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Robert Burns in Hungary

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There is no doubt that the prevailing social, historical and cultural circumstances have had a significant and positive effect on Burns's reception in Hungary. However, the prime causes for his great popularity here lie in the Hungarian readers' response to what they consider his emotional and artistic make-up.

The present paper will look at its topic from three viewpoints. First, I would like to give an account and evaluation of Hungarian translations of Burns. This will cover everything from the first sporadic attempts to the most recent representative editions. After this we shall survey the various essays, reviews and accounts which for the most part were published as additions to the editions of the poems. In these selections both the editions of the poems and the essays will be presented in chronological order. Finally, and on the basis of the above, an attempt will be made to trace the influence Burns exerted on the Hungarian literary scene.

English was one of the last major European literatures to be read in Hungary. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it was read mostly in German and French translations. Soon after Hungarian poets began to read not only the classics, but a selection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British writers. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first mention of Burns reflects this indirect transmission.
Heinrich Heine wrote to Kertbeny as follows: "Petőfi ist ein Dichter, dem nur Burns und Béranger zu vergleichen [sind]." (Petőfi is a poet who can only be compared with Burns and Béranger.)

Petőfi was aware of Heine's opinion as was Mihály Tompa. Tompa wrote to János Arany on October 25, 1858:

I know Robert Burns from German translations, I read his poems at Szemere in an awfully small booklet; I heard him being mentioned by Petőfi in Beje in 1846 or 47; Sándor told me the anecdote when we were on the way to Murány [this was between the 3rd and 8th of July, 1847] between Beje and Otrokóc: "Some of my poems were read to Heine, who called out: 'Ah! this is a great poet, like Burns or Béranger.'"

Tompa's anecdote might be true since Heine could have known Petőfi from the translations of Adolf Dux which appeared in 1846. Moreover, through the same translator's work three poems of Petőfi were published in Vienna as early as July, 1845, in the Sonntagsblätter. Thus Heine's words could have reached Petőfi's ears.

It can therefore be presumed that the first statement on the similarity of Petőfi to Burns dates from 1847. This comparison continually reappears in different works on Burns in Hungary. Moreover, we know that even Thomas Carlyle, independently of Heine, spoke about Petőfi being the Burns of Hungary, though he didn't know much about the Hungarian poet.

Lajos Kossuth (1802-94) was leader of the 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence; after the failure of the revolution he was interned in the town of Kütahia in Asia Minor. In 1851 he traveled to England where the crowds feted him, and his journey to America in 1851-52 was a triumphal march. In 1852 Kossuth settled in London. On May 26, 1856, he received a present from an admirer: The Life and Works of Robert Burns, edited by Robert Chambers (London, 1853). In December 1856, he received two other collections of Burns's works while he was visiting Scotland and the Burns memorial places. One, The Works of Robert Burns, edited with a life by Allan Cunningham (London, 1854), was given to him with the following inscription, "Presented to his Excellency Louis Kossuth, Ex-Governor of Hungary, by a few of his admirers and well-wishers in the town of Ayr as a small souvenir of his visit to the Cottage in which the poet Burns was born. 18th December 1856," followed by fourteen signatures. Two days later, he received another edition, The Works of Robert Burns, with a life of the
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poet and an essay by Prof. John Wilson (Glasgow, 1855). Both volumes of this edition have the same dedication: "To the Great Kossuth In Memory of the People's Bard. The reverential offering of Mary Ellison McCullock and her daughters, Mary, Agnes, & Harriet. Dumfries. 20th 1856 Decr."

Translations of Burns were continually published in the periodicals of the 1860's, though some had already appeared in the 50's. *Husband, Husband, Cease your Strife* has three translations dating from this period and *John Anderson my Jo* was translated both in 1852 and in 1854. Quite a good translation is, for example, that of *Husband, Husband, Cease your Strife* by Zsigmond Ács, published in *Kossorú* (Wreath) in 1865, edited by János Arany. These early attempts, including Ács's work, are of no real literary value; they lack a definite style and are usually overwhelmed by pathos.

The translations of Szana, Tamásfi and Lehr (one of the most diligent translators of Burns) also appear in this period. Emil Ábrányi and Kornél Ábrányi, Jr., published four translations in an 1868 volume entitled, *Költemények. Európa költőiből* (Poems. From European Poets). É. Ábrányi translated *Wha is That at my Bower Door?* and *The Joyful Widower*, which was published in the *Scots Musical Museum* but not attributed to Burns. The poem was included in several nineteenth-century editions without any indication that it is not a poem by Burns. Meanwhile, K. Ábrányi worked on *Lord Gregory* and *Duncan Davison* ("There was a lass, they ca'd her Meg.") *Wha is That* is a very good translation: sparkling, amusing, reproducing the main values of the original. The style of *Duncan Davison* is also well rendered in Hungarian. These sporadic publications are the forerunners of the later flourishing Burns translation industry in Hungary.

Up to now, János Arany has been the most outstanding translator of Burns in Hungary. He dealt mostly with English material after the 1848-49 Revolution, which was when his own English improved considerably. He studied Thomas Moore and Ossianic poetry mainly, though his favourite was Robert Burns. He possessed the Tauchnitz edition of Burns, published in 1845, in the index of which some of the titles are red-pencilled. Among the marked poems are *Tam O'Shanter, The De'il's Awa wi' th' Exciseman*, and *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. This latter, as we shall see, was of outstanding importance in Arany's own poetry. He translated the first two between 1868 and 1873. The Scottish dialect is entirely reproduced by Arany's popular style, amusing and bold locutions, apt adjectives; and the Hungarian text is nearly as good as the original version,
besides having the effect of an original poem itself. In addition, there are translations of two song fragments. An outstanding merit of these translations is that Arany emphasizes the special phraseology used by Burns especially to portray the Scottish poet's wit. Besides conveying the same content, the Hungarian text reproduces the overtones and tunes of the original and its inner world is comparable to the original. As an example of Arany's virtuosity, it is worth noting that his lines can be read as iambic metre and are at the same time characteristically Hungarian in metre. It is no accident that not even after a century have these excellent works been surpassed. They stand out in even the latest Hungarian selected editions of Burns.

