

From Canada to Hungary

The Unpublished Atwood¹

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Abstract

The first Margaret Atwood book appeared in 1984 in Hungarian translation but that does not mean that Európa Publishing House did not follow Atwood's literary work closely during Communism. Both her prose and poetry were reviewed, often shortly after the original English language publication. The paper examines twenty-two reviewing in-house documents that Európa Publisher used as part of the selection process and an informal censorship procedure. First, the study draws the cultural context for the in-house selection tools and then identifies key themes in the anonymized reviewing documents of the era, such as: possible titles for the books, poetry weighed on scales, the practice of multiple reviewing, social classes in translation, relying on paratexts, the reputation of international success behind the Iron Curtain, and in what way is this literature "Canadian"? The paper tracks the publishing paths of all Atwood books reviewed during and immediately after the political change of 1989, concluding that the tools for selecting books for translation have changed, not only due to the political change, but as a result of the accelerated publishing practices that focus on bestseller lists, literary prizes, pitches of literary agencies and a network of personal contacts.

Keywords

Margaret Atwood, Canadian literature, Communism, translation, reviewing documents

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1. Atwood before and after the political change of 1990

According to the reviewing documents of Európa Publisher, nine Atwood books were considered for Hungarian translation between 1974 and 1990, but only one proved to be safe enough to publish. *Surfacing* appeared in Hungarian under the title *Fellélegzés* [Relief] translated by Eszter L. Pataricza in the Modern Library Series in 1984. But how did the first readers, the publisher's reviewers see Atwood?³

The dossier containing the reviewing documents about Margaret Atwood's novels and collections of poetry was probably opened in 1974. Her surname on the cover is spelt with two T-s, with one T crossed out later, corrected in blue ink. The dossier is not slim. It contains twenty-two reviewing documents, some in several copies, typed on thin duplicate carbon paper. The name of the Canadian author, unknown at the time, came up again and again, every two or three years after 1974 in connection with a new title, but it was the publisher's final decision that the books would not be translated despite the predominantly positive reviews. The publisher's opinion changed only after 1989. According to the bibliographical data, the number of translated Atwood titles increased only slightly after the political change, which tendency is typical not only of Hungary. According to the translation database of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies (CEACS), data from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Czechoslovakia – later the Czech Republic and Slovakia –, Romania, and Bulgaria show a similar tendency, that is Atwood's books started to be published in the region only after 1990, that is after the fall of Communism (see Figure 1).

The fact, however, that not a single book by Atwood appeared in Hungarian translation before 1984, does not mean that Európa Publishing House – which was officially commissioned in 1957 to publish world literature – did not follow Atwood's literary work closely, both her prose and poetry, reviewing it often shortly after the original English language publication. In every two or three years, new reviewing reports were requested about Atwood's books. At least two, sometimes three or four opinions written by literary experts were made available to the publisher. The following volumes have been considered for publication by Európa, with the date of the English-language original in parenthesis: in 1974 and 1981 *Surfacing* (1972); in 1977 *You Are Happy* (1974); in 1977, 1981 and 1982 *The Edible Woman* (1969); in 1980,

³ I would like to thank Európa Publishing House, in particular Szilvia Kuczogi director and Gizella Magyarósi editor-in-chief for granting permission to research the reviewing documents owned by the Publisher which are related to the topic of my PhD thesis. I would also like to thank the staff of the Petőfi Literary Museum, especially Csaba Komáromi for his help. In agreement with Európa, the names of the reviewers are not public, thus the documents have been anonymized in the research. The names of the authors only appear if they have given their explicit consent.

1981, and 1982 *Life Before Man* (1979); in 1982 *Bodily Harm* (1981); in 1984 *Bluebeard's Egg* (1983); in 1986 *Dancing Girls* (1977); in 1987 and 1988 *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985); and in 1990 *Cat's Eye* (1988).

