Mór Jókai's Asian utopia(s)

PÉTER HAJDU

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In his *Novel of the Century to Come* (*A jövő század regénye*, 1872–1874), Mór Jókai (1825–1904) created a genuine utopian novel that formulated an optimistic view about a future of humankind in which technical development, scientific enlightenment, and cooperative politics would result in general well-being. Although he imagined this bright future as embracing the entire globe, some features of the novel offer an opportunity for an east-west comparison of imagology. The global utopia develops from two small-scale utopias, and their relative location seems important. One is in Europe, the other in Asia. The narration presents the embedded Asian utopia from two perspectives, one of which is Chinese. This embedded utopia shows how a 19th-century European writer imagines a classical Chinese utopia; and the juxtaposition of a European utopia with an Asian one from Chinese perspective and a Western perspective solicits comparison. The very complex structure gives the impression that the novel experiments with the possibilities of various utopian traditions. What stands out as the common features of the small utopian communities in Europe and in Asia and the big global utopia to be reached at the end of the novel are the basic values of hard work, cooperation, and the non-violent organization of social and political life. The small communities seem to realize such values out of necessity, since otherwise they cannot survive in their respective environment, but the novel suggest that the same values are adaptable globally too. It is probably the latter belief that makes the novel utopian.

Jókai was a great romancer, whose books were tremendously successful in his lifetime not only in Hungary, but also in Germany, Poland, Russia, and England. Twenty-one of his novels were translated into English, and six of them were published in at least ten editions.[1] *The Novel of the Century to Come* in contrast, was less successful: it was translated only to German. The translation, originally made for the German reading public in Hungary, and published in serialized form in the newspaper *Pester Lloyd* in Budapest, appeared almost simultaneously with the novel's original serialized publication. The Hungarian text was published in the newspaper *A Hon* (The Homeland) between November 3, 1872 and February 11, 1874, and the *Pester Lloyd* started the German version on January 2, 1873. This version was published once in book format in Pressburg (Bratislava) and Leipzig. *The Novel of the Century to Come* does not belong to the core of the Hungarian canon of Jókai's works, but

it was well-known and widely read until 1945,[2] and undeniably had fundamental impact on utopian literature. Pál Privigyey's 1887 novel entitled *Hungary is not in the Past but in the Future*, is a much shorter, simplistic remake of Jókai's endeavor (2002). In 1895 Zsolt Beöthy published a booklet entitled *The Novel of the Century to Come*, and Miklós Bessenyei's novel from 1905, *In Half a Century* imagined Hungary's European hegemony due to a monopoly of airplanes, which obviously utilizes Jókai's plot, and in 1914 Ferenc Herczeg wrote "The Short Story of the Century to Come" (for the overview of this tradition, see Veres 2013). Mihály Babits started his 1933 dystopia *Pilot Elza* with a reference to the subtitle of the first part of Jókai's novel "Perpetual Fight": "It happened in the 40th year of the perpetual fight" (1982, 463). *The Novel of the Century to Come* was not published between 1945–1981 (and in 1981 only in a critical edition designed for professional readers, not a wider readership) obviously because of its anti-Russian tendency, and because incautious readers could confuse the Russian nihilist revolution in Jókai's fiction with real-world communism. *The Novel of the Century to Come* is problematic for readers today due to its obvious misogynist and racist tendencies. Its boasting nationalism probably made it unmarketable abroad even at the time of its publication. The thin plot, the long descriptions and the naïve quasi-scientific speculations about the future technical inventions make for difficult reading. An African-American character plays a very important role in the plot; in the end he becomes the traitor (which is the most despised sin) and as a punishment or a kind of mercy he is sent to Africa "to civilize his people" (Jókai 1981, 2, 269), with which formulation the novel simply endorses every colonial discourse. The most violent criminals are sent to a region in Central Africa unpopulated by human beings although some hairless monkeys live there – where they can act out their murderous instincts by killing beasts, and thus create "a mighty new nation" (2, 283–284): hardly a concept of environmental justice. The narrator calls women "the half of the human race that has a weak neurotic system" (2, 63), and the maxim "don't entrust your secret to a woman or a stranger" (1, 278) is demonstrated by the protagonist's wife, who spoils the fate of a whole nation by simply forgetting to deliver a message of crucial importance (1, 280–284). She is pregnant when she is sent to the capital with the message, and she gives birth to the child earlier than expected; once she becomes a mother, she stops caring about anything but domestic affairs, and even later she is unable to remember she had a mission on which the fate of millions of people depended. Jókai makes her husband blame himself for the failure and adore her for her sublime motherhood in a highly rhetorical free indirect discourse; the implied author obviously opposes any public involvement of any woman and wants to see them confined to the sphere of the nursery and the kitchen. The counterexample, which proves the same moral, is Alexandra, the anarchist leader, then empress, of Russia, who plays the role of the super-villain in the story.

