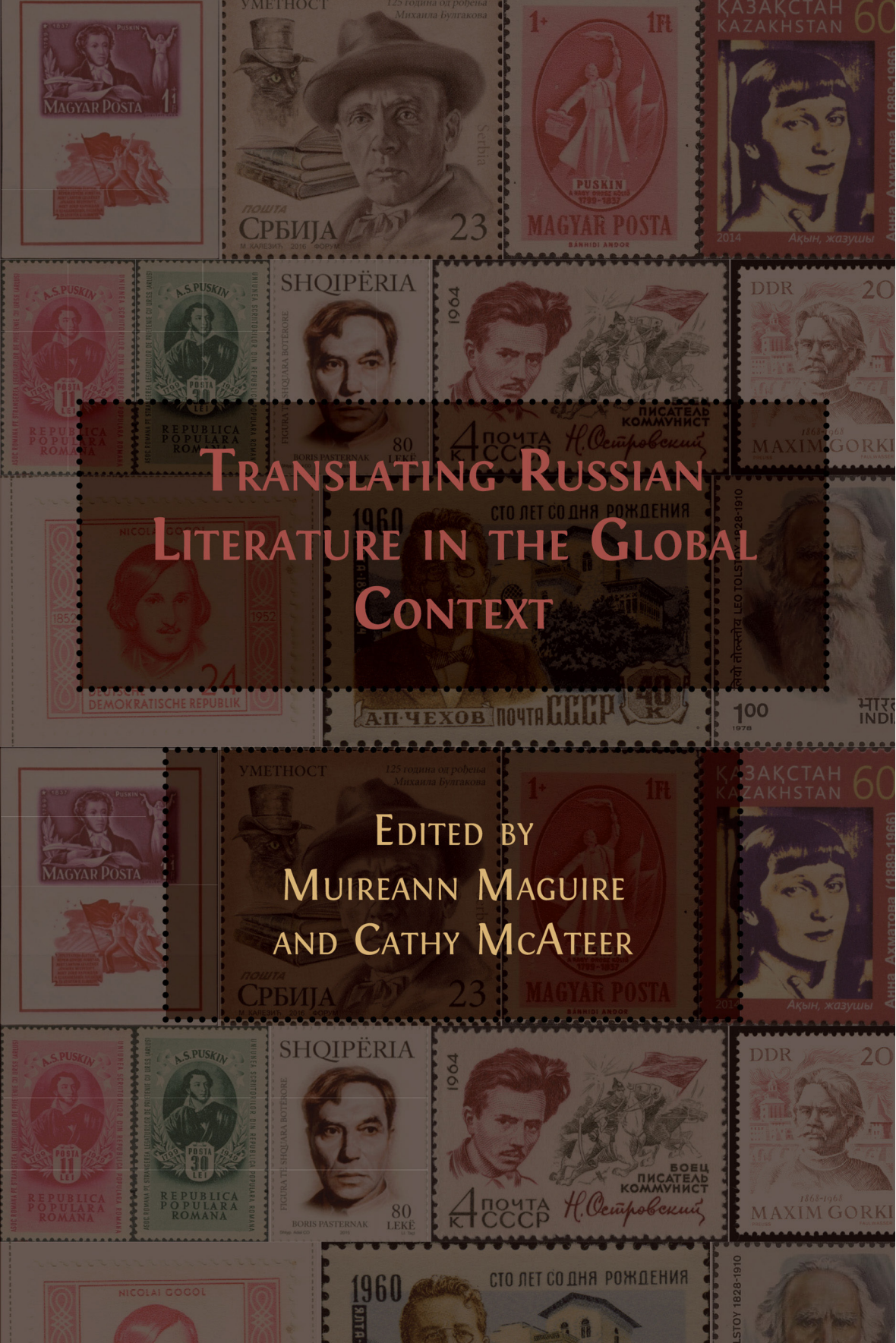

Translating Russian Literature in the Global Context

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Hungary

"Russia has so far given humanity nothing but samovars": On the Reception of Russian Literature in Hungary from the Beginning to Nabokov and Beyond

Zsuzsa Hetényi

Dionýz Ďurišin (1929–97) was the first scholar to categorise literary translation as a form and genre of comparative literature, drawing attention to the important distinction between direct and indirect relations in mediation.[1] Ďurišin considers literary translation the most complex form of cultural transfer. He points out that research into mediation plays an extremely important role in the study of patterns of world literature as a whole; it is particularly important in countries with isolated languages, like Hungary. Initially, very few Hungarian translators knew Russian: therefore, until the 1870s, most Russian works reached Hungarian audiences primarily through intermediary (or bridging) translations. My essay aims to describe the main trends in the Hungarian reception of translated Russian literature from the beginning, in the nineteenth century, up to the twentieth. I will provide deeper insight into the problems of the Socialist era by finishing with three brief case studies (from my own direct experience as a translator) on the translation of censored Russian authors and samizdat.

The evolution of nineteenth-century literature in Central and Eastern Europe differs in many respects from its development in Russia because of the huge difference in geo-literary space: smaller nations' cultural progress was defined

1 Dionýz Ďurišin, *Theory of Literary Comparatistics*, trans. by Jessie Kocmanová (Bratislava: Slovak Academy of Sciences, 1984), p. 12.

 https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0340.09

by their devotion to strengthening national consciousness.[2] In a phenomenon Pascale Casanova has described as the 'Herder effect', Croatians, Serbs, Czechs, Slovaks, Serbs from Vojvodina, and also Hungarians, attached great importance to the study of folk poetry that enriched their national culture and to themes drawn from their (often idealised) national past.[3] Hence in Central and Eastern Europe, this Romantic literary tendency prevailed much longer than it did in Russian literature.[4] In Hungary, in the 1850s and 1860s, during the heyday of the Russian Realist novel, poetry remained the principal genre, while the historical and romantic novels of Mór Jókai (1825–1904) continued to play a leading role in prose.[5] That is why Aleksandr Pushkin's 1832 *Evgenii Onegin*, translated in 1866 by Károly Bérczy (1821–67), not only found its place in this verse-oriented literary mainstream but influenced a popular new genre: novels in verse proliferated in Hungary.[6] Itamar Even-Zohar has argued that "the very principles of selecting the works to be translated are determined by the situation governing the (home) polysystem".[7] Thus, Russian literature apparently did not provide new patterns or topics for peripheral Hungary's literary development until the last decades of the nineteenth century.

From Mediated to Direct Translations: Three Periods in the Nineteenth Century

The period between 1820 and 1840, when sporadic translations from Russian literature were published in German or mediated through German translations, brought not only Pushkin and Lermontov (whose *Hero of Our Time* or *Geroi nashego vremeni*, 1839–41 was translated very roughly by János Kriza in 1840), but also Vladimir Odoevskii and Nikolai Gogol to Hungarian audiences. They were accompanied by their contemporary Russian critics, including essays by Faddei Bulgarin and Vissarion Belinskii, translated via German. The main mediators of this process during this first period (the so-called Age of Reforms) were the

2 Zsuzsa Zöldhelyi, *A külföldi közvetítés szerepe az orosz irodalom magyar fogadtatásában (XIX. század)*, ed. by Zsuzsa Hetényi (Budapest: ELTE BTK Műfordító Műhely, series *Dolce Filologia*, 2008).

3 Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by Malcolm DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

4 István Fried, 'A kelet-középeurópai romantika jellegzetességeiről', *Filológiai Közlöny*, 2 (1980), 153–68.

5 István Sőtér, 'A verses regény és a regény (Az Anyegin és a magyar irodalom)', in Sőtér, *Az ember és műve* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971), pp. 310–19.

6 Bérczy started working from Friedrich von Bodenstedt's German translation but, enchanted by Pushkin's novel in verse, he learned Russian in order to translate it directly.

7 Itamar Even-Zohar, 'The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem', in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 192–97 (p. 197).

language-reformer Ferenc Kazinczy (1759–1831); Ferenc Toldy (1805–75), the author of an overview titled *Russian Poetry* (1828);[8] and the literary translator and Member of Parliament, Gábor Kazinczy (1818–64).

