

Retranslation and retranslators in Hungary between 2000 and 2020

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Abstract

This study explores Hungarian retranslations between 2000 and 2020, on the basis of a restricted corpus of 19th- and 20th-century classic novels in four languages, with a special emphasis on the retranslators, in order to know more about their age, gender, work experience or embeddedness in the publishing and/or academic milieu. With a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) method, retranslations of classic English, French, Russian and German prose works published in Hungary between 2000 and 2020 are investigated with the help of bibliographical data provided by the catalog of the Hungarian National Library. The relatively small proportion of retranslation records and the low occurrence of parallel retranslations during the period examined suggest that publishers often opt for reissuing non-copyrighted previous translations. Retranslation activity in a given source language also reflects power relations of languages on the international translation market and results attest to the hyper-central role of English. Hungarian retranslators of classic novels are more likely to be men than women, are generally in their mid-fifties, and often work as editors in the publishing industry. Despite its non-representative nature, the present research highlights a number of issues related to the symbolic power of languages, gender, agents of translation and power relations between them, to be further investigated.

Keywords

retranslation, classics, retranslator, symbolic power, gender

1. Background and hypothesis

Ever since the 1990s, the number of studies on retranslation has been growing steadily, enriching translation studies through research on translation history, ideology, censorship, cultural policies, reception and gender, besides epistemological, bibliographical and methodological issues, to mention only a few of a vast array of topics (Alvstad & Assis Rosa, 2015; Cadera & Walsh, 2017, 2022; Deane-Cox, 2014; Kahn & Seth, 2010; Monti & Schnyder, 2011). As Berk Albachten and Gürçaglar point out, “[r]etranslation is a gateway leading to various questions that are at the heart of translation as a cultural and sociological concept” (2019b, p. 2). If texts and their analyses have often and rightfully been at the fore of researchers’ attention, the agents who produce them – translators, especially retranslators, editors, and publishers – have so far received some, but definitely less interest (as an exception, see Milton & Bandia [2009] on translators as cultural/political agents, or Wolf & Fukari [2011] on interpreting translation from a meta-textual, sociological perspective).

This article seeks, on the one hand, to raise new questions and offer potential directions for research into what retranslation represents in the translation market, and, on the other hand, to identify who retranslators are, through the example of the Hungarian publishing context in the past two decades.

In post-communist Hungary, following the privatization of the book market during the 1990s, the first two decades of the 21st century have seen the emergence of a number of retranslations into Hungarian of world literature classics: novels by authors such as Camus, Dostoevsky, Fitzgerald, Kerouac or Proust. These retranslations have also attracted a fair amount of attention from the media and have made literary translators’ work in general more visible through a number of reviews and interviews with the retranslators in both print and online media, paratexts (booklets, prefaces and afterwords) accompanying the translations, book festival presentations, and reader/translator events organized in connection with the launch of new translations.

Considering individual cases of highly-mediatised retranslations, of Salinger or Camus for instance, one is tempted to conclude that these were mostly the work of experienced, highly-rated translators holding editorial or academic power. Salinger’s retranslator, Imre Barna, for instance, worked as an editor, editor-in-chief and, from 2006 to 2013, as the CEO of Európa, the publishing house that printed his retranslation of *The Catcher in the Rye* in 2015. Another highly visible, but academic, retranslator is Ádám Nádasdy, retranslator of Shakespeare and Dante. Nádasdy is a well-known linguist, poet and polyglot translator who works mostly on Shakespeare’s plays. His scholarly knowledge, experience as a translator and intensive media presence have made him into a successful initiator of retranslations, and a retranslation trendsetter, arguing for the primacy of meaning over faithfulness to form (as an example, see the debate on the importance of preserving the form of the source text between András Kappanyos, 2018, literary historian and translator, arguing for, and Ádám Nádasdy, 2018, arguing against remaining faithful to form, in the literary review, *Jelenkor*). If it indeed appeared that retranslators tend to be older, influential male figures, it may indicate that retranslations are perceived by translators as professionally prestigious challenges that typically crown the peak of a translator’s career.

However, considering the reception of new translations only through the press might be misleading. Some mediatised retranslations have been and are made by women or young translators. Júlia Jancsó has been retranslating the seven volumes of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* [*À la recherche du temps perdu*] since the 1990s, and Laura Lukács’s retranslation of Orwell’s *1984* came out in 2022 (Scolar). There are also examples of young male translators obtaining contracts for retranslations: Mátyás Dunajcsik, for instance, has retranslated novels

by Camus (2020) and Saint-Exupéry (2015). In order to establish the profile of the prototypical retranslator, based on age, gender, work experience, and to assess retranslations in the Hungarian context more objectively, it seems necessary to verify intuitive inferences against data on the retranslations of classic novels in Hungary from 2000 to 2020.

2. Theoretical framework

From a sociological viewpoint, translation is an activity that simultaneously relates to the “international space” of transcultural exchanges, and to the “space of reception” (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2007, p. 102) – that of the target culture. Both types of space are governed by a complex interplay of cultural, political and economic dynamics changing over time. Translation fulfils its multiple functions in both spaces, but more prominently, in its space of reception: it serves as “an instrument of mediation and exchange, it may also fulfil political or economic functions, and constitute a mode of legitimation, in which authors as much as mediators may be the beneficiaries.” (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2007, p. 103)

The value of translation depends on the power relations among languages, as well as on the canonical status and prestige of the translated authors and their translators, both in the international and the national literary space (Casanova, 2002, p. 9). Translated books are marketable symbolic goods, so all agents or mediators (authors, translators, publishers) participating in their production benefit from their publication to accumulate – in Bourdieu’s (1996) terms – economic and cultural/symbolic capital. Translation helps legitimize authors, translators and publishers alike: its uses “vary from the consecration of the translated author to the self-consecration of the translator” (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2007, p. 103; see also the same idea in Gouanvic, 2005, pp. 161-162), and in the process, the publisher also acquires cultural and economic capital.

