New Immigration and Images of the Americas: The Effects of Travel Writing in Hungary

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Introduction

Migration studies usually focus on economic, social and political considerations as the key "pull factors" influencing people's decisions on finding a new home. Thus, for example, during the period of the New Immigration studied here, the United States is often presented as the primary destination for new immigrants because of the on-going (second) industrial revolution, technological developments, and a modern (and model) political system – all of which provide job opportunities and social freedom. Latin America compares poorly:

> "Political instability in several new Republics; the low demand for free labour in the majority of Latin American countries who possessed either large native populations (Mexico) or used slaves (Brazil and Cuba); the high cost of the passage; unfavourable geographies and climates in the hinterland; unattractive political and cultural characteristics; all help to explain why Latin America lagged well behind the United States as a destination for immigrants."[1]

Yet as Puskás argues, "numerous other factors also played their part in the mechanism of emigration, factors not so much economic but rather social and psychological in nature, and these by and large elude quantification".[2] These include published accounts of earlier travellers and migrants published in the form of books, newspaper articles, and letters, whose descriptions of foreign lands could complement, contradict or exaggerate the traditional pull factors and thus influence migration patterns. This is especially important where political and cultural characteristics addressed by writers line up with the purposes of their accounts and their cultural background, personality and political stance. This literature played a key role in establishing the images of certain countries and its peoples, becoming reference points later on. It provided a general overview of the population, culture, political system and economy of the countries visited.

The reports emigrants sent back also had a crucial impact on how attractive a country appeared. Their accounts make up a special part of the corpus of travel writing as their perceptions differ significantly from those travellers, tourists, or scientists who spent less

[1] Sánchez Alonso 2007, 398.
[2] Puskás 1982, 56.

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time in the Americas. Emigrants discussed topics not addressed by others, often including descriptions of everyday life or tips for those considering emigration. Hungarian emigrants also sent private letters about their experience, often exaggerating the positive aspects of immigration.

In what follows, I will study how accounts written by Hungarians reflected and shaped the images of the Americas and thus possibly migration patterns, providing an inter-American approach by focusing on the United States and Mexico. It is worth studying these two countries in comparison not only because of their geographical proximity but also because several Hungarians visited and wrote about both countries and often compared them, thus providing a ready-made case study of this phenomenon. For the United States, especially before the era of mass migration, travel accounts often exaggerated the positive features, while those written about Mexico focused on negative ones and discouraged migration. This changed at the beginning of the 20th century, when the United States closed its gates to new immigration and the Hungarian Government also attempted to discourage emigration, while Mexico during the Porfiriato (an era marked by the presidency of Porfirio Díaz, 1876/1884–1911) presented itself as an alternative. Travel accounts reflect the shift, but it was not enough (partly due to the outbreak of World War I) to change the overall images of the countries and thus fundamentally alter migration routes.

As noted above, travel accounts are less-quantifiable influencing forces than other factors usually considered in migration studies, thus we need to be aware of certain limitations in terms of their significance. As Wendy Bracewell also notes, "the importance of the genre in shaping its readers' views of the world is often assumed. The problem, as usual with the history of reading, is one of evidence for travel writing's wider influence."[3] We cannot be certain of how many people actually read an account, whether they shared the perceptions of the traveller or not, and how they compared to other factors shaping people's views of certain countries. Despite the lack of direct evidence on its influencing force, however, the role of travel writing as a source of information on foreign lands seems to be undisputed. We may identify recurring patterns and general trends that were shared by most people and made up an important part of knowledge on the countries studied here. Thus when studying the travel accounts written by Hungarians about the Americas in this paper, the texts are seen as reflections of the time and shapers of the discourse on migration, but by no means are they presented as decisive on their own when considering decisions of people on when, how and where to immigrate. They exerted their effect in combination with economic trends, governmental policies and general perceptions of the mother country and the New World shaped by various other texts simultaneously.

