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**Dreaming in Hungarian**

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In Hungarian, the verb for “to translate,” *fordít*, also means “to turn.” How then, is Shakespeare’s intricate and playful use of language in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* “turned” in Hungarian? As Shakespeare was a master of “turning” language, of molding it to suit his artistic purposes to create specific prosodic effects, how then, is it possible to achieve Shakespearean language in translation? Furthermore, how does such a vastly different and singularly complex language such as Hungarian convey the distinctive linguistic qualities of *Midsummer Night’s Dream*? While this effort may arouse doubt in readers of Shakespeare, the effects of his language are, in fact, achieved through the Hungarian language. First, this paper will examine how Shakespeare artfully utilizes the English language to create the whimsical, tension-filled world of *The Dream*. Although it is impossible to elaborate upon every nuance in Shakespeare’s language in *The Dream*, it is necessary to address some of the key linguistic effects – specifically, various forms of verse, lyricism, pun, and paradox, essentially ways in which language draws attention to itself. Indeed, upon close study of the language in *The Dream*, one sees how the play *lives* in its words, how it gives itself entirely to the free play of signifiers. Therefore, translating *Midsummer Night’s Dream* grants the translator ample freedom to “turn” what has already been “turned,” and, as this paper will demonstrate, Hungarian is wonderfully suited to this free play of signifiers. The translations – the first written in 1864 by János Arany, and two modern translations from the 1990s, one by János Csányi, and the other by Ádám Nádasdy – succeed in conveying *The Dream*’s unique linguistic qualities, yet do so within the Hungarian system of language. Indeed, as the Hungarian language is inherently flexible in structure and lyrical in sound, certain effects of the Shakespearean original are actually enhanced through translation. Interestingly, it is the *differences* in translation between the English and Hungarian works which bring out the most fascinating effects of paradigmatic selection, that is, the range of different

associated meanings for a given sign. It is precisely through this paradigmatic technique that the Hungarian translations attain what Roman Jakobson terms, “autonomous significance,” referring to the distinctive linguistic effects achieved by the Hungarian translations independent of the original text. Furthermore, these effects created through the Hungarian translations in no way diminish Shakespeare’s original; rather they add deeper layers of meaning and interpretation to this classic work.

From the beginning of *The Dream*, the reader quickly departs from the stately order of Athens to go tumbling headlong into the chaos of the green world: a place of transgression and transformation. Specifically, through language, the world of waking life transmogrifies into a fantastical realm of illusion, artifice, and vacillation. Not only are worlds inverted in *The Dream*, but necessarily, *words* are too. In one of the most iconic phrases of the play, this inversion of order and chaos is mirrored through the use of antimetabole, the repetition of words in inverted order (Brooks, xlvi). As Oberon admonishes Puck for his faulty judgment and the turmoil which ensues, he says, “Some true love turn’d, and not a false turn’d true;” (3.2. 91). Interestingly, one sees on a meta-linguistic level how Shakespeare is “turning” both language and representation. Through the repetition of “true” – one referring to true, or genuine love, and the other referring to clear, moral truth – the linguistic signification of “true” is called into question, thereby challenging the very concept of truth. This is precisely what *The Dream* aims at, that is, to question on multiple levels the veracity of human perception. As the play demonstrates, that which we think to be “true” can easily be inverted and transformed into the incongruous and deceitful. Indeed, throughout the play, Shakespeare employs elaborate juxtapositions in which he presents both dramatic and linguistic contradictions. This constant play with language conveys the work’s dialectic between sense and sense; one referring to physical perception and the other

to human logic and reasoning. As evidenced by Helena's hapless pursuit of Demetrius, perception, both physical and psychological, becomes irrevocably obscured:

Your virtue is my privilege: for that  
It is not night when I do see your face,  
Therefore I think I am not in the night;  
Nor doth this wood lack worlds of company,  
For you, in my respect, are all the world;  
Then how can it be said I am alone,  
When all the world is here to look on me? (2.1. 220-226)