As a translator Tamás Szana was less successful than Arany, but he did a lot for Burns's popularity in Hungary. His collection of portraits was published in 1870, under the title, *Nagy szellemek* (Great Minds). In this volume, Szana wrote about Leopardi, Tegner, Poe, Heine, Lenau, and Burns. To illustrate his article, Szana published five poems, translated by Szász (about whom we shall speak later), by Tamásfi, and by the author himself. Here can also be found an early attempt of the excellent József Lévay, a quite successful translation of *John Anderson my Jo*. We shall have more to say on Szana's activity below when his essay on Burns is considered.

Minor poets of the popular school increased the number of Hungarian translations of Burns rapidly. Károly Szász's *Kisebb műfordításai* (Smaller translations) were published in 1872. This edition, in three bulky volumes, contains numerous Burns translations. The Scottish poet's pieces are placed among celebrated works of Heine and Moore in the first volume. Most of the translations are of Heine, and Moore is represented by more pieces than Burns; however, all three occupy a prominent place in the first volume. This volume is reprinted a year later entitled, *Szász Károly Műfordításai, Heine-Moore-Burns* (Károly Szász's Translations, Heine-Moore-Burns) in a new impression, presumably to meet popular demand.

The omnibus volumes of Szász also contain translations of Burns. His merit is that he is the first translator to give the Hungarian text for a long Burns poem, *The Brigs of Ayr*. Besides *My Heart's in the Highlands*, there are several songs translated by Szász. It was he who wrote the often-cited paraphrase of *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. In this case, it is hard to decide whether this text is an original poem or a translation. The title is, *Szombat este a kunyhőban* (Saturday Night in the Cottage), and it was first published in Gereben Vas's edition *Falusi esték* (Country Nights). His version left characteristically Scottish references out, and reworked the text to the circumstances of mid-nineteenth-century Hungary.
Szász, instead of interpreting the poem, changed and provincialised it, with no advantage to the poem or credit to the "translator." Later Szász translated the poem again, this time more closely and with greater success.

Szász translated mainly songs, but these Hungarian texts do not carry the original values. They lack the simplicity and naturalness of the language of Burns's work. Szász's attempts are without style, they are bombastic, lofty and involved, and due to their crabbed style, they are difficult to read. In spite of all this, we must emphasize that--though his translations are no longer found in today's anthologies--his twenty-one translations are important for the reception of Burns in Hungary.

Twenty years after Szász's collection, at the end of the nineteenth century appeared the first volume devoted exclusively to Burns's poetry. The title is Burns Róbert költésményei (The Poems of Robert Burns), and the translator is József Lévay. In his own work, he produced mainly songs, the literary form which had been evolved from Hungarian folk poetry by Sándor Petőfi. His developed sense of form and the aims of the popular school attracted him to translating.

His edition contains 265 translations. His lengthy, though by no means comprehensive, volume gave a brilliant translation of The Cotter's Saturday Night; in fact, he translated this poem twice. Absolutely superfluously, perhaps driven by translator's ambition, he made an attempt at Tam O'Shanter after Arany. About this he writes the following: "Those can be found in my translations also, though done perhaps with less success, but these translations are mine." Some important poems are to be found in this volume, such as The Twa Dogs, To a Mouse, To a Mountain Daisy, and John Barleycorn. The edition contains mostly songs, some of which are really successful. Three of these, The Deuks Dang o'er my Daddie, O Whistle, an I'll Come to Ye, my Lad, and For the Author's Father occur in the 1952 Selected Poems in his translation. He was not able to translate The Jolly Beggars for the 1892 volume, although he did so later.

In the same year, in Budapesti Szemle (Budapest Review), Jenő Péterfy reviewed Lévay's work. Péterfy objected to the absence of The Jolly Beggars and felt that without it the portrait of Burns was not complete. As Péterfy put it, Lévay translated only that part of Burns's poetry which he himself liked. He correctly stated that the songs preserved their freshness, Lévay does not ornament, he deliberately strives for simplicity. Péterfy considered The Twa Dogs an extremely successful attempt and he also mentioned that Tam O'Shanter had already been translated. Here and there Lévay's version is closer to the original than Arany's text is, but the
Burnsian humour disappeared totally in Lévay's translation. This version is much weaker than the earlier one and does not even reach the level of other translations by Lévay. Jenő Péterfy finishes his article with the statement, "In general Lévay's Burns is one of the most precious products of recent poetry."

Lévay wrote a long introduction to his translations, and what is even more important, he published a thorough commentary on every poem. His ample and detailed, though sometimes inaccurate, commentary explains the origins of the tunes, the role of the rewritten songs; in addition to biographical accounts and information, it includes several examples of Burns's prose.

Péterfy's words still ring true despite some insufficiencies in the volume. Though some pieces are well translated, other attempts are of no literary value. Inevitably in the last century it is Arany and Lévay who give the most successful and best translations; perhaps in significance Lévay even surpasses his forerunner, though his Hungarian versions rarely reach the level of the original. Apart from the dialect, he is the first to call attention to the usual difficulties of translating Burns: "In the case of a poet who represents popular features and original peculiarities so excellently the only possibility even for the luckiest translator is to try to get near the original and become a more or less accurate reverberation of it. In most cases the translation will lack the glaze and freshness of the original."

It is here also, in this introduction, that Lévay indicates why he disliked certain poems:

Not only the extreme difficulties of translating, but sometimes aesthetic considerations and, in other cases, special aspects of the poet's provincial and personal problems and conditions of the age withheld me. The religious and sectarian struggles into which Burns got involved with his muse and which were not worth singing about do not interest the Hungarian public, just as the poet's polemic and satirical poems written on these subjects wouldn't bear significant interest for the same reader. The situation is the same for the poems which refer to the literary and political polemics of that age.

On first sight this consideration might seem correct and acceptable. But it is also inevitable that these editorial principles are responsible for his portrait of Burns being incomplete and the selection therefore not comprehensive.
To conclude, Lévay could be summed up as a persistent and tenacious translator, who worked hard to produce work which was frequently good and occasionally outstanding. Taking into consideration his volume of translations and the essay to be examined below, he is to be considered as the greatest Burns expert of nineteenth-century Hungary, whose achievement has preserved its importance up to the present day.

