Folk, modern, oriental, dramatic or communist
Translating Tagore into Hungarian

Imre Bangha

This is a revised version of my earlier paper “Tagore’s Reception and His Translations in Hungary” published in *Tagore -- At Home in The World*. eds. Sanjukta Dasgupta and Chinmoy Guha (New Delhi: Sage Publications India, 2012) 25 -- 37. I am gratefult to Dr Liviu Bordaş for sharing with methe fruits of his research on the international travels of the poem "The Bayadère".

The cultural encounter between ‘East’ and ‘West’ has been the subject of an enormous amount of scholarly work in recent decades. Most studies, however, investigate British, French and German ‘Orientalisms’ while the cultures of East Central Europe, roughly the Eastern part of the European Union, with languages hopelessly decorated with diacritics and inaccessible for most of the academic cosmopolis, have received relatively little attention in post-colonial discourse. However, this colourful region, often perceived to be part of the Orient during past centuries, has much to offer to a student of cultural encounter or of reception history.

The response to Tagore in various countries has long been the subject of academic studies done mostly in a national framework and at present, together with Martin Kämpchen, I am editing the handbook *Rabindranath Tagore: One Hundred Years of Global Reception 1913-2012*, which in thirty-six national or regional chapters covers the poet’s receptions in most parts of the globe. It is hoped that the book with its national or regional Tagore studies will encourage academics to see that the reception of Tagore as an international figure is more of a global experience than an aggregate of fragmented narratives.

Responses from East Central Europe have also been studied from national frameworks as the most convenient access to literary cultures closed into their unique

language.[1] In this paper, partly relying on some recently discovered material, I am revisiting the question of Tagore's reception in a language of the region, Hungarian.

Periods of Popularity and Amnesia in Hungary

The dominant Hungarian literary movement of the first half of the twentieth century was the one marked with the name of the literary magazine *Nyugat* (Occident) that endeavoured to modernise Hungarian literature by taking inspiration from the best achievements of modern Western European literature. Even if the leading exponents of this movement, Babits and Kosztolányi, were enthusiastic about Tagore in their first reactions their generation did pay relatively little attention to Eastern literatures and east of Hungary only Russian formed part of their literary horizon. The western orientation of this powerful movement can be taken as one of the reasons responsible for the emerging negligence or antipathy towards Tagore after periods of interest in 1913 -- 1914 and 1920 -- 1926.

After a short phase of enthusiasm at the announcement of the Nobel Prize in November 1913, the self-assured Orientalism returned to discourses about Tagore. In the twenties, a disillusion from European culture did not allow Orientalist discourse to creep in so easily. There were also a small number of writers from Hungarian territories lost in the war who found in Tagore a powerful critic of western warmongering and imperialism. As has recently been demonstrated by Ana Jelnikar, the positive approach to Tagore of people who felt oppressed by western imperialism was an example of what Patrick Colm Hogan calls situational identification, "where we develop an immediate sense of intimacy with someone as we intuit shared feelings, ideas, references, [and] expectations."[2]

This phase of extraordinary popularity was followed by a period of amnesia starting in the late twenties and lasting until Tagore's communist rediscovery in 1955. At that

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[1] See for example the writings of the "Tagore in Other Lands" section in *Rabindranath Tagore*: *A Centenary Volume 1861–1961* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1961): 297 -- 367 as well as Petrovic, Sveto. 1970. "Tagore in Yugoslavia." *Indian Literature* XIII/2 pp. 5-29, Shurbanov, Alexander. 1989 "Tagore in Bulgaria" in *Rabindranath Tagore in Perspective*. (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati,1989): 207--216, Amita Bose: "*Romāniyār rājnītir paṭe bhāratbarṣa o rabīndranāth*" (India and Tagore on the political canvas of Romania). *Korak.* Sharadiy, 1398 (1991) pp. 15-32, *Tagore and Czechoslovakia: Exhibition September 8 to September 16, 1956*, Calcutta: Rabindra-Bharati-Bhavana, 1956 pp. 1-8, Neacşu, Daniela (ed.): *Tagore: Romania Remembers*. Editura Paideia, Bucharest, 1998, Walter 2006, Bangha 2007, Nikolaev and Nikolaev 2009, etc.

