

Riddles in the Manuscript and Print Version of a 19th-Century Collection

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ABSTRACT

Scholarly publication of folk riddles in Hungary started in the mid-19th century. Among the early sources was the first classic collection of Hungarian folktales, *Eredeti népmesék* [Authentic Folktales], compiled by László Arany, which includes a separate chapter comprising 54 *riddle tales*. Manuscripts related to this publication were found in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences among other collections from the 19th century and identified in the 1960s as having been recorded by members of the Arany family. The manuscripts contain all the riddles published by László Arany, along with 25 riddle texts that remained unpublished. Comparison of the two sources reveals the editing process: the selection and arrangement of the material, along with the text modifications applied by László Arany. The first part of this article consists of a few terminological notes on tales and riddle tales in 19th-century Hungary, followed by the description of the riddle material in the manuscripts associated with the Arany family. In the second part the author presents in more detail the editing process which shows a far higher degree of conscious editorial attention than other publications of folk riddles in the period.

KEYWORDS

riddle, riddle tale, Arany family, textology, text editing

László Arany (1844–1898) was only 18 when the anthology *Eredeti népmesék* [Authentic Folktales] (ARANY L. 1862) was published under his name – a collection which contemporaries saw as “the best told Hungarian folktales” (GYULAI 1900:6) and which in Hungarian folkloristics is considered the first classic collection of folktales (VOIGT 1998:237; KÓSA 2001:65; DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:10). ‘László Arany’s collection of folktales,’ however, was not only László Arany’s work and not only a collection of folktales, as *The Folktale Collection of the Arany Family*, the

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synoptic critical edition published in 2018 (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018)¹ demonstrates. The manuscripts that had served as the basis of the critical edition may be traced back to at least three individuals, but there is also a fourth handwriting we need to reckon with whose source has remained unidentified to this day, but is other than Juliska Arany, Julianna Ercsey, or László Arany who have been identified as having noted down the tales.²

The volume is also more than a collection of just tales, since directly before the catch tales concluding the volume, it also includes a separate chapter comprising 54 *riddle tales* (ÁRANY L. 1862:318–325, 328; DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:503–537). These texts are not tales, but examples of another folklore genre which we refer to in today’s terminology as folk riddles.

Thus, *Eredeti népmesék* is not only an important source for folktale research but also one of the early examples of folk riddle publications in Hungarian folkloristics. Scholarly publications in this field began in Hungary in 1856 on the pages of a linguistic journal, *Magyar Nyelvészet* (1856–1861), while there was only one anthology of folk literature before László Arany’s volume in which riddles were published as part of a larger collection (see MERÉNYI 1861/I:204–224). One respect in which Arany’s collection is unique among the early sources is that the manuscripts on which the book was based have been preserved and are available for research.

In this article the author aims at revealing the editing process of the riddle chapter, which shows a far higher degree of conscious editorial attention than other publications of folk riddles in the period. First, the riddle material in the manuscripts associated with the Arany family is described. In the second part the editing process is presented in more detail, with regard to the selection and arrangement of the riddles as well as the text modifications applied by László Arany.

‘MESE’ [TALE] AND ‘TALÁLÓS MESE’ [RIDDLE TALE] IN THE 19TH CENTURY. A FEW NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL QUESTIONS

Before going any further, it is necessary to consider, at least tangentially, what the term *találós mese* [riddle tale] meant in Hungary in the mid-19th century and how the genre it denoted was connected to tales. Research on the meaning of the Hungarian term *mese* [tale] has most recently been reviewed by Judit Gulyás (2008). Sources agree that one of the first meanings of the word must have been *riddle* or *enigma*, with data corroborating this claim from the 16th century onwards (VOIGT 1980). It was used in this sense in Hungarian literacy up to as late as the 19th century (see GULYÁS 2008:171–175, 198–202; VARGHA 2011:97–98), but the extent of such usage decreased continually, and there are numerous data indicating that there was a need to make a distinction between the various meanings of the word *mese*. I will mention but two examples of this. An article published in the entertaining-didactical periodical *Hasznos*

¹For more on the critical edition, see Judit Gulyás’s paper in the present issue of *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*.

²László Arany (1844–1898), lawyer, poet, literary translator, folktale scholar. His father, János Arany (1817–1882), is one of Hungary’s greatest poets of the 19th century. His mother, Julianna Ercsey (1818–1885), and elder sister, Juliska Arany (1841–1865), played a significant part in recording the tale and riddle texts that served as a basis of *Eredeti népmesék*. On the members of the Arany family and their role in the emergence of the manuscript tale and riddle collection, see Judit Gulyás’s paper in the present issue of *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* (GULYÁS 2021).



Mulatságok (1817–1840) in 1822 bears the title *Enigma, vagy is mese* [Enigma, in other words, tale] and lists altogether eight meanings of the term to clarify that the author is using it in this particular instance with the eighth meaning – enigma (ANON. 1822:145–147; for an analysis, see GULYÁS 2008:172–176).

“But here we are not using the term *Mese* in any of the senses described so far, but mean by it what our forebears had meant under the term *Enigma* – a saying, pronouncement, or question with a hidden meaning whose sense, definition, or solution needs to be prized out or guessed; and in order to render such a solution all the more difficult, the matter is laid before us through its causes, traits, and conclusions, or is being likened to other, similar things in order to trick the mind, and the contradiction among these things is being placed in the foreground to allow the guesser finally to come upon the true likeness between them. To this end, words of a common meaning are mixed with words of a foreign meaning and the entire Tale is comprised into verses of some kind.” (ANON. 1822:145–147).

