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Images of remote countries in the literatures of Central and Eastern Europe

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The idea for this issue of WORLD LITERATURE STUDIES was to methodologically draw on the theory of interculturality and comparative imagology, hoping that such epistemological framework will contribute to a critical understanding of cultural otherness which, in turn, will facilitate a deeper understanding not only of the "exotic" topoi of remote and "non-similar" texts, but of Central and Eastern Europe as well.

The issue originated from the initiative of the Czech and Slovak Association of Comparative Literature and is dedicated to the XXII Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association in Macau. It is thus a logical continuation of the issue WORLD LITERATURE STUDIES entitled "Comparative Literature Studies as Cultural Criticism" (eds. Gáfrik – Zelenka 2/2013), by which the Czech and Slovak Association of Comparative Literature resumed its activity before the 2013 Congress of the ICLA in Paris, as well as of the issue devoted to comparative literature entitled "Frontier Orientalism in Central and East European Literatures" (eds. Sabatos – Gáfrik 1/2018).

In designing the issue, the editors attempted to select the texts which would show how the images of remote countries and cultures are reflected in Central European and East European literatures as well as to what extent these images could possibly influence the literary critical and theoretical discourse – especially its semantics and terminology – in this part of the world. Moreover, an indirect theoretical intention of the issue is to draw attention to the analysis of the possibility of transferring the concepts historically created in a certain context to a typologically and structurally different cultural area.

It is hoped that this type of imagological intercontinental comparative studies, as an integral part of contemporary research into East-West studies, could provide new theoretical impulses and literary historical material.

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Images of remote countries in the literatures of Central and Eastern Europe: On the theoretical starting points of intercultural comparative studies

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As a specific part of intercultural discourse, the study of interliterary relations in Central and Eastern Europe has focused primarily on neighbouring countries. Limited critical attention has been placed on contacts or relationships with structurally and typologically different cultures, whose study has only recently been initiated by intercontinental comparative studies. If comparative literature in Central and Eastern Europe wants to bring insight into the literary and cultural expressions of remote countries, it must take into consideration the fact of their geographical distance most probably reflected in their different historical, political and cultural experience, which, however, may pose a relevant research challenge, raising a crucial question of the commensurability of the concepts of literature, critical traditions and their ability to depart from purely one-sided valuations.

There are essentially several reasons why intercontinental comparative literary studies remains theoretically neglected and, historically, difficult to apply in the literary field called East-West Studies, and why the study of the relations, contacts, circumstances and complex interliterary networks between the structurally and typologically different cultures and literatures either remains only in the area of methodological proclamations or is empirically limited to a bibliographic list of translations, or an overview of horizons of reception. It must be emphasized that the problem lies not only in the mental and geographical distance of the analysing subject to the analysed object, but also in the interdisciplinarity of research approaches, which, in a unique way, fuse postcolonial theory, decolonial poetics, Oriental studies, hermeneutic philosophy, and imagology, thus dramatically changing even the concept of literature itself (Bernheimer 1995). Yet it is also true, and one must acknowledge it, that interdisciplinarity does not affect only the study of the relations between remote cultures and literatures, but "it has been nothing extraordinary to explore regional literature via comparison and in interdisciplinary context" (Marek 2018, 251) as well.

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According to one of its main initiators, Earl Miner, intercontinental comparative studies should lead to the understanding and explanation of cultural differences or "otherness" of those literary traditions and poetics between which there is a provable difference resulting from their geographical (continental) and poetological distance and "non-similarity" (Miner 1990, 5–6). Miner tries to integrate into East-West studies the theory of "interculturalism" as a principle of scholarly comparison overcoming, for example, the traditional ideas of European mimesis and the expressivity of East Asian poetics. His initial assumption that reception is possible without influence and influence without reception means that the sense of intercultural theory lies in the fact that this type of comparison can make do without a literary contact. Its realisation in the form of an abstract statement may therefore claim a greater communicational value. As he has it (2010), there are three possibilities of intercultural comparison. The first one, labelled as "proof of otherness", is characterized by the use of a relevant phenomenon of one culture to explain a less known element of the "other" culture: the binary opposition between the "demonstrating" (i. e. domestic) and the "demonstrated" (i. e. foreign) is based on the assumed similarity which, however, does not exclude the difference. For example, Petrarch's Renaissance sonnets can be understood via Japanese "bound poetry" (haiku). The second possibility of intercultural comparison includes the analysis of the functions of, for example, Chinese historical cantos and Western European heroic epic poems. In this case the structural "incommensurability" may be substituted by the emphasis on the analogical function of these works, which is to panegyrically celebrate the great past of a national society or an individual. The last type of intercultural comparing is based on "showing the differences of cultures" through genres that are, despite their otherness, relevant in the distant cultures. Thus, one may say that Miner's intercultural comparisons generally do not use genetic contacts or typological relations but create a theoretical discourse which allows generally valid conclusions that would deconstruct the axioms of Western, or Euro-American, literary studies.

The leading Spanish comparatist Claudio Guillén claims (1985) that comparing the cultural phenomena and processes which are contactually independent and genetically anchored in different civilizations is made possible if there is a certain interaction or similarity of common social-historical conditions. However, even he admits that the comparative study of this type is much more fruitful if it is carried out at theoretical rather than practical level. Comparing these traditions, e. g. in the form of poetological systems, may then show which critical concepts are universal and which are specifically limited to a local cultural tradition.

If we move more to the East, we find out that some features of the intercontinental comparative studies could also be identified in the work of the Russian formalist V. M. Zhirmunsky, who used the comparison of Central Asian and Western European epos to attempt to formulate theoretical conditions of the study of interliterary phenomena that are neither chronologically parallel nor genetically determined by a concrete influence. At the Fourth International Congress of Slavists in Moscow 1958, Zhirmunsky in his paper "O hrdinském eposu (slovanském a středoasijském)" (On the Heroic Epos [Slavic and Central Asian]) claimed that "it is possible

to analyse phenomena […] irrespective of their origin, geographical extension and chronological classification" (151) under the condition of a typological analogy, i. e. a similar social development. However, Zhirmunsky's criticism of the superiority of Western European literatures, which later in the 1990s continued as a struggle against the "centrisms" of Western cultures (Ďurišin 1992, 78–79; Said 2003, 3), paradoxically anticipated the systematic challenges to the receptive-communicative concepts, according to which the receiver must structurally transform the phenomena coming from the "foreign" culture, that is, transform them to his/her own code in order to understand them.

From a methodological point of view, however, the study of otherness in intercultural comparative studies involves not only the object of research, as in translatological concepts (which, however, reduce "otherness"), but also specific methods that, in turn, redefine this area of research in intercultural space. The roots of this anthropological thinking can be traced back to the works of the ancient, Renaissance and Enlightenment travellers who paid attention to the comparative study of customs and habits of the members of non-European civilizations. These travellers, however, did not catch real segments of a "foreign" nation, or the essence of extratextual reality, but, through metaposition, that is, linguistic-syntactic descriptions, formed an ideological, Eurocentric construction of the world. The first challenges to Eurocentrism, especially in the second half of the 18th century, resulted in radical criticism of monolithic ethnocentrism, i. e. of the age-old human tendency to understand and interpret the world from the perspective of one's own nation, when also "literature is seen first and foremost as the expression, through its proper language, of a specific nationality" (Leerssen 2007, 19). The philologically conceived comparative studies thus sometimes ignored semantic metamorphoses of the concept of culture, which up to the late 19th century was markedly axiological, narrowing the extent of observed cultural phenomena to positive values that were generally thought, within the ideas of rationalistic Enlightenment, as contributing to evolutionary progress and humanization of people. Such need of a critical seeing of "otherness" or "foreignness" is, to a varying degree, highlighted especially by contemporary concepts of intercultural comparative studies which assume that the "foreign" cultural space originated in our mind does not exist in itself, since texts are complementarily created as a reflection of certain fiction. One may draw attention here, for example, to the theory of mental maps of Franco Moretti who uses the reduction of motivic elements and their spatial abstractions, constructs interliterary networks, and thus points to relevant, often hidden qualities of the text. Understanding literature in this case does not occur through the description of individual texts, but through the analysis of "big data" revealing the structures of literary phenomena (Moretti 2000, 56).

Up to the mid-1920s, the traditional intercontinental comparison of different civilizations and cultures drew on the American-Eurocentric approach highlighting the Western literary canon as a point of reference for other, seemingly less developed regions and societies. Intercultural differences were explained essentially by the clearly intracultural principles (aspects) celebrating the value and aesthetic superiority of "the domestic" over "the foreign", i. e. the "barbarian" and "the other". The wide-

spread collapse of the colonial system in the 1960s disrupted this scheme by a new dialogue between the analysing subject, synonymically fused with the Euro-American tradition, and the analysed object coming from the so-called "third" or "developing world". An important methodological impulse, along this line, was brought by the ICLA/AICL Congress in Utrecht in 1961, thematically focused on the "comparative aspects of literature in languages which cannot be among the principal languages of the world" (Wesselings 22). The Congress, with active participation not only of comparatists from the then-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but also from the former colonial centres such as India, Pakistan, etc., declared the enlargement of the pantheon of world literature with the so-far marginalized values, and asked for an open and bilateral comparison based on the principle of equality and interpretive impartiality. The Utrecht Congress's programme of mutual rapprochement or setting up of a new dialogical framework between the West and East was then institutionally supported by the UNESCO program entitled The Major Project for Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values (Janaszek-Ivaničkova 1989, 94).

It is not a coincidence, then, that it is this period which saw the formation of imagology anticipating the roots of decolonial thinking, or the launch of postcolonial studies, since they were most articulate in formulating their fear of potential abuse, not only through political-economic dominance, but of culture as an instrument of power as well. If looked at from this aspect, imagology could be understood as a way of intercultural, hermeneutically oriented communication in which the analysis of stereotypes should not be used for the presentation and interpretation of the "foreign", but for its understanding, for starting a dialogue. Such an approach would, at the same time, contribute to the subversion of a contradiction in values between cultural homogenization and cultural diversification. In this sense one may draw attention to the outstanding American scholar Clifford Geertz, who claims that the "images" of culture create a complicatedly structured and multi-layered text, or its network, through which reality is composed via verbal means and interpretive procedures. The factors important for the analysis of images and ideas circulating in intercultural communication between the members of the studying and the studied culture include both the consciousness of "how people in a given culture perceive the world via their imagination", as well as knowing "on what cultural models and premises the images are based and how they are mutually influenced, changed and reflected" (Soukup 2011, 277).

The concept of imagology with the adjective "comparative" was for the first time used in 1966 by Hugo Dyserinck, one of the founders of this method, in his article "Zum Problem der 'images' und 'mirages' und ihrer Untersuchung im Rahmen der vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft" (1966). The Belgian researcher took it over from a text by the psychologist Oliver Brachfeld (1953) who claimed that social groups capture the world around them culturally, i.e. subjectively, permanently putting the subjectivity of their thought constructions into the processes of knowing. Following the study of national images by Marius-François Guyard and Jean-Marie Carré, who wanted to overcome objective differences between nations through the

search for similarities – though "Carré's *Les écrivains et le mirage allemands (1800–1940)* of 1947 was still (understandably, perhaps) fed by anti-German national bias" (Leerssen 2007, 21) – Dyserinck created his programme in opposition to the American structuralist of Czech origin René Wellek, who was consistently refusing this area of research as a fashionable matter of sociological history of artistic taste or so-called national psychology. Wellek's arguments were most clearly explained in his "The Crisis of Comparative Literature" (1964) in which he refuses the French theorists' preoccupation with external relations and claims that the literary study, including comparative literature, should have its own research methods. In his later theoretical writings, Wellek even considers so-called extrinsic factors to be dangerous for literature, an "attack on literature" carried out by the scholars who came to the forefront of critical attention from the 1960s onwards, including deconstruction, postmodern and postcolonial theory. Dyserinck, drawing on the theory of three worlds of the German philosopher Karl Popper (the nation as "a group of people connected by the same mistake as regards their history"), was also challenged by the idea that imagology essentially does not belong to literary studies, since it has political objectives (Gáfrik – Koprda 2010, 438). In fact, despite their seeming neutrality, images have their "denoting" as well as "noetic" function, and as stereotypes they occur not only in artistic texts, but also in literary criticism, historiography and literary theory.

However, contrary to Wellek's belief that imagology is extrinsic and ideological, Dyserinck claims that studying images of national ideas contributes to the de-ideologizing of literary studies. In his view, literary historians do not ask questions concerning the qualities of national literatures in their mutual confrontation, but examine what qualities are assigned to individual literatures and which interest groups are served by individual functions. Although the level of literariness in imagology seems to be rather high, with a possibility of considering images as even being similar to deconstruction's uprooted, non-teleological and non-motivated signifiers, its de-ideologization is, naturally, of a different essence than Wellek's, looking more towards the post-structural than the structural. This may be illustrated also by Guyard's claim that the image of the "foreign" is not only formed by artistic texts such as fiction, but is also influenced by non-literary texts generated through television, print and other mass media. However, Wellek's criticism is visible here as well, since Guyard methodically narrowed the object of imagology: its sense should not then be in an extraliterary search for a mutual understanding between ethnic groups, or in a search for the occurrence of myths in individual and collective consciousness, but in becoming a functional supplement to classic literary history.