[2] Patrick Colm Hogan 2004: 26 quoted in Jelnikar 2008: 15.

time he became the representative voice of colonies oppressed by capitalist imperialism.

As for the Hungarian translations, one can observe marked differences from the English translation from the earliest times on. While most Tagore translations outside India were directly or indirectly done from the English prose versions of Tagore's rhyming melodious Bengali verses, there has been an urge to go back to the Bengali originals. The first direct translation of Tagore from Bengali after English was done into Czech by Vincenc Lesný in 1914. The same year also saw verse translations into Hungarian. In the 1920s the Sanskritist H. Glasenapp produced verse translations in German. As an example of the search for Tagore's voice in East central Europe I am following up the Hungarian translating attitudes to Tagore's poetry.

Tagore Translations in Hungarian

Tagore has been widely translated into Hungarian and one can distinguish various patterns of translation. The two major patterns are prose relying on the English translations and poetry based on the knowledge that the Bengali originals are in verse.

Prose Translations

Among the earliest translators Mihály Babits preferred the naïve prose versions to the elaborately simple Bengali originals because they reminded him of the straightforward unornate poetry of Saint Francis of Assisi to whom he likened Tagore even though he was aware of the fact that Tagore was an extremely conscious poet.

> This fine poet is naïve and thinks that the entire world is a beautiful toy given by God as a good father to his big children. This saint is naïve as a thirteenth-century Italian saint...
> Stains of influences soaked into his originality and philosophy into his religion. He sings his thoughts in the most sophisticated Indian poetic forms and — what is more, he searches for new forms. In Bengali, he is probably not so naïve as in English prose that reminds us of the prose of the *Cantico del Sole*.[3]

[3] Babits Mihály: „Két szent", *Nyugat* 6/23. (1913), 734.

Babits's approach was followed by the majority of the Hungarian translators.

Verse Translations

Already W. B. Yeats' Introduction to Tagore's first English book, *Gitanjali* (1912) made it clear that in contrast with the free verse used in the English translations, Tagore's Bengali originals are written in melodious rhythmic patterns.

> These lyrics—which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention—display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my live long.[4]

The importance of Tagore's forms was again and again stated by Hungarian critics: 'Tagore's lyrics are as much of an erudite piece of work as folk poetry. His poems were written to melody and it is this melody that defines its form and characteristics.'[5]

The flexibility of Hungarian language and the twentieth-century tradition of poetry translation did not allow prose translation of poetry in Hungarian and urged translators to search for forms that closely reflect the original, wherever possible. In this way Greek, Latin and even Sanskrit poetry is translated in the same moraic metres. Yeats' statement and the experience of the Bengali verse originals at Tagore's lectures in the twenties urged Hungarian poets to create verse translations in their language.

Folk Songs

There were efforts to move closer to the Bengali original by introducing strophic pattern with metre and rhyme in Hungarian. As early as 1914, the journalist-translator Vilmos Zoltán (1869 -- 1929) published some Hungarian versions in verse that he claimed reflected the Bengali. Later, encouraged by having heard Rabindranath reciting his poems in Vienna, Zoltán came out with a whole volume of similar translations, the *Hindosztáni virágok* (Flowers of Hindostan, 1922), selected

[4] W. B. Yeats 'Introduction' to Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, London: The India Society, 1912, x-xi.
[5] Sőtér, István. 'Rabindranath Tagore' *Élet és Irodalom* 1961/19 p. 7.

from *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener*. The forms of his translations rely on traditional Hungarian patterns close to the rhythm of folk songs.

Bringing Tagore close to folk songs is a step towards the original, although it reflects only one facet of his Bengali poetry and the elaborate or the experimental aspect of his forms is lost. There are several reasons for the emergence of these folk-song type translations. The rhythmical pattern of Hungarian folk songs is in some ways similar to the Bengali *dalabritta* rhythm, where syllables are counted. The most popular Hungarian patterns consist of lines of twelve or sixteen syllables divided into two equal units with stressed syllables at their beginning. The folk songs suggest a naïve, unsophisticated approach to life so much longed for by urban people. Thus Tagore could be presented as someone who is not detached from nature. Hungarian conservative critics, influenced by nineteenth-century romanticism, held poetry inspired by folk literature in high esteem and in all probability welcomed such translations. In fact, it was such circles in which the Indian poet's visit to Hungary was prepared.

