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Wendy Bracewell, Alex Drace-Francis. *Under Eastern Eyes: A Comparative Introduction to East European Travel Writing on Europe.* Budapest: Central European University Press, 2008. 388 S. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-963-9776-11-1.

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Travels in Time? East European Travelers on Europe

This interesting and rich volume considers the east European as traveler–in particular, as a traveler about Europe, one who has produced travel writing that sheds light on what it means to be European. The editors of *Under Eastern Eyes* aver that theirs is "the first book to analyse the phenomenon of east European travel writing in a systematic fashion" (p. vii). It most certainly represents part of a conscientious attempt to lay the foundations for all future study of the phenomenon. The book under review is part of a larger research project under the aegis of University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies entitled East Looks West: East European Travel Writing, 1550-2000. Two other volumes are being published in this three-part series. Volume 3, *A Bibliography of East European Travel Writing in Europe*, was published by Central European University Press in 2008. It contains references to over 4,400 travel accounts published in book form since circa 1550. Volume 1 (forthcoming) will be entitled *Orientations: An Anthology of East European Travel Writing on Europe.*

The book is comprised of three comparative introductory studies, followed by nine case studies. In "Towards a Natural History of East European Travel Writing" (chapter 1), Alex Drace-Francis begins with a detailed and methodical (indeed, seemingly exhaustive) examination of the key concepts. "Travel" is defined as "organized, methodized movement" (p. 4). "East European" is given both geographic and linguistic dimensions (encompassing "the region between Russia and Germany, Turkey and Italy," and including works written in "Albanian; Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and Serbo-Croatian; Bulgarian; Czech; Greek; Hebrew and Yiddish; Hungarian; Macedonian; Romanian; Polish; Slovak; Slovene; and Ukrainian" [p. 6]). Readers of HABSBURG should note that neither modern Austria nor the Baltic states are included within this definition, which is used in the companion volumes as well. That said, a separate section of the bibliography (volume 3) lists travel books published in other international languages–"languages of international circulation," defined as "Latin, French, Italian, English, and Russian," as well as a "very few" texts in German–by "east Europeans" (as defined above).[1]

Drace-Francis further analyzes the evolution of writing and printing in the vernaculars of the region, with an eye to figuring out what gave rise to travel writing. It is interesting to learn how much early travel writing by east Europeans concerned itself with "Eastern" destinations, such as the Ottoman Empire. What apparently caused the ensuing rift between western and eastern European travel writing were the major schisms that wreaked havoc on these societies in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, although again more recent scholarship has provided somewhat of a corrective to this view and is acknowledged here. As regards how travel writing was enabled in the region, Drace-Francis singles out four characteristics: the public sphere grew out of, not in opposition to, courtly culture; diffusion proceeded in a north-south direction; the public sphere remained local or provincial, rarely extending to a national scale; and the discursive essay and not the novel developed above all. Although many travelogues were written in the earlier period, it was the second half of the nineteenth century that witnessed an explosion of travel writing in eastern Europe.

The next of the foundational chapters (by David Chirico) deals with the travel narrative as a literary genre. While its "literary-theoretical approach" may be of less interest to historians, Chirico is right to remind us not to forget the literary nature of these texts. He defines the travel narrative as "a non-fictional first-person prose narrative describing a person's travel(s) and the spaces passed through or visited, which is ordered in accordance

with, and whose plot is determined by, the order of the narrator's act of travelling," and singles out three modes: classical, romantic, and realist, while presenting some examples of Czech travel texts (pp. 39, 53).

Another foundational chapter–and, at about sixty pages, the most substantial–is provided by Wendy Bracewell. This comparative tour de force considers the limits of Europe as delineated by the travel writers of eastern Europe. What Bracewell argues is that the inhabitants of this region were no less engaged in mapping Europe than travel writers in the West, despite certain asymmetries of perception. For example, the distinction between (local) insider and (cosmopolitan/educated) outsider was often blurred in the case of east European travelers, particularly these literate ones. Transnational and comparative analysis demonstrates, according to Bracewell, "that travelers from both the east and the west of Europe, each pursuing their own interests, contributed jointly to definitions of the limits of Europe, coming to equate the concepts of modernity, progress and cultivation with Europe, their absence as barbaric, backward and Oriental" (p. 67). Early east European travel writers were less introspective in this regard (with the notable exception of the Croatian priest Juraj Križanić); concepts of Europe took off during the Enlightenment, yet culture more than cartography originally determined one's Europeanness (which, interestingly, could be expressed in degrees). While some used the travelogue as a tool for reforming their own, more backward, societies, the varied responses of east European travelers suggest the "limitations of a psychological-pathological approach to identities and power relations on Europe's peripheries" (pp. 110-111). Indeed, Bracewell is careful to note the variety of prisms through which travel could be refracted, the "multifaceted character of identity discourses constituted in these borderlands, not just with reference to Europe or an undifferentiated 'West' or 'East', but to a whole series of *other* Others" (p. 120).

