# "I never held myself to be an original writer." János Kis's Imitation of Richardson: The Hungarian Pamela<sup>1</sup>

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A year after Richardson's Pamela came out, a spurious sequel appeared, Pamela's Conduct in High Life (1741), and before Richardson's "true sequel" could have come out, a second imitation was published the same year, Pamela in High Life; or, Virtue Rewarded. Not only novels but numberless plays, comedies and tragedies followed up to the 1780s in imitation of Richardson. The Pamela frenzy spread all over Europe: besides abridgments and translations, a range of new Pamelas and Anti-Pamelas were soon published in England, France and Germany entitled Pamela The Second, Pamela Censured or Pamela Versified. There were parodies which purported to ruin Pamela's virtue and questioned the moral doctrine in the work. Among these works Fielding's Shamela opened the line and, as most of the 15 volumes of the Richardsoniana series of the Garland edition testify, was followed by works such as The True Anti-Pamela: or Memoirs of Mr. James Parry; and Anti-Pamela: or, Feign'd Innocence Detected: In a Series of Syrena's Adventures. There were other works which, although they did not borrow the name of Pamela, were still imitations because they belonged to the genre which Richardson founded by his novel, the "familiar story." It meant that the story was presented in the epistolary manner where "all the letters are written while the hearts of the writers must be supposed to be wholly engaged in their subjects" (Richardson ix). Dramatic Pamelas, such as Virtue Triumphant differed from the novel type in that they lacked the sentiment and focussed more on the salacious element of the erotic scenes. An acknowledged kinship to Richardson's heroine on the title page often guaranteed the bookseller's success regardless of whether the story bore any relation to the original or not. James Turner summarized the Richardsonian legacy with these words: "Reception seems too mild a word for the Pamela craze that swept through eighteenth-century Europe and inspired emulation in virtually every medium. Its irritating fascination was felt by Prévost, Fielding, Voltaire, Goldoni, Diderot, and Mozart" (Turner 70). The most extreme form of subverting the original narrative was perhaps the printing of Richardson's most beautiful "sentiments" on a set of cards.<sup>2</sup>

In many of the European literatures of the latter half of the 18th century the proliferation of the Pamela stories developed into a cult where certain moments sometimes recalled only one of the distant foreign adaptations of the original story. Each nation shaped the story in her own image: the pen of the imitators was led by their readers' expectations. Richardson's works continued to exist and influence later works under particular circumstances. Their German reception well exemplifies this tendency where his narratives founded the "empfindsame Briefroman": one third of all the "Romane" which appeared between 1774 and 1781 were written in imitation of *Pamela* or *Clarissa* (Kimpel 72).

Richardson's influence on Hungarian literature was mainly a result of this German reaction. The only Hungarian adaptation of Pamela-a full translation of the novel has not been made so far-was possibly transposed from a German imitation to Hungarian circumstances (György 356, Fest 99). János Kis's work, A magyar Páméla (The Hungarian Pamela), appeared in a particular literary context which determined its type and reception. The fact that the story was the first piece to appear in a pocketbook of four volumes reveals a more complex authorial intention than the indicated attachment to the Richardsonian heritage. In its altered form the Hungarian short story can hardly be compared to its original, yet many of the characters are heavily indebted to the general types in Richardson's novels: the seemingly virtuous maiden, the converted wealthy rake or the upper class lady who tries to interfere in the marriage. When placing Kis's imitation among the still immature attempts at writing prose fiction in Hungarian by imitating foreign patterns we cannot ignore the particular cultural context in which the writer-editor's task was primarily understood as a contribution to the rise of an educated reading public. The followers of Ferenc Kazinczy's literary programme took their task of cultivating the national language so seriously that Kis, who belonged to the few English speaking translators, thought of his own editorial career as a heavy duty taking the time from producing original works, an afflicting burden which he was compelled to involuntarily carry throughout his life even at the cost of sacrificing personal fame. In what follows I will examine Kis's motivation for offering a nationalized version of Richardson's *Pamela* and the cultural role his translations played in a period when the narrative techniques of prose fiction in Hungarian literature had barely passed their infancy.