Despite the problematic features mentioned above, *The Novel of the Century to Come* deserves critical attention due to several unique features. It is a classical liberal utopia, which narrates how Dávid Tatrangi, a simple Hungarian fellow, in the time span from 1950 to 2000 develops the perfect global society, based first and foremost on world peace, but also on general wellbeing, scientific development

and the enlightenment of the masses. This achievement mostly depends on his personal intellectual and moral capacities, but his Hungarianness is also important. The novel makes every possible attempt to flatter the Hungarian reading public, which makes it unsurprising that it sold so poorly abroad. In the first pages they learn that in 100 years Budapest will be the principal capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the Habsburgs have become so Hungarianized that the current king has the typical Hungarian first name of Árpád, and even the pope has moved from Rome to Hungary. It also gradually becomes clear that Hungarian women are the most beautiful in the world, just as Hungarian men are the bravest, smartest and most honest. Zsolt Czigányik thought the contrast between the current state of affairs and the imagined bright future is so harsh that Jókai could not be serious, and "the fantasy becomes so ridiculous that it can hardly be interpreted in any other way than as an ironic satire of the contemporary political situation" (2015, 16). In fact, there is no reason why a depressing present would exclude fantasizing about a future glory. That kind of fantasy might function as solace to the currently depressed national community but this reassurance also adulates the readership by supposing the potentials of the greatness to come are already there waiting for actualization. In the years Jókai was writing the novel he was a member of the Parliament.[3] It is true that those years he was in opposition, but not "an ardent supporter of Hungarian independence [who] could not accept Habsburg rule", as Czigányik put it (16). He was member of the moderate opposition party Left Center, which accepted the Compromise, but wanted to achieve separate army and finance. During his political career Jókai never joined any committed independence party.[4] Therefore, the dream that the dualist monarchy was still going to exist in 100 years, with the Hungarian half gaining in weight and importance, harmonizes with Jókai's political standpoint.[5] The vision of a future Hungary might be exaggerated and difficult to believe, but this general characteristic of the genre does not necessarily make it a satire.

At the end of Volume I, the protagonist establishes the city state Otthon (Home) on the islands of the Danube Delta, and through a monopoly on airplanes (Tatrangi's invention) he can both enforce world peace and produce a huge profit. This small-scale state is a mixture of nationalist and capitalist utopia. The citizens, at least at the beginning, are exclusively Hungarians; they are share-holders of the state-enterprise, and a triumvirate of three managers runs the whole business: Mr. Severus, the African-American billionaire businessman, General Dárday, a Hungarian soldier-gentleman, and Tatrangi, the idealist superman, who is both an inventor and a political genius, and represents a harmonic mixture of idealism, nationalism, and pacifism. This state works as a business company, which assures the citizen's loyalty and responsible behavior through justly sharing its remarkable profits. Tensions between employees and owners appear under the pressure of the Russian war-threat. Russian agitators successfully make the foreign migrant workers, who are not share-holders yet, rebel, which rebellion is suppressed by force (without casualties, to be sure).[6]

However, Tatrangi discovers another, even more utopian Hungarian state in Central Asia, which is called Kin-Tseu. The name appears to be a German transcrip-