Dyserinck, who together with his disciples (M. Fischer, K. U. Syndram, etc.) founded the so-called Aachen Comparative Programme (the concept of "Laboratory Europe"), was also concerned with intra- and extra-literary functions and the meaning of images in European regions, as mentioned above, and conceived of imagology as a method which transfers the sociologising or psychologising issue of national mentalities to the form of the de-ideologized view of the nature of nations. At the same time, he asked a question of the specificity of imagotypical structures originating in artistic texts, realizing that our knowledge of the "other", or a "foreign" coun-

try, is influenced and manipulated especially by media, and not by literature as art. Would then these imagotypical structures be different from the stereotypes created in the texts of a non-literary nature? It is this semantic space between the referential relation of utilitarian texts and the possibilities of artistic literature to generate fictive worlds with their own concepts of "otherness" determined by imagological discourse which is, to a certain extent, independent of the external reality. Comparative imagology – here Dyserinck anticipates the later culturological-anthropological approach of Konstantinović (1979) – thus always moves in intercultural space. It draws on reality, though negating it, at the same time, through its repeated fictive constitution. The imagologist thus respects the fact that an image of a "foreign" country is not based on a concrete geography, but rather comes from the reader's imagination.

Dyserinck's theory was significantly complemented in the 1980s by Daniel H. Pageaux (1983; 2010) who on the one hand drew on the anthropology of Lévi-Strauss, on the other hand came close to Ďurišin's theory of reception (1992, 94–95) and Lotman's communication model (1990, 45–63). According to Pageaux, who analysed images of the Iberian Peninsula in French writing, comparative literature must be heading toward cultural anthropology, and culture as a human science is becoming "a workshop" to produce images which work in interliterary communication. A comparatist may put together a picture of time and society from texts of art, based on their new reading, and thus be more sensitive than a political historian in getting through to the sense of "the foreign", to the recognition of a real rhythm of historical process. In the imagological perspective, texts are thus not distinguished according to their aesthetic nature, but according to their thematic significance and impact on receivers. The basic question asked by the imagologist is: to what extent can the investigation of the relations between works of art and the social structures in a concrete space and time be considered objective? Pageaux, who later anticipated the theory of fictional worlds, generally set three methodological principles which resulted from his long-term investigation into French-Spanish relations: 1. although the image of the foreigner is determined by the political-historical context of a certain synchronous section, it is neither a copy nor connected with the foreigner in the sense of mimetic reflection; 2. the form of the image is influenced by cliché, i. e. by a phrasal expression – "there is a limited stock of basic key words summarizing Spanish culture, psychology, and, especially, the French definition of Spanish realia" (2010, 451). The French view of the Spanish "foreigner" thus oscillates, depending on the historical context, between "Hispanomania" and "Hispanophobia"; 3. The circulation of images goes on irrespective of the aesthetic value given by the traditional division of culture into the so-called value and trivial element, since the image of "otherness" in both extreme positions of a differentiated culture arrives at analogical schematized (iconicized) structures. In the textual analysis of the image of the foreigner, one proceeds methodologically from determining big, binarily oppositional structures of the text, through an identification of large thematic units, up to the language level which also captures "otherness" through words.

The creation of an image of the foreigner proceeds semiotically as an indirect way of his/her symbolisation, most often through metaphorization, i. e. through the

description and transfer of what cannot be expressed directly. Symbolization identifies and self-defines the valuating (denoting) subject or community at various levels. The denoting subject or community is considered to be: 1. lower in relation to the "other" (deception, obsession); 2. higher, superior (phobia); 3. mutually complementing (love, philia). The question of the "veracity" of the image of the foreigner remains as a marginal, "unsolvable" problem, since an image always represents someone, while what comes first are the ideas and the ideological systems the image of the foreigner is subject to. On the other hand, the "imaginary", even though it does not exist, may be scientifically studied, since in these images, even though they have a form of fictive stereotypes, society and its individuals are identified in mutual relations. A concrete image thus becomes a basic building block of imagological reflections, a starting reference point that may be linguistically captured as a linguistic formation that becomes, in harmony with Lotman's terminology, a secondary language. Imagology, based on the binary opposition between the diachrony of the research object and the synchrony of methods (in essence, a contradiction of the object's "growing older" and the field's "becoming younger"), thus provides a methodological starting point for the writing of an alternative history of literature from the aspect of its figurativeness. If previous research was characterized by scholarly exclusivity, allowing to read the text only in one way, imagology calls for the right of "bricolage" and the layering of methodological procedures leading from narrowly aesthetic analyses up to historical and culturological research. A literary historian who gives up the ideal of objectivity always compares the results of his/her "reading" with cultural and social circumstances and relates them with the past and needs of the present.

In the next stage, from the 1990s to the present, imagology has been developing in two directions: towards literary theory and comparative study of verbal texts, and towards anthropological analysis of the history of mentalities. In the first conceptualization, it remains a specific method of analysis and interpretation of a literary work, understanding it under the influence of the methods of New Historicism and intercultural communication as a form of social interaction, since literature, as a historical and cultural construct, is created not only by authors, but also by social discourse that produces literary stereotypes as well. Imagology therefore studies the origin, functions and structural mechanisms of the stereotypes in which the features of nations and ethnic or other groups are manifested. It wants to identify, for example, the motivation of the origin of a concrete stereotype in literary texts, and to explain the national or ethnic anchoring of a character, including his or her physical appearance and inner characteristics, together with speech. The creation of literary stereotypes, as a set of standardized and repeating ideas of certain groups, which "assign a limited number of qualities to all members" (Krekovičová 2010, 10), may be indirectly reflected in the linguistic, compositional and thematic structure, i. e. in the presentation of a character, setting, atmosphere, in the means of expression or in the development of story or plot. In the intertextual chain are then studied the inter-semiotic and interspecies transfers of individual stereotypes, their migration from text to text in the form of special identification elements that lead either to canonization or to a radical change. In their monumental publication *Imagology.*

The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey (2007), Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen summarize texts with national features and define individual concepts and categories of the imagological method from the aspect of their national diversity and complementarity: for example, literary stereotype (auto-stereotype as a group's fixed idea about itself; hetero-stereotype as an idea connected to the "others"), literary image, topos, cliché, national symbol, emblem, myth, and so on.

In its second orientation, imagology drew inspiration from the works of acknowledged ethnologists and theorists of the nation: Ernest Gellner (1983), Benedict Anderson (1983), and Anthony D. Smith (1986), as well as from the theory of ethno-images by the Dutch researcher Joep Leerssen (2018) who understands imagology as a research into imagems, i. e. the differentiated national images oscillating between the polarity of affirmative and contrast symptoms within one stereotype. The relevant formulae of stereotypes include, according to Leerssen, the aspect of ethnocentrism, Eurocentrism or colonialism, the binary opposition of normalcy or exoticism, image of the barbarian and the educated, as well as contrastive stereotypes applied on the basis of the theory of climate (north vs. south, west vs. east, centre vs. periphery, Orientalism vs. Occidentalism). A significant impulse for the study of ethnoimages can also be found in the imagological concept of the Iranian semiotician Bahman Namvar Motlagh (2011) who understands the stereotype as a form of canonized literary and cultural image determined mainly by sociological starting points. He takes imagology as a partial element of ethnopsychology, therefore the research of stereotypes in texts is most often connected to the analysis of race, nationality, religion, sex, profession and age, with basic functions of stereotypes being defined as differentiation, identification, justification, generalization and affirmative reproduction (positive thematization of subject matter or motif). For Motlagh, the interpretation of stereotypes through thematic areas means that the resulting value of a concrete image within, for example, a national literature is determined by comparison with the canonized model frequented in the superior literary aggregate or social discourse.

After 1989, imagological reflections have penetrated the environment of Central and Eastern Europe, i. e. the regions with specific ethnic, national and religious situation intensively reflecting postmodern processes of globalization and provincialism. This brings a danger of hidden or open politicization of the imagological method, and, at the same time, additional methodological problems: the relation of the aesthetic value with the national nature of the image from the aspect of its ethical determination, as well as the question of the general validity and adequacy of the transfer of the terminology and semantics of imagological concepts, historically created mainly in German-French confrontation, to Central-Eastern Europe where the image of the "neighbour" (e. g. Czech-German, Slovak-Hungarian, Polish-Russian relations) was structurally formed under different conditions.

Other impulses for the development of East-West Studies came several decades later at the 14th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association (AILC) in Edmonton and the 17th Congress of the AILC in Hong Kong, which responded to the process of globalization and the post-industrial information revo-

lution (Janaszek-Ivaničkova 2010, 206). The congresses focused on polyculturalism and the specificity of the so-called small literatures, linguistically and ethnically different or existing in the middle of the so-called big cultures, for example, the texts of Chinese diaspora on the American continent, including Canada. The motto of the Hong Kong congress "At the Edge: Margins, Frontiers, Initiatives in Literature and Culture" reflected the changes of the research paradigm of intercontinental comparative studies: literature no longer aspires to universality and absolutes, but within the emancipatory postcolonial discourse, emphasizes its hybridization and transcontinental nature. It is not just the common mixture of languages, cultures and ideas, but also the transformation of the civilizational identity of ethnic communities that seems to be a problem especially for traditional Asian cultures based on the stereotype of ethnic homogenization, i. e. the traditional idea of national unity based on one race, one land and one language (the Korean comparatist Boo E. Koh) (Janaszek-Ivaničkova 2010, 209). As early as 1985, the Dutch Americanist Hans Bertens tried to distinguish contradictions between the semantics of two complementarily interconnected postmodern concepts of polyculturalism and globalism. While polyculturalism assumes respect for differences, especially negation of the impact of West European civilization, respecting the optics of "natural chaos" without setting any conditions of teleological movement towards agreement, globalism, in the sense of "new universalism", draws on monolingual approach to reduce literary and cultural differences in favour of a higher, hierarchically superior unified whole. Similarly, the Dutch theorist Douwe Fokkema's thesis of the so-called cultural relativism, drawing on the hermeneutical tradition of "empathy" and Gadamerian understanding, proclaims the openness towards the alternative cultural models (not to all political systems), negating the function of the centre in favour of periphery (1988). The research interest concentrates on the transgression and creolization of cultures, including acknowledging the linguistic and cultural rights of national and ethnic minorities in a unified social and political whole.

If, for example, one was to analyse the depiction of Indian, Chinese or Japanese culture and identity in the context of Central and East European imagination, it would not be possible through a classic literary history of mutual relations. The images of the "foreign country" do not have support in a concrete geography, but rather in the imagination of the reader. Therefore, one must be interested not only in how distant countries are reflected in our literary critical discourse, but also to what extent the critical procedures prevailing in Anglophone literary studies can be productive in reconstructing the Central European images of, for example, India (Gáfrik 2018). With respect to the already classic publication *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said, for example, there have been discussions about the proper definition of the concept of the Orient (the geographical area east of Europe narrowed just to the Near East and India, or the area including also East Asia, i. e. Japan and China?) and Orientalism that would challenge, as the American comparatist Dorothy Figueira (1991; 1994) claims, a simplified contradiction between imperialism and its victims, i. e. essentially negative consequences of Orientalism understood as a monolithic object of the Western European Orientalist discourse.

A possibility of the existence of a Central European perception, or of national forms of Orientalism, admits, in this case, other forms of the study of "otherness", if not for any other reason than for the fact that the Central and Eastern Europe do not have a history of colonialism and they themselves were bearers of "Orientalism" in the past. For example, the Canadian comparatist Tötösy de Zepetnek (1998) understands Eastern and Central Europe as a postcolonial territory and speaks about a specific, secondary "colonization" carried out in the Soviet Eastern Bloc through political, economic as well as cultural pressure. But even after 1989, Central Europe was supposedly subject to the colonial influence of the West manifested by mass culture imported especially from the USA, though in the post-1989 period the impulses of the West and East had a modified impact since Central and Eastern Europe became a place where the mediating function of cultural value was of a "self-referential" nature (Tötösy de Zepetnek, 1998), and therefore a means of national identity and sovereignty. Despite that, the identification and interpretation of post-socialist literatures and cultures of Central and Eastern Europe are influenced by Western theories of postcolonialism based on the material of the so-called "Third World" including Asia, Oceania, Africa and South America. It appears then that the middle position between the Western and Eastern bloc of the politically heterogeneous Central and Eastern Europe (despite its being part of the European Union) may nowadays be understood as a specific space of cultural mediation in the sense of "in between-peripherality", as Tötösy de Zepetnek claims. Central and Eastern Europe is therefore rather an intersection of "the network of interferences and transfers", a place of mutual attraction and repelling. In addition to its emulation of more developed cultures, this postcolonial model is characteristic especially by an effort to achieve a developmental autonomy that can lead even to political hegemonism and new nationalisms (for example, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, war in the Balkans, and so on). Nonetheless, a "de-ideologized" study of the importance and function of ethnic images and stereotypes in the process of the creation of national societies relativizes, not only in scholarly discourse, the understanding of a nation and its language as objectively given and organized taxonomic units for the study of intercultural processes.

