

# THE GOETHE SOCIETIES OF BALTIMORE AND WASHINGTON

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In the history of the Goethe societies of the world the United States have played an important role. Long before the first European societies in honor of the great German genius—Goethe Verein of Vienna, founded in 1878<sup>1</sup> by Professor Karl Julius Schröder of Vienna's Technische Hochschule and the well-known Goethe Gesellschaft of Weimar in 1885—were established, American admirers of Goethe had united in literary groups bearing his name. Generally such organizations were of a comparatively short duration. However, again and again the inspiration and human qualities of Goethe's writings have kindled the minds and hearts of his American followers who, at appropriate times, founded new Goethe circles.<sup>2</sup>

The present Goethe societies in Baltimore and Washington have a common beginning: both are rooted in the "Goethe Society of Maryland and the District of Columbia." To tell the story of the latter is to relate their history up to the year 1949. The Goethe Society of Maryland and the District of Columbia occupied an unique position among the Goethe societies in the United States. It was the only Goethe Society which survived the darkening of the political skies of the thirties and the cataclysm of World War II. It is a remarkable record that the spirit prevailing in the Society withstood all the vicissitudes which brought about the end of so many German societies in this country. Instead the Goethe Society of Maryland and the District of Columbia has carried on successfully during the eventful years and can record a vigorous existence and growth. In this year (1956) the Society or its descendents can look back on the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding. It is indeed fitting and appropriate at this time to record its birth and the subsequent happenings.

Brief attention should be called to the "Goethe Society of America" founded in New York in 1927 by a group of men consisting of university teachers and executives, physicians, lawyers, and businessmen. This organization was started at the suggestion of the Weimar Goethe Society and was modelled after the English Goethe Society. It was to spread, through lectures and especially through its publications, the message of the Sage of Weimar which had suffered as the result of World War I. This group was intended to be more than a local organization: it was to become in due time the parent organization of other local Goethe Societies to be called into life, the central agency for all Goethe societies of America.

However, the idealistic hopes connected with the Goethe Society of America were not realized. The political happenings in Germany must be held responsible for the failure. To be sure the Goethe Year 1932 found in existence beside the Goethe Society of America two others, one in Canada,

<sup>1</sup> Thomas A. Riley, "Thoughts after Seeing *Faust* at the Wiener Burgtheater, 1954," *American-German Review*, XXI (1955), 13.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Prahl, "The Goethean Literary Society of Franklin and Marshall College," *American-German Review*, XVI (1949), 29-31; "The Goethe Club of the City of New York, 1873-78," *Monatshefte*, XLIV (1952), 291-302.

the other in Maryland.<sup>3</sup> The latter had the Johns Hopkins University as its center.

The Goethe Society of Maryland and the District of Columbia was indirectly the product of the centennial of Goethe's death. It was instigated by Professors William Kurrelmeyer and Ernst Feise of the Johns Hopkins University for the purpose of providing the proper frame for the centennial celebrations. The meetings at which the formal founding of the Society took place was held at the home of the former on November 13, 1931. The official name adopted was: Goethe Society of Maryland and the District of Columbia. Besides the beforementioned mentors of the Society, other scholars of German Literature of the Baltimore and Washington area present were: A. E. Zucker (University of Maryland), Robert B. Roulston (Johns Hopkins University), Edward H. Sehr (George Washington University), Jane F. Goodloe (Goucher College), Father John G. Hacker (Loyola College). The idea of founding a Goethe Society received support not only from academic circles but likewise from such men as Carl L. Nitze, Pastor Fritz O. Evers, Otto H. Franke, Mrs. Magdalena Hester and many other citizens of Baltimore and vicinity. When in 1935 the Goethe Society of America came to an end, the Maryland group established direct contact with the Weimar Goethe Society. The outbreak of World War II interrupted this relation. Officially all connections with Weimar were severed in 1946. Today the Baltimore and Washington Societies represent independent organizations.

