Collected Translations as Anthologies of World Literature[1]

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Abstract: In semi-peripheral and peripheral cultures, where the status of literary translation tends to be high, respectable poets with significant institutional prestige produce many translations. The purpose can be twofold: to mediate foreign literature to a domestic audience, and to develop the vernacular poetic diction through experimenting with the various ways of expressing alien literariness. Both parts of this description of the purpose of translation are target oriented, but the selection of what to translate is also important. Hungarian modernist poets of the 20th century undertook several major translation projects, and also published collections of poetic translations. Volumes of translations by a single translator practically appear as world literature anthologies, even if the translators tend to deny such ambitions in paratexts. Most of the important Hungarian modernists published such volumes, displaying a rich variety of ideas about world literature.

Keywords: Hungarian literature, translation anthologies, world literature

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As it does in most peripheral and semi-peripheral literatures, in Hungary poetic translation traditionally carries great prestige. Poets associated with the literary magazine *Nyugat* (*West*) in particular invested much energy in translation, and partly as part of their experimentation to develop modernist poetics and modernist poetic diction in Hungarian, partly to make the wider audience familiar with such poetic innovations. The journal was published between 1908 and 1941, and the writers who published their works there are traditionally regarded as belonging to successive generations. Towering figures who were already there when the journal started or joined the community not much later are called the first generation; those who started publishing in the 1920s are the second generation; and the 1930s saw the third generation. Poetic translation was an important activity for many poets of every generation, but the first generation translated poetry as part of their modernist agenda. These translations were not just sporadic, but part of a program which resulted in book publications that contained only translated poetry. And such volumes intentionally imply a selection of world literature worthy of translation.

Although translation was a means for the poets of the first generation to elaborate and promote

modernist poetics, they did not exclusively translate modernist or contemporary poets. They were rather sensitive to features of earlier, even classical poetry that could be regarded as something modern. Catullus, a Roman poet of the 1st century BCE, was seen as especially inspiring and modern.[2] Thus, several such collections of translated poetry actually look like a history of world poetry, with a strong canonizing attitude, suggesting that the most important pieces of the world's literary production are those that the modernist poets can relate to. However, two pioneering modernists took care to emphasize in the introductions of their respective collections of poetic translations that these were not anthologies. Mihály Babits insisted that he randomly chose poems to translate as stylistic experimentation, and he asked his readers not to "look for the history of my taste here," only for "beautiful poems" of "somewhat uncertain provenance." The uncertain authorship seems tentatively but not assertively claiming parental rights for the translator. And then he adds that the reader "should not look for 'an anthology of foreign poets,' English or Greek, but for a Hungarian poet" (Babits, *Pávatollak* 6). Árpád Tóth formulated similar ideas:

> This book has not been produced with a program to be a complete anthology of foreign lyric poetry. I was occasionally caught by this or that beautiful alien poem […]. Although there are big gaps in the list of authors and the poems are not the most representative works of the respective poets, most of the poems collected in my book might not be unworthy. (n.p.)

This consistent denial nevertheless implies the translators' awareness of such a reading strategy as not only possible but also obvious on the readers' behalf. Being humble in the introduction has a long tradition among European literati from antiquity to modernity, and these highly educated poets may have regarded this *Bescheidenheitstopik* as obligatory. Such formulations of "my readers expect an anthology but it is not" are similar to the *recusatio* of classical poets claiming that they cannot and will not write in the more prestigious literary genres their audience expects and encourages them to use.

When Babits reviewed Tóth's collection of translations, he not only discovered a pattern of conscious selection, at least in the later phase of Toth's translating activity, but declared that all poets in his generation of Hungarian modernists, after an early phase of translating randomly, had developed their strategies of selection:

> There is no plan or principle in [Tóth's] older translations: they are purposeless flights of a self-indulgent art from one flower to another. Translation is hardly more than a pretext for a poem; representation of a foreign work is not the goal but rather an opportunity to exercise a complex and individual art, a perfect virtuosity of craft, and to make it shine. All of us, who have translated poems into Hungarian in the last twenty years, started this way: it was a free raid in the realm of European poetry before starting a systematic campaign of conquest. ("Könyvről könyvre" 661)

The military metaphors and that of the bee flying from one flower to another share the motif of appropriation. From the viewpoint of the denial of publishing an anthology, the bee-metaphor is more telling: even the plan-free flying around the meadow of poetry is like an anthology since the Greek expression *anthologia* originally and literally means "picking flowers."

