

literature during the quarter-century prior to 1945—is perhaps even more significant. Kovács's essay pays some attention to the precursors of the socialist press and literature (for example, *Népjog*—1893, *Amerikai Népszava*—1895, *Népakarat*—1903, *Előre*—1905, *Testvériség*—1911, *Előre*—1912, *Bérmunkás*—1917), but its core is devoted to the study of the Communist paper *Új Előre* (1921–37) and to the discussion of the literary and publicistic activities of its editors and most significant contributors (L. Kövess, J. Lékai, I. Bálint, W. Weinberg, E. Olexo, L. Egri, J. Varga, and so forth). In discussing their works and political or publicistic activities, Kovács also supplies us with a vivid description of the Hungarian-American workers' culture in general, of the nature and limitations of émigré (workers') literature, of the significance of immigrant social and cultural organizations, and of the importance of the image of the lost homeland in the lives and thinking of the newcomers, as well as of the conflict between their naïve and often emotional nationalism, on the one hand, and their economic and class interests, which bound or should have bound them to the socialist movement, on the other.

In his discussion of the development and achievements of the Hungarian-American socialist press and literature, Kovács alludes briefly to the existence of its nonsocialist or antisocialist counterpart, but his allusions are so limited that they may lead to certain misconceptions about the relative influence of these two distinct orientations. His discussion should have been placed in a wider framework, and he should have at least commented upon the relative significance of the socialist and nonsocialist interwar Hungarian-American press. As it stands, his study could easily lead one to the conclusion that the socialist press was almost alone, or at least was dominant in the field. Nothing could be further from the truth. The socialist (and especially the Communist) press and literature constituted only a small part of interwar Hungarian-American journalism and belles-lettres. The dominant trend was toward traditional and mostly patriotic writings, which were always more concerned with the effects of the Treaty of Trianon upon Hungary than with the achievements or failures of international socialism or communism. Moreover—as the author himself has pointed out—Hungarian-American literature, like most immigrant literatures of that period, did not reach high aesthetic levels. But insofar as there was any literature of some aesthetic value, it was more in the “nationalist” than in the “socialist” camp (for example, the writings of G. Kemény, Gy. Rudnyánszky, L. Szabó, L. Pólya, and J. Reményi).

These comments notwithstanding, we can only regard József Kovács's study and documentary collection, which is undoubtedly the first serious scholarly work in the field of Hungarian-American literature, as an impressive undertaking. Because there is a need for more works in this category, the author should be encouraged to continue his research and writings along these lines. A similar volume on the achievements of the nonsocialist Hungarian-American literature and press of the interwar period would certainly fill a void that needs to be filled, and would do so in the best traditions of Hungarian literary scholarship.

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JÓZSEF ATTILA VÁLOGATOTT LEVELEZÉSE. Edited and selected by
Erzsébet Fehér. Új Magyar Múzeum, no. 11. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976.
530 pp. 72 Ft.

In Hungary poets still command respect. Their words, spoken and written, are the property of the entire nation, not merely of the initiated. Their lives are inextricably intertwined with the life of their country, and as the history of Hungary is tragic in essence, so are (in many cases) the lives of Hungarian poets. Attila József is among

the finest and most tragic poets of the twentieth century. Born in 1905, he threw himself under a train in 1937. During the thirty-two years of his life he struggled with poverty, unrequited love, and mental instability; for a time a nihilist and anarchist, he turned later to communism and psychoanalysis, unable ever to find a spiritual home. In sum, his poetic legacy was purchased at great personal price.

Work on the life and work of Attila József has become something of an industry in his native land. Oddly enough, *The Selected Correspondence* is the first collection of letters to and from the poet to be published, although most of these letters have already appeared, scattered in various books and journals. The volume constitutes the eleventh in a series of documentary (literary) collections; it is well edited and supplied with detailed explanatory notes. A brief list of significant dates in József's life is appended. For scholars working on the poet's biography, it is indispensable.

I regret to say that I do not think the volume will be of much interest to the general reader. Discussions of a philosophic or literary nature are few; even those letters written from 1925 to 1927, years the poet spent largely in Vienna and Paris (where, as we know, his more mature thought took shape), are curiously mundane. Hence, there is here none of the kind of excitement generated by Thomas Mann's correspondence. To be sure, the correspondence of few writers can equal that of the German master (whom József much admired); but even if judged as expressions of József's own spiritual experience, the letters are disappointing. One comes away from them with a feeling of pity, rather than a sense of tragedy. Money—the lack of it—is, for example, a constant theme; surely the most pathetic letter in the collection is that to the distinguished poet-editor Mihály Babits (January 28, 1933). In it József asks Babits, whose work he had maligned, to use his good offices as codirector of a literary foundation to secure for him desperately needed financial aid.

Psychological problems form another pathetic theme; yet there is no heroic madness here (as with Nietzsche), but rather modern "mental illness." Indeed, knowing of József's great interest in Freud (there is in the collection a brief letter from the father of psychoanalysis thanking József for a poem written in honor of Freud's eightieth birthday), one is reminded of Karl Kraus's famous aphorism to the effect that psychoanalysis is the disease for which it pretends to be the cure (see, for example, the fantastic letter written to Edit Gyömrői, one of József's analysts, dated October 28, 1936).

Arthur Koestler once wrote of Attila József that "both his work and his personal fate were a terrifying symbol of our time." To understand that symbol, one must direct attention to the poetic achievement.

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SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE UNDER OTTOMAN RULE, 1354–1804. By *Peter F. Sugar*. A History of East Central Europe, vol. 5, edited by *Peter F. Sugar* and *Donald W. Treadgold*. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1977. xviii, 365 pp. Maps. \$16.95.

Peter Sugar has written an interpretation of southeastern Europe under Ottoman rule from which few will fail to learn. As always, he brings a fresh view to familiar material, and fresh material to familiar issues.

In all three periods of Ottoman history, the origins of the empire, its maturity, and its decline, Sugar is both a master of data and a virtuoso of interpretation. His overall conclusion is that the empire's greatest strength was at the same time its greatest weakness. The early empire, "the divinely protected well-flourishing absolute domain of the House of Osman," was founded on the twin pillars of loyalty to the