As far as relevant lexicons and encyclopaedias are concerned, enigma or riddle also appears as one of but not the primary meaning of the word *mese*, and occasional reference is made to folk literature. Thus, Gergely Czuczor and János Fogarasi’s thesaurus lists six meanings of the word *mese*, where the fifth reads as follows, “(5) catchy or tricky questions concealed in mysterious images which the common people usually start with the phrase, *Mese mese, mi az?* [Riddle, riddle, what is it?] (. . .) They are also known as *találós mese* [riddle tale]; and a more recent term, *rejtély* [mystery]” (CZUCZOR – FOGARASI 1867:508–509).

During the 19th century, the term *találós mese* became increasingly widespread in referring to riddles, while the other meanings of *mese* (tale, and more specifically folktale) became consolidated. However, this term itself contains several shades of meaning and is also shifting in time. Its first documented occurrence is found in the periodical *Mindenek Gyűjtemény* (1789–1792) (*Mindenek Gyűjtemény*, I, 1789:31), where it was introduced as the Hungarian equivalent of the word *enigma* and was used to refer to riddles in verse or other literary form. Usage of the word in reference to texts of folk literature was first documented in 1847, in a report on a session of the literary association Kiszfaludy Society, where János Erdélyi (1814–1868) had proposed that “not only legends should be collected but also riddles (riddle tales), proverbs, and similes that live on the lips of the people” (ANON. 1847:95). Over the 1850s, the expressions *néptalány* [folk riddle] and *találós mese* [riddle tale] both appear in reference to folk riddles, but from 1862 all the way until the 1920s, *találós mese* [riddle tale] is clearly the accepted term for naming the genre.³

RIDDLES IN THE MANUSCRIPTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARANY FAMILY

A hard-cover volume of colligated manuscripts located in the Department of Manuscripts at the Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest contain a total of 123 sheets of manuscript associated with the Arany family.⁴ These are bound in the same volumes with other 19th century manuscripts of collections of folk literature connected with

³On terminological issues in the 19th century related to the genre of riddles in Hungary, see VARGHA 2011:96–106.

⁴On the process of finding and identifying this manuscript corpus, see DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:11–26; for exact data of the manuscripts, see *ibid.* pp. 26–27.



János Kriza (1811–1875) and the Kisfaludy Society.⁵ The majority of the Arany material consists of tales recorded by several members of the Arany family, and only seven pages contain *riddle tales*. 75 of the 79 riddle tales are found continuously on six sheets, separately from the tale texts (MTA KIK Kt. Irod. 4-r. 409/I. 3r–8r). The title *Találós mesék* [Riddle tales] appears five times in the total body of manuscript pages, which partly indicates that the recorded texts were clearly classified as belonging to the same genre, and partly that the riddles were presumably noted down over a number of subsequent occasions. The sheets which were folded in half and used for recording them were later arranged into a ‘booklet’ (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:31–32), at least as indicated by page 1, which merely contains the title *Találós mesék*, underlined, with the back of the page left blank. The original order of the sheets has presumably differed from the present state.⁶ This, however, is of little significance, as neither the present, nor the probably original sequence is identical to the order in which the texts were arranged for publication.

Three complete texts and one fragment were noted under the title *Találós mese* on a sheet located in a different part of the manuscript (MTA KIK Kt. Irod. 4-r. 409/II. 18v), in the second volume, on the back of the second page of a tale which came to be published in *Eredeti népmesék* under the title *A kis malacz és a farkasok* [*The piglet and the wolves* (ATU 121)] (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:342–345). This is also the only sheet in the manuscript that includes recordings of both genres, although nothing indicates that the tales and the riddles were recorded in one session. We also lack exact data evidencing the time or place of the texts’ recording. Editors of the critical edition have ascertained that the records were probably made sometime between 1850 and 1861/1862 (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:41); as far as geographic location, the collection probably consisted of tales and riddles “learned in Nagyszalonta and Nagykőrös (or even Pest)” (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:45). Contrary to the folktales, all of the riddles included in *Eredeti népmesék* can be found in the manuscript records of the Arany family, which also includes 25 texts which do not appear in László Arany’s collection.⁷ When the manuscript was found, Györgyi Sáfrán was the first to identify – on the basis of the handwriting of the members of the Arany family – who had made the individual records. Her conclusions were ascertained by the editors of the critical edition, even though they were unable to involve professional graphologists in the editorial process, and so there remain a few textual records where the identity of the recorder is not entirely certain (see DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:27–31).⁸

The currently held view is that the majority of the riddles (76 of the 79 texts) were noted down by János Arany’s elder sister, Juliska Arany. None of the riddles seem to have been written

⁵Kriza János gyűjteménye, *Mesék, találós mesék, versek és népdalok, 19. század második fele* [János Kriza’s Collection. Tales, Riddle Tales, Poems and Folk Songs, Second Half of the 19th Century] (MTA KIK Kt. Irod. 4-r. 409/I–VI.); *A Kisfaludy Társaság népmese-gyűjteménye, 1840–1860-as évek* [The Folktale Collection of the Kisfaludy Society, 1840–1860s] (MTA KIK Kt. Ms 10.020/I–VIII.) (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:16).

