

Only the English Go There: Travel Accounts of 19th-Century Hungary. Edited by Mihály Hoppál, Béla Mázi and Gábor Tóth
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Published in 2019, *Only the English Go There* is the revised edition of *19th Century Hungary in the Western Eye*, originally issued in 2008. In the editing process, the biography of Edmund Spencer has been modified, and two new travelogues have been added, together with an index of names and places. The book presents the foreign authors' impressions of Hungary, of its towns and inhabitants in the nineteenth century. The editors' goal was to include a wide range of views and experiences in order to shed light on as many aspects of Hungarian life as possible. Thus, the book contains the travelogues of multiple authors, although it is worth noting that there is some overlap between the various texts.

The travelogues are basically snapshots of the Hungarian Kingdom and Transylvania during the 1800s. While they are not without stereotypes and oversimplifications, the flaws serve as an occasional source of entertainment for the present-day reader. It is particularly exciting to see Hungary in the eyes of foreign travelers because a visitor from abroad may be fascinated by certain habits and elements of indigenous culture that locals would deem as ordinary and natural.

The book contains twenty travel accounts with the authors' short biographies given after each account. The travelogues are mostly by Irish, Scottish, and English authors, with one American and one German adding more diversity to the compilation. Interestingly, only two of the contributors are female: Elizabeth Mazuchelli and Julia Pardoe. The authors' education and occupation is diverse: there is a professor, a lawyer, a clergyman, a journalist, a soldier, and a poet among them, and only one writer's background is unidentifiable.

The travelers visited various towns and villages during their journey across the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania. Many of them spent time not only at Pest, Buda, or Bratislava (Pozsony), but also at Szeged, Miskolc, and Szolnok. Those who went to Transylvania visited the Szeklerland (Székelyföld), Timișoara (Temesvár), and Târgu Mureș (Marosvásárhely). The gazetteer at the end of the book is of great help for readers who are unfamiliar with the regions and lands of Hungary and Transylvania. Contemporary illustrations depicting the landscapes as well as garments of the period may help the reader grasp the atmosphere of the era. The travelers mainly used carriages as their means of transport; in addition, some chose steamboats as well to cruise down the rivers. While most of the travelogues describe in detail the culture and architecture of towns – large or small – in several cases, we also find notes about smaller Hungarian villages. While the earliest travel account dates back to 1793 and the last to 1881, most of them are from the first half of the nineteenth century.

The authors frequently refer to historic events tied to some grand figures—mostly royals—of Hungarian history, such as King Saint Stephen, Maria Theresa, or Joseph II, usually giving a few lines of information about their lives. Among them, Matthias Corvinus emerges as the most popular figure, therefore he is the personality that is most frequently noted in the travel accounts. His name usually appears when the authors write about Visegrád or Buda. The Visegrád Castle was of high significance during medieval times, as it was the seat of Hungarian kings and at other times was used as a country residence. Under the rule of Matthias Corvinus, it was developed into a blossoming cultural center. The authors are fascinated by the ruins of the castle and the surrounding landscape. The hills of Buda with the remaining parts of the Buda Castle, along with the thermal baths and their hot water springs, are met with similar fascination and admiration.

Hungarian hospitality, the excellent cuisine, the excessive use of red pepper, the tasteful wines of Tokaj and Eger, and the beautiful Hungarian women are frequent elements of the travel accounts. Naturally, these details sometimes give way to stereotypes and oversimplifications. The authors also take note of the grand national pride of Hungarians and their yearning for independence, while however, drawing a strict line between patriotism and the chauvinism.

Since the Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania was home to various ethnicities, the travelogues contain references to several different nationalities and minorities. The most frequently acknowledged are the Roma, mainly in relation to folk music, with several authors appreciating the talented gypsy musicians. Furthermore, there are remarks on Greek, Ratz (Serbian), Ruthenian, Saxon, Jewish, Szekler (Székely), and Romanian ethnic groups. They also take note of several multilingual people in the country. In order to understand each other, the inhabitants

had to speak at least four or more languages. Members of the nobility mainly used Latin, but they would usually speak German, Hungarian, and at least one Slavic language as well. One of the authors, R. B Mansfield, calls the country a Paradise for Philologists. In addition, the travelers notice that the Hungarian language is very different from other European languages and describe it as one that is rather hard to understand and master.

A common element in the travel accounts is the mentioning of the Great Plain and the Puszta as characteristic landscapes of the Kingdom of Hungary. The authors' impressions of country folk vary greatly. Some like them, but others voice their contempt of them. They often describe country people's garment, the usual sheep-skin cloak among the peasantry, and frequently talk about the peasants' true companions, the fierce, shaggy white dogs. In connection with the rural world, they write about the herdsman, the *csikós* and the shepherd. G. R. Gleig pays tribute to the dangerous highwayman Jóska Sobri, calling him the "Hungarian Robin Hood".

The travelogues also contain information about the raiment of the nobility, mostly speaking about it positively as they say it gives people a personable look. When narrating their experiences of the beautiful city of Pest, the authors list the Chain Bridge, the Hungarian National Museum's astonishing exhibitions, the Ludovika where the soldiers are trained, and the innumerable coffee houses and restaurants in the metropolis. In Julia Pardoe's travelogue we can read about the Great Danube Flood of 1838; the plaques that mark the water level during the flood can still be seen all around Pest.

Overall, this is an interesting and easy-to-understand book for the present-day reader. The travel accounts contain a great deal of relevant information about the nineteenth century Kingdom of Hungary and Transylvania. The editors appear to have done an excellent job in collecting and selecting the travelogues, since each piece shows a different aspect of life. The result is a marvelous kaleidoscope presented through the eyes of the beholders, namely the travelers. It is a useful compilation for those interested in cultural studies, and also for researchers of the history of mentality in Hungary, as well as in the whole of Central-Europe.