An "Orientalising" Translation

At the time of Zoltán's folk-song-like translations another translator, the Transylvanian Géza Cziffra prepared the Hungarian version of three poems. In the introductory lines, the translator expressed his ideas about Indian poetry. Probably it was the experience of Tagore's trip to Vienna and Germany, where the audience realised that Tagore, who was present in Europe with prose poems, composed melodious originals. Cziffra recognised melody and alliteration as organising forces of Tagore's poetic forms. He, however, rejected the idea of syllabic rhythm and was uncertain about rhyming:

> The artistry of Indian poetic forms is different from ours. Rhymes and syllabic metre are substituted with frequent alliteration and endless melodiousness, which cannot be given back in Hungarian. Most Tagore translations are, therefore, heavy and colourless. In the translation below I will be trying to reflect Rabindranath Tagore's flowing and colourful literary artistry with rhymes to which we are more accustomed, though they are more frequent here than in the original.[6]

[6] Cziffra Géza (ford.). 'Rabindranath Tagore verseiből. *Napkelet* 1921, 2:1/10 pp. 536.

The result is the Perso-Arabic maqama-type rhyming prose. Using a Perso-Arabic poetic form to translate Tagore reinforces the contemporary impression that the Orient is essentially uniform.

Iambic Translations

Making verse translations, however, was not exclusive to the conservative writers. It was followed by one of the leading Hungarian poets, Dezső Kosztolányi (1885 -- 1936), who attended Tagore's lecture in Budapest and came out with three verse translations from English.[7] He felt free not only to create Hungarian strophes but also to deviate from his received text. He made the poems sound more explicit and further familiarised their imagery. His translating technique will be illustrated in one of the most popular translations entitled *A Bajadér* (The Bayadère). The long international journey of this poem before it reached Kosztolányi also serves as a good example of cultural translation in Europe at the beginning to the twentieth century.

Abhisār (Tryst), the Bengali original of Kosztolányi's translation, was composed on 4th October 1899 and included in the collection *Kathā* (1900).[8] The poem presents morals and aesthetics familiar to its Indian readership in fourteen quatrains rhyming ABBA, in which the first and the fourth lines are long and the second and the third ones are short. Its theme is based on the pious Buddhist story of Upagupta, the alleged guru of king Ashoka, and the dancing girl Vāsavadattā. The Buddhist story, first recorded in the beginning section of *Ashokavadana* around the first centuries CE (WHAT DOES CE MEAN? Common Era, AD) , celebrates the discipline and steadfastness of the monk Upagupta and shows that the problem of momentary happiness being turned into suffering is solved by a renunciation of the world before suffering comes and thus becoming aloof. Tagore apparently expected his readers to be familiar with the story of Upagupta since, unlike in the English version where he is presented as "the disciple of Buddha", he is not qualified in *Abhisār*. The first half of the Bengali original talks

[7] The three poems „A bajadér" (The Bayadere), „Vak leány" (Blind girl, *Gardener LVIII*) and „Lámpa az útra" (Lamp for the road, *Gardener LXI*) can be found in Kosztolányi Dezső: *Idegen költők.* Szépirodalmi, Budapest, 1966, pp. 603–605.
[8] Rabindranath Tagore, "Abhisār" in Rabindranath Tagore, *Kathā*, Kolikata (Calcutta): Ādī Brahmasamaj Yantra, 1900. pp. 29-33.

about a dancing girl *(naṭī)* going out at a dark monsoon night to meet her lover. On her way, by incident she kicks the ascetic *(sannyāsī)* Upagupta, who was asleep on the ground by the town gate. When she realises that it is a young ascetic, she apologises and invites him into her home. The ascetic refuses her but promises to come back when it is time. They indeed meet again at spring by when the dancing girl struck by pestilence is thrown out of the city and lies in the dust. Upagupta attends her saying that this was the time he promised to meet her.