The present research focuses on retranslations of “classic” novels. Retranslation is understood as “a second or later translation of a single source text into the same target language” (Koskinen & Paloposki, 2010a, p. 294). The term “classic” is difficult to grasp as a scientific concept, despite its generalized and widespread use, but it served as a keyword in the online search of authors to be considered. Publishers use the term “classic” as a label, implying that such a book has been valued for its excellence for an extended period of time, and has also maintained its popularity. Classics tend to overlap with the canon a great deal, most are taught in college curricula, and often published in collections of “classics”, by renowned publishers (e.g., Oxford World’s Classics, Penguin Classics). Classics are ideal candidates for retranslation because they not only represent cultural value, but are also popular: between Bourdieu’s extremes of “commercial” *versus* “pure” art, that is, low literary value/high sales numbers *versus* high literary value/low sales numbers (1996, p. 250), classics represent a middle ground. While they demonstrate high literary value, “works that come with the label ‘classic’ are generally consumed in large numbers” (Deane-Cox, 2014, p. 32).

Deane-Cox’s (2014) claim, however, needs to be tempered with regard to the space of reception studied here, i.e., the Hungarian publishing industry, which is a small, multi-actor and highly competitive market. Profitability, guaranteeing the survival of a publisher, prevails over cultural prestige, or, at least, entails compromises between cost-efficiency and earning literary prestige. Retranslations are not cost-effective, in the sense that publishers have to pay the retranslator, and exploitation rights, even if the original work is no longer under copyright. The return on their publication is neither immediate, nor large scale: they pay off in the long run, as opposed to bestsellers. Therefore, one of the hypotheses of this study, to be confirmed or disproved by the bibliographic data below, is that publishers might prefer to reedit existing translations, rather than pay for new ones.

If the previous hypothesis were confirmed by data, the question arises as to whether retranslations are essentially driven by the translator's desire "to leave a trace in cultural history by creating a personal, contemporary [...] artistically innovative interpretation" (Van Poucke & Sanz Gallego, 2019, p. 10; see also Berman's (1990) "*pulsion traduisante*"), or whether retranslating classics is where the translator's ambition and the publisher's interests meet, since both increase their symbolic and economic capital. If retranslators have the power to convince editors, it would be interesting to know whether they have a higher level of symbolic capital than the "average" translator: are they older or more experienced, are they mostly men or women, are they also involved in publishing, in academia or in the literary scene as writers or poets?

3. Corpus and method

The corpus for the analysis was assembled based on data provided by Hungary's National Széchényi Library (*Országos Széchényi Könyvtár*, hereafter: OSZK). The OSZK receives a mandatory copy of every book published in Hungarian and keeps track of publications both in paper and electronic format, which makes it the most comprehensive catalog in Hungary. The search included all translations of prose and drama, in paper or electronic format, issued between 2000 and 2020, by publishers based in Hungary. This precision is important because the OSZK catalog includes works in Hungarian of diasporic publishers in neighboring countries (Slovakia, Romania, etc.).

The filtering resulted in 39,794 entries, a corpus that far exceeds the scope and purposes of this research, but has the potential to provide valuable information on a number of topics related to literary translation in Hungary between 2000 and 2020. Each entry is comprised of the target and source languages of the translation, the author's name (with years of birth and death), the title of the original, the title of the translation, data about the Hungarian publication (name of the publisher, year and place of publication), the translator's name (date of birth and death included in most cases), and a categorization according to genre (novel, novella, short story, etc.) and format (electronic or printed).

The main challenge of working on the OSZK filtering is that retranslations are not tagged as such. Berk Albachten and Tahir Gürçağlar (2019a), as well as Paloposki and Koskinen (2010b, p. 36), who worked on bibliographies of retranslations, in Turkish and Finnish respectively, encountered the same problem (see also Pięta, 2010, Pym, 1998, and Poupaud, Pym & Torres Simon, 2009, on the construction of bibliographies for the translation scholar and the difficulties thereof). In order to distinguish translations published from 2000 to 2020 from retranslations released during the same period, the filtering had to be painstakingly double-checked against the OSZK catalog. Also, notations indicating whether the record in question was a reprint, a first or a second edition were inconsistent and often missing. Another shortcoming of the OSZK data was that the year of birth was unavailable for a number of translators, so additional internet research was required to find information on the translators' age and occupation. As publishers cannot disclose translators' personal data, whenever the internet search did not bear fruit, data were considered "not available" (N/A) in Tables 1 to 5.

Five lists of ten classic prose writers (American, British, French, Russian and German) were established, based on listings on Google and Goodreads, using the keywords "source language", "novels" and "classic". Google searches on books are based on what is "popular or trending in Google products, what is mentioned across the web, and what is new". Goodreads, a subsidiary of Amazon, bases its listings on the input of 6 million members and millions of books. Its recommendation engine "combines multiple proprietary algorithms which analyze

20 billion data points to better predict which books people will want to read next”¹. The study focuses on online sources to compile the list of authors to contrast what is currently trending as “classic” on the international scene to what is published and retranslated in Hungary as shown by the OSZK data. The lists of classic authors were compared to Bloom’s world literature canon (1994). Except for Russian, all lists contain a classic author of youth literature (Twain, Dickens, Kästner, Saint-Exupéry). Youth literature is defined here as literature targeting the teenage audience and also having children or teenagers as protagonists.

