's West-leaning literary sensibility also manifested itself along political lines. Becca Rothfeld discusses Szerb's critical work bringing together scholarly-artistic and ethical concerns in a turbulent pre-war Europe:

There is also *One Hundred Poems*, a multi-lingual anthology of canonical Western poems that Szerb compiled in implicit defiance of the Axis powers and their distaste for certain kinds (the kinds that were not radically pro-German) of multiculturalism. The work was a monument to the international

¹³⁰ Károly Kerényi (1897-1973) was a notable Hungarian scholar in classical philology with a special interest in Greek mythology. One of the characters in *Journey by Moonlight*, Rudi Walheim, is thought to have been modelled on him (Petrányi 2012, 58).

literary tradition that Szerb loved so much, a quiet but powerful act of protest. (Rothfeld 2014)

Similarly, the above-mentioned *Companion* reflected Szerb's political sympathies: in Beck's assessment, "the plan for the Companion was part and parcel of a Western-oriented propaganda campaign that came to fruition in the spring of 1943" – that is, it was put together with prospective peace negotiations in mind with the UK and the USA (Beck 2008, 65). Szerb's 1936 travel diary, which *Journey by Moonlight* is partially based on, is testament to his lifelong commitment to intercultural dialogue as well as his increasing fear of political obstacles to this. He observed that

the direction of progress suggests that citizens will stop leaving their countries; [...] Travelling abroad is not of prime necessity, and the totalitarian state will no doubt, sooner or later, declare the principle that the true patriot does not leave his homeland, the true patriot stays put.¹³¹

In this ideological context, it is telling that the editor of *The Hungarian Quarterly*, József Balogh, wrote in a letter to Szerb that "I find it hard to think of a person more fitted than your good self for presenting Hungarian intellectual concerns to the outside world" (quoted in Beck 2008, 63).

Although the early critical responses suggest some unease about the extent to which Szerb seemed to be drawing on foreign literary traditions, this may well be one of the reasons why his work has enjoyed unusual popularity in contemporary English translation. London-based Pushkin Press published six titles in quick succession in the first decade and a half of the 21st century,¹³² making Szerb the most translated classical Hungarian author in the contemporary English-speaking world.¹³³ Talking about his choice to translate *Journey by Moonlight* before even finding a publisher, Len Rix explains that "it took just three pages for me to see that here was a great European novel" (Rix and Tóth 2010, 43), and

¹³¹ Originally serialised in *Nyugat*, Szerb's travel diary was published in a single volume in 2007 as *A harmadik torony*, and as *The Third Tower*, in Len Rix's English translation, in 2014. I have been unable to get hold of Rix's version, therefore the translation included here is my own, based on an excerpt published in vol. 10 of *Nyugat* (1936) available digitally through the Electronic Periodicals Archive & Database (EPA) at <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00022/00609/19293.htm>.

¹³² *Journey by Moonlight* (2001, *Utas és holdvilág* [1937]), *The Pendragon Legend* (2006, *A Pendragon-legenda* [1934]), *Oliver VII* (2007, *VII. Olivér* [1941]), *The Queen's Necklace* (2009, *A királyné nyaklánc* [1943]), *Love in a Bottle* (2010, *Szerelem a palackban* [1963]), and *The Third Tower* (2014, *A harmadik torony* [2007]). Pushkin Press was founded in 1997 and publishes both classics and contemporary writing from across the globe; see <https://www.pushkinpress.com/about/>, accessed 17 September 2017.

¹³³ See footnote 126. In 2009, eight years after its first publication, *Journey by Moonlight* was still kept regularly in stock by Waterstones in the UK.

later mentions the text's universal thematic appeal as an important feature that was likely to resonate with an international audience:

As for the content of the novel, the fact is the story – and the character – of Mihály spoke so intimately to me I didn't at the time believe anyone other than myself would truly 'understand' it. I have since discovered that everyone who reads it feels the same way! It addresses a universal problem with a directness no other novel I know of does. Mihály, though he fails to see it, is trying to live 'the life of the soul' in a materialistic and convention-dominated world, and his predictable failure indicts a whole civilisation. (Rix and Tóth 2010, 43)

One could argue, then, that there are layers of resistance in Szerb's work that ensure its continued relevance. On the one hand, on top of the biographical evidence, there is plenty of explicit content in his writings condemning the direction world politics was taking in the 1930s, and even foreshadowing the unfolding of tragic historical events. But there is also a subtler kind of protest, one that was relatable at the time of the publication of *Journey by Moonlight* in English translation, and that is perhaps even more so in the post-2007 era of neoliberalism and the recent rise of the far right.¹³⁴ This is the resistance to what Rix refers to as "a materialistic and convention-dominated world" – leftist thinkers may call it simply capitalism – and it is this implicit critique that Rothfeld (2014) articulates in her review of *Journey by Moonlight* when she writes, "to be impractical and ill-suited to this boring, banal world was, in Szerb's eyes, the highest possible achievement."

This background to Szerb as a European or Anglophile writer, and the suggestion that the consequent universality of *Journey by Moonlight* may be the key to its contemporary success in English, go some way towards explaining why the novel was selected for translation.¹³⁵ The research questions that emerged from this and informed my reading of the TT can be broadly summarised as follows: what kind of cultural gap exists between the ST and TT versions of *Journey by Moonlight*, how does the translator attempt to bridge this gap, and – inasmuch as it can be commented on in literary-aesthetic terms, through close reading – how successful is his attempt?¹³⁶ More specifically, the novel will be presented in this study as an example of an old text in new translation, with the intention of examining the ways in which the 64 years that passed between its SL and TL publication may have increased the distance between the two versions, and posed additional challenges

¹³⁴ While spatial constraints will not allow much more than such a sweeping generalisation, the UK's increasing Euroscepticism culminating in Brexit, together with the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States, should constitute sufficient evidence.

¹³⁵ In a 2010 interview, Rix mentioned that "*Journey by Moonlight* alone has now sold 40,000 copies, and the number is rising" (Rix and Tóth 2010, 44).

¹³⁶ See footnote 47 about measuring success in translation.

for the translator.¹³⁷ We will now turn our attention to the language of the novel and inspect the target textual fabric more closely.

The Language of *Journey by Moonlight*

While I was not fooled into thinking that the novel was originally written in English, my own experience of *Journey by Moonlight* was that of an engaging read.¹³⁸ Peter Sherwood has eloquently stated that “Len Rix is really very good overall in this minor, Szerbian key” in the context of comparing his translation to two later ones (15 August 2016, pers. comm.).¹³⁹ This is important to assert before discussing my findings from a research methodology that is by its nature negatively biased: when looking for suspected shifts in a TT reading, the reader is much more likely to identify potential problems than particularly well-crafted passages or astute solutions. Nonetheless, a non-comparative reading with attention to all features of the TT that stand out is a useful strategy, with the vast majority of suspected shifts subsequently confirmed as actual shifts in the case of *Journey by Moonlight*. I will now offer an overview of the shift patterns that emerged from this initial reading in English, before discussing the potential implications of these for larger shifts in meaning or effect.

Mistranslations

No matter how one might try to categorise translation shifts, there will always be significant overlap between the categories. As we will see, in some instances it is worth considering the likely source of the shift (e.g. inadequate knowledge of Hungarian), while in others this seems to be a less fruitful effort. Because the purpose of the present study is not to offer a new taxonomy but to answer broader questions about how and why this particular text changes in translation, in the following paragraphs I will use the term ‘type

¹³⁷ While older materials come with unique challenges, they are not *automatically* more challenging to translate than contemporary writing. Because of globalisation and an evolving culture of translation, the passage of time may also reduce the distance between languages and cultures. Therefore, cultural and linguistic transfer is not necessarily easier in the immediate aftermath of publication, particularly, as Rix puts it, “in the early stages of one culture’s awakening to the tradition of another” (Rix 2009, 102).

¹³⁸ As with the other case studies, it was important from a methodological perspective to engage with the TT first, and let this reading guide all comparisons with the ST. I had read the ST more than a decade earlier, so my sense is that this did not influence my reading of the translation in any significant way.

¹³⁹ *Journey by Moonlight* is therefore in the unique position of being available to an English-speaking readership in three different versions. Unfortunately, a comparative analysis of the three translations is beyond the scope of this essay. Sherwood offers some initial comparative observations in a recent article (Sherwood 2016, 133–4). While a line-by-line ST-TT comparison of full works is rarely feasible and not necessarily the best way to investigate a translation, reading multiple TTs of the same ST is an extremely fruitful exercise, and one that does reveal a lot about the creative potential of the ST even without direct reference to it.

of shift' loosely. The first of these will be referred to as mistranslations.¹⁴⁰ These include fictional-factual inaccuracies (e.g. different characters performing the same action in the ST and the TT),¹⁴¹ or SL words with multiple meanings that were translated with the contextually wrong meaning in mind. It should be noted that mistranslations can be difficult to spot because, unlike the examples further down where the TT seems stilted or even grammatically incorrect, mistranslations do not always compromise the readability of the TT. In an English-only reading, focusing on coherence (internal consistency) is the most effective, although by no means watertight, strategy.

Mistranslations abound in *Journey by Moonlight*, with incorrect word choice as the most common example. We are told, for instance, that Erzsi is an attractive woman: “men found her charming, or at the very least sympathetic” (21). ‘Sympathetic’ and ‘szimpatikus’ are *faux amis*: the closest TL equivalents would be ‘friendly’ or perhaps ‘approachable’. “You know how correct my parents are” (32) sounds unnatural in English because ‘correct’ is not a character trait: here, the translator misunderstood the adjective ‘rendes’, which in the ST context means ‘decent [people]’. “The two golden children probably never knew what they had to thank for three days of stomach-ache” (209) betrays similar confusion: although ‘aranyos’ is indeed etymologically related to ‘arany’ [gold], the adjective means ‘sweet’ or ‘charming’ in modern Hungarian. A rhetorical device is misinterpreted in “it’s no use. Italy has everything I ever longed for” (96): ‘I must say’ or ‘I must admit’ would have been more appropriate. Éva takes out loans in the ST but does the opposite, “ma[kes] really surprising loans,” in the TT (58). A similar factual error and gender confusion occurs when Erzsi’s ex-husband, Zoltán Pataki, is thinking about visiting her: “But what of his pride? Erzsi didn’t care a hoot for him. He didn’t need Erzsi. Erzsi had no wish to see him...” (209) Erzsi is, in fact, the subject of all three sentences (three clauses in the ST) here, so she is the one who does not need Pataki (in his view anyway). This is a relatively minor semantic shift – certainly not as significant as Sherwood’s example from *Anna Édes*¹⁴² – but other occurrences harm the TT’s internal consistency much more

¹⁴⁰ Used without reference to translator capability or intention. Dezső Kosztolányi leaving out the Queen of Hearts from his 1936 translation of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* was a deliberate decision, but it would be classed here as a mistranslation, designating a specific kind of semantic shift that changes the denotative meaning of a textual unit.

¹⁴¹ The term *tertium comparationis* is sometimes used to denote the extra-lingual fictional reality or text world. Hewson warns of the limitations of the concept in translation criticism by pointing out that the *tertium* “cannot be said to be an objectified (and objective) yardstick, but rather the construction of a common denominator that aims for objectivity, and yet which is necessarily – and subjectively – formulated in one (and one only) of the two languages under investigation. The *tertium*, in other words, is itself a form of translation” (Hewson 2011, 8-9).

¹⁴² See footnote 97.

conspicuously. When Erzsi challenges János Szepeetneki's assumption that she had been left by her husband by asking, "How do you know that he left me and not the other way around?" he responds with "Forgive me. I shouldn't have asked" (160). The point that he is making here is, of course, the exact opposite: that he *should* have asked (and did not – the ST has 'Forgive me, I didn't even ask' [164]).¹⁴³

Other examples sit less comfortably in the category of mistranslations but make for similarly uneasy reading. A case in point is the sentence "Here there is something desolate, something dark and rugged, like the bay-tree: that exactly epitomises the harsh attractiveness of Italy" (84). I initially simply marked this sentence as worthy of investigation because it jarred with the TT context, only to discover during comparison with the ST that the translator may have misinterpreted the original sentence structure, which in a more literal rendering would read as 'it is precisely this harsh Italy that is [so] attractive' (87). In other words, it is not that Italy's attractiveness is harsh in general, but that this kind of Italian landscape constitutes the country's main appeal for Mihály. I would also classify rendering 'csúnya' [ugly] as 'drab' as a mistranslation in a context where the moral connotations of the SL word are significant, as in "Millicent Ingram was not the mind-boggling, soppy-named, beautiful American girl to be seen in Paris in the years after the war, when everything else in the world was so drab" (109).¹⁴⁴

Since this list is not intended to be exhaustive, I will offer one last example illustrating mistranslation as well as subtler poetic shifts.¹⁴⁵ This is a particularly rich passage which, as well as indicating difficulties of linguistic processing on the part of the translator, marks a departure from the ST aesthetic. I will therefore quote the paragraph in its entirety.

For indeed, what had been his life during the past fifteen years? At home and abroad he had been schooled in mastery. Not self-mastery, but the mastery of his family, his father, the profession which did not interest him. Then he taken [*sic*] his place in the firm. He had really tried to learn the pleasures befitting a partner in the firm. He had learned to play bridge, to ski, to drive a car. He had dutifully entangled himself in the sort of love affairs appropriate to a partner in the firm. And finally he had met Erzsi, who was sufficiently talked about in

¹⁴³ All ST page numbers refer to the 2016 edition by Helikon.

¹⁴⁴ The ST clearly refers to the post-war world not simply as 'dull' but as morally corrupt, similarly to expressions like 'ugly betrayal' or 'ugly fight'.

