In his postscript to the facsimile edition of the draft manuscript of *Buda halála* [The Death of Buda] by János Arany (1817–82), held in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest, Dezső Keresztury wrote, “as his plan grew, as the materials gathered from his readings proliferated—on which the secondary literature would have filled a small library had the positivist tendency to study sources and the historical evolution of motifs not gone out of fashion—the poet became increasingly troubled.”¹ It was only when he saw this vast, confusing and contradictory material that Arany, according to Keresztury, realized that he had to make his own selection from it.

As something of a last Mohican or the aging Toldi (I owe the flattering comparison to my esteemed colleague Péter Dávidházi), I intend to adhere in this essay to the now unfashionable school of philology, and by identifying and presenting one of the principal inspirations for *The Death of Buda* and the unfinished Hun trilogy,² namely Arnold Ipolyi’s *Magyar Mythologia* [Hungarian Mythology].³ In my view, one would be remiss to neglect the consideration of this source, considering that the copy of Ipolyi’s book used by Arany (the margins of which are full of his notes) is available in the Manuscript Archives.

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² This was the grand project by which Arany intended to provide the nation with the epic cycle on Attila which, to his great regret, did not survive in historical record. According to his plans, formulated in 1855, the three parts would be the following: i, *Attila and Buda*; ii, *Ríka and Ildikó* (the two wives of Attila); iii, *Prince Csaba*. The first part, rebaptized *The Death of Buda*, was published in 1863, several fragments survived from the third part, and the second had not begun.
of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with the shelf mark 517.4 A thorough analysis of these notes would overstep the bounds of this essay, so I will limit myself to discussion of the sections related to Arany’s plans for the Hun epic. They will be published in their entirety as part of the critical edition under the editorship of János H. Korompay, in the volume devoted to marginalia. There is hope for the success of this endeavor for the greater part of the surviving books from Arany’s library—much of which was either scattered or destroyed, i.e., the books held in the Arany János Museum in the Truncated Tower [Csonka Torony] in Nagyszalonta [Salonta in Romanian; the village of Arany’s birth]—are available on microfilm in the library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

Géza Voinovich mentioned this copy of Ipolyi’s book in his three-volume biography of Arany. He clearly had the book in his possession while working on the biography, and it was a stroke of immeasurable good fortune that it had not been destroyed in his apartment during the siege of Budapest along with other books and manuscripts of Arany. He first refers to the book in connection with Arany’s shift away from German legend and myth in his collection of source materials for an epic which he had already made the subject of intense study, towards the Hungarian tradition: “in the details he made use of Priskos’s notes5 and Arnold Ipolyi’s *Hungarian Mythology.*”6 Indeed in a footnote Voinovich included the list written by Arany on the last page of the book referring to passages, including page numbers, to which he alludes as thematic material for *The Death of Buda.*7 In another section of his book, in connection with the description of Ármány or Manó, Voinovich again referred to the influence of Ipolyi; however, I did not find not a single jotting by Arany on the two pages (25 and 136) he mentions.8

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5 The reference would be to the report of Priskos Rhetor (fl. 433–68) on his mission to Attila’s court. Modern edition: Pia Corolla, *Excerpta et fragmenta* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008). The Greek and Latin historical sources were provided for Arany by Lajos Kovács, an ex-colleague teacher from Geszt.


7 Ibid., n. 7.

8 Ibid., 132, n. 40.