In 1844, seven years after Pushkin's death and three years after Lermontov's, Ferenc Toldy (then still Ferenc Schedel; Toldy was a pseudonym) noted in his foreword inaugurating a new series of 'Foreign Novels' (*Külföldi regénytár*) published by the Kisfaludy Society (a literary association founded in 1836 by leading Hungarian writers) that it would be challenging to present to Hungarian readers works from such minor (!) literatures as Dutch, Swedish, Polish, or Russian.[9] Only after the 1840s, however, did translation become more faithful. During and even before the era of Classicism (from the late eighteenth century to 1820), authors' names could be omitted and substituted with the translator's instead, especially if the original text was heavily adapted. As early as 1787, the poet János Batsányi became the first to publish a study (consisting of three essays) on the theory and principles of literary translation, well before such theoretical considerations became a scholarly topic.[10]

Between 1850 and 1870, a considerable time lag developed in the translation of contemporary Russian literature. From the end of the 1850s, more and more information emerged about conditions in Russia, most probably thanks to the two figures who acted as catalysts for mediation in Western Europe, Aleksandr Herzen (1812–70) and Ivan Turgenev (1818–83), based in London and France respectively. Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time*, translated first from German in 1855 and then from Russian in 1879, was received critically.[11] This novel suffered on account of its unlikable protagonist and loose narrative structure; critics queried whether it could even be considered as a single integral work.[12] In 1855, the poet János Arany (1817–82), translator of Gogol's 'The Overcoat' via German ('Shinel'', 1842; 'A köpenyeg', 1860) advised one of his former students to read Pushkin

8 Based on poems including Adolf Müllner's version of Petr Pletnev's original anthology.

9 Külföldi Regénytár, *Kiadja a Kisfaludy-társaság. Szerkeszti Nagy Ignác* (Pesten: Hartleben Konrád Adolf, 1843–44).

10 János Batsányi, 'On Translation' ('A fordíttásról', 1788), *Magyar Museum*, II (1790). This journal, under Batsányi's editorship, was printed after two years' delay. See also *Batsányi János Összes Művei* [*Collected Works of János Batsányi*], ed. by Dezső Keresztury and Andor Tarnai, 4 vols (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1953–67), II: *Prózai Művei* [*Collected Prose*] (1960), esp. pp. 101–07.

11 Miháil Lermontov, *Korunk hőse*, trans. by Zsigmond Falk and János Vajda and serialised in the daily newspaper *Magyar Sajtó* in 1855, issues 88–144. The retranslation from Russian in book form, also under the title of *Korunk hőse*, was by Ruby Miroszláv and Iván Timkó (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1879).

12 Ferenc Zsigmond, 'Orosz hatások irodalmunkban' ['Russian Influences on our Literature'] in Zsigmond, *Értekezések a nyelv és széptudományi osztály köréből* (Budapest: MTA, 1945), p. 21.

and Lermontov (in translation).[13] Arany's remark highlights his intellectual tolerance and his ability to distinguish Russia's politics from its literature (a perennial complication of the reception of Russian culture in Hungary). After 1848, the negative perception of Russia in Hungary was reinforced by Tsar Nikolai II's cruel repressions and by the Russian Army's alliance with Austria, Hungary's traditional oppressor. Even the popular romantic novelist Mór Jókai (much admired by the élite of Victorian-era England) followed this trend for a while, as an active participant in the revolution of 1848.[14] However, his hostility towards everything Russian relaxed in the 1860s, when he expressed solidarity with those Russians who resisted absolutism, like the Decembrists; Pushkin became for him an emblematic figure of the fight for freedom against absolute rulers.[15] Jókai's name is closely linked to the reception of Russian history in Hungary; he visualised Russia as an exotic space and a source for romantic plots. Jókai's *Freedom under the Snow* (*Szabadság a hó alatt*, 1879) focuses on Pushkin and the noble Decembrist rebels of 1825. The Decembrist theme emerged in Russian literature after the return of the last exiled member from Siberia in 1856, but Jókai did not know Russian. His manuscript notes allow us to trace his use of German and French sources like Alexandre Dumas or Alfred de Vigny.[16]

From the 1870s onwards, the primary intermediary language for Russian translations after German (where Friedrich von Bodenstedt's translations dominated as pivot texts) was French, used for the 1868 Hungarian translation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1867) and for Turgenev's novels. But this new wave of translated literature often lacked politically meaningful details. For example, Vera Pavlovna's famous Fourth Dream of a utopian future society in Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *What Is To Be Done* (*Chto delat'*, 1863; *Mit tegyünk?*, 1877) was omitted by Ármin Sasvári, who translated the novel from French.[17] For similar political reasons, some Turgenev novels, like *Virgin Soil* (*Nov'*, 1877) or *Fathers and Sons* (*Ottsy i deti*, 1862), which launched debates elsewhere in Europe and in Russia on Nihilism and the populist *narodnik* movement, were

13 The name of the student is unknown. See Aladár Komlós, 'Puskin a magyar irodalomban', *Filológiai Közlöny*, 3 (1955), 333–52. Quoted by Zöldhelyi, *A külföldi közvetítés*, p. 15.

14 Lóránt Czigány, 'Jókai's Popularity in Victorian England', *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, 60:16 (1975), 186–92.

15 Mór Jókai, 'Kivel szövetkezzünk', *A Hon* [*The Homeland*], issues 200, 201, 202 and 205 (1867), p. 1 (in every issue).

16 See Zöldhelyi, *A külföldi közvetítés*, p. 40.

17 The same omission of Vera Pavlovna's fourth dream occurred with the first (1886) English-language translation of this text, produced via French by the American radical Socialist, Benjamin R. Tucker, as *What's To Be Done? A Romance*. For commentary on this and subsequent English translations of Chernyshevskii's novel, see Michael R. Katz, 'Review of English Translations of *What is to be Done?*', *Slavic Review*, 46:1 (1987), 125–31, https://doi.org/10.2307/2498628. Ármin Sasvári's translation of the novel appeared in Budapest in 1877.

also translated after a time lag, too late for their social content to be topical.[18] Only two decades later could these issues be freely debated; ensuring that Alphons Thun's German-language study *The History of the Russian Revolutionary Movements* (*Geschichte der revolutionären Bewegungen in Russland*, 1883) was immediately translated into Hungarian in 1884 under a new, high-sounding title, *The Nihilists* (*Nihilisták*).[19] The translator's foreword notes that the obvious parallel between resistance to the Tsars' absolutist regime and to the Habsburg monarchy invites sympathy from Hungarian audiences.

Next to Pushkin's *Onegin*, Turgenev's novels had the most enduring influence on Hungarian literature. Russia and Hungary shared many common tropes of fading nobility, with their neglected country houses and declining traditional rural culture. The idleness and procrastination personified in the titular hero of Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov* (1859) also struck a chord with the Hungarian mentality, echoed in the Hungarian poet Sándor Petőfi's poem 'Pató Pál', a mock-folkloric song where the narrator (Pató Pál) choruses, "'Oh, we have plenty of time ahead to do it later'".[20] At this period, a new generation of literary translators emerged, working without pivot languages. They offered new foci of interest to the Hungarian readers, as well as translating, for the first time, Russian authors of an earlier period, such as Ivan Krylov and Vasilii Zhukovskii. But they also translated the work of Nikolai Nekrasov, Fedor Dostoevsky, Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin, Vsevolod Garshin, and Anton Chekhov. Two outstanding figures of this new generation were Dezső Ambrozovics (1864–1919) and Endre Szabó (1849–1924). The breadth of Hungarian awareness of Russian literature by the end of the nineteenth century is demonstrated by the list of entries in the Great Pallas Encyclopaedia (Pallas Nagy Lexikon, 1893), compiled by Endre Szabó. These entries included Vissarion Belinskii (vol. 3), Chekhov (vol. 4), the Decembrists, Dostoevsky ('uniting mystical ideas with realism', vol. 5), Griboedov (vol. 8), Herzen (vol. 9), Nihilism (as a synonym of propaganda and terror, vol. 13), and an overview of Russian language and literature (vol. 12)—with their first names domesticated (for example, Pushkin's forename became Sándor instead of Aleksandr, Elek replaced Aleksei for A. K. Tolstoy, and so

18 As Zsuzsa Zöldhelyi has pointed out, an article by the Russian 'narodnik' thinker Petr Lavrov (1823–1900) which appeared in an English newspaper (*Athenaeum*) was translated without the name of the author. This Hungarian version was heavily redacted, having been filtered (re-translated) from the original Russian through English and then German. See Zöldhelyi, *A külföldi közvetítés*, p. 37.