tion of a Chinese name, and the text actually states that the area has different names in different languages: in Chinese it is Kin-Tseu,[7] in Tibetan Pamir, and in Mongolian Ladakh (2, 132). It goes without saying that it is futile to try to find this imaginary, utopian country on the map. Pamir is a mountain in inner Asia, Ladakh is a federal state in North-India, also called Indian Tibet. At one point the narrative indicates that Kin-Tseu is 38 degrees east from the Danube Delta (2, 132), which situates it somewhere like Samarkand in Uzbekistan. The country is also said to be inaccessible among the Himalayas, the Kunlun, and the Khokonoor mountains (2, 136). Tibet is indeed situated between the Himalayas and the Kunlun Mountains, and the fact that both the Yangtze and the Yellow rivers[8] flow from there also seems to point in that direction (2, 133); however, it is explicitly stated that Kin-Tseu is near Tibet, so it is not identical with it.[9] Already in his lifetime Jókai was celebrated for his creative imagination, although the careful analysis of his library and notebooks suggests that instead of inventing things he mostly found them in books (Fried 2003, 14). In her editorial commentary of the novel, Zsuzsa D. Zöldhelyi writes: "Humboldt mentions the Kunlun Mountain by the Kuku-Nor – Jókai probably meant that" (2, 452). Jókai possessed a copy of Alexander von Humboldt's *Ansichten der Natur mit wissenschaftlichen Erläuterungen* (1859), as well as his *Kosmos* (1845), the fourth volume of which contains abundant material about China. Jókai took many details about China from Johann Christoph Wagner's *Das mächtige Kayser-Reich Sina und die asiatische Tartarey* (1687), especially the most absurd curiosities. These books can be found in the Petőfi Literary Museum, Budapest, where a significant part of Jókai's library (about 1,000 volumes) is stored.[10] He did not need a wild imagination to come up with the fantasy that an animal called "Hoang-Cio-Ja" exists in China, which is a fish in winter, but a bird in summer,[11] or the idea of flying turtles in Henan province, because he found them ready in Wagner's book (Jókai 1981, 2, 134; Wagner 1687, 131, 126–127). Jókai obviously did not mean the Kunlun Mountain by the Khokonoor, since the Kunlun is another one of the three mountains surrounding Kin-Tseu. He probably took the inspiration for the name Kin-Tseu also from Humboldt's *Ansichten*, where a city named Kiung-Tscheu is mentioned (Zöldhelyi in Jókai 1, 601; probably Jingzhou in Hubei province). He took the name of a city and made it the name of a country, slightly modified the spelling, then explained that the Chinese name of the secret country is actually a Hungarian expression, "kincs ő", meaning "she is a treasure" (2, 155). This is how the inhabitants call their beloved country.

The novel as a whole is utopic, since it narrates how a harmonious society will develop in the future; this mostly happens in Volume II, in which the small-scale utopia of Otthon is expanded to the entire globe. This structure means that Kin-Tseu as another small-scale utopia parallels Otthon in Volume II. Douwe Fokkema has described the general, albeit not entirely true difference of setting between European and Chinese utopias: while in the Western world utopia tends to be an island, in China it is a valley among the mountains accessible only through the narrow passage of a cavern (2011, 91–92). He saw in this opposition the consequence of the maritime and continental nature, respectively, of those cultures. Inside *The Novel of the Century to Come* Jókai perfectly recreates this general opposition: Europeans create the island

utopia Otthon, while the Asians have their mountain valley utopia Kin-Tseu. This situation raises the possibility that Jókai might have been more knowledgeable about the Chinese utopian tradition than one would expect. Given that in 1890 he wrote a kind of fairytale with a Chinese setting that shows striking similarities to *The Story of Peach Blossom Spring* (*Taohua yuan ji*) by Tao Yuanming,[12] which is generally regarded as the origin of Chinese utopian writing, it is possible that he was intentionally playing with the contrast of the two major utopian traditions.[13] *The Novel of the Century to Come* actually contains two alternative Kin-Tseu utopias. The novel as a whole tells the story of the future world's transition into a global utopia, but Kin-Tseu, the land closed among high mountains in Central Asia has always been a utopia. However, the land is described from two different viewpoints: the first belongs to the Chinese, and is the restricted viewpoint of the uninformed; the other belongs to the omniscient narrator, and is therefore, by default, a Western viewpoint. For the former, the narrator "quotes" written sources, then simply relates how things really are. One can therefore say that a false written utopia is confronted with a true lived one. The notions of true and false, written and lived must, of course, be understood inside the written fictional world. Even if the country is inaccessible, the Chinese have some vague knowledge of it, since it is "on the edge of China". When Severus, as a reversed black Iago, tricks Tatrangi's wife, Rozáli, into jealousy by speaking about Tatrangi's frequent air trips to Kin-Tseu, she finds some Chinese sources about the land and manages to have them translated by a female Sinologist. The text on Kin-Tseu is said to be part of a Chinese historical collection, which actually exists; the Kin-Tseu report therefore is presented to Rozáli as containing adventurously transmitted ancient wisdom, which the narrator will only later prove to be completely fake. Jókai refers to the 19th-century collection *Siku Quanshu* (in his spelling She-Khu-sti-shu), which contains the "Szan-hoang-pen-ki" by "the most famous Chinese historian" "Sze-ma-tsiang", and even differentiates between its reliable parts "Sze-ki", which are already accessible in several European translations, and the other unreliable sections (2, 122–123). These data are correct. Sima Qian (Jókai's Sze-ma-tsiang, c. 145–c. 86 BCE) was a great historian in the 1st century BCE, and his only genuine work is entitled *Shiji* (i.e. Sze-ki), while *San huang ben ji* (Szan-hoang-pen-ki) is a collection of later additions edited by Sima Zhen (c. 679–c. 732). To all these reliable bibliographical and prosopographical data Jókai makes a fictional addition. He creates a story in which Sima Qian discovers some jasper tablets with secret and forbidden ancient knowledge[14] in a palace, and publishes their content under the title "ju-pan", which may be the Hungarian transcription of 玉板 (*yu ban* in pinyin), jade boards that officials in ancient China used as carriers of writing and reports. Jókai used his remarkable knowledge of the Chinese historical tradition to convince his readers that the fictional source about Kin-Tseu also exists.