## Kazinczy's Literary Programme: The Public Role of Translators

In the first decades of the 19th century many critics turned to French and German literary histories and aesthetic works to present the public with a selection of the best works of foreign nations. Gábor Döbrentei, for example, in a series of articles in his journal *Erdélyi Muzéum (Transylvanian Museum)* published a short history of French and German romances. Sámuel Almási Balogh, in his study on romances, followed Eschenburg's typology of fictional works in his *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Wissenschaften*: he tried to place, where possible, translations, imitations or original Hungarian works in Eschenburg's categories of, for example, the "warscheinlicher Roman" or the "sentimental Roman" (76, 90). The reviewers of foreign narrative theories wanted to introduce a variety of poetic and fictional forms into Hungarian literature through either adaptations, imitations or translations or by merely calling attention to the beauty of the most celebrated original works.

Kazinczy's main effort was to make Hungarian readers familiar with foreign works because he thought that, "we shall make a progress in crafts only if, instead of the unfortunate attempts of making originals, we adopt the masterpieces of more fortunate nations; this is my endeavour; and I would sooner wish for the second-rate fame of a lucky-handed Bartolozzi of delicate taste than my country should see in me a Dürer" (*Kaz. Corr.* 3: 41). "In a country," he writes in another letter, where "painting and sculpture do not flourish yet, we must wake up the sleeping genius by engravings, oil-painted copies and plaster mouldings. The substitutions of these in poetic works are translations, which I favour because all of our originals, even the best, do not reach the level of even the average, not too bad translations" (*Kaz. Corr.* 3: 303-304). His targeted public included two groups. On the one hand, he addressed the small, highly educated group of readers of refined taste who read in foreign languages and knew the originals of his translations and who were thus able to appreciate the style and invention of the translator. On the other hand, he wanted to broaden and educate the group of less learned readers by making them familiar with the masterpieces of foreign literatures instead of second-rate chivalric romances and sentimental love-stories which sold well although they were merely the vague and clumsy imitations of great works.

Attempts to explain the paradox of a severely divided and heterogeneous readership were made by many of the critics and translators. Gábor Döbrentei, for instance, in his introduction to a few translated extracts from *The Spectator*<sup>3</sup> complained about the early stage of readership writing that the paradox of the reading public was that the major part of the gentry, the most potential group to buy and read literature, could not read in Hungarian or would not degrade themselves to do so therefore they chose to read romances in the original (*Erdélyi Muzéum* 1817: 134). László Szalay revealed a similar paradox by stating that one group of the readers was familiar with foreign literatures therefore they stood above even our most excellent writers' expectations. The other group, both because of the poor education and unreadiness of these readers to accept valuable works, was still a very long way from the possibility of becoming a responsive audience for the best Hungarian authors (Szalay 53).