Undoubtedly the highlight in the history of the Goethe Society of Maryland and the District of Columbia was the event which called forth its existence, the Goethe Year 1932. More than a thousand guests gathered in the large auditorium of the Peabody Institute of Music in Baltimore on March 10, 1932. In the presence of the Governor of the State of Maryland, Albert C. Ritchie, and the Mayor of the City of Baltimore, Howard W. Jackson, the great modern German poet and dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann delivered the oration on "Goethe as Educator." In eloquent terms he pointed out what Goethe's ideas and ideals have meant to his time and to the following generations and how the application of his visions can lead mankind to a higher and better way of life.

In contrast to happenings in many other places, the interest in the Society did not slacken with the successful completion of the Goethe Centenary of 1932. It led in the course of the following years to a crystallization and consolidation of the group. A constitution was written and adopted which defines the aims, the operation, and nature of the organization. In contrast to the short-lived Goethe Society of America which set its aims as "to foster and spread better knowledge of Goethe's works and to stimulate in this country interest in his life and works" the Maryland Goethe Society enlarged its scope to: "Its objects shall be: To promote the study and appreciation of Goethe and of German literature, art, and philosophy in general." Professor William Kurrelmeyer was chosen first president. An active membership of between forty and fifty was maintained over the years. Seven meetings were held every year. Almost regularly the last meeting of the year was devoted to German music; on such occasions the arrangement and execution of the program lay in the capable and artistic hands of Miss Clara Ascherfeld and Mr. and Mrs. Otto H. Franke. The lectures are given in either English or German by professors of nearby universities. Naturally the Society avails itself whenever possible of schol-

<sup>3</sup> Dieter Cunz, "Die Marylander Goethe Gesellschaft," *Monatshefte*, XXXVIII (1946), 367-370. See likewise: *Monatshefte*, XXXIX (1947), 406, and *Monatshefte*, XL (1948), 419.

ars from other states of the Union or from abroad. Originally the meetings took place in turn at the home of the members and were followed by refreshments. Unfortunately World War II brought this pleasant social feature to an end. In recent years most of the meetings were held either at the Enoch Pratt Library or at the Johns Hopkins University.

There follows now a listing of the lectures covering the years 1932-1949. They are eloquent proof of the efforts of this comparatively small group of scholars and laymen to keep alive the accomplishments of Goethe.