The titles of such translation volumes also imply their attitude to world literature and

translation. Babits's *Pávatollak* (*Peacock Feathers*) in 1920, referring to the Aesopian fable in which an ugly bird (a magpie, a raven, or a jackdaw)[3] decorates itself with the peacock feathers it accidentally finds. A volume with the translator's name on the cover emphasizes the achievement of both the translator as selector and the one who actually wrote the texts, but this title suggests some humility, while also emphasizing the beauty of the collected poems. Tóth published his collection *Örök virágok* (*Eternal Flowers*) in 1923, with the title emphasizing beauty as a central concept of poetics and the belief in the universal and enduring character of the poems he selected for translation. The canonizing gesture implied in such a title can hardly be unintentional: the modernists wanted to occupy a position from which one can tell what is beautiful and what is eternally valid in world literature. The "flower," however, also reminds one of a joint enterprise of Babits and Tóth, which they accomplished together with a younger, second generation poet, Lőrinc Szabó, namely the complete translation of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*, which they published in 1923 with the Hungarian title *Romlás virágai*, i.e., "Flowers of decay." They assigned primary importance to Baudelaire in the development of modern poetry, but in this context the "flower" symbolizes not only beauty but also a non-classical mix of aesthetic qualities.

Earlier than these small booklets, Dezső Kosztolányi published his *Modern költők* (*Modern Poets*) in 1914, a much thicker volume with a greater ambition of comprehensiveness, geographically rather than historically. The title is purely descriptive, just like the subtitle *Foreign Anthology*. However, Kosztolányi worked for a decade to create this representative overview of modern poetry, and in 1921 he published a "massively expanded second edition" in three volumes with a much more prestigious publishing house.[4] The star of the first edition was Leconte de Lisle with 14 poems. In the second edition the first volume contained only French poetry with 144 poems by 38 poets. Baudelaire occupied the top position with 24 poems. His importance seems to have been beaten by Rilke with 64 poems in the second volume, which contains German poets (there were only 8 in the first edition). These shifts suggest that Kosztolányi focused more on contemporary modernist poetry in the extended version. Volume 3 contains "English, Italian, Spanish, etc." poetry, and has a final cluster called "War Poets."

The third edition in 1937 was a republication of the second edition with the title *An Anthology of Foreign Poets*, which indicated a shift from modernism to world literature; it was actually a shorter version of the second edition, but it contained the foreword of the first edition. By the 1930s the struggle to develop modernist poetics was already over, and translations had a different function.

In the foreword of the first (and third) edition Kosztolányi promoted the comprehensiveness of his selection:

> This book sounds the new lyric poetry. I am hesitant to write down: the lyric poetry of almost the entire world. What is new lyric poetry, we rather feel than know. There are poets here who have been dead for two hundred years, and others are missing who are still alive and loud success follows each of their poems. (i)

In the introduction, Kosztolányi also explained that he translated the English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish poems directly from the source languages. He approached the Slavic texts (Czech, Polish, Russian, and Serb) with help of some friends through rough translations, and the Nordic (Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish) and Asiatic ones (Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish) through German, French, or English intermediary translations (iii). It was the latter, Asiatic,

part which was omitted in the 1937 edition, *Idegen költők anthológiája*. Kosztolányi translated in total 203 Japanese and 218 Chinese poems in his life. These were indirect translations via French, German, mostly English, and sometimes more than one mediating language (Kolozsy-Kiss; Kalmár and Józan). In 1931 he published a volume of poetic translations called *Chinese and Japanese Poems* (*Kínai és japán versek*), which contained 101 Chinese and 107 Japanese poems.