Despite the great apparatus created to make us believe that such a book may exist, Jókai immediately undermines its credibility: "Sima Qian is the most reliable Chinese historian, who when lying does it on the basis of the most authentic sources" (2, 123). He also emphasizes that both European and Chinese philologists see a difference between Sima Qian's historical works (the *Shiji*) and romantic tales. The description

of Kin-Tseu belongs to the latter category – it is a pity that the woman who translates it for Rozáli does not read the secondary literature, and therefore fails to inform her of the unreliable nature of the source (2, 124).[15] The summary of the Chinese source, however, is not really informative. The narrator only relates that the whole text was translated for Rozáli, but he does not quote the translation, and only delivers a one-page summary (2, 124). The main point is that "The men are ugly and their body is bad; however, the ladies are even more beautiful." Jókai alienates the description of the female beauty through a sophisticated narrative technique: he does not speak about the object of Sima Qian's description directly, but about Sima Qian's description itself. Rather than representing the historical source as a transparent medium, he focuses on the medialization of the information, and lets the readers imagine whatever their ignited fantasy can make up:

> Sima Qian describes the beauties of Kin-Tseu ladies with sensual enthusiasm, giving all the details and missing nothing; that is a country full of so beautiful women that cannot be found in the whole celestial empire (2, 124).

The reader might assume here that Rozáli would be furious to read that the country her husband furtively frequents is famous for beautiful women. But this is not enough. Kin-Tseu worships the deity in the form of a handsome young man, which, of course, cannot be found on the spot. They believe in a mythical eagle that selects a handsome man somewhere in the neighboring areas and delivers him through the air. This narrative seems to solicit readers to imagine themselves in Tatrangi's position, being the only handsome man in the land of beautiful women, who happens to come from the sky as their god is believed to do.

Then one more paragraph provides some information about Kin-Tseu's (as it is implied, sexual) habits:

> Kin-Tseu is ruled by women: men are slaves, animal-like labor; women are the young god's army, court, clergy, and all young, beautiful and keen. From this constellation Sima Qian's fantasy created colorful stories with the liberty that only the Chinese muse allows, whose garden does not know anything about – a fig tree (2, 124).

It is not impossible that Jókai's success was due, at least partially, to his breaking some sexual taboos of the period's Hungarian highbrow literature,[16] although it was a very cautious, shy way of doing so. In *The Novel of the Century to Come*, he hints at the possibility of a pornotopia, a kind of utopia which centers around uninhibited sex with women, who, as Rozáli summarizes what she has learned from the Chinese source, "are more beautiful and more prone to love than European women" (2, 125). It is true that this pornotopia is designed for one person only (the only one who can fly there), which makes it similar to the orientalizing fantasies of the harem, but interestingly enough this orientalizing fantasy is attributed to the Chinese, fantasizing about a country west of them. At the same time, it is also a colonizer's fantasy about the (sexualized) resources of a country, which the locals do not know how to use; the land is waiting for the colonizer to develop her potential.[17] The colonizing discourse in pornography or the pornographic discourse of colonization has been described as somatopia by Darby Lewes (1996).[18] These beautiful women prone

to love need an alien man they can worship as their god. However, this colonizing, pornographic fantasy is attributed to the Chinese, and it turns out to be completely wrong. When the omniscient narrator describes Kin-Tseu as it is, readers will learn the real Kin-Tseu is not even remotely similar to what the Chinese imagine.