⁶Based on the handwriting of the individual pages and the titles and drawings accompanying the riddle texts, I assume that the original arrangement of the four sheets folded in half was probably the following: the outside cover was probably the pair of pages later numbered 1 and 8. This in turn contained three further sheets folded in half, possibly already in the process of arrangement for publication, which were, according to the current page numbering, pairs 4–5; 3–6 and 2–7.

⁷The majority of the omitted texts have already been published in 1982 by Ágnes Kovács (1982:529–530); the entirety of the published and unpublished texts of the manuscript were first published by Katalin Vargha, in her own reading (VARGHA 2012:259–279).

⁸In establishing the identity of the various persons who recorded the texts, I rely on the conclusions of the editors of the critical edition, which, naturally, also summarise prior scholarly findings on the subject.



down by their mother, Julianna Ercsey, unlike in the case of the folktales, and only two riddles may be considered as recorded by László Arany, neither of which have been published by him in print. The first scholar to engage with this manuscript material, Ágnes Kovács attributed the recording of one single riddle to László Arany (KOVÁCS 1982:530) – the only one to be written in pencil, which reads as follows, „Szegény paraszt ember úton-utfélen elhajagálja a nagy urak m[eg?] zsebbe teszik. takony [?]” [Poor peasants scatter it freely along the road, while the grand lords keep it in their pocket (snot) [?]] (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:532 [75]).⁹

Another text shows similarities with László Arany’s handwriting in young adulthood, which goes, “Míg él mindég áll, holta után szaladgál (ördög szek[. . .])” [While it’s alive, it stands still, after it’s dead, it runs around (tumbleweed) (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:530 [71/69B]). There is a third text that was also left in manuscript, but the identity of the author cannot be clearly determined based on the handwriting (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:520 [48]).

Another four riddles contain sections of text and longer corrections that were inserted later and show similarities with László Arany’s handwriting (as a young adult), which is indicated in the following citation by underlining. In one case this concerns the text of the riddle, ‘Piros mint a rózsza, kerek mint az alma, rétes ^{rétéges} de nem béles ^{mint a rétes}, emem belőle de nem édes. (veres hagyma)’ [Red like a rose, round like an apple, flaky ^{layered} but not filled ^{like a strudel}, when I eat it, it is not sweet (red onion)] (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:524 [55/47B]). In the case of the other three riddles, it is the solution that contains short texts that were probably inserted or added as corrections later (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:504 [5], 512 [23], 520 [49]).

There may well be several other corrections and additions that came from László Arany, but these are too short for us to ascertain their authorship based on the handwriting. In terms of content, however, the changes are of such a nature as to indicate that they are probably related to preparing the texts for publication. One example is the riddle „Egy ^{Két} garas ^{iczár} ára, még sem fér a’ ^{egy} házba. (Gyertya ez is.)” [Only costs one ^{two} grosch ^{kreuzer}, still doesn’t fit in the ^a house. (Also a candle.)] (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:518 [41]), where the modifications come from someone other than the original recorder, but the identity of this person cannot be ascertained based on the handwriting. At the same time, the text was published in *Eredeti népmesék* in the corrected version, which may suggest that the corrections came from the editor of the volume.¹⁰

FROM MANUSCRIPT TO COLLECTION – LÁSZLÓ ARANY’S ROLE IN PREPARING THE RIDDLE TALES FOR PUBLICATION

The editors of the synoptic critical edition emphasise that the different textual variants¹¹ made accessible in their edition “allow us to observe how the text of the tales is transformed in the

⁹Riddle texts are quoted in this paper in the form identical with that of the critical edition and source references also point to the page number in the critical edition. I include in brackets the numeral that refers to the position of the particular texts in the manuscript. On the textological principles informing the organisation of the critical edition, see Judit Gulyás’s paper in the present issue of *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica*.

¹⁰„Két garajczár ára,/Még se fér egy házba.” [Only costs two kreuzer, still doesn’t fit in a house.] (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:519 [VIII]).

¹¹In other words, “besides the autograph (tale) manuscripts of those recording the texts and the corrections made by these persons, the corrections of the editor who arranged them for publication, and, finally, the texts of the published collection” (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:11).



course of noting down and publication, what types of changes the editors perform in manuscript texts when they are transferred from use within the family to the wider readership” (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:11).¹²

Phases of text formation may be observed in the case of the riddles, and these are also well documented in the critical edition. As a part of preparing them for print, it was probably László Arany who selected the pieces deemed worth of publication and determined their sequence (see VARGHA 2012:379–385). But what might have been the principles that László Arany followed when preparing the riddles for publication? We have no direct data to help us answer that question, as *Eredeti népmesék* contains no accompanying text, preface, or notes whatsoever. In contrast to folktales, László Arany makes no mention of the genre of riddle tales even in his later works.¹³