By the turn of the century, hundreds of German and French fictional works were rendered in Hungarian. These "nationalized" versions were often taken as originals even when there was a "translator's preface" attached to the work. Imitation had a meaning different from, for example, English and German robinsonades or gulliveriads: it did not mean an ill-fated copying of the original but an equally or even better valued work, a creative paraphrase adapted to Hungarian circumstances. For example, Kazinczy's Bácsmegyey (1789), the rendering of a sentimental story, was the "nationalized" version of Albrecht Christoph Kayser's Adolph's Gesammelte Briefe (1778), the vague German imitation of Goethe's Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774). In the preface to his rendering Kazinczy is "delighted to say" that he succeeded in finding Hungarian names for the characters and placed the story in a Hungarian country-side. The great number of nationalized adaptations may be the sign of an enlarged reading public at the beginning of the 19th century: under the pressure of time authors had to borrow characters and skeletons of plots to dress them up in a Hungarian garment (György 90). The reason for "nationalizing" (the German synonym for the term is "magyarisieren") characters and places was to familiarize the story with the reader, to raise his interest, bring him closer to the events and make him feel at home in the world of fiction. József Kármán, the writer of an early sentimental novel in letters, Fanni hagyományai (The Posthumous Papers of Fanni, 1794) explains this feeling of familiarity by implying that each writer carries the stamp of his own national character in his work: "Every writer has his own world, his own atmosphere in which he lives, of which he writes; he has his own reading public which he addresses.... I don't mean to say that a foreign writer, who wrote in England, cannot be held good in Hungary. But it is true that he will be dearer for those who understand all his allusions, the background of his ideas, the subtlest meaning of his words than for those who do not know any of these.... Our readers find an unfamiliar, strange and untrodden world in translated books" (qtd. in Toldy 25). Many of the critical remarks similar to this were composed from the point of view of the assumed expectations of the reading public; some critics, however, also complained about the severe drawback from which most writers suffered, the great efforts they had to take to present the public with valuable works, which, at the same time, also met the more common expectations of simple readers.

The mentioning of Richardson's Pamela goes back to an early date. In a review on András Dugonits's novel, Etelka, in Mindenes Gyűjtemény (General Collection), the writer mentions the "English Pamela" as being "virtually the first of the type [to which *Etelka* belonged] among the works of the poetic mind" (1 [1789]: 130). In the following issue (2 [1789]: 187-88), József Pétzeli (Fest 39) called for the translation of Richardson's Pamela and it seems, he expected an adaptation more valuable than the original: he advised possible translators to turn to the work's French rendering because it was "such a fine sieve that does not let the bran, which might be found in the original, through" (also qtd. in György 169, 356). No translation was made either from the original or the French version although Richardson's novels must have been known and read by many-we know, for example, that Pétzeli had The *History of Sir Charles Grandison* in his library (Fest 39) and, in 1807, Kazinczy wrote to a friend that his wife was reading *Clarissa*, possibly in a German translation (also referred to by Fest 356). A magyar Páméla, appearing more than a decade later, became a characteristic example of the "nationalizing" methods of writers: Pamela's name, for example, appears merely once in the story, in the title. The main character is called Ilona, the typical name of a maid-servant at the time. The seducing rake, Mr. B., becomes embodied by Count Szentiláry. Oddly enough, the calculating, presumptuous character of Ilona stands closer to the hypocrite, calculating Shamela of Fielding than to the virtuous, innocent maid in Richardson's work, even if, in other respects, the two works differ.

### János Kis's Pocketbook Editions (Flóra)

Hungarian scholarship considers Richardson's novels the direct descendant of moral journals, primarily Addison and Steele's *The Spectator* and *Tatler* (György 166-67, Németh 69, Gärtner 765). Magazine fiction was a popular form which offered a moral doctrine in the disguise of an entertaining love story.<sup>4</sup> Among other sources, Richardson possibly owed the plot skeleton of *Pamela* to a moral tale which appeared in No. 375 of *The Spectator* (Newlin 469). It is about the daughter of an impoverished father, Amanda, who is sent to an honest farmer's house where the Lord of the manor falls in love with her and wants to keep her as his mistress. Hearing about the hardships of Amanda's father, in a letter he offers his support: "I will be so ingenuous as to tell you that I do not intend Marriage: But if you are wise, you will use your Authority with her not to be too nice, when she has an opportunity of saving you and your Family, and of making her self happy" (Bond 3, 411). Amanda's tears, when reading her mother's reply in which she proudly refuses the offer, moves the seducing rake to make amends. The story is concluded with the following words: "He Marryed Amanda, and enjoyed the double Satisfaction of having

restored a worthy Family to their former Prosperity, and of making himself happy by an Alliance to their Virtues" (Bond 3, 413).

