

László Székely, the 18th-century Hungarian translator of *De remediis utriusque fortunae*

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ABSTRACT

An interesting chapter in the European reception of *De remediis utriusque fortunae* concerns the history of its publication and translation in 18th-century Hungary. In this study, I will first briefly introduce who published Petrarch's handbook in excerpted and complete Latin form, and for what purpose. Against this background, the greatest Hungarian achievement of the era emerges: the only complete Hungarian translation of *De remediis* to this day. I present in detail the life and other translations and writings of the translator, László Székely. I also present the source of the Latin text used by Székely, the stylistic and rhetorical characteristics of the Hungarian text, and the translator's individual solutions, misunderstandings, and errors.

KEYWORDS

Neo-Latin literature, Francesco Petrarca, *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, 18th-century Hungarian literature, László Székely

TRANSLATIONS OF *DE REMEDIIS* IN EUROPE IN THE 14TH–19TH CENTURIES

Petrarch's reception in the 14th–15th centuries was characterized by the rapid spread of his Latin works, which originated in Italy and had a very wide reach, in contrast to the widespread

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knowledge and influence of texts written in the vernacular in the Italian-speaking world, but their almost complete disregard outside the country's borders. The large number of surviving manuscripts also makes it clear that, among his Latin works, *De remediis utriusque fortunae* was the one that from the very beginning attracted the most copyists and readers of Italian and other nationalities.¹ The original, complete Latin text of the work was published twenty-eight times between 1468 and 1758.² Readers very early on expressed a desire for the text to be made available in the "vernacular".³

The most important data on the printed translations (with the exception of those in Hungary) are summarized in the table below (the first column shows the Fiske list numbering⁴):

	Language	Translator's name	First edition	Published part of the text	Later editions
65. 68. 78.	német	Niclas von Wyle	1478?	Two dialogues (II, 18, 25)	1510 Strasbourg 1536 Augsburg 1861 Stuttgart
49.	Czech	Rehoř Hruby (Gregorius Gelenius)	1501 Prague (?)		–
88–93.	Spanish	Francisco de Madrid	1510 Valladolid	Complete	5 további kiadás 1534-ig
66.	German	Adam Wernher (?)	1516 Oppenheim	Four dialogues (II, 3, 55, 68, 69)	–
54. 55.	French	Jean Daudin	1523 Paris	Complete	1534. Paris
67. 68.	German	P. Stahel, G. Spalatin	1532 Augsburg	Complete	1536. Augsburg
69–77.	German	Stephan Vigilius	1539 Augsburg	Complete	8 more editions in Frankfurt before 1637

(continued)

¹Nicholas Mann compiled a list of *De remediis* codices that are still extant today or known from authentic descriptions. See Mann (1971). (I refer to it below as the *Checklist*, giving the serial number of each codex listed in it).

²Cf. Fiske (1888), 7; Mann (1971), 60.

³This was the second time that a work by Petrarch had been translated into Italian: the translation of *De viris illustribus* was done by Petrarch's good friend from Venice, Donato Albanzani. Petrarch dedicated *De ignorantia* to him, and Donato was the godfather of his grandson, Francesco. Wilkins (1990), 234.

⁴Willard Fiske reported on ninety-four editions of *De remediis*, some of which he studied himself, while others he included in his list based on library catalogues, together with their descriptions. Only a few of the data in the list need to be corrected, and it can be expanded with a few more insignificant volumes. Mann lists these editions based on his own collection, noting that there are certainly more, and updates some of Fiske's data. Fiske (1888); Mann (1971).

Continued

	Language	Translator's name	First edition	Published part of the text	Later editions
81–84.	Italian	Remigio Fiorentino	1549 Venice	Complete	3 more editions before 1607
51.	English	Thomas Twyne	1579 London	Complete	–
50.	Dutch	?	1606 Amsterdam	Complete	–
94.	Swedish	Arid Olafsson	1641?	Pinitianus-verses	–
56. 57. 58. 59. 60.	French	François Grenailles	1650 Paris	Complete	1661. Brussels 1662. Paris 1673. Paris 1673. Lyon
61.	French	Philippe Dumas	1763 Paris	Two dialogues (I, 80, 81)	–
85.	Italian	Giovanni da Saminiato	1867 Bologna	Abbreviated version	–
86.	Italian	G. da Saminiato	1867 Bologna	Complete	–
87.	Italian	G. da Saminiato	1876 Imola	Six dialogues	–
62. 63.	French	Victor Develay	1883 Paris (2 editions)	I, 43. I, 69.	–

According to this, eleven different complete translations of *De remediis* were published during the examined period, some of which appeared in multiple editions.⁵ The first Italian translation of the work was completed by a Camaldolese monk, Giovanni da Saminiato, in 1426–1427. The Italian version is more of an adaptation than a translation, and also serves as a commentary: in many places, the translator has expanded Petrarch’s concise wording, making it more understandable with explanatory half-sentences; in other cases, he has interpreted metaphorical expressions and rendered them with similes; he has replaced zeugmas with repetitive word structures. He has expanded on historical, literary, and parallel textual references, providing the names of real people or mythological and biblical characters, as well as brief descriptions necessary for understanding the events and stories mentioned.⁶ The Italian text was distributed not only in its entirety, but also in excerpts. The history of Petrarch’s

⁵With the exception of the Dutch translation, several copies of all the publications have survived. Cf. Fiske (1888), 25. On the Dutch publication, see Ypes (1934), 71.