Gerhart Hauptmann, "Goethe als Erzieher"  
 Ernst Feise, "Ernst Lissauers 'Eckermann' "  
 William Kurrelmeyer, "Goethe Editions"  
 Ernst Feise, "Goethe Books of 1932"  
 Samuel O. Mast, "Goethe as a Naturalist"  
 J. Th. Singewald, "Goethe, Geology and Mining"  
 Julius Petersen, "Erlebnis und Gelegenheit in Goethes Dichtung"  
 David Macht, "Alraune or Mandrake"  
 William Kurrelmeyer, "Christoph Martin Wieland"  
 A. E. Zucker, "Goethe and the German-American Poets"  
 Henry E. Sigerist, "Goethes 'Die Natur' "  
 Fielding H. Garrison, "The Medical History of Robert Schumann and his Family"  
 Edward H. Sehr, "Goethes Persönlichkeit"  
 Anita Schade, "Goethe's Songs"  
 Henry Gregor, "Music that Goethe Knew"  
 Ernst Feise, "Stefan George"  
 Henry E. Sigerist, "The Swiss Poet Heinrich Leuthold"  
 William Kurrelmeyer, "The German Bible"  
 John G. Hacker, "Goethe as viewed by two Jesuit Critics: Alexander Baumgartner and Friedrich Muckermann"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "Johann Sebastian Bach"  
 Ernst Feise, "Rilkes Stundenbuch"  
 A. E. Zucker, "Goethe and the Weimar Theater"  
 Herman L. Ebeling, "Die Triade in alter und neuer Zeit"  
 A. E. Zucker, "Faust and the Medieval Easter Play"  
 D. M. Robinson, "The Influence of Classical Greek Poetry on Goethe"  
 Alfred Striemer, "Der Einfluss der wirtschaftlichen Struktur der Kleinstadt auf Dichtung und Geistigkeit zur Zeit Goethes"  
 Goetz Briefs, "Gestaltwandel des deutschen Landes seit dem Zeitalter Goethes"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "The Romanticism of Robert Schumann"  
 John S. Selner, "Gregorian Chant"  
 Edward H. Sehr, "Der deutsche Minnesang"  
 John G. Hacker, "Goethe's Knowledge of English Literature"  
 Paul Dietz, "Recitations from Goethe, Schiller, Hauptmann, Rilke"  
 Jane F. Goodloe, "Paul Ernsts Werke und Weltanschauung"  
 Ernst Feise, "Angelus Silesius, der Cherubinische Wandersmann"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "Mozart"  
 Robert B. Roulston, "An Introduction to Rainer Maria Rilke"  
 Ernst Feise, "Hölderlin"  
 Charles D. Snyder, "The Demographic Distribution of Cultural Achievement"  
 Lubov Keefer, "Goethe's Influence on Pushkin"  
 Jane F. Goodloe, "Das Weihelied der Elften Olympiade"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "The Sonata in the Eighteenth Century"  
 Edward H. Sehr, "Some Remarks on Nothker the German, (950-1022)"  
 A. E. Zucker, "Schroeder's Performance of Hamlet in Hamburg in 1776"  
 Lubov Keefer, "Goethe's Faust in Music"  
 John G. Hacker, "Goethe's 'Die natürliche Tochter'"  
 Wolfram K. Legner, "Rainer Maria Rilke"  
 Jane F. Goodloe, "August Winnig"  
 Carey M. Kurrelmeyer, "Goethe's Lyrics"  
 A. E. Zucker, "Magister Johannes Velten, the German Thespis"  
 Edmund E. Miller, "Contemporary German Drama"  
 Augustus J. Prahl, "Gerstaecker and America"  
 Carl Scharf, "Goethe's Clavigo"  
 Camillo von Klenze, "Das amerikanische Goethebild"  
 Ernst Feise, "Goethe's Egmont"  
 Dieter Cunz, "Friedrich Schlegel und Goethes Wilhelm Meister"

