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One of the most exciting events in Hungarian literary studies in the United States in 2011 was the translation of Miklós Zrinyi's 17<sup>th</sup> century epic, *The Siege of Sziget* by László Körössy. Published by Catholic University Press, the volume not only introduces a Hungarian classic to a wide audience, but also provides a glimpse into the Turkish wars which shaped much of Hungarian and Central European history. It is to the credit of a young man born in the United States of Hungarian parents that this "grand Christian epic written in Hungarian almost three hundred and fifty years ago," (xxiv) has become available in English. Körössy's parents not only made sure that their son understood and spoke Hungarian, but that he also read it and was also familiar with Hungarian history. As the translator explained, he first became acquainted with the work when in high school, but it was as a sophomore in college that he was intrigued by the poem enough to attempt a translation. In the process he deepened his command of Hungarian language and history, building on the foundations his parents had given him. He completed the translation while a student at Catholic University majoring in history and political science and is now pursuing a PhD in Public Policy at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

The original work was published in Vienna in 1651 and is one of the most important works of the European Baroque. Zrinyi followed Torquato Tasso in reviving the Classical epic, and antedated Milton's similar undertaking by over a dozen years, ensuring him an important place in this tradition. Moreover, unlike either Tasso or Milton, Zrinyi was not only an accomplished poet but also a recognized statesman and military commander, himself somewhat of an epic hero. As his great-grandfather of the same name had done, Miklós Zrinyi captured the imagination of Europe by his deeds and was similarly lamented upon his death even as far away as England. To write this work, the poet Miklós Zrinyi took time out from his military and political career to immortalize his great-grandfather, the hero of Szigetvár who turned back Suleiman's forces in 1566 and was recognized as saving Europe from the Turkish offensive.

Of course, the praise of his ancestor served a higher purpose. It was a call to the nation to finally drive out the Turks from Hungary, since they were still in control of much of the same territory as some eighty years previously. He sought "to raise the national awareness of the Hungarian nation as well as that of the Croatians" (xvii) and urge them to take the fight to enemy. Appropriately, the work includes a "Postscript" in which Zrinyi claims lasting fame both for his poem and for his martial deeds, and a series of epigrams on the heroes in the epic. While in the epic right is always on the side of the Christians, Zrinyi knew his opponents well and drew complex characters and individual Turks are also shown as brave with many admirable qualities. In fact, one of the theses of the work is that the Hungarians are being punished for their sins but ultimately—in the third generation-- God will give them the victory. Such subtlety in the presentation of characters is ably captured in László Körössy's translation.

The original was written in rhyming quatrains of twelve-syllable lines, the "Hungarian alexandrine," but Zrinyi took considerable liberties with this form. While in the translation Körössy wisely chose to follow the stanzas closely, he does not attempt to reproduce the form,

since that would often have led to distortion of the sense. The result is felicitous, with the translation echoing the original without forcing it into a straight-jacket that could have marred the work. An archaic feel is given by the sometimes unusual phrasing or word order, but it is never achieved at the expense of lucidity. The spirit of the original is well captured, as in the famous opening lines:

I, who once with youthful mind  
 Played with love's sweet verse,  
 Struggled with Viola's cruelties:  
 Now with Mars' greater poetry

Arms, and the heroes I sing! The might of the Turks,  
 Him who was willing to undergo Suleiman's wrath –  
 That same Suleiman's mighty arm,  
 He at whose saber Europe trembled.

(Part One, 1-2)

Én az ki azelőtt ifju elmével  
 Játszottam szerelmnek édes versével,  
 Küzödtem Viola kegyetlenségével:  
 Mastan immár Marsnak hangassabb versével,

Fegyvert, s vitézt éneklek, török hatalmát  
 Ki meg merte várni, Szulimán haragját,  
 Ama nagy Szulimánnak hatalmas karját  
 Az kinek Európa rettegte szablyáját.