19 Alfonz Thun, *A nihilisták* (*Az orosz forradalmi mozgalmak története*), trans. by Rezső Szentgyörgyi Vörös (Budapest: Athenaeum R. Társulat, 1884).

20 Sándor Petőfi (1823–49), poet and revolutionary, considered Hungary's national poet. He was a key figure in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. He died in the last battle for liberation from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, aged only twenty-six; ironically, he may have been killed fighting Russian troops who had intervened on the side of the ruling Habsburg dynasty.

on).[21] By 1900, Russian literary influence was already detectable in Hungarian prose narrative patterns, even explicitly referenced in dialogue. Among such Russian-influenced writers were István Petelei with his Turgenevian tonality (1852–1910), and the Chekhovian short stories of István Tömörkény (1866–1917).

The Twentieth Century: Cataclysms

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the main new arrival in Hungarian letters was Maksim Gorky,[22] followed by Leonid Andreev and Aleksandr Kuprin. Gorky swiftly shared the place of honour afforded to Chekhov, Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Turgenev; all were mentioned not only in reviews, commentaries written by translators, and newspaper articles, but also in the correspondence of major Hungarian writers (including Endre Ady, Dezső Kosztolányi, Gyula Juhász, Tóth Árpád, Nagy Lajos, and Frigyes Karinthy). Karinthy was famous for his literary parodies; his spoof of Mikhail Artsybashev's *Sanin* (1907; translated in 1912)[23] shows the popularity of the latter work at the time. Endre Szabó's translation of *Sanin* had appeared in four editions in 1909 and two lesser-known translators undertook alternative versions of the text that same year. Arkadii Averchenko was also popular: his work appeared in the newspapers *Élet*, *A Hét*, and *Új Idők* from 1916 onwards. In 1911, Chekhov was the subject of an important scholarly analysis by the noted scholar György Lukács.[24] The influence of Russian literature persisted in Hungarian prose: Gyula Krúdy (1878–1933) with his Oblomovian-Oneginian hero Szindbád,[25] and Benő Karácsony with his Oblomovian *Piotruska* (1927), are some of those who represented Russian connections for their readers.

21 My main source for the history of literary translation is Sándor Kozocsa's bibliography is *Az orosz irodalom magyar bibliográfiája*, ed. by Sándor Kozocsa (Budapest: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, 1947).

22 Dezső Ambrozovics, 'Gorky Makszim', *Új Idők*, 26 (23 June 1901), p. 557.

23 Frigyes Karinthy, *Így írtok ti* [*So write you*] (Budapest: Athenaeum, 1912), pp. 144–53. For an overview of Artsybashev's shocking novel's *succès de scandale*, see Nicholas Luker, 'Scandalous "Sanin" Revisited: A Literary Re-Assessment,' *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (1999), 193–202 ; and Otto Boele's monograph *Erotic Nihilism in Late Imperial Russia: The Case of Mikhail Artsybashev's* Sanin (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).

24 György Lukács, *A modern dráma fejlődése* [*The Development of Modern Drama*] (Budapest: Kisfaludy-Társaság, 1911).

25 Krúdy's Sindbad stories were collected in one volume in 1944, uniting *The Travels of Sindbad* (1912), *The Resurrection of Sindbad* (1916), and *The Youth and Grief of Sindbad* (1917). See Gyula Krúdy, *Szindbád* [*The Adventures of Sindbad*], comprising *Szindbád utazása*, *Szindbád feltámadása*, and *Francia kastély* (Budapest: Új Idők, 1944).

The echo of the revolutions of 1905 and 1917 in Russia was amplified during the 133-day lifetime of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919.[26] However, geographical distance also led to misinterpretations, such as the misrepresentation of Sergei Esenin as a revolutionary poet. His poems were translated only after his tragic death in 1925, appearing in weeklies and journals (such as *Literatúra*, *100%*, *A Hét*, and *Korunk*). Here is a typical left-wing poem by Imre Forbáth (1898–1967), a former contributor to the famous Constructivist journal *MA* (*Today*).[27] The poem summarises Russian literature through images and types:

Imre Forbáth
A Russian Portrait Gallery

Leaden tears fell from Gogol's eye onto sad Russia.
And long wrinkles on Herzen's forehead: the path of the exiles to Siberia.
Turgenev's nose: the ladder on which the titans walked.
Pushkin's words: a glacier, glittering with cold stars;
From Dostoevsky's mouth the cold reeks as if from a morgue.
Tolstoy's beard is a frowning forest, where wondrous wise owls sit on the branches.
Blok a dim window through which heavy raindrops run down.
On Esenin's lips hangs sadness like pale blue roses.
But Lenin's forehead is a battering ram that broke through the cordon of the Past,
From the brain of Stalin the locomotives of History are humming.
Maiakovskii's gigantic throat trumpeted the horn of revolution,
And in the bosom of Gorky, Gorky smoldering, beats the heart of humanity![28]

While between 1920 and 1945, Hungarians maintained consistent interest in classical nineteenth-century Realist Russian literature, it is intriguing to note what contemporary new Soviet culture reached Hungary, and how. An example of Russian cultural mediation in Berlin is Lajos Kassák's article 'For the Russian

26 The Hungarian Soviet Republic (or Hungarian Councils' Republic) was a short-lived Socialist–Communist rump state (active 21st March–3rd August 1919).

27 *MA* was a Hungarian literature and arts magazine founded in 1916 in Budapest by the avant-garde poet Lajos Kassák, who continued to publish it after 1919 in exile in Vienna until 1925. It was launched after a previous journal *A Tett* (*The Action*). Forbáth published a poem there entitled 'A költő' ['The Poet'], dedicated to Briusov. *MA*, 1 February 1922, p. 46. See also footnote 30 below.

28 In Imre Forbáth, *Panasz és remény* [*Complaint and Hope*] (London: Hungarian Club, 1942), p. 8. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Exhibition in Berlin' ('A berlini orosz kiállításhoz', 1922).[29] Blok became celebrated only after his death, in 1921. Symbolist writers like Aleksei Remizov and Andrei Belyi arrived belatedly; Ivan Bunin was recognised only in 1933, the year he won the Nobel Prize for Literature. It was mainly left-wing intellectuals who turned to contemporary Soviet literature and news, such as work by Maiakovskii (from 1921) and Isaak Babel (from 1926), but Valentin Kataev's production novel (*Time, Forward!* (*Vremia, vpered!*, 1935)) and the satires of Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov (as well as those of Mikhail Zoshchenko) also found a place in the press and on the bookshelves of liberal intellectuals. Russian religious philosophy was represented only by Vladimir Solov'ev and Nikolai Berdiaev, and primarily in secondary criticism rather than in translation. Some writers' popularity exceeded their merits: arguably including Dmitry Merezhkovskii (who was not translated until the 1920s, but then in quantity), and Mikhail Sholokhov. Two volumes of the latter's *The Quiet Don* (*Tikhii Don*, 1933; *A csendes Don*, 1935–36) appeared in Hungarian as early as 1935; but Sholokhov's full pentalogy only appeared in Hungarian during the Second World War, from the publisher Imre Cserépfalvi. Ironically, at this point Soviet and Hungarian soldiers were fighting against each other on that same Don, which was anything but quiet. Il'ia Ehrenburg's works (such as *Julio Jurenito*, 1924) were also read in German editions by Budapest natives whose mother tongue was German. Ehrenburg's *The Stormy Life of Lazik Roitshvanets* (*Burnaia zhizn' Lazika Roitshvanetsa*, 1927), translated in 1933, was censored: the Vatican chapter was omitted.[30] While this chapter re-appeared in the appendix in the reprinted edition published in 1988,[31] a different chapter (on the visit to the Kremlin and the dialogue with Lenin) was omitted. The most prominent literary journal between the two wars was the intellectual *Nyugat* (*The West*) which regularly reported on Russian literary news. For example, in 1926 it published Sándor Bonkáló's long essay on Boris Pil'niak, whose novella *Ivan Moscow* (*Ivan-Moskva*, 1927) became the longest work in the *Nyugat*-published 'Contemporary Russian Decameron' anthology (1936).[32] This anthology was

29 Lajos Kassák, 'A berlini orosz kiállításhoz', *MA*, 25 December 1922, 2–3. Kassák was the editor-in-chief of the journal. When Miklós Horthy's terror defeated the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the journal's editors had to emigrate to Vienna after unwisely organising a 'Russian Evening' (on 20 November 1920). Some members of this *MA* circle, like Sandor (Aleksandr) Barta, his wife Erzsébet Újvári, and the painter Béla Uitz, co-editor of *MA*, emigrated to the Soviet Union. Barta was executed in 1938, Újvári died in 1940, Uitz was arrested but released for providing his monumental frescos. He returned to Hungary in 1970, two years before his death.

