

CAVES IN THE WORKS OF THE HUNGARIAN NOVELIST MÓR JÓKAI

JAME V DELIH MADŽARKEGA PISATELJA MÓRA JÓKAIA

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Izvleček

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Katalin Bolner-Takács: Jame v delih madžarskega pisatelja Móra Jókai

V delih M. Jókai (1825-1904) se kaže njegovo poznavanje geologije (vključno krasi in jam), mineralov, rastlin, živali, itd. Njegovi romani se dogajajo v odmaknjenih delih zgodovinske Madžarske ali tujine. Prizori iz jam vključujejo podzemeljske reke, kapniške jame, ledene in termalne jame ter lavine cevi. Med njimi opisuje tudi resnične, npr. Veterani, Örvénykő, Szkerisora in Modra jama na Kapriju. Enega izmed njegovih romanov so navdihnile Škocjanske jame. Jókai je 1853 obiskal jami Homoródalmás in Torja, 1876 in 1883 jamo Balika ter 1883 Dobšinsko ledeno jamo.

Ključne besede: jama v umetnosti, literatura, Madžarska, Jókai M.

Abstract

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Katalin Bolner-Takács: Caves in the works of the Hungarian novelist Mór Jókai

The books of the M. Jókai (1825-1904) incorporate scientific knowledge about geology (including karst and caves), minerals, plants, animals etc. The novels are set in remote parts of historical Hungary or abroad. The cave scenes involve underground rivers, stalactite caves, thermal caves and lava tubes. Real caves include those of Veterani, Örvénykő, Szkerisora and the Capri Grotta Azurra. Another book was inspired by Škocjanske jame. Jókai visited Homoródalmás and Torja caves in 1853, Balika cave in 1876 and 1883, Dobšina ice cave in 1883.

Key words: cave in art, literature, Hungary, Jókai M.

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Fig. 1: Mór Jókai (1825 - 1904).

Mór Jókai is one of the greatest personalities of Hungarian prose literature. Lasting already for one and a half century, his popularity is based upon his poetic personality, his rich imagination, idiom and humour, and, above all, his unequalled talent for story-telling. Besides these literary merits, his works also represent an extremely rich collection of knowledge on history, ethnography, botany, and zoology, as well as on geosciences - geography, astronomy, meteorology, hydrology, mineralogy, paleontology and, last but not least, karstology and speleology.

Mór Jókai was born in 1825 in Komárom, the prosperous commercial town on the Danube, as the third child of a noble family. He was educated in Komárom, Pozsony /Bratislava and Pápa; then he studied law in Kecskemét and after a two years apprenticeship in Komárom and Pest, he took his degree in law in 1846. He evinced

his wide-ranging talent at an early age: his first poem was published at the age of 9, at the age of 15 he spoke German, English, French, and Italian, and had a talent for drawing and painting as well; in Kecskemét he staged plays and acted in them, and his first stories were written also at that time.

After the success of his first novel in 1846, he devoted his talent definitely to literature, and took an active part in public life, too. He participated in the 1848-49 revolution as a popular speaker, then as a journalist, and after its failure he had to live in exile for a few months. Returning to Pest in 1850 he published under a pseudonym, but soon was active again not only as a novelist, but as editor and also founder of almost a dozen newspapers and periodicals. He was a hard-working writer throughout his long lifetime: he got up at 5 o'clock in the morning every day, and by 10 o'clock he was ready with his work running to 1 or 2 printed sheets. With his life-work consisting of 64 novels, some 300 novellas and short stories, dozens of poems and dramatic works, and several hundred articles and speeches, Mór Jókai is also the most productive Hungarian writer. His most popular works have been translated into

several languages: in his lifetime 137 of his novels and stories were published in German, 48 in Polish, 30 in Russian, 23 in English, 22 in Czech; and there are translations into Croatian, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, French, Italian, Rumanian, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovene, and Swedish languages, too.