The setting of the poem is also deeply embedded in traditional Indian aesthetics focussing on the evoking the emotions of love *(śṛṅgāra rasa)* and, in the second half, of compassion *(karuṇā rasa)*. The title, *abhisār* is a technical term of *śṛṅgāra rasa* as one type of meeting *(saṁyoga)*. Traditionally it is a description not of an actual meeting but rather of the woman who braves inimical society and nature to reach her lover. A woman donning her best attire and jewellery and going for a tryst at night is called *abhisārikā*. When she does so in a moonlit night, she is expected to wear white clothes *(śuklābhisārikā)* while on a moonless night she is expected to be in dark *(kṛṣṇābhisārikā)*. Indian tradition does not like the direct expression of sentiments, but only its signs either in the body or in the nature. An important part of the evocation of the aesthetic emotion is the description of the circumstances, the *uddīpana*s, such as the weather or the nature. Unlike European tradition, Indian poetic lore has two seasons meant to be particularly suitable for love, the rainy season around July and August, and the spring around March. Moreover, Bengali poetry has a particular propensity towards describing local nature. The *uddīpana*s of the rainy season and the imagery of the *kṛṣṇābhisārikā* dominate the first part while the *uddīpana*s of spring suitable for a *śuklābhisārikā* are present in the second half without the proper *abhisārikā*.

In his Bengali poem, Tagore followed the story's teaching but has superimposed on it the aesthetics of the *abhisār* and retold it in fourteen melodious quatrains rhyming ABBA, in which the first and the fourth lines are long and the second and the third ones are short. In other words, he made it into a Bengali poem according to Indian tradition.

The poem's first English version was received from Calcutta by a certain Yorkshire clergyman in the summer of 1913 .[9] Its text, duly entitled *The Tryst*, was apparently the same as published in *Poetry* magazine in December 1913 (pp. 79 – 81). The English version could not make use of the *abhisārikā* imagery and was at odds with transfusing the Indian seasons into Europe. Therefore, the *śṛṅgāra rasa* setting, so familiar for the Indian reader, was lost. The translation also introduced changes into the poem. It compressed the description of the beauty of the ascetic, the entire fourth stanza into a few words, somewhat familiarised the description of the spring nature for Europeans, by getting rid of the line "Medlar, trumpet flower and tuberose were blossoming in the royal groves."[10] It is also silent about the name of the girl, Vāsavadattā, enounced as the last word of the poem, about the ascetic's reading a healing mantra on her as well as about fact that the girl was on her way to meet her lover. Discarding some further technicalities of the *abhisār* setting in the second half of the poem, which mirror the first meeting, it rather focuses on the two meetings of the ascetic and the girl.

The Tryst as published in the *Poetry* magazine in 1913 was with some modifications included into *Fruit Gathering* in 1916 as poem XXXVII.[11] Most modifications were minor as can be seen from the various editions.[12] There was, however, also a structural difference: *Fruit Gathering* dropped the somewhat confusing reference to the Bengali new year in April resulting in loosing the parallel with the reference to the monsoon month of *Shravan* (translated as *August*) and in a drastic shortening of the eighth strophe:

> barṣa takhano haẏ nāi śeṣ, eseche
> caitrasandhyā.
> bātās hayeche utalā ākul,
> patrataruśākhe dhareche mukul,

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[9] Michel Delines "Quelques poems inédits de Rabindranath Tagore." *Les annales politiques et littéraires* on 23 November 1913, p. 467.

[10] The original of this line (**রাজার কাননে ফুটেছে বকুল পারুল রজনীগন্ধা।**) is present in the Bengali version of "Abhisār" (p. 31) but is left untranslated in Rabindranath Tagore, "The Tryst" *Poetry* December 1913 (pp. 79 – 81).

[11] Rabindranath Tagore, *Fruit Gtahering*. London: Macmillan, 1916, pp. 50-52

[12] As can be seen from a collation on *Bichitra : Online Tagore Variorum* (http://bichitra.jdvu.ac.in/content/collation/english/poems_and_songs/frg/e_p_frg_037/index.php)

rājār kānane phuṭeche bakul pārul
rajanīgandhā.[13]

(The year was not yet over; it was an evening in the Chaitra month.
The wind was restless and eager.
The branches of the wayside trees were in blossom.
Medlar, trumpet flower and tuberose were flowering in the royal groves.)