The reason why only four languages and five countries were selected for the purposes of the research is that culturally and/or historically speaking, these cultures had or still have an impact on the evolution of the Hungarian cultural and literary space. Up to the end of World War II, German was the language of culture in Hungary, but in the second half of the 20th century, until the 1980s, the translation of Russian literature increased in the communist bloc. French literature has been a source of inspiration for Hungarian writers from as early as the 18th century. From the 1980s, following international trends, English-language literature took the lead. According to the OSZK data for translations of prose and drama between 2000 and 2020, 19,937 out of the 39,793 records were translated from English (50.1%), 2,065 from German (5.1%), 1,682 from French (4.2%) and only 661 (1.6%) from Russian. The Hungarian data seem to confirm the unequal power relations of languages that structure the linguistic space worldwide: English “occupies the most central position – even hyper-central” with half of the books translated and “[w]ell behind come German and French” representing “between 10-12% of the world market of translations” (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2007, pp. 95-96). Russian, however, suffered a loss of prestige and power, resulting in a sharp drop of translation activity in the ex-communist countries (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2007, p. 97). Bart’s (2000, p. 113) data concerning Európa Publishing House, issuing most translated literature during communism, confirm that up until 1976, the number of Russian/Soviet titles exceeded Anglo-American ones by 20-30%; in 1977, the latter took the lead by five titles, and by 1984, there were twice as many English titles as Russian ones. In 1990, Russian titles represented only 17.5% of Anglo-American ones. Part of our aim, therefore, was to see whether retranslation activity in the Hungarian literary space reflected similar inequalities for these dominant or once dominant languages (for a more extensive discussion see Casanova’s monograph titled *La République mondiale des lettres* (1999), or de Swaan’s *Words of the world* (2001) on the power relations of languages and cultures that also structure the field of literary translation).

Despite its limitations, both in the scope of languages and the number of authors investigated, this study can potentially serve as a preliminary for larger-scale, representative research, or orient future projects in that direction. We do not claim to give an exhaustive list of retranslations in Hungary between 2000 and 2020, but seek to raise a number of questions and contribute to the debate on what is being retranslated and who the retranslators are.

4. Results

The data gathered for each list of classic novelists will be summarized in tables, and the content of the tables will be explained and commented upon in the text. The columns of the tables include the writer’s name, the number of records for retranslations (including their reprints, reeditions, e-book and audiobook editions) compared to the total records for the author, the number of source texts and retranslated texts (for example, 1/2 means the same source text was retranslated twice), the name of the retranslators, their gender, year of birth (and death), occupation (besides translation), and the publisher’s name with the year of publication.

¹ <https://www.goodreads.com/blog/show/303-announcing-goodreads-personalized-recommendations>

4.1. Retranslations of American classic authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Writer's name	Records for retranslations/ total records	Source texts/ retranslations	Translator's name	Gender	Year of birth/ death	Occupation beside translation	Publisher/ date of publication
Fitzgerald, Francis Scott	10/29	1/2	Bart István	M	1944–2019	editor, CEO of Corvina	Európa 2011
			Wertheimer Gábor	M	1963	college professor	Európa 2019
Harper, Lee	6/11	1/1	Pordán Ferenc	M	N/A	N/A	Geopen 2015
Hawthorne, Nathaniel	3/7	1/1	Feldmár Terézia	F	N/A	N/A	Ulpus 2013
James, Henry	2/4	1/1	Weisz Böbe	F	N/A	self-employed editor, proofreader	Alinea 2012
Kerouac, Jack	7/21	2/2	M. Nagy Miklós	M	1963	editor, CEO of Európa/Helikon	Európa 2011 Európa 2012
Salinger, Jerome David	4/24	1/1	Barna Imre	M	1951	ex editor, editor-in-chief, CEO of Európa	Európa 2015
Steinbeck, John	2/12	2/2	Bart István	M	1944–2019	editor, CEO of Corvina	Corvina 2001
			Oros Paulina	F	N/A	N/A	Auktor 2000
Twain, Mark	9/84	3/6 (Tom Sawyer /TS/, The pauper and the prince /PP/)	Kovácsné Kliment Emília (TS)	F	N/A	N/A	Új Ex Libris 2001
			Gerencsér Ferenc (TS)	M	N/A	N/A	Puedlo 2004
			Gyurkovics Máté (TS)	M	1991	poet	Könyvmolyképző 2015
			Kovácsné Kliment Emília (PP)	F	N/A	N/A	Új Ex Libris 2001
			Lengyel Tamás (PP)	M	1971	poet	Puedlo 2005
Gergely Zsuzsa	F	N/A	N/A	N/A	Noran 2007		

Table 1. Retranslations of 8 classic American authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Out of the ten classic American authors selected for the analysis, seven are treated by Bloom (1994, pp. 531–567) as part of the Western canon of world literature (Faulkner, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, James, Salinger, Steinbeck, and Twain). Two of these, Faulkner and Hemingway, are absent from Table 1, as their works were not retranslated between 2000 and 2020 in Hungary; the records found for these authors were reprints of old translations (3 for Faulkner, 13 for Hemingway). Five of eight retranslated authors have only one of their novels retranslated (although Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* was retranslated twice in the 2000s), two of them have two titles (Kerouac and Steinbeck), and only Twain has three, as his work *Tom Sawyer* has three new Hungarian versions, while *The Prince and the pauper* has two. Altogether, the number of retranslated source texts amounts to 12, and the retranslations to 16. The percentage of records representing retranslations (including reprints), as compared to the total number of records in Table 1, is 29.6% (43/145 records). More than two-thirds of the total records are translations of other works by the same authors, or reeditions of previous translations. It can also be observed that the Hungarian retranslation activity concerning American classics that are also trending internationally is rather intense (80% of the authors had at least one of their novels retranslated).

As far as gender is considered, 10 of the 16 retranslations (representing 12 novels) were produced by men, 6 by women (62.5% vs 37.5%). Twain's retranslations showed an equal representation of sexes. Also, younger male translators (born in 1991 and 1971) were only active in retranslations of Twain, i.e., youth literature. If Twain is not taken into account, the

ratio is 70-30% in favor of men. The number of retranslations per retranslator does not exceed two: two men, Bart and M. Nagy, and one woman, Kovácsné, retranslated two novels each, Fitzgerald/Steinbeck, Kerouac and Twain, respectively.