Jókai had already gained exceptional recognition in his lifetime. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences elected him a corresponding member in 1858, an ordinary member in 1861, an honorary member in 1883 and a member of the board of directors in 1892. In 1861 he was elected Member of Parliament, and held this post for more than 30 years. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his literary activity in 1894, he was overwhelmed with honours: the freedom of the capital and other cities was presented to him, Budapest University conferred an honorary degree on him, and a hundred-volume special edition of his works was published. He died at the age of 80 in 1904; at his catafalque in the hall of the National Museum, representatives of the king, the government, the judiciary, as well as delegations of all social strata and all regions of the country paid tribute to him.

Jókai's art is a special mixture of romanticism and realism. Most of his works are historical novels, for which he took subjects from the most different centuries of the Hungarian and universal history; but his imagination was also inspired by legends, folk heroes and adventurers as well as by the national industrialization and the future of the country. Considerable merits of his novels and stories are the artistic and lively landscape descriptions, by which he guides the reader not only through the romantic scenes of historical Hungary, from Lake Fertő to the Great Hungarian Plain, from the Lower Danube to the Tatra Mountains; but to all the continents, from Italy to Siberia and China, from South America to the North Pole.

These descriptions involve a number of karst features: sinkings streams and resurgences [e.g. 7: in Vargyas Valley /Cheile Virghișului/; 17: in the Karst Mts.]; periodical springs [e.g. 4, 17: in the vicinity of Kolozsvár/Cluj]; travertine deposition [e.g. 11: in a tributary of the Maros]; limestone gorges [e.g. 9, 17: Torda Gorge /Cheile Turzii/; dolines [e.g. 19: near Fiume/Rijeka]; karrenfelds [e.g. 17: at Trieste, 22: at Raguza/Dubrovnik]; and, of course, caves. Besides several unnamed and very probably imaginary caves and cavities mentioned when describing different sceneries in the ALCADI region, especially in Transylvania [e.g. 3] and in Dalmatia [e.g. 22], we find *Veterani Cave* /Peștera Veterani/ at the description of the Lower Danube [13], the *Blue Grotto* in a short paragraph concerning Capri [23], *Szkerisóra Ice Cave* /Ghețarul Scărișoara/ referred as the 'Gyetzár' among the sights of Transylvania [11, 15], as well as *Örvénykő Cave* in the Bükk Mts. [24], the caves of Székelykő Hill at Torockó/Rimetea [17], and the rock bridge in Stratenská Valley [21].

But caves are not only elements of the landscape in Jókai's works. He frequently cites caves, cavities and rock niches as hiding places for various animals (bear, wolf, lion, hyena, snake, panther, dragon, etc.) as well as for

robbers, refugees, and hermits [e.g. 3, 4, 5, 17, 20, 22]. It is strange, but all the caves well known in the last century within the boundaries of modern Hungary, such as *Baradla Cave*, *Szelim-lyuk* and *Abaliget Cave* are mentioned in this way only [4]. Some other actual or legendary caves — such as *Szilice Ice Cave* /Silická ľadnica/ [17], the crystall-lined cavities of the Alps [16], or the biblical cave of Saint Anthony [19] — are cited as analogues; and he often uses the word 'cave' for fortress, blocks of flats, gambling-clubs or ornamented rooms, too [e.g. 14, 15, 17, 19].

In addition to this list, there are at least 24 novels and short stories, in which caves are scenes for more or less important events in the plot. These cave scenes involve a surprisingly great variety of caves: stream caves offering not only refuge but also water supply [4, 9, 17] or used to drain a marsh [27]; through caves, that serve as pathways for escape or attack [6, 11, 18, 22]; a multilevel system, where the heroes have to fight not only against offensive troops, but the evil dwarfs living in the deeper levels, too [7]; caves decorated with dripstones [1, 17, 19] or ice formations [21] as solemn sites of tragic events and secret meetings; a shaft used for prison by pirates [19]; a water-filled cavern endangering coal mining activity [12]; thermal caves with warm lakes or hot springs in them [2, 22]; glacier caves [2, 8, 16] carved partly by warm springs into ice; a coral grotto providing tomb for the victims of a shipwreck [15]; a lava tube, through which Chilean aborigines escape from Spanish conquerors [10]; other volcanic caves heated by solfatara-activity [26] or exhaling deadly sulphuric gas [20]; as well as crystal caves [25], or archaeological and paleontological sites [14, 16, 22]. Though most of these caves are suspected to be fictions in the given location, Jókai's imagination has usually translated literary-hearsay data or personal experiences to the scene of the plot. It is documented that the writer has visited at least four caves — it is not by chance that his most detailed and valuable cave descriptions concern these caves.