Besides Lévay's enormous accomplishment, there is one other publication in the nineteenth century which should be mentioned. Although published one year before Lévay, it is convenient to deal with it now, since it can be discussed among the translator's later works. In 1891 Antal Radó published four translations in Idegen költők albuma (An Album of Foreign Poets). This representative and beautifully produced anthology includes only translations by Radó. Here John Anderson my Jo, Ae fond Kiss, Oh Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast, and O were my Love yon L'ilack fair appear. It may be presumed that these early translations of Radó were finished between 1887 and 1891 since an earlier book of his, Versek (Poems) published in 1887, though containing both original poems and translations, does not include any Burns translations. Two centuries have been connected by Rádó's imposing activity as a translator. He published his early translations in 1905 in the Szavalókönyvek (Recital-books) series edited by himself, issued fortnightly. In the first part of the two sections (Serious Poems; Funny Poems), John Anderson my Jo and Ae fond Kiss are printed.

In 1928 the next collection by Rádó was published, entitled Angol és amerikai költők (English and American Poets). Among the ten poems of this volume, besides the four already published and some songs, we have The Blue-eyed Lassie and Scots, wha hae (entitled Bannockburn here). In 1930 in an anthology entitled, Angol költők (English Poets) these ten poems are found once again. Of the various English and American poets in the volume, only Longfellow is represented by more poems (twelve). Rádó added a preface to this volume in which he informed the public on Burns (already known quite well mostly through Lévay) in the course of half a page of platitudes. He claimed that from Burns derived the populist romanticism which in Hungary began to blossom in Petőfi and Arany.

Rádó's translations are very far from those of Lévay's in value. With some small strictures the translation of John Anderson my Jo can be considered good, and Oh Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast and Bannockburn also have valuable Hungarian versions. (To this latter, Rádó added a long but inaccurate commentary; according to him, Bruce also fought against Edward I.) The translator tried to recreate the tone and the tune of
Burns's precise stanzas. But his rhymes sound hollow and though his stanza forms show some similarities with Hungarian folk song (following its form, he divides eight-line stanzas into two, e.g. *John Anderson my Jo*) he could not find either equivalent expressions or genuine language. Judged either by the quality or the quantity of his work, Rádó is not among the best Hungarian translators of Burns. His importance is mainly his activity as an interpreter of literature in English.

At the beginning of the twentieth century we have very few new translations. Though there were important translators among the first generation of *Nyugat* (West)\(^{10}\), they might not have felt any challenge in Burns's poetry.

The subsequent period is represented by two important names—Lőrinc Szabó and Géza Képes. Szabó's absolutely successful translations made the Hungarian reading public attached to certain poems and *John Anderson my Jo* and *Who is that at my Bower Door?* are now the most well-known and most loved poems of Burns. Besides the songs, he did fine work on *A red red Rose*, *John Barleycorn*, *The Blue-eyed Lassie*, *Afton Water* ("Flow gently, sweet Afton"), and *My Heart's in the Highlands*. Géza Képes translated mainly Burns's patriotic and democratic poems such as *Lines Written on a Bank-Note*, the epigram which begins "That there was falsehood in his looks," and *Scots, wha hae*. Their translations, along with pieces from Arany and Lévay, are included in all the recent editions of Burns.

After World War II a comprehensive selection of Burns's poems was published in 1952. Edited by László Kéry and István Kormos, it was entitled *Valogatott versek* (Selected Poems). This volume of 131 poems was the first to divide the published poems into three sub-categories, a classification which has always been followed since: *Miscellaneous Poems, Epigrams and Epitaphs, Songs*. Kéry's excellent introductory essay adds to a biography and an evaluation of the poet an accurate picture of eighteenth-century England and Scotland, including their cultural scenes. The edition is completed with an accurate commentary which, with the introduction, assists a critical reading of the text and establishes a fuller portrait of the poet.

This edition is important for two reasons. First, unlike earlier editions, which were selected according to the taste of the translator or editor, and were influenced by other distorting factors, this volume set itself the aim of giving a comprehensive picture of Burns.

In an article published seven years later in *Nagy Világ* (World Literature), Kéry has this to say about the volume:
The editors of this [volume] endeavoured to eliminate the one-sidedness of Lévay's collection and show in Burns's oeuvre as complexly as possible the different motifs of love, bold sensuality, country fun, rebellion against worthless institutions, anticlericalism, patriotism entwined with democratism, impish playfulness and the awareness of the serious responsibility of the poet. The best translators were asked to contribute to this work in order to give the Hungarian public the best possible Burns in Hungary.

It cannot be said that this edition (and the smaller anthology based on it or its second enlarged edition which has just left the presses) was completely successful in overcoming the difficulties described by Lévay. Different poets and different translators used different tonality to reproduce Burns in the Hungarian language. Some mixed archaisms to the popular speech, most translated in a modern poetic idiom, and there was even one who thought city slang best to establish the modern Hungarian equivalent of Burns.

Despite all this, the second reason for this edition's importance is the generally high level of the translations. In addition to the "classic" names, there are some excellent translators, as a result of which the number of near-perfect Hungarian versions has increased. Our best poets (Gy. Illyés, L. Ápily, I. Vas, S. Weöres, and J. Pilinszky) and translators (D. Mészöly, L. Lator, L. Kálnoky) added fresh touches to the by now more and more colorful and complex Hungarian portrait of Burns. Characteristically, to illustrate his article, Kéry publishes seven different versions of A red, red Rose (the works of L. Szabó, Z. Nadányi, Gy. Illyés, S. Weöres, Z. Jékely, A. Fodor, L. Kálnoky). The 1952 edition as well as the latest (1973) include the Kálnoky version to which only Szabó's attempt can be compared.

The task of the editors of this volume was easier than Lévay's, who had to rely entirely on his own resources, but the result is also of a higher standard. For all Lévay's achievement, the higher level of the 1973 edition—together with this edition in 1952—did the most for Burns in Hungary.

From 1952 to the present day, editions of Burns follow thick and fast. These, to some extent, are all based on this 1952 edition. The next two are mentioned in Kéry's article.

In 1956 István Kormos selected 64 poems from the 1952 edition and published them under the title Válogatott versek.
(Selected Poems). This volume intended obviously for the younger reader contains mainly shorter poems and songs. The translations are on the same high level as before and the volume adds a short biography and commentary. The purpose of this edition must have been to present a light, simple Burns portrait for young people.