This passage in particular attests to the complexity of Shakespeare's language, as he repeats certain words and images, such as "night" and "world," which paradoxically express both absence and negation as well as presence and affirmation. As Harold Brooks cites in the Introduction to the play, this passage is a "fine example of pseudo-logic in Helena's self-justification to Demetrius, which has the air of being logically argued, though it is pure fanciful lovers' hyperbole" (xlvi). Indeed, hyperbole functions not just to demonstrate the exaggeration of love, or in this case, infatuation, but more importantly it conveys the exaggeration of the *language* of love. All too often, what is mistakenly described as "true" love is actually an illogical embellishment referring to hopeless doting. Through yet another form of contrast, antithesis is employed as Puck knowingly states, "Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong" (3.2 27).

As a master of puns, Shakespeare employs them often, again to demonstrate the artifice both of language and love. Furthermore, by showing how language can be deceitful, Shakespeare demonstrates how characters' intentions can mirror this. Especially telling of this is a "very prettily riddled" petition from Lysander. In his fervent attempts to sleep with Hermia, he pleads:

O take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!  
Love takes the meaning in love's conference.  
I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,

So that, then two bosoms and a single troth.  
Then by your side no bed-room me deny;  
For lying so, Hermia, I do not lie. (2.2. 44-51)

In this passage alone, there are several instances in which Lysander plays upon the various “senses” of words, beginning in the first line with a pun on “sense” and “innocence.” Next, “bed-room” is intentionally hyphenated to denote room in a bed to be shared by lovers; however, it can also signify a “bedroom” a place where love is consummated. The last pun on “lying” and “lie,” however, masterfully completes this series of linguistic ruses, for why would a man ever “lie” in order to “lie” with a beautiful woman he desires? Even from the beginning, Lysander’s intentions are put into question, as Egeus vehemently accuses him: “Thou hast by moonlight at her window sung / with faining voice verses of feigning love” (1.1. 30-31). With the double meanings implied with “faining” and “feigning,” Lysander is charged with two counts of dishonesty. First, the “faining” voice alludes to the secretive nature of the lovers’ trysts, while the “feigning love” denounces Lysander’s lyrical professions as false-hearted inventions. Through, syllepsis, Shakespeare cleverly parallels words in both a literal and metaphorical sense, as in the fight between Demetrius and Hermia, as Hermia first charges Demetrius with, “So should the murderer look, so dead, so grim” which is immediately followed by Demetrius’ “So should the murder’d look” (3.2 57-58). In a literal sense, Hermia charges Demetrius with murder, while in a metaphorical sense, Demetrius retorts that Hermia has murdered him, for she has “Pierc’d him through the heart with her stern cruelty” (3.2 59). Later, one sees similar inversion with isocolon, in which parallelism is reinforced by members that are of the same length. Helena matches word against word when she states, “You both are rivals, and love Hermia; / And now both rivals to mock Helena” (3.2. 155-156). Indeed, Shakespeare employs various forms of

punning to reinforce the major themes of *The Dream* through language, constantly altering and conflating the perceived boundaries of linguistic meaning.

Of utmost importance is *how* this ambiguity is expressed, for one of the defining characteristics of a Shakespearean work is the utilization of verse. Through both blank and rhymed verse, Shakespeare poetically expresses the metamorphosis of characters *and* language. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* especially, the frequent use of rhymed verse creates an imaginative, fleeting world of fairies and moonshine. As Russ McDonald notes in The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare, the prolific use of rhymed verse can be attributed “to at least two probable causes: first, to the unreal, artificial dreamlike quality for which Shakespeare is striving, and second, to the fact that one of the main subjects of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is poetry itself—verse as the product of the imagination” (51). Furthermore, verse helps to define different groups in the play: Theseus and Hippolyta (almost) always speak in blank verse; only the fairies use the short couplet; and the young lovers never deviate from pentameter, with the exception of Act V (Brooks, cxxi). Blank verse is most often used by figures of authority and power, be they earthly or ethereal. Especially in the confrontation between Oberon and Titania, their speech in blank verse is in keeping with their royal dignity:

*Oberon:* Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania.