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Images of remote countries in the literatures of Central and Eastern Europe: On the theoretical starting points of intercultural comparative studies

Intercontinental comparative studies. Imagology. National stereotypes. Interliterariness. World literature. Central and Eastern Europe. AILC congresses. Czech and Slovak comparative literature.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the research into interliterary relations traditionally drew on national concerns emerging naturally from the proximity of a great number of neighbouring nation states with their distinct cultures, or national minorities living within a majority culture. Yet the contacts or relationships with structurally and typologically different cultures have remained outside of critical attention. Studying them requires not only some knowledge of the extraliterary context in which those cultures are situated, but a methodologically different approach as well, such as is used in postcolonial or decolonial theory, Orientalism, imagology, etc. The paper draws attention to the problems connected with comparisons using these approaches, especially imagology, as their main methodological tool. At the same time, it aims at finding out how such approaches contribute to the understanding of cultural, ethnic, biological or material "otherness" (especially through stereotyped imagotypical structures), and whether it is possible to transfer, for example, the imagological concepts historically created in a certain context to a cultural area of a different civilization, and use them to analyze the nature of the literary.

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Cultural triangulation in Romanian travelogues to China under Communism

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By analyzing three Romanian travelogues to China, what this article primarily sets out to achieve is to identify and substantiate the applicability of the cognitive model, which I will hereinafter refer to as "cultural triangulation", in comparative cultural studies and to follow the tentative analytical vocabulary that might derive therefrom. I believe that such an approach is justified particularly because contemporary comparative cultural studies – a generic label under whose umbrella I include a wide range of disciplines and theories, from postcolonial studies and polysystem theory to comparative imagology and certain versions of world literature – tend to judge interliterary and intercultural relations solely in terms of binary pairs, which leads, in turn, to an imminent limitation of such perspectives.

Thus, of all the aforementioned disciplines and theories, postcolonial studies stand as the most illuminating example as they continue to firmly rely on the colonizer-colonized dichotomy. Take for instance the primary opposition between "Orient" and "Occident" set forth by Edward W. Said (2003), Gayatri Spivak's analyses of the relations between "imperialism" and "subalternity", and even Homi Bhabha's more nuanced concepts of "in-between", "ambivalence" and "mimicry" (1994). Yet, binarism appears to also permeate theories where intercultural contacts do not necessarily imply colonial relations, as in the case of "interference", a polysystem concept put forward by Itamar Even-Zohar to account for the interaction between "source cultures" and "target cultures" (2010, 55–59). Moreover, binarism is also witnessed in imagology studies under the guise of the renowned opposition between "we" and "others", which, in turn, triggers the dissociation between "auto-images" and "hetero-images" (see Leerssen 2007). Last but not least, as I have shown in a previous study (Terian 2013), binarisms continue to prevail in the recently established field of world literature – or, at least, in its most popular versions and concepts: David Damrosch's "elliptical reading" (2003, 283), which posits the existence of a relation between two foci, the "source culture" and the "host culture", Pascale Casanova's distinction between "pacified" and "combative literatures" (2011, 133), and Franco Moretti's opposition between "core" and "peripheries" (2013, 132).

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WHAT IS CULTURAL TRIANGULATION?

However, previous considerations evince a particular issue: oppositions, dissociations, and comparisons – all these involving binary relations – are fundamental patterns of thought and, hence, they are a recurrent phenomenon across different types of research, literary endeavours included. Therefore, why would one consider them insufficient or counterproductive? My answer is simple: binarisms should not be relegated per se, since they are and will be relevant in a multitude of explanatory contexts where they may significantly contribute to a better and more accurate understanding of certain cultural phenomena and processes with a very specific ("local") character. However, in my view, such a multitude accounts to but a small degree for the complexity of interliterary relations.

Thus, to mention a specific example that I have recently analyzed in an article published in *World Literature Studies,* the shift in Romanian writers' perception of the Tatars, which occurred in the latter half of the 19th century and the early twentieth century, fails to be accurately understood unless we take into consideration the attitude of Romanians – writers included – towards the Turks as well. Throughout the aforementioned timeframe, the Romanian people had been faced with constant threat from the Turks, waging two wars against them, while the Tatars, deprived of any form of state organization, had become a loyal minority within the young Romanian state. Against this background, Romanian writers came to portray the former as the arch-villainous Other, whereas the latter – who played a similar role until mid-19th century – would trigger their compassion and solidarity (Terian 2018).

To put it in more abstract terms, we must acknowledge the instrumentality of cultural triangulation in understanding the condition of the so-called "minority literatures" such as the Hungarian literature produced in Romania or Slovakia, which find themselves in a relation of double dependence, both on the "national" culture of the state wherein they were produced and the culture of the state with which they share some form of ethnic congeniality. Moreover, cultural triangulation proves useful in assessing and explaining two symmetrical phenomena triggered by the struggle for autonomy that marked the second half of the 20th century in both (post)colonial and (post)communist literatures: if the former – most notably the literatures produced in Africa, South-East Asia and Latin America – extensively adopt, starting with the 1960s, the Soviet socialist realist model in pursuit of emancipation from the domination of the former Western metropolis, the latter – produced in East-Central Europe – embarked on an accelerated process of (re)westernization in an attempt to overcome socialist realism and the legacy of the Soviet rule. Similarly, it is arguable that cultural triangulation has contributed not only to the emergence of minority literatures, but also to the development of "minor" literatures, since at any stage in their evolution, they have come into closer contact with certain cultural models, and thus, have inescapably departed from others. Furthermore, since minor literatures represent the overwhelming majority of world literatures, it is not too far-fetched to assume that cultural triangulation is a "universal" phenomenon – or, at least, one that might be encountered in any major change affecting the world literary system, even when its presence is not particularly noticeable. After all, the most significant

historical, geographical, and cultural event of the previous millennium was the result of a cultural triangulation: didn't the European Christopher Columbus "discover" the Americas having in mind the image of the Indies?

Despite the numerous previous counterexamples, it is only fair to mention at least two situations when theorists have called attention to the limitations of binary approaches and highlighted the relevance of ternary relations in comparative cultural studies, though in neither of these two cases has cultural triangulation been construed of late as in the following. For instance, it is worth mentioning here the concept of "inbetween peripherality" set forth by Stephen Tötösy de Zepetnek in the late 1990s, when he noted that "in the post-World War II literature and culture of (East) Central Europe, there have been three main origins or centers of influence: 1) The Marxist/Socialist center ('filtered' through the colonialism of the USSR); 2) The indigenous center (which itself contains earlier foreign influences); and 3) The Western centers (with varied German, French, or other influences)" (1999, 92). Yet, should the hypothesis outlined by the Hungarian-American comparatist be accurate, the problem with it is that the author himself limits its applicability, relegating it to what he calls "comparative Central European studies" (2002). However, as is evident from above, cultural triangulation is not confined to a particular geopolitical area.

A more ambitious theoretical project was undertaken by the French researcher Michel Espagne, who further developed the concept "cultural transfer". In a relatively recent essay, this is defined as "any transition of a cultural object from one context to another" (2013), with the nuance that, in most cases, the term "context" refers to what we commonly call "national culture". Another aspect Espagne highlights is that a cultural transfer "almost always involves a third party" (2013). This claim is best supported by one of the chapters of *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands* devoted to "triangular cultural transfers" (Espagne 1999, 153–178), and by a collection of studies dedicated to this phenomenon (Dmitrieva – Espagne 1996). All the same, Espagne and his disciples' analytical approach regard triangulation as an exception rather than a component part of cultural transfers. As a matter of fact, not a single mention is made of the terms "triangular" and "triangulation" in the latest volume edited by Espagne on the French-Chinese intercultural relations (see Espagne – Li 2018). On the other hand, it should be noted that the concept of "cultural transfer" does not even remotely account for the whole range of intercultural relations, mainly due to its "objectifying" nature, despite the effectiveness of this instrument in analyzing some cases such as the one regarding the status of "Bessarabian" literature (see Mironescu 2016).

For this reason, the present endeavour only accidentally follows the lines of the theories put forward by Tötösy de Zepetnek and Espagne. Likewise, except for a mere terminological coincidence, my understanding of the concept of "cultural triangulation" is not compatible with Martin Raymond's, who construes it as a method of sociological analysis of trends relying on associations between "interrogation", "observation" and "strategic intuition" (2010, 119–146). Finally, the mechanism advanced herein is programmatically opposed to the dominant, albeit reductionist trend in comparative cultural studies which the following formula best summarizes: *(culture)*

A "sees"/constructs/influences/dominates (culture) B. Unlike this approach, cultural triangulation postulates that *all* (inter)cultural processes are ideologically filtered and imply the existence of an intermediary C between A and B, which takes various roles, mainly of camouflaging/altering/compensating/overturning certain power relations that are by no means perceptible or inescapable. Hence, cultural triangulation involves, in my view, three "peaks" corresponding to just as many members from different "national" cultures; of course, these members are not the cultures themselves, although they aspire to *represent* them by virtue of an allegedly legitimate metonymic substitution. Given the topological nature of any geometrical projection, I will further denominate and define these "peaks" in spatial terms (the three "S").

Thus, A is the *Scout,* standing for the "lookout" culture and its perspective, but not necessarily the individual who records it, since A's position might be reenacted and described by a foreigner, too – for instance, a Brazilian researcher who performs a study of the British travel memoirs to the Middle East. In any case, what matters here is the motivation – unexceptionally ethnocentric – behind the Scouts' exploring another culture by means of travelling or reading; through a close examination of foreign cultures, their goal is to contribute to a more favourable positioning of their own culture, either by identifying a particular course of future action or by arguing in favour of rewriting the cultural past.[1] Then, B is the *Scape*,[2] the culture open to contemplating and reading by the Other, which functions as a basis for comparison with culture A. It should, however, be noted that B is not merely "inspected", but also construed by A in an attempt to provide answers to questions regarding its own culture. Lastly, C is the *Scale* or the "Hidden Third",[3] the culture operating as an implicit yardstick for the evaluation of both A and B. In fact, it is not C itself that is hidden – quite to the contrary, as it may appear as an explicit basis for comparison between/for/to A and B – but the power relations underlying it. Therefore, in closing the triangle, it is evident that, in the process of cultural triangulation, (a representative of) culture A contemplates culture B, compares culture A with culture B and subsequently assesses them both against the perspective of culture C. Certainly, this happens at the starting point of the triangulation as the dynamics of the process may subsequently trigger numerous changes in the values and functions of the three cultures involved. For instance, sometime along their entire interaction, the relation between cultures A and B may shift from inferiority to superiority, neutrality or incommensurability. Or, even more surprisingly, culture B may gradually change its status from *Scape* to *Scale*, from construed object to instrument of measuring cultural development.

Naturally, all these changes are conducive to a rich taxonomy of triangulation types and an equally comprehensive conceptual apparatus. However, for reasons of space and given the limited scope of this article, I will not further elaborate on such aspects. Nonetheless, before embarking on a case study, it is essential to clarify a couple of points. The first of them is the novelty of my approach. For, apart from the theories advanced by Tötösy de Zepetnek and Espagne, deploying a triangle to account for the complexity of interliterary relations is, after all, reminiscent of the original technique used in comparative literature, whereby a *tertium comparationis*

is evaluated with a view to highlighting the similarities between two literary works or phenomena. However, there are at least two marked differences between *tertium comparationis* and cultural triangulation. On the one hand, as is evident from the prototypical example of *tertium comparationis*, Aristotle's analogy between "the shield of Ares" (*primum*) and "the cup of Dionysus" (*secundum*), with "instrument" thereby operating as a *tertium* (Saussy 2011, 61), "the third" is an implicit concept, more abstract than the other two submitted for comparison, and in relation to which the latter notion is, semantically speaking, a hypernym. Conversely, in the case of cultural triangulation (which may refer to three countries, cultures, literary trends etc.), all the three elements are explicit, palpable, and distributed along the same axis. On the other hand, if – in theory at least – the scope of *tertium comparationis* is to explain/account for two related phenomena, cultural triangulation takes on a transformational role, and an alignment of the other two "peaks" of the triangle with the normative level of *the Scale* is endeavoured.

