Giuseppe Cassone and the *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*

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Abstract: Giuseppe Cassone was a key figure in the Italian network of *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum,* alongside notable individuals such as Giuseppe Fraccaroli, Emilio Teza, Tommaso Cannizzaro, Dora d'Istria, Giuseppe de Spuches di Galati, Giuseppe Biadego, Francesco Cipolla, and Giuseppe Pitrè. As illustrated in the annex detailing the early organization of the Italian network, Cassone was undoubtedly one of its initiators, central contacts, and vital nodes. However, this collaborative community was highly stratified, and its members quickly became more independent. This paper will first examine Cassone's literary career, works, and affinity for Hungarian literature, and then delve into his relationship with *Acta Comparationis*.

Keywords: Giuseppe Cassone, *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, Italian network, cultural brokers.

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Giuseppe Cassone is a central figure in the Italian network of *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, playing a pivotal intermediary role in the transmission of Hungarian literature in Italy. His contributions are particularly significant in organizing the journal's staff, serving as a central node within the network and connecting various Italian contributors affiliated with the publication. Cassone invited numerous distinguished Italian critics, writers, and translators to collaborate with the journal.[1] It was through Cassone that Domenico Milelli and Tommaso Cannizzaro—who also involved his friend Prince Giuseppe de Spuches de Galati, with whom Cassone maintained contact—along with other Italian authors such as Dora d'Istria, Mario Rapisardi, and Emilio Teza, became collaborators of the journal.[2] Cassone's network extended beyond national borders: Henri Amiel, a key figure in the French network, was introduced to the journal by Cassone, who also corresponded with figures such as the German Johannes Minckwitz. As a cultural mediator, Cassone not only organized the Italian network but also played an integral role in the broader international network. Despite his significant contributions to the history of Hungarian-Italian cultural relations, relatively little attention has been paid in Hungarian literary history and comparative literature to Cassone's principles, the philological aspects of his engagement with Hungarian literature, or the nature of his involvement with *Acta Comparationis*.

Cassone and the Birth of the Petőfi Cult Italy

Giuseppe Cassone, often referred to as "the patient of Noto"[3] or "the hermit of Noto,"[4] was born in 1843 in the small town of Noto in southern Sicily. As a young man, he developed a strong sympathy for the ideals of freedom and interrupted his university studies at the age of seventeen to join Garibaldi's army of freedom fighters. However, his father, citing his youth, compelled him to leave the volunteer army. Later, Cassone was conscripted into a regiment in Messina; here, in 1866, he suffered a severe sunstroke that left him partially paralyzed, deaf in one ear, and with severely impaired vision. His physical condition continued to deteriorate over the years.

From the age of twenty-four, Cassone lived in his home in Noto, where he turned to literature and translation to alleviate his physical suffering. He composed his own poetry, drawing inspiration primarily from Giacomo Leopardi and Francesco Petrarca, but he dedicated much of his time to translation. Over the course of his life, he mastered

1. Sándor Kerekes, "Schopenhauer, Petőfi and Hugó Meltzl. Részletek Meltz Hugó életrajzából," *Minerva*, no. 16 (1937): 94.
2. Kerekes, "Schopenhauer, Petőfi and Hugó Meltzl," 95.
3. Géza Kovács, "Egy elfelejtett olasz Petőfi-fordító," *Budapesti Hirlap*, no. 168 (1925): 4–5.
4. Artur Elek, "A jó öreg Cassone," *Az Újság*, no. 182 (1910): 8.

Latin, Greek, German, French, Russian, English, and later Hungarian, translating works from these languages into Italian.

Cassone devoted his life to studying and translating poets known for themes of pessimism, world-weariness, and melancholy. He found deep resonance in their works, as their expressions of suffering and despair mirrored his own experiences of profound physical and mental anguish brought on by his severe ailments.[5] Cassone was an ardent admirer of the works of Arthur Schopenhauer, the "philosopher of pessimism," and Giacomo Leopardi, the "poet of pessimism."[6] He frequently read and translated texts by the English Romantics, including Byron, Wordsworth, and Shelley, as well as works by the German poet Platen — whose translations he also published in *Acta Comparationis*. Additionally, Cassone translated Lenau and rendered Heine's *Buch der Lieder* and *Romanzero* into Italian. His translations also included Joseph Victor von Scheffel's *The Trumpeter of Säkkingen*, excerpts of which he published in the journal.