*Titania:* What, jealous Oberon? Fairies, skip hence;

I have forsworn his bed and company,

*Oberon:* Tarry, rash wanton; am I not thy lord?

*Titania:* Then I must be thy lady; but I know

When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land,

And in the shape of Corin, and versing love

To amorous Phillida (2.1. 60-68).

Of further interest in this passage is the reference to “versing love,” which draws the reader’s attention both to the dramatic conflict between genuine love and affected, or “versed” love, as well as to the meta-linguistic function of “versing” in and of itself. This is further evidenced

through changes in verse within a group to express varying emotions. As Brooks explains, “Thus the passion to which the lovers’ conflict mount in their quarrel-scene is a climax in blank verse after the rhyme of their earlier, more formally treated exchanges (cxxi). Verse also functions as a means of juxtaposition between lofty, poetic verse, and the unsophisticated prose of the most human of characters in the play. Specifically, Titania’s elegant blank verse with Bottom’s unrefined prose enhances the contrast between her ethereal beauty and his vile, bestial transformation.

*Titania:* I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again:  
Mine ear is much enamor’d of thy note;  
So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape;  
And thy fair virtue’s force perforce doth move me  
On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee.

*Bottom:* Methinks, mistress, you should have little reason for that. And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays. The more the pity that some honest neighbours will not make them friends. Nay, I gleek upon occasion.

*Titania:* Thou art as wise as thou art beautiful (3.1 132-141).

Although this gross rhetorical juxtaposition encourages an initially humorous reaction, it also demonstrates the monstrosity of this most unnatural union.

While the presence of the monstrous and grotesque plays an important dramatic and linguistic function in the play, the true beauty of *The Dream* lies in its lyricism. As Brooks asserts:

Both in form and feeling, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is the most lyrical of all Shakespeare’s plays, not excepting even *The Tempest*. The reflections upon imagination and dreaming, the evocation of fairyland, of the moonlit wood, and of the moon as presiding divinity, are often lyrical in feeling, as are the recollection of Hermia’s and Helena’s girlhood friendship, the early morning hunting-scene, and at times, the words of romantic love – ‘Love, whose month is ever May.’ (Introduction, li)

Indeed, the verse and language in *The Dream* are often in themselves exquisitely musical, as when Hermia reminisces, “And in the wood, where often you and I / Upon faint primrose beds were wont to lie” (1.1. 214-215). In myriad passages such as this, Shakespeare creates beautiful images artfully combined with beautiful sounds. Especially in the fairies’ lullaby, the intentional use of certain sounds creates a very specific sonic effect:

*First Fairy: You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;  
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
Come not near our fairy queen.*

*Chorus: Philomel, with melody,  
Sing in our sweet lullaby;  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby;  
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh;  
So goodnight, with lullaby.*

*First Fairy: Weaving spiders, come not here;  
Hence you long-legg’d spinners, hence!  
Beetles black, approach not near;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence. (2.2. 11-22)*

Particularly in the chorus, the sonorants *l*, *r*, *y*, *w*, *m*, and *n* are employed to create a dreamy, rhythmical aura. However, as noted by Robert Beum and Karl Shapiro in The Prosody

Handbook: A Guide to Poetic Form:

One must also take the *vowels* into account. A great preponderance of vowels over consonants—especially of long and open vowels and diphthongs—almost always produces a kind of softness somewhat different in quality from the softness created by resonant or breathy or liquid consonants (12).

Indeed, the combination here of sonorant consonants with various, elongated vowels functions to create a sonorous, sleepy melody. Later, when the Hungarian texts will be examined, the function of long and open vowels will be discussed in detail, as these vowels are not only employed for prosodic effects; rather, they are an inherent part of the language itself. However,

within the English system of language, Shakespeare demonstrates in *The Dream* how he has mastered prosody to create specific linguistic effects.