In 1959 a new enlarged reprinting of the 1952 edition was published. This contained 1,000 lines more than its predecessor. The title is Válogatott versek (Selected Poems) and the editors once again are László Kéry and István Kormos. Even in this volume there are translations by Lévay and for the first time among the poets contributing is the greatest figure in contemporary Hungarian poetry, László Nagy. The introduction to this edition of 148 poems is essentially that of the 1952 volume, but with omissions and changes in the sections on the cultural and historical climate and the actual aspects. The poems are grouped as before and the commentary retained its merits. Issued in 10,000 copies this is a fine, comprehensive edition.

Apart from the above-mentioned related three volumes a short booklet was also published in 1958. One of the eight volumes of Tibor Bartos's Az angol irodalom kincsekházá (A Treasury of English Literature) covering the period between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, prints fifteen of Burns's poems in one volume along with Blake. The intention was presumably to show some shorter poems but there is no sense of completeness. In a period of such importance for Burns editions this short volume has no real significance.

The sixties and seventies are as poor as regards Burns as the fifties were rich. In 1966 a volume of 124 poems was published. This is made up of the latest and best translations; though it is short, compared to its recent predecessors it does not distort the complexity and comprehensiveness of the poet. The title is Piros, piros rózsa (Red, Red Rose) and the editors changed the sequence of the groups of poems so that first come the Songs, then the Epigrams and Epitaphs and finally the Miscellaneos Poems.

In 1967 a deluxe edition of one poem, The Jolly Beggars, was accompanied by Piroska Szántó's fine illustrations. There is a commentary written also by Kéry in this volume.

The most recent Burns publication was printed in 1973. With 123 poems, it omits only one poem from the 1966 edition on which it is essentially based. Here it is worth listing all the translators which will provide a check-list of our best contemporary translators along with the legendary earlier ones: Lajos Áprily, János Arany, Gábor Devecseri, András Fodor, Anna Hajnal, Gyula Illyés, Zoltán Jékely, László Kálnoky,
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The organization of the 1973 volume is based on that of 1966. The songs are under the subtitle Village Rendezvous (The Hungarian title of Wha is that at my bower-door) while the epitaphs are subtitled Lines (I murder hate) and the miscellaneous poems The Jolly Beggars. This volume retains the merits of the 1966 edition but after 14 years it might have been worth publishing a volume at least as long as that of 1959. (This latter was printed in 15,000 copies and is thus instantly snapped up in the second-hand bookshops.)

We have now completed our account of Hungarian editions of Burns. Of course, several poems can be found in various anthologies, e.g. G. Halasz's A angol irodalom kincseshaza (A Treasury of English Literature), and in collections of translations by poets, e.g. Istvan Vas, Hét tenger éneke (Songs of Seven Seas), 1955; Sandor Weores, A lelek idézése (Raising of the Soul), 1958; Laszlo Kálnoky, Szessélyes szüret (Capricious Vintage), 1958; Angol költők antológiája (An Anthology of English Poets) edited by M. Vajda in 1960; Gyula Illyés, Nyitott ajtó (Open Door), 1963; András Fodor, Napraforgó (Sunflower), 1967; Laszlo Nagy, Versek és versfordítások (Poems and Translations), 1975, and again in Sandor Weores's Egybegyújtott műfordítások (Collected Translations).

It is generally accepted that editions of the last thirty years have given a realistic and accurate picture of the great Scottish poet.

Most of the essays on Burns published in Hungary have been connected with different editions of his poetry. In most cases their aim is no higher than to provide a short introduction for the Hungarian reader. There are, of course, exceptions. Among these figure treatises comparing various Hungarian poets to Burns; this would seem to be the most recurrent theme in Hungarian criticism and studies on Burns.

The first essay on Burns published in Hungary (1870) came from the pen of Tamás Szana, already mentioned, in his collection of essays entitled, Nagy szellemek (Great Minds). In the first part of the essay, the author sketches the contemporary cultural background to Burns's lifetime. Then follows an attempt at a critical biography. This is, of course, based mainly on anecdote and the portrait is subsequently distorted, sometimes exaggerated and romantically idealised. The faults of early English monographs are reflected clearly. Over Burns's weaknesses and love life, he draws the usual polite veil.

In its own way this composition is significant despite its
limitations. This is by no means to say that even within its limits we have a picture which is comprehensive or realistic. But despite its idealisation it gives a many-sided picture with more merits than insufficiencies, considering it is such an early attempt.

The translations selected to illustrate the article also support its light portrait of its subject. And it does try to introduce Burns with some degree of comprehension. Its significance is the greater when we consider that the next work on Burns was published more than two decades later.

In 1888 Carlyle's essay on Burns was published in Győr (town in north-west Hungary) by Dr. Virgil Koltai. Considering the state of Hungarian translation in those days, this is a good version; however, to a modern reader it seems a little long-winded. It is very important, however, that a translation appears among Hungarian-published essays on Burns as early as this and that the essay presented to the reading public is faithful to its original.

It is no accident that in surveying essays on Burns we meet the name József Lévay at an early date. He gave his inaugural lecture to the Academy on June 1, 1891, on Robert Burns. (His volume of translations had not yet been published.) The complete text of this lecture has never been published, but there is a detailed account of it in the 8th part of the 1891 volume of Akadémiai Ertesítő (Bulletin of the Academy).

After the usual courtesies and circumlocutions follows a slightly idealised romantic description, somewhat similar to Szana's work though far more detailed. Lévay gives us the banalities, tells us that Burns wrote his poems walking on the banks of the Nith and the Cluden, or while in the saddle, and speaks about the poet's emigration plans. (Here he confuses the West Indies with India.) But an important element in Lévay's lecture is that in contrast with Szana he breaks with the image of the "heaven-taught ploughman," emphasizing Burns's mastery of technique. He also refers to Heine's analogy saying, "In our country he resembles Petőfi the most, but Petőfi is more inflamed, more turbulent, more insistent." He finishes his lecture with quotation from Carlyle and some translations of songs, which figure in his 1892 collection.

This collection in 1892 contains Lévay's 66-page introduction, including a 50-page accurate, detailed biography and a description of the cultural climate; all of this is supported with quotations from the poems. He mentions Carlyle, Taine, and Cunningham as sources for the biography and the description of the period. Much of his data is accurate and his interest is obviously in precision of detail where possible. Compared to the biographical section, the critical assessment
is short, commonplace, and lacks comprehension. The whole introduction would have been improved if Lévay had tried to place Burns among the greatest figures of Scottish, British, and World writing. That he did not do so is surprising since Lévay knew his Burns well. He translated Carlyle's Robert Burns as well, and his version was published in 1892, four years after Koltai's Hungarian version of the same essay.

