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TRANSLATION-PROGRAM OF THE FIRST HUNGARIAN PERIODICAL IN THE LATE 18TH CENTURY

1. The 'Magyar Museum' program

With the exception of Urania of 1794, all of the short lived, but nevertheless important first periodicals in the Hungarian language were launched at a historic moment at the end of the 1780s. In strict chronological order, three periodicals appeared in just over a year: after a year's preparation «Magyar Museum» was first published in November 1788; the first issue of «Mindenes Gyűjtemény» (Miscellaneous Collection) came out in January 1789, while Orpheus came out in February, 1790 following a year's preparation. Meanwhile, «Hadi és más Nevezetes Történetek» (Military and Other Notable Stories) started publication in July 1789. Although it was a newspaper, it functioned as the journal of the Hungarian Scholarly Society in Vienna.

These periodicals played a significant role in creating processes of integration: they acted as centres of social networks. At the same time, they also represented tendencies of dissimilation, since they shaped different profiles in line with their individual approach to common ideological objectives. The periodicals simultaneously manifested processes of both integration and dissimilation, presenting, through their complexity and relation to each other, a freeze frame of these processes.

The publications, however, were characterised by integration and dissimilation in various degrees. «Mindenes Gyűjtemény» (Miscellaneous Collection) is primarily an embodiment of the idea of integration and only finds its true vocation in its relation to the significant role of the 'scholarly man of letters' and to the practical aspects of the humanistic concept of science (litterae). «Magyar Museum» and «Orpheus» emerged with a clearly-defined programme, which appeared in both periodicals in prefaces articulating the programme. The clear-cut outlines of the proposed profile paved the way for the definition of a characteristic, individual path, and as such, were an embodiment of dissimilating tendencies.

Here we can only deal with the short introduction in «Magyar Museum», the first periodical published in Hungarian. The choice is justified by the fact that it was this journal whose translation programme most clearly represented the renewal of contemporary literary education with the idea of developing the new, modern concept of literature. The translations selected for the first issue are emblematic works by Gessner, Ossian and Milton. Experimenting with poetic language, the

first evokes a mood of simplicity, grace and pleasure while the other two conjure up the serious and sublime world of patriotism and religion. Thus taken together they represent the essence of a striving for renewal.

At the same time, the novelty of the models chosen is intertwined with the modernisation of translation principles. By way of elucidating the essence and limitations of close translation, in the conclusion of his essay on translation in the first issue of «Magyar Museum», Batsányi writes, «Yes, we can indeed borrow from the beautiful elements of more refined languages, however such attempts are easily noticed and should not go against the grammatical nature of our language». The illustrative translations of works by Gessner, Milton, Klopstock and Ossian can be interpreted in the light of these principles and this is what they endeavour to demonstrate. The desire to create a literature is manifest in the realisation of up-to-date expressions of the naive and the sublime in the Hungarian language. The self-consciousness of the young editors is also apparent in the reflections accompanying the translations and in the occasional critical comments on each other's writings. In «Magyar Museum», descriptions of naive and the sublime moods are achieved according to European models of the mid 18th century. This programme, however, came under attack as other leading literary figures frowned upon the principle of close translation and its representative samples, favouring other epic poems.

2. Epic models and attempts at appropriateness

In this debate, the selection of models relied on a limited number of works, including those of Homer, Virgil, Tasso, Milton, Voltaire and Klopstock, which traditionally define the epic canon, together with Ossian. Most attempts at translation were centred on the above works, yielding more or less satisfactory results. While the choice reflects preferences of the kind that can explain the different opinions concerning the program of «Magyar Museum», it does not necessarily imply exclusiveness.