Migration and the Americas

The cusp of the 20th century witnessed one of the largest waves of immigration to the Americas. During the era referred to as the New Immigration in the United States and the Great Emigration in Hungary, millions of Europeans (mainly from East, Central and South Europe) embarked on voyages to find new opportunities in the New World. This wave

[3] Bracewell 2015, 215.

of mass immigration started in the 1870s and lasted until World War I, more specifically the numerous restrictions and the quota system introduced in the aftermath of the Great War. Mass migration brought about not only an unprecedented influx of people into the Americas, but also resulted in the exchange of ideas and played a major role in shaping the image of the New World in the immigrants' native countries.

During this unprecedented wave, the United States attracted the great majority of immigrants. Between 1881 and 1920, approximately 24 million people settled in the United States, mostly in urban areas. Not all Europeans immigrated to the United States, however, especially after the government introduced various forms of immigration restriction first targeted at non-European groups (see the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882) and then extended significantly to include other people as well (e.g. the Emergency Quota Act of 1921). At the same time, other countries in the Americas implemented policies to attract immigrants. Canada became more attractive as, "from the mid-1890s until World War I, favorable government policies, eastern industrialization, and the opening of the western provinces to agriculture brought 300,000–400,000 immigrants each year, most from the British Isles and central and southern Europe".[4] Roughly another 13 million immigrants went to Latin America between 1879 and 1930:

> "Argentina, Brazil after the abolition of slavery, Uruguay and Cuba were the main destinations for foreign labour. More than 90 percent of the 13 million European immigrants who travelled to Latin America between 1870 and 1930 chose these four countries, although modest immigration flows to countries such as Chile, Venezuela, or Mexico occurred."[5]

The figures for Hungarian immigration mirror these international trends. The most important destination was the United States in this case also. By the beginning of the 20th century, Hungarian emigration reached unprecedented heights, and trans-Atlantic migration was perceived by Hungarian officials "as the newest, most modern movement, most significant with regard to its character, and most dangerous concerning its effects".[6] Between 1899 and 1913, 85 percent of people leaving Hungary immigrated to the United States.[7] It is difficult to calculate the exact number of Hungarians who left the mother country though. According to Thirring, the number of people who left Hungary (not necessarily all of them of Hungarian ethnicity) between 1881 and 1900 was close to 500,000. By the first decade of the 20th century, however, the number reached almost one and a half million. Julianna Puskás, on the other hand, claimed that "the actual number of immigrants to the United States for the examined period (1871–1913) can be estimated to be 1,200,000."[8]

Immigration to other parts of the continent seems insignificant. Canada became an important destination only after the restrictive immigration policies of the United States took effect in the 1920s, with about 30,000 Hungarians immigrating to Canada in the inter-war

[4] Powell 2005, 46.
[5] Sánchez Alonso 2007, 399.
[6] Thirring 1904, 12.
[7] Puskás 1982, 21.
[8] Puskás 1982, 18–19.

period.[9] Central and South America also remained marginal during this period of mass migration. According to Thirring, between 1871 and 1901 only thirty-nine Hungarians left for Central America from German ports. Most Hungarians went to Brazil (1,235) and Argentina (274), but these figures are low even if we know that the majority travelled to Central and South America from ports of other countries.[10] According to Anderle, however, 10–12,000 Hungarians, mostly farmers, arrived in Brazil by the end of the 19th century. He also argues that the "number of Hungarians in Latin America would reach only a few tens of thousands before World War I".[11] This began to change only after 1920 and the restrictions introduced, especially with regard to Mexico and Cuba,[12] due to their proximity to the United States.[13]

Pull Factors and Travel Writing: "Reverent Admiration" vs. the "Imperial View"

In Hungarian travel accounts written prior to the era of mass migration, writers often viewed the United States with "reverent admiration" and in line with this projected an overtly favourable image of a land of opportunities, in a political, economic and social sense.[14] Travel writers and news from the U.S. intensified the pull factors. Trans-Atlantic cables provided greater access to information on American progress, the second industrial revolution, railroads, world fairs and politics, and "newspapers in Hungary also wrote about the favorable job opportunities in America".[15]