His inauguration address at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, titled *Magyar népmeséinkről* [On Our Hungarian Folktales], also clearly reveals that he did not consider riddle tales as a subgenre of tales. On this occasion Arany focused more on categorizing and characterizing Hungarian folktales (ARANY L. 1867:200–228; for an analysis, see GULYÁS 2018:420–440), defining three basic categories: symbolic tales, fables, and comic tales. Riddle tales, however, do not fit into any of these categories. Therefore we have only indirect sources to rely on. It is mostly based on some of the theoretical writings of the father, János Arany, that we can outline how his son may have seen the genre of the riddle tale and what kind of principles he may have followed in preparing *Eredeti népmesék* for publication. He may also have been influenced by text publications of the period, particularly László Merényi’s collection of tales published a year earlier, which also contained a selection of riddles.¹⁴

The most important influence on László Arany’s editorial concept, as regards riddles, is likely to have been his father’s widely known review of László Merényi’s collection of tales, in which Arany also addressed the *folk riddles* published by Merényi.¹⁵ In this piece of criticism, which was later to become programmatic for Hungarian folkloristics, Arany expressed his views – argued meticulously and supported with numerous examples – on the best way to collect (and publish) folklore texts, including riddles, and what to focus on in the process. He placed the main emphasis on rhythm and retaining their rhythmical arrangement.

“On the lips of the people themselves, riddles rarely appear in a purely prose form. Occasionally they rhyme, but most often it is not so much the rhyme but *the rhythmical arrangement of words and sentences, their onomatopoeia, alliteration, and other poetic devices that primitive*

¹²On the way in which László Arany shaped the texts, and the process of textualization in the case of these tales, see GULYÁS 2010:225–234, 2018:411; DOMOKOS 2021.

¹³There is but one reference in the notes László Arany attached to the introduction to his father’s manuscript legacy in the context of one of the wordplays János Arany was so fond of, in which László Arany mentions that in his youth his father had been fond of “playing around with jokes of this kind,” and that in Nagykőrös, “in his early years as a schoolteacher, he and Ferencz Mentovich made a veritable contest of fabricating such rebuses,” but records of these texts did not survive (ARANY L. 1889, IX). For more on János Arany’s rebuses and linguistic playfulness, see VOIGT 2013:68–69; SZILÁGYI 2019:275–285.

¹⁴On the folktale collection of László Merényi (1837–1907), see DOMOKOS 2015:192–220.

¹⁵ARANY J. 1861; AJÖM XI. 326–342, 765–768. For the volume described, see MERÉNYI 1861. For a comparison of László Arany’s and László Merényi’s publications of riddles, see VARGHA 2012. The section in János Arany’s criticism relating to riddles was included, near verbatim, in the call in which the Kisfaludy Society invited people to engage in collecting folk literature (see GREGUSS 1863), thus it was able to directly influence the emerging expectations and principles of Hungarian folkloristics regarding riddles.



folk poetry uses that distinguish them from our everyday language. With regard to these riddles, the excellence of the collector lies in his ability to find and keep these rhythmical arrangements in their purest form, and not in the collector himself lending a verse form to the folk riddle.” (ARANY J. 1861:339–340, emphasis by K.V.)

In his criticism, János Arany quotes one particular text from those published by Merényi as a positive example of communicating the “authentic folk verse,” while he quotes others as “signs of self-seeking verbosity,” and elsewhere he complains that the example quoted does not “breathe the fresh flavour of folklore.” In the case of another riddle tale, alongside Merényi’s variant, with which he is not satisfied, he publishes the variant he considers correct, which is a better reflection of the rhythms of folk poetry and which he accompanies with a full poetic analysis (ARANY J. 1861:339–341).

Even before this occasion, János Arany had written about the significance of rhythm (as well as accent and alliteration) in Hungarian (folk) poetry. His first paper on the subject was published in the 1856 annals of the grammar school of Nagykőrös in a paper called *A magyar nemzeti vers-idomról* [On Hungarian National Poetry] (AJÖM X:218–258, 602–607). Here he already emphasised the importance of rhythm, as opposed to rhyme and metrics, in the various genres of folk poetry, “accordingly, the essence of bound speech being not rhyme or metrics, but rhythm, this last is coeval with poetry itself, which originally only appeared in this form, and only later assumed the sonorous attributes of rhyme or meter” (AJÖM X:221).

The examples he quotes include some riddles, alongside proverbs, folk songs, and play songs. “Each metric unit is heightened by one accented syllable, which here stresses the beginning of the unit. We find the same in the following folk riddle (pertaining to a calabash): *Míg él | mindig fut: | holta után | mindig lop.*” [While it’s alive, it always runs; after it’s dead, it always steals.] (AJÖM X:226. For a practically identical variant, see DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:522 [53], 523 (XVIII)). The emphasis may be rendered even more striking by alliteration, of which János Arany admitted that it is not as significant in Hungary as it is in Northern, Old Scandinavian poetry. Nevertheless, he quoted examples of it from Hungarian folk poetry – besides some proverbs, folk songs, one play song, and one nursery rhyme, this line included a riddle, „*Rí ruca | rí, rí. (Talány a hegedűre.)*” [Cry, duck, cry, cry (Riddle for the fiddle)] (AJÖM X:227; cf. DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:516 [37], 517 (V)).

