

From the “Goethe of Széphalom” to the “Hungarian Faust”: A Half Century of Goethe Reception in Hungary

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The concluding chapter of Steven Scheer's incisive monograph on Kálmán Mikszáth starts with some reflections on what constitutes “world literature”:

No matter how eminent, there is a sense in which a Hungarian writer has no place in world literature. The school of thought that looks upon world literature from the point of view of Goethe tends to include in it the literatures of the major languages of the Western world, or, better, the literatures of the major nations. According to this school of thought almost nothing written outside of Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, England, and the United States has a secure place in world literature. There is, however, another school of thought usually, though not exclusively, advocated by the scholars of those nations that have been omitted by the above. In this sense world literature is, as the name implies, the literature of the world.¹

The concept of world literature attributed to Goethe in these lines seems unnecessarily restrictive. Goethe's extensive occupation with the literatures of non-Western cultures as well as his interest in the folk poetry of various nations — including Hungary — attest to a far broader view on his part. And while he never systematically defined the meaning of the term “Weltliteratur” which he had coined, numerous statements of his show clearly that he had in mind the active and creative relationship among different national literatures, facilitated, if possible, through personal contacts of their writers.

In 1830, Goethe outlined this idea in his introduction to Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*:

There has for some time been talk of a Universal World Literature, and indeed not without reason: for all the nations that had been flung together by frightful wars and had then settled down again became aware of having imbibed much that was foreign, and conscious of spiritual needs hitherto unknown. Hence arose a sense of their relationship as neighbours, and, instead of shutting themselves up as

heretofore, the desire gradually awoke within them to become associated in a more or less free commerce.²

As he indicated in another context, he foresaw an “honourable part” for German literature — obviously including his own works — in this “more or less free commerce”:

The nations all look to us, they praise, blame, adopt and reject, imitate and distort, understand or misunderstand us, open or close their hearts towards us: We must accept all this with equanimity because the result is of great value to us.³

The reception of Goethe’s works in Hungary reveals both the determined orientation toward Western Europe by a linguistically isolated nation and the role her writers had in shaping her culture. Traditionally, Hungarian poets had seen themselves as leaders and guides to their countrymen not only in the realm of literature but also in the political arena. This was especially true for the authors of the nineteenth century. Most of them could not accept the concept of art for art’s sake and looked upon writing as a means of educating and refining the community at large. This attitude tied in with an almost unparalleled active involvement in politics. The degree to which foreign literary influences — such as those of Goethe’s works — were “adopted” or “rejected” by Magyar writers, then, depended largely on each author’s political stance and on the extent to which he considered them beneficial or harmful for the culture of his nation.

A complete history of the Goethe reception in Hungary would have to start at least as early as 1775 when the “*Werther* Fever” had reached the country: the German *Pressburger Zeitung* of Pozsony (Bratislava) published a “Letter to a Lady Friend” that alerted its readers to the moral dangers of Goethe’s novel. The year before, there had been a German production of *Clavigo* in the city, and *Stella* followed in 1777. In 1788, the German-speaking inhabitants of Pest had a chance to see *Götz von Berlichingen* on stage. Thus, at least as far as Hungary’s ethnic Germans were concerned, Goethe began to have an impact more than two centuries ago.

For the Magyars, the occupation with the works of the German poet started in the late 1780s and early 1790s. József Kármán’s epistolary novel *Fanni hagyományai* (Fanny’s Legacy) of 1794 shows the influence of *The Sufferings of Young Werther*. When twenty years later József Katona wrote his dramatic masterpiece *Bánk bán*, destined to become a milestone in the history of the Hungarian theater, he referred to Schiller and Shakespeare as his models. Yet it was *Götz von Berlichingen*,

Goethe's *Sturm und Drang* play about a noble-minded knight in turbulent times, which had paved his way.

But rather than attempting to trace the changes in the Hungarian Goethe reception from the beginnings all the way to our time, it may be more profitable to focus on the half century from 1811 to 1860. This period may well have been the most significant phase in the development of a Magyar national literature. It coincided with the age of Romanticism in Hungary which, according to István Sötér, spans the time from approximately 1817, when Károly Kisfaludy settled in Pest, to the Romantic revival in the works of Mór Jókai, Zsigmond Kemény, and especially Imre Madách in the 1850s and early 1860s.⁴

It seems appropriate to study Hungarian Romanticism in a European context. The very term "romantikus" was a translation of the German "romantisch," first introduced by the eminent literary historian Ferenc Toldy. But the German Romantic movement actually exerted only little influence on the Magyar writers of the nineteenth century. Certainly the political situation contributed to the fact that particularly the generation emerging in the 1830s and 1840s turned to France rather than to Germany for inspiration. It is remarkable, however, that Goethe continued to have an effect on Hungarian literature during this period. A glance at five outstanding representatives of the Hungarian world of letters may serve to illustrate both the changing image of Goethe during the Romantic age and the Goethean concept of "world literature" as an active process. Others could easily have been added to this list, but in Ferenc Kazinczy, József Bajza, József Eötvös, Sándor Petöfi, and Imre Madách, we have the entire spectrum of reactions to Goethe, ranging from uncritical admiration to violent rejection, from imitation to Magyarization.