The falseness of the Chinese knowledge of Kin-Tseu was foreshadowed by the preliminary geographic description of the mountainous area of Inner Asia, in which a page-long list of miracles informs the readers of what the Chinese think is there (2, 134). Jókai, who carefully collected strange stories from various books, once published a short article in his humorous weekly *Üstökös* (Comet) entitled "Chinese Curiosities" ("Chinai furcsaságok") with all the strange phenomena he found in Wagner's above mentioned book and elsewhere (1863). Many of them reappear in the list of strange phenomena the Chinese tradition attributes to Kin-Tseu's inaccessible mountainous area, such as the previously mentioned yellow bird-fish and flying turtles. Strangely enough Jókai calls the latter "the flying turtles of Henan", i.e., a province in Central China although they are supposed to live in the western mountains. Quasi-geographical locations are attached to most of the miracles, and they are seldom identifiable with real places in China. Theoretically they should not be at all, since those places are said to be outside China as Jókai presents it. Since it is probable that Jókai's readers could hardly differentiate between real and imaginary Chinese geography, the reason might be that he simply did not care, and used the Chinese toponyms he liked. The catalogue of obviously impossible things that the Chinese believe exist in Kin-Tseu already gives readers an impression how unreliable Chinese knowledge is. (We should remember that not much later we are to learn that this is the knowledge the fictional Ming dynasty Sema Qian found on secret jasper tablets and did not include in his serious writing; it is ancient "knowledge" that a reliable historian faithfully records among fairy tales.) However, even this catalogue ends with the erotic phantasy of the Sichuan baboons "that in the woods peek at the women for whom they feel human desire (a horrible hybrid, if they succeeded)". Both here, and in a poem Jókai published in the above-mentioned humorous periodical, he emphasizes that the baboons' love is hopeless. His source, Wagner's book, was not so sure about that, since it reads "they intercept women on their way to exercise their animal lusts with them".[19] Not bothered by the contradiction that the Sichuan baboons also live in the inaccessible highland instead of Sichuan, Jókai uses this item as an *argumentum a fortiori* to make readers imagine the beauty of Kin-Tseu women. They are so beautiful that even monkeys cannot resist them. If the baboons behave like this, imagine the human beings. Then he entails the information that several hundred years ago Chinese emperors payed as much as for pearls or gold to get women from there and always kept 300 of them around. An earthquake closed off all these miracles, of which the women are the most miraculous. As it seems, the Chinese love to fantasize about a Western wonderland, and their fantasies are highly erotized.

After this introduction it is not so surprising that the Chinese pseudo-historical source about Kin-Tseu is a pornotopia. Not a word of it is true, and Tatrangi, although he is a handsome young man coming from the sky, does not behave either as the

god of the Kin-Tseu women, or a colonizer of that nation. He admires their ancient social organization and teaches them the new inventions of the outside world from the last seven centuries. Jókai does not write a sexually explicit text; he only states that Chinese literature is sexually explicit, and lets his readers fantasize about the very explicit Chinese report of the pornotopia, as he reports of Rozáli's jealous fantasizing. The narrative then goes on to tell the real story of Tatrangi's journey to Kin-Tseu and deliver the omniscient narrator's true report of the country. The Chinese fantasy of the land of extremely beautiful and extremely available but also dominant women is thus proven false. Kin-Tseu is in reality the utopian community of a cooperative and peaceful nation, which unsurprisingly happens to be Hungarian. According to Jókai's mythical-historical story of origin, the Hungarians, when they were still leading a nomadic lifestyle in the Asian steppes, had two fractions, the war-party and the peace-party, and they decided to part. The fierce warriors went to the west and conquered the Carpathian Basin. The peaceful ones stayed where they were until in the 13th century they had to face the danger of Genghis Khan's expansion. Since they did not like the idea of any confrontation, especially not with an overwhelmingly superior enemy, they found a recess among the mountains, and since then they have lived in Kin-Tseu, an area to which later earthquakes have completely blocked every entrance.