László Arany must have been influenced by his father’s studies in poetics, since he himself also wrote an essay titled *Hangsúly és ritmus* [Accent and Rhythm] (with the subtitle *Függelékül Arany Jánosnak A magyar nemzeti versidomról szóló tanulmányához* [An Appendix to János Arany’s Essay on the Hungarian National Poetic Formula]), which he left unfinished (ALÖM II:319–356). At the same time, contrary to his father, he mostly quotes literary texts as examples, while from folk poetry he merely cites ballads, folk songs, and a few proverbs, but not a single riddle. It is highly likely that it was a matter of conscious choice in his editorial process of *Eredeti népmesék* to arrange the riddles selected for publication in such a way as to place highly rhythmical, occasionally alliterative, ‘lyrical’ texts at the beginning. He even emphasized their poetic character by publishing texts No. I – XVII broken into lines, contrary to the rest of the riddles in the volume. This appears to be a conscious choice because there is no such format in the manuscript records. The selection of texts in the process of preparing the material for publication also contributed to publishing the riddles most in line with János Arany’s ideal. Of the 79 texts found in manuscript form, László Arany published 54. The texts that were omitted, and the possible reasons for this omission, have already been described in earlier publications in



detail (VARGHA 2012:248–252, 2018:383–385), therefore only the possible reasons will be reiterated here, along with a few examples.¹⁶ Nine riddles were already struck (partially or entirely) from the manuscript, a few of them were blotted out by pencil, so without the digital copies these would be practically indecipherable. We cannot be sure that these deletions were performed by László Arany, or that they happened during the process of preparing for print. They include one fragmented text and three that are repeated within the manuscript.

Three riddles that were crossed out are based on wordplay. This textual type was almost entirely omitted from László Arany's volume, but the same applies to the manuscript. Within that, one text is seemingly in a foreign language, but in fact it is a Hungarian text which is to be understood verbatim.¹⁷ Another text is tricky, and the question covertly contains the answer. („Senki és Semmi hárman laktak egy halylékba, senki el ment tüzért semmi pedig vizért ki maradt othon? (és)” [48]) [Nobody and Nothing, the three of them lived in one shelter. Nobody went to get fire, nothing went to get water, who stayed home? (and)]. The third is a charade somewhat closer to the tradition of popular poetry („Nem fér a' pajtába, nem fér a' pinczébe, de könyen bele fér egy hajszál végébe. (a V betű.)” [57]) [„It won't fit in a barn and it won't fit in a cellar, but it will easily fit into the very end of a hair. (the letter V)].

This way, the above three texts are questionable in terms of genre. This is even more true of the last two deleted texts. One of them („Ött betübül állok, pipára, és tanácsra illek. (kupak) – I consist of five letters and fit a pipe or a meeting. (lid)” [8]) is a riddle in formal terms, but is invariant, i.e., we know of no similar variants either in contemporary or in later folklore collections. The other text („Regel méreg, délbe étek, este orvoság. (fekete retek.)” [72]) [Poison in the morning, food at midday, medicine in the evening. (black radish.)] appears as a riddle only exceptionally, but is widespread as a proverb, János Erdélyi's is one of several 19th-century collections in which it appears.¹⁸

Three further texts are questionable in terms of genre, though they are not crossed out in the manuscript. Two of them are riddles as regards form, but we know of no variants for them in Hungarian folklore; one is a wordplay. Another text (‘poor peasants scatter it freely along the road, while the lords keep it in their pocket’ – snot [?]) László Arany probably left unpublished due to its impropriety.

Ten more texts must have been omitted due to László Merényi having had priorly published their variant. Seven of them bear a direct mark (a letter ‘M’ in red pencil) to indicate that László Arany left them out of *Eredeti népmesék* with a view to prior publication. This, however, cannot be considered a consistent principle, as there are five riddles published by Merényi whose close variant was in fact published by László Arany.

Altogether, then, there are two reasons why a certain portion of riddles recorded in the manuscript were left unpublished. Partly it was texts that were generically dubious, not

¹⁶For the sake of easier reading, I have refrained from converting to lower index the sections that were struck from the original, instead I include texts in the first version in which they were recorded. Textual variants that document the process of text formation are available in the critical edition. I refer to texts by the numerals used in the critical edition.

¹⁷A similar linguistic joke, also known as dog Latin, serves as the basis of the tale by the title *A cigány fiú* [The Gypsy Boy (ATU 1628*)] in László Arany's volume (DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:200–203, 559–560).

¹⁸„A retekéről azt tartják régi tapasztalás szerint: reggel méreg, délben étek, este orvoság” [‘Radishes are believed by ancient rural wisdom to be poison if taken in the morning, nourishment if consumed at midday, and medicine if ingested in the evening] (ERDÉLYI 1851:338; cf. SZEMERKÉNYI 2009:1185).



belonging to the category of *true riddles* (TAYLOR 1951:1–5), or not deemed sufficiently folk(ish) or attractive, resulting in a far more coherent, more consciously selected range of riddles than other collections published at that time. On the other hand, he probably bore in mind a central expectation of scholarship in his time, according to which a collection of folk literature is expected to publish “original” or “authentic” texts that no one else had published before (GULYÁS 2018:409–415).

Shaping the riddle texts in the process of preparing for publication

Judit Gulyás has pointed out that in the process of preparing *Eredeti népmesék* for publication, in the case of the tale texts, “the majority of changes (...) did not affect the plotline but amounted merely to minor corrections in punctuation and spelling or were of a stylistic nature” (GULYÁS 2018:411). With regard to the riddles, we also find that László Arany shaped the text not in its essential traits but in some formal respects, and within that, mostly in terms of spelling or punctuation.