On the evidence of his travel notes, Jókai paid his first visit to a cave area in 1853, when he visited Homoródalmás Cave and Torja Cave during a three-weeks journey in Transylvania, and his experiences soon appeared in his books, too. *Homoródalmás Cave* (P. Mare de la Merești), referred by Jókai as 'the cave of Nagy Mál Hill' is the scene of his 1854 short story "The Hargita" [7] based on local legends, according to which the inhabitants of the nearby village were hidden here during the Tartar invasion. The story also recalls the discovery of the inner parts of the cave by following the bats that disappear in a narrow passage, where a blockage had to be removed to go on; and describes the purposes for which certain rooms were used by the refugees, citing the rooms by numbers — as it is shown on the 1836 map of István Fekete, who was Jókai's guide to the cave. In this story two more caves of the Vargyas Valley occur by name: *Ugron's Cave* and the *Horse-Barn* (P. Calului).

The gas-exhaling *Torja 'Stinking' Cave* (P. Pucioasa de la Turia) is mentioned in several stories [7, 9, 14]; and its detailed description is presented in Jókai's

384

1883. June 24.

Látogatók száma Zahl der Besucher		Kelet Datum	Név Namen	Foglalkozás Stand	Lakhely Wohnort
felkezdése óta seit der Entdeckung	folyo- vén im laufen- den Jahre	1883			
5857	109	24.	Jókai Mór	író	Budapest
58	110	"	Imannuauk	orvos	Rozsnyó
59	111	"	Wimöng Ök	palgarnu	Dobsina
60	112	"	Stordaght Mór	feldbíró	"

Fig. 2: The writer's signature in the visitor's book of Dobsina Ice Cave.

1882 novel "The Castle of Idols" [20], that takes place in the 12th century. Here, the cave serves as an ideal background for the young hero to meet with an old woman who is thought to have a pact with the devil; whilst we get information on the surroundings of the cave, the sulphur deposition around its entrance, its length of ten yards, and the deadly effect of the sulphurous gas on animals in front of the cave, on the gas-level inside (defined as "not higher than ones head") so it can be visited on stilts and as far as the torch remains alight, and that the gas is believed to heal rheumatic diseases.

Jókai's experiences in Torda Gorge during his 1876 journey in Transylvania are used in his 1877 novel 'There is a God' [17]. In this book, the gorge with its famed *Balika Cave* (P. Mare a lui Balica) — that had already appeared in some early works [4, 5], too — provides a safe way with night shelter for the heroes to by-pass the enemy troops during the 1848-49 revolution. Besides describing the environs and the fortified entrance hall of the cave, and recalling a local legend about its last lord, a robber, the writer reports on its ground-plan and its ascending character; as well as on its counterpart (P. Mică a lui Balica) opening at the same level in the opposite wall of the gorge, and on the nearby dripstone-decorated *Porlik Cave*, where the stalactites — just like organ-pipes — are suitable to play melodies on.

Jókai's most artistic cave description concerns *Dobsina Ice Cave* (Dobšinská ľadová jaskyňa), that he visited in 1883. In his 1884 novel "The white lady of Lőcse" [21] Jókai devotes a whole chapter to this cave, referring it as the scene of a secret meeting during the Rákóczy war of liberty. The section title

itself is "The Ice Cave", where Jókai describes not only the different ice speleothems, comparing them to pillars, waterfalls, altars, mirrors, carpets, lacework and tents; but also mentions the cave's formation by carbonic acid and water; as well as the layered structure of the ice laid down year by year; and he describes the equipment by which one can climb the ice wall. He links the huge breakdown at the bottom of the cave with the collapse on the surface, and explains them by a thunderbolt; and his imagination creates another entrance to the cave from Hanneshöhe, which has been verified almost one hundred years later by the discovery of Stratenská Cave.