Considering the previous discussion of some of the most important Shakespearean effects of language, how then, can they possibly be expressed through translation? Does a more literal translation produce a more “faithful” rendition, or does a more spiritual translation better express the original “essence”? As Reuben Brower discusses in Mirror on Mirror:

Translations offer most useful examples for exploring the connection between the two kinds of design because of the two necessary yet conflicting purposes of the translator. (1) He attempts to give the reader the same dramatic experience as that offered by the original (e.g. the experience of the voice, the role, the attitudes that equal “Hamlet”). (2) He attempts to produce this identity of effect through a different verbal medium, in another language. What happens when he undertakes this impossible task? What can we learn from his attempt about the interconnection of the poetic and the dramatic?” (140)

In truth, there is no final answer to these questions, only different interpretations. For in a field inherently rent with strife, translation theory abounds with various arguments on the nature of verbal equivalence. In fact, there can be no total equivalence in the translation from one language into another. As Roger T. Bell explains in Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice:

To shift from one language to another is, by definition, to alter the forms. Further, the contrasting forms convey meanings which cannot but fail to coincide totally; there is no absolute synonymy between words in the same language, so why should anyone be surprised to discover a lack of synonymy between languages? (6)

Indeed, from one language to another, exact synonymy does not exist; however, the paradigmatic axis – the selection of associated meanings for a given word or sign – actually broadens through translation, for the translator is given a new verbal medium to express the intent of the original. In this way, translation is not an impossible and infamously “traitorous” endeavor, especially in consideration of how Shakespeare constantly manipulates and alters language, demonstrating that language itself is inherently traitorous, capable of being “turned” one way or another. Jiří

Levý further explains in The Art of Translation (*Umění překladau*) that since language does not possess only one function, so too “a translation is not a monistic composition, but an interpenetration and conglomerate of two structures. On the one hand there are semantic content and the formal contour of the original, on the other hand, the entire system of aesthetic features bound up with the language of the translation.” Instead of inevitably “losing” something through translation, in some ways, new forms of expression are gained, as “this range of possibilities provides a clear indication that translation by its very nature entails certain shifts of intellectual and aesthetic values” (Anton Popovič, 78). When examining the Hungarian translations of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, this approach will be taken up, specifically looking at what happens when the original form of *The Dream* is altered into a new linguistic system.

Before diving into the Hungarian translations, first, it is necessary to examine theories of the problematic translation of poetry, even more wrought with controversy than the translation of prose. As Roman Jakobson cautions in his essay, *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* “In jest, in dreams, in magic, briefly, in what one would call everyday verbal mythology and in poetry above all, the grammatical categories carry a high semantic import. In these conditions, the question of translation becomes much more entangled and controversial” (149). Indeed, this is crucial to the examination of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, as this work is rife with “poetic verbal mythology” that would seem to be utterly impossible to produce in another language. However, through translation:

Syntactic and morphological categories, roots, and affixes, phonemes and their components (distinctive features)—in short, any constituents of the verbal code—are confronted, juxtaposed, brought into contiguous relation according to the principle of similarity and contrast and carry their own autonomous signification” (Jakobson, 151).

Through Roman Jakobson's theories of translation, understanding *The Dream* in another language becomes more plausible, since through the process of translation, it gains what he terms "autonomous significance," that is, the translated text's own importance separate from that of the original work. Rather than searching for deficiencies and inadequacies in the target language, it is far more worthwhile to observe the unique linguistic effects achieved within the target language.

