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Mór Jókai's Popularity Home and Abroad

Mór Jókai wrote a huge oeuvre which gained him immense popularity and high canonical status in Hungary. The novels that contributed to the canonical status in the nineteenth – century mostly concerned (recent) Hungarian history and the Hungarian national character. He never hesitated to adulate the national consciousness. The nationalist content, however, could hardly contribute to his also immense success in English, German, Polish, and Russian translations. He was an excellent romancer, and his intriguing plots with exuberantly Romantic fantasies might make him popular abroad while putting him on a lower level of the literary hierarchy than what he conquered in Hungary. The nationalist content could only give his works an exotic flavor in Western European context. But the reception in China was different. There the literature of the European periphery appeared as a possible model for the modernizing movement. The national pride of a backward and oppressed nation that longs for progress was definitely encouraging. The Polish and Russian reception could combine both attitudes.