János Kis made several translations from The Spectator and Johnson's Rambler and published these essays in a pocketbook which he entitled Klio (1825). He had started editing pocketbooks as early as the 1790s when his first Sebbe való könyv (Pocketbook, 1797) came out. It contained translations mostly of German and French essays. He followed the tradition of editing miscellaneous essays in small size books: they contained anecdotes, essays excerpted from moral journals and letters by the most renowned writers. The small size of these books added to their popularity: in the 1790s, Rudolph Sammer's editions of English authors in his Pocket Library series were very popular and widely known among Hungarian writers who read in English. According to Fest, Kis as well as Döbrentei, when collecting moral essays for translation, turned to miscellanies, where they found the texts collected in "one work" (Fest 97-98). After his first collection Kis continued to publish pocketbooks for the rest of his life. The first volume of his Sebbe való  $k\ddot{o}nyv$ , because of its great success, was soon followed by a second one which contained a calendar as well. Among the pocketbooks which were published in the following years we can find Flóra (1806-1808), Ifjúság barátja (The Friend of the Young, 1816), Helikoni kedvtöltések, (The Pleasures of Helicon, 1819) and Soproni Estvék (Sopron Evenings, 1839-44).

Kis's adaptation of Richardson's story appeared in the first volume of his four-volume pocketbook Flóra, which had more predecessors in German literature with the same title. Possibly because of its similar subtitle, Lajos György identified the source of the pocketbook with the monthly journal which was edited by Ludwig Ferdinand Huber in Tübingen between 1793 and 1803 (György 357) and was dedicated to "Teutschlands Töchtern geweiht von Freunden und Freundinnen des schönen Geschlechts." The subtitle of Kis's journal informs the reader that they will find "heartmoving little romances, moral tales, poems and other instructive and entertaining pieces for the gentler sex and her friends, by the editor of Zaid," an earlier work by Kis. The plan of the pocketbook goes back to 1803 when Kis wrote to Kazinczy that now that he handed his Zaid, Kotzebue's story, to István Kiss the bookseller, "I want to publish a Miscellany called Flóra, which will contain romances, poems, etc.-I know well that these are only ephemera: but we must make [people] get accustomed to accepting better food with the help of these.-If Flóra sells well, perhaps other volumes can follow it. If circumstances allowed, I think it would be possible to publish a similar Journal" (Kaz. Corr. 3: 77).

The editorial history of *Flóra* was not a success story although the first volumes sold well: Kis complained to Kazinczy about the carelessness of the publisher who, after leaving the manuscript untouched for two years, decided to make changes in the order and selection of the collected pieces without the knowledge and permission of the author. After he read an advertisement about the appearance of the second volume in 1807, Kis renounced his claim to authorship altogether. He declared that he did no longer remember what pieces he had sent to the publisher some four years before, and the publisher, he complained, altered the titles of some of the pieces against the author's wish (*Kaz. Corr.* 4: 509). Thus we cannot know for sure which titles in the first volume, in which A magyar Páméla appeared, were originally given by Kis or invented by the publisher.

#### The Hungarian Pamela

A magyar Páméla is the opening piece of the first volume of Flóra. The narrative, which occupies less than a hundred pages, is longer than what would be called magazine fiction but considerably shorter than Richardson's novel. It hardly resembles the original but certain elements of the plot, the leading characters and the moral focus connect the narrative to *Pamela*. Whoever gave the suggestive title, despite the fact that the heroine of the story is called Ilona, obviously wanted to immediately establish a close relation to Richardson's work in the reader's mind. This reminder, besides commercial motivations, may also testify that the story of Pamela must have been well known for the audience thus the writer-publisher could rightly rely on the reader's knowledge of the original tale or at least one of its adaptations.