Information from Hungarians living in the U.S. (in the form of *Amerikás levelek,* or letters from America) often reported only on success and equality. This ran contrary to the official Hungarian publications that emphasised the hardships of life in the United States, calling attention to "the abuse of immigrants, and reported on mining and industrial accidents".[16] People tended "to disbelieve their government, although it was telling the truth, and accepted at face value what their relatives and fellow villagers told them about the New World, although these accounts were blatantly one-sided".[17] Travel writers often presented the United States as a model society (see Sándor Bölöni Farkas, for example, or Ágoston Haraszthy), a land of opportunities, transmitting a positive view of the populace and technological progress. The country was seen as superior both within the Americas and in comparison to Hungary.

While the United States was depicted with reverent admiration, Latin America was perceived in a completely different fashion. Travel accounts stressed political instability and presented travel in Latin America (and thus immigration) as dangerous. In general, travel

[9] Powell 2005, 46.
[10] Thirring 1904, 77.
[11] Anderle 2008, 175.
[12] Ibid. 176.
[13] For more on Hungarian migration to the Americas see Anderle 2010; Glant 2013; Katona 1973, 35–52; Puskás 2000; Szente-Varga 2007; Torbágyi 2004; Torbágyi 2009.
[14] Katona 1971, 51–94.
[15] Puskás 1982, 53.
[16] Glant 2010, 176.
[17] Ibid.

accounts provided a negative view of the population, culture and life in Latin America. This "imperial view" portrayed the local populace (with the exception of those of European descent) as backward, inferior, requiring education from superior peoples and countries (like the United States).[18] Such negative images clearly contributed to the unenthusiastic perception of the region during this period and these countries could become attractive only when immigration to the U.S. was restricted.[19]

Inter-American Images and Migration: Mexico and the United States before the New Immigration

The comparative study of the Hungarian images of Mexico and the United States serves as a good opportunity for investigating how travel accounts reflected society and pull factors and how they could influence decisions on migration. First, I focus on the era directly preceding the New Immigration to be able to present the fundamental images of these countries that served as reference points for a long time, and only then will present the (attempted) changes in images during the peak of mass migration. Some of the writers addressed the issue of migration specifically, while others only indirectly touched upon the pull factors influencing immigration; still, both provided important sources of information for Hungarians.

Sándor Farkas Bölöni's *Útazás Észak Amerikában* [A Journey in North America (the United States)] established the image of the United States in Hungary as a "promised land" of unlimited opportunities.[20] Bölöni's publication became one of the most popular books of its time in Hungary, with two editions within two years. Hungarians publishing after Bölöni wrote in a similar style and reinforced the image of the United States as the land of opportunities. They all emphasised that the United States changed rapidly, as Bölöni noted:

> "In America no statistical data, no matter how accurate, remain relevant after five years. The phenomenal population growth, economic and educational changes each year simply outstrip statistical information. Hence last year's facts about a place or thing are no longer useful the next year."[21]

The United States, in this view, provided a model for modernisation and improvement, and travel accounts became "textbooks of political and economic progress, a treasury of democratic ideas frequently quoted in political debates in Parliament and at county level".[22] The rapid progress, internal improvements, the growth of American cities, the hard work and resulting prosperity of the population all impressed Hungarians. Writers introduced Americans as restless, hard-working Yankees, practical and creative, as in the following excerpt from another influential travel account published by Ágoston Haraszthy in 1844:

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[18] See Pratt 1992.
[19] Romero 2010; Dreisziger 1982.
[20] Bölöni 1834.
[21] Bölöni 1834, 128.
[22] Katona 1971, 57.

