

if we had not been taught to expect Latinisms in Milton. The diction has none of the false pomp we associate with Milton's eighteenth-century imitators. Even the order of words varies little from that of prose. The rhythm is subtly counterpointed with regular iambic pentameters and no one could justly say that we have to fight against the verse-movement as we read. The verse-movement is sufficiently flexible and varied to convey the changing thoughts and feelings of the speaker. Nor can it be said that Milton focuses on words rather than on sensations or things. It is difficult to imagine verse which more singlemindedly concentrates on the matter in hand.

I have tried to give some account of the controversy which divided the English literary world for a generation. The dust has now settled and when I published my little book on Milton some of my reviewers complained that I had treated the anti-Miltonists with too much respect. But however much we may disagree with some of the opinions of Leavis and Eliot, they are two of the best living critics; and I found it moving when Eliot made up his long quarrel with the great republican by introducing him into the *Four Quartets* as one who died blind and

quiet, the Royalists and Parliamentarians united in the strife that divided them.

Finally, it must be stressed that not all modern critics have adopted a hostile attitude to Milton. Through the labours of many scholars on both sides of the Atlantic we know a great deal more about the background of his work than the scholars of the last century did. The political background has been studied by Wolfe and Barker and in the Yale edition of the prose works; his theological ideas have been analysed by Sewell and Kelly; Rajan has given a useful account of the way a seventeenth-century reader would have understood *Paradise Lost*; Prince has traced the influence of Italian poetic theory and practise on Milton's versification; C. S. Lewis has cleared away many misunderstandings in his *Preface to Paradise Lost*; Christopher Ricks has written a splendid defence of Milton's Grand Style; and Joseph Summers and G. A. Wilkes have written intelligent introductions to *Paradise Lost*. What is still more encouraging is that whereas the students of the 'thirties and 'forties approached Milton with considerable distaste, the students of the 'sixties respond with enthusiasm to much of his poetry.

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THE HUNGARIAN MILTON DEBATE IN THE 18TH CENTURY

Hungarian writers first became acquainted with Milton's name and *Paradise Lost* in the 1780's. They read the book in Latin and French translations; the Latin version was by the Austrian Ludwig Bertrand Neumann (Vienna, 1768) who translated it in an abridged form into Virgilian hexameters as an aid to Latin studies. The importance of the French version for Hungary derived from the fact that it was from this edition that

Sándor Bessenyei made his Hungarian translation. It was mainly the Hungarian Calvinists who for religious reasons had a high regard for Milton. General recognition of *Paradise Lost* on the part of both the Catholics and Protestants was, however, delayed owing to well known criticism of Voltaire, who appreciated Milton as little as he did Shakespeare.

In the Hungary of the second half of the

eighteenth century, Voltaire's great literary authority rested on his reputation not as a writer of the Enlightenment, but as an epic poet and dramatist. That is to say, on that part of his work which Lessing described as "pardonable by God's grace". József Teleki, the Hungarian magnate, who wrote in Hungarian and French with equal ease, expressed the opinion of his age when he addressed the following lines to a translator of Voltaire's work: "Vous n'avez pas mal choisi, Monsieur, en donnant à Zayre un habillement Hongrois. Voltaire, mauvais Philosophe et mauvais Historien, méritera toujours des grands Eloges comme Poète tragique. C'est là son fort. Par tout ailleurs il paroît vouloir affecter de faire le Missionnaire de l'Irreligion et de l'Impiété; mais dans ses Tragédies il n'y en a point de tout, où il y a infiniment moins de ce venin, et il y prêche presque partout l'humanité avec toute l'énergie qu'un beau style peut donner à une bonne cause."

Throughout the whole period of Maria Theresa, the authority and judgment of Voltaire, as representing the acme of French literary culture, reigned supreme among the Hungarian intelligentsia, acting in conjunction with the classical writers of antiquity and the Renaissance, as well as Gottsched* as the yardstick of literary value.