Ferenc Kazinczy, the "Goethe of Széphalom" to friend and foe alike, was a gifted translator and linguist, not an inspired poet. His 1811 verse collection, *Tövisek és virágok* (Thorns and Flowers), reads like a translated anthology of poems by Schiller and especially by Goethe. It was the latter — along with Klopstock — whom he embraced as his model when his epigrams of 1811, conceived in the rural seclusion of Széphalom, inaugurated his ultimately successful campaign as a one-man *Sprachgesellschaft* to reform the Magyar language and to create an idiom capable of expressing all nuances of thought and emotion. With this undertaking, Kazinczy ushered in the Romantic age in Hungary.

For him, Goethe was the absolute master of style and structure and the conscious reformer of German literature, striving to elevate the level

of the intellectual life of his nation. Kazinczy's Goethe was the ideal poet and teacher. A letter of 1815 exhorts Sándor Bölöni Farkas:

Above all, I would ask you not to do much reading. Read little, but read good things. . . . Get to know Goethe, and Goethe, and again Goethe. He is my god in everything. And Lessing, Klopstock, Schiller, Herder, and Wieland. All others do not trust completely, but you may have blind trust in Goethe; in him dwells a Greek spirit.⁵

He called *Iphigenie auf Tauris* "divine" and expressed amazement at himself for having ever been able to enjoy other literary works in the past.

In the absence of a Hungarian tradition in literary theory and criticism, Kazinczy relied almost completely on the standards established by the classical writers of Germany. Schiller and Goethe provided the criteria by which he judged any work of literature. In 1807, he wrote to Farkas Cserey, the learned botanist:

A work is all the more perfect the closer it is to the example of the classical writers; it is all the more intolerable the more it deviates from that example.⁶

It is obvious that, given this attitude, Kazinczy could have only very limited interest in or understanding of German Romanticists. He detested what little he knew about the "mysticism" of Novalis, and in 1809, he referred to Fichte and Schelling in one of his letters:

I had to confess that, by myself, I see the aestheticians of the new school of thought as "Schönschwätzer," often I do not understand them at all. . . . Lessing, Winckelmann, and Goethe were no "Schönschwätzer," and I understand them.⁷

Kazinczy's repeated linking of Goethe and Lessing is revealing. Imbued with the spirit of European Enlightenment, he approached Goethe from a rationalist's position. It is characteristic of Hungarian Romanticism that it never knew the sharp renunciation of rational thought that was so symptomatic of the Romantic movement in Germany, just as Hungarian Realism was later to grow organically out of this Romanticism and not develop as a countermovement to it.

But Kazinczy's rationalism also prevented him from comprehending Goethe completely. He never understood that the German poet's greatest works had sprung from experiences, not events or reflections. It is no accident that he did not perceive any significant difference between the *Sturm und Drang* writer of Strassburg and Wetzlar and the Goethe who had returned from Italy. Goethe's true genius remained hidden from him who could only appreciate what was serene, clear, humane,

sentimental, melodious, and perfect in form. What was intuitive, irrational, and demonic in Goethe was beyond his reach.⁸ To the aging Kazinczy, who had grown from a revolutionary into a conservative, German classicism of the end of the eighteenth century continued to represent the high point in the development of all literature; more recent phenomena in Germany or elsewhere hardly touched him. Yet, despite his limitations, the “Goethe of Széphalom” had opened new avenues of artistic expression for future generations of Magyar writers, and his own unwavering devotion to the poet of Weimar had contributed greatly to this achievement.

In his monograph on József Bajza, József Szücsi [Bajza] refers to the eminent critic, literary theoretician, poet, and translator as perhaps the greatest admirer of Goethe in Hungary, and as the only one to be enthusiastic about Goethe without any reservations.⁹ While that may be an overstatement in view of Kazinczy’s position and the rather cool attitude which Bajza developed toward Goethe in later years, it accurately describes the young poet who had been introduced to Goethe’s writings by Ferenc Kölcsey. On July 9, 1827, Bajza wrote to his friend Ferenc Toldy:

The first installment of Goethe’s works — the new Stuttgart edition — has already come out. My heart is aching because I cannot buy it. . . . I am grateful to Kölcsey for having brought to my attention the poems of this great man. . . . I do not know anything that could give me greater satisfaction than these creations, produced by wondrous hands.¹⁰