¹⁴⁵ "The critic cannot afford to undertake an exhaustive analysis, even at the basic, microstructural level. It is thus necessary to work on the basis of an initial reading, reflecting the elements identified in the critical framework" (Hewson 2011, 27). How quantitatively significant such errors are in a particular work cannot be decided without a full record; qualitative assessment, however, is an even more complex question which I will come back to, although there is no doubt that, for example, frequent grammatical errors are a nuisance and make the Anglophone reader's job harder" (Sherwood 2016, 132; my translation).

high society for the level of gossip to satisfy what was due to the young partner in a fashionable firm. And he had ended by marrying her, a beautiful, sensible, wealthy woman, notorious for her previous affairs, as a partner should. Who knows, perhaps it needed only another year and he would become a real partner: the attitudes were already hardening inside him like calluses. You start off as Mr X, who happens to be an engineer, and sooner or later you're just an engineer who happens to be called Mr X. (89)

Mert íme, mi volt az élete, az utóbbi tizenöt év alatt? Otthon és külföldön tanulta a mesterséget, nem a saját mesterségét, hanem családjának, apjának, cégének a mesterségét, ami nem érdekelte, azután beállt a vállalatához, azután igyekezett megtanulni azokat az élvezeteket, amelyek egy vállalat beltagjához illettek, megtanult bridzsezni, síelni és autót vezetni, igyekezett a vállalat beltagjához illő szerelmi kalandokba bonyolódni, végül is megtalálta Erzsit, akivel kapcsolatban azután úri társaságokban annyit beszéltek róla, amennyi pletyka csak kijár egy előkelő cég fiatal beltagjának, és végre beltaghoz méltóan meg is házasodott, szép, okos, gazdag és előzetes viszonyuk által nevezetessé vált nőt vett el. Ki tudja, talán már csak egy év kell, és csakugyan beltag lesz, az attitűdök befelé kérgesednek, az ember először N. N., aki történetesen mérnök, és idővel már mérnök, akit történetesen N. N.-nek hívnak. (93)

The red flag that prompted a closer examination of these passages is the curious use of the word 'mastery' in the second and third sentences of the TT extract. 'Mastery' cannot be a synonym of 'profession' in English, and yet the two terms are both used as corresponding to 'mesterség' [profession] in the TT, making the start of the paragraph barely intelligible in English. 'Self-mastery' and 'mastery of his family' refer to character and willpower, implying an ability to control oneself and others, even though the ST simply explains that Mihály had spent the last fifteen years learning a particular profession. Furthermore, according to the ST, Erzsébet is notorious, or at least much talked about, because of *their* (Erzsébet and Mihály's) affair prior to their marriage, not her previous affairs with other men. While these certainly qualifies as mistranslations according to the definition provided above, it is also worth noting that the bulk of the ST is taken up by a single sentence over 12.5 lines. In English this is broken up into eight sentences. In the context of Mihály running away ("it was fear that had driven him to the mountains", 89), his agitated, free indirect stream of consciousness constitutes a stylistic marker of his state of mind. The bitty, steady and measured TT extract gives no sense of pulsating fear. This phenomenon could be broadly described as a stylistic shift.

Stylistic Shifts

The distinction between mistranslation (change in meaning) and stylistic shift (change in style) may seem vague. As recent scholarship has pointed out (e.g. Hewson 2011, 18),

style has gone from being seen as secondary to meaning (e.g. Leuven-Zwart 1989, 162) to constitutive of meaning, and therefore central to the study of translation.¹⁴⁶ However, I would argue that in the case of *Journey by Moonlight*, it is worth distinguishing between the two both in micro- and macro-level analysis. In terms of the former, it can be concluded from the sample above that, on the one hand, mistranslations very likely result from the translator misunderstanding the foreign language text, and, on the other, that they represent a series of idiosyncratic modifications of ST meaning. This is not to say that such semantic shifts are necessarily insignificant¹⁴⁷ or random,¹⁴⁸ or that their analysis has no pragmatic use.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, I propose that in the search for patterns in micro-level shifts that inform how the meaning of the creative work as a whole changes in translation, stylistic shifts – changes in tone, register, poetic effect, etc. – are more relevant to the present study.¹⁵⁰

Once again, mention must be made of the way in which the research methodology used here can potentially skew the results. For example, changes of tone in the ST that are ‘ironed out’ in the TT are translation shifts that are almost impossible to register in a TT-guided analysis, whereas the reverse is much more likely to be noticed. In fact, all of the stylistic shifts identified during my reading of *Journey by Moonlight* involve some degree of awkwardness or inconsistency in the TT. For example, departures from Szerb’s plain-English-like writing commented on above stood out, as in “Later on I laboured to remove this sense of estrangement by being extremely compliant, but that’s another story” (35). The target textual context itself leads the reader to expect a more conversational tone here, given that Mihály is talking to his wife over a glass of wine on their honeymoon, and a

¹⁴⁶ See also Geoffrey H. Leech and Michael N. Short’s ([1981] 2007) monist/dualist perspectives, and Gabriela Saldanha (2014) on style in translation.

¹⁴⁷ Hewson asserts that he “would not follow Leuven-Zwart in her affirmation that ‘only those microstructural shifts which show a certain frequency and consistency lead to shifts in the macrostructure’ (1989, 171), since one marked shift can influence the way a whole text is interpreted” (Hewson 2011, 8). No single micro-level shift with such impact was found in my reading of *Journey by Moonlight*.

¹⁴⁸ For example, in unpublished notes, Sherwood identifies the translator’s misunderstanding of the *topic-comment* information structure of the Hungarian language as underlying the confusion in the murder scene of *Anna Édes*.

¹⁴⁹ They may highlight gaps in translator training or the need for some form of quality control, e.g. by a native proof-reader.

¹⁵⁰ Mistranslations and stylistic shifts can be mapped onto Kitty van Leuven-Zwart’s descriptive model for the analysis of narrative prose, which distinguishes between ‘story level’ and ‘discourse level’. Mistranslations occur at the story level, which is where “abstract events become concrete actions and events which occur in a certain order, in a certain fictional time and at a certain fictional place”, while stylistic shifts belong to the discourse level, which “is defined as the linguistic expression of the fictional world as it is created on the story level” (Leuven-Zwart 1989, 172).

comparison confirms a marked difference from the casual ST dialogue.¹⁵¹ In other words, what this method is most likely to highlight is TT markedness in general (which may or may not result from shifts) and, more specifically, instances of unnatural or stilted English which are often interpreted as unwelcome shifts ('translationese'), even though this is not necessarily the case.¹⁵²

One of the most striking stylistic patterns I have found in the English version of *Journey by Moonlight* concerns word order. It is worth reiterating here my earlier point about the greater variation in possible constituent order in Hungarian compared to English.¹⁵³ One of the practical implications of this for comparative discourse analysis is that there are various standard (unmarked) structures in Hungarian, whereas in English, which is traditionally classified as a subject-verb-object (SVO) language, a departure from this is likely to be marked even where the sentence remains grammatical. The following quotations illustrate the many OSV occurrences to be found in *Journey by Moonlight* (objects are marked in bold):

Gradually he came to feel that surely only one place in Venice would have it, and **that** he would have to discover on the basis of pure instinct. Thus he arrived among the back-alleys. (11)

But **this possibility** she then completely dismissed. (13)

These islands later Christian observers, in their usual passion, transformed to islands of the blessed (197)

The smell Mihály could tolerate. [...] But **the darkness** he did not like (224)

Other types of topicalisation or fronting (that is, moving a constituent other than the object to the front of the sentence) also occur in the TT and are similarly marked, as in

Exactly where, I'm not sure. (19)

and **on her** wine always had a strong effect (73)

¹⁵¹ ST: "Később azután ezt a távolságérzést engedelmességgel igyekeztem korrigálni, de az már más történet..." (33).

¹⁵² Hewson criticises Berman's (1995/2009) approach for this reason, arguing that reading the TT first "to see whether the translation conforms to certain standards [...] seems to preclude any licence with the target language that has been taken in response to any idiosyncratic use of the source language that the author may have exploited" and "innovative decisions taken by the translator on the basis of the source text are thus likely to be censored" (Hewson 2011, 10).

¹⁵³ See footnote 83.

It is important to point out here that with the possible exception of the fifth example, this TT feature is the result of conscious or unconscious choices: alternatives include simply adhering to the standard constituent order ('she then completely dismissed this possibility'), using the passive voice ('these islands were transformed by later Christian observers [...]'), or expansion into a clause ('and that was something he would have to discover on the basis of pure instinct'). I would argue that these instances represent shifts in readability and register from the ST, and I will consider these in greater detail in a moment.

Another clear stylistic pattern in the TT involves the use of ungrammatical constructions. I understand grammar as distinct from both meaning and style but not independent of either. Since the examples I will now cite do not constitute a denotative departure from the ST, I have decided to discuss these as part of the stylistic shifts. Remarkably, the translator seems to have rendered Hungarian reflexive verbs throughout the text as reflexive in English, resulting in extreme markedness and an ungrammatical, or at best strongly non-standard, TL:

she is going to feel herself *déclassée* (67)

he did not feel himself to be in sin (98)

she felt herself at an advantage (110)

So now I should feel myself honoured? (163)

Mihály recovered himself in an instant. (200)

This type of non-standard usage is commonly ascribed to first language interference in the speech of learners of English as a foreign language, which makes it a curious literary phenomenon in a text produced by an educated native speaker. As with the previous examples, questions of readability arise as far as the receiver's point of view is concerned, and the sender's (in this case, for simplicity's sake, the translator's) assumptions about the texts are highlighted as deserving further investigation.

Dialogue: Pragmatic Shifts

The remaining stylistic shifts are more difficult to order, and inventing subcategories purely for the sake of formality seems counterproductive. As a loose organising principle, we could mention shifts that feature in dialogues or, to be more specific, TT formulations

leading to stilted conversations between characters that do not flow quite smoothly or naturally. The reason why these might be treated separately from shifts occurring elsewhere is twofold: firstly, reading dialogue (a hypothetical oral exchange expressed in writing) requires deriving meaning without the help of extratextual factors such as tone of voice and other nonverbal cues. The narrator may, of course, comment on these to aid the reader's interpretation of the text, but this is by no means a given. It could be argued, therefore, that dialogue as a mode poses unique difficulties for the reader, and any TT feature that inhibits understanding may be felt more acutely if it occurs in dialogue. At the same time, the nuances of dialogue often reveal important information about the characters' psychological states, and the opposite is also true, that dialogue is read and interpreted with the characters' assumed inner worlds and thought processes in mind. Dialogue is thus essential to character portrayal. Secondly, to be able to render dialogue in another language convincingly, the translator needs to be thoroughly familiar with oral expression in what is usually their second language. This may present a challenge to translators who learned the SL as adults without long-term exposure to the source oral culture.¹⁵⁴

An illustrative exchange takes place between Mihály and Erzsi in the presence of János Szepetneki in Chapter III. At one point Erzsi begins to feel uncomfortable with the apparent tension between the two men and tries to leave, but Mihály stops her:

Mihály looked at her in exasperation.
 “Just stay here. Now that you’re my wife this is your business too.” (18-19)

Mihály nagyon ingerülten nézett rá.
 – Csak maradj itt. Most már a feleségem vagy, most már terád is tartozik minden. (16)

One way to interpret this shift is to say that the illocutionary force of “Csak maradj itt” (“Just stay here”) changes in translation.¹⁵⁵ While both illocutionary acts are *directive* (Erzsi is instructed to stay), the ST utterance is also *expressive* of Mihály's exasperation in

¹⁵⁴ Rix learned Hungarian relying on written sources while living in the UK: “I first heard Hungarian spoken conversationally in October 1989. I was enchanted—such a beautiful, resonant, richly expressive language—and I immediately decided to learn it. I acquired dictionaries, books of grammar and tapes, and began a systematic programme of vocabulary learning, which has never really stopped” (Rix and Tóth 2010, 43).

¹⁵⁵ I use the terms ‘locution’, ‘illocution’ and ‘illocutionary force’ in line with J.L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words*: “I explained the performance of an act in this new and second sense as the performance of an ‘illocutionary’ act, i.e. performance of an act *in* saying something as opposed to performance of an act *of* saying something; I call the act performed an ‘illocution’ and shall refer to the doctrine of the different types of function of language here in question as the doctrine of ‘illocutionary forces’” (Austin 1976, 99-100).

a way that the TT is not. ‘Csak’ is a particle with multiple functions listed in László Országh, Dezső Futász and Zoltán Kövecses’s *Hungarian-English Dictionary* (2002), which include “emotional colouring of assertions, negations, questions” (204) and “expression of resentment and threat” (205). Such connotations could be conveyed, for example, by the phrases ‘don’t you go anywhere’ or ‘stay where you are’ in English. The reader may, of course, take the sentence “Mihály looked at her in exasperation” as a cue to imagine “Just stay here” being said with indignation, given that tone is one of several illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) in English (Searle and Vanderveken 1985), as it is in Hungarian. However, I would argue that the reader has to work harder to extract this connotational meaning from the utterance in the TT than in the ST.

A similar situation arises in the conversation between Mihály and Ervin in Chapter XI of the TT. Ervin, a childhood friend, invites Mihály to visit him in the monastery where he lives and explains how he could get there:

“[...] Hire a boy to bring you up. Will that be good?
 “It will be good, Ervin, very good.”

– Fogadj majd egy kisleányt, hogy felvezessen. Jó lesz így?
 – Jó lesz, Ervin, nagyon jó lesz.

As in the previous example, the shift resulting from the literalism of the TT is pragmatic. The locution has been rendered correctly in English, but the ST illocution is not ‘asking for the interlocutor’s opinion’, as the TT formulation would suggest, but rather ‘invitation to accept a proposal’, as, for instance, in ‘Does that sound good?’ or (the more modern) ‘Does that sound OK?’, or even ‘How does that sound?’ I would conjecture that, even though the TT expression disrupts the reading process, the English reader can probably still derive the correct illocutionary meaning from this utterance. This is not necessarily the case, however, with my third and final example of a pragmatic shift.

The loss (or introduction) of irony in translation is perhaps the most dramatic kind of pragmatic shift, because verbal irony is based on a diametric opposition between the ‘surface’ meaning and an ‘underlying’ meaning.¹⁵⁶ It could be argued that irony is a

¹⁵⁶ *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Baldick 2015) defines ‘irony’ as “a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance.” ‘Verbal irony’ is defined as involving “a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant, as in its crude form, sarcasm.” In M. H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham’s definition, verbal irony “is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker employs is sharply different from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed. An ironic statement usually involves the explicit expression of one attitude or evaluation, but with indications in the overall speech-

rhetoical device that changes the denotative meaning of a statement, and therefore a shift that neutralises irony in the ST could, in fact, be classed as a mistranslation. A case in point is the conversation between Erzsi and her friend Sári in Chapter XII where Erzsi expresses reluctance to divorce Mihály despite his less than considerate treatment of her:

“But Mihály isn’t like other people. That’s why I chose him.”
“And that was a fine move.” (150)

– De Mihály nem olyan, mint más ember. Azért is mentem hozzá.
– Jól is jártál vele. (154)

Sári’s response is clearly ironic in the ST, but not necessarily in the TT, where it could be read as supportive. The irony can be deduced from the context (Sári continues with “I really dislike the sort of people who aren’t like other people”), but not from the utterance itself, or at least not to the same extent as from reasonable alternatives (‘And what a fine move that was’, ‘And how much good has that done you?’).¹⁵⁷ Even if we accept that the rest of the dialogue makes Sári’s position clear enough, it is worth noting instances like this because of the cumulative effect they might have on the reading experience.

