

## REVIEWS

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**A magyar irodalom története**  
(History of Hungarian Literature). Edited by Tibor Klaniczay  
Budapest, Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1982. 487 pp. 95,— Ft

Hungarian literary histories of a comprehensive character were first prepared in the last century. In the first part of our century a development in this field was brought about by the work of a few, solitary scholars such as Jenő Pintér, Antal Szerb and Géza Féja. In the post-war period the works written by a single author were replaced by collective works, literary histories of three (1957–1967) and of six volumes (1964–1966), respectively.

As a result of these works, the tradition of comprehensive analysis of the national literature was born in Hungary. Few similar undertakings can be found in other countries. This tradition exerts a significant influence not only on Hungarian literary research and on Hungarian readers but also on those living in foreign countries. The voluminous, summarizing works published after the war made it possible for smaller literary histories to appear, written primarily for foreigners. The first book of this kind was that of Tibor Klaniczay, József Szauder and Miklós Szabolcsi entitled *Kis magyar irodalomtörténet* (Small Hungarian Literary History, 1961), later published in six foreign languages: French (1962), Russian (1962), German (1963), English (1964), Polish (1966) and Bulgarian (1975). Another comprehensive work of this kind, larger than its predecessor, was first published in German (*Handbuch der ungarischen Literatur*, 1977), and later in French (*Histoire de la littérature hongroise des origines à nos jours*, 1980). It is now available in an enlarged edition published in Hungarian.

The authors of the here reviewed (History of Hungarian Literature) are: István Nemeskürty (to the end of the 18th century), László Orosz (to the middle of the 19th century), Béla G. Németh (to the end of the 19th century), Attila Tamás (20th century), András Görömbei (Hungarian literature outside the borders of the country), and Ildikó Tódor (bibliography). The editor-in-chief of the book is Tibor Klaniczay. The members of this team belong to the middle and younger generation of excellent experts of Hungarian literary history, and are scholars with experience in the preparation of collective works of a comprehensive character.

In the handbook Hungarian literature is divided into ten periods: the Middle Ages (until the beginning of the 16th century), the Renaissance (from the middle of the 15th century to the beginning of the 17th century), Baroque (from the beginning of the 17th century to the middle of the 18th century), the Age of Enlightenment and Classicism (the decades of the turn of the 19th century), Romanticism of the Age of Reforms (the first part of the 19th century), the Age of Popularism (the middle of the 19th century), the Age of Realism (the last thirty years of the 19th century), the Age of the *Nyugat* (the first twenty years of the 20th century), the Age of modern artistic trends and of the victory of the ideas of socialism (between the two World Wars), and contemporary literature—that of most recent times.

The apportionment of space given to any one period is quite interesting. Old Hungarian literature and the Age of Enlightenment and Classicism are discussed on approximately 110 pages; about 125 pages are devoted to the 19th century; and our century was allotted about 160 pages. The number of pages are inversely proportionate to the length of time and to the quantity of the literary materials of the individual periods. This kind of approach to literature may be observed today in several countries. It serves primarily to satisfy the interest and requirements of the reader for an increasingly detailed picture of contemporary literature.

The chronological division of the handbook corresponds to the great ages of European culture and literature. This makes it easier for Hungarian literature (which has been pushed into a somewhat isolated situation, mainly by the isolated position of the Hungarian language in Europe) to come closer to the other national literatures of Europe. This isolation may, by the way, be felt most clearly in the 20th century. But in this case, on account of the lack of the necessary perspectives in time, we are not yet able to properly grasp the dominant tendencies.

The discussion of literary phenomena of each age is preceded by a short introduction which presents the reader with historical and cultural roots—the background as well as the elements of literary life. These introductions which discuss the events from the European point of view provide the foreign reader with the necessary knowledge of Hungarian events. In addition, they furnish explanation of the development of literary trends. The literary material itself is divided up on the basis of a diversity of viewpoints.

Separate chapters have been devoted to the discussion of the most outstanding Hungarian writers, to wit: Bálint Balassi, Miklós Zrínyi, Mihály Vitéz Csokonai, Dániel Berzsenyi, Mihály Vörösmarty, Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, Mór Jókai, Imre Madách, Kálmán Mikszáth, Endre Ady, Zsigmond Móricz, Mihály Babits, Dezső Kosztolányi, Attila József, Miklós Radnóti, László Németh, Gyula Illyés and Tibor Déry. These portraits, of the most outstanding figures, present the life and works of the Hungarian classical authors best known outside Hungary, or perhaps of those who have done most to be placed among them.