30 Ilja Ehrenburg, *Lasik Roitschwantz mozgalmas élete*, trans. by Gábor Goda (Budapest: Cosmos, 1933).

31 Ilja Ehrenburg, *Lasik Roitschwantz mozgalmas élete*, trans. by Gábor Goda (Budapest: Téka, 1988).

32 The contents (with many misspelled names): Isaac Babel: 'Probuzhdenie' ['Awakening']; Maxim Gorkii: 'Byk' ['The Bull']; Leonid (nb. not Vasilii) Grossmann: 'V gorode Bredicheve' ['In Berdichev']; Ilya Ilf and Evgenii Petrov: 'Chudesnyie gosti' ['The Wondrous Guests'], 'Kak rodilsa Robinzon' ['How

part of a series of foreign-literature anthologies, starting in December 1934 with a French volume, continuing through American, German, and English volumes in 1935, and concluding with the Russian and Japanese volumes in 1936. This series demonstrates that translations from Russian, viewed quantitatively, did not occupy a special place compared with other languages and cultures: focus on Russian literature was only rarely excessive. The turn of the twentieth century was one such intensive period and the half-decade around the fall of the Soviet Union (1987–92) would constitute a second, as we shall see below.

The production of the Russian-focused *Nyugat* anthology was the result of extensive correspondence mediated by the Soviet Embassy, and probably initiated by Gyula Illyés (1902–83), a poet and novelist with left-wing convictions. He had spent two months in the Soviet Union by invitation of the Soviet Writers' Union, participating in its first Congress in 1934. Even though Illyés had previously spent the years 1922 to 1924 in Paris and knew the literary historian Vladimir Pozner and had read Mark Slonim,[33] he compiled his anthology exclusively using texts recommended by Soviet authorities within the newly formed Soviet Writers' Union. Illyés even maintained contacts with the Soviet Embassy in Hungary. In a letter to his commissar in Moscow, the Russian ambassador to Hungary Aleksandr Bekzadian advocated building a lively cultural relationship. As noted by his secretary Semion Mirnyi, he complained that "in Hungary, there is no Russian-language press or Russian books at all […] so far we do not have a library or even a single book package. When I visited the Press Department of the [Hungarian] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I promised the head of the department that we would regularly provide [it] with materials and data on our development".[34] All the texts included in Illyés's *Nyugat* anthology were translated by Hugó Gellért (1890–1937), who had learned Russian during

Robinson was born']; Vsevolod Ivanov: 'Ditë' ['The Kid']; Iurii Olesha: 'Liubov' ['Love']; Konstantin Paustovskii: 'Doblest' ['The Heroic Deed']; Boris Pilniak: 'Ivan Moskva' (70 pages); Nikolai Tikhonov: 'Vechnyi tranzit' (translated as 'The Eternal Chase'); Mikhail Zoshchenko: 'Vory' ['Thieves'], 'Slabaia tara' ['Weak Wrappage'], 'Krizis' ['Crisis'].

33 Mark Slonim (1894–1976) was a controversial figure among the Russian émigré community: a politician, a literary scholar, and the editor of the Prague-based journal *Volia Rossii.* It is probable that Illyés used the following books as sources for the texts in his anthology: *Anthologie de la prose russe contemporaine*, ed. by Vladimir Pozner (Paris: Émile Hazan & Cie Éditeurs, 1929) and *Anthologie de la littérature soviétique 1918–1934,* ed. by Marc Slonim and George Reavey (Paris: Gallimard, 1935). Both can be found in Gyula Illyés's archive at the Manuscript Archive of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, folders IGY 5585 and 5586. See more in Erzsébet Schiller, 'A *Mai orosz dekameron* szerkesztése (1935–1936)', *ItK Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények* 4 CXVIII (2014), 547–60 (p. 556).

34 Attila Seres, 'A budapesti szovjet követség jelentései, 1934–1935', *Lymbus Magyarságtudományi Forrásközlemények* (2007), 225–92 (p. 246). Ambassador Aleksandr Bekzadian cited by Schiller in 'A *Mai orosz dekameron* szerkesztése', p. 548.

the First World War as a prisoner of war in Russia.[35] Bitterly and paradoxically, the historical cataclysms of the twentieth century produced translators with knowledge of the Russian language and culture, because they had been exiled, forced to emigrate, made prisoners during both world wars, or held captive in Gulag camps. This was why, in the twentieth century, direct translations from Russian to Hungarian became increasingly common.

The Pushkin Memorial Year in 1937 (marking the centenary of Pushkin's death) was commemorated by the greatest Hungarian writers, among them Mihály Babits, Illyés, and Sándor Márai. The book sensation of 1941 was Antal Szerb's three-volume essayistic, meandering *History of World Literature* (*A világirodalom története*), which prominently featured portraits of Russian writers. Well-informed about the literature of the Soviet era, Szerb explored the tensions between literature and politics, using the Futurists as examples of politically engaged writers, mentioning the *poputchik* (fellow-traveller) phenomenon, innovation in the theatre, and the Five-Year Plans, as well as some new literary names, including Boris Pasternak who is mentioned here for the first time in Hungary.[36] Szerb's chapter on 'Contemporary Soviet Literature' was censored—not only in 1941 but also in the later (posthumous) 1945 and 1947 editions: an especially cruel gesture as Szerb, who was of Jewish origin, was killed in 1945 by Hungarian Fascists. The chapter on Soviet literature was rewritten by Sarolta Lányi in such ardently pro-Soviet propagandistic terms that later, Kádár-era editions (1956–89)[37] were printed without it.[38] One sentence by Szerb was partially deleted from all postwar editions: namely, the 'samovars' clause in the following question: "But what will Russia, which has so far given humanity nothing but samovars, teach Europe?"[39]

35 The translator Hugó Gellért (born Hugó Goldmann), mentioned here, should not be confused with his better-known namesake and co-eval, the Hungarian-American artist and pro-Communist propagandist Hugo Gellert (born Hugó Grünbaum, 1892–1985). Both were born in Budapest, but Gellert emigrated to New York in 1906.

36 Antal Szerb, *A világirodalom története* [*History of World Literature*], 3 vols (Budapest: Révai, 1941), III (1941), pp. 395–406.

37 János Kádár (1912–89) led the Communist Party and Hungary itself for thirty-two years, after the failed anti-Soviet Revolution of 1956 (when he played an actively pro-Soviet role). After six years of terror, an amnesty was announced. From 1962, the regime started liberalising society and the economy, permitting (within strict guidelines) some freedom of speech and freedom to trade on the open market, so that Hungarians enjoyed arguably the highest standard of living in the Eastern bloc.

38 Chapters dealing with culture within the new Soviet bloc (Serbia, Slovenia, Bulgaria) were also eliminated in all postwar editions.

39 This phrase inspired the title of this chapter. See Szerb, *A világirodalom története:* "But what will Russia, which has so far given humanity nothing but samovars, teach Europe?" ("De mire fogja megtanítani Európát Oroszország, amely eddig még a szamováron kívül nem adott semmit az emberiségnek?"), p. 627.

The genre of Russian literature noticeably absent from this period was poetry. But at the end of the Second World War in 1945, as a quick welcoming gesture to the arrival of the Soviet army, an anthology of poetry was compiled including one poem by Anna Akhmatova, three by Nikolai Gumilev, three by Osip Mandel'shtam, and three by Marina Tsvetaeva. The gesture may strike us as paradoxical, given that the last three had fallen victim to the Soviet totalitarian regime. It is worth noting that Russian works translated into Hungarian were also published in Moscow, by and for the Hungarian Communist émigré community. This applied only to books with strong propaganda content, like Aleksandr Fadeev's *The Rout* (*Razgrom*, 1926), published by the meaningfully titled Sarló és Kalapács (Hammer and Sickle) Publishers: the book appeared under a completely different Hungarian title, *Tizenkilencen* (*Those Nineteen*, 1932). Oleksandr Dovzhenko's story about a heroic deed during the war, 'The Mother' ('Mat'', 1943; *Az anya*, 1943), was published in Hungarian by the Idegennyelvű (Foreign Language) Publishers in Moscow.