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this brief and selective survey. Firstly, it would seem that several shift types in *Journey by Moonlight* are recurring and patterned, particularly stylistic and pragmatic ones, and making sense of these and assessing their impact is the next step towards an understanding of the relationship between the ST and the TT. Secondly, my findings support Hewson’s proposition that “information about the translator(s) should be collected when possible” (25). For Hewson, this is one of the six areas of preliminary data collection, although he also claims “it is not for translation criticism to decide why a particular choice was made, nor whether it was made consciously or unconsciously, but to examine the impact that the choice may potentially have on the reading and interpretation of the target text.” (19). My own view is that both are legitimate and necessary enquiries. Especially in a field as small as Hungarian-to-English literary translation, attention must be paid to the small number of translators who are able to enter this very limited arena of literary production. We might consider Rix’s playful comment as a starting point: “Ah, but who is to do all this translating? Why are so very few people involved? It obviously takes a rather unusual, indeed rather odd sort of person, qualified by

situation that the speaker intends a very different, and often opposite, attitude or evaluation” (Abrams and Harpham 2012, 184).

¹⁵⁷ Note that the second alternative is not necessarily ironic (depending on what definition we use) but the illocutionary force of the question captures the speaker’s intention.

a unique combination of advantages and defects” (2009, 101). I propose that even a superficial examination of the translator’s subjectivity may provide pointers for textual analysis.

Interpreting Shifts: *Journey by Moonlight* in English

Archaisation and Overtranslation

As stated earlier, *Journey by Moonlight* is investigated here as an example of a classic text in contemporary translation. Accordingly, one of my preliminary research questions concerned the way in which the translator dealt with the time gap between the production of the TT and that of a ST which “appears markedly past to readers in language, content or both” (Jones and Turner 2004, 159). My initial assumption was that this time gap might pose a problem for the translator and result in either a ‘false historicity’ (a TT anchored in a different time period than the ST) or mixture of different time-deictic signals (internal TT inconsistency). In their overview of archaisation and modernisation techniques in translation, Francis R. Jones and Allan Turner divide such signals into two categories: “historically datable linguistic forms” (2004, 162), including conjugation and lexis, and “reference to artefacts, situations, etc. peculiar to a certain historical period” (163). Examples of the former are scattered across the ST of *Journey by Moonlight*, mostly in the form of subtly archaic conjugation (still used, but predominantly by older generations) and dated but mostly accessible vocabulary.¹⁵⁸ Examples of the latter are identifiable at every turn, from the way the characters communicate (by letter or telegram) to references to contemporary medicine: “Tell me that I have cerebral anaemia and prescribe iron tonic and bromide for my nerves. That’s what you’re supposed to do” (123).

It is noteworthy that, contrary to my expectations, none of the shifts registered in the reading of the TT were primarily to do with archaisation or modernisation. There was no overall sense that the TT referenced a different time period from the ST production or setting, or that its time deixis was inconsistent. Only a few isolated occurrences were identified where the source of the shift was clearly the aforementioned time gap, such as the instance also pointed out by Sherwood elsewhere: ‘retikül’ (155), he observes, “is ordinary interwar for ‘handbag’; ‘reticule’ [(152)] here is a false exoticism” (unpublished

¹⁵⁸ Examples of dated vocabulary include ‘papiros’ (79), ‘passzus’ (83), ‘röstellem’ (131), ‘parasztórát’ (149), ‘urad’ (meaning ‘your husband’, 154).

notes). I also noted one instance of hyperarchaisation¹⁵⁹ where Pataki, Erzsi's ex-husband, asks himself, "Why, despite all this [...] would I give up half my fortune to lie with her?" (220).¹⁶⁰ However, the stylistic shift patterns described above do show some similarities with a technique Jones and Turner refer to as 'superficial archaisation', which "involves adding lexical or syntactic archaic markers into a target text that is otherwise relatively modern" (166). The authors illustrate the use of such markers with a translation fragment starting with an OSV construction: "The nightingale we'll praise" (167). Markers including "word-order inversion," they claim, "often belong to a standardised archaic register of easily recognisable features which are unlinked to a specific time period. [...]" Alternatively, such devices may indicate a more general 'traditional poetic diction'" (167).

Whether or not we apply the 'archaisation technique' label to such stylistic shifts in *Journey by Moonlight*, they certainly constitute a shift towards a more formal, more literary register. 'Literarisation' is a value-neutral description of this process, but the appropriateness and implications of terms like 'overtranslation,' which Sherwood uses in his notes, and 'exoticisation' are also worth examining. Both these terms are intimately connected with the translator's (or other key agents') assumptions about the ST or the SL. Overtranslation can be defined as the retention of linguistic features erroneously perceived as significant.¹⁶¹ A case in point is the sentence "With a café waiter he telephoned Erzsi's hotel" (211). Sherwood explains that "this is the Hungarian causative construction, where the agent takes the 'with' case": the TT should therefore read 'He had the waiter telephone Erzsi's hotel' (unpublished notes). Overtranslation here has resulted in what I defined above as mistranslation: in the TT Mihály and the waiter make the phone call together. This may well have been a simple misunderstanding of the ST meaning, but other patterns – OSV order, verb reflexivisation – are less likely to be unconscious tactics. In fact, these TT features are in line with some of the ideas Rix has expressed about the nature of the Hungarian language. "Locked up in the magyar tongue lies a rich store of literary art. It is the product of a unique historical experience," he writes (2009, 99), and then proceeds to expand on this Romantic conception:

The prime agent of revelation is the Hungarian language itself: with its extraordinary syntax, its special rules for assigning stress, its insistence on

¹⁵⁹ Coined by Robin Lefere (1994), the term is defined by Jones and Turner as "the translator us[ing] forms older than those which the source writer's target-language contemporaries would have used" (Jones and Turner 2004, 165).

¹⁶⁰ The TL is almost Biblical here; 'sleep with her' would be a register-appropriate euphemism corresponding to the SL expression.

¹⁶¹ Berman's use of the term refers specifically to explicitation or 'expansion': "a stretching, a slackening, which impairs the rhythmic flow of the work" ([1985] 2000, 290).

sequencing phrases in every way impossible in English. Each problem is a fresh challenge to invention. The narrower vocabulary, where nuance is conveyed as much by context as anything else, together with its indifference to pronouns, plunge one into an endless search for the precise English equivalent, if only to avoid repetitions—not a blunder in some languages, but intolerable in English. (2009, 103)

Despite their lack of any scientific foundation,¹⁶² these claims provide a lens through which to view the translator's work. They reveal an ideological context not just of the patterns discussed above, but of many other, idiosyncratic occurrences where the TT seems to be inflected by the SL. This context may explain the unusual sentence structures in “when they sat down to dinner he could already, **a little**, look upon her as a lovely fragment of his past” (71, my emphasis),¹⁶³ and in “For Pataki, as he did with everyone, had maintained good relations with them” (211). Given Rix's admitted fascination with Hungarian syntax, these constructions can be seen as efforts to salvage some of the perceived exoticism of the SL (rather than the ST) in translation.¹⁶⁴

The upshot of this exoticisation at the most basic textual level is likely an increased cognitive burden on the reader. Even if we posit that the stylistic changes are not to do with archaisation *per se*, Jones and Turner's diagnosis of accessibility problems in new translations of older texts seems pertinent. They point out that readers are typically familiar with a range of diachronic language varieties, and therefore “on cognitive grounds alone, one must not assume that archaised text is always harder to process and produce than modernised text” (2004, 171). It would probably be similarly reductive to claim that ‘Exactly where, I'm not sure’ inherently requires greater cognitive effort from the reader than ‘I'm not sure where exactly.’¹⁶⁵ However, as Jones and Turner continue to explain, texts that violate readers' ‘schemata’ or “mental models of phenomena that typically occur together [...] tend to be perceived as cognitively jarring and thus harder to process” (2004, 171-2). In some sense, then, traces of Hungarian grammar injected into the English TT appear more disruptive than the run-on sentences in the English translation of *Seiobo There*

¹⁶² From a scholarly perspective, Hungarian syntax is ‘extraordinary’ only in that it is unlike the syntax of Indo-European languages. Whether its stress patterns qualify as ‘special’ depends, again, on one's point of view: its lexical stress, for instance, is fixed, meaning that the stress in multisyllabic words always falls on the same syllable (the first). Hungarian having a ‘narrower vocabulary’ is a puzzling suggestion, as is the idea that context matters more in Hungarian than in English.

¹⁶³ Rix rigidly follows the Hungarian syntax here: “és amikor vacsorához ültek, **kissé** már úgy nézett Erzsire, mint múltjának egy szép darabjára” (76, my emphasis).

¹⁶⁴ See footnote 154.

¹⁶⁵ Other examples, however, are almost certainly harder to process, like the lost illocutionary force in “Will that be good?”

Below. A macro-level consequence of this stylistic transformation, I would argue, is that the nostalgic mode that defines the ST shifts.

Nostalgia and Foreignness

“I’m writing a novel about nostalgia. It should be something like *Le Grand Meaulnes* and *Les Enfants terribles*,” Szerb wrote in a letter in 1937 (quoted in Havasréti 2011, 427). Indeed, nostalgia permeates the text, from Mihály’s yearning after his bohemian-flavoured adolescent friendships to reminiscences of his time spent in England. But it is not just at the level of personal reflections or desires that the presence of nostalgia is felt. József Havasréti differentiates “three aspects of the motif of ‘journey to the past’: journey through historical periods, journey to childhood, and journey to primordial time (which should be distinguished from historical time)” (Havasréti 2011, 431). These multiplicities are partially borne out by the plot. Mihály talks to Erzsi about his youth on their honeymoon because he misses his former social circles, but the stories he tells about their role-playing games also reveal psychoanalytical aspects to the narrative as a whole: “I really enjoyed being the sacrificial victim [...] Éva loved to be the woman who cheats, betrays and murders men, Tamás and I loved to be the man she cheats, betrays, murders, or utterly humiliates...” (37). The literal journey is therefore also at least triply metaphoric: the vacation in Italy allows Mihály to open up to his wife about his past (journey to adolescence) and creates a situational context for Mihály to act on impulse (he abandons Erzsi) and return to adolescent behaviour. On the other hand, the literal journey also prompts Mihály to extract meaning from the surrounding land- and cityscapes: “While ‘reading’ the city, Szerb’s hero captures the atmosphere of history and the presence of the Spirit unfolding through the historical process on the one hand, and the opposition of the nostalgic historical atmosphere and the prosaic present on the other” (Havasréti 2011, 434). This kind of meaning-making is discernible in the TT, although it does not consistently embody the same level of mysticism – connections that are not immediately understandable or knowable – as the ST. A case in point is the description of Gubbio in Chapter IX (my translation below):

In most of the towns in this part of Italy (as in so many ancient cities elsewhere) the houses give an impression of dilapidation, of being within a few short years of total ruin. (133)¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ As shown in my translation, Rix parsed the syntax incorrectly here, and consequently misplaced “as in so many ancient cities elsewhere” in the structure.

A legtöbb olasz város ezen a vidéken azt az érzést kelti, hogy házai omladozóban vannak, még néhány év, és az enyészet elnyeli, mint annyi más régi várost. (133)

Most of the towns in this part of Italy give the impression that their houses are on the verge of collapse, and in just a few years they will disappear from the face of the earth like so many ancient cities before them.¹⁶⁷

The difference between the connotations or poetic value of ‘dilapidation’ and ‘total ruin’ vs. ‘disappear from the face of the earth’ is worth noting. Such shifts matter because mysticism and nostalgia are linked by the idea of inaccessibility (of knowledge/the past). A comparative, side-by-side close reading of versions of the entire novel or excerpts from it may provide useful insight, through examples like the above, into how TT(s) (re)produce nostalgia at the linguistic level, but even a TT-guided analysis like mine raises issues worthy of further consideration. For example, if nostalgia is construed as a (desired) return to a past that is by definition different from the present (‘lost’), then it is remarkable that this desire drives Mihály abroad in an attempt to reconnect with his personal past. Even though the journey is not a return in the geographical sense because Mihály has never been to Italy before, foreign territory – from a Hungarian perspective – becomes a site not only of returning or witnessing a return to primal behaviours and desires,¹⁶⁸ but of literally, physically reconnecting with the past: Mihály finds Éva in London and later in Rome, and Ervin in Gubbio, while he himself is tracked down by Szepetneki in Ravenna. In the ST, nostalgia points away from the home country, geographically towards England, where Mihály has been before, and Italy, where he has not. Thus, the foreign and the familiar merge in Mihály’s search for a spiritual home: “nem *fog* volt, csak *mist*” (104), he tells Ellesley while recounting his London visit, because, firstly, he finds it easiest to capture his experience through the use of the English words, and secondly, he knows that his audience (the English doctor) will understand the references, perhaps similarly to how the reader is assumed to both be able to access the referents of ‘fog’ and ‘mist’ and understand the necessity of foreign-language expression. Unsurprisingly, “it was mist rather than fog” (101) in the TT, an instance of TT unmarkedness where the ST is marked, captures little of this emotional, spiritual and philosophical complexity.

Furthermore, since the ST is ‘markedly past’, it is also able to channel nostalgia on another time plane: that of the reading. One way in which the text generates this contemporary nostalgia is the use of loanwords that are now obsolete or archaic, and of non-phoneticised

¹⁶⁷ I am grateful to Peter Sherwood for his comments and improvements on my translation.