Hanns Gramm, "Goethe and His American Friends"  
 A. E. Zucker, "The German Theater of Baltimore"  
 Ernst Feise, "The Helena-Action in Goethe's Faust"  
 Edmund E. Miller, "History of the German Press of Baltimore"  
 Dieter Cunz, "Johann Caspar Lavater"  
 Peter Berger, "Der Staat in Grillparzers Dichtung"  
 Oskar Seidlin, "Goethes Zauberflöte"  
 Erich Albrecht, "Goethe and Johann Peter Hebel"  
 Friedrich Engel-Janosi, "Goethes Stellung in der Geschichtsschreibung"  
 Herbert Steiner, "Rilke's Poetry"  
 Ernst Feise, "Mörke—Keller—Meyer"  
 Helene Wieruszowski, "Der mittelalterliche Schauplatz der Helena"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "Romantic Music"  
 Augustus J. Prahl, "Bayard Taylor and Goethe"  
 A. E. Zucker, "Robert Reitzel"  
 Alfred S. Ledermann, "Shakespeare und die Psychiatrie"  
 Oskar Maria Graf, "Ludwig Thoma"  
 Dieter Cunz, "Carl Heinrich Schnauffers literarische Versuche"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "Spain and Music"  
 Ernst Feise, "Goethes dramatische Gelegenheitsdichtungen"  
 A. E. Zucker, "'Der Arme Teufel,' Berlin 1901-1904"  
 William Kurrelmeyer, "The German Bible before Luther"  
 Wolfgang Stechow, "Die Geschichte vom kranken Königssohn"  
 Herbert Steiner, "Begegnungen mit Dichtern"  
 Julius Bab, "Grosse Darsteller in Goethes Faust"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "The Personality of Beethoven"  
 Arno Schirokauer, "Goethe und die altddeutsche Literatur"  
 Ernst Feise, "Goethe's Hic aut Nusquam"  
 Fritz Lieben, "Goethe und die Chemie"  
 Wolfgang Michael, "Die deutschen ProzeSSIONsspiele"  
 Franz Rapp, "Festspele und Festzöge"  
 Oskar Seidlin, "Laurence Sterne's 'Tristram Shandy' and Thomas Mann's 'Joseph the Provider'"  
 Clara Ascherfeld, "Johannes Brahms"  
 Julius Bab, "Goethe and Dostojewski"  
 Ludwig Edelstein, "Wielands Abderiten und der deutsche Humanismus"  
 Wolfgang S. Seiferth, "Die Gestaltung von Judentum und Christentum im mittelalterlichen Spiel vom Antichrist"  
 Werner Vordtriede, "Das Problem des Dichters in Goethe's 'Triumph der Empfindsamkeit'"  
 Arno Schirokauer, "Die Gutenbergbibel"  
 Arno Schirokauer, "Nietzsche und Wagner"  
 A. E. Zucker, "Mommson und Virchow und der deutsche Liberalismus"  
 Paul Hessemer, "Italienisches Reisetagebuch eines Architekten vor 120 Jahren"  
 Oskar Seidlin, "Über das Glasperlenspiel von Hermann Hesse"  
 Hilde D. Cohn, "Hugo von Hofmannsthals frühe kritische Aufsätze"  
 Charles D. Snyder, "Adalbert von Chamisso as a Naturalist"  
 Walter Perl, "Über Dr. Faustus von Thomas Mann"  
 Alfred S. Ledermann, "Vom Seelenleben unserer Dichter"  
 Wolfgang S. Seiferth, "Das deutsche Schicksal in Thomas Manns Doktor Faustus"  
 Dieter Cunz, "Die deutsche Revolution von 1848"  
 Heinz Langerhans, "Die Philosophie der deutschen Klassik"  
 Arno Schirokauer, "Die Brüder Grimm"  
 Alexander Gillies, "Herder und Goethe"  
 Siegfried H. Müller, "Gerhart Hauptmann und Goethe"  
 A. J. Prahl, "The Goethe Club of the City of New York"

A new period began with the year 1949 which provided new impulse and inspiration to the Society. The year 1949 saw the bicentennial of the birth of Goethe which attracted special gatherings in his honor. One cannot point to one single celebration in this connection that compares with the Gerhart Hauptmann lecture in 1932. However, many affairs on a smaller scale were arranged by universities, colleges, museums, libraries, and literary circles during that year in Maryland and Washington. It is to the credit of the Goethe Society of Maryland and the District of Columbia that it

acted as the instigating, organizing, and unifying force.<sup>4</sup> With few exceptions all lectures were provided by members of the Society. Among the activities sponsored during the year 1949 was the rebuilding of the Goethe House in Frankfurt-am-Main. Out of its treasury the Society contributed the sum of one hundred dollars, and over one hundred dollars were collected at a Goethe evening held at the Zion Church in Baltimore and sent to Professor Ernst Beutler for the same purpose. In addition, the Society presented a complete set of Goethe's works to the library of the Goethe Society of Bremen, Germany.

The Goethe Year 1949 saw a great increase in the membership, particularly from the Washington area. Until then all meetings had been held in Baltimore. Under the circumstances it was felt advantageous to organize a second chapter in Washington. This came about in fall of 1949, chiefly under the guidance of Professors Wolfgang S. Seiferth (Howard University) and Dieter Cunz (University of Maryland), who devoted a great deal of time and effort for the purpose of providing greater conveniences to the members of the Washington area. For several years (1949-1954) the two chapters constituted one organization with common officers, the first vice-president acting as presiding officer for the Washington chapter. However, this arrangement did not prove satisfactory and in January 1955 it was mutually agreed that the two chapters would be divided into two independent organizations: the Goethe Society of Baltimore and the Goethe Society of Washington. The first presidents for the new organizations were: for the Baltimore group Professor Kurt Roderbourg (U. S. Naval Academy); for the Washington group Professor Dieter Cunz (University of Maryland). Close and friendly relations exist between the two groups which continue to coordinate their programs and whenever possible extend common invitations to out-of-town lecturers.