Though the epic poems not selected for translation were not condemned by the «Magyar Museum» circle, its critics – including József Rájnis – favoured only those works which he chose to translate. The translation of Homer's epic was not completed for a long time despite the fact that a sample passage was presented in the fourth issue of «Magyar Museum» by János Molnár together with his encouragement that patriotic scholars complete the task. More attention was given to Virgil, and more sample translations were provided in contemporary periodicals including that of Rajnis, who attached his theoretical comments to his eclogue translations. The complete translation of the *Aeneid* by József Kováts appeared in 1799. The translation of Tasso's works was promoted by the literary circle of «Magyar Museum», and beside Batsányi and Dávid Baróti Szabó, György Fehér

– then studying for the priesthood in Pest – also appeared as potential transla-
tors in the journal. There are also passages translated by Ferenc Kazinczy, but
the complete Hungarian rendition of *Megszabadított Jeruzsálem* (*Gerusalemme
Liberata*) was only completed by János Tanárki in 1805. Along with Baróti, many
were engaged in translating Milton's poem, but the prose translation of *Paradise
Lost* is credited to Sándor Bessenyei. There were two complete translations of
Voltaire's *Henriade*; one by József Péczeli in 1786 and 1792 and the other by
Sámuel Szilágyi in 1789, and their influence was significant. The task of translat-
ing Klopstock was undertaken by Kazinczy, and *Ossian* was rendered into Hun-
garian by Batsányi. *'Messiás' (The Messiah)* was completed and an appeal for
subscribers prepared, but with little interest shown, it remained in manuscript form
and, as was the general practice, underwent further refinement, except for the illus-
trations published in «Magyar Museum». Batsányi also got as far as publishing
illustrations for translations, three of which appeared in «Magyar Museum», and
although he struggled hard to cope with the material he never managed to finish it.
Ossian, translated by Kazinczy, was published in 1815.

For Rájnis the sole acceptable model was the epic of antiquity, a result of his
classical education. Thus when he voices his aversion to modern epic, it signals a
specific, contemporary way of reading, that of men of letters, even if expressed in
a rather extreme form. Péczeli translated Voltaire's *Henriade*, which was consid-
ered to be the epic of tolerance, and also Voltaire's study on the epic. His choice
of these works can be characterised by the clearly enlightened literary position
which is apparent in the programme of «Mindenes Gyűjtemény». Similar to a
considerable number of reformers, his position on Milton is twofold: they read
and celebrate Milton as a religious and Christian work, while accepting Voltaire's
assessment that as an epic poem it is defective and is no match for classical mod-
els. Although the literary circle of «Museum» does not deny the significance of
classical epic models with their choice of Milton, Klopstock and Ossian, there is
clear indication that modern literary models are in harmony with the European
orientation of the mid 18th century.

As has been mentioned before, there is usually a definite striving for appro-
priateness in the translation projects. It is especially true in comparison with Latin,
which was the language of the educated; consequently the Hungarian version had
to prove its refinement in relation to Latin. Apart from this common objective,
the different trends in translation refer to significantly different concepts, since
the types of works selected for translation already define the reference point for
'appropriateness'. Classical authors were rendered into Hungarian under the influ-
ence of a traditional Latin education, and educational and innovative possibilities
in literature were confined to the conventional education of men of letters.

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The enlightened, Western orientation characteristic of Péczeli seeks up-to-date sources of knowledge and, by rendering them into Hungarian, strives to implant and disseminate this knowledge in Hungarian educational culture and society. They mainly translated works which were ideologically relevant. The enlightened utilitarianism of these efforts is obvious. This promoted the advance of knowledge and education in general, but tended to ignore the specific features of poetics.

The third conception of translation specifically emphasises this poetic nature, although, as we have seen, it also relies on pragmatic considerations. The marked difference between scholarly literates and the aesthetic approach was tangible in certain phenomena of contemporary society. From time to time, reports appeared in newspapers announcing the name of translators and their work, and these were often accompanied by a warning that if anybody set about translating a work, they should take the trouble to let others know about it so that they waste no effort on the same work. The attempt to achieve this encyclopaedic completeness is founded on the pragmatic interpretation of the translation programme.

