

PETER SHERWOOD Abstract for HUSSE plenary, January 2022.

***HOLISTIC TRANSLATION CRITICISM: TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM
(WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO HUNGARIAN LITERATURE IN
ENGLISH TRANSLATION)***

In this pragmatic rather than theoretical presentation I want to outline two complementary kinds of holistic approach to the scholarly criticism of works of Hungarian literature (mainly prose) in English translation. In the first place, I believe it is *essential to consider the entire work*: the entire Hungarian original alongside its entire English version, line by line, sentence by sentence. I am aware that this is asking for a great deal, partly because of the investment of time and effort, and partly because such work is often deemed – quite wrongly, in my view – insufficiently 'academic'. Indeed, I must confess that I have myself so far carried out such a 'full-length' analysis of only three, very different works: Kosztolányi's *Édes Anna/Anna Édes*, Márai's *A gyertyák csonkig égnek/Embers*, and Krasznahorkai's *ÁllatVanBent /Animalinside*, and the resultant articles have had to be highly selective, since in each case a full reckoning could easily have exceeded the translation in length, sometimes several times over. Yet looking at just an extract, or even several extracts from a work, risks offering an untypical account of the translation and has the potential to unfairly (mis)characterise the work as a whole – though purely as a pedagogical exercise it can be indicative and thought-provoking, as I hope to show, time permitting.

The second way in which my approach has become more holistic over the years is that I believe the translation critic should first of all examine carefully the nature of the Hungarian source (which is not always as obvious as is often assumed) and only then consider the linguistic elements, mainly as – necessarily – filtered through the translator's/translators' knowledge of the two languages; while the broadest context must be the socio-historical one. This last should include an attempt to identify such factors as the differences between the cultures of translation in the two environments, notably the changing roles over time of those producing a translation from a 'minority' language like Hungarian, into English, a 'majority' language with a steadily increasing hegemony.

Wherever possible I will try to illustrate my points with specific examples, though translators' names will not be mentioned.