¹⁶⁸ See Havasréti’s discussion of the symbolism of liminal spaces in the novel (2011, 435-9).

spelling for some of these.¹⁶⁹ ST terms such as ‘déclassée’ (71), ‘szimptóma’ (73), ‘exorcizálta’ (130) and ‘exorcizálni’ (148), ‘serenitása’ (146), ‘ospizióba’ (149), and ‘delicatesse-ből’ (166) now function as time deictic signals because they have been largely replaced by more vernacular terms in contemporary discourse, and can now be read as markers of nostalgia for the time of the production of the text that itself harks back to ‘happier’ times. In addition to these, the ST also incorporates what Maria Lauret (2014) has termed ‘wanderwords’: “foreign words punctuating a text that have ‘wandered into English’ from other languages” (Szilágyi 2016). Ranging from isolated words through set phrases to complete lines of poetry, these are either italicised in the ST (“*nichts für ungut*”, 72; “*Cor magis tibi Sena pandit*”, 122; “*Denn da ist kleine Stelle, / Die dich nicht sieht. Du must dein Leben ändern*”; 122), or seamlessly integrated into the Hungarian (“my dear lady”, 110; “the blue Pacific Sea”, 115). The novel’s (West) European sensibility is thus literally written into the language of it. Because the relationship between multilingualism and erudition has since weakened, the implicit assumption that the novel’s original readership would have no difficulty engaging with heterolingual material endows it with further nostalgic value from a twenty-first-century perspective.¹⁷⁰

It is clear from the above that nostalgia cannot operate along exactly the same principles in the TT. The heterolingualism of the ST is subdued in Rix’s translation, and this is not simply because English is itself a Western European language, and what constitute English wanderwords in the Hungarian, like ‘fog’ and ‘mist’, blend into the TL without being marked out in any way, including italicisation. The time deictic character of loanwords is neutralised: ‘delicacy’ and ‘symptom’ are denotatively equivalent to ‘delicatesse’ and ‘szimptóma’, but because contemporary Hungarian prefers non-Latinate alternatives, their use in the TT amounts to ‘minimal modernisation’ (Jones and Turner 2004, 167).¹⁷¹ Both

¹⁶⁹ There is a modern tendency in Hungarian to completely phoneticise loanwords (‘menedzser’ rather than ‘manager’) as opposed to partial phoneticisation (‘saxofon’, ‘Barcelóna’) or foreign spelling (‘computer’). In his preface to *Idegen szavak magyarul* [Loanwords in English], which includes both older and newer spellings of loanwords, István Tótfalusi writes, “previously, essentially all the way until the 1954 publication of the Academy’s spelling rules, our loanwords of Latin, French and German origin mostly followed the orthography of the given language, so ‘kompenzáció’ was ‘compensatio’, ‘sablon’ was ‘chablon’, and so on” (Tótfalusi 2002, 10-11).

¹⁷⁰ Baer highlights the connection between multilingualism and the imperial past in Eastern Europe: as I have summarised elsewhere, “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” (Szilágyi 2013, 16).

¹⁷¹ Minimal modernisation can be a conducive strategy in translating old texts: “Richardson (1998, 128-9), citing Vladova (1993), adds the claim that linguistic modernisation best enables a work to be situated temporally for the reader, arguing that the contrast between modern-day language on the one hand and ‘references in the text to archaic forms and artefacts’ on the other hand ‘emphasis[e] the outdatedness of these references’” (Jones and Turner 2004, 167).

versions of the text signal foreignness, but while in the ST this is manifested as leaning towards, and even being nostalgic for, Western Europe, the TT linguistically represents ‘Hungarianness’ that is foreign in the TC context. In other words, the ST is both backward-looking (nostalgic) and outward-looking (rooted in a desire to belong to the West, or for a more united Europe). The TT can neither depict nor constitute a dialogue with the past in the same way if the past is uninterpretable or unknown to the TC readership. This brings us back to Levy’s metaphor of the gentleman wearing monocle and top hat who “has lost something along the way, only we do not know what it is” (Levy 2013, 19). Linguistically and, to some extent, in terms of collective memory, Hungarianness achieved through exoticisation, even when recognised as such, is an empty signifier, and therefore signalling foreignness in this way cannot create nostalgia. As Levy further explains,

the first Nyugat generations were successful with respect to revitalizing and modernizing contemporary Hungarian literature, but very little of their own writing went the other way, to the West, and as a result, when we read Kosztolányi now, in the recent translations of *Skylark* or *Kornél Esti*, we feel as though we are in possession of an artifact, one which can move us in the way that great fiction can. Yet it is an artifact nonetheless, for its window to influence those giants of modernism, to find permanent homes in the canons of other nations, seems already to have closed [...] (Levy 2013, 19)

Perhaps translating Hungarian modernists with a view to revitalising English literature would be, as Levy suggests, overly ambitious. But success can be defined and measured in various ways, and Rix himself has repeatedly taken a stance against the doom-and-gloom approach to translation into English. *Journey by Moonlight*, he points out,

has [been] reprinted five times in seven years, with an accumulating print run of over 30,000 copies to date. For each sale, assume three or four other readers. Add those who have purchased Szerb’s other two novels—also going strong—and combine it with the steady following for Kertész and Márai that has also sprung up, and you see the potential. (Rix 2009, 100)¹⁷²

What is certain, and encouraging, is that Szerb’s novel has had a significant readership in English. One of the aims of this chapter was to establish how the novel they read might differ from the Hungarian literary artefact, and in order to do so, I took stock of several types of micro-level or linguistic shifts between the ST and the TT. I stipulated that some of these – most notably the stylistic shifts – are to do with the translator’s “idées fixes about the ‘beauty’ of Hungarian” (Sherwood, 25 February 2017, pers. comm.), while pragmatic shifts and mistranslations have likely resulted from his limited understanding of

¹⁷² This number is now higher; cf. footnote 135.

the SL. In terms of the techniques used to deal with old material in translation, I concluded that both superficial archaisation and minimal modernisation have taken place. Crucially, the novel's relationship with 'the great European tradition' is reconceptualised in its English translation: the joint consequence of monolingualisation and overtranslation is, ironically, a firmer rootedness in the SC than the ST itself displays. Therefore, in a sense it is the English translation – the invitation to step into the European or world literary space – that shows the text as culturally embedded rather than a universally accessible work of literature that happens to have been written in Hungarian.

Concluding Remarks on the Case Studies

In the introductory chapter of this thesis I outlined a textual analytical approach and reading strategy tailored to all three case studies presented here. I identified my own reading of the three translations – a structured, non-judgemental, initially non-comparative and quasi-monolingual reading drawing on Berman's model of productive criticism – as the first step in, and the foundation of, the research process, which determined the specific focus of each study and guided the exploration of the divergence between the interpretive potential of the STs and the TTs. In other words, the initial research question was not any more concrete than "how do these texts change in translation?", although more specific questions were raised along the way in each case. Practical considerations have contributed to methodological discrepancies: in Chapter 1 I discussed at length the various practical obstacles to collecting hard data about translations, including the ways in which information about translations is recorded and made discoverable in databases. The limited availability of data is less pertinent to the close reading of texts which are themselves easily accessible, but still stands in the way of a completely unified analytical approach and a step-by-step model of textual commentary. For example, interviews with the translators of *Seiobo* and *Journey by Moonlight* have revealed important assumptions about the nature of the Hungarian language which seem likely to have impacted translational choices, but the translator of *Parallel Stories* remains an elusive figure and I have had to rely on intra-textual evidence only in analysing his work.

It would be reductive to make general claims about how Hungarian literature is translated based on three case studies, but the analyses can enrich our understanding of these specific texts and my tentative formulations contained therein aim to encourage further systematic research on translation practices between this language pair. In Chapter 2, I argued that an important characteristic of the author's writing style, which through its non-standard use of

punctuation is intended to mimic speech, is compromised in translation: the translator produces TT sentences of similar length but structures them in a manner that is far removed from the naturalness of spoken English. I also posited that this shift enables a meta-textual reading of the novel that is not applicable to the ST in the same way: the TT requiring commitment and effort from the reader parallels the text's thematic concern with the "hard work" of meaningfully engaging with art. In Chapter 3, I concluded that the principle of corporeal writing is absent from the TT, which may partially explain why the translation has been less favourably received (based on reviews) than the ST. Nádas's original work exhibits parallelisms on a thematic as well as a grammatical level, and the narrative is propelled forward by the constant manifestations of bodily impulses as well as bodily memory. These features are missing from the TT, which results in a disjointed and fragmented story that becomes difficult to follow because of its ambitious scope. In Chapter 4, I considered the impact of various categories of shifts on the target textual meaning and reading experience, and argued that, contrary to my expectations regarding inconsistent archaisation, it is overtranslation – the attempt to reproduce linguistics features considered stylistically relevant which are, in fact, inherent to the SL grammar – that results in overarching shifts in meaning and effect.

What these translations ultimately have in common is that, put simply, they are all harder to read than their sources: I have been able to pinpoint concrete ways in which these texts impose an increased burden on the reader rooted in translational choices. In other words, although all texts inevitably change in translation, we can say that these "inscription[s] of one interpretive possibility among others" of each ST produce less comfortable and easy readings than other possible ones (Venuti 2013, 4).¹⁷³ I have also highlighted some evidence suggesting that these translational choices are to do with linguistic competence on the one hand, and translator's attitudes to the SL on the other. Of the many instances of high-profile translators apparently simply misunderstanding the source text, some can be explained in terms of specific, if hypothetical, limitation of SL processing, including reference tracking. At the same time, many of these shifts can be linked to the translators' perceptions of the Hungarian language as unique, exotic, poetic, highly flexible, and fundamentally different from English. While the main aim of this thesis is not to make value judgements – and, in fact, the first of the case studies was concerned with exploring

¹⁷³ Regarding the idea that texts inevitable change in translation, Venuti explains that "the source text is transformed even when the translator makes a rigorous effort to maintain a semantic correspondence and stylistic approximation because the interpretants, although they main contain source-cultural materials, are drawn predominantly from the receiving situation" (2017, xii).

the creative potential of what were probably unconscious shifts which could have easily been framed as mistakes – it would be disingenuous to deny the implications of these findings to translation practice, more specifically, to quality control or the lack thereof. Highlighting the need for example, skilled bilingual editors, for example, is unlikely to be effective given the financial investment that would be required from an already under-resourced industry, but academia should nonetheless play its part and suggest alternatives where possible. For instance, it is conceivable that Hungarian-to-English literary translation would benefit from moving in a collaborative direction. While the phenomenon itself is not new – one of the Hungarian translators cited in this thesis, Peter Sherwood, regularly collaborates with his wife, Julia Sherwood, on translations from Slovak, Czech, and Polish – the notion of collaborative translation has received much critical attention in the field of Translation Studies recently, and my own translation, presented at the end of this thesis, has led me to think about translation as inherently collaborative. This idea will be further explored in the next chapter, which introduces the translated novel.

Chapter 5. Translating *Gabriel*: Reflections and Foreword

1.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the novel translation that follows it and integrate it into the thesis. It is intended as a bridge between theory and practice, both in terms of content and writing style: like the rest of the critical component of this project, it is research-informed (as is the translation itself), but it will also allow the translator to step forward, document her experience, and explain how it may constitute knowledge. It is a montage of different modes of writing, from analytical through autobiographical, self-reflective and anecdotal to what might be termed ‘creative non-fiction’.

Before we proceed, we should return briefly to the concept of **practice-as-research** (P-a-R), which was mentioned in the introduction as one of the methodologies applied in this thesis. There is a growing body of criticism on this mode of knowledge production, which has focused heavily on the visual and the performing arts, and to a lesser extent on creative writing. It is not my intention to summarise the discourse on P-a-R here, mainly because volumes like *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (2007, ed. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt) and *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances* (2013, ed. Robin Nelson) do it better than I could. There are two points I would like to make about P-a-R. The first concerns the terminology: I use ‘practice-as-research’, ‘practice-based research’, and ‘practice-led research’ interchangeably, and take them all to mean ‘learning by doing and documenting the new knowledge’.¹⁷⁴ The translation is therefore both process and product. There is a range of related expressions denoting the same phenomenon or similar phenomena, conveniently listed on page 5 of Patricia Leavy’s *Handbook of Arts-Based Research* (2017),¹⁷⁵ but there is no need for me to engage with the full range here. My second point relates to P-a-R being *one* of the methodologies used in this thesis and this chapter. Strictly speaking, presenting what I have learned about translation by translating is what qualifies as P-a-R, and that is one of the functions of this chapter. For example, in section 3 I will discuss what I have learned about translating into one’s second language by doing so. But the translation also constitutes research-based practice where (traditional) research can include,

¹⁷⁴ The documentation is a crucial component of P-a-R. As Nelson has pointed out, “the literature is dominated by the presentation of case studies which do not always bring out clearly what constitutes research (as subtly distinct from professional practice)” (Nelson 2013, 4).

¹⁷⁵ This table is based on Chilton and Leavy 2014.

for example, reading other texts to establish common problems in H-to-E translation and learn how to avoid them. P-a-R is only part of my methodological framework.

Another function of this bridging chapter is the contextualisation of the primary text for the target culture readership. By ‘primary text’ I mean both the source text (the circumstances in which it was produced and how it has been read in the source culture) and the target text (how it might be read in the target culture). From an academic perspective, it is also important to reflect on the title choice in light of what I have learned about title selection in the translation and publishing industry in general. While my personal relationship with the source text, which I will elaborate in a moment, has played an important part in my decision to translate it as part of an academic project, it has also become clear that (unsurprisingly) current publication practices simply do not favour non-contemporary authors, especially if they are also critically neglected in their source culture. My translation is therefore an act of subversion in the Venutian sense, not because of any experimentalism but because the selection “runs counter to the canon of the source literature already translated” (Venuti 2013, 2).

My role and status as a translator deserve some consideration in relation to the other published H-to-E translators of fiction. It is clear from the Bibliography that the best-known and most prolific translators working for big publishing houses have closer ties with the target culture, a fact that is not in itself surprising given the norm to translate into one’s first language and the rarity of someone inhabiting both cultural spaces equally. Out of the three translators whose work I have looked at more closely in this thesis, only one may be called a native speaker of Hungarian. According to his biography on the website of Twisted Spoon Press, Imre Golstein left Hungary in 1956 at the age 18.¹⁷⁶ Otilie Mulzet and Len Rix both learned Hungarian as adults. While this phenomenon is of socio-cultural interest – for example, it raises questions about the possibility of industry bias based on translators’ names, which may be Hungarian or ‘foreign’-sounding – it also has more direct and tangible significance because many of the shifts I have discovered seem to result from the translators’ limited understanding of Hungarian. An illustrative example of how literary sensibility cannot replace source language competence can be found in Otilie Mulzet’s English translation of a piece of flash fiction by Krasznahorkai, ‘I Don’t Need Anything from Here’ [Nem kell innen semmi] (Krasznahorkai 2013). Mulzet rendered “én itt hagynék csapot és papot” [I would leave everything behind] as “I would leave here the

¹⁷⁶ ‘Imre Goldstein’, Twisted Spoon Press, accessed 5 September 2017, <https://www.twistedspoon.com/goldstein.html>.

petcocks and the padres”, a delightful alliteration that completely misses the idiomatic meaning.¹⁷⁷ As we have seen, reference tracking in Hungarian can also be problematic.¹⁷⁸ This is a consideration that sets my translation apart from the three that have been discussed here: whatever criticisms might be levelled against my work, denotative misunderstanding of the source text is unlikely to be among them.