Cassone's work extended to French and Russian literature as well, translating Alfred de Musset, Charles Baudelaire, and Mikhail Lermontov. Notably, he was the first to translate Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* and several of his lyrical works into Italian, many of which he published in *Acta Comparationis*. His translations of Hungarian literature included several works by Petőfi, such as *János Vitéz* (*L'Eroe Giovanni*).[7] In 1902, Cassone completed a translation of Petőfi's entire body of work. Unfortunately, despite years of negotiations with various printers and publishers, the publication of this translation was never realized and was ultimately delayed by his death in 1910.

The exact details of how Cassone became acquainted with Petőfi's oeuvre remain unclear, but some accounts suggest a connection to Hugo von Meltzl. According to Artur Elek, in 1871, Hugo von Meltzl—a fellow admirer of Heine—discovered a booklet containing Cassone's translations of Heine. Impressed by Cassone's fidelity and stylistic mastery as a translator, Meltzl wrote to him, enclosing his own German translations of Petőfi's works. Cassone was so captivated by these that he decided to learn Hungarian, enabling him to translate Petőfi's works directly from the original texts.[8] This account is corroborated by Giovanni Cifalinò.[9] According to other memoirs and accounts in literary history, Cassone first learned about Petőfi during his student years. This initial introduction was followed by the influence of Aleardo Aleardi's poem *I sette soldati*, which centers on Petőfi. The poem sparked a wave of "Petőfi fever" that spread across Italy and eventually reached Cassone as well.[10] According to Roberto Ruspanti, Cassone became acquainted with Petőfi's works through German translations provided by Hungarian Garibaldists.[11] Jenő Koltay-Kastner speculates that Cassone himself initiated contact by sending his translations to Meltzl, having learned about him after a selection of Meltzl's Petőfi translations was published in Leipzig three years earlier.[12] Béla Erődi asserts that, according to Cassone himself, he was introduced to Petőfi through the German translations by Hugó Meltzl, Adolf Dux, and Lajos Aigner.[13] Artur Elek, Jenő Koltay-Kastner, and Béla Erődi all corresponded with Cassone, making either version plausible according to the available sources and the current state of research.

Cassone thus became familiar with Petőfi's works through German translations. It is likely that he translated the poem *The Fairy's Dream* (in Italian: Sogno incantato) from a German version into Italian, publishing it in Assisi in 1874. From that year onward, he began an active correspondence with Hugo von Meltzl, who enthusiastically supported Cassone in his efforts to learn Hungarian. Meltzl even sent him Mór Ballagi's *Hungarian Grammar for Germans* (1846) and Kálmán Babos' French-Hungarian dictionary (1865) to assist in his studies. Thus, through persistent effort and with Meltzl's dedicated assistance, Cassone mastered the Hungarian language, primarily to engage deeply with Petőfi's poetry. He subsequently published his translations in succession.[14] In 1881, Cassone published his second volume in Noto, *Foglie di Cipresso su la Tomba di Etelke* (The Cypress Leaves on Etelke's Tomb). In 1885, he published *Il Fiero Stefano* (Pista Szilaj), followed by *L'Apostolo* (The Apostle), which was printed in Rome in 1886 with a foreword by Ignácz Helfy. In 1891, he published *Nuvole* (Clouds) in Noto, and in 1903, *Perle d'Amore* (Pearls of Love), also in Noto.

5. Giovanni Cifalinò, "Giuseppe Cassone: Apostolo italiano di Petőfi," *Corvina* 6, no. 8 (1943): 367.

6. Cifalinò, "Giuseppe Cassone," 367.

7. Béla Erődi, "Giuseppe Cassone," *Budapesti Szemle*, no. 405 (1910): 458.

8. Artur Elek, "Giuseppe Cassone emléke," *Az Újság*, no. 178 (1943): 4.

9. Giovanni Cifalinò, "La Fortuna di Petőfi in Italia," *Corvina* 5, no. 2 (1942): 79.

10. Ödön Hendel, "Cassone," *Vasárnapi Ujság*, no. 33 (1908): 670.