The post-1945 era was a new departure in every way, with several distinct phases following a short period of pure enthusiasm which died away after 1947.[40] The head of the new Communist cultural policy was the Party ideologue József Révai (1898–1959), who during his Moscow exile in the 1930s, had already outlined a Hungarian version of national Bolshevism. He relied extensively on the work of György Lukács, after the latter's return from the Soviet Union. As Szegedy-Maszák has suggested elsewhere, "Since Révai supervised several areas in domestic politics, it was Lukács who took over a leading role in the press campaign against bourgeois culture, a role he played until around the turn of 1948–49."[41] A sharp dividing line was of course the anti-Soviet uprising in 1956. This period (called the 'Rákosi years' after the Communist politician Mátyás Rákosi) brought comparatively less relief than the Soviet Thaw did within the USSR, where there was a slight relaxation following Stalin's death. The main function of literary translation during the difficult 1950s, in Hungary as in the USSR, was to support unpublished writers, who resorted to translation and writing children's stories for income. A good example is László Németh's 1951 translation of Tolstoy's 1878 novel *Anna Karenina* (the fourth Hungarian translation of this text since 1887); Németh, a conservative nationalist thinker

40 On 31 August 1947, during the infamous 'blue-ribbon elections', the Hungarian Communist Party manipulated the balloting to win power. Despite this, they received only 22% of the vote; but in this political climate, the will of the electorate was no longer decisive. Hungary's period as a Socialist dictatorship began in 1948.

41 Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, 'The Introduction of Communist Censorship in Hungary: 1945–49', in *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2007), pp. 120–24 (p. 120).

who was not allowed to publish his own writing, learned Russian purely to be able to translate the prose of Russian authors.[42]

The Kádár era began in 1956, with a brief ideological thaw followed by the renewal of totalitarian sanctions. The public and cultural climate did not alter again until 1962, when a general amnesty released many Hungarian writers (and translators) who had been arrested and imprisoned since 1956.[43] Árpád Göncz, who later became Hungary's first democratically elected and non-Communist president (1990–2000), learned English during the six years he spent in prison; after his release, he worked as a literary translator (translating William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, and even J. R. R. Tolkien into Hungarian). The first Kádár-era reforms began in 1962, with a significant shift occurring after 1968. This was because, although the so-called 'new economic mechanism' (decentralisation of the economy) was not yet introduced officially, Hungary was allowed exceptional freedoms from Soviet control, because the Hungarian leadership argued that a second 1956-style revolution must be avoided. This strategy created opportunities that made Hungary, in the parlance of the time, the most cheerful barracks in the Socialist camp.

During the Kádár era, Hungary's only literary journal of world literature, *Nagyvilág* (its Soviet equivalent would have been *Inostrannaia literatura* (*Foreign Literature*)) was launched in 1956 and soon became the leading monthly of its type, widely read by intellectuals. It published translations of Russian and Soviet literature regularly and on a compulsory basis but did not favour them more than translations from other languages. This balanced situation, by failing to prioritise Soviet-Russian literature, may have spurred on the cultural powers of

42 Németh was censored because he belonged to the nationalist wing of so-called '*népi*' writers (meaning, literally, 'of the people'). This politically and ideologically heterogeneous group (often opposed to the 'urbanist' writers) was deeply rooted in the social ethnography of the 1930s. See Balázs Trencsényi, *The Politics of 'National Character': A Study of Interwar East European Thought* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 93. For more on Hungarian translations of *Anna Karenina*, see Albert Sándor, 'Az Anna Karenina magyar fordításairól', *Fordítástudomány*, XIV:2 (2012) 2, 80–92, https://www.epa.hu/04100/04125/00016/pdf/EPA04125_forditastudomany_2012_2_080–092.pdf. Németh's translation had many mistakes and was not always accurate, so a new translation was recently completed by László Horváth (*Anna Karenyina* (Budapest: Európa, 2021)). Horváth (b. 1950), who published his translation of *War and Peace* (*Háború és béke*) with the online Hungarian publisher 21. Század Kiadó in 2022 and is now working on Tolstoy's final novel *Resurrection* (*Voskresenie*, 1899; *Feltámadást*), told an interviewer that after more than a thousand days of living daily with Tolstoy's novels, he doubts that any other translator has succeeded in translating these three great novels in succession. See 'Gy. Horváth László: A szerző nagy gonddal komponált mondatait fordítjuk' ['Gy. László Horváth: We translate the author's carefully composed sentences'], Liter@, 2 February 2023, https://litera.hu/magazin/interju/gy-horvath-laszlo-a-szerzo-nagy-gonddal-komponalt-mondatait-forditjuk.html.

43 For example, the writers Tibor Déry and István Eörsi.

Brezhnev's Soviet Party line to create the Moscow-based literary journal, *Soviet Literature*, in 1975, with national versions translated into the language of every Socialist country.[44] The journal's Hungarian version was *Szovjet Irodalom*. Most of its content was edited centrally in Moscow (at Kutuzovskii Prospekt 1/7), but local editorial committees in Socialist countries were allowed autonomy over the remaining materials (approximately 10% of the journal content). In Hungary, this space was allocated to essays and translations by Hungarian writers and translators. Of course, the editor-in-chief and his deputies were carefully selected from 'reliable' but also skilled cadres. (One curious detail was that the two editors, István Király and Pál E. Fehér, never met; they did not even speak, so deep was their loathing for each other. They visited the office only once a year, on a date announced well in advance.)[45]

In Hungary, the establishment created a special system whereby cultural discourse was monitored according to the so-called 'three T's' system, from the Hungarian words meaning 'supported', 'tolerated', and 'prohibited' (*támogatott*, *tűrt*, *tiltott*). The principle was derived from Kádár's famous slogan: "anyone who is not against us is with us".[46] Since Hungary had no written censorship regulations, rules had to be devised and guessed on the basis of previous experience or international exemplars (as provided by neighbouring Socialist countries). Although in Hungary, dislike of everything Russian was a logical consequence of the forty-year Soviet occupation, interest in formerly prohibited

44 For more on *Inostrannaia literatura* and other Soviet translation initiatives, see Emily Lygo, 'Between Ideology and Literature: Translation in the USSR during the Brezhnev Period', *Perspectives*, 24:1 (2016), 48–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/0907676X.2015.1032311. See also Samantha Sherry, 'Better Something Than Nothing: The Editors and Translators of *Inostrannaia literatura* as Censorial Agents', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 91:4 (Oct. 2013), 731–58, https://doi.org/10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.91.4.0731; and Brian J. Baer and Susanna Witt, 'Introduction: The Double Context of Translation', in *Translation in Russian Contexts*, ed. by Brian Baer and Susanna Witt (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1–16 (pp. 9–12).

45 István Király (1921–89) was a Hungarian literary historian, a Member of Parliament (from 1971), and a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Pál E. Fehér (1936–2013) was a Hungarian journalist, editor of several Party-ruled journals and newspapers as well as many anthologies of Soviet poetry, prose, and essays between 1961 and 1981. He was a controversial personality, linked both to senior Party members in Moscow and to oppressed or outcast individuals.

46 This statement of Kádár's became official policy at the Ninth Hungarian Communist Party conference in 1966. The 'three T's' system was developed by György Aczél; for more on his role as Hungary's "main censor", see Raija Oikari, 'Discursive Use of Power in Hungarian Cultural Policy during the Kádár Era', *Hungarologische Beitrage*, 2 (2000), 133–62. See also István Bart, 'Transition and Privatization in Publishing', *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 140 (Winter 1995), 36–45; Mátyás Domokos, *Leletmentés. Könyvek sorsa a „nemlétező" cenzúra korában, 1948–1989* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999); István Bart, *Világirodalom és könyvkiadás a Kádár-korszakban* (Budapest: Scholastica, 2000); and László Lator, 'My Life as Editor', *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 165 (2002), 64–74.