I have briefly argued that translating *Győzelmes Gábrriel* formed part of the research process, and that *Gabriel the Victorious* is also the product of research; that in an industry setting the source text would be an unlikely candidate for translation; and that the target text presented here is unusual not just because it is an academic translation but because the direction of the transfer is L1→LX, or acquired to learned language, a point I will come back to shortly. Another important aspect of this research is that of translator training. As mentioned above, translation criticism can be regarded as training because developing and practising analytical skills on other texts helps to cultivate an analytical approach towards one’s own creative work. Interacting with practising translators has similar benefits. I conducted two formal interviews as part of my research but I also had informal conversations with some of the most prominent translators in the field: Bernard Adams, George Szirtes and Peter Sherwood. An emerging translator can learn a great deal from these on a practical level. One memorable piece of advice I was given is that one should not write in dialect in English (by Adams; I avoided dialect in my translation). Szirtes maintains that if a translation is bad, it is not because of mistakes in general but because of the tone: one should hear a functioning voice in the receiving language (I do; I rehearse voices in my head).

On the next few pages I will tell the story of my first encounter with the source text and how my reading of it changed over the years. I will introduce the author to his prospective English-language readership and enlist the help of his biographer to highlight and explain his undervaluation in the source culture. Addressing this critical neglect reaffirms the significance of my translation, partly because current translation and publication practices favour contemporary authors with extensive commercial apparatuses behind them, but also because Méhes’s own work was and remains subversive.¹⁷⁹ Next, I will survey recent

¹⁷⁷ I am grateful to Peter Sherwood for pointing me to this piece.

¹⁷⁸ See, for example, footnote 97.

¹⁷⁹ Aspects of this subversion will be explored in greater detail below, but János Dénes Orbán sees the flourishing of children’s literature itself as a vehicle of resistance in mid-century Romania: “The cultural

developments in the field of Translation Studies that focus on the translator, and discuss what it means in practice to translate collaboratively into one's second language as well as how it should be theorised. I will then provide a summary of the target text and position it in relation to some major twentieth-century English-language works that *Győzelmek* *Gábrriel* is in dialogue with, regardless of whether they have had any direct influence on the writing of it. It is important for the translator to be mindful of such ahistorical intertextual connections because they can be used to enrich the contemporary reader's experience of the target text. This section contains material that could be included in the foreword to a published edition, but it also serves the purpose of highlighting a theoretical approach in action: if translation is always an interpretive act then the translator can freely interpret a text without having to worry about narrowly defined faithfulness to the source. In this sense, the interpretive potential of my work is happily and self-consciously divergent from the source's and accommodates a range of TC referents, from a single nod to Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* (through the use of the term 'Finder') to the name 'hairyshirts' suggesting *Star Trek*ish dispensability. At the same time, a synopsis and survey of the major themes of the novel by its translator should be construed as commentary on the translation; in fact, practising translators rarely articulate explicit theories about their own work or works, and are often resistant to the idea of translation theory being relevant to their day-to-day professional pursuits. One does not set out to produce "a foreignising translation" or a "domesticating translation" or an "ethical translation" – let alone an "unethical" one – and even in terms of translation techniques, strategies or goals, a theory or theories can rarely be extrapolated from a translation project.¹⁸⁰ Instead, implicit theoretical assumptions are woven into the fabric of any translation, and the translator's subjectivity is shaped by subtle influences, from their education through their unique relationship with the source and target languages to their reading of the source text. The translator's description of their "radically variable" source is therefore analysis (Venuti 2013, 4). This is not to say that specific challenges and solutions adopted should not be discussed, only that such a discussion will inevitably be a collage of (hopefully) interesting points rather than a coherent theory. This collage will be offered in the closing section of this chapter.

politics of socialism – especially in the early years – tried its best to coerce art into a realist orientation. Anything that betrayed an affinity with anything else, idealism in particular, was viewed with suspicion. Overzealous pedagogues would have even got rid of fairy tales, claiming that they fostered idealism and mysticism, which could interfere with children's developing frame of reference. In this sense, Romanian children's literature gaining momentum in the mid-1950s is a clear sign of defiance and resistance" (Orbán 2001, 14).

¹⁸⁰ There are few exceptions to this, but adaptations – e.g. of an adult work for children, or of prose to the stage – are more easily theorised projects.

This text comes from a vacuum and arrives in a vacuum.

It is true that the child reader rarely ponders the absence of literary context. When one is just discovering the joys of reading, everything comes from a vacuum. I was not in any way disturbed by the author's unfamiliar name the first time I picked *Győzelmes Gábor* off my parents' bookshelves, although the vaguely futurist illustration on the front cover told me the book had been written a long time ago, before I was born, which was an uncomfortable thought. I like to think I was as captivated by the story as my father once had been – it was his much-loved and -read copy, after all.¹⁸¹

After many years of studying literature, new texts no longer appear to come out of nowhere, no matter how obscure they might be. And yet, when I started searching for a novel that had not been translated into English and would be a special enough candidate for a PhD-level creative project, I realised that this childhood favourite still existed in a bubble for me. I started doing research, both in the traditional academic way, by looking for criticism, and more informally. Few people in my circle of Facebook friends knew anything worthwhile about György Méhes, although some could identify him as a writer. This came as a surprise because not long before this I had visited Budapest and seen posters prominently displayed in subway stations advertising some of Méhes's recently republished novels.¹⁸²

Histories of literature from both Hungary and Romania are reticent. There is no mention of Méhes in volume IV of *A magyar irodalom története 1945-1975* [The history of Hungarian literature 1945-1975], titled *A határon túli magyar irodalom* [Transborder Hungarian literature] (Béládi 1982). Lajos Kántor and Gusztáv Láng's *Romániai magyar irodalom 1945-1970* [Hungarian literature from Romania 1945-1970] (1971) makes a few quick references to Méhes's dramatic output.¹⁸³ The comparatively informative Wikipedia article

¹⁸¹ It seems that even by the standards of childhood memory, the arrival of this book in my life is shrouded in mystery. My sister tells me I read the whole novel to her but does not remember if she liked it or not. She does remember the cover, which was already worn (my parents still have that copy) and this intensified the strange atmosphere of the book – mystical, exciting, unsettling? She was so anxious about the story that I had to stop several times and explain that it was all going to work out in the end. It was difficult for her to tell if the events described might have happened in real life. I have no recollection of any of this, which is puzzling. She is two years younger than me.

¹⁸² Ulpius-ház published a series before it went under in 2015. More recently, Cerkabella, a publishing house specialising in children's and young adult literature, brought out a selection of Méhes's novels for children.

¹⁸³ See also Orbán 2001, 132-3.

relies primarily on *Romániai magyar irodalmi lexikon* [Encyclopedia of Hungarian literature from Romania] (Dávid 1994). None of these volumes satisfy any curiosity that extends beyond the most basic biographical and bibliographic data. The only work that both acknowledges and goes some way toward filling this gap (abyss?) in scholarship is a 2001 monograph by Cluj-based poet János Dénes Orbán, *Bizalmas jelentés egy életműről* [Confidential report on an oeuvre].

In ‘The monographer’s afterword’, Orbán describes his shock on discovering that the author of many of his beloved childhood reads was in fact an extremely prolific and versatile writer who had been inexplicably and unjustly relegated to total obscurity:

For nine years I had frequented various arts faculties, as a writer and editor I had taken part in dozens of high-brow conferences as well as tipsy conversations around pub tables, I had exchanged ideas with hundreds of literary scholars, and not once had it come up that György Méhes might be something more than a smiling, fairy-tale-telling grandfather. [...] No one in the whole world was promoting Méhes. Not the textbooks, not the anthologies, not the scholars I knew. No one ever even told an anecdote about him. So it is sheer coincidence that I was introduced to him because I work for a publishing house that decided to bring out a Méhes-series and an introductory monograph on the occasion of his upcoming [85th] birthday. (Orbán 2001, 137-8)

Such is the context in which the first and (thus far) only monograph on a once popular Transylvanian Hungarian writer was conceived. As well as reflections on Méhes’s literary output from children’s stories and young adult fiction through plays and novels to journalism – Orbán calls these “a kind of reading diary” (138) – the volume contains an interview with Méhes reprinted from a 1997 issue of the journal *Szabadság* [Liberty], a photo section, and an extensive bibliography put together by Péter Kuszálik. The literary discussion is organised by genre and proceeds in rough chronological order. There is only one chapter that is dedicated to a single title: ‘1966’ introduces what Orbán calls “a utopian-esoteric-magic-idealist-fantasy-adventure novel”: *Győzelmes Gáriel*.¹⁸⁴

Elek Nagy, known by his pen name György Méhes, was born on 14 May 1916 in Székelyudvarhely, then part of the Kingdom of Hungary, into a bourgeois family. They moved to Cluj (now Cluj-Napoca, Hungarian: Kolozsvár) in 1917. Nagy was five years old when the Treaty of Trianon came into effect, meaning he would live most of his life on the

¹⁸⁴ The novel was written in 1966 and first published in 1967 (Orbán 2001, 34).

Romanian side of the new border.¹⁸⁵ He studied law and developed an interest in theatre, and in 1938 he spent a few months studying in Budapest on a scholarship from the National Theatre. His journalistic career began with theatre reviews and soon expanded into the area of political journalism. During the Second World War he served in the Royal Hungarian Army but was never sent to combat. After the war he worked as an editor for various journals but his career suffered because of his refusal to join the Communist Party, leading to a forced name change in 1952. The disillusioned journalist withdrew from public life and turned to freelance writing and translation instead.

He translated and co-translated plays, novels, short stories and children's stories from Romanian into Hungarian. His first young adult novel, *Verőfény* [Bright sunshine], was published in 1952, and his first collection of children's stories in 1954 (*Gyöngyharmat Palkó és más mesék*) [Palkó Gyöngyharmat and other stories], followed by more children's and young adult literature. He became, and for decades remained, a regular contributor to a major children's magazine launched in 1956, *Napsugár* [Sunshine].

He started writing for the stage in 1960. His first play, *Oroszlán a kastélyban* [Lion in the castle], failed, but *33 névtelen levél* [33 anonymous letters] became an instant success and was later adapted for television.¹⁸⁶ Orbán attributes a revival of Transylvanian theatre to Méhes, claiming that his entertaining, accessible dramatic works attracted previously uninterested audiences:

The cheerful plays are mainly about everyday problems, particularly family life, but their reproval of the regime is thinly veiled. These lightweight pieces seem like diversions that allowed Méhes to occasionally play his real cards, substantial dramatic works, such as the parables *Barbár komédia* [Barbarian comedy] (1967) and *Noé bárkája* [Noah's ark] (1969), which set forth a more complex, more metaphysical theory of power and attack the highest circles of the powerful. (10)

The journalist-turned-children's writer-turned-playwright came to adult fiction-writing last. His first novel, *Orsolya* (1977), was largely ignored by the literary establishment, although his war-themed and autobiographically inspired *Bizalmas jelentés egy fiatalemberről*

¹⁸⁵ Cluj remained part of Romania except for a brief period during the Second World War when a large part of Transylvania was reassigned to Hungary. At the time of his death in 2007, Méhes was living in Budapest.

¹⁸⁶ *Oroszlán a kastélyban* was performed only in Cluj and reviewed once (Szöcs 1960). "Sadly, my wife was proved right. My play was a spectacular failure," Méhes wrote in *Egyetlenem* (2009, 112). *33 névtelen levél*, however, debuted in 1966 and ran at various theatres in Romania as well as Hungary into the 1980s, and was extensively reviewed. See Kuszálík 2001, 240-1.

[Confidential report on a young man] (1982) was met with some critical acclaim.¹⁸⁷ Méhes completed two more novels and two novellas before his death in 2007; his only major piece of non-fiction, the autobiographical *Egyetlenem: medalionok Erzsébetről* [My only one: medallions about Erzsébet] was published posthumously in 2009.

Kuszálik's bibliography is admirably meticulous and still disappointing to look at. Méhes's own works, creative and critical, are listed on pp. 193-252: books, books translated into other languages (mostly Romanian), anthologies, translations, forewords, short stories, essays, reports, articles, reviews, plays, children's stories, memoirs, performances, radio and television plays, to name a selection of genres to which he made contributions.¹⁸⁸ The section on secondary literature about Méhes – interviews, tributes, critical essays referencing his work – takes up less than two and a half pages. The critical response to *Győzelmes Gábor* was confined to three short reviews from 1967 until *Confidential Report on an Oeuvre* was published in 2001. Orbán theorises this critical neglect as follows:

I do not want to come to the conclusion that contemporary criticism took no interest in this freelance writer, who refused until the end to serve the regime and stayed away from literary cliques, simply because he was not a hack and therefore lauding him was not mandatory, or because he had no desire to pose as a Transylvanian messiah and as such did not appeal to those who placed the ideology of survival above aesthetics. I also do not want to conclude that some of his contemporaries were jealous of Méhes's successes on the stage. I do not want to indict the Transylvanian literary institutional system already being crushed from so many sides – but, sadly, these assumptions seem reasonable. At the same time, they serve as a warning: even though we have avoided the reappraisal of Transylvanian Hungarian literature for a decade, sooner or later we will have to face this task. (136)

Such is the critical vacuum from which *Győzelmes Gábor* emerges.

The plain cover of the second edition of *Győzelmes Gábor* (2001) stands in sharp contrast with its gripping content, but it is nonetheless of great interest to the literary historian. The blurb on the back cover represents an even more striking departure from the ideology, not just the visual aesthetics, of the 1967 edition:

¹⁸⁷ The title of Orbán's monograph is a play on this novel title.