In order to complete the recordings of the activities of the two societies there follow the lecture programs of the years from 1949 to the beginning of 1956. The letters in parenthesis indicate whether the lecture was given in Baltimore (B), Washington (W), Annapolis (A), or College Park (CP).<sup>5</sup>

Adolf Meyer-Abich: "Goethes Naturbild" (B)  
 Ernst Scheyer: "Goethe as Draftsman and the Art of his Time" (B)  
 Felix Morley: "Frankfurt Revisited" (W)  
 Oskar Seidlin: "Goethe's Vision of a New World" (B)  
 Ernst Feise: "Goethe's Faust, Origin and Idea" (W)  
 Oswei Temkin: "Goethe as Scientist" (B)  
 Ludwig Hammerschlag: "Die politische Dichtung der Deutschen" (W)  
 Gerhard Loose: "Ernst Jünger" (B)  
 Julius Bab: "Die Geschichte der Goetheschen Lyrik" (W)  
 F. W. Zeylmans van Emmichoven: "Goethe's Deeper Relation to Christianity" (W)  
 Adolf E. Zucker: "The Forty-Eighters in America" (CP)  
 Wolfgang S. Seiferth: "The Pact with the Devil in Literature prior to Goethe" (W, B)  
 Rainer Hildebrandt: "Der Kampf für die Menschlichkeit in Deutschland" (W)  
 Arno C. Schirokauer: "German Poets of Fifty" (W)  
 Hilde D. Cohn: "Die beiden Schwierigen in der deutschen Literatur" (B)  
 Ernst Feise: "Goethe's Elective Affinities" (B)  
 Edward Farber: "Goethe's Tasso and the Tasso-Conflict Today" (W)  
 Arno C. Schirokauer: "Hartmanns Armer Heinrich" (B)  
 Adolf Meyer-Abich: "Natur und Geschichte, Begegnungen zwischen Natur- und Geisteswissenschaften" (W, B)

<sup>4</sup> Stanley N. Werbow, "Goethe Celebrations in Maryland 1949," *Twenty-Seventh Report of the Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland*, 1950, 71-73.

<sup>5</sup> The minutes of the two Goethe Societies are preserved without any gap, in Baltimore from 1931 to the present, in Washington from 1949 to the present. For published records see also *Monatshefte*, XLIII (1951), 414-415; XLIV (1952), 304-305; XLV (1953), 390; XLVI (1954), 282-283; XLVII (1955), 358-359.

