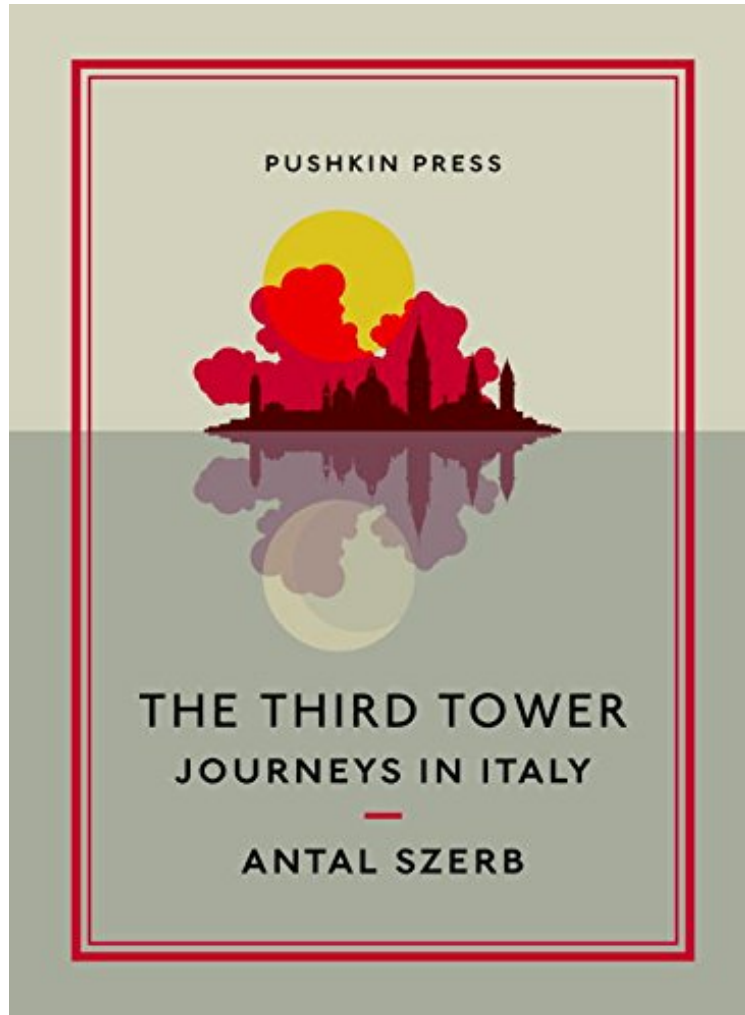


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## The Third Tower: Journeys in Italy (Pushkin Collection)

*Antal Szerb*

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**Antal Szerb : The Third Tower: Journeys in Italy (Pushkin Collection)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Third Tower: Journeys in Italy (Pushkin Collection):

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The wonders of Italy through an artist's eye By LongBranch One of the greatest literary figures of early 20th century whets the appetite for the sights and wonders of Italy and Szerb's treasure Journey by Moonlight. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Gini Alhadef Gem! 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. The Third Tower By S Riaz This short travel book was written in 1936, with the threat of war hanging over Europe, and the real possibility of visiting other countries soon being made much more difficult – if not impossible. Having rejected his initial wish to visit Spain due to the outbreak of the Civil War, he turned his attention to Italy. Antal Szerb was thirty five at the time he wrote this book; a gentle and kindly

Hungarian of Jewish descent. Indeed, this book made what is generally regarded as his masterpiece, "Journey by Moonlight," possible. Like the hero of that novel, Szerb arrived in Venice, and began writing it shortly after his return. The Third Tower consists of almost tiny snippets of description – each piece two or three pages. He writes of his troubles in finding rooms, of the heat, the architecture, scenery, food and drink, writers and poets. Despite his joy in his surroundings, he is perplexed by Mussolini's Italy; the people seem to exist in a perpetual state of rejoicing, of unceasing celebration. You feel his exhaustion, his worry about what is coming and his awareness of the trials ahead in between his musings on the beauty of the country he is travelling through. This is a snapshot of a time and place, seen through the eyes of a sensitive and observant man. Sadly, Antal Szerb was right in his worries about Europe and travel would soon be denied him. Like countless others, Szerb would lose his life in the coming war – beaten to death in a concentration camp. As he realised at the time, this was less a trip to Italy and more a farewell. I am so glad that Pushkin Press is republishing Szerb's books and I hope that these new editions of his work will give him a greater audience, as he is more than deserving of it.

In August 1936 a Hungarian writer in his mid-thirties arrives by train in Venice, on a journey overshadowed by the coming war and charged with intense personal nostalgia. Aware that he might never again visit this land whose sites and scenes had once exercised a strange and terrifying power over his imagination, he immerses himself in a stream of discoveries, reappraisals and inevitable self-revelations. From Venice, he traces the route taken by the Germanic invaders of old down to Ravenna, to stand, fulfilling a lifelong dream, before the sacred mosaics of San Vitale. This journey into his private past brings Antal Szerb firmly, and at times painfully, up against an explosive present, producing some memorable observations on the social wonders and existential horrors of Mussolini's new Roman Imperium.

"The recent revival of this amiably brilliant man's writing is in large part due to the efforts of the translator Len Rix and the Pushkin Press. . . It seems impossible that Szerb's wit, his intelligence and his generosity could be preserved in a book written in the midst of the fanatical hatreds that would consume him. But then, it's a small miracle that we have so many books available from this gentle giant of European letters." - The Wall Street Journal "Translated by Len Rix, this slim, elegant volume traces Szerb's farewell journey to his beloved Italy. . . The prose is intimate and disarming. . . Szerb deftly weaves Italy's timeless allure ("everything there is so old") with observations on its contemporary fever." — Publishers Weekly "The Third Tower is the vivid chronicle of a trip through a familiar landscape. The tone of the book conveys wonder, but the writing is always under the writer's control. . . expertly rendered into English by Len Rix, Szerb's longtime translator. . . The nostalgia that pervades The Third Tower is political, arising from an awareness of Europe's disastrous shift toward fascism and its disappearing tolerance of individual freedoms and differences of opinion." — The Millions "His love affair with literature was passionate, intense, and serious, but for all that it was never humorless, and it never lost the flirtatious and giddy quality of an adolescent crush. Reading Szerb on literature—reading Szerb at all—is like watching a lover dote on the object of his affections. . . It is the disparity between literary perfection and drab actuality that motivates us, in Szerb's view, to improve our world, to question its assumptions and tear at its established fabrics." - Becca Rothfield, The New Republic "a rich travelogue full of both joy and foreboding. . . To travel with Szerb is to have a charming and erudite guide, one who is nearly intoxicated by being in Italy. . . It is a beautiful and charming book, and a short one." - The American Interest About the Author Antal Szerb was born in Budapest in 1901. Best known in the West as a novelist and short story writer, he was also a prolific scholar whose interests ranged widely across the whole field of European literature. Debarred from a university post by reason of his Jewish ancestry, he taught in a commercial secondary school until increasing persecution led to his brutal death in a labour camp, in 1945. Yet the tone of his writing is almost always deceptively light, the fierce intelligence softened by a gentle tolerance, wry humour and understated irony. Pushkin Press's publications of Szerb's work include his novels Journey by Moonlight, Oliver VII and The Pendragon Legend, as well as the short story collection Love in a Bottle and the history The Queen's Necklace.