> "The American lives twice as long as others and does a hundred times more; the American wakes up early, and as soon as he is up he starts doing his business whatever that might be. He has breakfast with haste, and not to lose precious time, meanwhile, he reads the papers, and finishing within a few minutes, returns to his work. The time for lunch arrives; everyone appears on time at the sound of the bell, sits at the table without saying a word and the entire lunch ends within maximum twenty minutes; at restaurants, travelers might see three or four hundred men sitting down for lunch but after 15 minutes, only two or three of them can still be seen."[23]

These features, images and depictions together presented the United States as an attractive destination for immigration.

Images depicting Mexico and Mexicans contrast starkly. Although there were some early writings about Latin America in Hungary, the real breakthrough came after the defeat of the Hungarian War of Independence, when more Hungarians arrived in and wrote about Mexico. These accounts comprise the major source of information for the period leading up to the New Immigration. Western (European) travellers characterised Mexico as lazy and backward, while they also emphasised the country's lack of progress.[24] Hungarian travellers reiterated these ideas when they adopted the attitude and terminology of Western travel accounts and emphasised the superiority of the United States in their comparisons, rather than creating an independent image of Mexico.[25]

Comparisons between the two countries were often part of descriptions of Mexico, with the United States assuming the superior position. Károly László (1815–1894), a former revolutionary who started various business ventures in Mexico, directly compares the two countries in his writings. He emphasises the superiority of the United States in technological development especially "when these rough and clumsy [Mexican] wheelbarrows passed the road-building company's nicely painted North American carts it was interesting to notice the great difference between the two structures, and I thought to myself: if the steam engine had not been in use by now, when would these folk [i.e. Mexicans] invent it?"[26] It is the result of such a contrast, together with the view of the population, that entailed the necessity, in László's opinion, of foreign – especially U.S. – intervention to assist in Mexico's development. He clearly expresses this idea and the sharp contrast he perceives in his reports:

> "On the rivers, with banks full of sleeping crocodiles only, there will be swift steamships loaded with California gold, […] beautiful towns will be built […] and the treasures hidden in the fertile land will be produced, as if by magic, by the tireless North American farmers […] the now wild country will become the home of civilization and abundance in our lifetime."[27]

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[23] Haraszthy 1844, 2.
[24] See for example Buchenau 2005.
[25] Venkovits 2011, 28–47.
[26] László Károly levelei 1859a.
[27] László Károly levelei 1859b.

He even considers the occupation of Mexico justified, which is especially interesting coming from someone who fought for the independence of his country just a decade before:

> "The hard-working North Americans will flock into this area; they will dig up the treasures hidden in the 'fat' plains and rocky mountains, will bring them to the surface, and the wilderness of today that is not aware of its wealth will be turned into a rich, civilized, industrious country and may be annexed to the United States, which is the wish of the majority of those in the United States, in fact a plan that can hardly be concealed."[28]

Another former revolutionary, János Xántus (1825–1894) shared this opinion about the role and mission of the United States. The much more positive perception of the northern neighbour (as established by Bölöni) had a major impact on the perception of Mexico. Xántus claims that changes are needed to exploit the apparent opportunities of, for example, La Paz: "Such a change can only come about at a snail's pace, as long as the peninsula belongs to the Mexican Republic, for flourishing commerce in Mexico is unimaginable." He depicts Mexico as a politically unstable country, and argues that this volatility rendered it unable to govern itself. Xántus argues similarly to László when discussing the role of the United States in the region:

> "If […] the peninsula should become the property of the North American Union, which is only a matter of time, for it will inevitably happen before long, then La Paz will become one of the main depositories of American industry; […] Furthermore, due to its geographical location, La Paz could become for the North American Union what, for example, St. Helena, Gibraltar, Malta, or Bermuda constitute in the hands of the British."[29]

Such depictions clearly presented the United States as the obvious choice for immigration while Mexico assumed an inferior position. This was coupled by the overtly negative perception of the Mexican populace as depicted in these early travel accounts.