⁶Bessi (1996), 633–638.

encyclopaedia on moral philosophy becoming part of French tradition, as we know it, begins, unusually, with the French translation of the text. The translator, Jean Daudin, was a canon at Sainte-Chapelle, and he completed the work in 1378, only twelve years after the completion of *De remediis* and four years after the author's death, at the request of King Charles V.⁷ In his preface to the French version, he recommended the work to Charles V as a kind of mirror for kings, which could help the reader overcome harmful passions that disturb the soul and achieve spiritual peace, a fundamental royal virtue.⁸ Daudin's translation also reached English readers,⁹ and in the first quarter of the 15th century, an English translation of the first ten dialogues of Book II was completed.¹⁰

Complete or partial translations of the work testify to the renewed interest of readers who did not know Latin over a period of four centuries. The two main centres for the dissemination of *De remediis* in manuscript and printed form were southern Germany and Switzerland, as well as Paris. We can also conclude that Petrarch's work was continuously present on the European book market until the second half of the 17th century, with the number of copies adjusted to the demands of the reading public at the time. These volumes, mainly those in Latin, also found Hungarian readers, and the latest chapter in the cult of *De remediis* can be described as the history of publications that appeared in Hungary during the 18th century.

HUNGARIAN READERS, PUBLISHERS, AND TRANSLATORS OF *DE REMEDIIS* IN THE 15TH–18TH CENTURIES

Hungarian writers and poets were familiar with Petrarch's Latin and Italian works from the early 1500s: they read, quoted and translated his sonnets and the *Triumphs* (for example, István Brodaries, Bálint Balassi and Miklós Zrínyi). A Hungarian translation was made of Boccaccio's short story about Griselda, published by Petrarch in Latin (Pál Istvánfi's epic poem);¹¹ furthermore, his verse letters, as well as the *Sine nomine* collection of letters, the *Secretum* and the *De vita solitaria*, certainly found their way to Hungary.¹² János Rimay also read Petrarch, whom he mentions in the same breath as the ancient Stoic philosophers.¹³ It is quite possible that Rimay, who "conversed" with Petrarch, was referring to the dialogical structure of *De remediis*, as there is evidence that the work was known in Hungary and that Petrarch's ideas were sometimes borrowed from it. One significant reference can be found in a sermon by Péter Pázmány, who, in

⁷In certain manuscript catalogues, the translation is mistakenly attributed to Nicole Oresme, who is known for other translations made at the same time. We also know of another translation by Daudin, Vincent de Beauvais's *De eruditione perorum nobilium*. – See Mann (1970), 8–10; Trapp (2000), 232–233; also Christophe Carraud's introduction to the French edition, Pétrarque (2002), vol. II, 43–45.

⁸See Mann (1970), 15–16. Carraud publishes Daudin's preface in its entirety, see Pétrarque (2002), vol. II, Annexe I, 87–90.

⁹Trapp (2000), 237.

¹⁰Mann (1975), 287–288.

¹¹Máté (2021), 42–63.

¹²Cf. Szörényi (2010), 54–58, 60–62.

¹³"I dedicate my life to the practice of philosophy, not to chatter about it, and I converse more with Seneca, Petrarch, Cicero, and Epictetus than with other people." Quoted in Bitskey (1996), 94.

his speech entitled *How to raise a Christian girl*, quoted from Dialogue I. 24 when discussing the harmful nature of dancing.¹⁴ Another 17th-century author, István Csulyak of Miskolc, lists *De remediis* alongside *Secretum* and *De vita solitaria* in his book catalogue, and we know from his autobiography that as remedy for the pain of having lost his loved ones he turned to the works of Seneca, Plutarch, and Petrarch.¹⁵ A further reference can be found in Márton Szilágyi Tönkö's *Biga pastoralis, seu ars orandi et concionandi*, a preaching manual published in Debrecen in 1684, which quotes a sentence from the Preface to Book I.¹⁶

De remediis was not published in Hungary until the 18th century, but then, as a result of the effective work of the Jesuit teachers in Nagyszombat, Hungarian book printing quickly caught up with other European countries: between 1706 and 1758, the excerpt, translation, and complete Latin text of *De remediis* were published in a total of eight editions. The table below summarizes the main data of the 18th-century editions, adding the somewhat later Debrecen edition (the first column contains the numbers from the Fiske catalogue, and the last column contains the name of the editor or translator):¹⁷

45.	1706 Nagyszombat (Tnava)	<i>Harmonia philosophica sive Ars recte philosophandi</i>	György Rajcsányi
46.	1707 Nagyszombat (Tnava)	<i>Ars recte philosophandi</i>	György Rajcsányi
47.	1718 Nagyszombat (Tnava)	<i>Conclusiones scientiae practicae</i>	György Rajcsányi
79.	1720 Kassa (Košice)	<i>A jó és gonosz szerencsének</i>	Pál László
	1730 Kassa (Košice)	<i>Principia verae ac genuinae philosophiae</i>	Gábor Graff
27.	1756 Buda	<i>De remediis utriusque fortunae</i>	?
28.	1758 Eger	<i>De remediis utriusque fortunae</i>	?
80.	1813 Debrecen	<i>Az igaz és valóságos bölcselkedésnek...</i>	Unknown Hungarian nobleman

¹⁴Szörényi (2010), 59. Szörényi also notes that Petrarch was often quoted by Reformed theologians because of his anti-papal writings; Pázmány argues in his Response that Petrarch was a true Catholic despite his critical remarks about the popes.

¹⁵Szörényi (2010), 59–60.