This utopian community preserves some features of the mythical (or rather scholarly construed) ancient Hungarians, although one important feature, the glorious warlike character is explicitly missing. The old mythical features, however, are in perfect harmony with Jókai's 19th-century liberal values: democracy and religious tolerance. In Kin-Tseu all citizens are equal, all leaders are elected, and the selection has nothing to do with any religious beliefs. They have no institutionalized religion; although they have some pantheistic beliefs, worshipping the natural forces like water, air and fire, they may or may not attend any ritual as they feel (2, 149). Such ideas about the social organization and religious beliefs of early Hungarians were well-known in 19th-century historiography of culture. We should remember that the warlike Hungarians that went to the west, according to the 19th-century narratives, lost their equality-based social system and their tolerant nature-worship. Tatrangi, with his pacifism that follows from his Sabbatarian religion, becomes a perfect intermediary between the two Hungarian nations.

Other features result from the special circumstances of the mountain-locked country. The population grew massively in 700 years due to the lack of wars and epidemics. Since they are isolated, they cannot (even if they wished to) go out to fight other nations, which cannot attack them either. And since their community is based in first place on their peaceful nature, they do not have civil wars. It is also their isolation that protects them from diseases (2, 150), which as Susan Sontag (1977) reminds us, are usually seen as foreign threats. Since the population is growing but the available area to produce food is limited, they necessarily base their society on intensive use of the resources by the hard work of every citizen (2, 151). The frugal lifestyle and the absence of any alcoholic beverage also may be consequences of the limitations of food supply (2, 150; 2, 159).

All the above features together may be regarded as ingredients of an ecotopia, a vision of sustainable community life. Other features, however, contradict this. The area has oil too, and Kin-Tseu people use bamboo pipes to bring it to their houses for cooking and heating (2, 152), but of course we cannot expect a writer in 1874 to foresee the dangers of fossil fuels. Kin-Tseu is represented as a country in which the inhabitants have successfully adapted to the limited natural resources for 700 years, controlling population growth without violent measures and developing sustainable technologies both of food production and protection from floods. Their alliance with Tatrangi and the Otthon-Hungarians can be seen as the globalization of the model they developed for small countries. For Tatrangi, peaceful, non-violent politics is also of basic importance. Although Otthon's power is based on superior military technology (namely a monopoly on airplanes), he uses it not to conquer the world but to force all the nations to stop wars and invest their energies in peaceful development. The use of oil as Kin-Tseu's source of energy can be regarded as surprisingly appropriate foretelling of 20th-century developments, or as major failure in the concept of sustainability on the global scale. When the novel switches to describe the creation of the global utopia, the aspect of limited resources disappears. From a present-day ecocritical viewpoint, it is quite obvious the Earth's natural resources are also limited and their uninhibited exploitation can result in catastrophe. Kin-Tseu as a small-scale model may show how it can work, but the whole narrative fails to consequently apply that model to a full-scale utopia.

Although the lack of wars and pestilence guarantees population growth, Jókai mentions two factors that act against it, namely the Kin-Tseu people's severe morals and their faithful family life (2, 150). In utopias the special organization or regulation of reproduction, sex and maybe family life is an almost obligatory topic, which is hardly a surprise. If you imagine a perfect society, you have to say something about this particular area of human life, which in literature appears as the most frequent source of destructive energy, threatening the harmony in any community. As we saw, the fictitious Chinese utopia of Kin-Tseu was said to describe the sexual habits of the population in much detail, and a very free, libertarian, promiscuous sexuality was implied, driven by female desire. In the "real" Kin-Tseu description, Jókai does not say anything more about the topic, so by default we suppose they have exclusive monogamous, patriarchal families, but they do it better than 19th-century Europeans. However, the detail that this family life acts against population growth makes one wonder: is there any reason to suppose that marital faithfulness results in fewer children? We should take into consideration Jókai's personal Protestant background. It is a well-known fact that the fertility rate of mainstream Protestant communities is rather low, since they regard fertility as a matter of individual choice, in contrast, for example, to the pronatalist Catholic doctrine (Lehrer 1996). Even if the people of Kin-Tseu are not Christian and practice a rather free nature worship, at the family level they seem to live a Protestant utopia.[20] Not only their strict marital morals suggest this, but also their ethos of hard work. Their closed environment does not allow them to develop an expansive economy or exploit the area in an unsustainable way and forces them to intensify production while restricting consumption. Their life-

style one might therefore characterize with diligence, discipline, and frugality, exactly the categories with which Max Weber described the Protestant ethics (1904). The fact that they have no alcoholic drink at all (2, 159) might also be a hint in that general direction.