As for age and occupation, it is interesting to observe the lack of data, both in the OSZK database and on the internet, for female retranslators: the year of birth is missing for all five women (versus 2 men), and the occupation cannot be traced for 4 of them (versus 2 for the men). The lack of data implies that their professional visibility is practically null. Male translators were much easier to trace both in the OSZK filtering for age and on the internet for occupation. Barna, Bart and M. Nagy are well-known figures in the publishing industry: prolific translators, experienced editors, CEOs of publishing houses (Corvina, Európa and Helikon). Note that Európa seemed the most involved in the publication of retranslations (5 out of 16) based on the data in Table 1. The only retranslator representing academia is a professor of American literature (Wertheimer). They were aged 48, 56, 57, 64 and 67 when their translations came out. The youngest male retranslators were Gyurkovics, 24, and Lengyel, 34, who both retranslated Twain, and both of whom are poets, as well as literary translators.

4.2. Retranslations of British classic authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Writer's name	Records for retranslations /total records	Source texts/ Retranslations	Translator's name	Gender	Year of birth/ death	Occupation beside translation	Publisher/ date of publication
Austen, Jane	59/116	9/19 PP: Pride and Prejudice SS: Sense and Sensibility LS: Lady Susan NA: Northanger Abbey P: Persuasion E: Emma C: Catharine LF: Love and Friendship MP: Mansfield Park	Tomori Gábor (P) (E)	M	1967	–	Ulpius 2007 Ulpius 2008
			Greskovits Endre (LS)	M	1954	editor	Ulpius 2006
			Simonyi Ágnes (MP)	F	1953	–	Ulpius 2008
			Latorre Ágnes (NA)	F	N/A	interpreter	Ulpius 2007
			Loósz Vera (PP)	F	N/A	–	Ulpius 2006
			Bánki Dezső (PP)	M	1954–2010	college professor	Kossuth 2006
			Hegedűs Emőke (PP) (SS)	F	N/A	N/A	Rebeka és Panni 2007 Rebeka és Panni 2007
			Weisz Böbe (PP)	F	N/A	self-employed editor, proofreader	Alinea 2013
			Sárossy-Beck Anita (PP)	F	N/A	yoga instructor	Centrál Média csoport 2017
			Barcza Gerda (C) (LS) (SS) (LF)	F	N/A	N/A	Lazi 2006 Lazi 2006 Lazi 2009 Lazi 2013
			Sillár Emőke (SS)	F	1941	–	Ulpius 2006
			Kada Júlia (C) (LF)	F	1939	critic	Helikon 2015 Helikon 2015
Béresi Csilla (NA)	F	N/A	N/A	Lazi 2010 (2020)			
Brontë, Emily	5/13	1/1	Feldmár Terézia	F	N/A	N/A	Ulpius 2006

Dickens, Charles	11/74	5/7 CC: Christmas Carol	Szántó Judit	F	1932–2016	dramaturge, editor for Európa	Európa 2012
			Kovácsné Kliment Emília	F	N/A	N/A	Új Ex Libris 2002
			Rindó Klára,	F	1961	ex-editor at Könyvmolyképző	Könyvmolyképző 2009
			Szabados Tamás (CC)	M	1963	–	
			Illés Róbert (CC)	M	N/A		Helikon 2015
			Barkóczy András (CC)	M	1955	editor at Európa	Európa 2004
			Sóvágó Katalin	F	N/A	–	Európa 2009
			Tábori Zoltán	M	1955	editor	Európa, 2011
Forster, Edward Morgan	1/6	1/1	Borbás Mária	F	1930–2020	editor at Európa, writer	Cartaphilus 2012
Golding, William	4/25	1/1	Gy. Horváth László	M	1950	ex-editor, editor- in-chief at Európa	Európa 2015 (2017, 2018, 2019)
Huxley, Aldous	5/18	2/2	Totth Benedek	M	1977	writer	Cartaphilus 2008
			Galamb Zoltán	M	1965	teacher	Szukits 2002, Cartaphilus 2008
			Szántai Zsolt	M	1966	N/A	
Orwell, George	4/53	3/3	Lázár Júlia	F	1960	teacher	Cartaphilus 2006
			M. Nagy Miklós	M	1963	editor, CEO of Európa/Helikon	Helikon 2020
			Papoczy Péter	M	1972	ex-president of the Literary Translators’ Association	Európa 2003
Woolf, Virginia	5/23	3/3	Tandori Dezső	M	1938–2019	poet, writer	Európa 2004 Európa 2006 Európa 2007

Table 2. Retranslations of 8 classic British authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

All ten classic British authors, currently trending according to the Google search, are considered part of the Western literary canon (Bloom, 1994, pp. 531-567). Table 2 shows eight of them who were retranslated into Hungarian between 2000 and 2020; Joseph Conrad (16 records) and Thomas Hardy (6 records) were not. Retranslation activity seems even more intensive than in the case of American classics: three authors (Brontë, Forster, Golding) have one, Huxley two, Orwell and Woolf three, and Dickens, representing youth literature, seven retranslations (three of *A Christmas Carol*). Austen shows the highest number of retranslations throughout the study, with 19 (!) new translations (note that the sum of all the retranslations for the American corpus was 16). Two thirds of her novels came out in more than one version between 2006 and 2015: *Lady Susan*, *Northanger Abbey* and *Catharine* in two, *Sense and Sensibility* in three, *Pride and Prejudice* in five (!) new translations. The list of publishers indicates that Ulpius was aiming at publishing the oeuvre (6 retranslations were published between 2006 and 2010), employing different translators. This number is unusually high in the Hungarian context: perhaps the boom in film adaptations of Jane Austen’s novels (from 2003 to 2009 there was a new Austen TV film or TV series almost every year) prompted Hungarian publishers to have her novels retranslated. The number of retranslated source texts amounts to 25, with 37 retranslations for the British corpus, which is, because of the surge of retranslations for Austen, more than double the figure for American authors. Records for retranslations including reprints and e-books account for 45% of the total records (94/209). Omitting Austen’s extreme case (retranslation records amount to almost half the total records for Austen), that ratio is 37%. Without Dickens, who represents youth literature, this ratio drops to 34.8%, which is closer to the American results excluding Twain’s works.