This has become in *The Tryst*:

The New Year had not yet begun.
It was an evening of March.
The wind was wild.
The branches of the wayside trees were aching with blossoms.[14]

This was further shortened in *Fruit Gathering*:

The branches of the wayside trees were aching with blossoms.[15]

This solution, however, is also confusing since the sentence “The wind was wild” seems to relate more to the monsoon of the first half of the poem than to the restlessness and eager desire of the spring festivities. The translator tries to compensate for it in describing the branches as “aching with blossom.”

Nevertheless, the early English version was ignored by the majority of the initial international translators. Having heard it recited at a social gathering, Isaak Shklovsky, the London correspondent of the Moscow newspaper *Russkie Vedomosti*, prepared a Russian version. From Russian, it was then translated into French by Michel Delines and published in *Les annales politiques et littéraires* on 23rd November 1913.[16] This French translation introduced further changes to the poem. It not only softened the name Upagupta into Ugaponta but also used

[13] "Abhisār" (p. 31)
[14] Rabindranath Tagore, "The Tryst" *Poetry* December 1913 p. 80.
[15] Rabindranath Tagore, *Fruit Gtahering*. London: Macmillan, 1916, pp. 51.
[16] Cf. Bordaş, forthcoming.

the more exotic and erotically charged word *La Bayadère* as its title and as a repeated reference to the girl, who in the English was only called “the dancing girl”, “woman” or “fair woman”. However, the title connecting into the Orientalist stereotype of exotic eroticism catapulted the poem to international success. By the end of the winter of 1913-14, *La bayadère* passed into Spanish, back into English, Romanian, German and Hungarian and possibly to other languages.[17]

Most translations of *The bayadère* were close translations. Such a close translation was already prepared in Hungarian in 1914 by Ferenc Kelen (Kelen, 1914). Although Kosztolányi claimed to have translated Oriental poetry from close English, German or French translations[18], the original of *A Bajadér* has travelled long before reaching the Hungarian reader and the text was already far from the Bengali poem. Kosztolányi knew English, French and German and these three versions are so close to each and Kosztolányi's version so distant from to them that it is unclear which version he worked from. To illustrate the distance a stanza/line of the French, German and English versions is compared to that of Kosztolányi. French:

Le jeune homme se réveilla en sursaut, la clarté vacillante d'une lanterne frappa ses yeux, pleins de bonté![19]

This reads in German as:

Der junge Mann erwachte sogleich, die flackernde Helligkeit einer Laterne traf seine gütigen augen.[20]

And in English:

> *The young man wakened with a start*
> *And the wavering light of a lantern*
> *Fell in his eyes, the eyes full of kindness*.[21]

[17] Cf. Bordaş, forthcoming.
[18] Kosztolányi 1999, p. 501
[19] Michel Delines "Quelques poems inédits de Rabindranath Tagore." *Les annales politiques et littéraires* on 23 November 1913, p. 467.
[20] Beatrice Sacks: "Zwei Dichtungen von Rabindranath Tagore", *Die Grenzboten*, February 1914, p. 79.

Kosztolányi has introduced a drastic change here. The kindness of the eyes of the ascetic becomes the mildness of the dancing girl's (!) glance. At the same time he introduced a reference to the moon, so important in the Indian *abhisār* context.

Awakening, the priest sees that a lamp is kindled and two eyes are looking at him mildly like the moon.(tr. I. Bangha)[22]

He may have consulted the Hungarian version as well. It is possible that he also had *The Tryst* at his disposal since at the outset he writes that "The gate was shut, the lamp was out."[23] The word lamp is used in *The Tryst* but not in the *The Bayadère*, where instead of it "fires" are mentioned in all three languages. Although he followed the *The Bayadère* versions, seeing the fluidity of the text through the discrepancies of the two versions may have encouraged Kosztolányi to bring in further modifications. And indeed he introduced more modifications than can be perceived between *The Tryst* and *The Bayadère* versions.
In the Hungarian translation, Kosztolányi used ten iambic four-line stanzas. Kosztolányi took the poem more into the direction that it was taking on its way from Bengali to English. He removed the traces of the *abhisār* setting and of the girl's kicking of the sleeping ascetic by mistake. The mention of August, already confusing to a European reader, was removed and the description of the spring festivities, eight lines in *The Bayadère*, was compressed into two. The most striking change in this direction can be seen in the treatment of Upagupta's first address of the girl. The Bengali uses the highly elaborate *ayi lābanyapunje* (O, one with a multitude of beauty) in the Sanskrit vocative case. This has become *fair woman* in *The Tryst* and simply *woman* in *Fruit Gathering*.
The Bayadère versions had *belle des belles* in French, *fair one of the fair ones* in English and *Schöne der Schönen* in German. Kosztolányi's *Ugaponta* does not compliment the girl and addresses her as *my child*. Some changes were introduced for a more dramatic effect as the three short lines of *The Bayadère* describing the dancing girl struck with pestilence were extended into two full