Russian literature (not only contemporary prohibited or émigré tamizdat, published in Russian by Western publishing houses or journals) but also in earlier Russian texts (by Symbolist, avant-garde, and absurdist writers) was still extremely high during the 1980s and the early 1990s. One might even speak of a boom. In perestroika Russia, after seventy years of censorship, a vast fund of unpublished writings was rescued from the proverbial drawer to flood the market. Here the keyword is 'market', because as a simultaneous cause and consequence of socio-political change, the Russian book market was transformed: the profit-oriented approach replaced the value-oriented one. Hence the paradox arose that authors who had resisted the Soviet system, sometimes even risking their liberty or life, now that their long-sought freedom was finally realised, could not be published for fear that their work would not be commercially viable.

Paradoxically enough, while the Russian language was obligatory during the Communist era, there was no real public interest in 'official' Russian literature. Hungarian translators and publishing houses were obliged by the unwritten rules of censorship to publish only those books which had already appeared in the USSR. Nevertheless, they constantly tried to obtain the best literary works, staying well-informed about prohibited, illegal, or Western tamizdat publications. Such works, which attacked the Soviet social and political regime and thus influenced contemporary Russian oppositional thinking, helped to prepare Hungarian readers for the fall of the Soviet Union. Since this change of regime brought freedom of expression to the former Soviet bloc, formerly controversial Russophone authors like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Venedikt Erofeev, Mikhail Bulgakov, Osip Mandel'shtam, Andrei Platonov, and Evgenii Zamiatin regained their reputation in their homeland and consequently could now be published abroad.[47]

Three Cases from the Kádár Era: Evtushenko, Nabokov and Bulgakov

Evgenii Evtushenko's 'Babii Iar'—The 1960s

When compiling an anthology of twentieth-century Russian literature during the 1990s, I recalled a scandal from three decades earlier, provoked by Evgenii

47 On changes in the book market and its commercial context in the 1990s, see György Kókay, *A könyvkereskedelem Magyarországon* (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1997) and Pongrácz Sennyey, 'Book Publishing in Hungary, After a Decade of Changes', *Slavic & East European Information Resources*, 4 (2001), 29–39. The article reviews the major changes that affected book publishing in Hungary in the 1990s.

Evtushenko's taboo-shattering poem 'Babii Iar'.[48] It was the first Russian poem to address the massacre of Jews near Kyiv on the Jewish New Year in September 1941. Thirty-four thousand people were killed that day, and another hundred thousand died during the following years.[49] Evtushenko indicted the Ukrainian collaborators who were jointly responsible with the Nazi invaders for this extermination, which was a forbidden subject under Soviet censorship. Although I remembered hearing a Hungarian translation of Evtushenko's poem read onstage at my university, I could not find this text. Through many chains of professional acquaintances, I eventually located its translator (Ágnes Ágai). But she could not tell me where the poem had been published; she even doubted whether it had ever appeared in print. I failed to find the poem in any anthology of Evtushenko's verse. When I asked a librarian to search back issues of *Nagyvilág*, Hungary's world literature periodical, from between 1960 and 1970, he found the poem on his second attempt: hidden within a short, unsigned nineteen-line article, not even included in the table of contents.[50] Nor did Evtushenko's name appear in the contents list, apparently as a precaution against censorship. This sophisticated camouflage could have caused the translation to be permanently lost (had I not tracked it down to complete my anthology)…

Vladimir Nabokov's Road to Publication in Hungary (1966–87)

Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977) arrived in Hungarian translation surprisingly late, during the fifth decade of his literary career.[51] The first Nabokov short story appeared in Hungarian as part of a 1968 anthology of American short stories, followed by another nineteen-year silence. Hungarian translators and editors constantly schemed to bypass censorship, and the simplest method was to hide problematic authors in anthologies.[52] The first Soviet publication of Nabokov was concealed within *The Chess Review* (*Shakhmatnoe obozrenie*, 8 (1986)), for example.

48 *Én—nem én. Modern orosz irodalmi antológia. A MűMű—Műfordítói Műhely* (*ELTE BTK*) *fordításai*, ed. by Zsuzsa Hetényi (Budapest: Dolce Filologia VI, 2008).

49 Anatoly Kuznetsov also wrote what he called a "documentary novel" on this subject, with the same title, published in Russia in a heavily censored form in 1966.

50 *Nagyvilág*, 1 (1962), 140–41.

51 An earlier version of this section on Nabokov was published as Zsuzsa Hetényi, 'Nabokov's Art as a Juggler's Act': Vladimir Nabokov's Road to Publication in Hungary', *Anzeiger Für Slavische Philologie,* 44 (2016), 9–14. It is republished with permission, for which I thank the journal editor, Prof. Renate Hansen-Kokoruš.

52 Vladimir Nabokov, 'Becsületbeli ügy' ['An Affair of Honour'], trans. by Á. Réz in *Autóbusz és iguana*, ed. by Géza Ottlik (Budapest: Európa, 1968), pp. 31–58. The editors may have noted this story's previous appearance in Dmitri Nabokov's translation in *The New Yorker*, 3 September 1966, 36–66.

Hungarian law subserviently emulated Soviet censorship practice, but this was only one reason for the delay in Nabokov's Hungarian debut. One can only wonder why Nabokov was not noticed among Russian émigré writers earlier, even as soon as the 1920s, since Hungarian intellectuals usually oriented themselves in contemporary Russian literature by following their publications in Berlin and Vienna. *Mary* (*Mashen'ka*, 1926), Nabokov's first novel, was translated into German, but its title in that language *Sie kommt—kommt sie?* (*She comes, does she come?*, 1928) was confusing.[53] A second reason to overlook Nabokov was his relative unpopularity in the German book market. A third explanation could be that the Hungarian intellectuals of the interwar period were more interested in what they considered "new" Russian (rather, Soviet) literature than that produced by Russian émigrés. Nabokov's lyrical and philosophical voice was not even heard among the choir.

The only Russian émigré writer from Berlin widely published in Hungary between the two wars was Mark Aldanov (1886–1957), but his historical novels had already appeared in Paris in the 1930s. Aldanov's *The Ninth Thermidor* (*Deviatoe termidora*, 1923) was translated in the same year (1930) from the Russian original.[54] Eight of his novels appeared in several Hungarian editions between 1930 and 1944. Paris, the most significant centre of Russian emigration after 1925, seemingly received more attention from Hungary than Berlin. French sources were used for information about cultural news and trends, as the Hungarian interest in Merezhkovskii and Bunin (both Paris residents) reveals. Both writers were translated into Hungarian significantly earlier than the Berlin-based Nabokov, even though the latter's work regularly appeared alongside theirs in the most important Parisian Russian émigré journal, *Sovremennye zapiski* (*Contemporary Notes*).

Nabokov's name was first mentioned in a Hungarian periodical in 1961 in a short review of *Lolita* (1955).[55] Its author, a young writer called Mihaly Sükösd (1933–2000), framed his review with reference to Graham Greene, the first critic to praise *Lolita* (in 1955), thus saving that controversial book from oblivion. Graham Greene was an 'accepted' writer in the Soviet bloc because of his Cuba-related novels, which were published even in the Soviet Union. Moreover, Greene's 1955 novel *The Quiet American*, published in English for Russian readers by a Moscow publishing house, was also printed in Hungary.[56]

53 Wladimir Nabokoff-Sirin, *Sie kommt—kommt sie?*, trans. by Jakob Margot Schubert and Gregor Jarcho (Berlin: Ullstein, 1929). It was followed by a second novel in German translation: Wladimir Nabokoff-Sirin, *König, Dame, Bube. Ein Spiel mit dem Schicksal*, trans. by Siegfried von Vegesack (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930).

54 Márk Áldánov, *Thermidor kilencedike*, trans. by Károly Piroska (Budapest: Világosság Ny., 1930).

55 Mihály Sükösd, 'Lolita', *Nagyvilág*, 7 (1961), 1085–86.

56 Graham Greene, *Tikhii amerikanets* [*The Quiet American*] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo inostrannoi literatury, 1959). For more on Greene's relationship with the Soviet

Thus, I speculate that the Hungarian book business was well-informed about those authors considered acceptable by Soviet censors. There might be an even simpler explanation for the extended gap between *Lolita*'s publication in 1955 and 1961 (the year of the review): the failed 1956 Hungarian Revolution, which made this period inhospitable for the reception of a scandalous foreign novel.