¹⁶“[...] ut Franciscus Petrarcha, in libello suo elegantissimo: De ignorantia sui et aliorum loquitur, non fallacibus alis attollitur et steriliūm disputationum ventosa iactantia per inane circumvolvitur; sed quae certis et modestis gradibus compendio ad rerum ac Dei notitiam perducit.” Szilágyi Tönkö mistakenly cited *De ignorantia* as the source of the reference and changed the end of the sentence. *Biga pastoralis*, 107, quoted by Szörényi (2010), 63–64.

¹⁷For their full titles and bibliographic descriptions, see Turóczi-Trostler (1937); Máté (2008).

In his study discussing the survival of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy in Europe and the reception of Stoicism and Seneca, József Turóczi-Trostler presents in detail the intellectual currents and literary output of what he calls the “Hungarian Stoic late summer” period.¹⁸ The authors, theologians, and teachers involved “almost without exception come from a Catholic background and are almost without exception members of the Jesuit order,” with their centre in Nagyszombat. “György Rajcsányi (1669–1734) penetrated most deeply into the spirit of the Roman Stoa, [...] the two ultimate points of his orientation being Christ and Seneca, the *unio mystica* and the *tranquillitas animae*; the same path leads to both: renunciation, a disciplined, pious life in accordance with God’s will.”¹⁹ Rajcsányi published the *Tabula Cebetis* and Epictetus’ *Enchiridion*; as well as his own theological treatise entitled *Laurus Tuta* (1707) on the basic tenets of the Christian faith. His younger brother, János Rajcsányi, worked in a similar field, “explaining church doctrine and criticizing Protestant denominations in his works on the Catholic faith, written in Hungarian and Latin.” One of these, the *Itinerarium Athei, ad veritatis viam deducti* (1704), is similar in nature to *De remediis*, a compilation of several fundamental works on philosophy and religion. Petrarch’s encyclopaedic work is closest in spirit to the ancient philosophers and Church Fathers favoured by the Rajcsányi brothers, so it is not surprising that György considered this work suitable for publication, probably also because he believed that its dialogical form made it well suited for use in school education.²⁰ The first selection, published in 1706 (which was dedicated to their classmate László Amadé, who was graduating that year, and his class²¹), contained a total of forty-nine dialogues from Petrarch’s writings (19 from the first book and 30 from the second), but not in their original form: the publisher simplified many passages, merged two or three dialogues into one, and provided the sources of unmarked quotations (Johannes Pinitianus’s two-line poems can be read at the beginning of the chapters).²² The following year, a new selection was published, which was much more extensive: 28 chapters were taken from the first book of *De remediis* and 58 from the second. István Hunyadi, who dedicated the volume to Bishop László Pibér of Almi, emphasized that not only students of lyceums and academies, but also members of the nobility could benefit from reading it, not so much to broaden their education, but rather for spiritual edification. This second selection was republished in 1718 with a different title and dedication (by Antal Farkas, addressed to Ádám Malik, parish priest of Nagytapolca) but with unchanged content. Each of the three editions is a *liber promotionis*, and it is important to note that “Rajcsányi’s choice of topics related to the fundamental questions of human life, the transformation of the dialogues, and the easy-to-remember, instructive distichs all serve didactic purposes, so we can rightly

¹⁸Turóczi-Trostler (1937), 44–72.

¹⁹Turóczi-Trostler (1937), 45–46.

²⁰Csilla Bíró points out that one of the central ideas of Ignatius of Loyola’s *Exercitia Spiritualis*, the theory of indifference, is similar to the message of *Remediis*. See Bíró (2005), 496.

²¹See Máté (2007), 15.

²²The two-line poems of Johannes Pinitianus (1478–1542), a humanist teacher and poet from Augsburg, related to the themes of the dialogues, first appeared in the 1539 Augsburg edition of *Remediis*. For details on *Harmonia philosophica*, see Bíró (2005), 492; cf. Máté (2008), 60. – Gábor Graff republished the material from *Harmonia philosophica* in 1730 with a different dedication. Fiske was unaware of this edition.

assume that Petrarch's *De remediis*, even if altered, was present in the everyday life of schools in Nagyszombat and Kassa."²³ Bíró also notes that we do not yet know whether Petrarch's dialogues were "only intended as models for declamations to be read aloud, or whether they were also used for performance" during the public debates of the students of Nagyszombat. The answer to this question may be found in the school's yearbooks (*historia domus*).²⁴

A few years later, the complete Latin text of *De remediis* was published, first in Buda in 1756 and two years later in Eger, in an unchanged reprint.²⁵ The Buda edition was published on the occasion of Dr Teofil Koroda's graduation, at the expense of Count József Batthyány, by the Landerer printing house. We know that Batthyány studied at the University of Nagyszombat, so he may have become acquainted with Petrarch's work at a young age (either through Rajcsányi's selections or through a complete foreign edition), so it is no wonder that later, as a high-ranking church leader and one of the most generous patrons of his time, he contributed to the book's publication in Hungary.²⁶ The 1758 edition was also a *liber promotionis*, published on the occasion of János Trásy's doctoral inauguration with the financial support of Count János Forgách.²⁷

Two different Hungarian translations of Rajcsányi's 1706 edition were produced: one by Pál László in 1720 in Kassa, and one by an unknown Hungarian nobleman in 1813 in Debrecen. Pál László, canon of Várad (died 1729), dedicated the volume to Count Mihály Mikes of Zabola. In his work, he supplemented the distichs and dialogues taken and translated from Rajcsányi with reflections in which he briefly summarizes and elaborates on Petrarch's thoughts.²⁸ The unknown author of the 1813 Debrecen edition was probably unaware of László's translation and worked completely independently of it.²⁹