A further, similarly detailed cave description can be found in Jókai's 1886 novel "Three heads of marble" [22]. This novel takes place in the 12th century in Dalmatia, and comparing the former scenery with the modern landscape of karst, the writer stresses the role of human impact by timberfelling and the introduction of goats, which have resulted in deforestation, soil denudation and even change of local climate. The key scene of this novel is a river cave system, through which the hero gets from the inside of the country to a valley near the sea. The river, that re-appears at the sea under another name, enters the cave after a short surface course and forms waterfalls at the entrance. The cave is accessible through a dripstone-decorated, dry higher passage; the hero finds stairs cut into the rock wall; and the path runs high above the thundering river that ends in a lake with no visible outlet. Though the site is placed in the Raguza (Dubrovnik) area, these elements give a strong hint that this scene has been inspired by Škocjanske Jame, that Jókai might have seen — or at least heard about it — on his 1876 journey via Trieste to Italy.

The investigation of Jókai's life-work from a speleological point of view is far from being completed, but the data obtained so far seem already to prove the potential speleohistorical importance of literary works. Jókai's novels and short stories are significant not only because of his artistic cave descriptions: considering the fact that almost all the well-known caves of his age are presented in his works, either directly or indirectly, and are enhanced by a wide range of information comprising almost all branches of speleology, his life-work can also be regarded as giving a summary of the speleological knowledge available in Hungary in the second part of the last century.

WORKS BY JÓKAI

- [1] Marcze Záre — 1845, *Pesti Divatlap* no. 37.
- [2] Erdély aranykora — 1852, Pest (1851, *Pesti Napló*);
Die goldene Zeit in Siebenbürgen — 1874, Leipzig;
Midst the wild Carpathians — 1894, London;
The golden age in Transsylvania — 1897, London.
- [3] A kétszárvú ember — 1852, Pest (1851, *Pesti Napló*);
Der Mann mit den zwei Hörnern — 1886, Berlin.

- [4] Török világ Magyarországon — 1853, Pest;
Türkenwelt in Ungarn — 1855, Wien;
Slaves of the Padishah — 1902, London.
- [5] A nagyenyedi két füzfa — 1853, *Délibáb*
- [6] Janicsárok végnapjai — 1854, Pest;
Die letzten Tage der Janitscharen — 1854, Leipzig;
The lion of Janina, or the last days of the janissaries — 188?, London
(3. ed. 1897)
- [7] A Hargita — 1854, *Jókai Országos Nagy Naptára*
- [8] A láthatatlan csillag — 1851, *Losonczy Phönix*; In: Délvirágok — 1856, Pest
- [9] Istenhegyi székely leány — 1857, *Vasárnapi Újság*;
Die Széklermaid von Gottesberg — 1890 (?), Dresden.
- [10] Valdivia — 1857, *Nővilág*;
Valdivia. In: Buch der Novellen — 1895, Wien;
Valdivia. In: In love with the czarina and other stories — 1889, London/
New York
- [11] Szegény gazdagok — 1860, Pest;
Die armen Reichen — 1873, Berlin (1872, *Berliner Roman-Zeitung*);
The poor plutocrats — 1874, New York; 1899, London.
- [12] Fekete gyémántok — 1870, Pest;
Schwarze Diamanten — 1871, Pest; 1877, Berlin;
Black diamonds — 1894, London.
- [13] Az arany ember — 1873, Pest (1872, *A Hon*);
Ein Goldmensch — 1873, Berlin;
Modern Midas — 1884, New York;
Timar's two worlds — 1888, London.
- [14] A jövő század regénye — 1872-74, Pest;
Der Roman des künftigen Jahrhunderts — 1879, Pressburg (1873, *Pester Lloyd*)
- [15] Enyim, tied, övé — 1875, Budapest;
Mein, Dein, Sein — 1875, Berlin.
- [16] Egész az északi pólusig! vagy: mi lett tovább a Tegethoffal? — 1876,
Budapest (1875, *Üstökös*);
20.000 Jahre unter dem Eise — 1891, Berlin;
Bis zum Nordpol, oder was geschah weiter mit dem Tegetthoff? — 1909,
Berlin (1875, *Pester Lloyd*).
- [17] Egy az Isten — 1877, Budapest;
Die nur einmal lieben — 1878, Berlin;
The Christian in Hungarian romance. There is a God, or the people
who love but once — 1901, London;
Manasseh — 1901, London.
- [18] Egy hihedett kalandor a XVII. századból—1879, Budapest (1878, *A Hon*);
Was der Todtenkopf erzählt — 1881, Berlin;
Told by the death's head — 1902, New York; 1903, London.