Travel writers saw the population in no better terms. While they praised the natural beauty of Mexico, they contrasted it with the desolation of society. They portrayed Mexicans as lazy and inferior to their North American counterparts. Pál Rosti (1830–1874), a scientific traveller and photographer following in the footsteps of Alexander von Humboldt, embodied this trend in his 1861 book:

> "However pleasant Mexico [City]'s climate is, however enchanting its environs and interesting its people are, the European traveler, who requires a more enthusiastic social life in the larger towns, will not enjoy himself in this city after a longer stay. There is no sign of social life there, unless in the group of Europeans."[30]

[28] László Károly levelei 1859c.
[29] Xántus 1860, 129.
[30] Rosti 1992 [1861], 153.

Although László ran several successful businesses in Mexico, his letter of 1862 reflects a similar view. He does not emphasise opportunities for prospective Hungarian immigrants and depicts the population in a way that is everything but flattering:

> "These people possess no industry, no desire to work, and no ingenious mind. They have never reached manhood, but from childhood they passed on to helpless old age. People do not move forward but do not step back either, and if no blood rushes into it from some lively nation, it will never have a better future, it will disappear from the family of people without anyone shedding a tear for it. How unfortunate that this Canaan is possessed by such a sluggish, indolent, degenerated people who do not deserve to live."[31]

Xántus shares the same opinion in general and presents an especially negative view of the Creole population:

> "Seeing all this, and personally experiencing the exceptional hospitality of the Creoles to strangers, it would seem that their life is the most attractive and happy in the world. It may be so for the natives, but the North American and European who has learned to live a productive and intellectually satisfying life, would soon be bored by this life style and quickly realize that tropical life is not for him. […] It is not life but merely vegetation."[32]

The three revolutionaries provided the first Hungarian views of Mexico and Mexicans, and established an unfavourable image of the country in Hungary, one in clear opposition to that of the United States in terms of politics, social conditions and economic opportunities alike. Such an image was clearly not welcoming for Hungarian immigrants.

Besides this group of Hungarian revolutionaries, soldiers participating in Habsburg Maximilian's Mexican venture (1862–1867) also provided descriptions of the country but these did not significantly differ in terms of the general image presented. Their writing brought wider attention and a more independent image of Mexico, but even as the first calls to re-evaluate Mexico emerged, these writers retained the racist writing style and view of Mexico as an inferior nation. As members of an imperial army, of course, many used travel accounts to justify their presence.[33] Hungarian soldiers published two books and several articles that present not only military events but also discuss everyday life in Mexico.[34]

Maximilian's Hungarians put Mexico on the map in Hungary but did not bring about any change in the image of the country. Thus, when the era of the New Immigration started in the 1870s, Hungarians had clearly contrasting images of the two North American countries as expressed in these accounts. A hard-working, superior and developed United States provided abundant opportunities, while backward, lazy Mexico was simply dangerous. Given the hectic political and social conditions, and reports on the threat posed by bandits, Mexico seemed anything but welcoming for Hungarian immigrants.

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[31] Folk Mexico 1862.

[32] Xántus 1976, 149.

[33] Buchenau 2005.

[34] See Pawlowszki 1882; Szenger 1877, and the articles of Emil Nikolics (1866), Pál Sarlay (1867–1871), and István Burián (1868). For more information see Jancsó 2011, 419–430; Venkovits 2014, 28–46.

The Peak of New Immigration: Changing Images?

Certain changes occurred in the above-described images by the turn of the century, partly as a result of the growing difficulties of new immigrants in the United States and the introduced restrictions, while simultaneously to these, Mexico introduced measures to attract more immigrants. While Mexico's image therefore became more favourable in Hungary, and some travelogues also attempted to present it as a new destination for emigrants, the Hungarian attitude towards the United States became more critical. The admiration of the country mixed with a degree of disillusionment that emphasised the negative aspects of immigrant life. Katona claims that "the eleven travelogues [on the United States] published in Hungary between 1877 and 1900 bear little or no resemblance to the ten travel books written between 1834 and 1863".[35] András Vári goes further, writing that "the model country of the Reform Era became the land of threats by 1890".[36] Tibor Glant, however, contends that travel writing of the period was simply more complex, on top of which there were many more of them. Hungarian travel writing on the United States experienced its heyday between 1893 and 1908, and Glant concludes that although critical voices became more emphatic, the myth of the land of opportunities survived in both a political and, especially, economic sense.[37] Economic opportunity in particular was a crucial consideration for immigrants.