Stylistic changes included the line breaks mentioned earlier, which affected altogether 17 texts. Besides that, we might also include modifications which, again, did not affect the content of the riddle, but did affect its phrasing and thereby its style and ambiance.

This could mean altering a single word or two (e.g., ‘ahol’ [where] → ‘amott’ [yonder], ‘pecsenye’ [roast] → ‘hús’ [meat], ‘rág’ [chews] → ‘eszik’ [eats]), or re-phrasing several words or a structure in a clause (e.g., *egy lepedővel sem lehet le teríteni* [you can’t lay a bedsheet over it] → *egy ponyvával se’ tudnád betakarni* – [you couldn’t cover it with a tarp]).

While the above concern the whole text of a riddle, certain changes appear only in the solutions, others only in the riddle questions. As regards the solutions, the most common procedure for shaping the texts is abbreviation or simplification, which we can observe in the case of several texts. However, in most cases this has meant a change of one or two words, usually the omission of an adjective in front of the corresponding noun.¹⁹

vörös hagyma [red onion] [14.]	Hagyma [onion] (XLIV.)
zöld káposzta [green cabbage] [20.]	Káposzta [cabbage] (XXXI.)
fekete retek [black radish] [22.]	Retek [radish] (XXXII.)
görög dinnye és a magva [Greek melon and its seeds] [23.]	Dinnye és a magva [melon and its seeds] (XXXIII.)
kenyér tésztát mikor dagasztják [bread dough when they knead it] [25.]	Dagasztáskor a tészta [dough upon kneading] (XII.)
Ló hátas ember [man on horseback] [38.]	Lovas [a rider] (VII.)

¹⁹I quote all texts in this section in accordance with the critical edition, placing the manuscript version on the left and the variant published in *Eredeti népmesék* on the right. By way of identification, I include no page numbers, only the serial number of the text in the critical edition, using square brackets for the manuscripts and round brackets for texts that were published.



A more interesting case is when longer, explanatory answers are omitted and replaced by an answer of just a few words. This may be observed in the following examples.

Ludnak a' tolla ir. az ember a' kezével tolja odébb, és gondolatját teszi a' papírosra. [A goose feather writes. You push it about with your hand and put your thoughts on paper.] [1/1A.]	Írás [Writing]. (X.)
elől megy a' fényeske; az a tú, utána a fehérke; az a czérna, f ^m e ^g van a farka vége kötve; az a csomó a' czérnán [a bright little thing marches on ahead, that's the needle, followed by a white little thing, that's the thread, the end of its tail is tied up, that's the knot on the thread] [5.]	tú és cérna [needle and thread] (XV.)
anyai emlő, a' testvérek által adják egymásnak, mikor szopnak. [the mother's breast, the siblings pass it on to each other as they suckle] [28.]	Anyai emlő. [Mother's breast] (I.)
Kukoricza cső zöld korában a tövén, minden szemén van egy szál sejme, vagy máskép haja. [Corn cob when it's green it has a piece of silk or hair on every grain] [68.]	Kukoricza [Corn.] (XLI.)
az a' kis fa, a' ki a' tūdős hurkába van szurva, hogy ki ne jöjön belőle a' tötélék. [that little stick that's stuck in the lung sausage so the stuffing doesn't come out] [70.]	A hurka végébe szúrt kis fa. [The little stick in the end of a sausage] (XXIII.)

A dialogic structure is among the prime characteristics of the riddle genre with the corresponding practice of question and answer. During the collection of riddles, the dialogue was usually merely imitated, with the same informant reciting both the question and the answer. Consequently, according to the testimony of the accurate, verbatim records of 20th-century collections, the solution was usually pronounced (and recorded) accompanied by some kind of explanation which would not be uttered in a spontaneous riddling situation. One example from László Mándoki's collection in Moldova is as follows:

„Nagy ángyimnak nagy inge,/még egy őtés sincs benne./Találja ki ezt is, micsoda? A kemence, amibe a kenyeret süssük. Annak nagy inge van, ha bemeszeljük, mert fehér.” [My great aunt has a great shirt/and not a single stitch in it,/can you guess what it is? The oven in which we bake the bread. It has a great big shirt when we whitewash it, because it is white.] (MÁNDOKI 1971:209, emphasis by K.V.). We may clearly observe that the explanation is not actually a part of the text of the riddle – it is merely addressed to the collector, who would not otherwise understand it.

In other instances, the explanation was incorporated into the text when it was transferred from orality to literacy, when the collector/publisher supplemented the solution with an interpretative remark during recording or publication in order to make sure that readers understand. E.g.,



„Mig fiatal, lábon áll,/Ha megvénül szaladgál. Bondor, ördögszekér. *Igy nevezi a nép. Láthatni őszszel, sokat a szántóföldeken, a mint űzi a szél.*” [While it is young it stands still/when it is old, it runs around. Tumbleweed, *that’s what the folk call it. You can see lots of it in the fields, as the wind drives them along.*] (PAMLÉNYI 1879:521, emphasis by K.V.)

In the majority of cases, however, the published riddles end with a simple answer, no more than a few words, that are typical in spontaneous oral occurrences.²⁰ Although the texts that László Arany arranged for publication had not come from oral collection in the classic sense of the phrase but had been written down by his sister, the shaping of the answers probably served to reconstruct the characteristics of the spontaneous popular manner of riddling. A similar strategy may be observed in the case of the three narrative riddles found in the volume, where a long, narrative answer was cut considerably shorter by László Arany when preparing the text for publication.