Dichter-Abend: Hans Carossa und Ricarda Huch (B)  
 William Hubben: "Apokalyptisches Gedankengut bei Kierkegaard, Dostojevski, Nietzsche, Kafka" (W)  
 Edward H. Sehr: "The Brothers Grimm and German Romanticism" (CP)  
 Kurt Roderbourg: "Vom süddeutschen Geistesleben im 18. Jahrhundert" (A)  
 Musical Program: Goethe Songs (B)  
 Wolfgang Seiferth: "Die Heiligenlegende im Lichte neuerer deutscher Dichtung: Keller, Hauptmann, Th. Mann" (W)  
 Linus Spuler: "Schweizerdeutsche im Schrifttum der Vereinigten Staaten" (B)  
 Heinz Politzer: "Franz Kafka als literarische Erscheinung" (W)  
 Clara Ascherfeld: "Bach-Beethoven-Brahms Recital" (B)  
 Augustus J. Prah: "The History of the Goethe Club of the City of New York" (W)  
 Oskar Seidlin: "Goethe's Vision of a New World" (W)  
 Bernhard Blume: "Der Fluss als Symbol in der deutschen Lyrik" (B)  
 Eric F. Menke: "Frankfurt, the City of Goethe" (W)  
 Ludwig Edelstein: "Goethes und Euripides' Iphigenie" (B)  
 Ernst Feise: "Leben und Tod bei Conrad Ferdinand Meyer und Gottfried Keller" (CP)  
 Herbert F. Schaumann: "On Looking into Homer's Odyssey" (W)  
 Arno C. Schirokauer: "Das Nibelungenlied als Zeitspiegel" (B, W)  
 Herbert Steiner: "Corona, Bericht über eine Zeitschrift" (W)  
 Edgar Mertner: "Deutsche Dichtung unter dem Einfluss der beiden Weltkriege" (B)  
 William Sundermeyer: "Hermann Hesses frühe Lyrik" (B, W)  
 Karl D. Darmstadter: "Goethe, der Bibelkundige" (W)  
 Ernst Feise: "Der Tod bei C. F. Meyer und Gottfried Keller" (B)  
 Carol K. Bank: "Per Lagerkvist's Humanistic Concepts Compared to Goethe's" (B)  
 Leonard A. Willoughby: "On Rereading Dichtung und Wahrheit" (W)  
 Leonard A. Willoughby: "The English Goethe Society, Past and Present" (B)  
 A. E. Zucker: "The Vienna Theater" (CP)  
 Ewald Standop: "Deutsche Verskunst, ein Ueberblick" (B, W)  
 Ernst T. Sehr: "Shakespeare and the young Goethe" (W)  
 William H. McClain: "Das Goethebild Remain Rollands" (B, W)  
 Hugo Müller: "Der Nihilismus im Nachkriegs-Deutschland und seine Ueberwindung" (W)  
 Arno C. Schirokauer: "Das Grimmsche Wörterbuch, eine Jahrhundertfeier" (B)  
 Oskar Seidlin: "Beim Wiederlesen von Goethes Iphigenie" (W, B)  
 Victor Zuckerkan: "Das Problem der Architektur in der Musik" (B)  
 Benno von Wiese: "Die deutsche Tragödie im 19. Jahrhundert" (B)  
 Benno von Wiese: "Grundprobleme in Goethes Faust" (CP)  
 Friedrich Bruns: "Goethes Lyrik" (B)  
 Wolfgang S. Seiferth: "Goethes Westöstlicher Diwan" (W, B)  
 Marie Wasserberg: "Pädagogische Ideen in Goethes Wanderjahren" (B)  
 Hugo Müller: "Thomas Manns Doctor Faustus" (W)  
 Bruno E. Werner: "Die Deutschen und ihr Theater" (W)  
 Julius Schwietering: "Soziale Aspekte der deutschen Volkskunde" (B)  
 Julius Schwietering: "Wolfram von Eschenbachs Parzival" (W)  
 Elizabeth M. Wilkinson: "Goethes Trilogie der Leidenschaften" (B)  
 Elizabeth M. Wilkinson: "Schiller as Educator" (W)  
 Oskar Seidlin: "Orestes and Iphigenia Today: the Dehunianization of the Myth" (B, W)  
 Ernst L. Abrahamson: "Oedipus and Faust" (B)  
 Ludwig Hammerschlag: "Die Gedankenwelt Albert Schweitzers" (CP)  
 Heinrich Schneider: "Lessing und die Religion der Goethezeit" (B)  
 John R. Cary: "Theodor Fontane's Berlin Novels" (W, B)  
 Eitel Wolf Dobert: "Jean Paul, Kauz oder Dichter?" (W)  
 Richard Plant: "Das psychologische Gerüst in Schillers Dramen" (W)  
 Bruno E. Werner: "Die Deutschen und ihr Theater" (B)  
 Augustus J. Prah: "Nikolaus Lenau und sein Faust" (W)