The education of the Hungarian intellectuals of the second half of the century was still mainly ecclesiastic in foundation, and for the most part they wrote in Latin, as required by Hungarian tradition. It was during this period that the Latin-language culture of Hungary and certain of its European neighbours, gained something of a European reputation because the high level of the Latin spoken by Hungarian intellectuals made the language a fit vehicle for translations from modern literatures. Fénelon's *Télémaque*, Marmontel's *Bélisaire*, Corneille's *Nicomède* first appeared in Hungary in Latin translation. In modest emulation of the Latin translation of the *Messiah* made in Vienna, in 1770, a Hungarian Piarist translated Klopstock's

* Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700-66)

ode on the occasion of Maria Theresa's death into Latin in 1784.

Hungarian writers in the Latin language found the Latin model of French literary taste among the authors of the Renaissance. They based their rules of poetry on Julius Caesar Scaliger, and they considered Virgil a greater epic poet than Homer. They wrote volumes of odes, epigrams and letters in Latin which were read by a fairly wide though exclusive circle of intellectual and aristocratic connoisseurs. Theirs was a conscious and rational art, entirely alien to the cult of the sublime and the sentimental, their whole cult of Latin and the classical age was no more than a variation on the Rococo of the Hungarian and Austrian aristocracy.

This was the dominant trend which confronted the young writers of the time of Joseph II in the 1780's, and it was in opposition to it that the new literature arose, drawing inspiration from Herder, Goethe, and Schiller, and among the English authors, Shakespeare and Ossian. The first great discussion of the new movement which succeeded the late Baroque and the Rococo of the eighteenth century—a discussion which struck at the very roots of aesthetic principles—centered on the value of Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

There were three men engaged in this paper war; two of them waged the war, the third wrote the literary works which gave rise to it. The cause of a classical-type literature in the Latin language was represented by József Rájnis, ex-Jesuit, the fervent follower of Scaliger and translator of Virgil. The new generation knocking at the door were represented by János Batsányi, an admirer of Herder's philosophy of history, who regarded the task of translating Ossian as a sacred vocation, who edited the first Hungarian-language literary review (1788-1792) with unusual care and devotion, and who was the best Hungarian political poet of the post-French Revolution years. The third participant in the debate, Dávid Baróti Szabó, ex-Jesuit teacher and poet, began his career by following the same late-Latin rules of poetry

as Rájnis. He became widely known as the first to demonstrate how classical metres could be adapted to the Hungarian language (1777).

It was by no means an easy task to write Hungarian poetry in classical metre. The strict rules of antiquity compelled the poet to make use of forms and turns of phrase alien to the colloquial Hungarian tongue, to introduce new or obsolete words, and indeed the unusual language in Baróti Szabó's verses led to a misuse of the Hungarian order of words, in order to follow the verse-forms of his classical models. The "classical" Latin verses he produced were anything but classical—and precisely on account of this singularity. And it was the aged ex-Jesuit's young friend, Batsányi, who seized on it. As an Ossian enthusiast he was well aware that a nebulous and ambiguous style might better impress the imagination than clarity and a logical structure, because the unaccustomed forms evoked sensations of the strange and the sublime in the reader. Batsányi realized that certain words, sounds and combinations spontaneously expressing emotion exert an influence, despite the reader's inability to discover a rational basis for the emotion aroused. Batsányi convinced his friend he should give up all the attempts to force the language to a Latin structure, and should rewrite his verses according to his—Batsányi's—principles of aesthetics. And as a modern literary example of world importance, he gave Baróti Szabó Neumann's Latin version of *Paradise Lost* to translate.

The reason why a Latin-language text was chosen was that neither Baróti Szabó nor Batsányi spoke English, nor had the younger poet himself been yet able to rid himself entirely of the influence of Latin literature. His first attempts to translate Ossian, for instance, following the example of the Viennese Michael Denis, were into hexameters, and only later, in imitation of Herder, did he go over to prose and blank verse.