Based on an overview of the history of the reception of *De remediis* in Hungary in the 16th–18th centuries, we can conclude that readers – as in other European countries – were not primarily interested in the abundance of ancient and Christian examples provided by Petrarch, or in humanist and European cultural knowledge, but rather picked up the book to promote their spiritual development. Petrarch became their helper and conversation partner in processing and experiencing the events of their inner, spiritual lives, serving as their "psychologist" with ready answers and cheerfulness for any situation in life – just as Seneca, who was also widely read and translated, did. The Italian author's "dialogues entered Hungarian intellectual life together with the Platonic and Stoic waves," writes Turóczi-Trostler, "after they had spread throughout Europe." They became a fundamental element of our country's intellectual life and theological-philosophical orientation, at least as far as the 18th century is concerned. According to Turóczi-Trostler, "the needs and paths of spiritual life are far too uncontrollable and mysterious for us to be able to illuminate them with superficial cultural-sociological explanations. It seems that an irresistible desire for peace and a mood of resignation have taken hold of the representatives of the Hungarian intellectual-humanist class."³⁰ *De remediis* does

²³Bíró (2005), 495.

²⁴Bíró (2005), 496.

²⁵Cf. Turóczi-Trostler (1937), 65; Máté (2008), 65–66.

²⁶See Lengyel (2006), 170.

²⁷Lengyel (2006), 171.

²⁸[Petrarca] (1720).

²⁹[Petrarca] (1813).

³⁰Turóczi-Trostler (1937), 44.

not discuss philosophy on a theoretical level, but is a practical, “self-help” handbook. Its themes, form, and message make Petrarch’s work similar to psychology textbooks, in which the author provides well-organized, practical advice for a variety of life situations, allowing readers to easily look up and learn what to do when faced with great sorrow or joy. An important milestone in the reception of the work in Hungary was the first and, to date, only complete Hungarian translation, which was prepared in the mid-18th century by a man who had experienced many vicissitudes.

THE TURBULENT LIFE OF LÁSZLÓ SZÉKELY AND HIS TRANSLATIONS

Count László Székely was only 13 years old when he lost his mother, Countess Kata Rhédei, in 1729, and only a year older when his father, Count Ádám Székely, also died.³¹ Székely then chose their relative, Dániel Jósika, a former military officer, as guardian for himself and his younger brother, Ádám. Jósika treated the boys with tyrannical severity and provided them with very little in the way of material support. The brothers suffered from a lack of food and clothing during their schooling in Nagyenyed, and when László wanted to go to a foreign university after finishing his studies, his guardian refused to provide him with the necessary financial support. The young count gained legal experience at the chancellery, but he abandoned his legal career and, after removing himself and his brother from guardianship, began to manage his own estate at his manor house in Alamor. László Székely married for the first time in 1742: he married Countess Kata Bánffy, but their happiness was short-lived, as they first lost their little daughter and then, in 1745, his wife also died. Between December 1743 and March 1744, he travelled to Vienna with his first wife, which was a notable event in Székely’s otherwise secluded life; the imperial capital was the furthest city he had ever visited. In 1749, László Székely remarried, taking Countess Zsuzsanna Thoroczkay as his wife. Although their marriage lasted twenty-three years, malicious rumours about his wife and the death of their two children cast a shadow over their happiness. Székely’s relationship with his only close relative, his younger brother Ádám, was not free of difficulties either. László Székely was awarded the title of chamberlain in 1764 and was also a candidate for the position of chief magistrate of Alsó-Fejér County in 1772, but he died on his estate in Alamor on February 7 of that year.

According to his autobiography, it was the tragic events of his family life in the second half of the 1740s that led Székely to become a regular reader and collector of books, and it was after this that his work as a literary translator blossomed. Székely was not merely an amateur writer, but also a memoirist through his own independent work, his autobiography, and the creator of very extensive, albeit scattered, manuscripts of poetry and prose. His literary style and achievements are comparable to those of the most outstanding Transylvanian authors of his time, such as Kelemen Mikes or József Hermányi Dienes, even if – as we can anticipate based on his writing more well known – he lags behind them in terms of linguistic and writing skills and talent.

Shortly after Székely’s death, in accordance with his last will and testament, his library was transferred to the Reformed College in Székelyudvarhely; today, the volumes are part of the collection of the Haáz Rezső Museum Scientific Library. His own manuscripts met a different fate: one or more of them are kept in several libraries and archives each in Transylvania and Hungary while only two such volumes ended up in Székelyudvarhely, and even those were not part of the library’s

³¹For a more detailed biography see [Fehér \(2019\)](#).