In *The Novel of the Century to Come* Jókai experimented with different kinds of utopia and the peaceful cooperation, the reasonable investment of the human race's energies in development is the common denominator of those he represented as possibly viable. In the two small-scale utopias, the national (Hungarian) coherence seems of basic importance. Although Kin-Tseu is first presented from a Chinese viewpoint as a pornotopia, the omniscient narrator soon refutes that as an oriental fantasy ascribed to the influence of Chinese literary traditions. What the narrator approves instead is a frugal utopia, which shows affinity to the Protestant morality, and also traits of a sustainable ecotopia. Even if the Kin-Tseu Hungarians are preserving the old Asian-Hungarian religion and social equity, they have created something similar to the European ideal. However, the second Kin-Tseu utopia (that of the omniscient narrator as contrasted to that of the Chinese) is also a *mise en abyme* for the whole novel, since it is actually based on the pacifist nature of the population. Dávid Tatrangi does not use his monopoly on the aircraft to conquer the world, but to force all the nations of the globe to stop warring and cooperate peacefully, which results in astronomic growth of human well-being. The small-scale pacifist utopia is embedded in a global one.

NOTES

[1] For his success in the English market see Kádár 1991; for his failure in France see Kádár 1995, 164–202. Translations from the Hungarian are by the present author unless otherwise noted.

[2] Actually, the republication of the novel stopped with the 1928 edition. It is possible that the experience of World War I made it difficult for the readers to take the fiction of world peace achieved by advanced military technology so seriously.

[3] To be precise, he was member of the House of Commons between 1867–1896, and the House of Lords afterwards.

[4] In 1867, when the Resolution Party was split into two, Jókai did not join the Far Left party, which aimed at independence, but the Left Center; and in 1875, when the Left Center merged with the Deák Party to create the Liberal Party, which was to govern dualist Hungary for 30 years, he stayed with Kálmán Tisza, while those who did not created the Principled Left Center in 1873, a part of which merged with the 1848 Party in 1874 to establish the 1848 Independence Party, while another part established its own Independence Party. Jókai never joined any of the various formations of independence parties.

[5] Curiously enough, Czigányik characterizes the intolerable political situation with the following "fact": "Ironically, maybe he is also protesting contemporary reality: emperor Francis Joseph, who was simultaneously the king of Hungary, did not speak Hungarian" (2015, 16). Actually, Francis Joseph spoke Hungarian fluently and already as a young boy was able to write good compositions in Hungarian as homework.

[6] Czigányik rightly emphasizes that "[t]he structure of society is described by Jókai in Marxist terms of patterns of exploitation, with the authorities – as it is to be expected of an exploiting class – constantly considering the use of coercive forces." However, the structure of the society is more complex than the dichotomy implied in Czigányik's spatial methaphor in the expression "the harmony of the

new state is threatened from below" (2015, 19). The rebellious elements are those who do not have full citizenship in Otthon, and decided not to apply for owner status in the collective entreprise. Their willingness to follow hostile propaganda seems to imply moral inferiority (the symptoms of which are illoyalty and mobility). Only the good immigrants want and can join the Hungarian owner-worker class in Otthon. For a more illuminating analysis of the Otthon economy see Hites 2021 (article in this volume).

[7] The 19th century had no generally established rules to transcribe Chinese words into Hungarian. Since most of the sources Hungarians used were in German (and some in French) the transcription was mostly assimilated to the German habits, although they were not strictly regulated either. Therefore, to identify Jókai's Chinese words with real referents is a challenging task. In this article I quote literally what Jókai wrote, unless the identification, like in the case of well-known geographical denominations, is evident.

[8] For both names Jókai used transcriptions; "Jan-Tse-Kiang" for Yangtze is easily decipherable, while the "Huang Ho" (Huang He), which means "yellow river" might cause some difficulties.

[9] The third mountain which borders Kin-Tseu has the name of China's biggest lake, the Qinghai Lake, also known as Kuku-Nor. We will never know how the name of a real lake became the name of a mountain.

[10] Csorba 2006, p. 62, items 233, 234, and p. 146, item 900.

[11] Wagner's German transcription is "Huangcioya", which is similar to a mythical creature of the Chinese tradition called Huang que yu (yellow birdfish), the summer-fish-winter-bird animal in the South Sea.