The other point is the faithfulness of the cognitive model to the phenomenon. It is evident that a series of intercultural relations is, in fact, a complex network consisting of not two, three, or four "threads" and "peaks," but dozens, hundreds, and even throusands of such formations. Yet, a hypothetical attempt at describing them at length would render the subjects explored by comparative cultural studies utterly incomparable. As a result, a certain degree of abstractization – and, implicitly, simplification – is unavoidable. Therefore, it is not its legitimacy that one may be tempted to question, but the extent to which it functions as an effective instrument. What is the reason behind my proposing three "peaks" instead of two or four as a relevant approach to cultural interactions? The answer to this question lies in geometry itself: when connecting two straight lines, the result is never a triangle, but, at best, a broken line or two crossing lines; yet, when connecting two triangles, what could result is not only a quadrilateral, which is the minimal result of this operation, but also a dodecagon such as the Star of David. Consequently, reducing a cultural "triangle" to its component sides is tantamount to oversimplifying its complexity, whereas perceiving a quadrilateral as being formed by two conjoined triangles yields a much more detailed picture of the subject matter. In other words, triangulation is the most effective non-trivial instrument for investigating literary relations.

ROMANIA AND CHINA – UNLIKELY AFFINITIES

Before I start my analysis, a brief overview of the Sino-Romanian political and cultural relations is in order. Firstly, it should be noted that China has always enjoyed a special place in the European (especially in the Western) imagination – one so ambiguous that some researchers argue that "to the present day the European image of China has reflected not actual facts, but historically varying perceptions and shifting cultural self-conceptions among Europeans" (Schweiger 2007, 126). What accounts for this particular status is what came to be known as "China's ulteriority" (Kerr – Kuehn 2007, 2), that is the Westerners' belated interaction with China as opposed to other parts of the world. As, at the beginning, China had for long remained unknown to them; then, on many occasions when they attempted to establish a connection,

they were denied access to it; and when they were allowed to, they did not have the necessary instruments to make its acquaintance. That is exactly why "[f]or the West […] China as a land in the Far East becomes traditionally the image of the ultimate Other" (Longxi 1988, 110). For the same reasons, China came to symbolize the imaginary antipode of the West, prompting many to state more or less seriously, from Henry David Thoreau onward (1971, 58), that if a Westerner were to dig deep into the bowels of the earth, China would emerge on the other side.

Symptomatic for this perception of China – and of the entire "Far Orient" as "the same, but more East" – is that, in his seminal work, Said leaves out of discussion this part of the world without much regret, confident that an analysis of the "Near Orient" would provide enough data to draw conclusions that apply to the entire Orient (2003, 17). Such forced substitution re-emerges in other, more recent works such as *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, where China fails to rank among the top five travel destinations, while Arabia, Amazonia, The Pacific, Africa and Ireland appeared to have secured their position (see Hulme – Youngs 2002). In fact, substantially less academic studies have been published on the travelogues to China than the Middle East, India or Africa. At work here could be the same "ulteriority", if we take into account that, for example, around the year 1800, the Europeans were more familiar with the so-called "New World" than they were with China. The country only started opening itself to the world in the early 19th century and this would last for about a century (c. 1840–1940), as in the mid-twentieth century, precisely when there was an unparalleled democratization and development of the means of transportation, the country isolated itself again from the West, as a consequence of a policy whereby "travel to China by foreigners […] was severely restricted" (Strassberg 2003, 248).

As opposed to Western European countries, Romania found itself in a privileged position, occasioned by both its foreign policy and cultural tradition. Thus, it should be noted that in spite of the distance between the two countries and the differences between the two peoples, a description of China is the first systematic account of a country – of *any* country! –made in writing by a Romanian. Appointed ambassador to China by Czar Aleksey I Mikhailovich of Russia, Nicolae Milescu "The Steward" (1636–1708) wrote two travelogues on this journey upon his return: *Book Describing the Journey through Siberia, from the Town of Tobolsk to the Border of the Kingdom of Kitaya, Year 7183, Month of May, Day 3* (1675), and the *Description of China* (1676). Most notable is the latter, which features a detailed description of Chinese history, mythology, geography, administration, and culture (see Crețu 2018). It was only four decades later that the first systematic account of his own country, Dimitrie Cantemir's 1716 *Descriptio Moldaviae* (Description of Moldova), was published and no less than a century and a half later that the first description of the West authored by a Romanian, Dinicu Golescu's 1826 *Însemnare a călătoriei mele…* (My Travelogue), was issued. It is then hardly a wonder that China has elicited constant interest among the Romanians, since one of the main works lying at the foundation of Romanian culture was devoted to it.

On the other hand, the political relations between Romania and China suggest an underlying cordiality between the two, which, in spite of some temporary "drifts",

has never turned into adversity. Communist Romania was the third country after the Soviet Union and Bulgaria to officially recognize the existence of the People's Republic of China on October 3, 1949, and establish diplomatic relations with it (Budura 2005, 33). Moreover, ever since the 1950s, many delegates from China and Romania have mutually visited each other's countries, with which they shared a common ideology. However, the strained relations between the Soviet Union and China, triggered by the debates surrounding "revisionism" that marked the late 1950s, caught Romania in their crossfire. On the occasion of the Third Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party (1960), Romania sided with the Soviet Union in its critique of the Chinese delegation, which was all the more unnerving as the Romanians were hosting the event (Budura 2005, 37). In spite of this, over the following two decades, not only did Romania succeed in avoiding a further drift from China, but also came to see the country ruled by Mao Zedong as a model of independence from the Soviets, which the former would attempt to replicate in the mid-1960s. Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the two major shifts in the Romanian communist regime's policy that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s – the Theses of April 1964, when Romania officially declared its autonomy from Moscow, and the Theses of July 1971, when Nicolae Ceaușescu, drawing on the Chinese Cultural Revolution, tightened the Party's leash over culture – have been preceded by visits to China. In any case, the political closeness between China and Romania appears to have reached its climax in 1968, when, following Ceaușescu's condemnation of the Warsaw Pact troops' invasion of Czechoslovakia, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai promised to lend Romania military support should it be subjected to similar aggressions on the part of the Soviets (Budura 2005, 43–44). Furthermore, the 1960s and 1970s had seen an unprecedented increase in the mutual economic and cultural exchanges between the two countries. However, after 1979, "Romania and China undertook different paths" (Chiriu – Liu 2015): if Deng Xiaoping's China experienced a series of economic reforms and gradually opened itself to the world, Ceaușescu's Romania sank even further into isolation, a phenomenon to which the Party's increasing control over society would contribute to a large extent.

ORIENTALISM, OIKOPHOBIA, ANTICHRONISM

In what follows, I will illustrate the mechanism of cultural triangulation by analyzing three travelogues to China written by Romanian authors during the communist period: George Călinescu's *Am fost în China Nouă* (I Was in New China, 1955), Eugen Barbu's *Jurnal în China* (China Diary, 1970), and Paul Anghel's *O clipă în China* (One Moment in China, 1978). The three memoirs were singled out neither randomly nor solely to support my thesis. Firstly, I have chosen them because they were written by representative authors of postwar Romanian literature or, at least, one particular trend of this age. The more recent travelogue writer in my sample is Paul Anghel (1931–1995), a renowned member of the "protochronist" movement, which, in the national communist period of the 1970s and 1980s, opposed Westernization and supported the theory of anteriority and superiority of Romanians in all areas of science and culture. Eugen Barbu (1924–1993) was one of the most acclaimed

Romanian prose writers of the early postwar decades until sometime around 1970 when he fashioned himself as the shadow leader of the protochronist movement and a proponent of Ceaușescu's cult of personality. Last but not least, George Călinescu (1899–1965), extolled by Barbu as the "divine critic" (1970, 210), was perhaps the most influential critic in the history of Romanian literature, which explains why protochronists attempted to claim him as their forerunner.

Beyond these real or alleged ideological affinities, travelogues are also interconnected through various generic and intertextual ties. For instance, all three travel memoirs combine direct observation with scholarly considerations of Chinese civilization, despite their widely varying ratios. The most balanced in this regard is Călinescu's, which brings together a chronological overview of his itinerary (Beijing – Tianjin – Nanjing – Shanghai – Canton, etc.) and a thematic account of the Chinese world, ranging from its landscapes, monuments, cities and villages to its art, clothing, and cuisine, to only name a few. In contrast, in Barbu's memoir, the thematic criterion takes precedence over the chronological, whereas in Anghel's case, the chronological perspective is so underrepresented as compared to the thematic that the author subtitled his book an "essay" instead of "travel diary" (Anghel 1978, 12). Nonetheless, both Barbu and Anghel make frequent references to Călinescu's memoir, to whom the emergence a new sub-genre in modern Romanian literature, the "Chinese travelogue", appears to have been thus attributed.

Moreover, it should be noted that the three journeys occurred somewhat symmetrically, about 12–13 years apart: Călinescu's in 1953, Barbu's in 1965, and Anghel's in 1978. All of them took place at a time when Sino-Romanian political relations were on excellent terms (which is perfectly understandable) and record certain significant landmarks in the evolution of the communist regime in the two countries: the peak of the Stalinist age (1953), the beginning of the so-called "liberalization" (1965), the era of the new dogmatism (1978) in the case of Romania; the transition period prior to the First Five-Year Plan (1953), the years between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution (1965), the end of the Cultural Revolution and the proclamation of the Four Modernizations (1978) in that of China. However, these events aside, the common denominator between all three travelogues is the mode in which they project cultural triangulation: all three were authored by Romanian writers (the *Scouts*), who visited China (the *Scape*), which was invariably compared to the Western/European cultural model (the *Scale*). This last term is essential here, as it bears witness to a former inferiority complex on the part of the Romanians toward Western civilization, which comparatist Adrian Marino named after the author of the first Romanian travelogue to the West (the "Dinicu Golescu complex") and characterized as being marked by three defining traits: "1. Awareness of widely varying differences in terms of civilization, culture, economic powers, morals ('organization'); 2. Continuous critical comparison ('not as it is here'); 3. Drive toward great progress and reform through imitation and emulation, in profound patriotic spirit ('enlightenment', 'emancipation', 'benefit of the people')" (Marino 1976, 5).

Although the three diaries share the same premise, their perspectives and systems of value differ considerably. For instance, Călinescu emphasizes China's ulteriority,

along the lines of so many other travellers before him: "[T]he fundamental feeling is that of landing on another planet" (1955, 14); yet he goes on to compare the "new" planet with the "old" one, more precisely its Western component and praises not its specificity, but those elements that bear close resemblance to the Western world. In his words, "[i]n Nanjing, the Blue River runs as large-scale Canal Grande" (16); "[t]he great square of Hangzhou is a wonderful lake, a Chinese Lago di Como" (40); in Tianjin flicker "the lights of a smaller New York" (41); Shanghai is "an American-like city" (43); "Canton is a white city, very much like Naples, with narrow streets full of peddlers and shops" (44), etc. On the other hand, whenever the critic notices major cultural discrepancies – in terms of architecture and painting, two art forms that, to him, appear as highly embedded in Chinese folklore (32, 71) – he does not shy away from extolling, albeit in mild terms, the superiority of Western culture over some Chinese aesthetic products he perceives as mere exercises:

> The European painter would artistically convey the idea of a burgeoning local landscape and economic opulence by depicting a bustling atmosphere. The Chinese artist cannot move past instances of partial beauty, painting successively one duck after another, one fish after another, one flower after another […] As a merchant unfolds roll after roll of iridescent silk, so does the painter unravel nature in its component parts, creating a, so to speak, studio landscape (70–71).

What transpires from Călinescu's perspective is an unmasked Orientalism, which despite his curiosity and amiable attitude toward his hosts, does not admit too many nuances. Quite to the contrary, the critic's Eurocentrism remains that of an undeniable *Scale*, most noticeably when he comments on Chinese religion, which he compares (and implicitly belittles) through a telltale metaphor, with European mythology: "Chinese cults evince a case of extreme obsolescence in that a modern Chinese individual appears not that far removed from a European venerating Jupiter and Hephaistos" (112).

Where does Romania sit in this equation? Călinescu refrains from an outspoken expression of the European dimension of Romanian culture and is rather reluctant to draw any parallels between Romania and China. Why is that so? Weren't the two countries on the same side? Isn't the very imposition of Communism in China the reason why the Romanian traveller visited this country? A seemingly obscure statement on the first page of the book foregrounds the critic's stance: "The new China is nothing more than the usual China, but at a particular revolutionary stage in its history" (5). The actual meaning of this statement reveals itself 150 pages later into his memoir, when Călinescu argues that the Chinese Revolution is actually "an application of Marxism to China's specific context", that is "a new form of bourgeois democratic revolution" (158). To put it differently, China lags behind Europe even in terms of implementing communism, which, in turn, betrays a certain level of superiority on Romania's part, despite its solidarity with China: "All the themes our literature approaches also constitute the endeavors of writers in the new China. There, however, they have a local colour. The Chinese individual has been subjected to a millennial philosophy of inertia, and the man of letters has long remained confined to the cedar tower of classical language. The Chinese writer must find within a source of violent

force in order to depart from the all too fine china and move toward the more naive, though more popular, terracotta" (167). Therefore, Călinescu's journey to China does not appear to have changed his perception of the cultural values and functions he triangulated. At most, this experience served to strengthen his orientalist perspective and perhaps even encouraged him to believe that Romania, far more advanced in its implementation of communism, could actually act not only as a *Scout*, but also a *Scale* for China.