Atwood's English language texts had been reviewed by seventeen people, twelve women and five men. The reviewers' gender does not influence, however, whether they supported the publishing of the reviewed book. Among the five male reviewers, only one gave a negative review, that of *Surfacing* in 1974, which was nevertheless selected for translation by the publisher. Four out of twelve female reviewers did not recommend a particular Atwood text to be published in Hungarian at all. The publisher rarely, only on three occasions asked the same person for their opinion. Due to the large number of in-house and external reviewers involved, a wide variety of professional perspectives – ranging from writers, poets, translators, editors, literary historians, scholars, journalists – are present in the initial reception of Atwood. Six out of the twenty-two documents did not recommend the reviewed book to be translated into Hungarian, three recommended a selection of reviewed short stories, and thirteen gave positive critique and tried to get Atwood's text through the publisher's screening process before or immediately after the change of regime.

It is widely known that after 1946, the key actors in the nationalization of literature in Hungary were, among others, the publishers (Czigány 1999: 30–44). Although there was no official censorship, translation and editing were done often by silenced writers and self-censorship was expected and present at all levels of publishing (Haraszti 1986, Czigányik 2011: 223–234, Schandl 2011: 263–270). From 1957, the Hungarian Central Publishing Authority, functioning under the Ministry of Culture, coordinated publishing in line with the political will dictated by the institutions of foreign and domestic policy, according to the principle of the 'three Ps'⁴ (Kontler 1999: 445), that is, cultural products were either promoted, or permitted, or prohibited (Czigány 1999, Bart 2002). Some aspects of this mechanism – one 'P' or the other – have been researched by literary historians in publications, pointing out either the ruthlessness of the system (Domokos 1996) or the fact that some "sensitive" books or theatre plays could still become public, although with a delay (Takács 2015: 137). The economic reform introduced in 1968 also impacted the sphere of culture. The reform "communicated with the actors of culture through regulations, prices, deductions, incentives, as well as premium conditions. However, it did not bring about a change in the general principles of cultural policy nor promise or induce the

⁴László Kontler's terms for the 3 T-s policy in Hungarian: *támogatott, tűrt, tiltott*.

reform in this field.” (ibid. 138)⁵ Despite the subsidies given by the state in the early 1970s, publishers sought to produce books that were of interest and financially profitable to compensate for the increasing costs of publishing, while ideological control persisted up to the change of regime. (Czigányik 2011) The introduction of cultural tax, also known as ‘kitsch tax’, was in principle levied on works depicting eroticism and violence, but in practice prevented the publication of popular genres, including science fiction (Sohár 1999). It was far from clear, however, what the system meant by "violence" and "eroticism" and how the inspectors would categorize a work, so practically, it could fall into either the permitted, the prohibited or rarely the promoted categories. Sohár points out that from 1968 on, there was a growing interest in popular genres, including translated pulp fiction, crime stories and science fiction (Sohár 2022). This increasing leniency and “thawing” during the Kádár era can also be seen in the reviewing documents that assessed the marketability as well as the financial success of the books to be translated and were discussed in the publishers’ planning committees (Czigányik 2011: 225).

Reviewing was one of the instruments of control built into the publishing process, that described the books considered for publishing from a professional and an ideological point of view. The publishers asked both in-house and external reviewers with foreign language skills to review world literature. It was an activity that the publisher paid for. The 2-5 page long typed expert opinions had a set form and were often remarkable short essays or literary analyses, although the literary value alone was not a decisive factor in the publisher's decision (Czigányik 2013:17). Based on personal experiences and the reviewing documents of an editorial office, Mátyás Domokos, an editor and in-house reviewer of Szépirodalmi Publishing House between 1953–1991, in his book *Leletmentés* [Rescuing artefacts], describes the principles of extending an artificial, Socialist Realist control over Hungarian literature and the introduction of a literary policy controlled by state bureaucracy. Through the stories of a number of manuscripts, he describes the impossible struggle that the editorial staff had against an "invisible" censorship in order to publish certain pieces of literature, in a way that is true to the original text, not altered, printed in an appropriate edition and number of copies. Quoting writer Lajos Grendel, Domokos explains that the paradox of the reviewers’ work was that "these professionals could at most be right, but had hardly any power or influence; their job was to take a stand, but it was for others to decide whether their stand