11. Roberto Ruspanti, "Három képzeletbeli utazás, Régi és új peregrináció," in *Magyarok külföldön, külföldiek Magyarországon I.*, edited by Imre Békési et al. (Budapest-Szeged: Nemzetközi Magyar Filológiai Társaság/International Hungarian Philological Society, Scriptum Kft., 1993), 301–316.

12. Eugenio Kastner, "Lettere inedite di Giuseppe Cassone a Ugo von Meltzl," *Corvina*, no. 8 (1928): 96–97.

13. Erődi, "Giuseppe Cassone," 460.

14. Erődi, "Giuseppe Cassone," 457.

In 1904, Cassone released a volume titled *Fiori Stranieri* (Foreign Flowers), which included translations of poems by Heine, Platen, Scheffel, Pushkin, and Musset. The volume also featured translations of Petőfi's *A hold elégiája* (The Elegy of the Moon) and *Egy gondolat bánt engemet* (A Thought Troubles Me).[15] *L'Eroe Giovanni* (John the Valiant) was published in Budapest in 1908, after significant difficulties, through the support of the Franklin Társulat Publishing House and the dedicated efforts of his Hungarian friends, Béla Erődi and Péter Zambra.

Cassone played a pivotal role in fostering the cult of Petőfi in Italy and in the early dissemination of Petőfi's works there. His contributions are particularly noteworthy because he was the first Italian translator to highlight a more lyrical and nuanced side of Petőfi's poetry. Unlike many of his contemporaries, who predominantly framed Petőfi as a revolutionary poet, Cassone moved beyond the conventional patriotic clichés. He presented Petőfi as a multifaceted poet, whose works transcended the confines of nationalist lyricism, as showcased below.

The nation-building efforts in Hungary and across Europe, which elevated Petőfi as a symbol of folk-patriotism and revolutionary ideals, naturally influenced his early European reception. Many readers initially approached Petőfi's poetry through the lens of folk-nationalist ideology, often resulting in a superficial understanding of his oeuvre. Hugo von Meltzl, however, played a crucial role in challenging this narrative. Through *Acta Comparationis*, Meltzl prioritized the publication of Petőfi's poems that extended beyond patriotic themes. He frequently emphasized the versatility of Petőfi's work, drawing attention to his contributions across multiple genres, advocating for the recognition of his prose, and facilitating the premiere of his drama in Cluj. Meltzl's efforts significantly contributed to the broader, transnational reinterpretation of Petőfi's literary legacy.[16]

Following the dissemination of Petőfi's poetry in Italy—particularly among Sicilian freedom fighters—and the influence of Aleardo Aleardi's epic *I sette soldati* (The Seven Soldiers), in which Petőfi is portrayed as a symbol of patriotism, the Hungarian poet came to be interpreted and confined within an exclusively patriotic framework in Italy.[17] Petőfi is most often referred to in Italy as *poeta tirtaico, patriota ed amante, vate*[18]—the "poet, patriot, and Tirteus of European freedom, hero and vate."[19] The Italian translators of Petőfi who preceded Cassone often relied on the same texts, many of which were not direct translations from Hungarian. As a result, in mid-nineteenth century Italy, Petőfi became known primarily as a national hero-poet, celebrated for his patriotic and revolutionary spirit.

The dismantling of this narrow stereotype was largely due to Cassone (and indirectly to the influence of the founders of *Acta Comparationis*), who approached Petőfi's works from a broader perspective, employing different interpretative strategies. While Cassone valued Petőfi's patriotic poems, he regarded him as an exceptional poet primarily because of his reflective and philosophical works. This shift in perception was clearly informed by Meltzl's insights and was later shaped by the evolving Petőfi image promoted through *Acta Comparationis*.[20] Cassone focused primarily on Petőfi's more philosophical and melancholic works, which convey the anguish, doubts, and anxieties of modern existence, as well as uncertainties about life, the world, and the pain of love—all emotions with which Cassone deeply identified.[21] In the 1870s and 1880s, Cassone succeeded in uncovering Petőfi's lesser-known, less canonical side — which he described, in more emphatic terms, as "l'io poetico più vero" ("his truer lyrical self").[22] Through his translations, Cassone offered the Italian readership a fresh perspective on the Hungarian poet, complementing the prevailing image rooted in patriotic and Garibaldian rhetoric with a deeper, more nuanced understanding of Petőfi's lyrical and introspective dimensions.[23] In Cassone's repertoire of published translations, a notable emphasis is placed on Petőfi's poems with reflective or amorous themes.

