

**Vadon, Lehel. *Az amerikai irodalom és irodalomtudomány bibliográfiája Magyarországon 2000-ig* [A Bibliography of American Literature and Literary Scholarship in Hungary to 2000]. Eger: EKTF Líceum, 2007. 3 volumes. Vol. I: 1275 pp; Vol. II: 1138 pp; Vol. III: 1243 pp.**

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Some reference books can be read for both business and pleasure. Readers who are curious about American literature and literary scholarship and consult any of the three volumes of Lehel Vadon's impressive bibliography also embark on an enjoyable imaginary travel through time. These new volumes continue and extend time. Lehel Vadon's previously published bibliographical works on American literature and literary scholarship,<sup>1</sup> and the massive volumes offer a unique opportunity to explore the interests and preferences of our predecessors, translators, and literary scholars alike, in mediating, surveying, and critically evaluating American literature in Hungary. The adventurous browser will have moments of elation seeing the rich and almost instantaneous translation and critical acclaim of Mark Twain's work, but may also feel embarrassment at the rather late reception of Henry James. S/he may acknowledge the richness of primary and critical sources of Charles Olson, but regret the scarcity of critical articles on Hart Crane.

Some critical blind spots notwithstanding, the bibliography reflects the continuous preoccupation of Hungarian authors and literary scholars with American literature. As Lehel Vadon claims in the preface, the sheer quantity of the bibliographical material collected in these volumes belies skeptical opinions about the insignificance of the impact that American authors had on Hungarian literature and culture (41). Even the earliest developments of American letters were noted in Hungary, hence the solid critical reception of colonial authors like Increase Mather, Thomas Hooker and Roger Williams. In the late nineteenth century the literature of the United States captured Hungarian authors' and critics' attention. Translations from the poetry of Bryant, Longfellow, and Whittier reflected the conventional taste of Hungarian readers of the period, while the publication and critical reception of an innovator like Walt Whitman was rather belated, beginning only in the 1910s. For long decades in the twentieth century the availability of American literature reflected ideological demands, especially during the postwar years when the Marxist-dominated literary criticism and publishing policies favored American authors of the political left. Yet in some cases the selection of authors for translation was also a political statement of resistance, suffice it to point out Dezső Tandori's solid work as translator of American high Modernist and Confessional poetry. The above remarks are, of course, based

on information randomly selected, oriented by first impressions, and also not devoid of personal biases of interest and preference. Systematic work on the reception of American authors in Hungary is an urgent necessity which will certainly get impetus from this monumental and exhaustive bibliography that captures the enormous wealth of critical material available in our libraries.

An immersion in the history of the reception of more than three centuries of American literature invites us to draw a lesson from the achievements and debts of past scholars, but it also suggests the magnitude of the challenges ahead. Lehel Vadon's is organized in a user-friendly way that makes it easier for scholars to survey tasks and plan further research. The bibliography lists 2,371 American authors, their works published in Hungarian translation, and offers the full spectrum of literary scholarship in the form of books, book articles and scholarly articles in periodicals in 51,408 bibliographical entries. The appendices offering the lists of periodicals, authors, and translators provide indispensable assistance not only in locating, but also in orienting the researcher in the retrieval of information. Also, the width of the surveyed material is impressive: it includes books and periodicals not only from present-day Hungary but from the surrounding countries as well, and offers insight into the vivid cultural life of the Hungarian ethnic minorities outside the mother country. Finally, this work is the first such comprehensive bibliography in Hungary, and unique in that it includes both current and retrospective material. A further task will be to continuously update and make the material available as an electronic database.

Scholars in the fields of American Studies, librarians, and teachers of English nationwide will greet this valuable reference work with much enthusiasm, and will pay homage to the dedicated work of Lehel Vadon by following his example and using his new bibliography to extend research in American literature. Now there can be no excuse for delaying thorough and comprehensive studies about the reception of American literature in Hungary. Finally, let me express a modest anticipation. Hungarian readers may have something more to gain by the recent publication of this bibliography. Due to the steady development of American studies in our country the critical reception of, for instance, contemporary nonwhite ethnic American authors has preceded the publication of their works in Hungarian translation. Also, several classic American novels of the mid-nineteenth century—Herman Melville's, for example—, are still not available in translation. Lehel Vadon's work should inspire publishers to pay long overdue debts to American authors, past and contemporary, who have still not made their way to the Hungarian reading public.

<sup>1</sup> *Az amerikai irodalom és Irodalomtudomány bibliográfiája 1990-ig* [A Bibliography of American Literature and Literary Scholarship in Hungarian Periodical Publications to 1990] (Eger, 1997), as well as the following bibliographies of primary and secondary sources: *Edgar Allan Poe: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Institute of English

and American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2004); *American Renaissance: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2005); *Walt Whitman: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2005); *Mark Twain: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2005); *American Dramatists: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2006); *Jack London: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2006); *Mark Twain: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2006); *Thomas Stearns Eliot: A Hungarian Bibliography* (Department of American Studies, Eszterházy Károly College, 2008).