As for gender, Austen’s retranslations differ significantly from what was found elsewhere: 15 of 19 texts were translated by women (78.9%, 10 women/3 men); in other words, for Austen’s “romantic” novels, female retranslators heavily outnumber men, even though gender representation is rather balanced in Table 2 (17 women/14 men). All retranslations of British writers considered, the ratio of male and female translators is 39% and 61%. If Austen’s retranslations are not considered, the ratio switches to 60% and 40% in favor of men. If we leave out Austen’s and Dickens’ retranslations, male retranslators outnumber females 81% to 19%. It seems worth exploring whether female translators are more involved in the retranslation of “romantic” and youth classics. However, the data in this study is not sufficiently representative to verify this assumption.

Age and occupation can once again be better traced for male retranslators: the year of birth is missing for 10 women (7 of which retranslators of Austen) versus 1 man, and no indication of occupation could be found for 5 women (3 retranslators of Austen) and 1 man. For the retranslators whose year of birth was available, it could be established that their average age when their retranslation was published was 47 for men and 64.5 for women. The youngest male translators were each 31, but most were in their late 40s or older, the oldest being a female retranslator aged 82, Borbás.

No data on occupation was available for 6 retranslators, but 9 of the remaining 25 also work(ed) as editors (5 of them were editors at Európa), 3 were writers and 3 worked in education (2 teachers, 1 college professor). Results of both the American and the British lists seem to suggest that experience in the publishing industry as a translator and editor might make one a better candidate for retranslation than, for instance, being an academic or a writer. The publisher that was most involved in publishing retranslations was again Európa (9 retranslations), followed by Ulpius (8) and Lazi (5): the three of them published 59%, 22 out of 37 British classic novels.

4.3. Retranslations of French classic authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Writer’s name	Records for retranslations /total records	Source texts/ retranslations	Translator’s name/ number of retranslations	Gender	Year of birth	Occupation beside translation	Publisher/ date of publication
Camus, Albert	5/15	3/3	Ádám Péter	M	1946	college professors	Európa 2016
			Kiss Kornélia	F	1969		
			Dunajcsik Mátyás	M	1983	writer	Jelenkor 2020
			Vargyas Zoltán	M	1953	–	Jelenkor 2019
Flaubert, Gustave	1/27	1/1	Romhányi Török Gábor–	M	1945	–	Napkút 2010
Maupassant, Guy de	2/29	1/1	Bognár Róbert	M	1946	ex-editor at Európa	Ulpius 2007/2014
Rabelais, François	3/4	3/3	Gulyás Adrienn 2	F	1977	college professor	Osiris 2010 Osiris 2015
			Csordás Gábor 1	M	1950	editor, publisher	Jaffa 2017
de Saint-Exupéry, Antoine	12/59	1/6	Ádám Péter	M	1946	–	Lazi 2015/2017
			Dunajcsik Mátyás	M	1983	writer	Pájer D. 2015 Sztalker Csoport 2018
			Takács M. József	M	1961	editor at Helikon	Helikon 2015, 2019, 2020
			Burján Monika	F	1964	college professor	Könyvmolyképző 2017
			Pálfi Rita	F	N/A	N/A	Napraforgó 2014
			Vida Erika	F	1970	ethnographer, editor	Roland 2016
Zola, Émile	2/30	1/1	Jancsó Júlia	F	1955	teacher	Ulpius 2013

Table 3. Retranslations of six classic French authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Table 3 shows six of the ten French classic authors considered; four of them, Honoré de Balzac, Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo and Jules Verne, were not retranslated into Hungarian between 2000 and 2020 (Dumas, Verne and Saint-Exupéry do not appear as canonical French writers in Bloom's listings, 1994, pp. 531-567, unlike the other French authors investigated). Several publishers reprinted translations from the 1920s for the last four novelists. Also, electronic editions abound (29 out of a total of 47 records for Balzac, 55 out of 88 for Dumas, 11 out of 22 for Hugo and 81 out of 189 for Verne). This might be seen as a cost-effective strategy of publishers, as they favor old translations instead of financing new ones, and publishing them in an e-book format rather than on paper. For the six retranslated authors, the percentage of records representing retranslations against the total number of records in Table 3 is 15.2% (25/164), i.e., considerably lower than for American (29.6%) and British authors (45%, or 37% without Austen). Retranslating classics seems a less intense activity from French than it is from English.

Four authors have only one of their novels retranslated, Camus and Rabelais have three each. Each text has only one retranslation except for Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* [*Le petit prince*], which was retranslated six times between 2014 and 2017. The rush of publishers to have the text retranslated can be explained by the expiration of Saint-Exupéry's copyright as of 1st January 2015 (a similar rush occurred in Turkey, where a few days after the expiration of Saint-Exupéry's copyright, twenty new editions and retranslations were released [Berk Albachten & Tahir Gürçağlar, 2019a, p. 225]). Also, 28 of 47, i.e., 60% of the total records for *The Little Prince*, were reeditions and reprints of György Rónay's 1970 translation published by Móra.