And a few months earlier, he had commented to Toldy about Goethe and his public:

When I read Goethe and remember how small an audience the works of this poet have attracted in comparison to what they should have, I keep telling myself in order to find assurance: this outstanding Greek master is so close to nature, and today’s generation so far from it that — unless they have made a special study of him — they do not know and do not understand what to look for in Goethe.¹¹

Certainly Bajza’s accomplishments as a literary critic and editor far outweigh his importance as a poet. But he did write some significant political and patriotic poems, he achieved success with his lyrical ballads, and he contributed greatly to the establishment of the song as a poetic genre in Hungarian literature. He considered Goethe the undisputed master of this latter form, and he proudly related in a letter of 1829 how he had converted the poet and historian László Szalay, who had initially detested Goethe’s songs, to become one of their ardent admirers.¹² Through his translations in the mid-1830s of some of Goethe’s

poems, Bajza sought to acquaint his compatriots with what he saw as the high point in the development of European literature. His 1837 essay "A fordításokról" (On Translations), published in the periodical *Athenaeum*, is largely a Hungarian version of Goethe's discussion of different approaches to translating as presented in the notes to the *West-Eastern Divan*. Bajza added that Hungarians would never equal the Germans in their mastery of the art of translation, but that Goethe's views on the subject had not remained completely unknown in the country because, above all, Kazinczy had served as his spokesman. It is noteworthy, however, that when Bajza selected the models to follow in his own poetic attempts, he chose the German Romanticist Ludwig Tieck along with Goethe. And as Bajza left the enthusiasm of his youth behind, the lyricist Goethe eventually disappeared from his field of vision.

Since Bajza, very much like Kazinczy, admired in Goethe the master of style and form, he emphasized that aspect in his aesthetic and theoretical essays as well. He called the German writer the "founder of the modern novel" but dealt mainly with questions of language and structure when discussing Goethe's prose works without showing much interest in matters other than form. It is only logical, then, that his highest praise was reserved for the poet's accomplishments in a genre in which stylistic precision is essential. In his study of 1828, "Az epigramma theóriája" (The Theory of the Epigram), he lauded Goethe as the most outstanding author of epigrams in modern times:

None of the writers of his nation has mastered to the same degree as he did the unique form of the epigram and its artful phrasing; only Lessing might be compared with him in this respect.¹³

Characteristically, he considered Kazinczy, Goethe's devoted Hungarian disciple, the greatest master of the genre in Magyar literature:

We do not know any poet of our times other than Kazinczy who could stand in such beautiful splendor next to the epigrammatist Goethe; only those two are worthy of comparison with the Greeks. As a poet, Goethe is incomparably superior to him; as a master of form, he is his equal; in the genre of the epigram, those two share with Lessing the leading position among modern authors.¹⁴

The triad Lessing-Goethe-Kazinczy evoked here indicates once more how much young Bajza's image of Goethe paralleled that cultivated by the "Goethe of Széphalom."¹⁵

The opening of the National Theater in 1837 was a most important event in the cultural history of the country. Bajza had been a consistent champion of a Hungarian national theater, and as the director of the

newly established institution in 1837–38 and 1847–48, he had the opportunity to put some of his theories into practice. This practical experience, on the other hand, enriched his dramaturgical writings which today are valued as the most significant part of his legacy. In the famous controversy with Imre Henszlmann, a literary critic and art historian, he strongly favored French drama over that of Germany because he found in French works a moral purpose and felt that they were not contrary to moral teachings. In his writings of 1833 on the novel, he had expressed his concern over “German sentiment” which he called “the lechery of the soul.” He had been worried that “this morbid disease of the soul, German sentimentalism, might be imported too.” What he found “harmful to our national character” in the novel, he fought in the theater as well.¹⁶

Bajza’s criticism of Goethe as a dramatist must be seen against this background. It was Bajza, the fighter for Hungarian concerns in the theater and the practitioner of stagecraft, who judged the playwright Goethe. Moreover, Bajza’s views seem influenced by Tieck’s critical assessment of the poet. On several occasions, Bajza emphasized that Goethe’s plays were unfit for the stage. In an obituary article, he took a look at *Faust* in particular.¹⁷ He called the drama a “wonderful depiction of a wonderful myth of the German people” but expressed regret over the fact that the poet had obviously disregarded the limitations of the stage. Numerous scenes in the play are mere tableaux of Faust’s psychological condition or extensive reflections on the limits of human knowledge and the insufficiency of reason. Other scenes, although excellent in themselves, are not connected with the whole of the play, while again others, although highly dramatic, are too sketchy. In short, *Faust* represents a collection of rhapsodic fragments, not a tragedy written for the theater. Ten years later, Bajza reiterated his position in an *Athenaeum* article on the Hungarian drama.¹⁸ The principal purpose of a drama is its stage production. If a play fails in this respect, it has not fulfilled its primary function. And in this regard, Goethe — great as he otherwise might have been — was not particularly strong.