In a letter exchange with Lipót Palóczy, Cassone expressed his intention to write a series of critical articles on prominent Hungarian writers, including Mór Jókai, János Arany, and János Vajda. He also planned to create a bibliographical and critical portrait in Italian to further strengthen Italian-Hungarian literary relations. In the same letter, he remarked: "I want to awaken in my compatriots the desire to come into closer contact with Hungary and to begin to appreciate the literary culture which has the merit of being born last and of rising very quickly to the

15. Erődi, "Giuseppe Cassone," 457–461.
16. Szabó Reznek Eszter, "Meltzl Hugó és a kolozsvári Petőfi-ellenkánon," *Irodalomtörténet Közlemények*, no. 2 (2016): 215.
17. Roberto Ruspanti, "L'immagine romantica di Petőfi in Italia," *Rivista di Studi Ungheresi*, no. 13 (1998): 17.
18. Ruspanti, "L'immagine romantica di Petőfi," 17.
19. Peter Sárközy, "Magyar irodalom Olaszországban," *Kortárs*, no. 46 (2002): 99–100.
20. Ruspanti, "Három képzeletbeli utazás," 302.
21. Ruspanti, "Három képzeletbeli utazás," 17.
22. Ruspanti, "Három képzeletbeli utazás," 17.
23. Ruspanti, "Három képzeletbeli utazás," 18.

level of the literature of other European nations."[24]

Cassone thus set his sights not merely on translating specific texts but also on redefining this endeavor within the broader geopolitical framework of the first great era of modern cultural diplomacy, a time when culture became integral to inter-state communication and self-representation. He regarded translation as a systematic activity that could serve a cultural diplomatic purpose. Guided by the principles advocated by *Acta Comparationis*, Cassone articulated his broader objectives: to promote the dissemination and emancipation of Hungarian literature within Italian intellectual circles and to institutionalize the translation of Petőfi's works. In doing so, he positioned translation as a tool for fostering cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Cassone as Cultural Mediator in *Acta Comparationis*

Acta Comparationis provided the ideal platform for Cassone to pursue and achieve his cultural and literary goals. It is no coincidence that the very first issue of the journal featured a translation of a Petőfi poem, *Az* én *pegazusom* (*Il mio Pegaso*), translated by Pier Giuseppe Maggi—a contribution facilitated and introduced by Cassone himself: "Questa bella traduzione, che io non so in quale giornale o rivista letteraria sia stato stampata, fu copiata dall' originale, che si conserva a Milano nella biblioteca di Brera, dove furono depositati alcuni manoscritti del Dottor Pier Giuseppe Maggi morte nel febbraro 1873. Noto (Sicilia). Cassone."[25] Cassone's first publication in *Acta Comparationis* serves as a testament to his role as a cultural mediator and his dedication to fostering connections between nations. His modesty is evident in his decision not to begin with one of his own translations of Petőfi but instead to feature a work by Pier Giuseppe Maggi, one of the earliest Italian translators of Petőfi and a literary figure Cassone greatly admired.

The selection of *Az* én *pegazusom* is particularly noteworthy. While Maggi had translated several of Petőfi's poems into Italian during the 1860s and 1870s, Cassone chose this lesser-known piece, showcasing his intent to highlight different facets of Petőfi's oeuvre and to introduce Italian readers to works beyond the poet's more familiar repertoire. This choice reflects both Cassone's respect for Maggi's contributions and his nuanced approach to broadening the Italian reception of Hungarian literature. *Il mio Pegaso* occupies a unique position at the intersection of the principles and objectives of *Acta Comparationis* and Cassone's personal literary preferences. Unlike the more stereotypical patriotic poems often associated with Petőfi, this allegorical and philosophical piece aligns with both the journal's mission to explore nuanced aspects of world literature and Cassone's inclination toward reflective, less conventional works—in this case, a non-canonical, more philosophical poem of Petőfi.