In the first Hungarian review of *Lolita*, the five-year time lag in reception was concealed by the absence of the book's publication date. Sükösd described *Lolita* as boring, superficial, and lightweight but playful. It was an ironic, picaresque, essayistic novel with undeveloped characters: in short, a piece of decadent elegance. Before the political changes of 1989 introduced press freedom, very little more was published on Nabokov's fiction: just three short introductory essays written by the translators of *Lolita* and *The Enchanter*, and an excerpt from *Other Shores* (*Drugie berega*, 1954).[57] One reasonably scholarly review did appear in a popular literary weekly under the title 'The Aesthetic Evil' by Ferenc Takács.[58] Takács was the first advocate for publishing *Lolita*, in a series of unpublished 'reports' commissioned by Hungary's world literature publishing house, Európa. The only essay translated into Hungarian in this period about Nabokov was a somewhat unanalytical but charming piece by the half-Hungarian Yugoslav writer, Danilo Kiš, whose review reflected his own feelings on exile and emigration.[59]

Internal Reports on Nabokov (1966–87)

The debates and controversies paving Nabokov's pathway to publication can be traced in the reviews written for the Európa publishing house by specialists on American literature, now held in the library of Petőfi Museum of Literature (PIM). This is a closed collection accessible only by special permission. The reasons for this precaution are not only potential copyright issues afflicting these reviews, which were often written by well-known individuals seeking extra income, but also because the ideological subservience of the reports would embarrass their authors if printed today. (Hence, I only identify names below with permission from the writers or from their heirs.)

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bloc, see Duncan White, *Cold Warriors: Writers Who Waged the Literary Cold War* (London: Harper Collins, 2019).

57 These essays were as follows: Pál Békés, 'Ismeretlen szerző a huszadik századból' ['An Unknown Writer from the 20th Century'], *Nagyvilág*, 1 (1987), 82–83; János Széky, 'Nabokov kisregénye elé', *Nagyvilág*, 3 (1988), 386; Zoltán Vargyas, 'Az orosz Nabokov' ['The Russian Nabokov'], *Nagyvilág*, 8 (1989), 1234–36. On 31 March 1989, the Central Committee of the Socialist Party loosened restrictions on media ownership, effectively ending the state's media monopoly.

58 Ferenc Takács, 'Az esztétikai gonosz (Nabokov: *Lolita*)', *Élet és Irodalom* 13 (XXXII, 25 March 1988), 11.

59 Danilo Kiš, 'Nabokov, avagy a nosztalgia', trans. by Marietta Vujicsics, *Nagyvilág*, 8 (1989), 1118–21.

When evaluating which books to publish, Európa commissioned two independent reviews for every proposal. Theoretically, two positive opinions were needed for a publication to go ahead. If one was positive and one negative, a third opinion was requested. In Nabokov's case in 1966, the first opinions submitted were negative, on both *Invitation to a Beheading* (*Priglashenie na kazn'*, 1936), and *Despair* (*Otchaianie*, 1934). The reviewer of the latter was overtly horrified by this novel; he missed the irony and grotesque playfulness of *Lolita*. He considered the plot inexplicable, the language "pompous babble, stuck-up, proud"; the whole book "either nonsense or of no interest", because "[Nabokov's] distasteful, ranting, worn-out style quickly becomes tiresome". Strikingly, this reveals how widely *Lolita*, although in practice forbidden, was read in Hungary at the time. In the Soviet Union, one could be arrested and sentenced for possessing or discussing forbidden books. *Lolita* must therefore have featured on official Hungarian lists for confiscation.

The next confidential reviews were commissioned for *Lolita* in 1969, during Hungary's post-1968 Thaw. The year 1968 held dual symbolism for Hungary: it was marked by both enthusiasm for the Paris-centred European student movements, and the shame of having participated in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, for which the Soviet Union had rewarded Hungary with a modicum of freedom and limited economic reforms. That year Európa published Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (*Master i Margarita*, 1940; *A Mester és Margarita*, 1969, trans. by Klára Szőllősy), even including a few pages censored from the Soviet journal edition of 1966–67 (no book edition appeared in the Soviet Union until 1973).[60] The positive 1969 evaluation nevertheless finds *Lolita* to be "art as a juggler's act" ("bűvészkedés a művészetben"), while the negative review considers it a dull novel about "a literary person who has nothing better to think of than a girl's roundish figure". The next reviewer was a well-regarded poet, Otto Orbán, who was evidently irked by the material differences between his life in early-1970s Hungary and Nabokov's descriptions of luxury in Swiss hotels and mountains in *Transparent Things* (1972). Thus, despite his admiration for Nabokov's style, his irony leads him to a negative conclusion.[61]

In 1975, *Look at the Harlequins!* (1974) was judged negatively by a translator and a screenwriter. In 1980, *Speak, Memory* (1967) was rejected (for translation) on the grounds that:

> [...] the author failed to answer the real question of his readers; because of his social situation and age he has no memory of or message about the revolution [...] he hates Bolsheviks inexorably and extremely [...] and cannot see any difference between Lenin and Stalin [...], he is a passionate and blindfold anti-Communist.

60 Mikhail Bulgakov, *Master i Margarita* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1973).

61 I name Ottó Orbán with permission from his widow, Julia Orbán.

These words did their job: not only was this book not even given to another reviewer, but it was sent back to the foreign editor. As if it were contagious, the fact of returning is noted on the review with an exclamation mark. In the same year, *Pale Fire* (1962), despite garnering two positive reviews (1980, 1981), was not commissioned for translation. Surprisingly, even the *Lectures on Literature* (1980), based on Nabokov's university courses about Dickens, Austen, Stevenson, Proust, Kafka, Joyce, and Flaubert, were rejected in 1983. They were considered anti-intellectual, too direct, lacking the terminology of literary theory, and too self-reflective. But a breakthrough had already occurred in 1981 when a new and thoughtful seven-page evaluation of *Lolita* was submitted to Európa, warmly supporting its publication, and further endorsed by another positive review that year. Both reviewers were specialists in American literature, well-placed to emphasise Nabokov's status as an outstanding modernist writer, a dominant figure in American literature. Yet, despite the positive reviews of 1981 and 1982, Európa published *Lolita* only in 1987, in a translation by the author and actor Pál Békés (1956–2010). 1989 marked a Nabokov boom of sorts; from this date on, there were only positive reviews of Nabokov texts (although in 1989 one editor was still hesitating to commission *Speak, Memory*), and translations of his early Russian novels dominated. A Hungarian edition of Nabokov's collected works (novels and short stories) was published by Európa between 2006 and 2015.[62]

Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog*: The 1980s

Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog* (*Sobach'e serdtse*), a satire on the Soviet New Man, was written in 1925 in the Soviet Union, and immediately confiscated and banned (until 1987). From the 1960s onwards, it was circulated in the West in so-called tamizdat (Russian-language unofficial editions), so that very few people in Eastern Europe could read it. It was not known even among those with access to sources of clandestine literature under the Kádár regime. This situation changed slightly when the Slovak journal *Svetová Literatúra* published a Slovak translation in 1978. The polyglot Hungarian writer György Spiró then read the novel—strangely enough, upon the recommendation of the notoriously hardline cultural journalist, Pál E. Fehér, mentioned above as the "ghost-editor" of the journal *Szovjet Irodalom*. Spiró, who had begun working in 1981 as a dramatist at the Csiky Gergely Theatre in Kaposvár, a city in South-Western Hungary, decided to adapt *Heart of a Dog* for the stage on Fehér's suggestion; he asked me to translate it. I had already finished my translation (based on the 1969 Paris edition of the book, which Spiró had lent to me) when the planned staging was banned. My (now officially illegal) Hungarian translation *Kutyaszív* (literally *Heart of a Dog*) was filed at the archive of the Institute of Theatre in Budapest.

62 The Nabokov Estate contracts oblige translators to use the English version of Nabokov's works, even for those novels originally published in Russian.

A second attempt to stage the work was made in 1986, but again the authorities intervened. My Hungarian translation, however, was published in the same year by one of the smaller samizdat (illegally printed and distributed) publishers, Katalizátor Iroda. It was printed on the clandestine stencil machine of a samizdat journal located in an artist's workshop. Thus, illegal Western tamizdat became Hungarian samizdat. At my request, as I had small children, the translator's identity was not mentioned. Moreover, I did not want to cause any trouble for my father, then Hungary's Minister of Finance. This new translation was noticed by the political police in January 1987, when one of their agents visited the samizdat workshop and bought a copy. Katalizátor Iroda was then targeted by the secret police and dissolved. One year later, in 1988, my translation was legally published by Európa Publishing House.