It is evident that Kosztolányi scanned world poetry much more widely than the other poets of the first generation. The lack of the Classics, in contrast with Babits, might be surprising. In his lifetime, Kosztolányi translated a couple of classical poems, but he did not include any in the *Modern Poets*, which hardly needs any detailed explanation. The chronologically deeper, while geographically narrower, scope of Babits followed from his concept of world literature, which generally influenced his translation projects. Babits also published two thematic collections of poetic translations. *Erato* (1920) is a still popular collection of erotic poetry in the western tradition. His young friend Szabó significantly contributed to the project, although his name was nowhere mentioned. We do not know which poems and what proportion of the entire book he translated. Tóth helped too (Róna). The volume starts with archaic Greek poetry, and the Classics' presence is significant. In 1933, Babits fulfilled another project, namely *Amor sanctus*, a bilingual (Latin and Hungarian) collection of 50 ecclesiastic hymns from Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. His biggest enterprise was the translation of the complete *Divina commedia* by Dante (1922), but his translations of *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus* are also worth mentioning. These major poetic translation projects testify to his interest in the entire history of European literature. When theorizing about world literature he did not hesitate to identify world literature as European literature because he regarded it as an organic development. Geographically distant literary production cannot belong to his world literature because it is not organically connected. From this concept it follows that there can be other world literatures elsewhere, but he did not discuss this theoretical possibility. As Babits explained already in 1913: "By world literature we only mean European literature, that stream of culture that started with the Greek nation and first flooded the Mediterranean, then took root towards the North in new races, and slowly, like an ancient tree, bore fruit" (*Esszék, tanulmányok* 1.368).

When Babits in 1935 wrote *Az európai irodalom története* (*A History of European Literature*), he described the development of literature as a dialogue of poets across the centuries. World literature is a tradition for him: poets like Homer, Virgil, and Dante "Borrow each other's forms, images and themes. Perfect originality does not exist. World literature has a shared language, arsenal, and treasury" (12). What also follows from the implications of this organic concept of world literature is that non-European territories and traditions can join world literature once an organic connection is established. And it may have been happening. Kosztolányi's translations of East-Asian poetry obviously influenced his own poetry. It might be regarded as an organic connection, which was, of course, not unique in Europe (D'haen). And on the other end of the Eurasian continent, a committed group of Chinese writers translated western literature extensively to establish modern literature in vernacular Chinese.

While Kosztolányi's representative, albeit personal, selection of lyrical world literature had a geographically wide scope, he did not want to trace the roots of modernism too far back in time. For this wide scope he had to resort to indirect translations as well, since the half dozen languages he understood could not satisfy his curiosity. Most members of the later generations of *Nyugat* embraced the method of indirect translation as a possible addition to their direct translations. Miklós Radnóti, a major poet from the *Nyugat*'s third generation used none of these. He published

a collection of translations while still relatively young, in 1943. The title *Orpheus nyomában (In Orpheus's Wake)* suggests the importance of the Classics in implying that European poetry follows the mythical singer of the Greeks. The "Afterword" explains the Orpheus trope rather poetically: trees, animals, and rivers followed the mythical singer. Poets are more or less Orpheuses today too, but they sing in different languages, and the group of their enchanted followers includes poets too. "They want to understand the singer's language, different from their own. But they want not only to understand but also to sing the seductive text in their own language to the tune they heard" (Radnóti 165). Poetic translation is a miracle that liberates enchanted poets under the spell of the alien poetry. Translating is impossible until it happens (166).