Although this particular issue of *Acta Comparationis* did not yet feature a dedicated "Petőfiana" section, the prominence of Petőfi in its contents is undeniable. The first four articles following the editorial foreword focus directly or indirectly on Petőfi and the art of translation. Additionally, the issue includes several other contributions addressing translation, reflecting its central importance during the early, formative phase of the journal. At that time, when the range of article in *Acta Comparationis* was still limited, translation emerged as the primary focus of the journal's community.

Cassone devoted himself to literary translation throughout the journal's lifespan. While his deep interest in translation stemmed from his expertise as a translator, his motivations extended far beyond the technical process of linguistic transfer. Cassone firmly believed that translation served as a vehicle for fostering exchanges between national literatures, thereby facilitating the creation of a transnational literary network. For him, translation was not merely a linguistic act but a profound means of building intercultural connections and enabling mutual understanding across cultures.[26] Although Cassone frequently expressed in his letters the goal of strengthening Italian-Hungarian literary relations, his contributions to *Acta Comparationis* reveal a broader focus. Alongside his translations of Petőfi, he also published translations of works by Platen, Pushkin, and Scheffel, demonstrating that his translation efforts were not exclusively centered on Hungarian literature. This reflects Cassone's belief in the value of transnational literary forms that translations can create and the importance of incorporating masterpieces from various foreign cultures into national literary traditions. His work sought to integrate foreign literature into Italian literary culture, thereby broadening Italian readers' exposure to Eastern and Central European literary achievements.

24. Szécsi Ferenc, "Petőfi-kultusz Olaszországban – Giuseppe Cassone. Petőfi legjobb olasz fordítója", *Budapesti Hírlap*, no. 148 (1925): 8.

25. "This beautiful translation, which I do not know in which newspaper or literary journal it was published, was copied from the original, which is preserved in the Brera Library in Milan, where some manuscripts of Dr. Pier Giuseppe Maggi, who passed away in February 1873, were deposited. Noted (Sicily). Cassone." Pier Giuseppe Maggi, "*Il mio Pegaso* (da Petőfi)," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 1 (1877): 12–13.

26. Kastner, "Lettere inedite," 102.

Between 1877 and 1886, Cassone published six translations of Petőfi's poems in *Acta Comparationis*: *Italia*,[27] *Il ramoscello tremula…*,[28] *Son solo*,[29] *Desiderio di morte*,[30] *Il mondo ed io*,[31] and *Luce!*[32] These translations exemplify his dedication to showcasing the depth and versatility of Petőfi's oeuvre within the broader framework of his transnational literary mission.

In the twelfth issue of *Acta Comparationis,* Cassone's translation of *Reszket a bokor, mert…* (*Il ramoscello tremula…*) was published. At Hugo Meltzl's request, Cassone also translated the poem into the Sicilian dialect and prepared it for publication as part of an extraordinary appendix. This initiative was significant because one of the foundational goals of *Acta Comparationis* was the emancipation and preservation of dialects. Both editors of the journal had personal stakes in this mission. Meltzl, a native speaker of the Transylvanian Saxon dialect of German, and Brassai, who spoke a Western Transylvanian dialect of Hungarian, were deeply invested in challenging the stigmatization of dialects. They opposed the normative dominance of standard language varieties, which often subordinated dialects, and they sought to dismantle this linguistic hierarchy.

By embracing a more democratic approach to language and advocating for the preservation of dialects, the founders of *Acta Comparationis* aimed to counteract the exclusionary tendencies of nation-building movements, which sometimes marginalized linguistic diversity in favor of a standardized national language. Cassone's Sicilian translation aligned with this broader mission, demonstrating a commitment to linguistic inclusivity and cultural plurality within the context of literary exchange.[33] This emancipatory and protectionist endeavor is evident in various other aspects of *Acta Comparationis*, particularly in its commitment to publishing translations and articles in the languages of ethnic minorities, such as Armenians, Roma, and Jews.[34] Meltzl and Sámuel Brassai believed that dialects reflected the unique achievements and worldviews of specific communities within nations. For them, dialects were not merely linguistic variations but also cultural expressions that deserved recognition and preservation.