Many Hungarian travelogues, however, were critical of the U.S. in this period and called attention to the downsides of the Gilded Age:

> "Bölöni and his fellow travelers in pre-Civil War America hailed in the U.S. a land of freedom, equality, and plenty. To their counterparts in the second half of the last century America was far from being an Eldorado anymore and they tried hard to dispel the myth of America in Europe and Hungary as a fairy-land of plenty where 'fried pigeons would fly into your mouth' whenever you open it."[38]

According to Glant, the anti-American sentiment of the era expressed in some of these writings arose from three main factors: "a major shift in the way Hungarians came to view the future of their own country, an imperial approach to the New World, and large-scale trans-Atlantic migration."[39] Several writers embarked (or were sent) on study tours in the United States, but they were more willing to share negative experiences as well. People called attention to poverty more often, with some noting that in New York, "in the immense metropolis there are several hundred thousands of people who have neither lodging nor bread […] nor work".[40] They put more emphasis on the hardships of the trans-Atlantic voyage, and the harsh treatment and low ranks of recent immigrants, among other issues. This changing image in Hungarian travel writing was augmented by the various Hungarian government publications mentioned above.[41]

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[35] Katona 1973, 35.
[36] Vári 2006, 153.
[37] Glant 2012, 79–99.
[38] Katona 1973, 37.
[39] Glant 2010, 175.
[40] Quoted in Katona 1973, 43.
[41] Glant 2010, 176.

At the same time, Hungarian travel writers became more complimentary of Mexico. They noted the nation's modernisation and even called the Hungarians' attention to business opportunities, in line with the intentions of the Mexican Government. Some Hungarian texts called for a "more realistic" and "fair" representation of the country and its people. They tried to refute earlier negative impressions and called attention to good prospects in the country. In earlier travel accounts, even if business and agricultural investment opportunities were mentioned in Mexico, they were usually not presented as viable options for Hungarian immigrants.

This tendency had several causes: the New Immigration to the United States; changes in the attitude towards the emerging great power of the New World as a result of a mass exodus from Hungary; modernisation in Mexico under Porfirio Díaz (1876–1911) that found supportive and endorsing voices in travel writing; and more welcoming Mexican immigration policies that were aimed at attracting European settlers in part by altering the formerly gloomy view of the country. The quasi-dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz established better commercial, political and cultural relations with Austria–Hungary, which made the exchange of information and travel easier for Hungarians.[42]

> "Díaz and his supporters organized an international public relations campaign to reinforce the regime's apparent durability with a veneer of cultural credibility. For this they recruited foreigners and Mexicans to lobby opinion makers and policy makers abroad and to write foreign-language 'books, pamphlets, and articles that were directly or indirectly subsidized by Porfirian authorities.' They wanted to show the world that Mexico was becoming more European and less 'Indian,' more civilized and less dangerous."[43]

The main aim of the administration was to lure foreign investment to the country together with European settlers partly by improving the image of the nation abroad. This attracted several foreigners who in turn could witness and propagate modernisation and improvement. The policies contributed to more friendly attitudes and positive images in travel accounts but similarly to earlier attempts, the overall immigration policy failed because even though Mexico was presented as a more attractive place, other regions of the Americas were still perceived as more advantageous, and newly arrived immigrants did not get the support they were hoping for.