Barbu's attitude towards China, on the other hand, is entirely different. He appears to experience a major cultural shock during his journey, brought about by the realization of the host culture's superiority over European culture. Chinese painting, for instance, which Călinescu deemed but mere instances of studio exercise, Barbu praises and gives as an example of suggestiveness, which the Europeans ostensibly lack: "Chinese painters are masters of suggestion and of stopping short at the right moment. Their art, in contradistinction with our European practice, is one of extreme vigour, of graveness manifested in painting. Chinese painter's greatest concern is to leave something to the imagination! Westerners pursuit the female element, whereas the Chinese, nature" (1970, 181). Barbu encounters similar instances of superiority almost everywhere, from Chinese people's faces to their cleanliness, from their monuments to their cuisine. However, art still takes center stage, because what elevates the Chinese above the Europeans is, first and foremost, "a rare refinement in the art of living" (92) or, to be more precise, their ability to aestheticize their mundane existence.

From this perspective, Barbu tends to equate the relationship between China and Europe with the antinomy between the beautiful and the practical, remarking incessantly on the primacy of the former: "Gazing time and time again at the perfection of these palaces and temples, testimony to labour intertwined with art, harmony with ineffable artistry, I cannot help but deplore our hurried existence, the modern men who erect cities and cage-like houses, enormous barn-like rooms where practicality instead of the all too architecturally necessary artistry dominates, defiant of the fact that architecture too is an art, not a practical skill" (104). As is evident from this statement, Barbu himself, as a Romanian, does not exempt himself from Europe's limitations, prejudices and faults, acknowledging them openly. Consequently, as opposed to the Orientalism of Călinescu, who cannot depart from his European values, Barbu's position amounts to a form of *oikophobia*, which Roger Scruton defines as "the disposition […] to side with 'them' against 'us', and the felt need to denigrate the customs, culture and institutions that are identifiably 'ours'" – in short, "the repudiation of inheritance and home" (2006, 36).

Such an attitude yokes together "a feeling of inferiority in the European" (Barbu 1970, 57), mixed with the boundless admiration for Chinese civilization, whose products sometimes engender "a sense of levitation" (107) in the Romanian writer. This situation generates, within cultural triangulation, an interchange of functions between B (the *Scape*) and C (the *Scale*), so much so that the European culture is ultimately evaluated against the Chinese cultural yardstick and not the other way around: "I remember the Parthenon and those grand ruins of the ancient Greek civ-

ilization, I picture to myself Rome with its small quarters and I set them against the Great Wall [of China]. The proportions are overwhelming. Had I seen the cradles of European civilization after this journey, I would have been left with a bad taste in my mouth. This way, what quivered and enflamed then, now ardently defends itself" (54). For this very reason, progress does not entail for Barbu, as it does for Călinescu, China's Westernization or even communization, but rather Romania's Sinicization – if not of the entire West: "I am experiencing a sense of pioneering. From here, sooner or later, a wind of change will blow toward our ancient places which we hold so dear. In China I have learned more about what simplicity, balanced living, rest and work mean, to gaze rather than to glance, to think rather than accept; to strive to mend rather than amend" (259–260).

Anghel confesses to a similar admiration for China. In his memoir, the process of cultural triangulation and, conversely, the shift of the visited country from *Scape* to *Scale* are spelled out in the very first pages: "[My] travelogue does not relate to a single universe – the Chinese universe – but to two others, the European and the Romanian, the last two relaying flashes of reconnaissance to the first. However, the last two are here but cursory landmarks, with the Chinese remaining the principal measuring unit of the human" (Anghel 1978, 9). Anghel, like Barbu for that matter, believes that a defining trait of Chinese culture is the aestheticization of living, since under "art" the "whole system of life" may be subsumed (106). Much along Barbu's lines, Anghel also maintains that China is superior to the West in all facets of its civilization, including the most mundane aspects of life such as humour: "The first attitude, the European one, assuming a separation from objects, from the world as object, implies a concessive outlook, compassionate at best, lenient towards things, a way of saying: I could destroy you, but I will spare you, I will take you lightly. The other is a participative attitude, congeneric with things, revealing them as they reveal themselves to the world, with a genuineness which represents, for things even, an act of self-understanding" (144).

Nevertheless, unlike Barbu, Anghel no longer speaks from the standpoint of a representative of the European culture, reminiscing that "few moments after my arrival, I felt like a citizen of Pekin, forgetting and not forgetting where Europe sits on the map" (8). It is not just his personality, but the whole culture he belongs to (the Romanian culture) that exempts itself, the writer notes, from Western mindsets, evincing instead surprising parallels with and connections to the Chinese culture. What explains these similitudes is that, according to Anghel, the Romanians and Chinese alike, apart from the seemingly anachronistic evolution of their societies, have, in fact, put forward equally unconventional points of view, or to use the term coined by the Romanian mathematician Solomon Marcus, "*antichronic* solutions" (224) to the great problems of world science, technology, and culture. Chen Jingrun's successful approach to the "Goldbach conjecture" and Emanoil Bacaloglu's deciphering of the "Gauss formula" are "the manifestation of a very old and at the same time very fresh reasoning," which allows for "a free play with the infinite, devoid of all fear, in which no side of the past-present-future triangle excludes or opposes itself from or to others" (225).

This *antichronism*, which differs from both Călinescu's Orientalism and Barbu's *oikophobia*, lies at the heart of Anghel's acutely intimate, yet not necessarily verisimilar interpretations, of the history of Romania and China, with a view to finding similarities between the two peoples. Primary among the numerous similitudes he identifies between the Romanian and Chinese folk cultures is the one between the "Carpathian wall" [sic] and the "Chinese Wall" (36), which he deploys to emphasize the Romanian people's role as defender of civilization and, implicitly, their right to be acknowledged, like the Chinese, as *Scales* of humanity:

> The functionality of clay ramparts or of the *trojan* in Dacia in relation to China is relative, what matters is their strategic similarity only. Foes are alike and, in some cases, identical. They all come to destroy the universes thus enclosed. Ancient China had fought the nomadic Xiongnu invaders for several centuries, rebuffing and eventually redirecting them towards Europe – just as floods are deflected –, where they would eventually arrive around the fourth century and come to be known under the fright-inducing name of the Huns. In 375, the Huns, forgetting their Eastern defeats at the Great Wall, attacked Dacia and temporarily set camp there before setting out for the Pannonian plains where they established a settlement and wherefrom, under Attila's lead, they would undertake numerous incursions on the Western Roman Empire, producing significant casualties on some occasions. Defeated by the Chinese in Antiquity, the Huns played their last card in Europe when, following their defeat at Nedao (454), the sinister invaders would "vanish from history" (36).

Consequently, undertaken and published in the name of ideological "friendship" between two socialist states, the Romanian travels and travelogues to China become, less than a quarter of a century later, an instrument for legitimizing the anti-Western and nationalist tendencies assumed by a part of the Romanian cultural elite in late communism. It is true that this stance is by no means shared by the entire Romanian intelligentsia of the time and that, in order to gain a more capacious perspective of that literary field, the analysis of the three works mentioned above should be accompanied by an analysis of Adrian Marino's and Eugen Simion's travelogues to the West. However, such an undertaking would exceed the remit of the present article. What is worth noting, however, is the diversity of attitudes cultural triangulation can account for. From Călinescu's Orientalism, whose positive belief in the superior Western values supports the standard arrangement Romania (*Scout*) – China (*Scape*) – Europe (*Scale*), through Barbu's *oikophobia*, whereby China radically shifts to become a *Scale* from whose height Europe and Romania are charted unapologetically, to Anghel's *antichronism*, which attempts, against a strong anti-Western background, to divorce Romania from Europe and to elevate it to China's level of *Scale* – we encounter a multitude of relations, functions, and values, which, in my view, convincingly show that cultural triangulation is an efficient instrument in explaining the dynamics of intercultural relations.

NOTES

[1] See, in this respect, the opposition between "legitimating (or retrospective)" and "pragmatic (or prospective) strategies" that I advanced in Terian 2013.

[2] The term is used here in Arjun Appadurai's acceptation, even if the fivefold classification (in *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideoscapes*) put forward by the Indian-American theoretician is not particularly relevant to my approach: "The suffix *-scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles. These terms with the common suffix *-scape* also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groupings and movements (whether religious, political, or economic), and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, and families" (Appadurai 1996, 33).

[3] The "Hidden Third" is a concept set forth by the Romanian philosopher Basarab Nicolescu (2012) to overcome the distinction between subject and object. I will further employ this concept merely as a cognitive pattern, without sharing all other aspects embedded in Nicolescu's theory of transdisciplinarity.

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Cultural triangulation in Romanian travelogues to China under Communism

Cultural triangulation. Romanian literature. Travel writing. China. Scout – Scape – Scale. Orientalism. Oikophobia. Antichronism.

This article highlights the heuristic usefulness of "cultural triangulation", a concept attempting to exceed the dominant schemata for the analysis of intercultural relations in current comparative cultural studies, which are generally limited to binary mechanisms of the type *(culture) A "sees"/constructs/influences/dominates (culture) B*. In contrast to this reductionist tendency, I argue that all (inter)cultural processes have an ideologically filtered nature and consequently imply the mediation of the relationship between *A* and *B* via an intermediary *C*, to which various roles are assigned (e. g., to hide/alter/compensate/reverse various power relations, which are under no circumstances obvious or inevitable). My study explores the dynamics of this mechanism of cultural triangulation by analyzing some of the most representative travelogues to China written by Romanian authors during the communist era: G. Călinescu's *Am fost în China Nouă* (I've Been to New China, 1955), Eugen Barbu's *Jurnal în China* (Chinese Diary, 1970), and Paul Anghel's *O clipă în China* (One Moment in China, 1978).

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"Namaste": Representations of India in Sega's spiritual travelogue

ADRIANA RADUCANU

A survey of all the Romanian writers who either focused on or were influenced by the age-old traditions, sacred texts, and mythology of India in their work would make in itself the subject of a book-length study, which is not the aim of the present article. Nevertheless, the claim that India plays a significant role in Romanian literature should be substantiated, especially since, in its turn, it will serve to contextualize the actual topic of the present work. Hence, in the first part I will briefly survey Mihai Eminescu and Mircea Eliade's works, in view of their relevance in supporting the central position that India holds in Romanian literature. In the second part my focus will be a contemporary work by Sega (the pen name of Octavian Segarceanu): *Namaste: A Novel of Spiritual Adventures*, whose depiction of India as perceived by the post-modern consciousness of the contemporary man is shaped by a network of multiple (and often antagonistic) cultural influences.

Mihai Eminescu, whom the Romanians fondly styled as "the Evening Star of national poetry" (based on his authorship of the eponymous poem) is the undisputable national poet, a belated European Romantic, still relatively unknown to an international audience, due to his frequently acknowledged untranslatability. His poetry displays a wide range of influences, ranging from Schopenhauer to Buddhist, Christian, agnostic, and atheist themes. Although his India was only "of the mind and spirit", not of the body – he never travelled there – it constitutes an indisputable marker of his entire oeuvre. In his fascination for the faraway country, Eminescu was influenced by Schopenhauer (arguably the 19th century philosopher with the highest investment in Indology), and by his own Hindu studies in Berlin (1872–1874), a city which was then at the forefront of Oriental scholarship. He also befriended the Jewish folklorist Moses Gaser who had elaborated the "theory of east-European folklore as Indian mythology by-product" (Terian 2017, 46). Towards the end of his life, Eminescu translated Franz Bopp's 1845 *Critical Grammar of the Sanskrit Language*. All these various influences and points of interest led towards an interesting act of cultural appropriation in relation to Hindu spirituality, with Eminescu adopting many of the motifs found in its legends, myths, and sacred texts which he treated as "domestic material" (Terian 2017, 48). Moreover, in a century when national consciousness had yet to be shaped, Eminescu evaded a certain anxiety of influence, at both the national and personal/esthetical level, by granting India a crucial place in his

oeuvre, so that the "Indian intertext" (Cretu 2017, 71) of his writings is extensive and visible at a cursory glance. *Memento Mori*, besides being an "enormous Oriental panorama" (71), is also the poem which presents India as both the key to an ontological and national problem connected to the conundrum of establishing origins, as well as a solution for the creative dead end that he experienced as a poet (Terian 2017, 47). *Venus and Madonna* echoes Kalidasa's *Sakuntala* (Bhose 1978, 49); *A Dacian's Prayer* expands the boundaries of the nation and weaves the theme of the Dacian "autochtonism" into the typically Romantic canvas of "genealogic fantasies" which allocate "the Romanian people a culturally prestigious and venerable ancestry" (Cretu 2017, 71); *Return, One Wish Alone Have I, Kamadeva* (a re-written and modified version of the original *Page Cupid*), *Gloss, The First Epistle*, and *The Legend of the Evening Star* are heavily influenced by Buddhist spirituality, with a sense of cosmogony derived from the *Vedas, Hymns of Creation* (Bhose 1978, 47–52). Similar spiritual influences also inform Eminescu's prose, with *Poor Dionis, Wasted Genius, Archaeus, and Pharaoh Tla's Avatars* dwelling heavily on "the Buddhist notion of reincarnation" (Cretu 2017, 71). Eminescu's opus is marked by a harmonious symbiosis between the Hindu cultural space, and Western and autochthonous motifs. These mixed influences on the Romanian poet's work justify its reading as a "space", a "cluster of related cultures", a "spatialized cultural web" (Terian 2017, 50) with India at its core. Paradoxically, in the 19th century, India enabled the Romanian national poet to find the world, more specifically India's influence on the world (also on Romanian literature) while romantically looking for the nation and attempting to establish its roots.