When Bajza, together with Toldy and Vörösmarty, began editing the new periodical *Athenaeum* in 1837, his youthful devotion to Goethe had long given way to a more sober attitude, and this new stance seems to be reflected in the number of articles critical of Goethe and his works that appeared in the influential journal under his editorship. Vörösmarty had little interest in the German poet and probably shared Bajza’s opinion of him as a playwright. Only Toldy, who had devoted his life to the building of bridges between the cultures of Germany and Hungary,

retained his high regard for Goethe to the end. But Bajza, too, would remember that one of the influences that had shaped him as a writer and critic had emanated from Weimar. As he stressed, Goethe's name represented to him not the life of one individual but an entire era, a phase of development of which he also was a part.¹⁹

Baron József Eötvös, outstanding statesman and creator of the realistic novel in Hungary, was one of the leading figures of the Reform Period. Both in his literary works and in his political activities, he sought to elevate the cultural level of his nation and to bring about some needed changes in his society. A number of the liberal causes he championed as a politician — such as compulsory education, prison reform, and the emancipation of the Jews — indicate that this Romanticist was an heir to the age of Enlightenment, too.

Eötvös was even more familiar with German culture than most of his peers. His mother was German, and young József grew up speaking her language and developing a love for the literature to which she had introduced him. It was his tutor József Pruzsinszky who acquainted him with the Magyar language and who instilled in him the deep feeling of attachment to his native country. When Eötvös entered Pest University at the age of thirteen, he was able to excel in all subjects except Hungarian language and literature. But whatever deficiencies he had in this area soon disappeared, and his literary accomplishments between 1831 and 1835 led to his election to the Academy at the age of twenty-two.

It seems significant that Eötvös's first venture into the realm of literature was with a translation of Goethe's *Götz von Berlichingen* which he completed in 1830 but did not publish. Goethe, however, provided more than mere translating exercises to him. In 1839–41, Eötvös completed his popular novel *A karthausi* (The Carthusian). These memoirs of a young French aristocrat who takes the vows as a Carthusian monk soon became the greatest publishing success in Hungary since András Dugonics's *Etelka* more than fifty years earlier.

The prologue to Eötvös's book addresses the reader "who is not left cold by the sufferings of a soul that was created for good and noble things, and who is more interested in the secret history of a heart than in the skillfully woven plots of novels."²⁰ If this seems like an appeal to the public of Goethe's *The Sufferings of Young Werther*, the novel furnishes additional evidence of the impact of that work. The suicide of young Arthur after he realizes the hopelessness of his love appears inspired by Goethe's tale, and even the structure of *A karthausi* may have been influenced by it.²¹ Werther's tragic love story is revealed to us through his letters to his friend Wilhelm, and the book concludes with

the fictitious “editor” relating to the reader the events immediately preceding Werther’s death, the suicide itself, and the burial of the unfortunate hero of the story. In the Hungarian novel, Gusztáv, the protagonist, starts as the first-person narrator; later we read only his diary entries; and at the end of the work, Gusztáv’s friend Vilmos, to whom he had entrusted his papers, tells of his death. It is hardly by accident that this friend’s name is the Hungarian equivalent of that of Werther’s intimate.

In his discussion of *A karthausi*, D. Mervin Jones stresses the Wertherian quality of Eötvös’s hero:

The action is continually retarded by long reflective passages; but the introspection is not confined to these — it pervades the whole narrative. Gustave knows no state of mind but crushing grief or blissful happiness, and always faithfully records his emotional reactions to events. Like a true Romantic he is continually asserting the claims of the emotions and sees life from an emotional point of view.²²

Sőtér is even more specific in suggesting the relationship between the characters of Gusztáv and Werther when he comments on the impact of French literature on the Hungarian novelist:

We have so far considered the models of the *Carthusian* as romantic, but if either Sainte-Beuve or Sélancour served as examples, they in their turn also go back to Werther, and the figure of Gustavus is chiefly related to him.²³

If *A karthausi* was indeed partly inspired by *Werther*, Eötvös’s novel may be seen as the first mature work for which Goethe’s book had provided a creative stimulus — after Kármán’s sentimental *Fanni* or Kazinczy’s imitative *Bácsmegyeinek gyötrelmei* (The Sufferings of Bács-megyei), whose very subtitle had indicated that it represented an adaptation of a German original. *A karthausi*, however, was not meant merely to provide sentimental entertainment but contained a political message as well. Eötvös offered to his nation, struggling to develop a suitable political system, a look at the France of Louis-Philippe as a model not to emulate. And just as *Werther* was to be followed by *Wilhelm Meister*, Eötvös’s later novels abandon the earlier sentimentality and address in a realistic manner existing social and political problems, as in *A falu jegyzője* (The Village Notary) of 1845, or social inequities of the past, as in *Magyarország 1514-ben* (Hungary in 1514) of 1847–48.

