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LEHEL VADON: *AMERICAN RENAISSANCE: A HUNGARIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY*.

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Lehel Vadon in *American Renaissance: A Hungarian Bibliography* provides much needed bibliographical data on the Hungarian editions of some major writers of the American Renaissance: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, and Emily Dickinson. The main title as well as the selection of authors suggest Vadon's embracing F. O. Matthiessen's concept of the development of American literature in the nineteenth century, outlined in his seminal book, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941). Although the limitations of the original concept have been successfully challenged by later generations of critics, the term American Renaissance (albeit with modified definitions) has long become an indispensable item of critical terminology.

The chapters on individual authors contain information on both primary and secondary sources. Vadon first lists the works of the given author published in Hungarian either in full or in parts, categorized by genre. This is followed by a section on Hungarian publications about the author in the form of books, studies, reviews, and so on. Such structuring proves to be user-friendly and satisfies the main goal of the author, i. e., "to make available for the first time a reasonably complete record of publications [...] of the writers of the American Renaissance." Even before the reader looks at the actual data, the varying length of individual chapters in itself deserves attention since it reflects on the visibility and popularity of authors. While Emerson and Hawthorne seem to have attracted significant readerly and critical interest (both chapters are

approximately 30 pages long), the sections on Melville and Thoreau are much shorter (18 and 8 pages). The longest chapter by far is the one on Dickinson: 123 pages. There are several factors which explain such disproportions so I will revisit the question in my analysis of individual chapters.

The first Hungarian translation of Emerson's works appeared as early as 1859, followed by the systematic, chapter-by-chapter translation of his *Representative Men* by Károly Szász in 1894. Indeed, it is this collection of essays that first attracted Hungarian readers to Emerson. His poems and other essays, for the most part, did not come out in Hungarian until the 1920s. "Brahma" and "The Snow-Storm" seem to have been the most popular of his poems but the fact that all poems appeared in the same original translation even in later collections suggests that his poetry did not stir enough interest to call for re-translation. This is clearly not the case with the essays which, translated first in the 1920s, received a new boost of attention in the 1980s when texts like "Self-reliance," "The American Scholar," "Circles," and others were not only republished but also appeared in new translation. Such facts reveal that Emerson (just like Thoreau, as we will see later) was interesting for the Hungarian audience primarily as a thinker and not a poet.

Although *The Marble Faun* was the first of Hawthorne's novels to be translated into Hungarian in 1871, two other novels of his oeuvre appear to be the most popular. *The Scarlet Letter* was first published in a Hungarian edition in 1921 and, since then, György Bálint's original translation has been republished in almost every decade of the twentieth-century. *The House of the Seven Gables* was not available until 1941 but has seen 8 editions ever since. Hawthorne's short stories also seem to have enjoyed a steady reputation and popularity. Several of his stories—among them "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "The Snow-Image"—came out as early as 1877 but almost every major story has been available in Hungarian since the 1920s. The results of a new wave of translations of familiar short stories were published in 1979 indicating continuing interest in Hawthorne's oeuvre.

Melville's and Thoreau's works seem to have needed a much longer time to make it on the Hungarian scene: most of them were not translated in full until the 1950s and 60s. Thoreau is primarily known for *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience*, excerpts from both first appeared after 1947. *Moby Dick* is the only one of Melville's numerous novels that has been translated in full although it has been reprinted 15 times (though in some

cases as a children's book). His major short stories, "Bartleby the Scrivener," "Billy Budd," and "Benito Cereno" were not translated until the late 1960s and mid-70s, just like his poems although a surprisingly large number of those has been included in recent anthologies of American literature. In fact, Melville looks very much like a scholars' writer (perfectly in line with his status outside Hungary as well). Despite the small number of available texts and editions (especially compared with Hawthorne and Dickinson), his oeuvre has attracted a striking and steady critical attention: 4 Hungarian monograph studies include chapters on his works (more than on any other author here), 51 essays have been written on him vs. 15 on Thoreau, 35 on Dickinson, 61 on Emerson, and 77 on Hawthorne.

Dickinson received the longest chapter in the volume due to the impressively large number of her poems translated into Hungarian. Although Amy Károlyi clearly stands out as the most enthusiastic translator and commentator on Dickinson, the poems have also enjoyed the attention of numerous other translators. The first poems appeared in Hungarian relatively early—1935 and 1943—considering the poet's controversial status in the canon of American poetry. Yet the culmination of Hungarian publications arrived only in the late 1970s and early 1980s when two collections containing the poet's works exclusively came out. The translations in these volumes are based on and inspired by the seminal Thomas Johnson edition of Dickinson's poems (1955) which challenged the previously published, heavily edited (distorted) versions of the poems and first presented them in their original form. *Bibliography* also reveals that Dickinson was read in Hungary not only as a (North-)American poet appearing primarily in relevant university readers or standard anthologies of American literature. Besides, she was conceived as a children's poet and, significantly, as a female poet, for example in *An Anthology of Poetesses* (1943), edited by Sophie Török and Katalin Kotzián. It also becomes apparent that Dickinson's oeuvre and figure have inspired several plays and poems, many of those available in Hungarian as well. In light of the abundance of response from translators, it is somewhat disappointing to see the lean scholarly attention to the poet's work. Károlyi's are the only books written on Dickinson and although the 1970s produced a few scholarly articles, no monograph studies have been published since 1981.

American Renaissance: A Hungarian Bibliography is based on meticulously researched data and offers enormous help to scholars

interested in the Hungarian reception of major nineteenth-century American authors. It is not easy to find the most appropriate form and structure to present such information but Vadon overcomes such challenges for the most part. However, it remains unclear why the name of the translator is not listed in the case of some collections (for example, university readers) and, more importantly, why only the Hungarian, but not the original English title, appears in numerous cases. This latter problem becomes especially confusing in the case of Dickinson's poetry since she did not assign titles to her poems thus the identification of the original text may prove to be somewhat challenging. The Dickinson chapter provokes another, albeit minor, question, namely the photo of the poet the author chooses to include. Scholars have had serious problems with finding an authentic photographic image of Dickinson and, in fact, all three of the existing illustrations have posed challenges and dissatisfaction. However, critical consensus seems to have settled on the latest one, taken when Dickinson was 17. The author naturally enjoys perfect freedom to choose the illustrations he finds best for his purposes but one cannot help feeling uneasy that while all the other authors in the volume are presented as adults, the photo of Dickinson included here is that of a 10-year-old child, an image unlikely to suggest the figure of a complex, sophisticated and mature poet.

Despite reservations like the above, one must emphasize the significance of this volume in the Hungarian scholarship of American literature. The amount of data and the organization of massive information are impressive and will, surely, prove to be indispensable for later reception studies of the American Renaissance. Bibliographies like Vadon's *American Renaissance* offer a much needed reflection on the scholarly and readerly response to a body of literature and make the reader aware of important, previously unsuspected literary, cultural or ideological contexts and priorities.