Eliade's position in the world republic of letters is more prominent than Eminescu's, due to his many writings in French or English, and in spite of his problematic reputation, admittedly scarred in some circles by his political sympathies and/or affiliations.[1] The eminent historian of comparative religions discovered the tangible, geographical India when he obtained a scholarship to study Sanskrit between 1929 and 1931. The India of the mind and spirit had been there longer, since his high school years when he had gradually discovered alchemy, Orientalism, and the history of religions. While at university, Eliade's interest in the East continued, in "the old Orient as the new one. Gandhi, but also Tagore and Ramakrishna" (2007, 26).[2] The subcontinent was, as he stated in 1961, the very locus of the essential, exemplary, paradigmatic man, the only place which "possessed the merit of having added a new dimension in the Universe: that of existing free" (Eliade 1993, xx). This search for essence and permanence which he thought belonged to India will later on be opposed to another, also arguably inspired by India, i.e. the seductive nostalgia of and desire "to be different every hour, to bathe very day in different waters, to not ever repeat anything, to not remember anything, to not continue anything" (Eliade 1991, 168).

India features prominently in Eliade's widely diverse oeuvre: two volumes of fiction, *India* (1934) and *The Maharajah's Library* (1934), his PhD thesis: *Yoga. Essai sur le origines de la mistique indienne* (1936), the novels *Isabel and the Devil's Waters* (1930), *The Dying Light* (1934), *Maitreyi* (1933), and *Building Site: Indirect Novel* (1935), where he turns some episodes of his Indian diary into fiction, *Soliloquii*

(1932), a volume containing his personal philosophy, also derived from his Indian notes, fantastic novellas such as *Nights at Serampore, Doctor's Honigberger's Secret, Shambala, Agartha,* as well as numerous radio interviews and letters. In this article I will only focus on a few aspects of his representations of India that confess to the plurality, the montage structure of the country that fascinated him almost to the point where he considered forsaking essence/identity in favour of identification. These aspects, as will be revealed later on, find their counterpart in Sega's spiritual travelogue, hence my reasons for what otherwise may be suspected to constitute a random process of selection.

Eliade's physical India is a land of *petit récits* (in Lyotard's formulation) of striking contrasts, of slums, lepers and rich areas in the immediate vicinity of good schools (in Calcutta and Madras). It is also a country where male handsomeness sometimes surpasses the Hellenic ideal, whereas the female one escapes any attempts at generalizations, due to its geographical diversity. The climate can be extreme but in the South, the traveller is fascinated by the enigmatic charm of winter nights, which remind Eliade of the *Arabian Nights*, in which the only desired company is neither God nor woman, but the soul itself: "This is why India's poets and thinkers seem so strange: they spend too much time with themselves" (1991, 42).

Far from being interested in and experiencing only the superfluous of the exotic (although, I would argue, this is inescapable given the subject matter), Eliade displays a constant interest in the esoteric of India, the religious rituals of the Himalayas, Hardwar, and Rishikesh; he travels to these sites of pure spirituality in order to encounter the uncontaminated world, free from the Anglo-Indian eclecticism that has left its imprint onto the many regions he had visited. Quite predictably for a multicultural universe like India, this search for origins and primordial beliefs is intermediated by a meeting with Swami Shivananda in whose Rishikesh ashram Eliade spent six months. Dubbed "the Western guru", mainly but not only because of his contribution to "exporting" the yoga teachings to the Western world, Swami Sivananda also makes an appearance in the novella *Nights at Serampore*; it is from him that the zealous novice learns the most precious lesson of Hindu spirituality, namely that everything is *maya,* illusion. It is also the lesson that demands expiation in order for the self to truly reach self-achievement. As an avid traveller and researcher of everything Indian, Eliade feels torn between the desire to re-fashion himself as an Indian and the opposing one, the desire for cultural and spiritual self-preservation. India, the young Eliade feels, has the uncanny, almost demonic power to convert him spiritually, to annihilate him, hence the necessity to "protect myself against all this magic around me. From the language I learn, to the philosophy I think and the décor whose rhythm I make mine, everything is foreign, profoundly foreign to my soul […] The adventure is a double-aged knife; that is why I enjoy it so much" (Eliade 2008, 326). For Eliade, India also means significant romantic and erotic encounters with two women. One of them is Maitreyi, immortalized in the eponymous novel (1933, published posthumously in English as *Bengal Nights,* 1993), who was the daughter of his host, Surendranath Dasgupta, a prominent Indian scholar of Sanskrit and philosophy in the first half of the 20th century. Jenny, the other significant woman in Elia-

de's life in India, is the one in whose arms he found temporary solace after Maitreyi's father strongly opposed their relationship and banned him from his house.

> It is only now, when I meditate on my 'secret' life in India, that I understand its meaning. Ultimately, my Indian existence was changed (better said, deleted) because of having met two young girls: M. and J. If I hadn't met them, or if because of meeting them I hadn't allowed myself to be dragged towards irresponsible adventures, my life would have been completely different. Through M. I forfeited the right to become integrated in "historical" India; through J. I lost everything that I thought I had created in the Himalayas: my integration in spiritual, transhistorical India. But I understand (at last) that it had to happen like this. The two girls were placed in my path by *maya* to force me to come to my senses and find my own destiny which was: cultural creation in Romanian language and in Romania. Only after the era of frenetic, intense activity, between 1933–1940, I had the right to 'detach' myself from the Romanian moment – and start to think and write for a larger public and from a universal perspective (456).

As detailed in this candid confession, written at the end of an impressive academic career which had spanned decades, India played a significant role in Eliade's personal and professional life. It helped shape his lasting beliefs, his capacity as *homo religiosus*, and his development as a scholar. The sheer diversity of teachings and experiences that it munificently provided confirmed its status of (cultural) space as mediating and engendering the Romanian writer's universality.

Sega (Octavian Segarceanu), the best-selling author of the spiritual travelogue that constitutes the focus of the present article, although attracted to writing since childhood, only started publishing short sketches in the *Transylvanian Gazette* after 1990. He worked as a copywriter in publicity for seven years, became the deputy creator director at McCann Erickson, Romania, and made commercials as a freelance director. Over the years he accumulated social status, money, various prizes and fame. In spite of his worldly success, realizing that his own life had come to nurture an existential lack, he left for India in 2008. This resolution resulted in a year of geographical/spiritual peregrinations, which took him from Osho's ashram in Pune (depicted in the first novel *Namaste: A Novel of Spiritual Adventures in India*) to the place of Buddha's birth in Nepal (the main topic of *Namaste: A Novel of Spiritual Adventures in Nepal*). The present article will focus on the autobiographical/spiritual travelogue *Namaste: A Novel of Spiritual Adventures in India*, the first in a trilogy to be completed within the near future.

The narrative depicts a country situated at the very core of the identity creation of man and author alike. In this context, the faraway space provides the uncanny background for an ambiguous process of becoming, characterized as both a fundamental shift from but also movement towards the re-appraisal of the familiar ties. I will initiate my analysis with a brief explanation of the concept of "ontological rebellion" as I consider it to define the narrative substance of Sega's passage. Then I will proceed towards an analysis of the complex manner in which the story confirms and/or challenges it. Expressed differently, I will weigh "ontological rebellion" against its counterpart "hauntological rebellion"[3] and the (im)possibility of becoming with/in the absence of private ghosts. In Paul Schmidt's words:

> Ontological rebellion involves a diametrical shift in orientation aiming at rejection of very basic internal modes of existing within the concrete individual. Ontological rebellion enters the realm of possibility only after a metaphysical rejection of the concept of a fixed human nature and a historical rejection of legal-political systems. It is the most drastic form of rebellion, not just a change in one's manner of living arising from the rejecting of external social and material conditions but an altering of the core of one's being. Having rejected metaphysical truths and social historical principles, man now exhumes the depth of his being to reject himself, again and again, seeking to create himself (1971 [Hill 2011, 61]).

The grand design of this existential refashioning is based on the aspect of human nature which qualifies as innate insubordination; humans are reluctant to acknowledge the necessity of obedience to "anything stuck and unlimited", opting for metamorphosis over fixity, for "being-able-to-be" over "simply being", for "projection and striving toward an ever-more towards an unknown and the not-yet", in view of their complex ontology as a "knot of relationships throbbing in all directions" (Buff 1993 [Hill 2011, 62]). Ontological rebellion re-told – as in *Namaste* – can but gain from the candid tone of remembered adventures, meant towards the attainment of the "metaphysics of the concrete, that is, the autobiography of one's feelings". Strictly methodologically:

> The first person grammar is the language for such a task, which stands in sharp contrast to the traditional metaphysics of the abstract. The language of the concrete is marked by four features: 1. The first person singular; 2. The unity of the present-time-to-me, which is a single whole made up by other single wholes; 3. The living-space of my feeling and my bodying; 4. The expression of my concreteness in my bodying. The goal of ontological rebellion is being reorientation (Hill 2011, 62).

"Narrativity of the self" accompanies "ontological rebellion"; in Alasdair MacIntyre's words, made famous by his After Virtue, stories must be lived before they are told. Nonetheless, the purpose of pre-lived stories departs from the idea that the role of the narrative is to merely report the events of our lives; rather, as Ricoeur would put it, the narration of experiences serves for a purposeful reconfiguration: "Fictions are not simply arbitrary […] inasmuch as they respond to a need over which we are not the masters, the need to impress the stamp of order upon the chaos of existence" (1984–1988, 2, 77).

Indisputably, Sega's abrupt departure for India accompanied by the incumbent (albeit temporary) severing of ties with the familiar and the ordinary circumstances of his life stems from a restlessness, a dissatisfaction with the here and now, common for the contemporary man. As he confesses in a TED interview, what prompted his decision was the encounter with *The Book of the Ego*, written by Osho, an Indian guru with a controversial reputation.[4] In my reading, throughout the narrative, Osho becomes a synecdoche for India; the very setting of *Namaste: A Novel of Spiritual Adventures in India* is Osho's ashram in Pune. Significantly, the name "Osho" comes from "ocean", it suggests infinity (Sega 2011, 54); I would also argue that like "Osho who never cared about convincing anyone" (54)[5], India also preserves its neutral, 'liquid' quality, becoming what neophytes are able or willing to metamorphose it into, taking the shape of the personal vessel in which its ineffable substance is poured.

Sega initiates and continues his journey as an individual subjected to two equally important types of cultural "stimuli"; the first, his Romanian, cultural and literary tradition, the second, a tissue of Western films and books which will be instrumental for his mental contextualization and re-territorialization of India. Throughout the narrative, national and international 'cultural texts'[6] take turns in providing fitting comparisons to life-encounters. As a Romanian, even before landing in India, he imagines the monsoon to have the fragrance of the linden tree which is Eminescu's undisputed tree in the national and cultural repository. One of the first natives he encounters is an old man with a bamboo cane, a charlatan who poses alternatively as a musician, biologist, journalist, old law professor, and who sports an Eminescu haircut (Sega 2011, 24). Another Eminescu intertext is linked to the practice of meditation in the dark, with its connotations of death and rebirth. Sega even coins the term "endarkenment", the opposite of "enlightenment", to signify the practice and the urge to die "in the absence of light, dissolve in the endless black, move on to the foetus position", in order to be born again (152). Sega's paradoxical embracement of darkness, the comfort provided by the state of non-being and detachment from life may easily be read as a specific cultural reference to Eminescu's *Evening Star* (the hero of the eponymous poem), who at the end of the poem, following a failed love-story with a mortal princess also rediscovers eternal safety in his dark universe, remote from the fragility and falsity of the human world. Furthermore, Sega's preference for darkness as engendering authentic self-transformation also resonates with Eliade's famous statement in *Isabel and the Devil's Waters*, his first novel written during his stay in India: "Light does not come from light, but from darkness."