In the case of Radnóti, it is quite obvious that some of his poems were inspired by his translations; the formal equivalence of his translation of Walter von der Vogelweide's *Owê war sint verswunden alliu mîniu jâr!* and his original masterpiece *Erőltetett menet* (*Forced March*) is a telling example. The many translations from the classics and his idea of writing "Eclogues" in hexameters about World War II may be considered two sides of the same coin. Although most of the translations included in the collection were written in the three years immediately preceding publication, when Apollinaire's influence on his poetry was a memory long past, with nine poems Apollinaire still features most prominently in the volume. As Radnóti put it: "With my Apollinaire translations I relived the great adventure of my youth as a poet, namely surrealism, paying tribute to a master of my youth" (171). The subtitle "Poetic translations from poets of two thousand years" reveals the ambition to offer a wide overview of European poetry. Literally speaking, the time span is bigger than 2,000 years, since the first poet included is Sappho (6th century BCE) and the last is the contemporary Jean Cocteau. Greek and Roman classics fill up about 25% of the volume, which contains 73 translations from five languages: Ancient Greek, Latin, German, English, and French in the chronological order of the source texts. Radnóti's selection shows a preference for classical and French poetry. Eighteen Greek and Roman poems fill 31 pages while 24 German and English poems get 46 pages, and 31 French poems 55 pages (including the massive presence of Apollinaire). Radnóti explicitly denied that the volume was "an anthology of European literature," and called it a collection of poems one poet likes very much (170). One might wonder what an anthology is if not this, namely picking flowers. Radnóti probably means a representative, highly canonical selection as opposed to his collection of personal favorites. However, this is a kind of (counter-)canon, in which modernism gains central importance and Apollinaire appears as the greatest poet.

Szabó published two impressive volumes of poetic translations called *Örök barátaink* (*Our Eternal Friends*) in 1943 and 1948; the latter was called "Second Collection." The adjective "eternal" implies a canonical intent, while the metaphor of friendship is explained in the preface by concepts of hospitality and dialogue. Szabó emphasized that the selection was sometimes accidental, but he seems only to apply this to those who were not included due to lack of time. He described his book as "a lyrical volume on world literature, on a part of the world's lyric poetry" (Szabó, *Örök barátaink* [1943] 7). The concepts of hospitality and dialogue are explained as follows: "I feel among them [i.e. the poems translated] like a host among his guests. I am responsible for them and I have obligations to them. I am introducing to them my country, our Hungarian language; and I am introducing them to the Hungarian audience." Translation is described as initiator and medium of world literature that Szabó describes in a hymnic tone: "an exchange of souls and thoughts, the humanity's universal and common speculation about the small and big issues of life" (8). The two volumes contain several hundred poems, which might be

regarded as a rather comprehensive view of lyric world literature. Although Szabó included some passages from verse dramas as well, in this excerpted form they might function as lyric poetry too.

Szabó's translation anthology is not only much bigger than those of his predecessors but also much more comprehensive culturally and geographically. Tóth's little delicate volume had the subtitle "Árpád Tóth's Verse Translations from English, French and German Lyric Poets," an accurate description, as the book contains 59 poems by 23 poets, 13 of them French (occupying 78 pages), seven English (79 pages),[5] and only three German (10 pages). They are arranged chronologically, lending the collection a literary historical air. The earliest poet included is Villon, while the last is Rilke. Milton and Albert Samain appear with the most poems (eight each), but Milton's are longer, which makes him occupy more than 25% of the volume. English Romanticism and French symbolism seem the most important literary trends.

Babits' *Pávatollak* contains 44 translations from 22 poets and from 6 languages. The three literatures Tóth did not translate from but Babits did, namely Ancient Greek, Latin, and Italian provide few poems: 3 from Ancient Greek (2 poets), one by Catullus and one by Carducci. Therefore, Babits, just like Tóth, basically focused on the three major European literatures, with the proportions even more against German. Although he translated 5 German and only 3 French poets, the numbers of poems are already in favor of the French (7 against 15), and even more so the numbers of pages occupied: 8 against 24. However, poetry in English has an overwhelming presence with 10 poets (but only 18 poems). Oscar Wilde's "Charmides," a rather long poem closing the entire collection, would make a comparison of pages disproportionate, but even without Wilde, the works of the other nine English poets fill 55 pages. One might wonder why German poetry plays such a minor role, despite the overwhelming influence of German culture and literature on Hungary. And the answer lies exactly there. The poets of *Nyugat*'s first generation came from the intelligentsia of medium-sized provincial towns: due to their traditional education and family background, they were at home in Romance and German literatures as much as in Hungarian. When they looked around in world literature for modernist inspiration, they had to move beyond that (Rába 26).