To Eötvös, Goethe offered the highest standard by which to judge literary accomplishments. But he rejected imitation, since Goethe was the product and representative of a different culture — an echo of

Herder's concept of literature. If there were Hungarian novels, dramas, and poems worthy of comparison with Goethe, they would certainly not be similar to the works of the German poet, even though Hungarian criticism had derived its criteria from the analysis of these works. Consequently, he applauded Petőfi's poetry because of its originality.

Eötvös opposed the moralistic condemnation of Goethe as a "man without a heart" which was widespread at the time. He stressed instead that the production of a poet is always more than the poet himself.²⁴ He had read the authors of "Junges Deutschland" and admired Victor Hugo and French Romanticism, but they had little effect on his high esteem for Goethe. As Pukánszky points out, Eötvös was one of the few in Magyar literature to appreciate Goethe as a complete human being, not just as a master of form — as had Kazinczy — or as an abstract intellectual ideal for which one dutifully voices enthusiasm. He belonged to the small but very important community of Hungarians who were "goethereif," who were ready for Goethe.²⁵ And Sötér adds:

The ideas of Eötvös, even in advanced age, were attached to Goethe, Goethean morality supported him in many hours of trial. In the wake of Goethe did Eötvös proceed from poetry to science, and beyond it to the philosophical content of the sciences.²⁶

For Sándor Petőfi, Goethe's image was radically different. When Hungary's most brilliant lyrical poet met his death on the battlefield of Segesvár, he was only twenty-six years old — the same age as the *Sturm und Drang* Goethe when he moved to Weimar. It is not surprising, then, that Petőfi had little use for the serene Olympian. He was neither interested in the formal perfection that Kazinczy and Bajza had admired nor could he grasp the totality of Goethe as Eötvös had done. His concept of Goethe was shaped largely by Börne and other writers of the "Junges Deutschland" movement. It is no coincidence that Petőfi proposed the name "Fiatal Magyarország" ("Young Hungary") for the "Tízek Társasága" ("Society of Ten"), his circle of literary and political friends in Pest.

Kölcsey had complained as early as 1826 that his countrymen were adoring the "pale images" of Schiller at the expense of Goethe's "serenely-smiling Graces."²⁷ In the 1830s and 1840s, in part as the result of the political situation, Hungarian reactions to Goethe were becoming increasingly negative. Imre Vahot, who was to appoint Petőfi assistant editor of his weekly *Pesti Divatlap* in 1844, probably spoke for many when he discussed Goethe and his work in an 1841 *Athenaeum* article entitled "Töredékgondolatok a világgköltészetről" ("Fragmentary Thoughts about World Literature").²⁸ Vahot praised *Götz von Berlichingen* and

especially the first part of *Faust* which had provoked a revolution in the world of ideas. Goethe was a genius who could have led his compatriots in the fight for national unity. But instead, he had become a Philistine, unfaithful to his true vocation and absorbed in the petty concerns of the Weimar court.

Similarly, Petőfi regarded Goethe as the lackey of princes, as a representative of the same detested culture that was manifesting itself politically in the Habsburg domination over his beloved Hungary. The poet, who at the age of twenty had known many of Heine's poems by heart and who had translated Heine as well as Schiller, Claudius, and Matthisson, eventually denied any knowledge of German. On one occasion, he did quote Goethe. When, in a political dispute in 1848, Vörösmarty had accused him of immodesty, Petőfi replied in the *Kossuth Hírlapja*: "Goethe, in his entire long life, only once said something intelligent, and that was when he said: 'Nur die Lumpen sind bescheiden' ('Only rogues are modest')." ²⁹ But it is unlikely that Petőfi was familiar with many of Goethe's works, none of which was among the German books he owned.