[21] Roy Temple House: " The Bayadère" *Poet Lore*, 1 Jan. 1914, pp. 61.
[22] Kosztolanyi 1966, p. 603.
[23] Kosztolanyi 1966, p. 603.

quatrains. Mirroring the *Upagupta-Ugaponta* change, Kosztolányi softened the name Mathura into Madera. The young ascetic disciple of Buddha became "the priest of Buddha" and a "saint". More importantly, the didactic layer from the poem and at the same time he made the figures less serene, but more human. In *The Bayadère*, the conversation of the girl and the ascetic is as follows,

> "You pardon, young hermit, that I have roused thee"
> spoke the bayadère; "come with me.
> The dusty way is not a bed for thee."
>
> "Go thy way, fair one of the fair ones!"
> Said the hermit. "When the moment is come
> I will come and find thee."
>
> Then all at once the black night
> Showed her teeth in a lightning flash,
> And the bayadère trembled with fear. [24]

As has been mentioned, Indian poetic tradition does not like the direct description of sentiments. Kosztolányi, therefore, provided extra words and sometimes even lines describing them *(And Ugaponta kept on musing, …And he looked at her footsteps sadly)*. In the Hungarian version the dancing girl is more explicit about love and the sadness of the young ascetic suggests either that he also had a touch of it or rather compassion for the sorrow of the dancing girl. Nevertheless, by this sadness the stern figure of the ascetic becomes more human,

> …"Why are you here, poor one?
>
> Dust and sorrow are not worthy for you,
> Give your kiss not to the dust but to me."
> … "Go, go ahead, I'll follow you,
> I will be on your side when needed, my child."
>
> A boisterous lightning rode through the sky
> And Ugaponta kept on musing,
> The girl ran home trembling
> And he looked at her footsteps sadly.[25]
> (tr. by I. Bangha)

The second conversation in *The Tryst* is as follows,

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[24] Roy Temple House: " The Bayadère" *Poet Lore*, 1 Jan. 1914, pp. 61.
[25] Kosztolányi 1966 p. 603.

> The ascetic sat by her side, gently took her head on his knees, moistened her lips with water and smeared her body with balm.
> "Who art thou, kind angel of mercy?" asked the woman.
> "The time, at last, has arrived for me to visit you, and I have come," replied the young ascetic. **[26]**

And in *The bayadère*:

> The young hermit sits at the bayadère's side;
> He lays the sick woman's head on his knees,
> He wets her burning lips with cool water
> And bathes her body with oil.
>
> "Who art thou, sweet angel of mercy?"
> said the bayadère and groaned.
>
> "The moment is come. I promised thee,
> and I have come to find thee as I promised,"
>
> The end of the Hungarian poem is more dramatic and has a deeper touch of the transcendental,
>
> *Ugaponta took her head into his lap*
> And was sitting with her down in the dust of the road
> And gave her to drink and anointed her body
> And the Saint sanctified her life.
>
> "Who are you?" cried the woman, "Angel compassionate!
> Good one, why do you give me so much good?"
> "… Because I promised, I follow you when needed,
> and now I am on your side, my child." [27]

Kosztolányi's melodious translation also inspired people to set Rabindranath's poetry to music as is testified by a letter of a person called György Káldas who was a composer of some Hungarian songs in the folk style. Káldas set to music Kosztolányi's translation of the *Blind girl*. This was another attempt to present Rabindranath's poems as songs close to folk literature.