¹⁸⁸ Some of these sections also include review citations.

This strange dystopia was presented as a children's novel and slid down the throat of a distracted censorship apparatus as such, even though its author "catering to children" could have been accused of anything from seditious agitation to freemasonry on the basis of the text.

Győzelmes Gábor is a kind of *1984* written as a children's story: a fantasy exploring problems of power in the spirit of Orwell and Foucault in an age when the works of Orwell and Foucault would have been inaccessible not just to the reader but to the writer himself.

Clearly, this kind of honest assessment would not be possible, let alone effective as a marketing strategy, without the benefit of historical hindsight. The austere new cover hints at the target audience having 'grown up': although the intended readership of good children's literature is always dual, the 'adult layer(s)' of this book, which once existed in a forced hierarchical relationship with its overt meaning, no longer need to be treated as unreal, secondary, or insignificant. This is not to say that *Győzelmes Gábor*, a "pseudo-children's novel," as Orbán calls it, has lost its appeal for younger audiences. It does mean, however, that we are free, some of us even compelled, *not* to read it innocently. To those of us with childhood memories of the text, this can be shocking. 25 or so years ago I was able to reassure my little sister that such things did not happen in real life, whereas now I would have to say, "they can happen, and do, and have – only the details are slightly different."

While reading up on the history of this title, I was reminded at every turn of the fine line between fiction and reality. Perhaps the most surreal moment was coming across an article from 2015 titled 'Kalandpark lehet egy erdélyi várkastélyból' [Transylvanian castle to be turned into adventure park?] (HVG 2015b). It reported that an immensely wealthy Transylvanian Hungarian businessman had bought the fifteenth-century Gyalu [Gilău] Castle in Cluj County. I could not help thinking about the billionaire antihero of Méhes's book who lives on an artificial island turned into a kind of hedonistic paradise. The fictional billionaire is called Lord Brilliantos. The real-life billionaire is called Elek Nagy after his father, the almost-forgotten Transylvanian Hungarian writer, the Great Story-Teller who was so persistent in exploring wealth and power through his work – one of the reasons why both eluded him.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ No further parallels between the fictional and the real-life billionaires are implied.

Translations often arrive in a vacuum as far as the target audience is concerned. It is the translator's task to familiarise herself with the original context and mediate it to her readers – in other words, to create a new context.

The documentation of the history of this translation would be incomplete without a discussion of the translator's subjectivity – my own. In terms of the broader academic landscape, this is possible because the translator has been firmly established as a legitimate object of study within the field of Translation Studies. There is also a methodological need to talk about myself in the context of the present research project, which is practice-led.

Although it is now generally accepted in academia that literary translation is a creative pursuit, and therefore the translator as creator deserves scholarly attention, this has not always been the case even in the relatively recent history of the discipline. *The Translator's Invisibility* (Venuti [1995] 2008) springs to mind, but others too have called for the translator's importance to be recognised, and successfully shifted the critical focus onto the people behind (or 'in') translated texts. In *Method in Translation History*, for example, Anthony Pym pointed out that Holmes's proposed mapping of the field (Holmes [1972] 2004) left little room for the study of the human element, prompting Pym to ask, on the back of a comparison with Lawrence Humphrey's 16th-century model, "where did all the people go?" (Pym 1998, 4). Peter Bush and Susan Bassnett introduced the 2006 edited volume *The Translator as Writer* with an assertion that seems more evident today, that translation is "an art to be celebrated, not concealed" (Bush and Bassnett 2006, 2). The book contains several personal histories – of translators as well as specific translations – many of which are unapologetically autobiographical and self-reflective, including Bassnett's own essay titled 'Writing and Translating'. A decade on, some of the claims made in this work feel dated. Academia has come a long way since the time of the "pervasive [...] hierarchical division" which meant that "scholars [were] discouraged from listing their translations as serious publications" (Bassnett 2006, 173).

As a further sign of shifting priorities, in 2009 Andrew Chesterman started talking about **Translator Studies**, once again remarking that "Holmes' vision of Translation Studies was highly weighted towards texts rather than the people that produce them" ([2009] 2017, 328). Chesterman outlined a subfield that would "focu[s] primarily and explicitly on the agents involved in translation, for instance on their activities or attitudes, their interaction with their social and technical environment, or their history and influence" (329). Among the various concerns of Translator Studies, he mentioned the "*sociology of the translating process*" (emphasis in original), which "has to do with the study of the phases of the translation event: translation practices and working procedures, quality control procedures

and the revision process, co-operation in team translation, multiple drafting, relations with other agents including the client, and the like” (327). Chesterman’s concept of the sociology of the translation process brings to mind the very recent emergence of genetic translation studies, which was described in 2015 by Anthony Cordingley and Chiara Montini as “analys[ing] the practices of the working translator and the evolution, or genesis, of the translated text by studying translators’ manuscripts, drafts and other working documents” (1).¹⁹⁰ Not only is there no reason for the translator to hide any longer; both her subjectivity and her processes are now widely accepted as relevant subjects of enquiry.

As I pointed out earlier, in so far as theory and practice can be separated from each other, it is true that in this research project practice has influenced theory and theory has influenced practice. The former is much easier to document than the latter, because practical translation rarely takes place with a particular theory or theories in mind. In terms of the ways in which producing this work has shaped my thinking about translation, two considerations deserve commentary here. Firstly, I must address the fact that I have translated a novel into my second language, and the experience and my gradual acceptance of this direction of transfer as a legitimate pursuit feeds into recent developments in scholarly thinking. Secondly, the same can be said about collaborative translation – that I have come to view translation as inherently collaborative in a variety of ways, and that this is to be embraced and exploited rather than resisted or hidden. In other words, I would argue based on this translation project that incorporating input from others in one’s work is not a weakness but the logical practical consequence of the long-overdue critical disengagement with the Romantic notion of authorship.

Literary translation into a language other than one’s first has traditionally been seen as problematic, although this is reflected more in unspoken assumptions and unconscious

¹⁹⁰ It could be argued that genetic translation criticism is text-oriented rather than agent-oriented: according to Cordingley and Montini, it “focuses [...] on the transformations of the translated text during the process of its composition. It may, like cognitive translation studies, also attempt to deduce the strategies and mental operations of the working translator. Yet its methodology differs from the cognitive approach because its object is the textual evidence of the activity of translation rather than the translating subject” (2015, 1). However, for Chesterman, both “the sociology of translators” – referring to “issues such as the status of (different kinds of) translators in different cultures, rates of pay, working conditions, role models and the translator’s habitus, professional organizations, accreditation systems, translators’ networks, copyright, and so on” – and the (process-oriented) “sociology of translating” come under the umbrella of Translator Studies ([2009] 2017, 326-7).

biases than in written policies.¹⁹¹ The reality of the industry is that the vast majority of literary translators translate into their native language or one of their native languages, and this is borne out by the data presented in Appendix A. I propose that this norm should be challenged – the production of *Gabriel the Victorious* in fact does so – and I am not alone: developments in both scientific and cultural understandings of language acquisition and linguistic competence support my practice-based findings.

Let us start with the science. The idea of the native language as a monolithic possession of the native speaker, and of foreign language learners as forever striving but never quite attaining linguistic perfection, has been the subject of much criticism on cognitive as well as ideological grounds, with Alan Davies' *The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality* (2003) constituting a milestone in the evolution of these concepts. Jean-Marc Dewaele (2018) and John E. Joseph (2017) provide useful and up-to-date summaries of the debate. The phenomenon of first language attrition has been studied since the 1990s and extensive research has been undertaken by Monika Schmid, among others (e.g. Schmid 2011; 2013; 2016), showing that – contrary to what the emotive term ‘mother tongue’ would suggest – first language competence is not static throughout a speaker's lifetime and LX gains (Dewaele's preferred term)¹⁹² often result in L1 losses.¹⁹³ L1 users are no longer seen as the guardians of secret knowledge that will forever remain inaccessible to the rest of the world, and this has profound implications for how we write, read, translate and evaluate literature.

Moving into the cultural arena, we can see that it is not just the native vs. non-native dichotomy that has been reconceptualised but English language and English literature too. Fiona Doloughan discusses this in the introduction to her monograph *English as a Literature in Translation* (2016), where she posits, as I have summarised elsewhere, that “the increasingly widely accepted notion that English belongs to all its users as opposed to an elite circle of native speakers is indicative of a radical transformation of previous

¹⁹¹ The same is true for the broader translation industry to some extent. In terms of source language vs. target language competence, requirements of the latter tend to be more stringent. For example, the Code of Professional Conduct of the Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI) states that “members shall translate only into a language that is either (i) their mother tongue or language of habitual use, or (ii) one in which they have satisfied the Institute that they have equal competence. They shall translate only from those languages in which they can demonstrate they have the requisite skills” (accessed 5 September 2017, <http://www.iti.org.uk/become-a-member/code-of-professional-conduct>).

¹⁹² “I have suggested using the label ‘LX’, meaning any foreign language acquired after the age at which the first language(s) was acquired, that is after the age of 3 years, to any level of proficiency” (Dewaele 2018, 238).

¹⁹³ For example, it has recently been shown that “even in the early stages of L2 learning, a L2 influence may be manifested in the L1 as a destabilization of word-to-referent mappings, suggesting continuous dynamic interaction between the two languages” (Malt et al. 2016, 684-5).

linguistic and cultural hierarchies” (Szilágyi 2016, 414). This radical transformation inevitably impacts how translation is viewed: one of Doloughan’s stated aims is to “show the extent to which for many writers today translation (in multiple senses) has become integral to the fabric of their narratives” (Doloughan 2016, ix). The concept of “translingual activism” is central to Doloughan’s project, “whereby the role that English plays in the world is unsettled through recognition of the complexities and inequalities of translation and understanding of the ways in which meanings are diversified through language crossing and mixing” (Doloughan 2016, 1). Maria Lauret takes a similar approach to ‘heterolingual writing’ in *Wanderwords: Language Migration in American Literature* (2014). Both authors focus on “literature inflected, informed, or haunted by the presence of languages other than – in this case – English” (Szilágyi 2016, 413) but relate their respective (but overlapping) theoretical frameworks to other disciplines and broader cultural and political concerns, such as education and language policy, history, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. Taking a step back from all this, we could say that the grand narrative of linguistic perfection vs. imperfection, English vs. other (lesser) languages, and vernacular vs. translated literature has given way to a more nuanced understanding of our linguistic universe, including literary production.

These trans-disciplinary conceptual shifts have a direct bearing on how I view and present my work as a translator. While I would normally describe myself as a native speaker of Hungarian who has learned English as a second language, the contrast between this schematic representation and the real-life complexities of my linguistic performance has become increasingly obvious over the past ten years I have spent living and studying in the UK. The familiar compliment “Your English is better than mine,” coming from monolingual speakers, is still flattering, but my initial, grateful but incredulous response (“Haha, thanks, but that’s not actually true!” (“I know better, I’ve done linguistics at university, you can’t develop linguistic intuition unless you acquire a language before the age of 12”) has been gradually replaced by a more tentative and pensive “Is it, though?” My Hungarian is different from my English, and my English is different from theirs, but is there any point in talking about knowledge hierarchy given how socially contingent language use is? For example, how does confidently recognising, and being able to teach, linguistic registers in English weigh against getting the occasional preposition wrong? And how serious a crime is sounding American from time to time? Is it really possible to separate implicit knowledge of grammar from the articulate expression of philosophically complex thought, i.e. to argue that the former is the exclusive privilege of the native

speaker regardless of their level of education, and the latter is something non-native speakers can get good at if they practise it long enough, a bit like chess?

The experience of translating *Győzelmes Gábor* – my first novel-length translation into English – has reaffirmed the fragility of linguistic hierarchies. During the four-year process, I had input from a range of experts and enthusiasts – colleagues and friends, all with a literary sensibility, although not all of them translators – who read and commented on various parts of the texts. Sometimes comments were made in writing, but in-person negotiations of meaning proved to be a more fruitful way of searching for the best available solution. Most of these contributors were native speakers of English and yet the discussions were much more balanced and nuanced than I had initially envisaged. As it turns out, I had vastly overestimated the difficulty posed by my ‘insufficient’ vocabulary in English: help rarely came in the form of giving me the English turn of phrase I was looking for. Instead, people would offer a range of options and explain – and, importantly, disagree with each other – on the connotations of each. On a few occasions, my English-speaking collaborators were themselves unable to come up with any suggestions, but the very act of describing the context with which I was grappling led me to an answer. English being my LX does not mean that I had to refer to a higher authority on linguistic matters to complete the translation. On the other hand, these conversations were often invaluable because of the cultural, rather than linguistic, expertise my collaborators brought to the table – for example, by pointing out that Rex Rapsallius claiming “knowledge grows out of the barrel of a gun” in Chapter 1 of Part 2 is an allusion to Mao Zedong’s often-quoted statement “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”

There is no denying that *Gabriel the Victorious* is the result of **collaborative translation** in an important sense, but almost all translations are collaborative.¹⁹⁴ This is true even if we define translation narrowly: during my two residencies at the Hungarian Translators’ House in 2015 and 2016, I witnessed first-hand the working practices of professional literary translators, who routinely consult other translations, often into English, of the source text they are working on. In fact, part of the appeal of translators’ residencies is the opportunity to spend time in the same physical space as other translators, because a living,

¹⁹⁴ I am using ‘collaborative translation’ in the general sense to mean the work of more than one person, rather than as a synonym of ‘crowdsourcing’ and ‘community translation’, which is how Pym defines the term (2011, 77).

breathing professional community stimulates translation work in a way that mailing lists and online forums cannot replicate. If we expand the notion of translation to encompass all aspects of target text production, the collaborative nature of the enterprise becomes even more obvious. As Anthony Cordingley and Céline Frigau Manning observe, “the vast majority of translators, especially those working in pragmatic or audiovisual contexts, must accept their role in the creation of a negotiated, dynamic text over which they have only provisional authority, knowing that their work may be modified significantly by revisers, editors, dubbing adapters and publishers of some form” (Cordingley and Manning 2016b, 2). “Provisional authority” implies responsibility for a certain stage of production, after which the product is ‘passed on’ to the next agent, and we may want to reserve the term ‘collaboration’ for instances where some form of dialogue takes place between the participants. Even if that is the case, however, translation – along with many other forms of writing, including academic writing – remains often collaborative, whether or not this is formally acknowledged.¹⁹⁵ Input from L1 users into a translation by an LX user should not be seen as fundamentally different.