Alternatively, and typically for the contemporary adult, with a vested interest in the mesmerizing Hollywood world and in Western culture generally speaking, Sega also sees himself at the beginning of his journey to India as a young Gerard Depardieu, running in slow motion, to Vangelis music, in water that comes to his ankles, passionately kissing the land of the West Indies (Sega 2011, 10). An old woman obsessively re-reads K. Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* in a thinly veiled reference to Sega's own world on the verge of collapse and possible reconstruction (57); an Indian driver, wearing dark sunglasses at night is mentally addressed by Sega as "You ugly motherfucker" (from the film *Predator*) (91); the beloved ashram chef looks just like Eddie Murphy (133); a gorilla refusing a banana brings to his memory *The Jungle Book* musical's infectious refrains (180); unpleasant body odour is kept at distance with the help of the guava fruit which becomes Sega's "Preciousss, My Preciousss…" (Golum's endearing term for the much coveted ring in *Lord of the Rings*) (185), and the examples could go on. The above-mentioned similes, descriptions, symbols and metaphors belonging to local and universal cultural landscapes not only live in Sega's novel, but are lodged there in what Derrida might call "a host of ghosts".

The encounter with and depiction of the condensed version of India, encompassed in Osho's ashram, covers various aspects, ranging from obsessive preoccupations with women's physical appearance (which Eliade also dwelled on in his India), and their availability as casual sex partners, to complaints about the hardships of active meditation and the inherent difficulties of jobs that he feels unqualified for but which he

has to perform, as part of the Work as Meditation programme. However, very early in the novel, the author guides the readers into his narrative of becoming, and clarifies the main three coordinates that will shape his quest. These are: religion, politics, and love and/or sexuality, detailed in the chapter titled "The Electric Switchers" which tells the story of the almost sleepless night spent in a hotel, before being admitted into the world of the ashram. Hours of tossing and turning provide an opportunity to perform an honest dissection of his past, and prefigure an autobiography of his feelings, in a candid tone, which foreshadows the upcoming style of the narrative. The rhythm kept by his constant switching the lights on and off marks the erratic flight of thoughts and memories, ranging from the spiritual greyness of communist times with their "sheep-comrades" (Sega 2011, 30) briefly enlightened by the secret ritual of Bible readings with family and friends, to his unfulfilled and frustrating love life, to the even more vexing search for self-definition through religious allegiances.

Once granted access into the ashram, Sega becomes part of a microcosmos of foreigners and natives alike, all enticed by the promise of a re-making of the self, of achieving a magnified existential authenticity of being through rituals, tasks, and a general demand to surrender the notion of a fixed identity.[7] In "Masks", the facilitator asks the newly-arrived from Spain, Ireland, France, Switzerland, USA, Germany and India to perform some national dances and then urges them to abandon the masks which they had been made to wear, so as to "abandon the falsehood taken for truth" (50). This willed-for cultural amnesia can be read in Hill's words as a step and a stage of "ontological rebellion":

> Forgetting is a temporary form of dispensing with certain voices, slogans, and rites of the community. Indeed the would-be cosmopolitan wants to open the gates of community and let the radical Others in; he wants to hybridize the community and rid it of any form of purity that is associated with race, culture, tribe or nation. The moral cosmopolitan, if necessary, will put the existence of every culture at risk, even her own. Like the foreigner who is free of ties with her own people, she feels completely free … forgetting is an act of defiance. The ontologically rebellious person has no respect for this and that memory out of a sense of misguided nostalgia (Hill 2011, 96).

Related to but also superseding the forgetting of social conditioning, Sega's spiritual re-fashioning also requires another type of daily dis-remembering, preached by different sages; paradoxically, given the heterogeneity and the reliability of its sources, the urge to forget reinforces its counterpart, the urge to stay attached to certain automatisms of belief. Jiddu Krishnamurti (whom both Sega and Eliade mention in their writings), Father Arsenie Boca (martyred by the communist regime), and Osho share the common belief that: "To live completely wholly, every day as if it were a new loveliness, there must be dying to everything of yesterday. Otherwise you live mechanically, and a mechanical mind can never know what love is or what freedom is" (Krishnamurti 1969 [Hill 2011, 101]).

As previously stated, Osho functions as a synecdoche for India, but the author questions the validity of this act of substitution to the very end. For example, in the "Demons" chapter, the guru appears to the neophytes on a large screen, wearing a ridiculous costume resembling "a gala kimono" (Sega 2011, 41), assorted with an

even more ridiculous hat, and delivers a lengthy speech, largely incomprehensible to Sega who is both numbed and repelled by the inauthenticity of this grotesque display. This exposition into nothingness – as far as he is concerned – is followed by the audience enthusiastically producing a cacophony of animalistic sounds which throw Sega into an existential terror at being surrounded by "devils", "demons speaking in tongues" (42). Automatic defence mechanisms die hard though, so he instinctively finds refuge in grasping the cross around his neck, in a Christian gesture meant to keep the evil at bay. In a postcolonial reading of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Eliade's *Bengal Nights,* Basu claims that:

> One desires the archaic and the exotic insofar as it remains the other, but insofar as it retains its ontological difference the encounter with it is liable to be marked by frustration, failure, lack […] Passages to India are often passages into the unconscious, a site of covert desire which could reveal a secret of the Western self not apparent or available to it. A structuring principle of such texts is that the other is denied a speaking part, and registers itself as an absence (2001).

Although the present reading is not informed by the lens of postcolonial theory, I find Basu's argument relevant to my study. Osho does indeed speak but the message appears to Sega compromised by the orchestrated artificiality of the show. Moreover, the "frustration, failure" and "lack" caused by the encounter with Osho as Other almost become Conrad's "horror" in the "Demons" chapter. Hence, this first "exposure" to the very guru who authored his presence in India, mediated as it is by technology, translates the grotesque carnivalesque into inescapable existential dread for the man who came determined to question the limits of belief. Another layer is added by the political undertones which problematize even more this extreme form of adulation. The participants chanting the name "Osho", almost in a state of trance, uncomfortably resemble the rituals of the Ceausescu personality cult in Romania. The enthusiastic yet depersonalized incantation, actually the whole practice of active meditation focuses on the idea of self-refashioning as a "New Man" (Sega 2011, 95) which was also the aim and the purpose of the totalitarian Romanian regime. The New Sannyasins are supposed to give up their past and their conditioning, acquire a new Sanskrit name and become free men; this "birthing" and "baptising" in one occur in a festive ceremony which to Sega appears to replicate the one in which Romanian children were "promoted" and became part of an organization titled "The Motherland's Hawks", actually an early procedure of indoctrination into absolute submission to the Party (106). A videotape that Sega watches testifies to the in-rivalries between the Old Guard of sannyasins and the present Inner Circle, and reveals a structure of power uncannily reproducing that at the level of the Romanian communist party. As noticed by Sega, two worlds colluded in 1970; the one in which Osho, simply dressed, with "an incandescent look" delivers his endless speech to a Western audience enthralled by his words which "sparkle like diamonds", and the one in which "in a different part of the world another enlightened being was speaking in front of the grand national assembly about the dawns of the Golden Era. In the meantime, the era collapsed over the people and their hopes, the promised gold turned to dust, and the enlightened one was sacrificed for Christmas, like a pig" (206).

The symbolic juxtaposition of Osho/Ceausescu interrogates the boundaries of "ontological rebellion" and its falling short of becoming "hauntological rebellion" because politics, with its enduring, traumatizing memories, is all pervasive and it sustains the inescapable contingency of identity. Paradoxically, Sega's memories of growing up in the haunting, incapacitating world of communist Romania are accompanied by his memories of also growing up in the cultural cradle provided by Christian Orthodoxy, its secret existence/influence notwithstanding. Towards the end of the volume, in an exemplary narrative twist, Sega ponders on the very origins of his adulthood rebellion as shaped by the desire to break free from the shackles of an imposed religious identity. This ontological insubordination is triggered by the sight of a figurine representing the Buddha, contemplated in the house of a childhood friend and the subsequent account provided by his father about the Buddha being "the only one who came to life 2500 years ago" while "we are sleeping and dreaming of golden eras, of the peaks of progress and civilization, damn it" (245).

It is Sega's mother who reinforces the necessity to preserve local cultural and religious allegiances. Hers is the voice of the Symbolic with all its incumbent restrictions, urging her son to forget about the Buddha, and "say your prayers to Our Lord, Jesus Christ who doesn't like the Buddha, a very proud man who thought of himself as God" and therefore deserves Hell whereas "we'll go to paradise because we are the Lord's obedient sheep" (245). Hers is also the voice that endorses culturalism. In David Bromwich's words:

> The thesis that there is a universal need to belong to a culture – to belong, that is, to a self-conscious group with a known history, a group that be preserving and transmitting its customs, memories and common practices confers the primary pigment of individual identity on the persons it comprehends. This need, culturalism says, is on par with the need to be loved by a father and a mother, and with the need for a life of friendship and associates (2014, 11).

Sega's experiences in the ashram, indeed his very presence there noticeably challenge the limitations of culturalism; however, the memories of the maternal voice foreboding damnation as the price for even contemplating different ways into faith, reinforced by those of Father Arsenie's stern belief that meditation with its emphasis on immediacy at the expense of eternal redemption is a "gate to hell" (Sega 2011, 95) still retain their grip on him. They are reflected in Sega's own misgivings about the potential evil quality of some of the ashram ceremonies. His barely contained anxiety echoes Eliade's when confessing to the inescapable fascination and sense of endangerment that India poses to his spiritual being. Crushed under the combined weight of both domestic religion and an overactive, cinematic-inspired imagination, Sega pictures "satanic rituals, bloody sacrifices, savage orgies in the moonlight, all culminating with us, depersonalized disciples abandoning ourselves in the Master's arms", whereas "the facilitator invokes devilish forces from the centre of a pentagram with candles in the five corners" (79). In his religious quest, Sega is thus trapped between two conflicting desires; the desire for space for personal growth and the desire to surrender to the familiar norms of his previous religious existence. In Kristeva's words: "To worry or to smile, such is the choice when we are assailed by the

strange: our decision depends on how familiar we are with our own ghosts" (1991, 91).

To Hindus Osho is a convivial, parental figure, revered as a God, while "Westerners drop by Osho on their way from Goa to Varanassi, Darjeeling or Nepal, for a spiritual cure" and both become "as glad as children […] we are all Osho's children" (Sega 2011, 67). Sega further meditates on Mother India who equally embraces her progenies, regardless of where they come from and what their quest is. This Eastern perception of the world of the ashram as a topographical fosterer of togetherness and harmony, generosity of spirit and body has its counterpart in the Westerners' scepticism; their lucid, demystifying gaze ruthlessly tears the attractive, mystical veil covering the world of the ashram and exposes it for the commercial enterprise that it truly is. Tarika, the German, warns Sega that "everybody is cooked here eventually" (76), David, the Dutchman, impassively assesses the ashram as a world of "escapism, dissimulation, cheap niceties" and those who fall under its spell as "know-it-alls in their crypto-fascist ego trip", as programmed founders of an industry, a sect, a profit-oriented ruthless capitalist corporation (127–128). In the name of profit, the ashram has converted into "Osholand", a self-contained country within a country, permanently accessible to all who after retirement are willing to sell everything they possess and settle down as CG-s (contributing guests). Significantly, such a CG is for Sega a geographical and cultural ghost, a sixty year old Romanian surgeon, who after having met Eliade in the USA who introduced him to Krishnamurti's teachings, decided to convert all his earthly possessions into an ashram room worth a hundred thousand euros. From the newly named Dhyan Basera, Sega learns that far from being "an asylum", Osho's ashram is actually "a kindergarten for adults" where the inhabitants can "take the first step after having crawled for a lifetime" (176). In Kristeva's formulation, the fellow Romanian whom Sega encounters in the ashram and who might signpost an outline for his own path is the archetypal "foreigner", who is "free of ties with his own people", "available", "freed of everything", who "has nothing" and "is nothing", but is "ready for the absolute, if an absolute could choose him" (1991, 12).