<p>Magyarázat. a’ három láb’ a’ csizmadia szék, a’ két láb a csizmadia, (előtte) az egy láb<;> a’ sonka, (oda ment) a négy láb; a’ kutya. (el vite az egy lábat; a’ sonkát, a’ két láb; a csizmadia, fel kapta a’ három lábat; a csizmadia széket, úgy meg ütötte vele a’ négy lábat; a kutyát, hogy mindjárt el ejtette az egy lábat; a’sonkát.) [9.]</p> <p>[Explanation. The three legs is the cobbler’s stool; the two legs is the cobbler, (in front of him) the one leg is the ham, the four legs (went there) is the dog (carried off the one leg; the ham, so the two-leg, the cobbler, picked up the three legs, the stool, and struck the four-leg with it so hard that it dropped the one leg straight away.)]</p>	<p>A háromláb csizmadiaszék, a kétláb csizmadia, az egyláb sonka, a négyláb kutya. (XXV.)</p> <p>[Three legs is the cobbler’s stool; the two legs is the cobbler, the one leg is the ham, and the four legs is the dog.]</p>
<p>Magyarázat. Még a tölgy fa élt; (túdnilik mig ki nem vágták,) makokat termett, élőket tartott, mert disznók híztak vele. Mikor ki vágják hajót csináltak belőle, élő emberek jártak rajta<;> vizen, halak, ’s más vízi álatok fellett. [76.]</p> <p>[Explanation. While the oak tree was still alive (that is, until they cut it down), it grew acorns and nourished living things, because it was fed to pigs. After it was felled, they built a boat out of it, and living people traveled in it, on the water, over the top of fish and other water creatures.]</p>	<p>Egy tölgyfa, melyet csolnagnak csináltak. (Mig élt, disznókat tartott makkjával; mint csolnag embereket hord, s halak felett jár.) (LIII.)</p> <p>[An oak tree made into a row boat. (While it was alive, it fed pigs with its acorn; as a boat, it carries people and travels over the top of fish.)]</p>

(continued)

²⁰See the anthology of Hungarian folk riddles published in print in the 19th century, based on linguistic or folkloristic collection (VARGHA 2010).



Continued

<p>Magyarázat. Egy vadász lőtt egy nyulat, olyan nagy fi[?] volt bene hogy egy pár nap mulva meg elett volna, a vadász kapta magát, felét meg sütötte, felét meg főzte, a' kis piczi nyulnak. azután fel vitetett egy nagy fa tetejére egy teknő földet, le tétette a galy közé, maga fel mászot a fára, alá ült a' teknőnek, ott ete meg a nyulat. [77.]</p> <p>[Explanation A hunter had shot a rabbit, it had such a large kit in it that it would have given birth within a few days, so the hunter roasted half and boiled the other half of the little rabbit. Then he had a large tub of soil carried up to the top of a tree, had it put down among the branches, climbed on top of the tree, sat under the tub, and that's where he ate the rabbit.]</p>	<p>Egy vadász mondta ezt, ki egy hasas nyulat lőtt; a fiát kivette belőle, felét megsütötte, felét megfőzte, levitte a pinczébe, ráállott egy szál deszkára, úgy ette meg. (XIV.)</p> <p>[This was said by a hunter who had shot a pregnant rabbit, had taken the little rabbit out, roasted half, boiled the other half, took it down to the cellar, stood on a plank and ate it that way.]</p>
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In the case of the first part of the riddles or riddle questions, we see changes of a different nature, but these, too, have been made presumably with the intention of restoring the 'original' folk text. This may have taken the form of abbreviation, omitting the details that seemed unnecessary.

<p>Nekem olyan kis hordóm volt, hogy ha le esett a padlásról, nem volt olyan bodnár a' világon a' kí meg tudta volna csinálni, ugy szélyel tört. (tojás.) [35.]</p> <p>[I had such a tiny barrel that if it fell off the attic, no cooper in the whole world could mend it, it was so badly smashed. (egg)]</p>	<p>Nekem olyan kis hordóm volt, hogy ha leesett a padlásról, nem volt az a pintér, a ki meg tudta volna csinálni. Tojás. [XLVIII.]</p> <p>[I had such a tiny barrel that if it fell off the attic, no barrel maker could mend it. Egg.]</p>
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In one text, a change of word order could have served attaining/restoring the correct rhythm and rhyme between 'fényes' [shiny] and 'édes' [sweet]:

<p>Kívül fényes, belől szőrös, a' közepe igen édes. (gesztenye.) [27.]</p> <p>[The outside's shiny, the inside's hairy, the middle is truly sweet (chestnut).]</p>	<p>Belől szőrös kívül fényes, A közepe igen édes. Gesztenye. (XIII.)</p> <p>[The inside's hairy, the outside's shiny, the middle is truly sweet. (chestnut)]</p>
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To the same end, László Arany replaced a somewhat awkward text with a slightly more remote variant:

<p>‘Se kint, se bent, még is a’ házban van. (ablak fa.) [66.]</p> <p>[It’s neither outside, nor inside, and still it’s in the house (the window frame)]</p>	<p>Kint is van. Bent is van, Mégis a házba’ van. Ajtófélfa. [It is outside, it is inside, and still it is in the house. The door post.] (XVI.)</p>
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Elsewhere, an adjustment of but a few words served to approximate two texts of a similar theme and rhythm to each other:

<p>Erdőn vágják, meg faragják. lábat tesznek alá, lelket tesznek belé. (bölcső.) [2.]</p> <p>[They cut it in the forest, carve it, add legs to it, and put a soul inside. (cradle)]</p>	<p>Erdőn vágják, megfaragják, haza hozzák, lelket tesznek bele. Bölcso. (XX.)</p> <p>[They cut it in the forest, carve it, take it home, and put a soul inside. Cradle]</p>
<p>Erdőn vágják, meg faragják, testet tesznek belé. (koporsó.) [3.]</p> <p>[They cut it in the forest, carve it, and put a body inside. (coffin)]</p>	<p>Erdőn vágják, megfaragják, haza hozzák, testet tesznek bele. Koporsó. (XIX.)</p> <p>[They cut it in the forest, carve it, take it home, and put a body inside. Coffin]</p>

Finally, in one place László Arany replaced the word ‘föld’ [soil] with the word ‘zöld’ [green] to make sure the words of the riddle were alliterative. This way, however, instead of restoring the original, he produced a variant which is logically flawed and is different from the known parallels.²¹

<p>föld a lába, zöld nadrága, furkó a feje. (zöld káposzta.) [20.]</p> <p>[earthen legs, green pants, club head (green cabbage)]</p>	<p>Zöld a lába, zöld nadrága, fúrkó a feje. Káposzta. (XXXI.)</p> <p>[Green legs, green pants, club head. Cabbage]</p>
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²¹Currently known variants contain terms identical in content to ‘föld’ [Earth or soil], e.g., „Sár a’ lába, zöld a’ nadrágja, furkó a’ feje, fa a’ ködmenje? Káposzta.” [Its legs are mud, the trousers green, the head’s a club, its coat is wood. Cabbage.] (PHILOFENNUS [FÁBIÁN István] 1857:393); „Sáros a lába,/Zöld a dolmánya,/Fa a tarisznyája,/Kő a sapkája? Káposzta.” [Its feet are muddy/its mantle is green,/its knapsack is made of wood,/its cap is made of stone? Cabbage.] (KÁLMÁNY kb. 1875–1919:1).



SUMMARY

After selecting and arranging from the Arany family's manuscript collection of tales and riddles, where riddles had mostly been recorded by Juliska Arany, and after making certain modifications to the texts, László Arany eventually managed to assemble a chapter in *Eredeti népmesék* which is unified in style and which, in comparison to later collections, represents folklore riddles accurately.

The volume was presented in *Budapesti Szemle* by Pál Gyulai, whose favourable review confirmed that László Arany had met the standards set out by János Arany in his critique of Merényi with regard to riddles as well as folktales. Gyulai primarily commends László Arany for retaining the original form of the riddles, sometimes repeating verbatim the principles that János Arany had set out.

„The collection ends with a few riddle tales and catch tales. (...) The riddle tales of the collection are also excellent. The collector has faithfully kept their original form, *the rhythmical arrangement of the words and sentences, their onomatopoeia and alliteration*, which are so typical of both our riddle tales and our proverbs. Indeed, far too little attention has been paid to these to date. Even among [János] Erdélyi's proverbs we find some that have been divested of their original form, while [László] Merényi stretches out riddle tales, patching them and adding to them as he goes.

Reading through the entire collection has been a favourable experience, and we only regret that there are not at least two volumes of it.” (GYULAI 1862:391–392. Emphasis by K.V. Cf. DOMOKOS – GULYÁS 2018:339–340.)

The modifications made by László Arany in the process of preparing the texts for publication served to highlight and, if necessary, restore the 'original' form of folk riddles. Although he did not engage with theoretical questions of this particular genre, the chapter containing riddles in *Eredeti népmesék* shows a far higher degree of conscious editorial attention than any other publication of folk riddles in the period. This is reflected by the arrangement of the texts, the minor adjustments made to form or content, as well as the composition of the texts published.

Joking questions based on wordplay amount to at least one third of riddle texts published in the 19th century. They can be found not only in collections of folklore in this period but also in manuscript collections, chapbooks, periodicals, readers, and minor entertaining publications. László Arany, however, included only one such text in his collection. He also refrained, in most cases, from publishing dubious, obscene, or even improper texts, which also constitute a considerable stratum within the total body of Hungarian riddles.²² He also omitted pieces belonging to popular poetry, which are to be found in great numbers not only in chapbooks and entertaining periodicals or in László Merényi's much criticised volume but also in one of the most important collections of folk poetry in the period, *Vadrózsák [Wild Roses]* by János Kriza (KRIZA 1863).

The majority of texts published by László Arany fall in the category of 'true riddles' (cf. TAYLOR 1951:1–5), which describe a subject from the rural lifestyle in a way which intentionally misleads the reader. Thus, this volume is a far more homogeneous material of riddles than other publications of riddles from the same period.

²²Lajos Katona puts particular emphasis on this in his encyclopaedia entry, which briefly summarises Hungarian folk poetry and its genres. 'IX. Riddle tales or folk riddles, within which a considerable group includes those referring to obscenities, a category quite numerous among our people, too' (KATONA 1896:60).



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