One of Petőfi's travel letters of 1847 to Frigyes Kerényi contains his spirited rejection of Goethe as a man and as a writer:

Goethe's *Faust* was in my pocket. What to do . . . swear or faint? You know, my friend . . . that I do not like Goethe, that I do not care for him, that I detest him, that I find him as nauseating as horseradish prepared with sour cream. The head of this man was a diamond, his heart, however, a flint — ah, not even that! A flint gives off sparks! Goethe's heart was clay, miserable clay, nothing else; moist, pliant clay when he wrote his silly *Werther*, but afterwards dry, hard clay. And I don't have any use for a fellow like that. For me, every man is worth as much as his heart is worth. . . . Goethe is one of the greatest Germans. He is a giant, but a giant statue. The present age crowds around him as if around an idol, but the future will knock him down like all idols. As indifferently as he looked down upon the people from the height of his fame, as indifferently will the people look down on the ruins of his fame after it has turned to dust. He who did not love others will not be loved by others, at most he will be admired. And woe to the great man who can only be admired but not loved. Love is eternal like God; admiration is fleeting like the world.³⁰

In the light of Petőfi's political commitment, it is quite consistent that this devastating assessment came after an earlier expression of high praise for Pierre Jean de Béranger, the "greatest apostle of freedom" who was described as the world's most outstanding poet.³¹ And it should be kept in mind that many of Petőfi's German contemporaries — and numerous critics in the decades to come — held similar views of Goethe.

But ironically, Goethe had contributed to Petőfi's development as a poet — at least indirectly. As Sótér states: "From the angle of Hungarian poetry, Goethe was the example of the poet who turned to folk poetry and only in the second place the author of *Faust*."³² His successful incorporation of the folksong into literature had a strong impact on Hungarian Romanticism. It stimulated a trend that reached its highest point in some of Petőfi's best works that blend the heritage of folk poetry with the expression of deep personal feeling.

And a poem like Petőfi's "Homér és Oszián" (Homer and Ossian) could not have been written without Goethe's "silly *Werther*." True, other Magyar authors — such as János Arany — had similarly contrasted the worlds of the Greek poet and the Gaelic bard, and Kölcsey had pointed to Goethe and Schiller as their modern counterparts. But what had perhaps become a commonplace comparison in mid-century Hungary certainly stemmed from Goethe's skillful evocation of the two contrasting moods in his epistolary novel. Throughout the book, Werther's state of mind is indicated by his references to either Homer or Ossian. Homer is the symbol of simplicity and naive enjoyment of nature and life. In his letter of October 12, 1772, Werther tells Wilhelm that Ossian has displaced Homer in his heart, and after that, the Northern atmosphere of gloom and inevitable destruction takes the place of sunny Greece. During their last fateful encounter, Werther reads to Lotte from his translation of Ossian — actually Goethe's own Strassburg rendition of what he had believed to be genuine third-century poetry — and then leaves to take his own life. Thus Petőfi, albeit probably unwittingly and unwillingly, was following in Goethe's footsteps when he wrote in 1847:

Do you hear Homer?
In his song there is the vaulted sky,
The eternal smile of quiet joy,
Whence the dawn's purple
And the gold of the midday light
Flow gently down
On the honey-colored waters of the sea
And on the green islands in it
Where gods are playing
In happy harmony with the human race
Your games, oh wonderful love!
And do you see Ossian over there?
In the country of the eternal fog in the Northern sea,

Above wild rocks his song resounds
As the storm's companion in the shapeless night,
And the moon is rising,
Like a setting sun,
Red as blood,
And sheds a grim light on the vast forests
Where bands of mournful spirits
Of the heroes fallen on the battlefields
Are roaming about.

Petőfi's concluding stanza, urging Homer and Ossian to go on singing and playing the "divine harp," may also serve as a fitting epitaph to Hungary's greatest lyrical poet and Germany's most famous writer:

Years are passing,
By the hundreds and by the thousands; they crush,
Without mercy, everything; but, oh,
You are sacred to them;
They breathe fallow death over everything,
Only the wreaths on your silvery heads remain green.³³

In case of Imre Madách, Goethe's impact was much more direct. When János Arany, then considered the country's leading literary authority, was asked to read and evaluate the manuscript of *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man), penned in 1859–60 by an unknown aspiring amateur playwright, he put it aside after having perused the first act, convinced that the drama was an inferior imitation of *Faust*. Eventually he was persuaded to read the entire work — influenced, perhaps, by Madách's growing reputation as a gifted orator in the Pest parliamentary assembly. Arany quickly changed his mind about the philosophical poem, declared it a masterpiece, and became its most vocal champion. Almost overnight, Imre Madách came to be one of his nation's most celebrated authors. He was soon afterwards elected to the Kiszalud Society and to the Academy. His play was widely read and admired, even though its first successful stage production at the National Theater did not take place until 1883, almost twenty years after the poet's death. *The Tragedy of Man* has been translated into more than twenty foreign languages and has been staged abroad repeatedly.