⁵ All translations from Hungarian are mine in the paper.

was correct or not (Domokos 1996: 8)." Regarding Pilinszky's volume of poetry, Domokos recalls that

to those who have lived through the mechanisms of the publishing sector at that time, and are still willing to remember it, it does not need to be proven at length, because they know it with a jolt of their nerves, that these positive or negative opinions played no part in shaping the fate [...] of the manuscript. [...] The fate of the manuscript was decided on the Olympus of literary politics, where the *other* copy was weighed on scales that was not set to measure the level of poetic value. (Domokos 1996: 92)

The reviews thus had a double role in the publishing of Hungarian literature. On the one hand, the reviews written by renowned literary scholars and editors were the means of selection required by the state apparatus imposing itself on publishing, on the other hand, in some cases, the reviewers were in direct contact with Hungarian writers, poets, letting them know about their acclaim (Domokos 1996) and trying to smuggle some of the writings through the filter of the system.

In the case of world literature, the reviews followed a fixed form regarding the description of the book, and included the name of the author, the original title of the work, an approximate translation of the title, the length of the book in so called manuscript sheets (1 manuscript sheet=40,000 keystrokes), the name of the publisher, the year of publishing, a brief introduction of the author, a summary of the plot, a clear recommendation for publication or rejection, and the date of reviewing (Géher 1989: 10). The description provided an overview of the writer's biography, situated the work within the author's oeuvre, and was also supposed to point out the broader literary context, that is its international reception, which could pose a challenge in the Kádár era, since literary criticism in foreign languages was not accessible.

István Géher, Hungarian literary translator, literary historian, professor of Eötvös Loránd University, publishes his own reviewing reports in a book in 1989 in which he explains that

the reviewing report is not a scientific publication, nor is it a piece of criticism, or a literary genre. The rights to these reports belong to the publisher. They are confidential, similar to in-house documents, memos, minutes, a work plan, or a travel report. (Géher 1989: 21)

The reviewing documents have been studied by several researchers with scientific purposes from several perspectives (e.g. Bella 2016, Czigányik 2010, 2011, 2013, Gombár 2011, 2013, Hartvig 2013, Schandl 2011).

Next, I will discuss the issues raised in the reviewing documents that considered the publication of Margaret Atwood's prose, short stories, and poetry from the point of view of Translation Studies and will not examine the personal voice or habitus of the reviewers who often express radically different opinions. In the anonymized documents of the era, I aim to trace the mark of Canadian literature, any recurring patterns, and not analyse the way personal opinions were expressed. In the documents, I examine the following aspects from a Translation Studies perspective: possible titles for the books, poetry weighed on scales, the practice of multiple reviewing, social classes in translation, relying on paratexts, the reputation of international success behind the Iron Curtain, and in what way is this literature "Canadian"?

2. The possible Hungarian titles for *Surfacing*

It was in the summer of 1974 that the Hungarian publication of Atwood's *Surfacing* was considered in Európa Publishing House. That year, two reviewers gave their opinions: the first giving a positive, the second a negative review. Seven years later, in 1981, however, a third reviewer recommended the publishing. Apart from that the three reviews, three other reports, one dated 1981 and one in 1982, suggest that Atwood should be introduced in Hungary with *Surfacing*, and a 1981 review on *Life Before Man* also points out that Atwood's earlier works "should be considered" as well. The publisher probably gave in to the repeated "requests" when in 1984 finally published the volume in Hungarian under the title *Fellelegzés* [Relief]. It is worth noting that the title of the published translation does not correspond with the titles suggested by the reviewers: *Felszínre bukkanás* (literal translation: coming to the surface), *Felmerülés* (literal translation: surfacing), or *Felszínre érni* (literal translation: reaching the surface), although these are much closer to the plot of the original novel, and to the recurring Canadian topoi of a search for identity or survival.