In order to understand the autonomous significance achieved by the Hungarian translations of *The Dream*, first, it is crucial to possess a basic understanding of some of the key features of the Hungarian language. To the first-time listener, Hungarian may sound completely foreign, as it is not an Indo-European language; rather, it is classified as a Finno-Ugric language. As such, it is commonly misunderstood as being similar to Finnish, when it actually belongs to the Ugric branch of this category. In the Hungarian alphabet, there are fourteen vowel phonemes – classified into two groups, long and short – and twenty-five consonant phonemes. As a rule, the stress always falls on the first syllable of every word, and contrary to other languages, vowel length and stress do not correspond. While there may be secondary stress on longer words, containing both short and long vowels, such as *viszontlátásra* ("goodbye"), the primary stress nevertheless falls on the first syllable. Of crucial importance in Hungarian is the distinction between short and long vowels: a - á; o - ó; u - ú; ö - ő, e - é; ü - ű; i - í. While in most cases the distinction simply warrants an elongation of the short vowel, with a - á and e - é, it is more appropriate to think of them as entirely different letters. In the classic example, there is a world of difference between „szar” and „szár,” the first meaning „shit,” and the second meaning „stem,” like that of a flower. While the short „a” has a closed, deeper sound formed in the back of the mouth, the long „á” is far more open and elongated in pronunciation, similar to the English

„ah.” Similarly, the unfamiliar speaker of Hungarian can easily be spotted by the pronunciation of „e” and „é,” as they will fail to make the proper distinction between the short „e,” similar to the English pronunciation, and the more foreign „é,” which calls for an unfamiliar, and seemingly exaggerated elongation, similar to the „a” in the English „bay.” Of further importance is the categorization of Hungarian vowels into two, distinct groups: back and front vowels. The back vowels — a – á, o – ó, and u – ú — are produced in the back of the mouth, while the front vowels — e – é, i – í, ö – ő, and ü – ű — are produced in the front of the mouth. These categories are an integral part of the function of vowel harmony in Hungarian. As explained by Jakobson in The Sound Shape of Language:

All inherent vocalic features and some of the prosodic ones take part in diverse forms of a constructive device called ‘vowel harmony’ or ‘synharmonism’ which is used in and plays a relevant configurative role in the organization of sound and word systems by numerous and various languages widespread throughout the world (146).

As an agglutinative language, Hungarian uses a variety of affixes – including suffixes, prefixes, and a circumfix - which ascribe meaning and a specific grammatical function to a word. In Hungarian, most endings harmonize with the word they are attached to, such as “házban,” which, in one word means, “to be in a house.” In keeping with the rules of vowel harmony, the suffix ending, “-ban,” harmonizes with the noun “ház,” as opposed to the alternate ending “ben,” which would be completely incongruous with a back vowel word. As this is only a very basic explanation of some of the key characteristics of the Hungarian language, other important features will be examined as they are encountered within the texts.

In order to have a better understanding of the three Hungarian translations of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, they must first be placed within their historical and cultural framework. The first translation of the play, from 1867, was written by János Arany, the “greatest artist of the Hungarian language” (Ványi, Ferenc 110). Indeed, as one of the foremost

intellectuals of the Reform Era in Hungary, dating from the late eighteenth century into the mid-nineteenth century, he played an integral role in reforming the Hungarian language. As part of the language reform movement, in Hungarian known as *nyelvújítás*, there was a national effort to create a language more suited for literary purposes. Rather than limit himself to the traditional forms of pentatonic folk poetry, “Arany turned to European poetry: assimilating Homer, Dante and Shakespeare, moulding Hungarian folk poetry in the spirit of these influences” (Sőtér, István 244-5). While the objectives of the language reform movement were later split between the perfect, precise translations of great Western works, or the creation of original, distinctly Hungarian literature, Arany’s translations nevertheless paved the way for later translators who would approach the text with a greater sense of artistic freedom. As stated by literary historian, Gyula Farkas, in Hungarian Writers and Literature:

His translations...prove the rich poetic and communicative nature of the Hungarian language, when used by a master. Although conditioned by Hungarian cosmogony, János Arany gave validity to the profound truth that man, when his ideas and emotions are expressed with artistry, finds the consciousness of his universality in any language (116).

Indeed, with the foundations established by Arany in the nineteenth century, modern translators, such as János Csányi and Ádám Nádasdy, are able to create deeply imaginative linguistic renditions of *The Dream*.