It should also be mentioned that Kosztolányi was not alone in his approach. One of the leading poets of a later generation, Sándor Weöres (1913-1989), used a similar

[26] Rabindranath Tagore, "The Tryst" *Poetry* December 1913 p. 81.
[27] Roy Temple House: " The Bayadère" *Poet Lore*, 1 Jan. 1914, pp. 62.

attitude, translating into iambic strophes and changing the content freely. Weöres, however, in spite of his interest in Oriental cultures and of the similarity between his poetic world and that of Tagore translated only one poem.

Relying on the terminology of the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, in his *Three Hundred Ramayanas*, A. K. Ramanujan distinguishes three types of translations. "[When] Text I and Text 2 have a geometrical resemblance to each other, as one triangle to another (whatever the angles, sizes, or colors of the lines), we call such a relation *iconic*. In the West, we generally expect translations to be "faithful," i.e. iconic. Iconic translation not only the preserves the structure of the original poetic work but also reproduces the meter of the poem as well as the exact number of lines. The indexical translation (p. 45) retains only the basic structures, such as the plot and the characters but may differ in terms of indigenous customs, language or philosophies. Ramanujan calls a translation *symbolic* when the plot and characters of the exemplar are used to say entirely new things, often in an effort to subvert the predecessor by producing a counter-text."[28] Here, the two texts approach similarity only in their minimal utility of plot and characters, but differ in all other respects like settings and sequence of events. In this case, two texts may sit in stark contrast to one another in their conveyed meaning and message.

In the translation history of the poem we have seen the first two types of translation. Tagore himself produced an indexical translation, as did Kosztolányi. Most other translations were iconic. *La Bayadère*'s relationship to *The Tryst* can be placed between the iconic and the indexical. Although grammatically it hardly wavered from the *The Tryst*, its introduction of a word charged with Orientalism had significant consequences.

Communist Translations

Although put on index during the Stalinist regime of the early fifties (Vértesy 1987) Tagore was Rediscovered in 1955 when Soviet relationships with India underwent an unexpected change. The establishment of Indo-Soviet friendship

[28] Ramanujan, A.K. 'Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation.' In Paula Richman ed. Many Ramayanas: *The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia.* Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 44-45.

was marked by Khrushchev's visit to India in 1955. Together with the political reconciliation came the rediscovery of Tagore as an emblematic figure of India's anti-imperialistic struggle. In the Hungary of 1956 Tagore had an outstanding career. In February a representative exhibition of modern Indian paintings included Tagore's art, in May an appreciative article was published about him in one of the leading dailies announcing that "after all Tagore served progressive forces" and in October a bust of his was installed and an alley was renamed after him in Balatonfüred near the sanatorium where he was recovering in 1926. The attitude established in 1956 was maintained at the Tagore centenary when Tagore, the progressive, anti-fascist writer was celebrated.

The way that Rabindranath Tagore later found viable was not the cloud-adventure of transcendentalist denial of life. He again made a commitment against colonial tyranny and threw his previously acquired knighthood down at the feet of the British. During a visit to Germany and Italy Rabindranath Tagore recognised with disgust and dread that Fascism was the greatest danger threatening mankind and leading to war. At the same time his visit to the Soviet Union made him a friend of the Soviet people. In his articles and poems he protested against Fascist aggression in Abyssinia and China. Tagore had come a long way from the Brahmanical thought to realise the only possible way that the writer, the artist could materialise his dreams about peace was only by joining the international front of people with his talent, with his enthusiasm and with the persuasive force of his art. (Franyó 1961)

Some new translations of Tagore's poetry appeared presenting him as the poet of the workers. The following one is my English rendering of the Hungarian version of the *People at work (Orā kāj kare)*[29],

> Although their power grew enormous
> Coincidence helped and later
> The people cut through with united force
> The dark web of colonies.
>
> This fettered word is over for ever;
> And in spite of useless rumbling of weapons
> We take our people to the great perspective

[29] The original is poem Nr. 10 in *Ārogya (Orā kāj kare)*, which came out as Nr. 121 in the English *Poems.* Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1943 (2nd edn.) pp. 204–207. The Hungarian version by Zoltán Franyó was published in *Kisalföld*, the daily of the town of Győr (4 July 1961 p. 8).

Of centuries, where it will shine forth.

That never shirks -- always, day and night,
For long centuries has been living on his work.
Glory to our workers! We will never
Forget how much the suffering was!