3. Poetry weighed on scales

The second volume that was considered by the publisher in 1977 was a collection of poems entitled *You are Happy*. This collection, the ninth among Atwood's volumes of poetry, was published in English in 1974. The invited reviewer describes

Atwood's poetry as "powerful and evocative in every detail." The reviewer refers to the recommendation on the cover of the original, and highlights Atwood's sense for mythology in the events of everyday life, meaning that the "poet constantly gives signs about having a knowledge about how things, phenomena, feelings are connected deep down, at the roots." In the insightful analysis, the reviewer concludes, "I would like to see other works by the poet [...], I recommend the translation of her poems based on this one volume as well." Apart from that, several reviews call attention to Atwood's poetry, for example, one in 1974: "The novel shows that its author is an excellent poet. Her style is concise, her imagery abstract, yet these signs make perfect sense," "Five volumes of poetry have been published so far – she is considered to be one of Canada's greatest poets." In 1980, "she is known as a poet worldwide," or in 1982, „She is widely known in Europe already, but first and foremost for her poetry and not for her novels." Despite the fact that the volume of poetry received a positive review, only one review can be found about *You Are Happy* in Atwood's dossier, and it seems that the publisher's attention turned from Atwood's poetry towards her prose.

4. The practice of multiple reviewing

In the 1980s, when the ideological control was somewhat softer, it was not an uncommon practice among publishers to review books again that had been previously rejected (Czigányik 2011: 225). Multiple reviews have been invited by Európa in case of the novel entitled *The Edible Woman*, which was first reviewed in 1977, in the same year when the collection of poems titled *You Are Happy* was considered. Of the two reviewers of *The Edible Woman*, one urged for the publication of the "excellent novel," a critique of consumer society, the other one, although found the subject matter fascinating, rejects the novel, noting that the characters are "not likable," they are part of a passionless, disinterested, declining society. Four years later, in 1981, the publisher decided for another round of reviewing. Both reviews (1981, 1982) recommend the publishing of the book. The third review points out that it is a "sophisticated work of an early career writer", and the fourth document notes that the book is easy to read and enjoyable." The reviewers add, however, that Atwood should be introduced in Hungary through an earlier piece of writing, with the translation of *Surfacing*.

5. Social classes in translation

It sounds archaic today that the two main characters in *The Edible Woman*, Marian and Duncan, meet in a laundromat. The Hungarian reviewer uses the word “Patyolat,” the name of a state-owned cleaning company that was very popular during Communism.⁶ This “domesticating” translation strategy (Venuti 1995: 1–42) also appears in the way social classes in Canada are described in the reviewing documents. Almost every single reviewer pays attention to describe the social context that Atwood’s characters belong to. The summaries, however, use the terminology to describe Canada in the 1960s in a way that is consistent with the Socialist world view of the 1970s and meaningful to the readers of the reviewing documents. Canada as presented in *Surfacing* is “an urbanized, uniformized, and Americanized world” (1974), where the “Francophone-Anglophone conflict appears” but it is not emphasized. The four reviewers of *The Edible Woman* make reference to the USA in one way or the other. The first (1977) points out that the novel “(this early piece of writing already) is a bit anti-American caricature of consumer society.” The main character is a “young intellectual woman” (1977, second review), the story takes place in the “world of the young intellectuals: the characters in the story have completed their university studies” (1981, third review), “young Canadian-American intellectuals [...] attracted to the order of social norms (1982, fourth review), in other words, “young American intellectuals who belong to the lower-middle class” (1982).

Bodily Harm, also reviewed in 1982, takes place mostly outside of Canada. Two negative and one positive reviews were submitted regarding this novel. The first opinion describes the novel as “remarkable, [...] interesting, well written”, but does not recommend it for translation, as Joan Didion’s *A Book of Common Prayer* (Hungarian title: *Imádságoskönyv*, 1981), which tells a similar story, was published around that time. The second reviewer feels disappointed and expects that the book will attract only “a small number” of readers, concluding that “[t]his book is not ready for publication, at least for the time being.” The third review, unlike the previous two, is a five-page document that praises the writer for her brilliance, and gives a detailed description about the plot: “it shows a well-known version of a Latin American scenario: a corrupt dictatorship that pretends to be a democracy, the votes are bought, with a strong but threatened opposition, active, sect-like