Altogether, ten source texts and fifteen retranslations were involved in the study. The sex ratio of translators was balanced (7 men, 6 women), although men retranslated more texts (56.6%) than women (43.3%). However, if you exclude Saint-Exupéry, whose *The Little Prince* shows an equal distribution of male and female translators, the sex ratio is 61.1% vs 38.8% in favor of men. The French corpus is well supplied with biographical data: only one female retranslator, Rita Pálfi, was not traceable. The average age of female retranslators for French is 47.4 years, and 57.8 years for men at the time their respective retranslations appeared, the average age of both sexes combined being 54 years. Dunajcsik, Ádám and Gulyás retranslated two novels each; all the other retranslators, one. Also, unlike retranslations in English, publishers seem more cautious with French classics: 9 of 12 editors published one retranslation based on the corpus, and the remaining three did not publish more than two. As for the occupations of retranslators besides translation, 5 of 13 (38.4%) work in education (4 college professors/1 teacher) and four are also editors (30.7%). Bognár, Csordás, Romhányi, Takács M. and Vargyas are all translators of French with an impressive record of translations, prizes and awards, with a well-developed professional network, still actively working for publishers. There is only one writer in Table 3, Dunajcsik, who is also the youngest retranslator.

4.4. Retranslations of Russian classic authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Writer's name	Records for retranslations/ total records	Source texts/ retranslations	Translator's name	Gender	Year of birth	Occupation beside translation	Publisher/ date of publication
Bulgakov, Mikhail Afanas'yevich	4/29	1/1	Hetényi Zsuzsa	F	1954	college professor	GoodBooks 2011 Aliena 2013 Európa 2017
Dostoevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich	1/55	1/1	Vári Erzsébet	F	1957–2011	college professor	Jelenkor 2004
Turgenev, Ivan Serge'yevich	1/17	1/1	Gy. Horváth László	M	1950	ex-editor, editor-in-chief at Európa	Helikon 2019

Table 4. Retranslations of three classic Russian authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Table 4, which presents retranslations of Russian classic novels between 2000 and 2020, seems to illustrate a peculiar case of non-retranslation. Except for Pasternak, all of them are mentioned in Bloom's lists as canonized authors of Russian literature (1994, pp. 531-567). Of the ten writers, seven were not retranslated at all, and the low number of total records or the absence of records in the OSZK filtering also indicates a loss of interest in Russian literature in Hungary (Nikolai Gogol 20, Ivan Goncharov 0, Maxim Gorky 0, Mikhail Lermontov 1, Boris Pasternak 3, Aleksandr Pushkin 8, Lev Tolstoy 35). As already mentioned, prose and drama translations from Russian only represent 1.6%, 661 of a total of 39,793 records. Between 2000 and 2020, only three of ten authors and altogether three novels were retranslated: Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog* [*Sobach'ë serdtse*], which had only existed in a 1986 samizdat translation, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* [*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*], and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* [*Ottsy i deti*]. Statistics have improved since then, because Gy. Horváth retranslated Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* for Európa in 2021, and *War and Peace* [*Voina i mir*] for 21. Század Kiadó in 2022.

The average age of the three retranslators is 57.6 years (52 for women, 69 for the only man, Gy. Horváth). Vári, 47 at the time of her Dostoevsky retranslation, worked and Hetényi still works as a college professor of Slavic languages. Hetényi has been active in organizing literary translation workshops for students, and has been the vice-president of the Hungarian Literary Translators' Association (Műfordítók Egyesülete) since 2020. Vári has translated books by Vladimir Nabokov and Venedikt Yerofeyev. Hetényi translated Nabokov, Joseph Brodsky, Isaac Babel and other famous authors. Hetényi has been and Vári was a well-known figure in academia as well as in literary translation. Gy. Horváth is probably the most prolific retranslator in Hungary: he worked at Európa as an editor and editor-in-chief and translates from English, as well as from Russian. After he retired, he retranslated *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper, three novels from Updike's *Rabbit Series* and the three Russian classics mentioned above.

4.5. Retranslations of German classic authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Writer's name	Records for retranslations/ total records	Source texts/ retranslations	Translator's name	Gender	Year of birth	Occupation beside translation	Publisher/ date of publication
Hesse, Hermann	11/49	3/3	Horváth Géza	M	1956	college professor, editor	Cartaphilus 2004/2016 Helikon 2016/2018
Kafka, Franz	4/19	1/1	Györfly Miklós	M	1942	college professor, editor	Palatinus 2002 Helikon 2015/2019/2020
Kästner, Erich	4/95	4/4	Perczel Enikő	F	N/A	dramaturge	Móra 2018
			Lendvay Katalin	F	1945	editor	Európa 2000
			Simon László	M	N/A	N/A	Akkord 2012
			Jeney Margit	F	N/A	N/A	General Press 2005
Mann, Thomas	1/34	1/1	Györfly Miklós	M	1942	college professor, editor	Gabo Kiadó 2016
Remarque, Erich Maria	1/26	1/1	Ortutay Katalin	F	1960	college professor	Cartaphilus 2008

Table 5. Retranslations of five classic German authors into Hungarian (2000–2020)

Half of the classic German prose writers selected for the analysis (Heinrich Böll, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Günter Grass, Patrick Süskind and Stefan Zweig with 6, 17, 13, 9 and 24 records in the OSZK filtering, respectively) were not retranslated between 2000 and 2020. Grass, translated into Hungarian from 1968 on, did not get retranslated despite his Nobel Prize in 1999: *The Tin Drum* [*Die Blechtrommel*] was republished in its 1973 translation three

times in the 2000s by Európa. Despite Tom Tykwer's movie of the same title in 2006, Süskind's *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* [*Das Parfum: Die Geschichte eines Mörders*] (5 out of 10 records) has not been retranslated either. Remarque, Süskind, Kästner and Zweig are not mentioned by Bloom as canonical authors (1994, pp. 531-567), so the overlap of canonical and popular or "trending" as classic is 60% for the German corpus. Only Hesse had three of his novels retranslated, the other four authors only one each. Altogether, ten novels of five authors were retranslated, and each has one new translation. The percentage of records representing retranslations from German (including reprints, e-book editions) as to the total number of records in Table 5 is 9.4% (21/223); excluding Kästner, representing youth literature with the highest number of 95 total records, the figure is 13.2% (17/128 records). That percentage is lower than what was found in French, but somewhat higher than the Russian result. It is also interesting that the number of retranslations for Kästner – 4 out of a total of 95 records – seems very low. Each of these four retranslations is of a different novel. *Emil and the Detectives* [*Emil und die Detektive*] appears in 20 records, 1 being the new translation and 19 representing writer Tibor Déry's 1957 translation. This confirms publishers' preference to reuse old translations, with no copyright issues involved.