At the same time, in the personal correspondence of Batsányi and Kazinczy, and even in the periodicals, there are often two versions of translations of the same work, allowing opportunities for comparison and competition. This approach obviously goes beyond the pragmatic interpretation and is connected to the poetic character of the language. This translation program took shape in the first issue of «Magyar Museum» and it is this program that was attacked by contemporaries.

3. Translation versus Imitation

According to József Rájnis, «The first issue of «Magyar Museum» is filthy with a scandalous sin» which he appears to have discovered in the rules of translation; that is in Batsányi's essay on translation. In fact, the debate over translation, which had, however, started in other forums, centred on this essay, as in addition to Rájnis, Péczeli also criticised Batsányi. He responded to Rájnis in detail in a long essay published in «Magyar Museum», while he reflected on Péczeli's opinion in an editor's comment, re-iterating his own position. In many respects, the unfolding dispute was a repetition of the German controversy on a similar theme, which developed between the literary circles of Gottsched and Breitinger.

«Translation shall be a true and faithful replica of the original [...] all that the original contains must be expressed, if possible, by the same structure and phraseology, neither adding to nor taking away from the text.» This is the basic principle that both Rájnis and Péczeli objected to in Batsányi's approach and they attacked it with varying degrees of vehemence. Both were convinced that instead of close translation (which Rájnis equated with word-for-word translation) what they needed were free translations; that is adaptations, so that the translator

should compete with the original work. However they had differing views on the reasons why. Based on the principle of humanistic imitation referring to Pliny (and Gottsched), Rájnis laid stress on the task of refining individual style. Péczeli emphasised the pragmatic application of the same principle as interpreted by French authors such as D'Alembert. As we have seen in the selection of epic models and the orientation of translations in general, their different ideas are clear manifestations of the attitude of men of letters and that of the pragmatic literates. Following Western development models, Batsányi and Kazinczy, the editors of «Magyar Museum» opened up a new methodology by restricting themselves to a focus on a work at a time.

The above principle of translation inevitably involves bringing the original work to the fore and thus pushing the recipient language and the readers into the background. These efforts can be understood as the creation of literature in compliance with foreign models, and as such required the radical renewal of the language, genre and style of literature. To be more exact, it necessitated the creation in Hungarian literature of literary forms equivalent to Western models. The same efforts raised the problem already implicit in the conceptual basis for the organic model, a later alternative to model-based modernisation, but at this time it only emerged at a linguistic level. Translations complying with this model had to come to terms with the differences between languages, which translators of the other concept naturally recognised but did not consider a great obstacle, arguing that the recipient Hungarian language should be given priority.

4. The state and nature of language

In his treatise on the requirements of close translations, Batsányi deals with some restrictions concerning the practical difficulties of translation, (admitting that translation should be «as close as possible»; in other words he recognises there are limits). As he expresses it: «At times, the stubbornness or the poverty of the language does not allow the translator to adapt the finesse of the original writing where it occurs originally». As we can see, two major issues are touched upon; the nature of language on the one hand, and the state of language on the other.

In the same way Kazinczy writes about this in his dedication for Gessner's translation: «I have learned from my faltering attempts that it is very hard to accomplish close translation because the state of our language is unprepared and its nature is unrelated to Western languages.» What deserves attention here is that the two reasons are mentioned in a disjunctive and co-ordinate clause; that is in one conceptual field, although their contexts are not identical.

The *state* of language can be interpreted as a stage of development in the general process of evolution of the age, while the *nature* of language implies the

opinions voiced from the mid 18ᵗʰ century, which claimed that languages are inherently different and defy comparison. In the text under discussion however there are no signs that this distinction is recognised. All this is demonstrated by Batsányi when he writes: «It is obvious that the more different the two languages are (that is the source language and the recipient language), the more serious obstacles we encounter and the lesser the extent to which we can follow the original in every respect.» The difference between languages is interpreted as gradualism, just as the state of the language is considered in its relation to perfection. Although the difference between languages makes close translation (more) difficult, it does not make it impossible.