Though József Rájnis was one of the first to adapt classical forms to the writing of Hungarian, he had no just appreciation of

his own poems, which he considered to be just as classical in style as his Latin models. The vain and irritable man of letters was wounded by the fact that not he but Baróti Szabó was the first to reach the public with Hungarian verses in classical metres. And finally, Batsányi, in one of his essays, advocated the principle of close and accurate translation of the original which ran counter to the cardinal principle of Latin verse, i.e., the right of embellishing or transforming the original text when translating. Rájnis expressed his views in a long polemical essay (1789) in which he reproached Batsányi *inter alia* with trying to make Baróti Szabó ridiculous by giving him Milton's epic poem to translate which he described as "teeming with errors." According to Rájnis *Paradise Lost* is a most unfortunate piece of work, unredeemed by the few beauties which stand out among its many blatant errors. He gave as his reasons for this denunciation—not only the picture of devils building palaces, the roles played by Death and Sin, and the path of Satan leading through Chaos—but also those parts of *Paradise Lost* where the fallen angels play the harp, frolic about, and debate Predestination. And as an ex-Jesuit, he was also shocked by the fact that Milton refers to pilgrimages, rosaries, holy images and cowls from a Protestant point of view.

It was Batsányi who replied, and not his aged friend, in a scathing essay which appeared in 1789. Batsányi was perfectly well aware that the list of errors and objections in final analysis was taken from Voltaire and—apart from the exception taken to the passages incompatible with the Catholic religion, to which Batsányi did not even answer—could be summed up as violating both the Latin poetical rules which demand verisimilitude, and making false allegories. But just as the ideas in the attack were not original, neither were those in the reply. Batsányi relied chiefly on Friedrich Wilhelm Zaharia's translation of Milton (*Das verlorene Paradies*, Altona, 1760–63), and quoted Moses Mendelssohn and Winckelmann.

The power and logic of Batsányi's reply silenced his opponent, and traces of further arguments only appear in an unfinished work of Rájnis's which was never published. In this work the pro-Voltaire ex-Jesuit, enraged by Batsányi's reply, attacked him with all the anger that animated polemicists of his Order in past times. In fury he attacked all the literary idols in addition to Milton who were loved and admired by Batsányi and his friends. Klopstock and the "obscure" Ossian were equally pilloried, and Virgil, Voltaire, Scaliger and Gottsched were again extolled.

An attack such as this in an unpublished manuscript, could be of no avail in preventing the supporters of Milton winning a resounding victory in Hungarian literature in the 1790s. But the real winner of this "breakthrough," which opened up a new era, was not Milton, but Ossian, echoing as he did Hungarian national sentiments, whose popularity in Hungary reached its climax at the turn of the century. Milton continued to be highly esteemed, but at the end of the 18th century his work was mainly known in Protestant circles.

ANDOR TARNAI

“NATION AND PROGRESS”

István Sőtér's Monograph on 19th Century Hungarian Literature

The Hungarian people occupy an isolated position among the peoples of Europe by reason of their history as well as their tongue. Situated on the frontiers of western and central Europe on the one hand and central and eastern Europe on the other, Hungary has gained many benefits and endured great sufferings from both directions. With the beginnings of modern history, it found itself caught between the devil of Hapsburg expansion in the west and the deep sea of an expansionist Ottoman empire in the south. It was the deep sea which in fact engulfed the greater part of Hungarian territory and held it for over 150 years before it receded and yielded the whole of Hungary to the Hapsburg devil at the end of the seventeenth century. From that time on Hungary was faced with only the one enemy—Austria—in its battle for survival, but the country by then fell so far short of the rate of progress achieved by other European countries that it could scarcely hope to make up the leeway.

The early decades of the nineteenth century as a result found all the substance and trappings of feudalism surviving intact and

unchanged in Hungary; they were marked at the same time by a rebirth of the desire for national independence, fiercely repressed by the Hapsburg authorities. A few enlightened minds amongst the aristocracy and nobility, such as Count István Széchenyi, Lajos Kossuth and Ferenc Deák, launched a movement for reform and national revival, and they were speedily joined by the great literary figures like the poet Sándor Petőfi, and the novelist Mór Jókai, among others.

These aspirations of Hungarian nationalism ran directly counter to the interests of Austria, imbued with the spirit of the Holy Alliance, and the clash between the two led eventually to the 1848-49 War of Independence and a part national part social revolution—likewise led by noblemen fighting to advance the establishment of a bourgeois society. The Revolution was defeated by the combined forces of the Austrian Hapsburg and the Russian Romanov empires supported by ultraconservative elements in Hungary; Hungary was deprived of such privileges as it still retained; but political reaction in the full flood of victory found itself powerless,