We have already mentioned Jenő Péterfy's review in volume 184 (1892) of Budapesti Szemle (Budapest Review). This article was also included in his Osszegyűjtött munkái (Collected Works) in 1903. Although appreciative of the collection's merits, he finds fault with the one-sidedness of Lévay's presentation. On the omission of The Jolly Beggars he comments, "It is true that it is fiery, but it is characteristic of Burns as well as of the circumstances." In his own short sketch of Burns he stresses the complexity of his subject. He emphasizes that Burns suffered the most from his weaknesses. He points out that critics enjoy the rich heritage and the privilege of being tactless to the dead. Péterfy too considers the "connection" between Burns and Petőfi and contrasts Petőfi's vehemence with Burns's more gentle side. He highlights the revolutionary quality in Burns's character and art. The only pity is that this excellent critic did not go on to a fuller consideration of Burns at a later date.

In the same periodical in October 1884, Sándor Imre opened the long series of comparative analyses with Petőfi és Burns (Petőfi and Burns), later republished in 1897 in Irodalomtörténeti Tanulmányok (Studies in Literary History). The motto taken from R. P. Shairp reflects the tone of the article: "In all but his poetry his was a defeated life, sad and heart-depressing to contemplate beyond the lives of most poets." A detailed biography and description of the age precedes a general survey. Imre is not over-enthusiastic on the poet's character. His comparison finds mostly insignificant and accidental similarities in the personalities of the two poets. The important and meaningful identities that can be discerned are the products of almost identical social and cultural backgrounds. That both poets worked in almost the same genres is not coincidental and gives grounds for further comparative analysis. Often not only the genre but the topic is identical. Imre compares Burns's poetics to that of Petőfi. The article's basic contrasts always reappear in Hungarian literature, which indicates its importance for Burns criticism.

The first book-length biography of Burns in Hungary was published in 1897 at Hódmezővásárhely (a town in southern Hungary) under the title of Burns Róbert and with the subtitle, "Written for the adolescent young by Aladár Ribiczey."
In his introduction the author claims that the eighteenth century produced not only military but spiritual fame also. He speaks of Béranger, Petőfi, and Burns jointly. Burns's upbringing is given in detail and a sketch is made of the age itself. Using quotations from the poems he attempts a psycho-biography and here he speaks about Burns's love affairs as flaming passions. Finally he can show some part of the heavens and hells the poet was familiar with during his lifetime, with the poet's alternation between the two.

The value of this work is in that it does not rely on anecdote, thus making possible a realistic portrait. Even so, the portrait is somewhat romanticised and pathetic.

On January 27, 1909, the daily Alkotmány (Constitution) published an article by one V. S., Petőfi és Burns (Petőfi and Burns). Nothing is certain on the authorship of the three-galley article. In this period three authors used the initials "V.S.": from 1892 to 1911, Sándor Böhm; from 1904 to 1905, Dr. Géza Kacziány; and between 1910 and 1912, Dr. Sándor Varjas. Earlier in 1897, Soma Visontai edited an article using the same initials. No one of these authors is more probable than any of the others, nor do these four exclude the possibility of a fifth person.

The article begins by referring to the 150th anniversary of Burns's birth; it then goes on to describe the different customs in the commemoration of Burns's birthday. The life of Burns is sketched again, drawing attention to the similarities with Petőfi. Certain dramatic effects are attempted (e.g. the conversation between William Burness and his son on the father's death-bed, and the meeting with Walter Scott). Burns's comment that he would be much better known in a hundred years is quoted. Ribiczey finds Petőfi the greater poet, though lacking the epic power of Burns; a judgement which could have been examined profitably by authors of later monographs. V.S. sees very clearly that Burns combines some of the qualities of both Arany and Petőfi. This article, though mentioning some interesting possible aspects of comparison, adds nothing new to the Hungarian view of Burns.

Vilmos Tolnai's article "Burns Röbert Szombatéjé irodalmunkban" (Robert Burns's "Saturday Night" in Our Literature) was published in 1923, in Budapesti Szemle. Tolnai attempts to survey the influence of Burns on Hungarian writers and specifically the influence of The Cotter's Saturday Night on Hungarian poets. He considers four Hungarian poets at four different stages of the influence, which relationship he satisfactorily demonstrates. Lévay made an accurate translation of Burns's poem (and, later on, Szász did too) and Szász wrote the paraphrase. He finds a direct influence on János Arany
Robert Burns in Hungary

but something more casual in the case of Petőfi. Tolnai's article is the most scholarly and, therefore, the most valuable of these early comparative analyses.

Gizella Dedinszky's doctoral thesis Petőfi és Burns (Petőfi and Burns) dates from 1932. The author organizes her work from the following perspectives: biographical background; political, social, and literary background; common features in their poetry; songs: a) folk songs; b) drinking songs; c) love songs; religion; nationality; nature; language and prosody.

The author makes no attempt to pursue major differences in the two writers' work or background and contents herself with enumerating superficial resemblances. A great deal of space is occupied with describing irrelevancies without much attempt at further examination. Thus, for example, in her first section she reminds us at some length that both writers changed their names; but she fails to follow up this biographical tidbit. (As Burness became Burns, Petrovics became Petőfi, and the reasons for this are interesting and different, thus meaningful.) Her discussion of poetics is a simple parade of banalities on their use of folk poetry. The most interesting section is that on both writers' sense of nationality. Since both used the entire range of lyric forms, it is scarcely any great achievement on Dedinszky's part to find parallels; she hardly made any attempt to distinguish further. Nor is her discussion of religion, particularly in connection with Burns, anything more than naive. The examination of nature, a complex topic, is too simple to provide any insights into its role in their work.