On the front of translations much less happened during the fifty years that have passed since. The most important development is that direct contact with the Bengali language produced translations that are closer to the originals not only in content but also in form. For the exhibition, commemorating the 50th anniversary of Rabindranath's death in 1991, a song was translated into Hungarian by József Vekerdi and myself.[30]

gāner bhitar diye jakhan dekhi bhubankhāni
takhan tāre cini āmi, takhan tāre jāni.
takhan tāri ālor bhāṣāy
ākāś bhare bhālobāsāy,
takhan tāri dhulāy dhulāy jāge param bāṇī.

takhan se ye bāhir chẽṛe antare mor āse,
takhan āmār hṛday kā̃pe tāri ghāse ghāse.
rūper rekhā raser dhārāy
āpan sīmā kothāy hārāy,
takhan dekhi āmār sāthe sabār kānākāni.

(When I see the world through a song
then I recognize it, then I know it;
then in the language of its light
the sky fills with love;
then in every speck of its dust the highest message
awakens.

Then it comes from the outside inside me;
then my heart throbs in all its grasses;
in the flow of feelings the contours of forms
lose their boundaries somewhere;
then I see that everything is exchanging whispers with
me.)

The Hungarian version follows the original's *dalabritta* rhythm,

Mikor dalban olvadok fel, a világ él bennem;

[30] The original is song Nr. 26 in the *Pūjā* section of *Gītabitān* (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1973/74). The translation was printed on the invitation card of the exhibition.

Akkor úgy érzem, Őt látom, Ő áll itt mellettem.
Fényének parancsszavára
Kigyúl szeretet-varázsa,
Akkor minden porszemében zsong az Örök Szellem.

Akkor ami eddig kint volt, bent él a lelkemben,
fűszálai remegése dobban a szívemben,
minden alak feloldódik,
minden határ elmosódik,
s a Mindenség suttogása testet ölt szememben.[31]

Conclusion

In 1913 Rabindranath surprised European readership as an Oriental Old Man heralding the end of Europe's cultural hegemony. The initial enthusiasm lasting only for a few months in Hungary, when leading writers wrote enthusiastically about him, gave way to perplexity and then to oblivion. In the 1920s Tagore became a prophet with a spiritual message showing hope to a civilisation immersed in materialism and drenched in blood. In the 1950s he became an anti-imperialist thinker with progressive social message.

Tagore was a unique presence in as much as he was a modern poet to be translated into Hungarian while before the mid-twentieth century only poetry of the antique east was given attention. Tagore was, however, often presented as the living representative of the ancient Orient. In his appearance he himself became an old man, a symbol of timeless East.

The fluctuations in Tagore's fame show how vulnerable the reputation of the first bestselling modern Asian poet was to European fashions and to ideologies. At the same time the fact that Tagore's oeuvre lends himself to interpretations so different from each other shows the truly universal nature of the Indian poet.

It was not always Tagore's English versions that were translated and as is the case with *The Bayadère*, his poetry reached Hungarian after a long journey through major European languages. His poetry has been translated into Hungarian in various ways. Most of the translations followed the English prose poem format, some, however, were in verse. Most translations tried to reach back to an original be it the English prose or the Bengali verse versions. However, the idea of reflecting an original was problematic since it was either very difficult to decide

[31] Published in http://terebess.hu/keletkultinfo/tagore.html

what the ‘original’ was when a poem circulated in several versions, or when only a clearly derivative version was only accessible for further translation. The only exception to this is Kosztolányi version, who observing, or perhaps just suspecting, that Tagore’s own English versions were already inculturated translations, prepared a further indexical translation, in which he hoped to unfold the poetic possibilities lying in his original.

Since until the most recent times, there direct knowledge of Bengali poetic forms was absent, Hungarian poets experimented with various forms, some tried to bring Tagore close to folk songs, some to Perso-Arabic rhyming prose, and others to the most common European poetic form of the times, iambic lines.

It seems that the indexical translations were more successful than the philologically close iconic ones. While Tagore’s fame based on iconic translations has faded in Hungary Kosztolányi's *A bajadér* has been a constant presence and even today it is available on a dozen of web-pages as people’s favourite.

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