Szabó broke with the pattern set by Babits and Tóth, with whom he collaborated on some translation projects; those first-generation poets had an exclusive West-European focus and produced only direct translations, which was also the practice of the third-generation poet Radnóti. Szabó, in contrast, followed the path laid down by Kosztolányi: a more comprehensive attitude towards world literature also from source languages he could not understand. He clearly indicated the difference between his direct and indirect translations: from Ancient Greek, Latin, German, French, and English, he translated directly and put the original title below the Hungarian title of those poems, while "the few Slavic, Oriental or other poems were interpreted through one or more intermediary languages; there the original title is missing" (*Örök barátaink* [1943] 10). In this way he could extend his horizon even further.

Other second and third generation poets published collected poetic translations later in their careers. Instead of publishing translations to show the result of their "campaign of conquest"—to use Babits' metaphor—which could, on the one hand, demonstrate what they found worth appropriating in world literature, and, on the other, what they achieved in stylistic experimentation with alien poetics, they collected their translations from many decades of their poetic careers. This trend was actually started by the old Babits himself, who in his collected works series published a volume called "Minor Poetic Translations" in 1939. This title and also the foreword emphasize the translator's personal achievement, and that the volume does not contain all of his

translations but only those that were worthy by their merits as translations, and not those of the source text's canonical position. Other poets rather used metaphorical titles mostly to suggest comprehensiveness. István Vas claimed to represent the entire world's lyric poetry in his *Hét tenger éneke* (*Songs of the Seven Seas*), a claim hardly modified by the "Foreword's" interpretation of the metaphor. Sándos Weöres chose a remarkably different metaphor with the title *A lélek idézése* (*Summoning the Soul*). Translation for him seems to mean a mysterious, spiritual encounter with the (probably) dead poets, to engage himself in the dialogue Babits described as world literature. Gyula Illyés with the title *Nyitott ajtó* (*Open Door*) claims an especially privileged role for the translator: he appears as somebody who offers fresh air and a wide horizon to readers who were otherwise sitting in a closed room, or invites foreign poets as guests to enter the house of Hungarian culture. Anna Hajnal, one of the very few women poets of this era, chose a rather strange title for her collected poetic translations *Kölcsönkenyér* (*Borrowed Bread*, 1968). This is a rare word mostly used in the proverb *Kölcsönkenyér visszajár*, i.e., "Borrowed bread should be returned," which serves to justify vengeful actions. The concept of retaliation is difficult to interpret in the context of poetic translation, and if a person needs to borrow bread, the staple food in Hungary, that might imply extreme poverty. Hajnal's collection does not contain any paratext to explain the title, but one might understand it as a poetic reference to the essential importance of foreign poetry (bread) and the process of exchange in world literature (borrowing).

These retrospective collections of decades of translation are respectably thick volumes, which already suggests comprehensiveness. Vas with 400, Illyés with almost 700, and Weöres with 900 pages indicate the importance of translation for their poetic career. Hajnal's 430-page collection is less impressive only because it also contains her translation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, without which the lyric poetry fills up less than 290 pages. The poems are organized into three groups. The first is "Germans" (140 pages, Heine with the most poems, Schiller with the most verses), the second is "Britons and Americans" (120 pages, Edward Lear features with the most poems), and the third has a rather long title: "Greek, Polish, Czech, Spanish, Romanian, Russian" (30 pages, 10 poems altogether). Although the eight source languages might suggest a broad enough scope, the third group's shortness and heterogeneity make it appear rather like an appendix to a collection of poetry basically in German and English. Hajnal's collection appears rather as a counterexample among the *Nyugat* translators, which does not give the impression of a world poetry anthology.