But the label "Hungarian *Faust*" has stuck with the work,³⁴ and Arany's initial reaction is quite understandable. Like Goethe, Madách used the confrontation scene between the Lord and Satan from the Book of Job as a prologue. A closer reading, however, reveals signifi-

cant differences. In *The Tragedy of Man*, this scene marks Lucifer's rebellion against God. Adam, the first man, is to be his tool in this insurrection. Lucifer, who appears to have been modeled after Goethe's Mephistopheles but is lacking that "devil's" redeeming sense of humor, succeeds in bringing about the Fall of Man. After the first human beings have been expelled from Eden, he shows Adam the future of his race in a series of dream visions designed to lead him into despair and to a renunciation of God. In a very real sense, Adam experiences "what to all mankind is apportioned," as Faust had desired. Accompanied by Lucifer, the "Spirit of Negation," he travels through history, assuming various historical roles and encountering Eve, the embodiment of "Woman Eternal," in her different reincarnations. From the Egypt of the Pharaohs to Fourier's utopian Phalanstery, he witnesses again and again the corruption of all great ideas.

After having seen the dismal dusk of humanity in a world where the sun has turned cold, Adam awakens again and is now ready to take his own life. In this way, he can stop the course of history before it has even begun. Thus, his reason for contemplating suicide is very different from that of Goethe's hero at the beginning of the play who is painfully aware of his innate limitations and of his inability ever to find the answers he is seeking. But when Eve tells her husband that she is with child, he realizes that his desperate deed would be meaningless. He bows before the Lord who restores his grace to mankind and assigns to Lucifer the same role that had been outlined for Mephistopheles in Goethe's "Prologue in Heaven." As leaven, he is to keep man from becoming complacent and inactive. He is to serve in the divine order as the force which, in the words of Mephistopheles, "would do ever evil, and does ever good."

The general parallels with *Faust* are obvious, and details in numerous scenes of *The Tragedy of Man* attest to Madách's familiarity with Goethe's dramatic poem.³⁵ The Hungarian playwright made no attempt, however, to disguise those parallels, as he was aware of having created a work whose structure and intention are quite different from the German tragedy. It is very likely that Goethe himself would have approved of this use of his play. Much of what he wrote to Karl Ludwig von Knebel about Byron's *Manfred* applies directly to Madách and his drama:

This unusual and gifted poet has absorbed my Faust. . . . He has used every theme in his own fashion, so that none remains as it was; and for this in particular I cannot sufficiently admire his genius. This reconstruction is entirely of a piece; one could give most interesting lectures on its similarity to the original and its departure from it; I do not deny, however, that the dull glow of an unrelieved despair will become

wearisome in the end. Yet one's irritation will always be mingled with admiration and respect.³⁶

In his *Tragedy of Man*, Madách discusses philosophical and theological questions in the tradition of the "poème d'humanité" of European Romanticism.³⁷ He ultimately denounces Hegel's optimistic interpretation of human history as a history of progress. After the events of 1848–49 and the subsequent Bach era, such optimism had become impossible for a Hungarian author. But Madách's play does not end with the "dull glow of an unrelieved despair." The Lord's final admonition to Adam is: "Hark to Me, Man! Strive on, strive on, and trust!"³⁸ God demands man's faith despite the gloomy visions of history that are in no way invalidated. It is this desperate faith, so often demonstrated by the Magyars over the centuries, that gives Madách's drama a uniquely national quality along with its universal message.

With the conversion and "Magyarization" of Goethe's art and thought in *The Tragedy of Man*, the creative influence of Goethe in Hungary had reached its highest point. What came after the "Hungarian *Faust*" was either epigonic reaction or interpretation. With Imre Madách's dramatic poem, the age of Romanticism in Hungary and in Europe had come to an end.

NOTES

(Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.)

1. Steven C. Scheer, *Kálmán Mikszáth* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 147.
2. Quoted in Fritz Strich, *Goethe and World Literature*, tr. C.A.M. Sym (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1949), p. 351.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 349.
4. See István Sötér, "Hungarian Romanticism," *The Dilemma of Literary Science*, tr. Éva Róna (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973), pp. 212–39.
5. Ferenc Kazinczy, *Összes művei*, Harmadik osztály, Levezetés, ed. János Váczy, 21 vols. (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1890–1911), 13: 241.
6. *Ibid.*, 5: 7.
7. *Ibid.*, 6: 486.
8. For almost identical assessments of Goethe's impact on Kazinczy, see Jakob Bleyer, "Goethe in Ungarn," *Jahrbuch der Goethe-Gesellschaft* 18 (1932): 114–33, and Béla von Pukánszky, "Ungarische Goethegegner und -kritiker. 1830–1849," *Ungarische Jahrbücher* 11 (1931): 353–76. The rather one-sided study by Julius von Farkas, *Die ungarische Romantik* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1931), still offers some valuable information about this phase of German-Hungarian cultural relations.
9. József Szücsi [Bajza], *Bajza József* (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1914), p. 71.