collection, but were donated by Dr. János Sebesi in 1919. One of the volumes is a translation of Petrarch's *De remediis* (*A jó szerencsének és szerencsétlenségnek orvosságairól*); the other is a translation of Kurtze Fragen aus der politischen Historie (1697) by German scholar and geographer Johann Hübner (1668–1731) (*Hübner Jánosnak [...] rövid kérdései a külső, politikai históriákból*, 1761).³² Another translation attributed to Székely, also mentioned by Jakó, is *A csehországi ecclesiának üldöztetésének [...] históriája* (*The History of the Persecution of the Church in Bohemia*, 1747–1751), which is currently not in the Székelyudvarhely collection, and it is unclear how Jakó came into possession of it. The manuscript of another of Székely's more extensive translations can be found in the special collection of the Cluj branch of the Romanian Academy.³³ Its title is *Végső vagy utolsó trombitaszó* (*The Last Trumpet*), and its source is the first edition of Richard Brathwait's *Novissima tuba* (1632), a religious poem in Latin. The structure of the 1753 translation follows that of the original: title page, conversations, closing quotations. The original volume's introductory text is replaced by the translator's preface. The source references (authors' names) appearing in the margins of the London edition appear in the Hungarian translation in smaller numbers, inserted into the text.³⁴ Between 1765 and 1769, Székely also prepared Hungarian versions of a short novel and a letter by Frederick II.³⁵ He selected the texts from the second volume of a German edition of the Prussian king's collected works.³⁶ His own copy is now in the collection of the Haáz Rezső Museum Scientific Library and contains numerous markings and underlinings.³⁷ The title of one of the translations is 1–2 letters to Voltaire, i.e. the Hungarian versions of two letters written by King Frederick II of Prussia to Voltaire, one of which has been published in a modern edition.³⁸ In his letter dated August 8, 1736, the young Frederick praises the French writer's dramas and poetic talent.³⁹ In the short novel, the sisters of a deceased man try to resurrect him with the help of a strange creature who claims to be a magician, but within a few days it becomes clear that the strange figure has deceived them.

Of Székely's thousands of pages of writings, only the three more extensive works mentioned above, the *Önéletírás*, *A jó szerencsének és szerencsétlenségnek orvosságairól*, and *Végső vagy utolsó trombitaszó*, have received sufficient attention. To our knowledge, no one has yet thoroughly examined the third, longer text, the Hübner translation, the writings published by Emese

³²On the Székely family, cf. Jakó (1976), 228–230.

³³Egyed (2021).

³⁴Egyed (2021), 66–67, 78–79.

³⁵Egyed (2010a, b). Emese Egyed, who published the texts, did not indicate the location of the manuscript.

³⁶[Frederick II] (1760–1761); [Frédéric II] (1760). The three-volume edition of selected works by Frederick II, King of Prussia, printed in 1749–1750, was the first product of Frederick's private printing press at the palace of Sanssouci. The king entitled the edition, the contents of which were entirely in French, *Oeuvres du Philosophe de Sans Souci*. After Voltaire arrived in Potsdam in July 1750, he was given the second and third volumes of the *Oeuvres* from 1750 for editing (although not the first volume with *Le Palladion*). Frederick then had a new first volume of the *Oeuvres* printed at the Sanssouci press. – The first three volumes of the work are found in a collated volume in the Haáz Rezső Library collection.

³⁷We would like to take this opportunity to thank the library staff, Zsuzsanna Kolumbán and András Lajos Róth, for their kind assistance with these manuscripts.

³⁸Frederick II, *Brief. An Jordan; Brief. An Voltaire, den 8ten Aug. 1736*. in: [Frederick II] (1760–1761), vol. II, 95–99.

³⁹Frederick II, *Le miracle manqué, Conte* (original title: *Das fehlgeschlagene Wunder. Eine Erzählung*), in: [Frederick II] (1760–1761), vol. II, 85–88.

Egyed, or the manuscript containing the latter. It is also conceivable that further autograph translation manuscripts or copies may be hidden in Transylvanian or Hungarian collections. Their discovery and a detailed description and careful, comprehensive evaluation of his oeuvre are important tasks for 18th-century literary history research.

PETRARCH, THE PSYCHOLOGIST, SPEAKS IN HUNGARIAN

László Székely began work on the translation in April 1760, completing the first book on October 30, 1761, and finishing the work the following year. The translator gives several versions of the title: on the spine of the bound manuscript, *Magyar Petrarcha jó és rossz szerencse orvosságairól* (*Hungarian Petrarch on Remedies for Good and Bad Luck*); on the inside title page of the manuscript *Mind a kétféle, úgymint a jó szerencsének és a szerencsétlenségnek orvosságairól vagy azoknak segedelmekről* (*On the Remedies for Both Kinds of Fortune, Good and Bad, or Their Aids*); and on page 52 of the manuscript we read *Az kétféle, úgymint a jó és a gonosz szerencse orvosságairól* (*On the Remedies for Both Kinds of Fortune, Good and Evil*). Székely introduces the translation with a short recommendation addressed to the “Christian reader!”. In the recommendation, he quotes biblical passages related to the main theme of *De remediis* and also explains what prompted him to make the translation:

“The very wise preacher Solomon cries out: ‘When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider this: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, no one can discover anything about their future.’⁴⁰ This is an admonition to be observed by all people of distinction and rank, but, blessed God, how few there are who, in their fortunate state, can remember those times when they were forced to say, ‘I do not like these things’. On the other hand, how many people are led into despair by the words of the prince of darkness: ‘Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die!’⁴¹ No one has tried more than the wise Solomon to determine what is good and what is evil fortune. Let those who lived with greater pleasure than he did say this about themselves, but behold, amid all the worldly names for his happiness, who will be more unhappy and miserable than he, when he did not walk in the true ways of his father David? He strayed from his Lord, his God, fell into the sin of idolatry, broke away from the Holy Mother Church, and, recognizing his sin, cried out: ‘Meaningless! Meaningless! [...] Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.’⁴² Oh, the great corruption of human nature! The Spirit of God included examples of these in his holy speech, but in connection with the almost daily occurrences of worldly things, the things seen with the eyes are innumerable, yet with reckless blasphemy, the most common opinion about times of good fortune is: ‘Eat, drink, my soul’, and so on.’⁴³ And what is the response to this, as written by the Spirit of God:

⁴⁰Ecc1 7:14. New International Version. (2011). BibleGateway.com. <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/>.