Similarly, Cassone was deeply concerned with the issue of dialects, as Sicilian, his native tongue, was considered a subordinate variety of the Italian literary language.[35] Cassone's decision to engage with dialects was rooted in a deeply principled stance, shaped by the centuries-long Italian *questione della lingua* (linguistic question). This debate, which had been ongoing since the Renaissance, became particularly urgent and contentious during the period of the Risorgimento. The unification of Italy brought linguistic issues to the forefront, as the newly formed nation grappled with the question of how to balance linguistic diversity with the need for a common language.[36]

At the time of *Acta Comparationis*, these debates were still fiercely contested in Italy. One side advocated for the imposition of a standardized, uniform version of the Florentine language as the national standard, arguing that this was essential for fostering national unity. This approach often called for the suppression or "abolition" of regional dialects, which were viewed as obstacles to linguistic and cultural cohesion. On the other side, opponents of this standardization movement staunchly defended the preservation of dialects, rejecting their marginalization and emphasizing their cultural and literary value.[37] Cassone's engagement with Sicilian and his inclusion of dialectal translations in *Acta Comparationis* reflected his alignment with the latter group. He viewed dialects as authentic expressions of regional identity and cultural achievement, resisting the homogenizing tendencies of linguistic

27. Giuseppe Cassone, "Petőfi Sándor: *Italia*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 2 (1877): 50–51. The original Hungarian title of the poem: *Olaszország*.

28. Giuseppe Cassone, "Petőfi Sándor: *Il ramosecello tremula*," *Acta Comparationis*, no. 12 (1877): 249. The original Hungarian title of the poem: *Reszket a bokor, mert…*.

29. Giuseppe Cassone, "Petőfi Sándor: *Son solo*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 34 (1878): 89. The original Hungarian title of the poem: *Minden virágnak*.

30. Giuseppe Cassone, "Petőfi Sándor: *Desiderio di morte*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 4 (1880): 58. The original Hungarian title of the poem: *Halálvágy*.

31. Giuseppe Cassone, "Petőfi Sándor: *Il mondo ed io*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 5–6 (1882): 84. The original Hungarian title of the poem: *A világ és én*.

32. Giuseppe Cassone, "Petőfi Sándor: *Luce!*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 1–2 (1886): 13–15. The original Hungarian title of the poem: *Világosságot!*.

33. Levente T. Szabó, "The Subversive Politics of Multilingualism in the First International Journal of Comparative Literary Studies," in *Paradoxes du plurilinguisme littéraire 1900: Réflexions théoriques et études de cas*, ed. Britta Benert (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2015), 229.

34. Levente T. Szabó, "A megszelídített Petőfi? Az 1874-es Petőfi-díszkiadás körüli vita és a korabeli Petőfi-filológia egyidejű egyidejűtlenségei," in *"Szirt a habok közt" Tanulmányok Imre László 70. születésnapjára*, ed. Péter Bényei et al. (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetemi Kiadó, 2014), 556.

35. Éry Anna, "Anyanyelvoktatás Olaszországban," *Anyanyelv-pedagógia*, no. 4 (2014). https://www.anyanyelv-pedagogia.hu/cikkek.php?id=545. Accessed April 25, 2025.

36. Éry, "Anyanyelvoktatás Olaszországban."

37. Tullio De Mauro, *Storia linguistica dell□Italia unita* (Rome-Bari: Editori Laterza, 1970), 79.

standardization. His work thus not only contributed to the goals of the journal but also engaged directly with one of the most pressing cultural and political debates of his time.

Since Cassone's overarching goal was to establish connections and facilitate exchanges between national literatures, he also undertook translations from German and Russian for *Acta Comparationis*. In the seventh and eighth issues, he contributed an Italian translation of the 12th canto of Joseph Victor von Scheffel's *Der Trompeter von Säkkingen*, titled *Il trombettiere di Säkkingen*. The original work, first published in 1854, achieved immense popularity throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, particularly after the 1870s.