The gender distribution seems to favor women (3 male versus 4 female translators), but for Kästner, women strongly outweigh men with a ratio of 3:1. Also, excluding Kästner, the sex ratio is 2:1 in favor of men, and the two male translators, Györfly and Horváth, authored five of the ten retranslations in the German corpus. As for other languages, the traceability for retranslators of German youth literature appears worse than for the others: the year of birth could not be found for two female and one male, and there were no data on professional occupation for one female and one male retranslator of Kästner.

The average age of male retranslators at the time of the publication of their retranslations was 60.5, for women, 51.5 years, the average age independent of gender being 56 years. As for their other professional activities, three of the translators work as college professors (two of whom are also editors), one only works as an editor, and another is a dramaturge. Györfly and Horváth illustrate a case in which the retranslator is in an editorial position for the retranslated author: Györfly was the editor in charge of the complete works of Kafka when he retranslated *The Trial* [*Der Prozess*] (2002), and translated *Lost in America* [*Der Verschollene*] (2003) for Palatinus, while Horváth edited the Hesse collection for Cartaphilus. Horváth's name appears as "translator" in 18 out of the 49 records for Hesse. Their editorial position for the collection might have helped them move forward their retranslation projects with the publisher. Two of Horváth's three retranslated Hesse novels, *Journey to the East* [*Die Morgenlandfahrt*] (2004) and *Demian* (2006) for Cartaphilus, appeared hardly a decade after they had been translated by Halasi (1998) and Kászonyi (1992) for Európa, which suggests that Horváth, tasked with editing the complete works, managed to convince the publisher to pay for two retranslations, instead of using Halasi's and Kászonyi's relatively recent versions.

5. Discussion

The corpus of this study involving Hungarian retranslations of fifty classic authors in four culturally dominant languages seems to confirm international trends in the translation market, as described by Heilbron and Sapiro (2007, pp. 95-97). As shown in Table 6, the hyper-central position of English in the translation market is also undeniable in retranslation: 37 classics gave rise to 53 new translations, which means that several texts were retranslated in Hungarian twice or more between 2000 and 2020. None of the French, German or Russian authors had the privilege of having more than one retranslation per source text, except for Saint-Exupéry. Also, the rate of retranslated authors is the highest for the American and British classics (80%),

and so is the percentage of records representing retranslations (reprints, reeditions, e-books and audiobooks,) as opposed to the total number of records for the authors investigated, with an average of 37.3%, i.e., more than one-third of the total number of records. The fact that retranslations from English are reprinted or reissued presupposes a steady demand for them on the Hungarian market.

Table 6 also suggests that the more dominant or central a source language, the more its authors and novels get retranslated, and the higher the frequency of retranslations (parallel retranslations, more reprints and reeditions). French and German produced similar results, well behind the Anglo-American lists, although retranslation seems a bit more intense in French than in German, with one more retranslated author, more retranslated texts and a higher percentage of records representing retranslations: 15.2% vs 9.4%. The loss of interest in the retranslation of Russian literature is obvious and confirms Heilbron and Sapiro's claim of a sharp drop in the number of translations from Russian in the ex-communist bloc after the disintegration of the Soviet Union (2007, p. 97).

The overall average percentage of retranslations versus the total number of records for all four languages considered is 21%, meaning that retranslations account for one-fifth of the total records for the authors retranslated. The remaining records concern older translations or translations of other works of the authors examined. This implies that, all four languages combined, older translations compete to a significant extent with new ones. The simultaneous publication of old and new translations by rival publishers is a recurring phenomenon observed throughout the corpus. To present just two examples, *Emil and the Detectives* by Erich Kästner appears in 20 records, 1 being the new translation and 19 representing reeditions and reprints of writer Tibor Déry's 1957 translation. Also, Könyvmolyképző published Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* in the 1952 translation by Marcell Benedek in 2007, the year Róbert Bognár's retranslation was published by Ulpus. The relatively small proportion of retranslation records (one-fifth to one-third of the total number of translation records, see the second columns in Table 1 to Table 5) and the low occurrence of parallel retranslations during the period examined seem to confirm the assumption that retranslation is a costly enterprise for publishers who would rather opt for non-copyrighted previous translations than pay for a new version of the same text.

Source language	Source texts/ retranslations	Retranslated authors out of ten	Percentage of retranslation vs total number of records
American English	12/16	8	29.6
British English	25/37	8	45
French	10/15	6	15.2
German	10/10	5	9.4
Russian	3/3	3	5.9

Table 6. Retranslation activity according to source language

As for age, gender and occupation, the main results we can induce from this study for Hungarian retranslators of classic literature between 2000 and 2020 are as follows. For retranslators whose year of birth was available, the average age for men is 56.8, for women it is 53.8, and for both sexes combined, 54.7 years, at the time their retranslations were published (Table 7). This number is lower than expected when compared to the highly-mediatized examples of retranslators mentioned in the introduction, and not significantly different for the two sexes. The fact that retranslators are on average in their mid-fifties implies, nonetheless, that they are not inexperienced translators. The lack of data and untraceability of certain retranslators

mentioned in Tables 1 to 5 needs to be highlighted, as “invisible” retranslators are mostly women retranslating youth classics or romantic literature (9 female versus 1 untraceable male retranslator in Table 2). Retranslators of non-youth literature enjoy better visibility according to Tables 1 to 5, yet in general men’s visibility remains superior to women’s.