⁶ The prices were cheap and fixed, the customer paid only half of the actual costs. When more and more households had washing machines, the company lost some of its prestige.

guerrilla groups.” The reviewer is quite blunt when remarking that the protagonist accidentally becomes “a witness of political conspiracies,” after “an isolated and hasty uprising attempt fails, and in the hysteria of a bloody retaliation, the police arrests Rennie as well.” The description of the social unrest is thus not ‘domesticated’ according to the expectations of the editors of the publishing house. At the same time, the reviewer probably did not work very often as a reviewer for Európa Publisher, because he or she does not follow the strict form of the review and at the end of the document, a clear statement is missing whether to publish the book or not. The publisher decided not to publish *Bodily Harm* in Hungarian.

In 1984 and 1986, two collections of short stories were reviewed in Európa: *Bluebeard’s Egg* and *Dancing Girls and Other Stories*. Three, out of the four reviewers, did not recommend the translation of the whole volume, rather, they suggested a selection. Apart from the excellent portrayal of characters, the reviewers considered the characters and their life situations too commonplace. “Her heroes are everyday women – an elderly farm woman and a simple housewife, young girl and a freelance journalist, a lonely old woman and a woman giving birth – with everyday fates.” (1986). The Hungarian word used for an elderly woman living on an isolated farm (*tanyasi asszony*), however, evokes the atmosphere of the Hungarian Great Plains. The reviewer does not use a ‘foreignizing’ translation strategy (Venuti 1995: 1–42) here, which would make it clear that the story is set in Canada.

Of the two reviews of *The Handmaid’s Tale* in 1987, only one recommended a translation. The first reviewer describes the social order of Gilead in short sentences. “The president of the United States was shot, the members of the Congress were disarmed, the military declared a state of emergency. People became disoriented, hid in their homes and watched TV. The Constitution was ‘temporarily’ suspended. There was no resistance, since no one knew where to look for the enemy. Censorship. Newspapers were banned. The female shop assistants were replaced by men.” At the end of the reviewing document, the author notes regarding the “inconsolable hopelessness” of the novel: “Only the lives cannot be replaced any more. /How many times has this been the case in our own history?!” This overt personal reflection does not appear in any of the twenty-two examined reports before 1987. In the plot description, the reviewer refers to the taboo topics to be avoided, and notes that the relationship between Offred and the Commander are “pronouncedly free of any eroticism”, thus it meets the aesthetic requirements of Socialist literature. The reviewer emphasizes that the lack of humour in the novel is resolved only in the last chapter, which does not lack humour and irony. And since

before the political change the genre of science fiction fell into the permitted and mostly in the not promoted category (Sohár 1999, 2022), the reviewer adds: “An excellent writer, a fairly well written sci-fi /without sci/?” The second reviewer is also outspoken but does not recommend the novel for publication. The reviewer rejects the possibility of “a revolution that creates a totalitarian dictatorship” along gender lines and considers the novel to be a copy of George Orwell’s prose that carries a “real trouvaille” (1988). The name of the writer is an important reference here, as none of Orwell’s books were published in Hungarian translation until 1989 (Czigányik 2011: 226).

After the political change, in November 1990, *Cat’s Eye* was reviewed by the publisher, which had been recently published in English in Canada in 1988. The impact of the political change can be noticed in the way the plot is summarized. The first reviewer considers the novel to be “a deservedly successful novel, worth publishing in Hungarian translation” in which a 1956 Hungarian refugee also appears⁷, although only briefly, a teacher of Elaine, the protagonist. The second reviewer does not go into detail about the multi-layered nature of Canadian society, but mentions: “Elaine is on time travel between the present time and the time of her childhood and youth, that is the 1940s and 50s’ Canada.” A clear change can be noticed in the plot descriptions of the reviewing documents: while the reviews written in the 1970s, try to give a precise description of the characters’ place in society, in the second half of the 1980s, personal reflections, moreover, in the 1990s, overt political references can be found in the plot descriptions of the novels.