¹⁹⁵ In monographs this is often evidenced by the acknowledgements section, and it could be argued that PhD theses are supervised and therefore by definition collaborative.

Gabriel the Victorious is about the battle between Good and Evil in an unnamed fictional world. The story begins on a strange mountain inside which a secret organisation is headquartered. They call themselves the Invisible. They represent the best in humankind: not only are they **courageous** and **pure** but also **hard workers** and **experts** each in their own field. Part One, 'The People of the Rock,' opens with new members being led to the mountain by the founder and leader of the Invisible, Gabriel. The 77 newcomers learn about the history of the movement and are offered the sign of the People of the Rock, a small metal ring that connects hearts and channels their strength through the Heart of the Rock. Once the newcomers have joined up (or, more precisely, have been **initiated**), the Invisible are finally ready to reclaim the City of Emberland from the militarised gang that terrorises its inhabitants.

Part Two sees the rule of the evil Gorillas, also referred to as 'hairyshirts', challenged by the joint forces of the People of the Rock and the ordinary people of Emberland. The nominal gang chief, Gorilla Joe, is spectacularly defeated in a wrestling match by Gabriel, who relies not only on his own **strength** but on the collective strength of the Invisible. The fight continues on two fronts after the leader of the People of the Rock is kidnapped and taken to the Isle of Xintipan: while the rest of the Invisible are left to finish off the enemy in Emberland, Gabriel must face the puppet-master, the real villain who controls the Gorillas and rules the world from the safety of his man-made paradise: the billionaire Lord Brilliantos.

The battle on Xintipan is both literal and metaphorical. Separated from his companions and cut off from the physical and mental strength of the community that is transmitted through the Heart of the Rock, Gabriel must **resist** various temptations in his head and his heart as well as physically aid the **Resistance** of the slave-workers living underground. Among the workers, Gabriel finds his sweetheart, Lizetta, who had mysteriously disappeared from Emberland. The oppressed have to break out of their prisons and work their way up to the surface of the island to be **liberated** from the tyranny of Lord Brilliantos and his right hand, the calculating and emotionless Mr Barren. In the end, around the same time as the last division of the Gorilla Guard essentially self-destructs in Emberland, Barren makes the fatal mistake of placing the sign of the Rock over his heart, which destroys him and his crew. The unworthy are thus defeated and the people of Emberland are freed.

The keywords I have highlighted in this brief plot summary foreground some of the bigger themes *Gabriel the Victorious* deals with: individualism vs. collectivism, nature vs. machinery, work vs. idleness, construction vs. destruction, egalitarianism vs. exceptionalism, the meaning of power and strength. Gabriel, like the archangel of the Abrahamic religions, is repeatedly referred to as the **messenger** (of the Rock, of the People of the Rock, or of the Invisible). As such, he is the representative of something bigger than himself, a mystical higher power or being, but at the same time he also represents, is one with, and fights on behalf of **the people**. He is ordinary in some ways – for example, vulnerable to the agonies of romantic love – and extraordinary in others. There is never any doubt that evil can ultimately only be overcome through the collective strength of the people – in other words, that the people must save themselves – which is evident even in moments which to some characters (the ‘uninitiated’ Gorillas, for example) might look like divine intervention. A case in point is the wrestling match, where Gabriel is simply a vessel giving physical shape to the strength-in-unity that is made possible by the invisible antennas worn by the People of the Rock. At the same time, Gabriel also stands out from the people because he is a **hero** or **the chosen one**, whose coming is foretold in an ancient prophecy: “Some day, no one knows when, a child will come, and he will discover the treasure [...] the child who finds the treasure will have a life filled with hardship and pain. He will be surrounded by danger throughout his life. True, you do not want courage, but you must take on a task that would be too much for ten ordinary people.” Gabriel’s heroic qualities manifest themselves once again when Barren removes from his body the antenna, and thereby the protection and power of the Invisible. From this point on Gabriel is truly on his own. In some ways, therefore, Gabriel is a **Christ-like figure**: both human and ‘divine’, abandoned before the final and most painful trial. However, these associations are purely symbolic in the fictional universe. As the conversation between Gabriel and Lord Brilliantos reveals, the evil side may refer to divinity as a concept for their own rhetorical purposes, but there is no literal higher being:

“I wield all the power, and what I’m offering is worth more than anything: some day you could be my successor. If you like fancy words: the ruler of the world. Or even more: a god on earth.”

Gabriel gently shook his head.

“I don’t believe in any kind of gods.”

“Very good. That is how it should be. The gods have never believed in anything either. They crush the world and don’t shed a single tear; they don’t even laugh, such is the extent of their indifference.”

Inclusion and exclusion operate differently on various levels in the novel, although overall its ethos remains **inclusive**. As an organisation, the Invisible are almost sect-like: with the 77 newcomers and 777 members in total, their numbers initially appear to be rigidly and symbolically controlled. The description of the initiation ceremony evokes religious ecstasy and serves as a counterpoint to the later introduced ‘bad euphoria’ induced by Brilliantos’s narcotic wine:

The shiny ring gradually faded away as if it was being absorbed; the sign of the Invisible indeed became invisible. At the same time, those who were wearing it felt their bodies burst into a blaze of fire: the boundary between reality and illusion was lost. They saw dreams and felt themselves grow and multiply as if they had not one beating heart but many, as if there were countless lives throbbing inside them. In some strange way they experienced the whole interior of the Rock; all of a sudden they understood its fascinating workings, and what had previously seemed complicated now became simple. They were overwhelmed by thoughts and their bodies and souls were filled with strength and courage.

It may seem as if it was this mystical interconnectedness that made the Invisible almost superhuman, but it is also suggested that **exceptional virtue and knowledge** are a prerequisite for receiving this *gnosis*, along the lines of “whoever has will be given more.” The Invisible also enjoy privileged status among ordinary people: no one is completely certain they exist, but in legends and rumours they are synonymous with redemption; people whisper about them and eagerly await their coming.

On the other hand, when the Invisible do finally arrive in Emberland, they bring crates full of fantastine rings to be distributed to **all** who deserve them (virtue is still required but expertise is not).¹⁹⁶ This is because people are, generally speaking, worthy: they have a strong moral compass and instinctively pull together in the face of oppression. This is why they can outwit the hairy-shirts searching for hidden books:

The Gorillas turned everything upside down, took the stoves to pieces, yanked up the floorboards, knocked on all the walls, and found no books. Not a single one. They could not, of course, because by the time a search party got to the top of the stairs and broke into the flat, the book, if there had been one inside, had flown through the window into the flat across, or been lowered a floor or two on a string, or pulled up in a carrier bag hanging on a wire.

¹⁹⁶ Fantastine is the name of the metal with miraculous properties from which the antennas are made.

This fundamental goodness also explains why the Gorillas have so much trouble with forced recruitment:

The hairyshirt patrols rounded up tens of thousands of men every day, escorted them with loaded guns to the barracks and forced them to swear allegiance to Gorilla Joe, but as soon as they were positioned at the front, in the trenches, the freshly recruited army dissolved in an instant.

The Gorilla army diminished as it grew, and by the time the real Gorillas finished recruiting a troop they realised only they were left, the rest having hidden or deserted.

Not everyone behaves well, of course, but even the more animal-like people are human underneath and therefore deserve some respect and empathy. Perhaps the most poignant reminder of the sanctity of life extending to all human beings is the heaviness felt by the victors and articulated by one of the leaders of the Invisible, the magician Sylvester Skulldugg, after the Gorilla army has annihilated itself:

He was a tough old man, a hardened opponent and unrelenting enemy of the Gorilla murderers, but his voice was still a little shaky when he wiped his beady brow and said, “We warned them... they deserved their fate... they would have deserved ten deaths... So.... The murderers’ guard is finished.” “There was no other way, Uncle Skulldugg, stop torturing yourself.”

What makes the good side good is that the loss of life is never to be celebrated.

It is hard to believe that Méhes did not have access to George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) before writing *Gabriel the Victorious*. According to Orbán, Méhes’s first encounter with *Animal Farm* only happened in the late 1970s, and he read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* a long time after that (Orbán 2001, 37). Beyond the common themes of totalitarianism, state surveillance and historical revisionism, the parallels on a more granular level are astonishing. The Gorilla regime is in many ways a cartoonish version of the Orwellian totalitarian state:¹⁹⁷ this is particularly true for a district of Emberland called the Prohibited Quarter, “so named because everything was prohibited for those who lived here. Only one thing was allowed: work.” The Prohibited Quarter is patrolled by so-called

¹⁹⁷ It is worth mentioning the (unintentional) connection between the names of the two fictional settings. ‘Óceánia’ and ‘Parázsia’ have more in common formally than ‘Oceania’ and ‘Emberland’, but the semantic implications remain interesting in the English translation. Emberland might be temporarily intimidated but its fighting spirit can be rekindled.

Gorilla balloons, gang members wearing inflatable rubber outfits that enable them to float in the air and spy on citizens.

They had special equipment that enabled them to do this. There were binoculars with thick lenses attached to their eyes and hearing devices with metre-long receivers covering their ears, which they could turn in any direction. These balloon-bodied monsters with bulging glass eyes and giant ears were constantly on the lookout for prey. The hearing device caught every whispered word, the binoculars saw everyone near and far. A twitch of the corner of the mouth, a single murmured word was enough for the floating Gorilla to strike. What happened next depended entirely on the mood of the Gorilla boy involved. If he felt like it, he might fire a round into the ground at the chosen victim's feet. When the person tried to escape, the Gorilla could fire a few shots into them. But if the Gorilla boy was not in a shooting mood, he might fling a triple grappling hook attached to a steel wire into the victim's side and drag them along, hoisting them up and dropping them again like a fish on a hook. He would take them to the nearest Gorilla station. What happened to the victim after this... was only whispered about by the reckless, since the Gorilla balloons were constantly floating above the pavements and hiding behind ledges or balconies so no one would ever feel safe.

The laughable, grotesque image of these "balloon-bodied monsters" shocks through its sharp contrast with the merciless reality of their function. As in *Airstrip One*, in the Prohibited Quarter too there is a constant threat of plain-clothed informers infiltrating the city, although they are successfully outwitted by the people of Emberland and as such represent a failed attempt on the part of the State to control its citizens. Plenty of other means remain, however.¹⁹⁸ Nowhere is this more evident than in a short chapter titled 'The Truth of the Gorillas', where a victim found guilty of hiding books – a prohibited item in Emberland – is taken to the Gorilla equivalent of a courthouse called The House of Truth. Contrary to what its name would suggest, the Gorillas' House of Truth has more in common with Orwell's Ministry of Love than with the Ministry of Truth. Its motto, "*We know one truth only – the truth of the Gorillas,*" would easily accommodate the three slogans of the Party: "WAR IS PEACE / FREEDOM IS SLAVERY / IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH". Inside the House of Truth, the victim is caught in a literal labyrinth of lies: their only chance to survive is giving the wrong answer to each equation that is put to them, but no one can keep up the lying for too long without getting confused. In the Gorilla jurisdiction, $2+2=5$ only gets you another equation, until $1 \times 1 = 1$ gets you sentenced.

¹⁹⁸ In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 'two-way' television sets called telescreens are used to keep citizens under constant surveillance. In *Gabriel*, the closest equivalent of this device is used only by the Invisible to spy on their opponents. Its purpose is therefore different, if not morally unproblematic, so I rendered it as 'Televiewer'.

The powerful propaganda machinery that is the Ministry of Truth in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is also in operation in Emberland. The purpose of *The Gorilla Times* is to twist the truth into headlines that enhance the public image of the Gorilla Guard. Accordingly, the arrest of a blind man is pitched as a huge success for law enforcement (“GORILLA GUARD CATCHES DANGEROUS ELEMENTS HIDING BOOKS / GANG LEADER DISGUISED AS BLIND”), and the hairyshirt boss’s defeat is reported as a “HUGE VICTORY FOR GORILLA JOE / CHAMPION OF TRUTH CRUSHES OPPONENT”. But despite all the savagery, intimidation and coercion, which are **real** within the fictional framework even when narrated in a euphemistic or elliptical style, the Gorillas remain **parodic** throughout the novel. They are no more than brutish **caricatures** of hunger for power coupled with stupidity. Compared to what happens on Xintipan, the Emberland episodes are mere comic relief. As Orbán (2001, 45) puts it:

A dictatorship only becomes perfect and indestructible if people stop committing even thoughtcrime, if they come to love the regime – this is the central idea of Orwell’s book. Brilliantos upholds the same ideal of power, although his institution is not yet as efficient as Big Brother’s. Brilliantos is the most dangerous of politicians: uninterested in petty cult of personality – he leaves that privilege to Gorilla Joe – he wants absolute power, divine and mythical. Hardly anything is known about him; it is all guesswork and myth-making. Only the initial *B* stamped on every product reminds us of his presence, but this is much more sinister than the Gorilla narcissism collapsing into self-parody.

B. is not quite B.B., but the ideology is the same. The Gorillas are the lesser evil, necessary for Brilliantos to distance himself from and elevate himself above the people. They are also a narratological necessity without which the work could easily turn too dark: while the chapters set in Emberland are infused with black humour, it is almost as if this humour could not penetrate the glass dome covering the Isle of Xintipan. Death is invisible here, and yet this is where matters of life and death are decided.

The island’s physical structure reflects the strict social hierarchy whereby those in power are at the top (on the surface) and the remaining members of this micro-society are distributed on underground levels depending on their degree of powerlessness, with those undertaking the work that is considered the most menial at the very bottom. Xintipan is thus not unlike Metropolis in Fritz Lang’s 1927 feature film of the same title, where the industrialists rule the city from above, the city that is sustained by machines operated by workers underground. In the vertically split world of the film, “fathers, for whom every revolution of the machine meant gold, had created for their sons the miracle of the Eternal

Gardens.” These gardens, like the gardens of Xintipan, are only for the privileged, the ruling elite, and yet this is where Feder, son of the city’s master, first meets Maria, whose robot double later becomes leader of the workers’ revolt. Similarly, it is in the gardens of Xintipan that Gabriel sees Lizetta for the first time since her disappearance, and Xintipan is where he learns that she has become leader of the workers’ resistance movement. However, unlike *Metropolis* where the uprising is arguably fuelled by misguided anger and brings real danger to society, including the workers themselves (their city is flooded), in *Gabriel the Victorious* the prospect of a revolution is used by the oppressors as a rhetorical device to convey a sense of constant threat to civilisation and to legitimise oppression. The construal of the Xintipanian workers as the enemies not just of the elite but of reason itself masks real fear. As Lizetta explains to Gabriel,

We have people everywhere. Brilliantos and his crew would be terrified if they knew how many we are. Do we have people down at the power station, you ask? They are all our people. No supervisor or inspector will venture down there. I’m sure Barren didn’t mention this to you. Their food is sent down in a lift and they can’t be flooded as a punishment because if they cut off the power and the water, Xintipan will dry up, freeze, and die.