Weöres published his translation collection without any discursive paratext, but the selection and the poems' organization imply some ideas about world literature. He is the one who had the most comprehensive view of world literature. He organized the translated poems into 16 groups as follows: China; Chinese nationalities; India; Central-Asia and Georgia; Byzantium; Medieval Latin poetry; Celts; Iceland; Germans; the English (which group includes two American poets, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson); the French; Italians; Spaniards; Russians and Ukrainians; small nations in the Soviet Union; and neighboring countries. In each group there is a chronological progress. This might not be significant with some very short groups, like the "Italians," which only contains two poems, one by Giacomo Leopardi and one by Gabriele d'Annunzio, or the "Celts" with five anonymous poems, but is most informative about longer national blocks. The Chinese collection is the first and the longest in the book, starting with the *Tao Te Ching* by Laozi and ending with a poem be Mao Zedong. (Weöres translated 11 poems by Mao for the 1959 collection *Mao Ce-tung 21 Verse* [*21 Poems by Mao Zedong*]). The book starts with poetry of Asian nations reaching a total of 260 pages, to which one can add the 25 pages of the small nations of the Soviet

Union, mostly Siberian folk poetry. The space given to the core or major literatures only slightly surpasses that of the European peripheries or small nations. All this gives the impression of a geographically balanced view of world literature. What is surprisingly absent is European Classical Antiquity. No Classical Greek or Roman poetry is included. This fact cannot be justified because of lack of language skills: on the one hand, Weöres translated from many languages he personally did not know using rough translations by people who did, and on the other hand the collection does contain Medieval poems translated from Greek and Latin. In the case of Chinese and Indian poetry, he was happy to present literary developments starting from ancient times, but in the case of European literature he regarded the Middle Ages as the beginning. This shows something of his personal preferences, while the book as a whole seems to aim at some kind of comprehensiveness.

Illyés opened his collection with a paratext titled "Our Place in World Literature," and it starts with a proud statement of the selection's comprehensiveness: "Almost all European nations are represented in this collection, and beyond that two great peoples of Asia" (5) namely the Chinese and the Japanese. He explains that he ordered the poets not geographically but chronologically, except for the Asians, "because their development is different." Then he exclaims: "The time when he lived characterizes a writer of a civilization much more than where he lived!" (5). I suppose that today's readers tend to regard Europe as one civilization, and therefore the separation of the Asians fundamentally contradicts this emphatic statement about the insignificance of place. But we can accept that inside a civilization the minor differences of space are dwarfed by those of historical periods.

Illyés expressed highly original ideas about world literature, translation, and small nations. He describes literature through the metaphor of the "parliament of nations," in which the smallest ones may have equal weight. More importantly, he views world literature from the viewpoint of the recipients:

> Translation—and actually world literature too—is first of all an issue for nations of small population and modest literary past. This is their noble revenge.… For those who can read only in English or French, the world of Dante, Goethe, Pushkin or the *Kalevala* is more like a closed door than for a Pole, a Czech or a Hungarian. I am sure that the clue for the puzzle why Shakespeare had no influence in France while Racine had none in England simply lies in the fact that they were not translated. Obviously, neither any need nor snobbery forced them to do so. Their poverty was caused by riches, lameness by healthy muscles. (7–8)

Illyés denied that the world-literary character of Hungarian literature depended on the Hungarian author's success or impact abroad. For him, Hungarian literature is world literature if it discusses the same problems that the literatures of the world discuss at the same time. Discussion belongs to the same metaphor of the parliament mentioned above. And this is why translation is cardinally important for a literature: the domestic literary system should be informed about what is going on elsewhere. World-literariness is not an issue of fame, but of synchronicity.

In his "Foreword" sub-titled "Confession about Translation," Vas emphasized that translation was always a most personal issue for him, and that his collection thus could not offer a complete or even a historically characteristic picture of world poetry. He explained what he thought such a volume should look like: "That would require all the great poets of the world, and the greatest, most representative poems by them" (9). One person could not complete such a project, because no one person has the appropriate understanding, linguistic and formal skills for everything. However, he regarded his translating activity as an operation in the field of world literature. To describe this operation, and to

explain the metaphorical title of his collection, he used another metaphor, calling himself a pirate of the seven seas, which included the oceans of time too. The volume contains the prey he collected during his 18 years of intellectual adventures, but he adds: "with this prey I had not deprived anybody of their treasure. Because this is a fortune which accumulates through being shared by as many as possible: world literature" (11). World literature, in this framework, is not a fixed set of treasures; although the collection does not give a complete picture of world literature, it is itself accumulating world literature. Translation is part or rather the very method of world literature growing.