6. Relying on paratexts

Placing the author and the work in the context of national and world literature was an important part of the reviewing documents. However, since the reviewers had no access to literary criticism from the West, they often relied on the paratexts that were surrounding the texts (Genette 1997: 23–32), such as the blurb on the cover, or the foreword. The primary role of these accompanying texts was to help the readers orient themselves on the Canadian and the English-American book market. We find seven references to the blurbs of the original volumes, in 1974, for example: “The blurb describes her as the greatest Canadian poet of our time. In Hungary, as far as I know, she is unknown,” or in 1982, “In this case, we can take the words of the blurb literally: ‘few authors have such talent to read the soul

⁷ The 1956 revolution was a taboo topic during Communism as the uprising went against the ruling regime.

of the characters as Margaret Atwood.” There are two direct references to the blurbs of the English language original: for example in 1977, “*The Edible Woman* was the first novel of the Canadian writer, which the publisher reprinted four years later (in 1973) with a foreword that would fall in the category of a thorough critical essay.” One of the reviewing documents also makes reference to the foreword of Ferenc Takács which was published along the Hungarian translation of *Survival* in 1984. The reviewing documents are paratexts themselves, more precisely – to use Genette’s term – epitexts, texts that are texts accompanying the literary piece, so in a way they are subordinate to the text, yet, since they recommend the text, they have a certain “power,” and as we have seen it, they draw on paratexts produced earlier in the source culture (Tymoczko & Gentzler 2002: xviii, d’Hulst, O’Sullivan & Schreiber 2016: 135–156).

7. The reputation of international success behind the Iron Curtain

Several documents draw attention to the popularity of the author, regardless of whether Atwood’s particular work was recommended or not by the reviewers for Hungarian publication. There are seven references to Atwood’s popularity in Canada and eight mentions her international success. The first reviewing document in 1974 highlights, for example, that a year after the book was published in Canada, a “paperback” edition also came out in the UK. According to a review dated in 1981, “Margaret Atwood, poet and novelist, is a recognized and greatly appreciated figure of contemporary Canadian literature even outside of Canada.” In 1982, another review says: “She earned herself an international reputation as a poet, while also publishing successful novels.” From the 1980s, the reviews refer to a general recognition, as well as the value markers of the English and American book market. In 1982, although the reviewer considers it a bit far stretched, highlights the international prominence of *Surfacing*: “the *New York Times Book Review* called the novel ‘one of the most important novels of the 20th century’”. One of the two documents dated 1987 references the handbook of “*Contemporary Authors*,” the other one refers to the English-language radio program on books by the BBC World Service. It is worth noting, however, that two reviews dated after 1989 emphasize the value markers of the international book market. The reviewer of *Cat’s Eye* mentions that “[t]he *Handmaid’s Tale* was an international bestseller, but the *Times Literary Supplement* and the *New York Times Book Review* agree that it is surpassed by [...] *Cat’s Eye*” (1990). The second opinion, submitted in the same year, highlights that the *Cat’s Eye* has

“made it to the *New York Times* bestseller list” and points out that “its publication provides a “glimmer” of hope for intellectual as well as financial success even at the current state of the Hungarian book market /winter of 1990./” Therefore, it can be seen, that in Atwood’s reviewing documents during the years leading up to the political change and immediately afterwards, there are an increasing number of references made to the profitability of publishing. References to the value markers having international prestige signal not only the end to a restricted inflow of world literature but also a broadening of references used by Hungarian critics. In the 1970s, in Atwood’s reviewing documents, international success was thus partly attributed to the presence of paperback, popular, low-priced editions, while from the 1980s on, success was measured rather by the book’s presence in prestigious forums (e.g. BBC, *New York Times*) and on bestseller lists which reflect sales figures.