⁴¹Job 2:9.

⁴²Ecc1 1:2.

⁴³Luke 12:19–20.

‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you.’⁴⁴ Students usually say this in short: ‘Do not be puffed up in good fortune, and do not be discouraged in adversity.’⁴⁵ Telemachus puts it this way: ‘Fear misfortune until it befalls you, for then it will be too late to fear, and there is no other remedy than peaceful endurance.’⁴⁶

I believe, Christian readers, that there will be some among you who will say, ‘Preaching is the priest’s business, why should I pay attention to it?’ But if good and bad fortune are not limited to priests, then priests feel the same way about their pleasant and unpleasant fates as anyone else. This book, which deals with the pleasant and unpleasant circumstances that can befall all kinds of people, I wanted to communicate to you in our native language, with the aim of being of use to you, and it is your duty, gracious reader, to take it kindly. It is enough for me if, among my days burdened with many misfortunes, little luck, and accumulated misfortune, I was able to show you and others that I did not lie on the lazy pillow of idleness. Be well. Written in my house on my estate in Szederjes, on the 16th day of April, in the year 1760.”⁴⁷

Given the many sad and even tragic events in László Székely’s life, it is understandable that he found much consolation in Petrarch’s work; some of the turning points in his life are almost identical to the titles of the dialogues in *De Remediis*. For example, dialogues 46 and 47 of Book II deal with the early loss of parents. The theme of dialogue 45 of Book II is the bad relationship between brothers, a sad experience that Székely himself went through in his relationship with his younger brother, Ádám. The loss of his wife (II, 18) and the related issue of remarriage (I, 76) may also have preoccupied the Transylvanian count, who decided to remarry after what was considered a long period of widowhood in the circumstances of the time. The recurring figure of the estate manager who deceives his principal appears in the dialogues of the first book, which may remind us of Székely’s own bad experiences with his estate manager, as recounted in his autobiography.

In the manuscript of his translation of Petrarch, as in the 1613 edition of *De remediis* that served as his source, László Székely often underlined the passages he considered important. This tendency is also evident in the dialogues mentioned above: in the chapters on second marriages and sibling rivalry, Székely underlined passages about the importance of peace within the home and family. The passages highlighted by Székely mainly contain teachings encouraging the avoidance of emotional extremes, recommending the practice of humility and piety as examples to follow, as well as the adoption of an outlook on life that sees all harm and misfortune as a means of increasing virtue and turning it to one’s own advantage. *De remediis* was therefore probably one of Székely’s most influential readings, and after completing the entire translation, László Székely returned to his beloved author at least once more, when, at the beginning of his autobiography, he retranslated and commented on the passages from the preface of Book II that he had previously underlined, in a section of about ten pages.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Luke 12:19–20.

⁴⁵The Latin proverb: ‘Nec in secundis rebus effertur, nec contrahitur in adversis.’ One of its early occurrences: Apuleius, *De dogmate Platonis*, II, 20.

⁴⁶Reference to François Fénelon’s novel *Télémaque* (1699).

⁴⁷For the original Hungarian text see: [Bíró et al. \(2015\)](#), 21.

⁴⁸[Fehér \(2019\)](#), 49–52.

SZÉKELY'S SOURCE AND THE ELEMENTS OF THE TRANSLATION TAKEN FROM OTHER SOURCES

The Hungarian version is based on the 1613 edition of *De remediis utriusque fortunae*.⁴⁹ This edition is part of a series, the first volume of which was published in Bern in 1595 by Joannes Le Preux. This is the first of a total of eight editions of *De remediis* published in Switzerland, in Bern or Geneva, by Le Preux and Stoer until the middle of the 17th century. The publisher probably took the text from one of the earlier French editions, but he must also have been familiar with the 1515 Venetian version by Alessandro Paganini. Of the Le Preux publications, the second edition, published in 1600, differs greatly from the first: its text was edited by Paulo Lentulo (d. 1613), a Swiss of Neapolitan origin, who corrected it in many places based on the 1554 Basel edition of Petrarch's complete works. Nevertheless, the published text contains numerous errors, which also found their way into Székely's translation (see below). For the next edition, published in 1605, whose real novelty was the inclusion of the two-line distich poems of Pinitianus, Lentulo created a new preface, in which he inserted several quotations from laudations of Petrarch written by 14th–16th-century humanists. The fourth and fifth editions of *De remediis*, published in 1610 and 1613, appeared under the name of Esaias Le Preux. The content of the volumes remained essentially unchanged from the previous ones, but as a new feature, both included Petrarch's letter known as *Epistola ad posteros* (also known as *Posteritati*).⁵⁰

Székely's own copy, used for the preparation of the work, with marginal notes and underlining, was added to the collection of the Reformed College in Székelyudvarhely at the end of the 18th century (today it is located in the Scientific Library of the Haáz Rezső Museum). The manuscript translation is particularly valuable because it contains all the elements published in the 1613 Latin edition. Thus, it includes the letter addressed to posterity, which, to our knowledge, is the first Hungarian translation of this much-quoted, famous text.⁵¹ Székely did not omit the section of the 1613 volume that Paulo Lentulo, the editor of the printed edition, intended as a kind of recommendation: he combined the laudations and eulogies of several famous humanist writers and scholars about Petrarch, linking them with a few sentences of his own. Lentulo took the texts from the 1554 Basel edition: they originally appeared in the letter of recommendation at the beginning of the volume, written by the editor, Ioannes Herold. The sources of the quotations are Boccaccio's *Genealogiae deorum gentilium libri* (cc. 1350), Erasmus' *Ciceronianus* (1528), Joan Lluís Vives' *De tradendis discipulis seu de institutione christiana* (1531), Francesco Florido's *In M. Actii Plauti aliorumque latinae linguae scriptorum calumniatores apologia* (1535) and Paolo Giovio's *Elogia virorum litteris illustrium* (1546).⁵²

⁴⁹Petrarca (1613). Fifth edition of the 1595 publication

⁵⁰Petrarca (1613), [3]–[16].