Travel writers noted the modernisation of the county, and the improved infrastructure. Railways linked the Pacific Ocean with the Gulf of Mexico, and major cities with Mexico City. This made travelling faster, safer and more reliable and various parts of Mexico more accessible for travel writers as well. Similarly to the U.S. earlier, the railroad unified the country and improved commerce and the economy. The government laid telegraph lines and enforced law and order in the countryside; the budget was balanced, and Mexico provided a welcoming atmosphere for investors.[44] According to Buchenau, "Porfirian modernization led to a greater influx of foreigners. Entrepreneurs and professionals flocked to Mexico from Britain, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States, forming sizeable

[42] Szente-Varga 2012, 28–44.
[43] Frazer 2006, 90.
[44] Foster 1999, 127–143.

foreign-born communities in the larger cities".[45] These investors (and travel writers) also promoted the Díaz regime.

The best illustration of the changing depictions of Mexico and the presentation of the Porfiriato is the pioneering figure in Hungarian travel writing, Jenő Bánó (1855–1927). He presented a novel attitude towards his adopted home, redefined the relationship between the U.S. and Mexico, and set out to mend the image of the latter in Hungary with the aim of attracting immigrants. As a review of his first book in *Vasárnapi Újság* claimed on October 19, 1890, "the book has current value as well, at a time when so many people emigrate in search of a new homeland".

Like most immigrants, Bánó left Hungary to earn money and return home. After failing in the United States, he moved to Mexico. In his accounts, the relationship between the United States and Mexico is turned upside down. He calls attention to development and opportunities in Mexico, while criticising the United States and emphasising the threats and failure of immigrants: "There are several other Hungarians in San Francisco but as I heard they all live under the most modest circumstances; California, the promised land—as we can see—does not really waste its blessings on our poor compatriots who wandered here wishing to get rich."[46] He notes, moreover:

> "[Mexicans] do not like the North Americans and still the neighbor's influence expands day by day; but in my humble opinion this with time can pose a threat for this young state that has just started to flourish and which as an independent republic is destined to a great role, if, however, they would unite with North America, the country would lose its originality, special characteristics, and nationality among the Anglo-Saxons—as it happened in California, New Mexico, and Texas—and it would be degraded to a secondary position within this enormous body."[47]

He presents a completely different image with regard to Mexico: for the first time, Mexican accounts emphasise Hungarian success, a welcoming environment and people, and good opportunities for immigrants.

Bánó is eager to share with his readers the examples of modernisation and improvement in Mexico. He travels on and describes new railroads as projects bringing progress for the cities and for the country in general. He writes about the technology available in the country, together with signs of industrialisation, mining, and great developments in agriculture. This was in line with the general developments in the region: "[A]fter 1870 the situation changed. Political stability and the emergence of policies design [sic.] to attract foreign immigrants that had been growing since the 1850s and 1860s including religious freedom, rights of private ownership and respect for civil rights, friendlier attitudes towards foreigners, all helped."[48]

Mexico was depicted as a country offering business opportunities earlier as well but it was seen as an attractive place for American or English settlers and businessmen. Bánó introduces Mexico in his letters not just as an alternative destination specifically

[45] Buchenau 2005, 92.
[46] Bánó 1890, 68.
[47] Bánó 1890, 96.
[48] Sánchez Alonso 2007.

for Hungarians, but as a better one than the U.S. This was in line with the intentions of the Díaz Government (even if probably they did not think of Hungarians in the first place). It seems from his letters written to his father that Bánó knew that such a publication could be beneficial for him and he actually sent his writings to Díaz. The review of his first book was published in Mexico and it praises Bánó for the fair and positive treatment of the nation. According to Díaz's letter, the Mexican President promised support for Bánó's endeavours.[49]