One of the joys of translating this text into English was the realisation that unlike Hungarian, in English the different meanings of ‘power’ can be captured in one word. Despite the elite’s best efforts, power is held where power is generated, even if it is at the lowest level. As a member of the power station staff explains, “power opens and closes the steel gates. The entrance to the underwater tunnel can’t be opened without it. We are Brilliantos’s prisoners and he is ours.” The power of the Invisible also comes from the mystical physical connection that operates like an electric current running through the Heart of the Rock. In fact, the Heart Machine that is “the power house of Metropolis” bears a remarkable visual resemblance to the Mirror of the Future inside the Heart of the Rock, which accumulates and stores the most noble ideas of humankind and reflects them back to its viewers.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand, Feder’s nightmarish vision of the giant machine as the man-eating deity Moloch in *Metropolis* shares its symbolism with Alasdair Gray’s 1981 fantasy *Lanark*, in which the giant mouth-shaped portal opening up in the ground and the mysterious Institute where patients end up as each other’s food, Soylent Green-style,

¹⁹⁹ Interestingly, the first shot of the Eternal Gardens of Metropolis also evokes the inside of the Rock with its huge stalactite-shaped structures. The cave seems garden-like to the young Gabriel: “Strangely shaped stalactites glistened in the semi-darkness – some light must have found its way in through a narrow crack above. He saw flowers of sulphur and strangely shaped rusty red stumps, and gases puffing among greenish crystals. Golden veins ran all over one of the cave walls, like the roots of an almost inconceivably large tree.”

represent a mode of production that ultimately **devours the worker**. *Gabriel*, like *Lanark*, is an **allegory** of the struggle of the working class.

Unfortunately, power sharing does not come easily to those who like to exploit others. If knowledge is power then mass ignorance might keep existing power structures safe: this is the idea behind the Gorillas' ban on books. Of course, the Gorillas being Gorillas, they put it in rather simplistic terms:

"Tomorrow our heroes will get a chance to be valiant. Tomorrow we issue an order to burn every book in Emberland."

"What? ... Books?" Moronitz asked, astonished.

"Yes, books. Haven't you figured out yet that books are our enemy? Readers think. People shouldn't think but drink, for heaven's sake! No wonder our taverns are full of barrels of Gorilla booze, beer and brandy. If people read they don't get round to drinking. They spend their money on books instead of brandy."

"Disgusting!"

It is extremely unlikely that Méhes would have been familiar with *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) at the time of writing, and yet the book burning scene, which coincides with the arrival of Gabriel and his crew in Emberland, reads as if it had been directly inspired by Ray Bradbury's dystopian novel. When the book pyre is about to expire (perhaps because manuscripts don't burn) and fire engines turn up on Gorilla Square, the people of Emberland feel a momentary relief before it gives way to even greater shock:

"Go!" came the next command, and the hose wriggled in the hands of the fire-fighters above from the force of the liquid pumped into it from a tanker, which spurted out in a long arc.

The silently watching crowd now cried out. As if a fire bomb had detonated, the feeble fire suddenly flared up; first a plume of fire shot up in the middle, then the whole pile was consumed by flames again. Rivulets of fire ran down among the heaps of books, a stifling burnt smell filled the air, hot wind blew, floating flakes of fire settled on Gorilla Square, the clean-brushed hairy shirts and the Gorilla officers' white gloves were smudged with soot.

[...]

"Paraffin. In Emberland oil and paraffin are used these days to extinguish fires."

"True," Skulldugg replied. "These fire-fighters are in fact fire-lighters."

Like Bradbury's 'firemen' who burn down houses where books are found, the Gorilla guards also go from house to house in search of illegal possessions and do not shy away from planting books in people's homes to save face. The way blind old Michael Plus is

framed as a dangerous book-hiding criminal is reminiscent of the livestreamed capture of an innocent man at the end of *Fahrenheit* after the real fugitive, ex-fireman Guy Montag, has escaped. But resistance too takes a remarkably similar form in the two novels. The group led by Granger who memorises books before burning them is also ‘invisible’: in all other respects they are “model citizens” who blend into society and no amount of stopping and searching can expose them. On the other hand, the average citizen is portrayed much more negatively in *Fahrenheit* than in *Gabriel*: while in the latter resistance is ubiquitous, in the former most people are collaborators who can be played off against rebels. In Emberland people work together to hide books and neutralise Gorilla spies; in the unnamed city in *Fahrenheit* they are at the disposal of the authorities. *Gabriel* is an **optimistic dystopia**.

Gabriel the Victorious was translated over four years. I started the first draft in summer 2013 and worked on the first third of the novel intermittently over the next two years. The rest of the first draft was completed during two fortnight-long residencies at the Hungarian Translators' House in 2015 and 2016. It is difficult to measure the impact of such a professional environment on translation quality – it is possible that as time passed and the translation progressed, I simply 'got a feel' for the novel – but I suspect that without those residencies, *Gabriel* would be a different text.

The word I usually use when describing Méhes's Hungarian is *ízes*, 'flavoursome'. It means something like 'slightly off-standard', 'having a particular local quality without becoming inaccessible', 'varied but unpretentious' or 'sophisticated but familiar'. I grew up in Budapest speaking standard Hungarian and do not recall having any problems understanding the book as a child, although as a translator I made ample use of the collection of historical and dialect dictionaries at the Translators' House. A few dialectal expressions have been flattened out in translation because Gabriel's story has a fictional setting and a universal sensibility that would resonate with readerships anywhere in Europe. Time matters more than place, and even though the timeline itself is fictional, in an important sense *Gabriel* is an early-to-mid-twentieth century story. The awe-inspiring power of new technology and the increasing concern about what it can do in the wrong hands are narrative aspects that anchor it in this time period, so this temporal distance must be signalled somehow in translation. With regard to "historically datable linguistic forms" (Jones and Turner 2004, 162), I aimed for a vague sense of datedness; where I had to make decisions about "artefacts [...] peculiar to a certain historical period" (Jones and Turner 163), I aimed to broadly reference the time of writing. This was particularly relevant to rendering the names of the various parts of Don Xavier's ship in English, as well as weaponry and technological terminology. I wanted to make the language dated where appropriate but keep terminological inaccuracies to a minimum: some of the military vocabulary had to be corrected, such as "automatic machine gun", since all machine guns are automatic. At the same time, I avoided overly technical military expressions in line with the cartoonish feel of some parts of the narrative and the sanitised language of violence.

Flowery language is often used for comedic effect in the speech of pompous or deceptive characters, whose voices were tremendous fun to translate. One of my favourite sentences

comes from Sylvester Skulldugg disguised as the Sultan of Killishminbumbuluhuyhungai addressing the Gorilla chief Rex Rapscallius: “Oh Light of Lights, rising sun on the dome of the sky, the sight of whom blinds mere mortals like me, allow your most obedient servant, oh Lord of Wisdom, to place the humble flowers of his devotion at your rose-scented feet.” I am almost inclined to forgive Skulldugg for having such a tricky name to translate. I mean it literally: *Furfangos Furuzsin* conjures up trickery; light, Mozartian music; and strong powers of persuasion (from *furfangos*, ‘witty, in the sense of being able to outwit someone’, *furulya*, ‘recorder’, and *duruzsol*, ‘speak in a soft, low, confidential voice, usually in someone’s ear’).

Not all names were so challenging to translate. Some could be left unchanged or were Anglicised slightly: Lizetta, Zil, Gorilla Joe, Brilliantos, Xintipan, Chelebilla, Malamud ben Ali Ogli, Mirella, Nekrichevich Svetozar, Trillo. Others required a bit more thought, like the strongman and chain breaker *Mázsa Mátyás*. *Mázsa* is an obsolete unit of measurement, the equivalent of 100 kg. Henry Hundredstone is 6.35 times heavier in English, but his name alliterates, not to mention the royal reference. Hungary has only had one King Matthias to England’s eight Henries, but he is the hero of many legends and at least one cartoon series. The retired vegetarian lion, Madame Rosemary, presented a few problems. *Rozmaring* is a spice, not a female name, but Rosemary can be either. However, Madame Rosemary cannot be female because he has a mane. The *Madame* part may cause confusion in the Hungarian too, but pronouns are not gendered so at least *Rozmaring*’s mane is not constantly rubbed in the reader’s face. The name of the circus director, Don Xavier Maria Filostacio de Ipecacuana, posed a different problem. It appears in two variants, Filostacio de Ipecacuana and Ipecacuana de Filostacio, probably an authorial or editorial oversight, which I decided to fix. There is also an unnecessary acute accent in the Hungarian (*Filostáció*), which I removed.²⁰⁰ I would gladly hold up the names of the two drugs given to the Gorilla army, Savagin and Simperin, as proof of my creative genius, but the truth is that I just got lucky with *Vaditin* and *Vigyorin*. For reasons I do not yet fully understand, the names of bad characters tend to be more rewarding to translate than the good ones. The paragraph that introduces the underlings of the two Gorilla commanders, Rex Rapscallius (‘Rapschal’ to his friends) and Baron Moronitz (‘Moron’ for short), is another favourite of mine:

²⁰⁰ Don Xavier has a Spanish name, and in Spanish the stress falls on the second last syllable of a word ending in a vowel by default. The acute accent is only used to indicate stress falling elsewhere, e.g. *Ángela*.

These colonels were only colonels in the sense that Moronitz was a general and baron. There was Potentling, the knifeman, Shucks, the former laundry owner, Nigel Nuff, who had come second in the Emberland Pickpocketing World Championship, and lastly a specimen called Sniffer whom no one knew anything about except that he was in Rapsallius's confidence and that he was willing to shoot anyone for the right reward. Rumour had it he had the steadiest hand in the whole Gorilla Guard.

It is in the discourse of these characters that we see most clearly the challenge that underlies the text in both languages: how can we discuss and depict violence for a dual audience of adults and children? The narrative is unambiguous about horrible things happening in Emberland and on Xintipan, but the language in which they are recounted and the register used by the villains of the story are euphemistic, and as such it must be carefully negotiated in translation. I tried to both distance in time and tone down all verbal expressions of violence compared to contemporary science or crime fiction. Thus, "I don't give a fig" was deemed acceptable, but "I don't give a rat's arse" would have been too strong. "Shut it", "shut your mouth" and "bugger off" convey a threat of interpersonal violence and sound entirely recognisable and yet not quite colloquial to the contemporary ear. In practical terms, I found imagining the way my parents would express their anger and frustration when I was young a useful tool. Imagining voices in general was key to the process, particularly when trying to decide whether to use contractions in the characters' speech: a more formal register seemed appropriate in certain places because something transcendental and awe-inspiring was happening, like the presentation of the Heart of the Rock (i.e. to indicate pathos), but elsewhere it could be a sign of pretence or coldness (e.g. when Barren speaks). It was all the more important to find a good balance between high and low, or, rather, high and medium, in the characters' as well as the narrator's rhetoric because contemporary English-language readers have a limited tolerance for pathos.²⁰¹ My aim was always to keep the story alive in my head, and my hope is that this has helped to make it come alive on paper. After all, that is the highest achievement for any literary translator.

²⁰¹ Perhaps this is why in poetry translation the preferred approach tends to be modernisation rather than archaisation. Jones and Turner explain that "the dominant English-language poetic norm for a large part of the 20th century [was] that of using contemporary, 'plain' language where possible and avoiding archaisations" (2004, 179), in contrast with, for example, the Romantic period with its tendency to "regard a patina of age as a sign of literary value" (180).

Appendix A. Bibliography of Hungarian Novels Published in English Translation 2000-2016

- Bánffy, Miklós. 2000. *They Were Found Wanting (Vol. II of the Transylvanian Trilogy)*. Translated by Patrick Thursfield and Katalin Bánffy-Jelen. London: Arcadia. STT: *És híjjával találtattál*. 1937.
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- Dalos, György. 2001. *The Circumcision*. Translated by Judith Sollosy. Rose Bay, NSW: Brandl & Schlesinger. STT: *A körülméletés*. 1990.
- Dragomán, György. 2007. *The White King*. Translated by Paul Olchváry. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. STT: *A fehér király*. 2005.
- Esterházy, Péter. 2004. *Celestial Harmonies: A Novel*. Translated by Judith Sollosy. New York, NY: Ecco. STT: *Harmonia caelestis*. 2000.
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- . 2014c. *The Beckoning Light: Romantic Fantasy*. Translated by Mark Baczoni. Shattered Glories 3. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- . 2014d. *Breath of Darkness: Romantic Fantasy*. Translated by Mark Baczoni. Shattered Glories 4. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- . 2015a. *Hidden Spirit: Romantic Fantasy*. Translated by Mark Baczoni. Shattered Glories 6. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
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²⁰² I have been unable to find reliable bibliographic data on the STs of A. O. Esther's *Shattered Glories* series even through an email exchange with the translator in October 2015. I have therefore included TT data as discoverable on commercial websites and omitted ST data altogether.

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- . 2008b. *The Pathseeker*. Translated by Tim Wilkinson. New York, NY: Melville House. STT: *A nyomkereső*. 1977.
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- Lakatos, Menyhért. 2015. *The Color of Smoke: An Epic Novel of the Roma*. Translated by Ann Major. Williamstown, MA: New Europe Books. STT: *Füstös képek*. 1975.
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- . 2011. *Captive Lion*. Translated by Bernard Adams. Budapest: Corvina. STT: *Rab oroszlán*. 1936.
- . 2015. *Behind God's Back*. Translated by Bernard Adams Budapest: Corvina. STT: *Az Isten háta mögött*. 1911.
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Appendix B. Bibliography of Published English Translations Subventioned by the Hungarian Books and Translations Office 2000-2016

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²⁰³ Date of award in square brackets at the end of each entry.

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