8. In what way is this literature “Canadian”?

Canadian literature can be considered peripheral from the point of view of the international book market, also less well-known compared to other literatures written in English or French. It is perhaps not surprising that this was no different before the political change. It is worth noting, however, that in the examined reviewing documents, the personal interest of the reviewers is directed not only towards Atwood but also to Canadian literature in general. In the opinions on Atwood’s literary work, we find strong images, associations of Canada, for example “raw, stark naturalism in the depiction of details can be noticed in the work of other Canadian writers as well; this shifts sometimes to the almost mythical, pagan worship of the Canadian, wild, natural environment.” (1974). In the literary works, the “Canadian wilderness” (1981) is contrasted with urban life. This dichotomy is also pointed out by another reviewer: “in modern Canadian literature, the themes of the city and countryside, urban environment and natural landscape bring forth rather interesting literary developments in their anachronistic rawness, at least for us.” (1981). The reviewer of *Bluebeard’s Egg* in 1984 mentions the influence of Canada on the literary work as the most important factor. “Themes in Atwood’s works have always been determined by her life experiences of being Canadian, a woman, and her relationship with nature.” These three themes appear in Atwood’s oeuvre. One of the reviewers of *Bodily Harm* reflect on the reception of Canadian literature in 1982:

Just because Margaret Atwood is the most prominent author of Canada, I have to admit that until I started to read her book, I did not expect much, which is

due to my /superficial/ knowledge of Canadian literature that it often deals with things that are provincial and not-so-important. And by the time ... I reached the end of the book, it became clear to me that what I have read is a first-class book by a very contemporary writer who is extremely good, mature, clever and lovable, not only by »Canadian« but also by world literature standards.

This opinion is strengthened by an opinion dated 1986 about *Dancing Girls*, whose reviewer does not recommend the whole book for publishing, and notes that the reason for selection is that “very little of Canadian literature reaches our country” (without date). This observation still holds up till today, although thanks to Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro, Canadian literature is becoming more widely known these days.

As a summary, we can say that before the change of the regime, the editors of Európa Publishing House kept an eye on Atwood. It is worth noting that according to the translation database of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies,⁸ in the former Socialist block, the Hungarian translation of *Surfacing* was the second book by Atwood in 1984 that was published in the region. It was preceded only by *Lady Oracle* published in 1982 in Bulgarian. The bibliographic data, however, show that even after the political change, it was relatively difficult to introduce Atwood to the Hungarian literary field, while in the surrounding countries, her novels were available well before 2017. Three of the reviewed Atwood-books have been published until 2020 *Surfacing* that was translated fourteen years after its first Canadian publication, *The Handmaid's Tale* twenty-one years later than its English language publication was translated into Hungarian by Enikő Mohácsi in 2006, initially with Lazi Publisher in the city of Szeged. By that time, the book was recommended to the publisher no longer by a reviewing document, but through Katalin Kürtösi, professor at the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Szeged.⁹ However, the journey of the book was rather difficult. Although it was published in 2006, it did not find a receptive readership. An edited translation of the novel was re-published by Jelenkor Publishing House in 2017 and since that time, thanks to the HBO-GO series adaptation that came out under the same title in 2017, the book has been reprinted eleven times.¹⁰ The most reviewed book was *The Edible Woman*

⁸ The translation bibliography of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies: <http://www.cccanstud.cz/index.php/en/other-activities/projects> [Accessed 8 September 2020]

⁹ Interview with István Lázár, the director of Lazi Publishing, January 2019, Budapest.

¹⁰ Kovács, Fruzsina. Symbolic capital in the Hungarian translation of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, Translation in and for Society: Conference presentation at the 1st International e-Conference on Translation, 26 September 2018, KU Leuven, University of Córdoba.

before the change of regime, which was translated by Ágnes Csonka in 2020 for the Atwood-series of Jelenkor, forty-four years after the original Canadian release.