Although the complete translations will not be explored in their entirety, specific lines and passages will be analyzed in order to convey the autonomous significance of the Hungarian versions of *The Dream*. Interestingly, the unique differences found in the Hungarian translation(s) actually begin with the very title of the play. To the novice learner of Hungarian, the title appears to be completely irrelevant to the original title, for nowhere in the title is there mention of “a midsummer night.” However, the title in Hungarian, *Szentivánéji Álom*, literally

meaning, “Saint Stephen’s Dream,” implies far more recognizable cultural connotations than a literal translation of “midsummer night’s dream.” Although it seems to be a most unfaithful translation when taken out of its cultural context, the Hungarian title is actually the most fitting translation of Shakespeare’s original. Considering that midsummer was not simply a time during the year, but a celebration of marriage, fertility, and abundance, it is appropriate that the Hungarian title carry the same import. Indeed, as Saint Stephen’s Day falls on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June, then the Hungarian title is actually a very accurate equivalent of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Moving past the title, the Hungarian translations demonstrate what István Sótér describes in The Dilemma of Literary Science as a “freer chain of image and reason” (255). What is meant by this is the inherently flexible nature of the Hungarian language. Without any strict rules regarding word order, the subject, noun, or verb can be placed anywhere in the sentence. Generally, that which the speaker wishes to emphasize the most is placed at the beginning of the sentence; however, these are mere guidelines in an essentially free concept of word order. Although Shakespeare takes great liberties with traditional English word order to create specific poetic effects, nevertheless, his work is still inherently bound to its native material. One of the most iconic lines of *The Dream*, „Lord, what fools these mortals be!” (3.2), takes on three, completely different forms in the Hungarian translations. Beginning with Arany: „Be bolond az ember faj!” which literally translates as „Foolish, the tribe of men!” Significantly, „foolish” precedes the subject of humankind as Arany logically desires to emphasize this quality first. Although this rendition of Shakespeare’s line does not drastically differ in its syntactic form, as Shakespeare also precedes „mortals” with „what fools,” the following modern translations render this line in different fashions. While Csányi’s Puck exclaims, „Oly bolond az ember mind!,” that of Nádasy decries „Minden halandó: bolond!” The first translates into something like „How

foolish are all people!,” while the second humorously translates as „Everything mortal: foolish!” Especially interesting in Nádasdy’s version is the placement of „mortals” before „foolish;” yet, by using the colon he just as effectively stresses the stupidity of all things mortal. Although Shakespeare’s original is not precisely replicated in Hungarian, it is apparent that this is not the obvious objective of the translators. As Sótér describes, „Thus the new and traditional forms are no more than means for the contemporary poet as the eclogue or sonnet used to be for his predecessors of yore; he can use deliberately either, without being forced to denounce any device. Thus Hungarian poetry is characterized by a free and ample selection of poetic methods” (255).

This “free and ample selection of poetic methods” granted to the Hungarian translator, allows for the poetry of Shakespeare to express completely different shades of meaning and imagery in Hungarian. At times, what is suggested in Shakespearean language can actually be expressed in Hungarian. The classic line, “The course of true love never did run smooth” (1.1. 134), surprisingly attains a different level of depth and poetic beauty in Arany’s translation of, „a hű szerelmek folyama / Amennyit én olvastam, vagy regében / Hallottam, kényelmes nem volt soha.” First, Arany turns Shakespeare’s „course of true love” into an evocative „river of love,” literally creating the image which Shakespeare alludes to. Furthermore, Arany’s image of a „river of love” imbues the original with a different kind of beauty as it creates a deeper connection with nature, the primary source of drama and conflict in the play, as the disorder in the green world disrupts the harmony in Athens, and logically, must restore harmony in the end. Of further interest in this passage is the fragmentation of „The course of true love never did run smooth,” as this does not stand as unitary line; rather it begins „The river of true love, / In all that I have read / And heard in tale, / Never was pleasant.” Arany creates a very unique effect through

this drastic change in word order, as it creates a progressive line of reasoning as Lysander comes to the conclusion that „love never was easy.”