This richness is partially demonstrated by the remaining nine chapters, the case studies. Ordered chronologically, they are written by scholars representing a range of disciplines. Many are quite enlightening. We learn, for example, that Reform Hungarians who traveled to study (primarily in the German lands, the Dutch Republic, and England) in the early modern period viewed the countries of Europe and Europeans through the prism not of modernity/backwardness but of religious creed (chapter 4 by Graeme Murdock). In another strong chapter demonstrating her enviable command of multiple languages and travel literatures, Bracewell examines travels of east Europeans through the Slavic world (in particular, through the south Slav lands)–that is, through their "own" lands, beginning from the end of the eighteenth century. Her chapter features noble Poles Jan Potocki and Alexander Sapieha on a Slavic mission, in the face of the "rottenness" of the West and the partitions of their country; the Morlachs of Dalmatia as well as the Montenegrins, each seen as maintaining, despite obstacles, primeval Slavic virtues; and east European perceptions of a promising future for Slavs in Europe and the world (p. 173). Bracewell coins the term "domopis" to denote the kind of "homeland writing" of the Slavs that she explores here (p. 192). In her chapter, Irina V. Popova-Nowak interestingly considers modes of transportation–in particular coaches and steamboats–as well as travel through Hungary's different regions (and abroad) for both Magyars and Hungary's ethnic minorities as they engaged in an "odyssey of national discovery" of their little-known country (p. 195). She also remarks on their travel in time: to the West meant traveling to the future, to the East to the past.

Andi Mihalache reminds us that much in travel is anticipation of seeing what has already been imagined. In an at times opaque chapter nonetheless full of interesting insights, he analyzes the understudied travelogues of writer Nicolae Iorga, as viewed through the prisms of metaphor and monumentality. And Zoran Milutinovic has written a fascinating chapter that also demonstrates the role of the "imaginary," this time, of a "Europeanised Balkanite" whose travels to Africa and assessments of the Africans he encounters–both authentic natives and Creoles–reveal more about Europeanness (western and eastern alike) than one might expect (p. 269). Also learning more about himself is the protagonist of chapter 10, Mihail Sebastian (pen name of the Romanian-acculturated Jewish intellectual Iosy Hechter), who "became" Sebastian while on a trip to Paris in the interwar period. In contrast, socialist travelers to the West were not supposed to undergo any *Bildung* or transformation during their stays in "enemy" territory, as demonstrated by Rossitza Guentcheva. In one of only two chapters dealing with the post-1945 period, she groups published Bulgarian travel books on the West into three categories: ultimately banned, criticized, and acceptable, analyzing each in turn.

Several chapters challenge the definitions provided in the foundational chapters. For example, the Polish literary scholar Maria Kalinowska focuses on poetic (as opposed to prose) works of the romantic period–here, those of Antoni Malczewski, Adam Mickiewicz, and (especially) Juliusz Słowacki–as these poets wander in proper romantic form through Europe and beyond

(chapter 7). Likewise, the other work dealing primarily with Polish themes–Katarzyna Murawska-Muthenius's chapter–argues that Jan Lenica's 1954 sketchbook of London can be "read" as a "Cold War travel text" (p. 329). The inclusion of poetry and drawings, although interesting as sources to historians of varying stripes, nonetheless seems to dilute the effect of what could have been a tighter volume. Surely there were Polish travel narratives–perhaps one by a woman (unrepresented here, as they apparently were underrepresented among east European travel writers)–that could have been addressed here to round out the collection.

All told, however, this second of the three projected volumes represents a major step in the direction of laying a solid foundation for the systematic study of east European travel writing. While the nine case studies seem to have been assembled in a less systematic way, the opening three chapters neatly set the stage for further investigations. They, and the other pieces, should be welcome additions in courses dealing with travel and tourism as well as depictions of East and West.

Note

[1]. Wendy Bracewell and Alex Drace-Francis, *A Bibliography of East European Travel Writing in Europe*, East Looks West 3 (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2008), 487.

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