(Első Ének, 1-2)<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes one wonders if colloquial expressions in a translation can really capture the original, but in Kőrössy's translation in all cases they do, another example of fidelity to the original: "But, tell you me, what could he accomplish?" renders "De, mond meg énnekem, mit vihete végbe?" (I.95) with a deft touch. Critics have remarked not only on Zrinyi's talent as an epic poet who excelled at the depiction of combat and military matters, which is not surprising since he alone among epic poets was an active soldier and commander, but they also noted his lyrical gift. This, too, is captured in the translation:

Once dawn's graceful chariot  
 Had moved all things to beauty,  
 Sweet nightingale to bitter song,  
 And the knights of Sziget to great joy,

(Part Seven, 1)

Minekutánna már szép hajnal szekere  
 Mindeneket indított gyönyörűségre,  
 Szép fülemüle keserves éneklésre,  
 És szigeti vitézeket nagy örömré  
 (Hetedik Ének, 1)

Other times the inversion, true to the Hungarian, adds emphasis in the English version as well:

To fight, however, not just for any reason  
 We must, but for our beloved Christian homeland,  
 For our Lord, wives, children,  
 Our own honor and lives.  
 (Part Five, 27)

Harczolnunk peniglen nem akarmi okért  
 Kell, hanem keresztény szerelmes hazánkért,  
 Urunkért, feleségünkért, gyermekinkért,  
 Magunk tisztességéért és életünkért.  
 (Ötödik Ének, 27)

The final lines, a quintet, was printed in italics in the original to further emphasize its importance, and again the translator captured its spirit:

*God of knights, verily your servant  
 Did not pity from you his worldly ruin;  
 By his blood formed great words,  
 With such signature gave himself to you;  
 For his noble blood, have favor on his son.*  
 (Part 15, 109)

*Vitézek Istene! ime az te szolgád  
 Nem szánta éretted világi romlását;  
 Vére hullásával nagy bölöket formált,  
 Ily subscribálással néked adta magát:  
 Ő vitéz véérért vedd kedvedben fiát.*  
 (Tizenötödik Ének, 109)

If one wanted to nit-pick, I found only one instance where the translation seemed to fail, when it depicts Zrinyi lost in thought using “mired,” which does not really agree with the image of storms losing their force against the fortress (not town) of Késmárk. In the original Zrinyi simply “stands” (*Áll*) in thought; of course, the English demands another verb, but maybe “sunk” would carry a less negative connotation.

I have to commend Kőrössy for the notes which not only enrich the work but provide vital information. While some of these are translations from the notes in the 1901 Franklin Társulat edition of the work, many are provided by him to elucidate points of Hungarian history and geography, or references which might be lost to the English reader. He includes some of the basic Catholic/Christian doctrines which inform the work but would be lost to many readers, as well as explaining references to Greek mythology. One need only look at notes 5-35 in Part 14 to be impressed by his breath of knowledge explaining everything from Hungarian heroes to

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classical and religious references. The notes add greatly to the reader's understanding of the poem yet do not detract from one enjoying it as a smooth read. The diligence with which Kőrössi hunted down facts is amazing; note, for example, the explanation of *szarkavár* (magpie castle), an expression no longer in use; "it referred," he notes, "to fortifications on a national border, from which soldiers could launch pillaging raids into other countries" (124). The translator in interviews acknowledged a debt to Peter Sherwood of the University of North Carolina for finding the explanation. Sometimes the notes give alternate readings of a passage, as when he comments on the line translated as "But valiant Deli Vid went across the river,/ Upon the rear of the Turks" (VI.83) that it can also be read as "Deli Vid crossed the river on the backs of Turkish corpses" (99) [De vitéz Deli Vid általment az vizen,/ Az törökök hátán]. In several places Kőrössi notes where he departs significantly from the original word order to allow for a sensible translation.

The work is further enhanced by George Gömöri's introduction in which he gives the historical background to events in the epic, the European fame of both the hero of the poem and of the poet, some information on sources, and places the epic within European literary tradition. Useful addenda to Kőrössi's edition include a glossary of Turkish, Croatian, and Hungarian words which explain usage in the text and a list of characters that any student of the complex work will find useful. A Bibliography by Stephen Béla Várdy gives chiefly historical works for further study of the period and of the Zrinyis.