Two outstanding literary histories of the following period must be mentioned. The first volume of Mihály Babits's Az európai irodalom története (The History of European Literature) covering the period to the nineteenth century appeared in 1934. György Rába says of it, "This work is not a literary history in the common sense of the word, but while retaining in the background scientific viewpoints--historical, social motives, artistic life--it is the personal confession of the writer about the universal and unaltering values of literature." Babits wrote of Burns as "the first popular poet of freedom." He discerns in Burns's way of life, in his poems and techniques an attempt to break out of some kind of captivity. Babits describes the fascination Burns held for his generation. He concludes this theme by comparing Burns to two other figures, "These simple poems [Burns's] were flown around the world by the same mystic lust for freedom, which was blazing in the souls of the Blakes and Schillers." Antal Szerb's book, A világirodalom története (The History of World Literature, 1941) also deals with Burns. György Bod-
nár points out that "Szerb's disillusionment strengthened in his book the influence of Spengler's philosophy of history." Interestingly, the part on Burns doesn't reflect this effect. Szerb deals with Burns under the subtitle English Pre-Romantic Age, which he sees as "the golden age of the Scots." Szerb emphasizes Burns's studies and his education to finally put to rest the "heaven-taught ploughman" view. Szerb, as was his practice, conveys biography in his footnotes, focusing on Burns as a rebel. He goes to some pains to discuss the advantage of using Scots rather than literary English. And he locates Burns in the wider context of European romanticism ("poetry is pure experience") by comparing him to Rousseau.

Both the above articles produced a full and accurate evaluation of Burns's work and significance.

The year 1952 saw the publication of Válogatott versek (Selected Poems) prefaced by László Kéry's essay. This was the best essay to date in Hungarian. The title is "Burns" and it opens with an excellent survey of life in eighteenth-century Britain, providing the information essential for the Hungarian reader of Burns. There then follows a biography which, despite its brevity, is the best available in Hungarian. Kéry then gives us a critical assessment of the poetry and finally a summary of Burns's posthumous reception. Kéry's work is marked by scholarly accuracy, delicacy of judgement, perceptiveness of the relationship between Burns's life and work and an awareness of the complexity of his subject. He produces a tour de force analysis of several individual pieces (The Twa Dogs, Address of Beelzebub, The Cotter's Saturday Night, Holy Willie's Prayer, Tam O'Shanter, and The Jolly Beggars) in order to demonstrate the unities he perceives in Burns's complex connections with his culture and within his own oeuvre. It is no exaggeration to say that this introduction has given the Hungarian reader a complete sense of Burns as a man and as a European poet.

The 1959 edition of Burns's poems reprints, with minor changes, this same introduction. A condensed version was also included in Kéry's collected essays Angol írók (English Writers) published in 1975. The accurate and most informative commentaries of both the 1952 and 1959 editions are also the works of László Kéry.

Nagy Világ (World Literature) in 1959 published another Kéry essay, "Robert Burns--Petőfi házájában" (Robert Burns in Petőfi's Country) accompanied by seven translations of A Red, red Rose mentioned earlier. After a preliminary discussion of the Scottish background and the Hungarian reception of Burns, Kéry proceeds to the difficulties facing a translator of Burns. His discussion is concretely related to the Hungarian tradition and the accompanying translations.
The same year saw the publication in *FiloZológiai Kőzlöny* (Philological Review) of an article by Zoltán Kenyeres entitled "Egy téma, két költő" (One topic, two poets). As the title suggests, it is a comparative analysis of Burns and János Arany. (The author dismisses the conceptional comparison with Petőfi.) Two poems are contrasted, *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and *Családi Kör* (Family Circle) in order to bring up resemblances and differences which are then traced back fully. He finds that Arany's poem is virtually devoid of influence by Burns. Though, as we shall see below, Arany's opinion is different concerning this question, Kenyeres is right when stating that not only the deviations, but the similarities also show the difference between the two geniuses. Kenyeres's essay, though not entirely convincing in its conclusion, is a lively demonstration of comparative analysis. That same year (1959), Péter Pósa published an article entitled "Burns és az angol romantika költészetének néhány kérdése" (Burns and Some Questions of English Romantic Poetry) in *Acta Universitatis Szegediensis Sectio Litteraria* in which he examines English Romanticism and in which he mentions Burns as a forerunner of Wordsworth and Blake as a forerunner of Coleridge.

Another Burns comparative study appeared in 1975 in *Hungarian Studies in English: Popular Tendency in the Works of Csokonai and Burns*, written by Klára Báræi. The similarity between the two has often been mentioned in Hungary: almost exact contemporaries, living in comparable circumstances and both influenced by popular and folk poetry. Báræi finds a closer kinship between Burns and Csokonai than Burns and Petőfi, though not everyone might agree with her opinion on the closeness of the former.

The standard and authoritative reference work *Az angol irodalom története* (History of English Literature) of 1972 firmly places Burns in Pre-Romanticism and in his Scottish tradition, and gives an accurate evaluation of his poetry.

Finally, let us mention two other reference works, *Új Magyar Lexikon* (New Hungarian Encyclopaedia) of 1960, and *Világ-irodalmi Lexikon* (Encyclopaedia of World Literature) of 1970, both containing brief and accurate entries on Burns.

We have seen that the first mention of Burns in Hungary links him with Petőfi. This is a fine example of how a foreign author is received in a literature: he is "defined" in terms of a native writer, who in turn qualifies our perception of the foreign author in question. Consequently, a description of these Hungarian authors to whom Burns has been compared would give us a better idea of how Burns is viewed by the Hungarian reader.

While doing this, I shall try to speak about traces of
Burns's influence on Hungarian authors, though it is hard to find the small motives and effects, and we can speak about clearly recognizable and obvious influences only in few cases. Burns's Scottishness is important since Scotland was felt by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Hungarians to have a great deal in common with Hungary. Burns's Scotland and Petőfi's Hungary were similar in that they still possessed much of the structure of feudalism, were both dominated by a more advanced neighbour, and in the years 1697-1745 both had made two attempts under arms to regain their freedom. Both reacted to the Enlightenment in similar ways.