As spoken Hungarian is imbued with various musical intonations unknown in English, in some respects, it is more suited to poetic, especially lyrical, forms of expression. As Sótér notes, there is a „novelty of thought and image that is striking in Hungarian lyric poetry” (255). Indeed, in Hungarian, lyricism and actual semantic meaning correspond more frequently than in English, particularly evident in the Fairies’ Lullaby. In Shakespeare’s original, the fairies sing:

First Fairy: You spotted snakes with double tongue,  
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;  
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,  
Come not near our fairy queen.

Chorus: Philomel, with melody,  
Sing in our sweet lullaby;  
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby;  
Never harm, nor spell, nor charm,  
Come our lovely lady nigh;  
So goodnight, with lullaby.

First Fairy: Weaving spiders, come not here;  
Hence you long-legg’d spinners, hence!  
Beetles black, approach not near;  
Worm nor snail, do no offence. (2.2. 11-22)

While Arany maintains the refrain of „Lulla, lulla, lullaby,” in keeping with his era’s commitment to exact translations, his rendition of „Never harm, nor spell, nor charm” translates as „Semmi bú / Semmi báj,” essentially meaning the same thing, „No evil / No charms,” yet creating rhyme where it originally did not exist.

*Kar:* Philoméla dalabáj,  
Zengje lágyan: lullabáj,  
Lulla, lulla, lullabáj,  
Semmi bú  
Semmi báj  
Asszonyunkra itt ne szállj;  
Jó'tszakát, lullabáj.

Through Hungarian, the English „lullaby” transforms into the open, sonorous „lullabáj” of the Magyars. Just by observing the preponderance of long „á” in this stanza alone, one sees how the Hungarian is able to create lyrical verse rich in both meaning and sound. While, Arany creates rhyme through a relatively slight change, Csányi deviates far more from the original to parallel the musical resonance found in the rhyming patterns of Hungarian verb conjugation, indicated by their endings in „-unk.”

*Kórus:* Philoméla, hív dalunk,  
Halkan hozzád hangolunk;  
Hallga, hallga! altatunk.  
Hallga, hallga! altatunk.  
Sem varázs, se bájolás  
Ne találja asszonyunk!  
Jó'tszakát, már alhatunk

Furthermore, the three lines featuring breathy, aspirate „h”s imitate the sleepy, magical incantation of the fairies’ lullaby while denoting far more than a simple lullaby. Literally, these lines translate as „Quietly to you we tune; / Hush, hush! We lull you to sleep.” Finally, in Nádasdy’s version, nearly every line expresses an exquisite harmony between semantic meaning and lyrical parallelism:

*Kórus:* Fülemüle, erre szállj,  
mézes hangon muszikálj.  
Édes álom, bűvös báj,  
Édes álom, bűvös báj.  
Ártó varázs, szúrós darázs  
Asszonyunktól messze járj;  
Áldja álmát bűvös báj.

This translates as: „Nightingale, in this direction fly, / on a honeyed sound hang about. Sweet dream, magic charm, / Sweet dream, magic charm. / Enchantment maker, stinging wasp / From our lady go far away; / Bless her dream with magical charm.” Even in English, the full impact of

this verse is stunningly beautiful; however, in Hungarian, it unequivocally achieves „autonomous significance” through both its semantic and prosodic effects.

Through the exploration of Hungarian translations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, one sees that translation is not in the least an act of treachery. This view is inherently limited as it discourages the study and analysis of translated texts under the overriding assumption that they will inevitably be of inferior quality. As eloquently stated by Wilhelm von Humboldt, from the introduction to his Translation of *Aegamemnon*:

Translation, especially poetic translation, is one of the most necessary tasks of any literature, partly because it directs those who do not know another language to forms of art and human experience that would otherwise have remained totally unknown, but above all because it increases the expressivity and depth of meaning of one's own language (56).

Indeed, while the translations demonstrate the unique qualities of the Hungarian language, more importantly, they convey different ways of thinking about Shakespeare's timeless work.

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