The importance of Cassone's translation is further underscored in the *Foreign Review* section of the first issue of *Acta Comparationis*. Under the Italian subheading, it is noted that Cassone had been working on the translation of Scheffel's *The Trumpeter of Säkkingen* for over a year and that excerpts from the work would appear in later issues.[38] It is evident, therefore, that Cassone did not undertake the translation of Scheffel's *The Trumpeter of Säkkingen* specifically for *Acta Comparationis* or at Meltzl's invitation or request, as was the case with "Reszket a bokor, mert..." Instead, he had already begun working on this translation prior to the inception of the journal. This indicates that his interest in Scheffel's work was independent of his collaboration with *Acta Comparationis*, reflecting his personal commitment to bringing significant foreign literary works into the Italian literary sphere. The journal can thus be seen as a kind of "advertising space" and a new, transnational framework for Cassone, providing him with a platform to showcase excerpts of his ongoing projects and offer readers a glimpse into his translations.

This was not unique to Cassone but rather a broader characteristic of *Acta Comparationis*. The journal functioned as a forum where contributors frequently pursued their own agendas and goals while contributing to the shared mission of fostering transnational literary exchange. This dual purpose allowed contributors like Cassone to align their personal literary ambitions with the overarching objectives of the journal, creating a dynamic space for collaboration and individual expression. For example, Cassone frequently contributed translations from German to *Acta Comparationis*, including three translations of works by August von Platen: *Cassandra*,[39] *Lamento de la fanciulla*,[40] and two sonnets.[41] These works highlight Cassone's continued engagement with German literature and his dedication to introducing a diverse range of poetic voices to the Italian literary audience.

A special mention should be made of Cassone's translation of Pushkin in *Acta Comparationis*, as the inclusion of Russian literature in the journal was exceptionally rare due to the Russo-Ruthenian political conflict and the ban on the Ruthenian language. Amidst these tensions, only a few Russian translations appeared in the journal, one of which was Pushkin's *Evocazione* in Cassone's translation.[42] Cassone had a deep admiration for Pushkin and was particularly fond of his works, having also translated *Eugene Onegin* into Italian. It is therefore not surprising that *Evocazione*, with its melancholic tone—an aspect that resonated strongly with Cassone—found its place in *Acta Comparationis*.[43]

In addition to his translations, Cassone contributed a summary article titled ""Appunti bibliografici," in which he reviewed recently published or republished translations of foreign classics in Italy. This article also highlighted prominent Italian translators and their ongoing projects, serving as a valuable resource for the literary community. It is likely that Meltzl requested this important summary, recognizing its potential to support *Acta Comparationis*' mission of fostering cross-cultural literary exchange.

Cassone and *Acta Comparationis* mutually "served" each other's interests, aligning from the outset through shared principles on numerous issues. Cassone's work—particularly in literary translation and cultural mediation—and his anticapitalist values seamlessly fit into the journal's vision of comparatism.[44] His contributions received increasing encouragement and commissions from Meltzl, reflecting the strong synergy between his personal goals and the journal's mission.

For *Acta Comparationis*, Cassone was a vital collaborator, especially during its formative phase. He significantly contributed to the journal's operation and success by expanding its network of contributors, enhancing the prestige

38. Giuseppe Cassone, "*Il trombettiere di Säkkingen*. Poema di Giuseppe Vittorio Sheffel. Canto XII. *Verner e Margherita*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 7 (1877): 142–144, Giuseppe Cassone, "*Il trombettiere di Säkkingen*. Poema di Giuseppe Vittorio Sheffel. Canto XII. *Verner e Margherita*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 10 (1877): 207–211.

39. Giuseppe Cassone, "A. v. Platen: *Cassandra*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 12 (1877): 262–263.

40. Giuseppe Cassone, "A. v. Platen: *Il lamento de la fanciulla*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 5 (1879): 81–82.

41. Giuseppe Cassone, "Due Sonetti di A. V. Platen," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 4 (1880): 1311.