At that age, therefore, a rational approach to language was predominant, which considered language merely a means of, and vehicle for, knowledge, although in the middle of the century there appeared the first versions of the empirical language philosophy of linguistic individuality. In accord with Batsányi's opinion, Kazinczy's dilemmas, which arose from contemplation on his translations, show that the central issue for them did not primarily lie in the philosophy of language; that is the different nature of languages in itself was of no significance. The real issue is one of pragmatism and literary interest: if the beauty of the original work manifests itself in its linguistic form then how is it possible to comply with the equally important principles of faithfulness to the original work and preservation of the original character of the Hungarian language at the same time?

Consequently, the principle of close translation serves two purposes in practice; following a model on the one hand (and this in a language context implies language enrichment) and respecting the original character of the language on the other, while harmonising the two. The main objective is that the original be realised in such a way that it should sound Hungarian (the complete work in the source language should be rendered into flawless Hungarian). This is supposed to bridge the chasm between two, partly conflicting principles, one aimed at staying faithful to the original work, the other targeted at maintaining the original character of the language. To be more exact, it is this principle that makes it possible to conceal the chasm in such a way that only the practical difficulties should be seen, difficulties which can eventually be remedied. Naturally, for this to be realised it is accompanied by a specific interpretation of the requirement to be faithful to the original work.

The principle of close translation as represented by Batsányi and Kazinczy promoted the idea of faithfulness and exactness to the original. Nevertheless, the limits of faithfulness are obvious. They do not by all means require that the translation be based on the work in the original language (it was permissible to rely on versions in mediating languages) neither did metrical form have to be identical to the original in the source language. Therefore it seems that Batsányi and

Kazinczy's principle of close translation, which after all means model-based trans-
lation, does not adhere strictly to the individuality of the work, and does not require
it be imitated. The reason being that this idea of individuality did not exist for them.

The principle of close translation formulated here seeks to reflect the tone
and rhetorically understood style of the original work and that is how, relying on
Western models, its proponents aspired to establish tones such as the sublime and
the naive which they believed to be absent from Hungarian literary language. The
emphasis is on the tone represented by the work selected for translation rather than
on the work itself. The main interest of the work lies in its atmosphere, and a close
translation must re-create in Hungarian the tone of the original model. At the same
time it must respect the requirements of the Hungarian language, as if it was origi-
nally a Hungarian work. The practical dilemmas and self-imposed limitations of
close translation demonstrate the conflict of these two requirements. The attempt
to be faithful to the original work is a manifestation of a new concept of literature,
while preserving the character of the Hungarian language is one of the most forceful
aspirations of the linguistic battles of the time. Therefore, the two requirements or
objectives can only be interpreted in two completely different (aesthetic and linguis-
tic) contexts, even though they are directly connected to each other in the debates.

The two requirements, which were supposed to be equally fundamental, con-
fronted each other in many respects during the evaluation of the practical difficulties
of translation. (Kazinczy highlighted this phenomenon more sharply than Batsányi).
Nevertheless, both of them continued to make assessments at a practical level and a
theoretical clash over these requirements and their inherent concepts never emerged
in the course of contemporary debates. This concealed reconciliation takes place in
the formula of 'translation as original work'. In fact, here we can witness the birth of
the model-based and the organic alternatives of literary renewal. The requirements
that remain to be harmonised (both with Batsányi and Kazinczy) later become the
foundation for two separate concepts in the early 19th century.

Bibliografia
The nature of this paper does not make detailed notes possible. I would like to mention
only some reference works which were of greatest help to me.

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The quotations are from the critical edition of «Magyar Museum»: *Első folyóirataink: Magyar Museum*, I-II., ed. A. Debreczeni, Debrecen, 2004.