In Hungary the first synthesis of the Enlightenment and popular tendency is to be found in the work of Mihály Csokonai Vitéz. He turned towards folk poetry almost at the same time as Burns, used and worked with folk poetry consciously, and his work also became well-known, though mostly in towns and colleges. Like Burns, he also collected folk songs and his aim was to preserve them, just like Burns. An essay of his, Volkslied, deals with folk art, and from the title it is probable that he knew of Herder. In various parts of the country he collected and recorded more than 2,000 popular expressions and consciously used them in his own work. He was the author of a well-known essay, A magyar nyelv feléledése (The Revival of Hungarian Language), and really did much for his mother tongue. He has frequently been compared to Burns. Several of his poems bear titles that are Burnsian: Sad Misfortunes, Lamentation, Poor Suzy, Peasant-Song, Love Song to a Wine-Flask. They are characteristic of a conscious re-working of popular poetry. Unlike Burns, he was not a peasant and so the viewpoint adopted in the poems is essentially different. In the case of Peasant-Song, the poem itself could have been written by Burns, but he would almost certainly have entitled it simply "Song." For Csokonai this kind of poetry is a separate genre. His writing of satire is another link with Burns, but this, along with his presentation of character, is to be found mostly in his plays. We know his English was poor (since he himself tells us that he read The Rape of the Lock in a French translation), so it is not likely that he knew Burns's poetry, nor even that he knew of Burns's existence. But the frequent contrasting identifies some of the features that have appealed to Burns's Hungarian audience.

The historical event which separates Burns from Petőfi is, of course, the French Revolution. They are both typical of their respective eras and Petőfi, in his own person, provides for Hungarian literature the model of poet as revolutionary man of action. A significant feature they share is an affirmation of their own language as a vehicle for poetry, though
Hungarian had to contend with German, another language, rather than another variety of the same language. Given the circumstances leading up to the 1848/9 Hungarian Revolution, it is not surprising that Petőfi's poetry is more overtly politically committed, nor, for that matter, that he died at the age of 26 on the battlefield. The differences in the circumstances of their period certainly determine their respective oeuvres, but it is widely felt in Hungary that they were essentially similar in personal and artistic character.

We do know that Petőfi was familiar with Burns's poetry and, like Arany, possessed the 1845 Tauchnitz edition of Burns. His familiarity must date at least from his learning of Heine's comment. It is likely that Petőfi's poem A tél esték (The Winter Nights) had as one of its promptings The Cotter's Saturday Night. (Several critics are of this opinion, for example Ágost Greguss, Kerbeny, and Tolnai.) Petőfi has another poem written in February 1845, Tél világ (Winter World), depicting the hardships of winter, contrasted with the symbolic warmth of the hearth. At this point he didn't have his Tauchnitz edition of Burns. It is likely then that A tél esték is a synthesis of the earlier Tél világ and Burns's poem The Cotter's Saturday Night. However, the connection lies in similarity of the theme and motif rather than in close verbal echoing.

At the moment we lack a comparative analysis of both poets, based on close critical reading. But we can say that Petőfi's work shows at least "memories" of Burns.

János Arany has an interesting comment on the dangers of defining one writer in terms of another. As early as 1850, we find in one of his poems, Vojtina levelei ésoséve (Vojtina's Letters to His Brother):

Burns Róbert, a skótok Petőfije,
Költő mikép 19n, paraszt létire,

(Robert Burns, Petőfi of the Scots, /How he became a poet, though being a peasant.)

This later caused Arany some annoyance. On September 29, 1858, he wrote to Mihály Tompa:

Emich is advertising Petőfi's latest poems, which the reading public have been awaiting with burning impatience—and in spite of this he thinks he must recommend them in my name. Recommend Petőfi in my name! Among the Vojtina-stupidities (do you still remember? you even answered it) there was a line...With this I didn't want to say that the two poets are equally great; only that just as in our
country Petőfi could, so Burns in Scotland could become a great poet without regular education; and further there is a similarity in their popular origin, genius, etc. Now these asses say that I called Petőfi the Hungarian Burns, and think that this is recommendation of Petőfi. As if the Hungarian reading public knows Burns better than Petőfi, or as if Petőfi would need to borrow fame from Burns's name.\footnote{15}

The Emich who is the object of Arany's annoyance is the one who produced one of the earliest Burns publications in the Arany-edited Kozoró (Wreath) of 1865.

Let us look at one of Arany's best-known poems, Családi kör (Family Circle) which has obvious affinities with The Cotter's Saturday Night. More than affinity, in fact, as Arany's son, László, wrote:

He mentioned once to me that his Családi kör was written under the influence of Burns's Saturday Night, so that when first publishing it he was really thinking [that he should] mention this, but he did not do so only because he did not want to spoil the effect he wished to exert with the "lame, Hungarian soldier."\footnote{16}

The similarities are clearly visible, but the differences are also significant. Arany's description is objective, visual, cinematic as a modern critic might say, and without authorial comment. (The poem utilizes the narrative form which is called "epic" by Hungarians.) The thoughts of the personae are assimilated by the narrative. Burns, however, always comments, steps forward and explains, cuts off the narrative flow to moralise. It is also interesting that the prayer which is so significant and important in Burns is completely absent from Arany's poem. This could be because religion in Scotland had a more important historical role than in the Hungary of the nineteenth century. Also lacking in Arany's poem is the patriotic hymn which follows the prayer in Burns's piece. In the spirit of 1851 such expressions of patriotism were not possible in Hungary. Originally there were some words commemorating the suppressed Revolution in the speech of the wounded soldier (whose figure is very important in Arany's poem—it refers to the Revolution) but at the request of Vahot, the publisher, he rewrote this passage.

The resemblances are there, but Arany's poem is hardly the simple imitation Frigyes Riedl (author of a monograph on Arany) claims it to be. Arany is a major figure in Hungarian literature and, translator though he was, he was not a simple mirror
Robert Burns in Hungary

to another poet. He is certainly influenced by Burns but he uses rather than is used. Motif and theme, as in the case of the Petőfi poem referred to above, are frequently similar, but Arany's work is characteristic only of Arany.

The two other poets on whom Burns exerted a direct and obvious influence are of altogether lesser stature: Károly Szász and József Lévay. Both were translators as we have seen; their versions read as translations. Their works are more or less successful translations, save Szász's already-mentioned paraphrase, Szombat este a konyhóbán (Saturday Night in the Cottage). In his version Szász omitted the characteristically Scottish references (among other parts, the first, seventeenth, and twenty-first stanzas) thus his "poem" contains eighteen stanzas. He changes the rhyming, the Spenserian-stanza, and replaces the iambic līges with the accentuated twelve-syllable lines. Jenny becomes Ország (a typical Hungarian country-nickname for Erzsébet=Elizabeth); instead of Scottish "Porritich" we have the Hungarian traditional food "túróscsusza" (noodles) with cottage cheese) in his changed and provincialised version of Burns's The Cotter's Saturday Night. However, Szász later translated the poem more closely and with greater success.