⁵¹Bíró et al. (2015), 15–20.

⁵²Petrarca (1613), [25]–[32].

Another valuable part of Székely's text is the translation of the distichs preceding each dialogue, written by Johannes Pinitianus, a humanist teacher and poet from Augsburg. Székely slightly expanded the distichs, rendering them in four-line, rhyming tercets; he chose the same verse form for his poetic autobiography.⁵³ Overall, it can be said of these short poems that, although there are a few less valuable or obscure pieces among them, the majority are very well done: Székely renders the message contained in the original distich accurately, with well-chosen words, evocative imagery, and often in a very punchy form. In addition to the 254 verses preceding the dialogues, he also transposes some of the verse excerpts quoted in Petrarch's work into his own characteristic verse form; this occurs several times in Book I, but not once in Book II. Based on all these small text fragments and the poetic autobiography, it can be concluded that László Székely should be considered one of the minor poets of 18th-century Hungarian literature.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRANSLATION, ERRORS, AND MISTAKES

The copy of the Petrarch translation kept in the Scientific Library of the Haáz Rezső-odblac; Museum is presumably a revised manuscript. Although there are minor and major corrections, crossed out parts, and additions, their relatively small number and the orderly handwriting suggest that the translator copied the text from a draft. This assumption is reinforced by the fact that a longer section, approximately one manuscript page in length, is missing from the text of dialogue 96 in Book I, presumably omitted during the copying process.⁵⁴ A peculiarity of the translation is that the manuscript contains numerous elements that do not originate from Petrarch: these are Székely's explanations of proper names and other words occurring in the text, which are not typographically separated from the original sentences of *De remediis*. Székely wrote most of these explanations himself, presumably based on his dictionaries, either for himself or for his readers, and it is striking that there are a lot more of them in Book I than in Book II.

The longest explanations, spanning half a page, can be found in dialogues 23, 26, 43, 64, and 65 of Book I, concerning Arion, Saturnalia, Tantalus, Emperor Augustus's talking magpie, and the Danaids. In his own "notes", Székely provides accurate information almost

⁵³Cf. Németh (2006).

⁵⁴The following sentence is interrupted: "[8] [...] edificiisque circumdatum litoree urbis in morem, rura praeterea" ("as if it were a city, and fields besides"). The following sentence is Székely's own explanation, which, however, does not relate to the information contained in the sentence immediately preceding it, but presumably to the last sentence of the omitted part. In the omitted part of the text, Petrarch, based on Suetonius, reports on Nero's clothing habits and the additional construction projects he ordered (the Colosseum, a canal connecting Avernum with Ostia). He gives the length and width of this canal in numerical terms ("[9] [...] Longitudo quidem", Dotti [2009], 716–718), and Székely's explanation may be related to this. – I quote the Latin text of *De remediis* here and in the following based on Dotti's edition (the English translations are made by me).

without exception, correctly identifying the persons and places mentioned. The exception to this is in dialogue 58 of Book I, where he incorrectly identifies “Sorga”, i.e. the Sorgue River in France, and – certainly based on information from some ancient encyclopaedia – he confuses it with a river of a similar name mentioned by Plutarch, and thus writes that it is located in Pannonia (i.e. he immediately interprets this seemingly well-known name as Hungary).⁵⁵ Székely’s mistake is peculiar because Petrarch mentions the Sorgue River three times in his letter to posterity, where it is clearly stated that it flows near his estate in Vacluse. Another similar mistake by the translator does not occur in the explanations: in Book I, he repeatedly misidentifies the author briefly referred to by Petrarch as Flaccus. This Flaccus always refers to Horace, and while Székely incorrectly translates the name as “Valerius Flaccus” in dialogues 11, 21, 32, 47, and 48, he writes “Horatius Flaccus” in later occurrences of the name.

However, most of Székely’s mistakes and errors can be attributed to printing errors in the 1613 edition or to corrupted passages in the text.⁵⁶ The first significant corruption of the text is found in the letter addressed to posterity. In one passage, part of the sentence that appears in the original version is missing, and the figure referring to Petrarch’s age is also incorrect (the critical text version is shown alongside):

Inde reversus ad fontem Sorgiae, et ad solitudinem transalpinam redii, cum iam quartum, et tricesimum aetatis annum post terga relinquerem. ⁵⁷	58 Inde reversus ad fontem Sorge et ad solitudinem transalpinam redii <i>et intra breve tempus extincta illa Columnensium gloriosa, sed heu nimium caduca, familia iterum ad Italiam redii, cum iam tertium et quadragesimum etatis annum post terga relinquerem;</i> ⁵⁸
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⁵⁵The question in the original reads: “[2] [...] Quid si lucidus Ticinus, si amenus Athesis, si sonorus Sorga?” (“What if Ticinus is bright, if Athesis is pleasant, if Sorga is sonorous?”) Dotti, 478.