After the poetic collections created by individual translators, I should mention a collection of another modernist, Antal Szerb, who belonged to the second generation of *Nyugat*, but was not a poet or translator himself. Szerb was an excellent essayist, who also published several, highly intellectual novels and short stories. He edited a collection called *Száz vers* (*One Hundred Poems*), partially selecting earlier translations, partially commissioning poets to translate poems for this multilingual anthology, in which the source texts were also included. Only six languages feature as source languages: English (31 poems), French (27), German (25), Latin (8), Italian (6), and Greek (4). In such a volume, it would have been absurd to include languages hardly any reader could understand or even read. But such selections of world poetry are also limited by the number of languages an editor or the translators know. Personalized versions of world literature almost necessarily have a geographically focused scope, although some poets found ways to extend the range of translatable literatures.

Szerb's *Száz vers* are interesting from another viewpoint too. They are organized into ten cycles, each with its own title. The structure is not mechanical: none of the cycles contain exactly ten poems. The cycles create thematic units: "Lonely People," "Lovers," "Gods," "Mortals," "Animals," "Nostalgias," "Fates," "Nights," "Sorrows," and "Powers, Visions." This thematic categorization implies very clear ideas of what lyric poetry should discuss—ideas obviously distilled from the European literary tradition. The longest cycle is "Mortals," with 19 poems about death. The runner-up is "Lovers," which many readers would have expected to be the winner. The round number of 100 poems already implies a highly canonical selection, which is moderated by the large number of poets included. I think only two seem really missing: John Milton and Emily Dickinson. The absence of the latter is made obvious by Szerb's decision to use one of her poems as the motto for his preface. He selected poems by 79 authors (along with three anonymous poems); only 14 poets enjoy the inclusion of two of their poems in the volume, and only two have three: John Keats and Goethe. The volume also contains short notes on every author. Goethe's canonicity is paradoxically emphasized by having the shortest such note of all: "He was Goethe" (Szerb 332). Szerb, however, was the editor of the volume; poet-translators published much less canonical, more personal, and probably more interesting suggestions for lyric world literature.

The Hungarian modernists gathered around the literary magazine *Nyugat* took poetic translation very seriously as part of their program of developing modernist poetics, and when they published collections of translations they implied their views about world literature. The fact that such volumes had an audience is already suggestive of the prestige of translations in a semi-peripheral literature like Hungarian. These poets had the tendency to deny the intention of publishing world literature anthologies in the paratexts, but the general tendency of this denial shows that it was a rather obvious idea on behalf of their readers. It might be a personal view of world literature that such a volume proposes, but it says something about who are the most important poets, which literatures should be included and in what proportions, and which are the negligible periods of literary history. But they did not only represent world literature as a canon through their selection: they also theorized about

world literature in the paratexts, and regarded translation as crucially important in the workings or existence of world literature. For those who regard equivalence (or "faithfulness") as highly important for literary translation, the practice of indirect translation is usually unacceptable, but if it is about world literature, it allows a much more inclusive view and strategy.

Notes

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2. Cf. Péter Hajdu, "National Peculiarities in Approaching the Classics: The Case of Catullus with Hungarian Modernism." *World Literature Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2023, pp. 4–12.

3. In the introduction Babits refers to the latter's name in Latin, calling himself a *graculus*.

4. Actually, the first edition was published by a marginal publisher, the publishing house of the Catholic literary magazine *Az Élet* (*The Life*), the second by the probably most important literary publisher of the time, Révai.

5. Including Poe, whose "Raven" challenged several Hungarian translators to compete with each other.

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