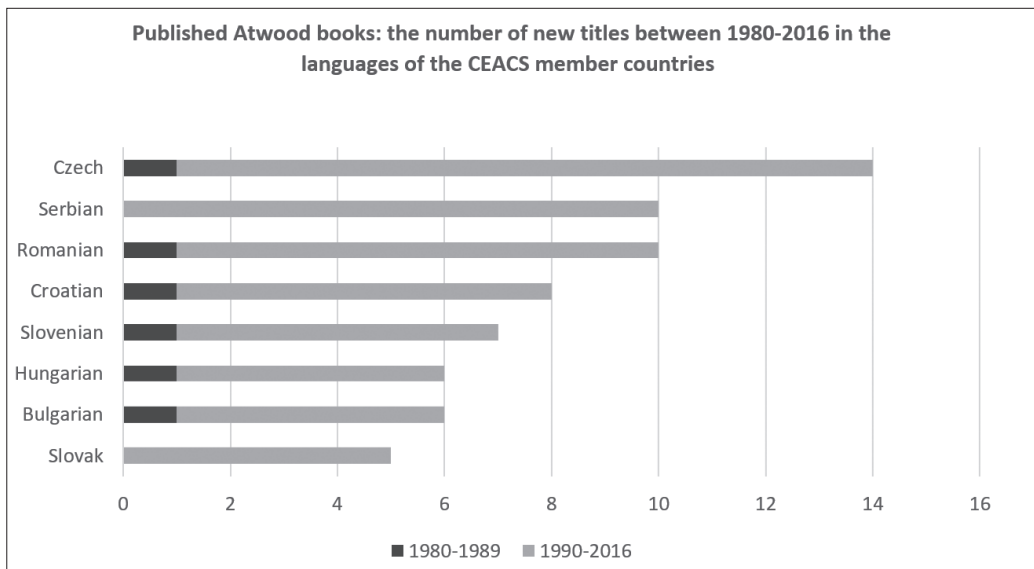
Today, the tools for selecting books for translation have changed. Due to the accelerated publishing practices, it is now rare that publishers would ask external readers for reviews. Bestseller lists available on the internet, the prestige of international literary prizes, pitches of literary agencies and the network of personal contacts serve as a filter to select books that are economically safe to publish.

Table 1. The recommendations of the reviewing documents on Margaret Atwood's literary work

Date of the review	Address (date of publishing in source language)	Recommendation Publishing is	Possible title	Notes
1974	Surfacing (1972)	recommended	Felszínre bukkanás	
1974	Surfacing (1972)	not recommended	Felmerülés	
1981	Surfacing (1972)	recommended	Felszínre érni	
1977	You Are Happy (1974)	recommended	Boldog vagy	
1977	The Edible Woman (1969)	recommended	Az ehető nő	
1977	The Edible Woman (1969)	not recommended	Az ehető asszony	
1981	The Edible Woman (1969)	recommended	Az ehető asszony	First recommends publishing <i>Surfacing</i> .
1982	The Edible Woman (1969)	recommended	Az enivaló nő	Calls attention to the popular book of <i>Surfacing</i> .
1980	Life Before Man (1979)	not recommended	Élet az ember előtti időkben	
1981	Life Before Man (1979)	recommended	Élet az ember előtt	It would be worth introducing Atwood through her earlier novels.
1982	Life Before Man (1979)	recommended	Élet az ember előtt	
1982	Bodily Harm (1981)	not recommended	Testi sérülés	

1982	Bodily Harm (1981)	not recommended	Testi hiba	Recommends the publication of her poetry.
1982	Bodily Harm (1981)	recommended	-	
1984	Bluebeard's Egg (1983)	not recommended	Próbatétel	Recommends a selection of short stories.
1984	Bluebeard's Egg (1983)	recommended	Kékszakáll tojása	
-	Dancing Girls (1977)	not recommended	Táncosnők	Recommends a selection.
1986	Dancing Girls (1977)	not recommended	Táncosnők és Más Történetek	Recommends a selection.
1987	The Handmaid's Tale (1985)	recommended	A szolgáló meséje	
1988	The Handmaid's Tale (1985)	not recommended	A szolgáló meséje	
1990	Cat's Eye (1988)	recommended	-	
1990	Cat's Eye (1988)	recommended	Macskaszem	

Figure 1. Source: CEACS translation database 2016.



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