10. József Bajza, *Összegyűjtött munkái*, ed. Ferenc Badics, 3d ed., 6 vols. (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1899–1901), 6: 252.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 227.
12. See *ibid.*, p. 292.
13. *Ibid.*, 4: 54.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
15. József Patai, in his article “Bajza és Lessing,” *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny* 32 (1908): 33–47, 205–23, 354–69, has shown how Lessing’s impact was evident throughout Bajza’s life.
16. See Sötér, pp. 217 and 227.
17. “Goethe,” *Társalkodó* 1 (1832), Nos. 34 and 35.
18. “Valami a magyar dráma felől,” *Athenaeum*, 1842, 2, No. 38.
19. See Bleyer, p. 122.
20. József Eötvös, *Összes munkái*, ed. Géza Voinovich, 20 vols. (Budapest: Révai, 1901–1903), 1: 7.
21. On the influence of *Werther* on Eötvös’s technique, see Jenő Koltay-Kastner, *A Karthausi helye a szentimentális regényirodalomban* (Budapest: Németh, 1913).
22. D. Mervin Jones, *Five Hungarian Writers* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), p. 169.
23. Sötér, p. 232.
24. See Eötvös, 19: 119–20.
25. See Pukánszky, p. 376.
26. Sötér, p. 230.
27. In an article in *Élet és Literatura* 1 (1826): 210–14.
28. “Töredékgondolatok a világgöltészetéről,” *Athenaeum*, 1848, 1.
29. Sándor Petőfi, *Művei*, ed. József Kiss (Budapest: Szépirodalmi könyvkiadó, 1976), 2: 594. (The quotation is from Goethe’s poem “Rechenschaft.”)
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 490–91.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 483–84.
32. “Hungarian Lyric Poetry and the World,” *The Dilemma of Literary Science*, p. 243.
33. Petőfi, 1: 740–41. Certainly Petőfi was unaware of Macpherson’s forgeries when he wrote this poem.
34. A rather flagrant recent example can be found in J. W. Smeed’s book, *Faust in Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), which gives the title of Madách’s play in German and quotes exclusively from Ludwig Dóczy’s 1891 German translation. Smeed states in his preface: “Quotations are given in the original language except in the cases of A. Tolstoi and Imry [sic] Madách. Here since one of the main points made is the link with Goethe’s *Faust*, I have quoted from the German translation rather than in English” (p. v).
35. Vilma Pröhle, in her dissertation “*Az ember tragédiája és a Faust* (Budapest: József Kertész, 1929), lists 44 literal correspondences. While some of those are rather superficial, any student of Madách and Goethe could add further to that list.
36. Quoted in Strich, p. 256.
37. For detailed discussions of Madách’s position in European Romanticism, see the 1972 dissertation by Enikő Molnár Basa, “*The Tragedy of Man as an Example of the Poème d’Humanité: An Examination of the Poem by Imre Madách with Reference to the Relevant Works of Shelley, Byron, Lamartine and Hugo*” (University of North Carolina), and Dieter P. Lotze, “Madách’s *Tragedy of Man* and the Tradition of the ‘Poème d’Humanité’ in European Literature,” *Neohelicon* 6 (1978): 235–54.

38. Imre Madách, *The Tragedy of Man*, tr. Charles Henry Meltzer and Paul Vajda, 4th ed. (Budapest: Corvina, 1960), p. 300.



Kossuth and Újházi on Establishing a Colony of Hungarian 48-ers in America, 1849-1852*

Béla Vassady, Jr.

I

Although much has been written about Lajos Kossuth's motives for going to America in the wake of the unsuccessful Hungarian Revolution of 1848-49, serious scholarly research exploiting sources on both sides of the Atlantic commenced only in the 1940s. Perhaps because it could never be questioned that Kossuth's primary motive for visiting America was to generate aid for Hungary's cause, even this recent scholarship has neglected to assess the degree to which he considered the option of founding a Hungarian colony in America, or to fully assess László Újházi's efforts to bring such a plan to fruition. Thus, for example, Dénes Jánossy's seminal work on the Kossuth emigration and Tivadar Ács's more modest study of Újházi's short-lived colony in Iowa generally ignored the portions of the Kossuth-Újházi correspondence dealing with the colonization scheme and concluded that Kossuth had always opposed the idea.¹ Éva Gál's recent biography of Újházi portrayed this long neglected emigrant more thoroughly, but gave short shrift to Újházi's colonization activities and concurred that Kossuth was against colonization.² John H. Komlos' recent study on the Kossuth emigration excelled in its treatment of Kossuth's position on the settlement question before his American journey, but ignored Kossuth's colonization policy after his arrival, presumably on the assumption that thereafter it no longer played a role in his plans.³ This essay attempts to demonstrate that these assumptions have over-simplified Kossuth's complex, often contradictory, motivations. As the accepted leader of the Revolution and of the subsequent emigration, Kossuth recognized that

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