- [19] Egy játékos, aki nycr — 1882, Budapest;
Ein Spieler der gewinnt — 1883, Budapest.
- [20] A bálványos vár — 1883, Budapest (1882, *Nemzet*);
Die Götterburg — 1884, Berlin.
- [21] A lócsei fehér asszony — 1885, Budapest (1884, *Nemzet*);
Die weisse Frau von Leutschau — 1885, Budapest.
- [22] Három márványfej — 1887, Budapest (1886, *Nemzet*).
- [23] A lélekidomár — 1889, Budapest (1888, *Nemzet*);
Der Seelenbändiger — 1892, Berlin.
- [24] A tengerszemű hölgy — 1890, Budapest (1888, *Nemzet*);
Die Dame mit den Meeraugen — 1890, Leipzig;
Eyes like the sea — 1893, London
- [25] Álmodád — 1891, *Pesti Hírlap*.
- [26] Rákóczy fia — 1892, Budapest (1891, *Nemzet*);
Fürstenblut — 1893, Stuttgart.
- [27] Ahol a pénz nem isten — 1904, Budapest

JAME V DELIH MADŽARSKEGA ROMANOPISCA M. JÓKAIA

Povzetek

Dela Móra Jókai (1825-1904), največjega madžarskega romanopisca, temelje tudi na njegovem poznavanju zgodovine, etnografije in tudi geologije (vključno krasa in jam), mineralov, rastlin, živali, itd. Njegovi romani in novele se dogajajo v skrajnih in odmaknjenih delih zgodovinske Madžarske (Transilvanija, Višavje, Velika madžarska ravnina) ali eksotičnih celin: Daljni Vzhod, Južna Amerika, itd. Njegova najbolj znana dela so bila prevedena v tuje jezike, toda večji del njegovega opusa, ki vključuje 54 romanov, okoli 300 novel in stotine člankov, je dostopen le v madžarščini.

Prizori njegovih del vključujejo jame kot skrivališča, puščavniška zavetišča in bivališča raznih živali. V opise pokrajin vključuje kraške oblike in pojave, kot so intermitentni izviri, lehnjak, vrtače, škraplje, itd., kot tudi izmišljene in prave jame (Veterani, Örvénykő, ledenica Szkerisora, Stratenska kamenita vrata in Modra jama na Kapriju). V okoli 20 njegovih del so prizori iz jam, včasih je jama tudi vodilno prizorišče. V jamskih prizorih so opisane najrazličnejše jame: kapniške in vodne jame, jame v nadstropjih, ponorne, izvirne, ledene in termalne jame ter jame s strupenimi plini.

Kot dokazujejo njegovi zapiski, je Jókai 1853 obiskal jami Homoródalmás in Torja, 1876 jamo Balika in sotesko Torda, 1883 pa Dobšinsko ledeno jamo. Opirajoč se na podrobne opise v enem izmed njegovih zadnjih romanov, ki se dogaja v Dalmaciji (in razpravlja o antropogenih vplivih na kraško denudacijo), je zelo verjetno, da ga je navdihnil obisk Škocjanskih jam, kar bi se lahko zgodilo med njegovim obiskom Italije 1876 ali 1887.