In addition to the presentation of individual authors, much attention has been paid to literary genres. It is thanks to this that the readers can trace the development of the novel, beginning with its initial verse and prose forms created in the Age of Enlightenment, through its real birth in the first era of Romanticism and through its evolution towards Realism, up to the flourishing of the short story at the end of the last century. In a similar manner, though not in so much detail, the development of the drama and poetry is analyzed within the individual periods. Within these large genres which are present in several ages, other genres, specific to only the era, as for example, the genre of the Baroque memoir, are discussed and analyzed.

The book also introduces the literary works belonging to the individual literary trends, beginning with early Renaissance humanist writings in Latin and late Renaissance mannerism in Hungarian up to the avantgarde between the two World Wars. Finally, special mention should be made of the chapters classified according to other criteria, for example, the literature of the Middle Ages in Hungarian and Latin, Baroque court poetry and the popular as well as religious literature of the Baroque Age. Only the introduction of the era following World War II differs from the ages presented on the basis of the above-mentioned principles. It is presented only through its most important representatives. This is the way the most recent, contemporary literature is generally discussed since the necessary perspectives are lacking. In summary it may be stated that the different parts give proper emphasis to the characteristics of each age and era. The separate chapters within the individual ages and eras are also based on similar principles of composition.

In this work the authors and materials are selected according to the concept and volume of the work in question. Bearing this in mind, no essential discrepancies can be discovered in the book. Two aspects of this work must be singled out for praise because they have enriched the contents of the work beyond our expectations. They concern the treatment of written materials intended as literature from the Baroque to the present day—from elementary reflections upon literary history, through the development of major literary historical works and the growing significance of the genre of literary criticism, to the birth of the literary essay and meditations on literary theory. These are fields in which Hungarian literary sciences has achieved significant results, some of which are well-known and properly appreciated outside of Hungary. A valuable supplement to the history of contemporary Hungarian literature is the chapter devoted to literary activities outside the borders of Hungary. This subject is treated for the first time in the present, Hungarian edition of this work, making readers acquainted with writers living in Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Yugoslavia, where a significant number of Hungarians live. It is regrettable that Hungarian writers living in other countries have not been included in the book.

The handbook, as was its intention, presents Hungarian literature primarily to foreigners. Its various merits show that it may be extremely useful for foreign readers. The book contains well-chosen, basic information about individual writers and their works. There is a well-struck balance among the different parts, those offering introduction and information, and those furnishing interpretation, and this makes the book worthwhile reading. It contains the newest results of Hungarian literary science, as well as the most recent achievements of research in literary history (facts) and literary theory (methodological approaches). The work also contains quotations which make it possible to establish direct contact with literary reality. Those who wish to know Hungarian literature better receive great assistance from the parallels, analogies and real connections drawn in the book between Hungarian literature on the one hand and foreign literary works, on the other.

The work ends with a valuable bibliography containing the following: bibliographies, biographical dictionaries and literary encyclopaedias, works of literary history containing summaries of Hungarian literary works, literary anthologies, basic works on literary history (discussing the individual eras and trends, literary genres, literary language, stylistics, prosody and translation, history of books, libraries, printing and press, connections of Hungarian literature with other literatures, the works of the most outstanding researchers from the post-war era) and works on the most important writers. In the bibliography a significant place has been allotted to publications in foreign languages as well as to writing published abroad. These show the vivid interest with which Hungarian literature is followed outside the country, especially today. Another supplement contains portraits of about forty Hungarian writers.

Taking several viewpoints into account, the synthesis of literary history presented here well deserves to be known abroad. As presented it is available in three languages. It is hoped that it will also appear soon in other languages.

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Görömbei, András  
**A csehszlovákiai magyar irodalom 1945–1980**  
(Czechoslovakian Hungarian literature 1945—1980)

Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982. 444 pp.  
(Irodalomtörténeti Könyvtár, vol. 37.) 74,— Ft

Czechoslovak Hungarian literature\* (i.e. Hungarian literature in Czechoslovakia) as a phenomenon and concept has existed since 1918. Although the phrase might seem to speak for itself, some explanation might not be entirely out of place.

In accordance with the most widely spread model existing to common knowledge, a given national literature corresponds to the literature of a given country. This, however, occurs less frequently in its purest form than one might believe. Looking at the map of Europe, it is immediately apparent that over the ocean from Portuguese literature we find Brazilian literature, the language of which is also Portuguese, but which is otherwise completely different; literatures in the Spanish language flourish outside Spain across the whole of Latin America; literature in English is not only cultivated in England, but also in the USA, Canada, and Australia; people write in German not only in the two Germanies but also in Austria and Switzerland, etc. And this creates a diversity of overlapping areas and continuous possibilities of transition—one needs only

\*Throughout in the review we keep this word-by-word translation of the Hungarian book title. For an explanation see the full text of the review. (Editorial remark.)