Bánó encourages Hungarian immigration to Mexico both indirectly by the complimentary depiction of the country and also more explicitly: "This is Mexico, dear father, a really blessed country, and anyone who has a practical mind is destined to become rich here."[50] Bánó goes even further and writes: "It would be wiser for our Tóts [people of Slovak ethnicity living in the territory of Hungary], if they want to emigrate from the upper parts of our county, to come here and not to the unfortunate North America where they are looked upon as draft animals."[51] While in the U.S. he presents the difficult circumstances of Hungarian immigrants, in Mexico he emphasises success. He writes about six Hungarians in Mexico City and claims that "all my Hungarian compatriots have a successful life both in social and financial terms, and what is even more important, they are all loved and respected both by Mexicans and others."[52] Hungarians have a much better status in Mexico than in the U.S. and Bánó mentions in particular Samu Lederer, his influential friend and patron in Mexico City, who could not cope in the U.S. but became successful in Mexico. Bánó also provides practical advice for Hungarian readers, offering growing tips for coffee, vanilla, rubber tree, etc., describing workers and their wages, the challenges of immigrant life. He calls attention to the support granted by the government and realisable profits.

Bánó's books provide a mix of a typical travelogue, a migrant narrative, and propaganda.[53] Bánó identifies with the policies of the Díaz Government and extends his view of progress to all aspects of life, remaining blind to problems of the nation. It is not by chance that Szente-Varga refers to Bánó as the publicist of the Porfiriato and that he also earned the position of Consul General of Mexico in Hungary.[54]

He not only changes the former depiction of the country in terms of opportunities for immigrants but also provides an entirely different image of the population, the country is deemed to be safe, different groups within society receive a favourable treatment, people are presented as kind, hospitable, as well as good workers.[55] Several things influenced Bánó's approach to Mexico: his career plans (knowing that these publications could benefit him); a degree of disappointment in the United States; and his disdain for the imperial view. Later, as an employee of the Mexican Government, it also became "his duty" to present such an image of the country and to emphasise opportunities for cooperation. The Hungarian expressed more sympathy with and openness towards Mexicans than those writing before him and this resulted in a revised image of the nation.

[49] Bánó 1896, 25.
[50] Bánó 1890, 139.
[51] Bánó 1890, 139; 195.
[52] Bánó 1890, 108.
[53] See also Bánó 1906.
[54] Szente-Varga 2014, 127–135.
[55] Bánó 1890, 101.

All of this, however, was undercut by World War I. For Hungarians, the United States continued to be more attractive during the entire period of the New Immigration, and emigration to Mexico remained marginal. Although more Hungarians arrived in Mexico, "no signs of significant Hungarian immigration were found".[56] The country retained an image as politically unstable and dangerous, with only a sporadic Hungarian presence and no real opportunities.

Conclusion

When drawing conclusions based on images and perceptions expressed in travel writing one has to be careful to avoid overgeneralisations. As also noted above, the influence of a great variety of travel accounts may be assumed (with greater certainty in some cases as in others) but it is hard if not impossible to quantify such an effect. At the same time, we do not have a large number of accounts we could rely on and thus to a degree we are forced to draw conclusions using only a relatively low number of primary sources (especially regarding Mexico). We should also keep in mind one of the basic tenets of travel writing studies: travellers' accounts tell just as much about their own background as the land and culture visited. This was the case in the travelogues presented above also: the writers' preconceptions, social background, objectives with publications, and their general view of their own position in the New World clearly left a mark on the depiction of the Americas. What seems to be certain despite these limitations, however, is that travel writing served as an important source of information and it often reflected migration patterns and policies. This is the case with Hungarian travel writing on the Americas, as well. Travel writing worked in combination with a myriad of other factors and it often exaggerated or attempted to negate push and pull factors – economic, social and cultural considerations that are at play both in the mother country of immigrants and in their destination. The images of the United States and Mexico presented in Hungary (in diverse texts ranging from books, articles, and letters) could influence emigrants by shaping their perceptions of far-away lands, possible destinations, and available opportunities. Extending the basis of this research by including more, so far neglected or non-Hungarian travelogues, and by finding more opportunities to combine the methods and approaches of travel writing and migration studies, we might expand the conclusions of this project and extend it both in a geographical and temporal sense.

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[56] Szente-Varga 2017, 36.

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