The three examples above (Evtushenko, Nabokov, and Bulgakov) show how unclear the dividing lines were between permitted and prohibited texts. Totalitarian terror relied on this uncertainty. Thus, it is difficult to establish exactly when totalitarian censorship ended, since its decline was gradual and took different forms in each country it affected.[63] The end of totalitarianism in Eastern Europe is often dated to 1989, but in Hungary, censorship was weakening long before that date. The last bastion of the collapsing fortress, defending the culture of Socialist Hungary, was the translation of Russian literature.[64]

63 On the connection between translation and censorship from a multidisciplinary perspective, see 'Translation Studies Forum: Translation and Censorship', in *Translation Studies*, 3 (IV, 2011), 358–73, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14781700.2011.589657. For a Polish comparison, see the Polish case: John M. Bates, 'From State Monopoly to a Free Market of Ideas? Censorship in Poland, 1976–1989', in *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, ed. by Beate Müller (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 141–67.

64 Mikhail Gorbachev banned censorship in the Soviet Union on 1 August 1990. The censorship authority itself was abolished; the federal government found its continued operation unnecessary.

Appendix

Below are some translations of Russian Literature in Socialist and post-Socialist Hungary. The first date is the publication year of the Hungarian translation. The second date (in parentheses) is the year of the first full-text publication in the Soviet Union (or Russia).

Controversial Soviet-Era Fiction

1962 (1962) Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (*Odin den' Ivana Denisovicha*) (*Iván Gyenyiszovics egy napja*), trans. by László Wessely (Budapest: Európa, 1962).

1969 (1966–67) Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita* (*Master i Margarita*) (*A Mester és Margarita*), trans. by Klára Szőllősy (Budapest: Európa, 1969).

1979 (1922) Boris Pil'niak, *The Naked Year* (*Golyi god*) (*Meztelen év*), trans. by Péter Kántor (Budapest: Európa, 1979).

Glasnost' Period

1985 (1910) Aleksei Remizov, *Sisters of the Cross* (*Krestovye sestry*) (*Testvérek a keresztben*), trans. by Péter Kántor (Budapest: Európa, 1985).

1985 (1913) Andrei Belyi, *Petersburg* (*Peterburg*) (*Pétervár*), trans. by Imre Makai (Budapest: Európa, 1985).

1986 (1907) Fedor Sologub, *The Petty Demon / The Little Demon* (*Melkii Bes*) (*Undok ördög*), trans. by Imre Makai (Budapest: Európa, 1986).

1988 (1926) Boris Pil'niak, *Tale of the Unextinguished Moon* (*Povest' nepogashennoi luny*) (*A kiolthatatlan hold története*), trans. by Pál Misley (Nagyvilág 5., 1988).

1988 (1987) Anatolii Rybakov, *Children of the Arbat* (*Deti Arbata*) (*Az Arbat gyermekei*), trans. by Elli Nikodémusz (Budapest: Magvető, 1988).

1988 (1988) Boris Pasternak, *Doctor Zhivago* (*Doktor Zhivago*) (*Zsivago doktor*), trans. by Judit Pór (Budapest: Európa, 1988).

1989 (1987) Andrei Platonov, *The Foundation Pit* (*Kotlovan*) (*Munkagödör*), trans. by Zsuzsa Király, Erzsébet Vári (Budapest: Európa, 1989).

1989 (1988) Andrei Platonov, *Chevengur* (*Chevengur*) (*Csevengur*), trans. by Mária Szabó (Budapest–Uzsgorod: Magvető–Kárpátia, 1989).

1989 (1989) Varlam Shalamov, *Kolyma Tales* (*Kolymskiie rasskazy*) (*Kolima*), trans. by Ágnes Gereben, László Maráz, Ágnes Osztovits, Judit Osztovits, Zsuzsa Rab (Budapest: Európa–Szabad Tér, 1989).

1989 (1989) Vasilii Grossman, *Forever Flowing* (*Vsio techot*) (*Panta Rhei*), trans. by György Enyedy (Budapest: Magvető, 1989).

1990 (1987) Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Before Sunrise* (*Pered voskhodom solntsa*) (*Napfelkelte előtt*), trans. by László Bratka (Budapest: Európa, 1990).

1990 (1987) Nikolai Erdman, *Plays* (*Piesy*) (*Drámák*), trans. by Éva Harsányi, Rimma Dalos (Budapest: Európa, 1990).

1990 (1988) Evgenii Zamiatin, *We* (*My*) (*Mi*), trans. by Iván Földeák (Budapest–Pozsony: Európa–Madách, 1990).

1990 (1990) Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The First Circle* (*V kruge pervom*) (*A pokol tornáca*), trans. by Imre Makai, Mária Szabó (Budapest: Magvető, 1990).

1990 (1990) Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *Cancer Ward* (*Rakovyi korpus*) (*Rákosztály*), trans. by Mária Szabó (Budapest: Árkádia, 1990).

The Post-censorship Era

1992 (1985) Tat'iana Tolstaia, *Hunting the Woolly Mammoth* (*Okhota na mamonta*) (*Mamutvadászat*), trans. by Zsuzsa Rab (Budapest: Európa, 1992).

1993 (1989) Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago* (*Arkhipelag GULAG*) (*A GULAG szigetvilág*), trans. by András Soproni (Budapest: Európa, 1993).

1993 (1990) Isaak Babel, *1920 Diary* (*Dnevnik 1920*) (*Napló, 1920*), trans. by Zsuzsa Hetényi (Budapest: Pesti Szalon, 1993).

1994 (1989) Konstantin Vaginov, *Goat Song, Harpagoniada, Works and Days* (*Kozlinaia pesn', Garpagoniana, Trudy i dni*) (*Harpagoniáda*), trans. by László Bratka (Budapest: Osiris–Századvég, 1994).

1994 (1989) Venedikt Erofeev, *Moscow-Petushki* (*Moskva-Petushki*) (*Moszkva-Petuski*), trans. By Erzsébet Vári (Budapest–Pécs: JAK–Jelenkor, 1994).

1994 (1992) Andrei Siniavskii, *Strolls with Pushkin* (*Progulki s Pushkinym*) (*Séták Puskinnal*), trans. by Katalin Szőke (Budapest: Európa, 1994).

1999 (1992) Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra* (*Omon Ra*) (*A rovarok élete*), trans. by Zsuzsa Király (Budapest: Park, 1999).

2001 (1990) Sergei Dovlatov, *Pushkin Hills* (*Zapovednik*) (*Puskinland*) / *Ours* (*Nashi*) (*Ezek vagyunk mi*), trans. by Miklós M. Nagy—Erna Páll (Budapest: Európa, 2001).

2002 (1994) Vasilii Aksionov, *Generations of Winter* (*Moskovskaia Saga*) (*Moszkvai történet*), trans. by András Soproni (Budapest: Európa, 2002).

2002 (1998) Boris Akunin, *The Winter Queen* (*Azazel*) (*Azazel*), trans. by Ibolya Bagi (Budapest: Európa, 2002).

2003 (2000) Liudmila Ulitskaia, *The Kukotsy Enigma* (*Kazus Kukotskogo*) (*Kukockij esetei*), trans. by Edit V. Gilbert, József Goretity (Budapest: Európa, 2003).

2004 (2000) Tat'iana Tolstaia, *Kys* (*Kys*) (*Kssz!*), trans. by Miklós M. Nagy (Budapest: Ulpius-ház, 2004).

2005 (1988–89) Vladimir Voinovich, *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (*Zhizn i neobychaynyie prikliucheniia soldata Ivana Chonkina*) (*Ivan Csonkin közlegény élete és különös kalandjai*), trans. by Zsuzsa Hetényi (Budapest: Gabo, 2005).

2009 (1999) Sasha Sokolov, *A School for Fools* (*Shkola dlia durakov*) (*Bolondok iskolája*), trans. by Rita Haffner (Budapest: Napkút, 2009).

2010 (2005) Dmitrii Glukhovskii, *Metro 2033* (*Metro 2033*) (*Metró 2033*), trans. by Márton Bazsó (Budapest: Európa, 2010).

2012 (1989) Vasilii Grossman, *Life and Fate* (*Zhizn'i sud'ba*) (*Élet és sors*), trans. by András Soproni (Budapest: Európa, 2012).