42. Giuseppe Cassone, "Pushkin, *Evocatione*," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 4 (1879): 965–66.

43. Giuseppe Cassone, "Appunti bibliografici," *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*, no. 3 (1877): 57–60.

44. For the anticapitalist logic of how Meltzl imagined the role of *Acta Comparationis* and comparative literature, see Levente T. Szabó, "International Exhibitions, Literary Capitalism, and the Emergence of Comparative Literature," *Journal of World Literature* 7, no. 3 (2022): 332–347.

of Hungarian literature, and promoting Petőfi's works in Italy. Simultaneously, the journal provided Cassone with a platform to publish his translations—particularly of Petőfi—while fostering his connections and recognition in Hungary. Furthermore, *Acta Comparationis* offered a medium that resonated with Cassone's regional approach to language and literature, supporting his broader advocacy for linguistic and cultural diversity.

Although Cassone's involvement in the journal was highly active in its early years, his contributions gradually decreased. Between 1882 and 1886, he ceased publishing entirely. His last contribution was the Italian translation of Petőfi's poem *Világosságot!* in 1886. By 1885, in a letter to Meltzl, Cassone expressed uncertainty about the journal's continuity, asking whether *Acta Comparationis* was still in operation. This inquiry suggests a decline in communication and perhaps a waning of his role within the journal's evolving framework.[45]

Initially, Cassone was an integral member of the *Acta Comparationis* community, actively contributing to the Italian network by inviting new collaborators and promoting the journal. However, by 1885, the journal had grown and evolved to the point where Cassone's once-indispensable role as a cultural mediator began to wane. Several factors likely contributed to this shift. The retirement of Brassai, Meltzl's declining health, the partial outsourcing of the journal to a London publisher, and the consolidation of issues may have disrupted the journal's original structure and dynamics.

One key development was that other Italian contributors no longer corresponded with Meltzl through Cassone but instead submitted their texts directly to him. This change diminished Cassone's centrality within the network, reducing his role as an intermediary and cultural broker.[46] Additionally, during the journal's final two years, Cassone did not publish at all. This absence can be attributed to his increasing focus, from the 1880s onward, on translating and publishing Petőfi's oeuvre—a project that commanded much of his energy and attention.

In contrast to the journal's broad, transnational perspective during this period, Cassone's work became increasingly specialized, centering on Petőfi. This narrowing of focus, while reflective of his deep dedication to Hungarian literature, marked a departure from the broader, comparative literary ambitions that had characterized his earlier contributions to *Acta Comparationis*.

Within the Italian network, the layered and polyphonic nature of *Acta Comparationis*' broad definition of comparatism is evident. No singular trend or common guiding principle can be identified among the Italian contributors. Instead, smaller groupings emerged, such as the so-called Petőfi schools of translation, the Sicilian circle, and the Verona circle. However, these were not part of a unified, institutionalized, or organized group. The collaborators did not coalesce around a single issue or problematic but pursued varied literary and scholarly interests.

Although Cassone initially played a central role in organizing and maintaining the Italian circle of collaborators, the dynamics of this network evolved, and his role as mediator shifted. Over time, the Italian network expanded to the extent that links between individual collaborators weakened. The need for a central intermediary between the Italian contributors and the *Acta Comparationis* editorial office diminished as collaborators began working more independently, establishing direct relationships with Meltzl and sending their texts directly to him.

This transformation also saw the original circle of Petőfi translators broadened to include contributors with entirely different interests, expanding the Italian perspectives represented in the journal. Cassone's unique and significant contribution to both the Italian and broader *Acta Comparationis* networks was his sustained reflection on translation and the translator's role. He viewed literary translation not only as a linguistic and artistic endeavor but also as cultural geopolitics—a foundational means of establishing relations between nations. By emphasizing the role of translation in fostering international understanding and relativizing traditional, canonical notions of geopolitics, Cassone enriched the intellectual scope of *Acta Comparationis* and exemplified the journal's transnational vision.

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45. Kastner, "Lettere inedite," 117.
46. Szabó, "Cultural Brokers," 67–80.

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Appendix: the Italian network of *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum*