[12] "A leaotungi emberkék", i.e. The small people of Leaotung. In 1890 it appeared in a newspaper, and later it was published in Jókai's various fairytale and short story collections.

[13] The Danube delta islands of Otthon are not only contrasted to the Chinese topos of the enclosed valley but also to Jókai's other utopias. Both the mise-en-abyme North Pole utopia in *Black Diamonds* (Jókai 1964, 1, 202–224) and his late novel *Where Money Is Not God* (1904) place the perfectly idyllic community on islands.

[14] Why is this knowledge forbidden? Jókai describes an anti-intelligentsia movement in China, in which books written during the previous dynasty were burned and hundreds of scholars were executed to prevent them from writing the destroyed books again. This sounds similar to what happened during the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE); see Twitchett and Loewe 1986, 69–72. However, Jókai attributed the movement to the Ming period (1368–1644; 2, 122). If it is not a simple mistake (which is highly possible, given the uncertainties of transcription), he might have wanted to use the name of a better-known dynasty or to adjust the book burning to the chronology of Kin-Tseu's foundation, which he posited in the 13th century. The historical Sima Qian does not fit in the chronology, but if Jókai's fictional Sima Qian lived in the Ming period, he does. Jókai names a "Hue" dynasty as preceding the Mings. This name does not sound very similar to any real dynasty, but it may be identified with the Yuan dynasty, which makes the chronology correct.

[15] Although Jókai emphasizes that there are female academics in the future society, they appear to be segregated; there is an academy for women, and this only event when a female scholar is involved in the plot seems to imply that women can hardly compete with men in academia. The woman Rozáli hires can find the relevant written source, and she can translate it, but she fails to discover the context and therefore she is incapable of critical interpretation. A historian who presents unreliable material as if it was a reliable source, because they fail to read the secondary literature, is obviously a bad scholar. Women do not appear as inventors when the novel describes the innumerable innovations of the imaginary 20th century, and the only female academic makes a major mistake. The women's academy therefore does not seem to be a serious institution. This is one of the many signs of the novel's misogynist tendency.

[16] Cf. Tamás 1993; Szilasi 2000, 198–199. For the frequency of erotic and pornographic contents in popular genres overwhelming evidence has been collected in Császtvay 2009. Géza Csáth (1887–1919), the young short story writer, made this remark in 1906: "Jókai sometimes had terribly perverted ideas" (Szajbély 2014, 128).

[17] The assumption is described by Robert M. Adams as follows: "the natives don't know what to do with the land that Providence has unfairly bestowed upon them, and superior races are therefore entitled to take over" (More 1992, 41).

[18] See also Lewes 1993. For the relationship of utopia and sex in general, see Tower Sargent and Sargisson 2014.

[19] "Sie sind über den massen auf die Weiber verliebet ja greiffen dieselbe zu weilen auf dem Wege an ihre viehische Lüste mit ihnen zu büssen" (Wagner 1687, 127).

[20] One might see a similarity to the ideas of Thomas Malthus, who in his 1798 book *An Essay on the Principle of Population* explained that the increase in food production can never catch up with population growth, and notably suggested population control by sexual self-restraint.

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Mór Jókai's Asian utopia(s)

Nationalism. 19th-century literature. East-West comparison. Pornotopia. Ecotopia.

The paper analyzes Mór Jókai's *The Novel of the Century to Come* from the viewpoint of the local aspects of cultural embeddedness of the complex and competing utopian discourses. The whole novel describes a future in which, after difficult struggles, a globally united and perfect society is created. However, two different small-scale utopias are also described; one of them (Otthon) is located in Europe and shows traits of the national-capitalist dream; the other (Kin-Tseu) is imagined to be in Central Asia and presented first from the perspective of Chinese historical sources, in a form similar to a colonialist pornotopia. Then an omniscient narrator proves that the Chinese image of Kin-Tseu is false, and presents it as it "really" is. This latter utopia solicits an ecocritical reading, since its basic problem, i.e. the sustainability of a growing population in a closed environment, is crucial for current ecocriticism. The experimentation with various (including Western and Eastern) utopian traditions functions as a unique poetic feature in Jókai's novel.

Péter Hajdu, CSc
School of Foreign Languages
Shenzhen University
No. 3688 Nanhai Road
Nanshan District
Shenzhen City
China
pethajdu@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3623-1578