The relationship between Ilona and Count Szentiláry is similar to that between Pamela and Mr. B. Ilona is a strikingly beautiful, obedient and seemingly impeccable girl of 14, too, when she becomes the maid of the young Lady H. It is at the widow Szentiláry's house where she first meets the wealthy nobleman who tries to buy her innocence but his attacks are proudly refused: "I would rather live and die in poverty than seek my fortune in a sinful way. All my riches are my blameless life and innocence, and I cannot give them to anyone.... Because of my poor situation I am not entitled to enter into alliance with you, Sir, and my heart denies any other kind of union" (22). The Count sends numerous letters in which he attempts to seduce her by offering her wealth. Only the sixth letter is included in the narrative in which he reluctantly promises that, sometime in the future, when circumstances allowed him, he would marry her. Ilona does not give up her virtuous life for two entire years and refuses to become the mistress of the Count who decides to prove his good intentions: when visiting Ilona's home and discovering the great poverty in which she and her ill mother are living, he secretly leaves money behind. He only begs Ilona to dress richly and appear as a lady, which she agrees to. When, wearing her nice dress, she then meets Lady Palatinus in a shop, the lady accuses her of being a kept mistress. Because of this damaging reproach Ilona falls dangerously ill. Her only wish before death is to see Lady Palatinus and be allowed to explain her motives. She is listened to and kindly forgiven in the eye of the public and, despite her seemingly mean origins and poverty, Count Szentiláry finally appreciates her morality and sufferings and wishes to marry her. After Ilona's noble origin is also revealed, no one objects to the marriage any longer and she is happily united with the Count.

Giving a summary of the plot does not reveal much about the narrative. Besides the connecting elements, which link the story to the original tale—such as Ilona's age, her arguments in response to Count Szentiláry's verbal attacks, and the final approval of their marriage by the nobility—there are crucial differences. In Kis's narrative there is a lack of pathetic emotions and excessive sentimentality for which Richardson's *Pamela* became the forerunner of the modern novel. Kis did not keep the epistolary form either, he adapted an omniscient, intruding narrator (a characteristic feature of most of the imitations) who sees behind the curtain and never hesitates to throw light on the characters' motivations. The Count's alliance with Ilona, for example, is already predicted at the beginning of the story: "his marriage proved that he kept his word: although his great fortune and noble title would have made him a desirable match among the richest noblewomen, yet he chose a maiden of the lower class" (10). The reader also learns that this seemingly

humble maiden knows well, from the very beginning, that she can make her fortune if she behaves accordingly. Once she suspects that the Count is in love with her, she is immediately ready with a plan: "Ilona was fully convinced of his love so she decided to make her fortune. She knew very well that, with time, she could persuade him to legally marry her. On this conviction she laid her plan which she wanted to follow; she was determined to practice, by all means, the pride of her virginity on her lover while being careful not to distance him from herself" (24). Thus the conventional character of the poor and virtuous girl is made to be seen through the filter of the Anti-Pamela tradition, Fielding's legacy, whose main objection against the Richardsonian heroine was that Pamela was far from being a virtuous heroine, she was a counting, cunning hypocrite who was very much aware of her own situation and knew well that her only chance to secure her financial and social status was marriage. Because of the ironic remarks of the self-conscious narrator Kis's story becomes a strange hybrid of Richardson's didacticism and Fielding's parody. The concluding sentence of Kis's narrative leaves the reader entirely in doubt about the story's moral teaching: "Who cannot see that Ilona now blesses the moment which once caused her shame because her present happiness had its root in that shame" (106).

A magyar Páméla is a characteristic example of how Hungarian writers adapted foreign works and how they wanted to "nationalize" them and adjust them to the reader's taste by offering a story, where the skeleton of the plot was borrowed, if not from the original then from one of it's nationalized imitations, of a popular foreign work. This "nationalizing" method, however, cannot be collated with the translator's role. Kis's letters and editorial prefaces reveal how differently he thought about his own task as the faithful translator of an English text (he, for example, gave a full translation of Johnson's *Rasselas* in *Soproni Estvék*) and how he thought about the public role that he felt he had to fulfill out of mere duty when he appeared as the editor of a collection of entertaining stories. When he transposed the Pamela story his primary aim was to bring the story close to the reader by giving Hungarian names to the characters and presenting them in familiar circumstances.