⁵⁶All of the early modern printed editions of *De remediis* contain numerous errors. The editors of the modern editions (Christophe Carraud, Ugo Dotti) have only partially succeeded in correcting the errors. A critical edition is currently in preparation, based on the text variants published in 14th-century manuscripts. On this issue, see Lengyel (2010a, b); Perucchi (2014), 87–140; Ertl–Lengyel (2019); Ertl (2020), 13.

⁵⁷Petrarca (1613), [11].

⁵⁸“Returning from there, I returned to the fountain of Sorgia and the strange life beyond the snowy mountains. Shortly thereafter, the famous but doomed Colonna family died out, and I returned to Italy after spending forty-three years there.” For the Latin text, see Refe (2014).

Below are a few more examples of errors found in the 1613 edition:

De fortuna corporum eximia (I, 1, p. 47)	De <i>forma</i> corporis eximia
urnam fortium evertisse (I, 61, p. 213)	urnam <i>sortium</i> evertisse
Peusippus (I, 78, p. 252)	Speusippus
D. Fratrem perdidit R. Nondum audio propter quod valde lugeas; fieri potest enim; ut et fratrem, et domesticum simul hostem amiseris. (II, 51, p. 499) ⁵⁹	D. Fratrem perdidit R. Nondum audio propter quod valde lugeas; <i>nimis enim vere ait Naso rarum esse fratrum gratiam</i> <i>D. Fratrem amisi</i> R. Fieri potest enim ut et fratrem et domesticum simul hostem amiseris; en iactura: rem malam boni nominis perdidisse

The funniest of the errors of this type can be found in the Preface to Book II, where Székely, meticulously adhering to the text of the 1613 edition, writes that “swallows suck the blood of elephants”. The reason for the mistake is that the text on which the translation is based uses the word ‘hirundo’ (‘swallow’), instead of ‘hirudo’ (‘leech’).⁶⁰ Székely translated this sentence as follows: “These species show many such things, but especially the swallow, when you feed it, suffers terrible pain, and whether it sees or hears the mouse, it is bored with it”. However, he himself felt that this information was incorrect, and in his brief explanation of the passage, he writes: “But [Petrarch] probably means that the elephant suffers pain because of the fed swallow, and whether it sees the mouse or not, it is repulsed by it, because further up he mentions the elephant more closely. In short, Petrarch is vague here, and the translation cannot be successful.”⁶¹

Székely’s text therefore contains the errors found in the 1613 edition. Beyond that, he himself made a few mistakes. In dialogue I, 41, he gave the name Polycratus instead of Ploycletus,⁶² and in dialogue I, 35, he was unable to identify ‘arx Tarpeia’ (‘the city called Tarpeia’).⁶³ Elsewhere, he did not translate the Latin names of certain plants and animals with the correct English words: he translated ‘orata’ as ‘trout’ instead of ‘golden orfe’, and ‘muraena’ as ‘monkfish’ instead of ‘eel’ (I, 63); he confused ‘ericius’ (‘hedgehog’) with the word meaning ‘rapeseed, rape’ (‘erysimum’) (Vol. II, Praef.).

Apart from these errors, mistranslations and misunderstandings, Székely’s translation follows the original text accurately. A characteristic feature of his translation style is that when

⁵⁹The numbering of the dialogues in Volume II is incorrect. In the Heidelberg edition, the title of dialogue II 8 is *De paupertate et damno*, the text of which was published in two parts in the Venetian edition (II 8 *De paupertate*, II 9 *De damno*). The latter arrangement was followed by the editor of the 1613 edition.

⁶⁰Petrarca (1613), 359; Dotti (2009), 920–921.

⁶¹Biró et al. (2015), 258.

⁶²Petrarca (1613), 165; Dotti (2009), 354–355.

⁶³Petrarca (1613), 141; Dotti (2009), 292–293.

translating a word, he sometimes – out of uncertainty, or because he wanted to make the passage more understandable – did not choose between two possible variants but used both. This expansive-interpretative solution sometimes creates a verbose effect, which can also be observed in the translation of the title *De remediis* itself, one version of which can be found on the title page of the manuscript: *Mind a kétféle, úgymint a jó szerencsének és a szerencsétlenségnek orvosságairól, vagy azoknak segedelmekről* (On both kinds, namely the remedies for good fortune and misfortune, or their aids). With this peculiarity, which was a common practice among Hungarian translators of the time, László Székely's work is an enjoyable, fluid translation of Petrarch's original work, delighting the reader with passages of lyrical beauty, which presents its creator as a skilled prose writer, capable of rising to the artistic level of the greatest. Unfortunately, like Székely's other translations, this text was never printed, so it could only reach a very small circle of readers in its own time.⁶⁴

CONCLUSIONS

As is well known, Petrarch's Book of Fortune appeared in several versions in 18th- and 19th-century Hungary. However, Count László Székely's work should not be viewed merely as a phase in this fashionable trend, as it elevated its author into a community of interpreters that had existed for almost five centuries, which sought and found guidance for its own minor and major concerns in Petrarch's work, based on the teachings of Seneca's Stoic philosophy. The translation itself served as a tool for self-examination for its creator, while also providing him with consolation. In our modern world, all this is equivalent to therapy conducted under the guidance of a professional, which, however, is ultimately based on the same principles as the practice of Stoic Christian philosophy in everyday life, which Count László Székely encourages the reader to follow.

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⁶⁴The only major selection from the work (twenty-four dialogues) has been published by Tiborné Kardos, one dialogue translated by Katalin Bácskai, and six excerpts from my own translation. See Kardos (1984); Bácskai and Tóvay Nagy (2009); for my own translations, see Lengyel (2007, 2009a, b).

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