Source language	Age of male retranslators	Age of female retranslators	Average
American English	50	N/A	50
British English	47	64.5	55.8
French	57.8	47.4	54
German	60.5	51.5	56
Russian	69	52	57.6
Average	56.86	53.85	54.7

Table 7. Average age of retranslators according to gender and source language

Table 8 summarizes the percentages of male retranslators for all authors in general and excluding youth (Twain, Dickens, Saint-Exupéry and Kästner) and romantic (Austen) authors. One tendency that can be observed is that the percentage of male retranslators is higher for all source languages, when youth and romantic authors are excluded, and their ratio varies between 2/3 for German and French and 4/5 for British and American English. The inclusion of youth classics and Austen in the British list, with 78.9% of her retranslators being women, mitigates this ratio and makes gender distribution look equal, with an average of 49.5% of male retranslators for the four lists that included a youth classic author. The issue of gender distribution among retranslators is, however, more complex and needs to be further investigated with a representative sample. For French literary translators, Kalinowski found that women with the same level of education and in the same position feel much less entitled to translate consecrated authors, and the masculinization of the translation of classics, more so than the translation of contemporary authors, was undeniable (2002, p. 53)². Her findings confirm what is shown in the third column of Table 8: classic works of literature do not seem to always carry the same symbolic value, and the ones targeting young or female audiences attract less male retranslators (i.e., have less symbolic value).

Source language	% of male retranslators	% of male retranslators excluding romantic and youth classics
American English	62.5	70
British English	39	81
French	53.8	61.1
German	42.8	66.6

Table 8. Percentage of male retranslators in general and excluding romantic and youth classics

Lindqvist’s (2021, p. 146) findings in a pool of 15 acknowledged translators of Spanish Caribbean literature into Swedish are also intriguing, and would introduce another factor to be considered regarding gender distribution: the unequal power relations of source languages. Besides the fact that most of the translators were of advanced age (8 born before 1950), Lindqvist found that 12 of the 15 translators were women. She also observed that the number

² “[O]n observe dans la traduction un primat de la variable sexuelle sur celle du capital académique : à niveau de diplômés et de positions égales, les femmes sont infiniment moins nombreuses que les hommes à se sentir investies du “droit” de traduire les auteurs consacrés. La masculinisation de la traduction des “classiques”, plus encore que celle de la littérature contemporaine, est un fait patent.” (2002, p. 53)

of novels translated from the Spanish Caribbean region by these 15 translators was low, and Spanish went from fourth place in the 1990s to sixth in 2015 in the translation market in the target culture (p. 146). Comparing her results with mine, it might be worth investigating whether there is a correlation between the prevalence of female translators and the symbolic power and cultural prestige of the source language.

As Bourdieu claims, “positions which become feminized are either already devalued ... or declining, their devaluation being intensified, in a snowball effect, by the desertion of the men which it helped to induce” (2001, p. 91). “[T]he progress made by women”, he continues, “must not conceal the progress made by men, so that ... the structure of the gaps is maintained”, which he refers to as “permanence in and through change” (2001, p. 91). Applied to the context of retranslation, Bourdieu’s logic would stipulate that female retranslators are more involved in retranslations of less central or dominant languages, and in books with less symbolic capital, targeting younger or specifically female audiences, while authors with more consecrating power writing in dominant languages will be more sought-after by male retranslators. Kalinowski’s (2002) and Lindquist’s (2021) findings and my results, partial as they might be, seem to support Bourdieu’s insight, but need to be verified against a representative corpus of data.

Source language	PUBLISHING	EDUCATION	LITERATURE
American English	5 editors	1 college professor	2 poets
British English	9 editors	1 college professor, 2 teachers	3 writers
French	4 editors, 1 publisher	4 college professors, 1 teacher	1 writer
German	3 editors	3 college professors	-
Russian	1 editor	2 college professors	-

Table 9. Occupation of retranslators outside translation, broken down by language

As for occupations of retranslators, not including translation, three relevant fields could be distinguished: publishing, education and literature. The most prominent occupation was that of editor. In 21st-century Hungary, editors seem very active in the retranslation of English-language classics (14 out of 22), representing the highest cultural value nowadays. 59% of them were men. Academia and education seem less relevant with 11 college professors and 3 teachers. German retranslators, Horváth and Györffy, who retranslated 5 out of 10 source texts in the German corpus, appear among both editors and professors. There are six writers and poets in the corpus, suggesting they are less interested in retranslations than editors or academic translators are. These results differ from those of Kalinowski, who found that consecrated foreign authors (published in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade) are mostly translated by academic translators, with the rare exception of writers, well-endowed with symbolic capital (2002, pp. 50-51). In the Hungarian context, embeddedness in the publishing world, i.e. being an editor as well as a translator, possibly even an editor-in-chief, seems more relevant to becoming a retranslator than being an academic. The question of whether the retranslation of less central languages would attract more academic translators remains open for future research.

6. Conclusion

As a conclusion, it appears that the typical retranslator of classic literature in Hungary is more likely to be a man than a woman, in his mid-fifties, and an experienced translator, with strong

ties to publishing, having also worked as an editor. Despite its tentative nature, the present research conducted on a limited number of classic authors retranslated from four languages into Hungarian from 2000 to 2020 highlights a number of issues – mostly related to gender, agents of translation and power relations between them – that could, and should, be further investigated: Is the rate of female retranslators higher for classics targeting younger or female audiences? Does multi-level embeddedness into publishing (being a translator and an editor) help in acquiring retranslation commissions? Does the number of academic and/or female retranslators increase in less central or less dominant languages, and do male retranslators have greater visibility in the literary market than their female colleagues? The results found for the Hungarian context between 2000 and 2020 call for a large-scale, more representative study, preferably involving a group of researchers, to overcome the difficulties of identifying retranslations in large sets of data.

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