There can be various reasons why Kis chose to turn to making and editing translations and adaptations in a much greater proportion than producing original works, his life-long ambition. His pocketbooks offered a light reading and easy entertainment for the reader while publishing them guaranteed an immediate financial success for the editor. In the preface of his Sebbe való könyv he admitted that the translator always had an inferior role compared to original works: "No one wishes it more than the editor of this little work to see men on the Hungarian Parnassus who could obscure these translations... by their original and immortal works. He would be the first to readily forget the creations of his own mind without pain and would respectfully and delightedly listen to the heavenly voice of the Hungarian Homers, Xenophons, and Platos" (3). Ten years after his first pocketbook came out, Kis confessed in a letter to Kazinczy that he envied him for having plenty of time and the financial security to "raise your own works to the exceptional level of grace and inner worthiness" (Kaz. Corr. 4: 509). He added that, after so many imperfect attempts, which he felt he had to publish because of the painful lack of compatible literary works, he was hoping that he could eventually publish "something that will continue to exist even when we will have to move there, quo pius Aeneas, quo Tullus dives et Ancus" (Kaz. Corr. 4: 509).

We know from his letters that he never thought highly of the pieces which appeared in his pocketbooks and literary journals: he accepted Kazinczy's criticism who, when buying the first volume, immediately sent it on to his niece without reading it (Kaz. Corr. 4: 394) and he similarly passed on the third volume, this time even without looking into it (Kaz. Corr. 4: 394). In his Emlékezései (Memoirs, 1845-46), written in the very last years of his life, Kis left Flóra unmentioned despite the fact that its editorial and publishing history occupied more than four years of his life. The feeling of disappointment, that he had wasted his talents and energy on compilations selected from famous writers' works while being incapable of producing masterpieces himself, partly out of financial pressure, hunted him throughout his whole career. In his declining years he once again recalled and repeated an earlier reply which he made to the attacks which had been made against him on the pages of Muzárion (Musarion). He had been charged with plagiarizing from other writers' works and trying to sell them as if they were his own. The accusation offended him deeply and he found it so unjust that he felt he had to repeat his words after two decades again: "Let me clearly declare once again that I never held myself to be an original writer; that I always translated both my verse and prose compositions from others' works or imitated them or turned to them. In fact, even those pieces of mine were partly imitations which have generally been accepted as original" (Emlékezései 197-98). His defence, after so many years still full of hurt feelings, well expresses how he perceived the writer's task in an age of early readership. Together with Döbrentei, Kazinczy, and other writer-translators, he looked at the task of propagating the best pieces of foreign literatures as a noble if involuntary mission in contributing to the progress of Hungarian literature.

#### Notes

 $^{1}$  I acknowledge with thanks the grant from OTKA (FO 29203) that has enabled me to complete the research for this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Price remarks that "transposed from bound pages to cards made to be shuffled, the 'sentiments' lose even the arbitrary order that the *Collection* [of the Moral and Instructive Sentiments, Maxims, Cautions, and Reflections, Contained in the Histories of Pamela, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison, 1755] borrows from the letters of the alphabet, and the material connection that the novel borrows from its binding."

<sup>3</sup> Fest attributes 14 translated pieces from English moral weeklies to János Kis in the *Erdélyi Muzéum* (97) but, according to György, the translator of Addison's essays was a certain Ferenc Fekete, who, as Kazinczy writes in one of his letters, supposedly translated the whole of *The Spectator* (411).

<sup>4</sup> Claude Newlin points out the close relation between *Pamela* and the periodical tradition: "Whether or not Richardson himself was directly influenced by the remarks on fiction and by the stories in the periodicals is perhaps impossible to determine; but at any rate it seems clear that his work fits into the same movement of sentiment and taste as the fictional contributions of the periodical writers.... To accomplish his purpose Richardson, then really wrote an enormously expanded and moralized novella" (476).

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