

A MAGYAR IRODALOM FOGADTATÁSA A VIKTORIÁNUS ANGLIÁBAN, 1830–1914. By Lőránt Czigány. Irodalomtörténeti Füzetek, 89. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976. 287 pp. 29 Ft., paper.

John Bowring's *Poetry of the Magyars*, published in 1830, was the first English-language anthology of Hungarian verse to appear in print. A significant segment of Hungarian literary opinion held that the work represented a general interest in and awareness of Hungarian literature in Western Europe and that Hungarian authors, therefore, were at long last writing for a European audience. The truth was different: the book appealed primarily to English interest in the far-away, the exotic. Lőránt Czigány's exhaustive study, based upon evidence from a wide range of Victorian periodicals, newspapers, anthologies, and encyclopedias, lays to rest the still prevalent notion (in Hungary) that some of Hungary's literary "greats" entered the mainstream of English literature the way, say, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Ibsen, or Heine did—to say nothing of Dante or Goethe.

Bowring's anthology contained a study of Hungarian literary history, from the seventeenth century to the 1820s, as well as English versions of Hungarian folk songs and poems. Since Bowring himself knew very little Hungarian, he translated not from the original, but from the German translations he found in his German-language originals. Though the work received wide notice—some twenty-five English periodicals reviewed it—it was only in 1848–49, following the political upheaval in Hungary, that it achieved the height of its brief popularity. In 1866, Bowring published an anthology of selections from Sándor Petőfi, who was also widely reviewed, but coldly received. As in his earlier work, Bowring's English versions tended to be only vague approximations of their originals, both semantically and stylistically. As literature, they were stillborn.

Hungarian fiction fared somewhat better than did Hungarian poetry. József Eötvös's *The Village Notary*, translated and published in 1850, owed its relatively large success to English interest in the political and social world depicted in the novel, again, as a result of the revolution. It was left to Mór Jókai to achieve a genuine, albeit temporary, popularity. Beginning with the 1890s, many of Jókai's novels were published in English, satisfying the demand of a large reading public for complex, romantic tales with exotic settings. A few of Jókai's novels were being reprinted as late as the 1920s. Though some of these translations were based directly on their Hungarian originals, most of them were done from German versions; all of them were subjected to heavy editorial excisions and even interpolations to suit English tastes. Such "improvements" notwithstanding, there were a few eastward-looking English critics who put Jókai in a class with Tolstoy and Turgenev.

Czigány's remarks on various English translations of Petőfi are applicable, alas, to virtually all other attempts of this kind. For want of good translations, Hungarian literature remained (and, perhaps, continues to remain) almost unknown. Moreover, in the absence of good translations, no competent translator thought it worth his while to learn Hungarian. A vicious circle.

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FIVE MODERN YUGOSLAV PLAYS. Edited and with an introduction by *Branko Mikasinovich*. New York: Cyrco Press, Inc., 1977. xii, 339 pp.

The number of works translated into English from contemporary Yugoslav literature is relatively high; both poetry and prose are well represented. Basically, this can be attributed to three factors: the high quality of literary works, a larger number of qualified translators, and, finally, an increased interest in Yugoslavia as a country