Both Lévay and Szász are typical representatives of minor Post-Romantic poetry of the type occurring in virtually every European literature towards the end of the nineteenth century. One could trace many direct influences in their own work, but essentially it is as translators that they are important in the history of Burns in Hungary.

There seem to be two peaks of Burns's existence in Hungary: the first is doubtless a result of the work of translators such as Károly Szász, József Lévay, and Antal Radó to the end of the last century; the second, because of the appearance of the significant collections published over the last thirty years. This second wave of Burns translation is especially valuable because it has involved a group of talented Hungarian poets, rather than literary amateurs.

Burns is no longer a writer available to and known only by Hungarian poets, but a widely-known favourite of the Hungarian reading public. The first peak coincides with the degeneracy of the tradition in which he stands centrally; the second with a juster appreciation of this tradition and his role in it.

Burns is immensely popular in Hungary: his work frequently figures in poetry broadcasts, is represented in the standard secondary school textbook, is often included in recitals and has even been set to music by the most respected Hungarian rock-group, "Fonograf," and sung by Zsuzsa Koncz.

Given this interest in Burns, it is surprising that there
still remains a considerable body of his work uncollected or even untranslated and the time is ripe for a major critical work on Burns.

Budapest

*A Chronology of Burns in Hungary*

1847 Petőfi mentions Heine's words

1849 Heine's letter to Kertbeny

1852 First translation of *John Anderson my Jo*

1854 *John Anderson my Jo* translated again

1865 *Husband, Husband, Cease your Strife* translated by Ács, published in *Wreath*

1868 Four translations published by E. Ábrányi and K. Ábrányi, Jr. in *Poems. From European Poets*

1868-73 Translations by Arany

1870 Szana's essay, *Great Minds*, and translations by Szász, Tamásfi and Lévay published

1872 Szász's *Smaller Translations* published

1873 Szász's *Translations, Heine-Moore-Burns* published

1884 Imre's comparative analysis *Petőfi and Burns* published

1888 Carlyle's essay on Burns translated and published in Győr

1891 Four translations by Radó in *An Album of Foreign Poets*; Lévay's inaugural lecture on Burns

1892 Lévay's *The Poems of Robert Burns* published; Péterfy's review in *Budapest Review*

1897 Ribiczey's biography *Robert Burns* published in Hódmezővásárhely; Imre's essay republished in *Studies in Literary History*
1903 Péterfy's article republished in his *Collected Works*

1905 Radó's earlier translations reprinted in *Recital-Books*

1909 Article by V.S. published in *Constitution*, entitled "Petőfi and Burns"

1923 Tolnai's "Robert Burns's 'Saturday Night' in Our Literature" published in *Budapest Review*

1928 Ten translations by Radó in *English and American Poets*

1930 The ten translations by Radó reprinted in *English Poets*

1932 Dedinszky's doctoral thesis on *Petőfi and Burns*

1934 Babits's *The History of European Literature* published

1941 Szerb's *The History of World Literature* published

1952 *Selected Poems* edited by László Kéry and István Kormos; Kéry's introductory essay in the volume

1956 *Selected Poems* edited by István Kormos

1958 Fifteen translations in Bartos's *A Treasury of English Literature*

1959 Enlarged edition of the 1952 *Selected Poems* published
Kényeres's comparative analysis, "One Topic, Two Poets" published in *Philological Review*

1966 *A red, red Rose*, a new comprehensive edition of the poems published

1967 Deluxe edition of *The Jolly Beggars* published

1973 *The Poems of Robert Burns*, the most recent edition published

1975 Bárczy's "Popular Tendency in the Works of Csonokai and Burns" published in *Hungarian Studies in English*; Kéry's essay reprinted in his collection *English Writers*
NOTES

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The author feels greatly obliged to his friends who valuably assisted him in the preparation of the present article: Miss E. Borsoszky, Mr. D. Bíró, Mr. P. Dohár, Mr. Z. Iván, and Mr. G. Mátýás.

All translations appearing in the article—including the titles of various essays—are by the author. In the case of the Arany couplet no claim is made for poetic virtue.

2 Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849) is considered one of the greatest poets of Hungarian literature. His poetry is closely connected to folk poetry and thus he became the leading figure of the Hungarian populist romanticism and popular tendency. He took part in the 1848-49 Revolution and War of Independence and died on the battlefield.

3 Friedrich Hirth (ed.), Heinrich Heine's Briefwechsel (Heinrich Heine's Correspondence), (Berlin, 1920), III, 90.

4 Mihály Tompa (1817-1868) is a significant representative of the populist school. Wrote mainly epic poetry. Worked as a pastor and in the War of Independence served as army chaplain.

5 János Arany (1817-1882) is the greatest Hungarian epic poet, a friend and colleague of Petőfi. Worked mainly as a teacher. During the War of Independence he was an editor and worked for the government. He is among the best Hungarian translators.

6 Mór Ráth (ed.), Arany János Hátrahagyott iratai és levelezése (János Arany's Posthumous Writings and Correspondence), (Sudapest, 1887), III, 452.

7 Károly Szász (1828-1905) though prolific is hardly a major figure. He was a university lecturer and wrote some significant essays. More important as a translator than a poet.

8 József Lévay (1825-1918), a minor poet of the populist tendency, wrote mainly songs, a typical genre in Hungarian poetry since Petőfi. In hiding after the Revolution, he later became an editor and a member of the Academy.
Jenő Péterfy (1850-1899) was one of the best essayists and critics of nineteenth-century Hungary. His talent was not recognized until after his early death, but since then he has been more and more appreciated.

Nyugat was the most significant literary periodical between the two World Wars. It was edited by the most outstanding men of letters of this era.


op. cit., VI, 86.

Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773-1805) was the greatest poet of the Hungarian Age of Enlightenment. He wrote songs, epic poems, and plays, as well as important essays. He lived mainly in Debrecen, in eastern Hungary.

Mór Ráth (ed.), *Arany János Hítrahagyott íratai és levelezése* (János Arany's Posthumous Writings and Correspondence), (Budapest, 1887), III, 449-50.