Eliade's "ghost" most significantly intrudes on Sega's narrative in the chapter titled "Myth of the Eternal Return," which is also the famous title of one of the books that consecrated the Romanian comparatist of religions as a scholar. Sega's symbolic appropriation of his eminent predecessor's title (and concept) renders his recapitulation of the diverse experiences which the ashram/Osho as India had provided for three months. As one of the final chapters, it yet again underlines the ambiguity of the encounter with India, with its various archaic and historical aspects. On the one hand, although the narrator/author strongly rejects this eventuality, there is a sense of the imminent threat of being re-swallowed up by the world of the ashram (all who visited it once developed an all-consuming craving); on the other hand, he calmly renounces the comforts of the almost-Westernized world of the ashram, suspecting it of diluting "the real India": "I look around and all I see is inflated egos, hidden behind *sannyas* names and well-camouflaged by the large simplicity of large, white or red robes" (Sega 2011, 252). Such final doubts are reinforced by Osho's former driver turned personal mentor, and explained as originating in Sega's true condition, that

of a "Christian monk" (252), who in spite of his willingness to look into the Other remains fundamentally unable and/or unwilling to leave behind his past religious ties and through them, his whole identity. At the end of his stay in the ashram the author himself admits to not having been able to re-fashion himself as a Buddha, or a Zorba or even as a sannyasin; at the same time, although the weight and the value of his past may avert absolute freedom, the existential fetters once fully acknowledged cannot prevent new spiritual flights, encounters and ways of being. The next stop is Himalaya (271), a destination inspired by a Japanese woman, an unlikely mentor in more ways than one.

Similarly to Eliade's Indian experience, Sega's stay in the ashram, apart from its political and religious aspects also includes his love/sex-life. Nevertheless, in spite of many flirtatious moments, with many (and only) Asiatic women bearing delicate flowers' names, and which confess to an undisputable fetishism of preference, the encounters are mostly anecdotal, irrelevant in their repetitiveness. The narrator/author's imagination sarcastically dissects his erotic preferences and objectifies the Asian woman in cinematic/anime terms, imagining her as a "robot-woman", which can become anything to any willing partner. Yoko is the only notable exception and also the Japanese version in India of Sega's former love interest in Romania. The two women mirror each other in their sceptical appraisal of Sega's erotic enthusiasm, which he mistakenly takes for love. Moreover, Yoko is also Eliade's Maitreyi and Jenny in one, albeit with a reversed signification. While Eliade confesses to having failed to integrate into historical and transcendental India through Maitreyi and Jenny respectively, Sega's Yoko challenges him to expand the limits of his transformation by attending the much more demanding Vipassana meditation course and travelling to Himalaya. Yoko becomes unavailable as a sex partner after only one night of carnal bliss; however, she is the inspiration behind Sega's decision to extend his exploration of the mind, spirit and body by traveling to Nepal and eventually returning once again to India.

Sega's *Namaste* demonstrates that in the new millennium the Romanian literary interest in India is showing no signs of abating, and is moreover reinforced by the deeply personal aspects of the encounter. Eminescu's India "of the mind and spirit" opened a powerful vein of inspiration in Romanian literature and marked the birth of a national tradition with universal undertones. Eliade's India, rendered in its mosaic-structure, became one "of the mind, body and spirit", a country whose detailed representations added impressive new layers to this tradition and became a powerful catalyst for a lifetime's work. Sega's spiritual travelogue continues Eliade's encounter, depicting an India which is both the 21st century avatar of his illustrious predecessors' depictions, and of the universal cultural influences residing in the restless consciousness of the postmodern man.

NOTES

[1] I am referring to Eliade's eight or ten pro-Legionary articles, his close association with Nae Ionescu – a Legionary supporter (Ricketts 1988, 882), and the incriminating testimonies of his close friends Eugene Ionesco who considered him "very guilty" (Calinescu 2010, 106–107) and Mihail Sebastian who reproached him for his "catastrophic form of naiveté" in sympathizing with the Romanian right-wing (Sebastian 2000, 14).

[2] This and all the following quotations from Eliade are my own translations from Romanian.

[3] I was of course inspired by Derrida and his concept of "hauntology", when I coined this conceptual sibling to "ontological rebellion". I consider "hauntological rebellion" to represent the move towards freedom from the spectres of the past, an act of disobedience intended to support the forging of a new identity.

[4] For a very interesting and recent portrayal of Osho and his followers, see the 2018 Netflix documentary series Wild Wild Country. In his review for the Guardian, Sam Wollaston succinctly enumerates the various ways Osho is perceived: "The great guru, spiritual teacher and mystic. Or the dangerous cult leader, master criminal and terrorist, depending on which side you were on. Or maybe simply a hippy with a long, wispy beard, a collection of dodgy outfits and a penchant for Rolls-Royces". Sam Wollaston, "Netflix's take on the cult that threatened American life", Guardian, April 11, 2018 (https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/apr/11/wild-wild-country-review-netflixs-take-on-the-cult-that-threatened-american-life).

[5] This and all of the following quotations from Sega are my translations from Romanian.

[6] By "cultural texts" I mean mostly films and literary works; philosophical references are also there, but their proper analysis would exceed the limits of the present study.

[7] As the author explains on the back cover of his novel, Namaste is composed of two words in Sanskrit, "nama" and "te", translated as "I bow to you." Nama means "that which does not belong to me" and it represents giving up your own ego in favour of the other's. Actually, this is a false etymology. Namas means "obeisance" or "bow". It is derived from the Sanskrit root "nam" which means "to bow".

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Mihai Eminescu. Mircea Eliade. Hauntological/ontological rebellion. Octavian Sega. Post-modernism. East/West.

India has occupied a prominent place in the Romanian literary and cultural landscape since the 19th century and it continues to do so in ours. The claim of an almost-tradition of representations of India in Romanian literature can be easily sustained via a perusal of the works of Mihai Eminescu (the national poet) and Mircea Eliade (the famous comparatist of religions). India enabled the former to surpass a certain anxiety of influence, at both ontological and aesthetic levels and came to constitute a cultural *axis mundi* for the latter, a powerful catalyst for a lifetime work. This article will focus on Octavian Segarceanu's (Sega) spiritual travelogue, *Namaste: A Novel of Spiritual Adventures in India* (the first in a trilogy) and argue that in the Romanian contemporary literary landscape he is one of the most prominent continuators of writings either alluding to or focusing on India. His spiritual travelogue depicts a country perceived by the post-modern consciousness of the contemporary man, acknowledged as a network of multiple (and often antagonistic) cultural influences, but also a country echoing his predecessors' works. An act of ontological rebellion inspired Sega, the copywriter turned writer to question basic, internal modes of existing and to focus not only on being but being-able-to-be. In so doing, the present article argues that the author/foreigner/wanderer both turns the readership into witnesses to the candid autobiography of his feelings, as well as surveys the makings of a cosmopolitan identity, situated at the crossroads between West and East, film and literature, philosophy and faith.

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Travels among "backward heathens": J. I. Bajza's "The Adventures and Experiences of the Young Man René" as a frontier orientalist fantasy

DOBROTA PUCHEROVÁ

René mládeńca príhodi a skúsenosti (The adventures and experiences of the young man René; henceforth only *René*), first published in 1783–1785 in Pressburg, Upper Hungary (today's Bratislava), is often considered to be the first novel in the Slovak language (Marčok 1968, 9). It is preeminent on a regional level as well, preceding both its Hungarian and Czech counterparts: in these languages, only adaptations (loose translations) of French novels had been published before, but no original novel (Brtáňová 2016, 98). Written by Jozef Ignác Bajza (1755–1836), a Catholic priest, satirist and Slovak nationalist, it constructs an image of Middle Eastern Islamic cultures to express Enlightenment social critique as well as nationalist sentiment. In this sense, the novel is part of a genre and shows influences by a number of both Enlightenment and classic texts. Bajza, who had studied at Vienna's Pazmaneum and besides Slovak and Hungarian read in Latin, German and French, was a cosmopolitan intellectual who was familiar with the European genres and discourses of his time. René can be read as an amalgam of several genres: the Enlightenment novel of education, a heroic romance, a satirical novel, a gallant novel and an orientalist fantasy, with picaresque, sentimental and didactic elements (compare Brtáňová 2009, 571–581). While in many ways an original story, its ideological, narrative and imaginational inspirations can be traced to Enlightenment and classic novels such as Francois Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (1699), Ignác Meszáros's *Kartigám* (1772), Achilles Tatius' *τὰ κατὰ Λευκίππην καὶ Κλειτοφῶντα* (The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon, 2nd century AD), Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), or William Darell's *A Gentleman Instructed in the Conduct of a Virtuous and Happy Life* (1732), which Bajza read in Hungarian translation (Brtáňová 2016). In this sense, it is simultaneously cosmopolitan and local, unique in being both "peripheral" and "classic".

Bajza's novel was written to both entertain and educate, with very particular ideological intentions. Published at a time when Slovak national identity was emerging through the literary and educational work of Slovak nationalist intelligentsia, it was written to promote the idea of the Slovak people as a modern European nation rooted in Christian values and in step with Enlightenment modernity. Bajza, as is well known, was an ardent promoter of the Enlightenment reforms of the Habsburg Emperor Joseph II. He was deeply concerned about the cultural and political margin-

alization of the Slovaks in Hungary and in particular by the widespread illiteracy, lack of learning and the resulting absence of national consciousness among the Slovaks. As he laments in Part II of *René* through the mouth of a character: "[T]his folk has never had books in the right sense of the word. […] Whatever caused it, it means that we are now fumbling in deep darkness if we want to know anything about the origins of this tribe or when it came to this territory and whether it came as a winner" (Bajza 1970, 222).[1] To write his novel, Bajza was the first to codify the Slovak language (even though this version was rejected by his successors). To portray the Slovaks as a modern European nation, he used an imagination typical of his time: an orientalist fantasy. As will be analyzed, Bajza's images of the Muslim cultures of Syria and Egypt are used to fashion a Slovak modernity, confirming the Slovak people's Christian, European and Slavic identity at a time when it was politically just starting to come into being as a nation, seeing itself as distinct from the Hungarians, the Czechs and the Jews.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN ORIENTALISM

As critics have noted, Bajza's representation of Syria and Egypt (both then part of the Ottoman Empire) did not have any presumptions of authenticity and was simply following a popular convention of the time, designed to excite the readers' imagination and enhance the entertainment value of a text (Mráz 1948, 106). Writers who did not have a direct experience of the Orient, and also those who did, copied orientalist tropes from each other (see Said 1978; Kabbani 1986; Staud 1999), as is the case also with Bajza. Yet, as Edward Said (1978) was the first to point out, the ideological meaning of these exotic elements is undeniable. It came out of a historical European perception of the Middle East as a civilizational threat and at the same time Europe's most significant cultural contestant. Starting from the medieval crusades to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims, through the expansion of the Ottoman Empire to Europe, the Orient would occupy in the European imagination "one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other" (1). As Said has famously argued, the establishment of the academic field of Orientalism in the 17th century, in combination with European colonial interests in the Orient, led to the proliferation of a discourse that was engaged in epistemologically, culturally and politically dominating the Orient by producing knowledge about it – knowledge that is considered superior to what the Orientals produce about themselves. A crucial function of Orientalism is the construction of European identity in juxtaposition to the Oriental Other. The presumed irrationality, backwardness and primitiveness of the Oriental cultures was set against the European cultural identity to confirm the latter as superior: "The Orient is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different', thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said 1978, 40). In addition, the Orient is static (208), passive (97, 105, 311), barbaric (150, 175) and degenerate (172, 286), meaning that Europe is dynamic, active, cultured, well-bred, and so on.

Europe, for Edward Said, is Western Europe and especially Britain and France, which had colonial interests in the Middle East. Central and Eastern Europe, on the other hand, had a specific relationship to the Muslim Orient that was mainly shaped by its experience of being along the frontier between East and West and by the series

of Ottoman invasions to these lands starting from the 13th century. At the Battle of Kosovo of 1389, the Ottoman Empire was poised to conquer the entirety of the Balkans. In 1526 at the Battle of Mohács, the Ottomans gained control over one third of the Hungarian Kingdom including Budapest. In 1683, the Ottoman army was defeated by the united forces of the Habsburg Monarchy, the Holy Roman Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the Battle of Vienna, which is often perceived as the decisive battle that ended the 300-year-long threat of the Ottoman Empire and saved Christian Europe from Muslim domination.

The Austrian anthropologist André Gingrich has coined the term "frontier orientalism" to describe the perception of the Orient by nations that did not have contact with Muslim cultures through colonizing them, but were themselves threatened by and sometimes the colonial subjects of the Ottoman Empire. In this sense, the Orient for Central and Eastern European nations was never a remote and abstract Other, but familiar and very real. According to Gingrich, the Habsburg narrative of Muslim Orientals has a dual register, differentiating between the "Bad Orientals", who represent the threat of the Ottoman Empire, and the "Good Oriental", the defeated Turk who becomes a Bosnian colonial subject and eventually a loyal ally against new enemies. This narrative helped to consolidate the identity of the Habsburg Empire as a major European power (Gingrich 1998, 110; Gingrich 2015, 63). The Slovak-American scholar Charles Sabatos has followed upon Gingrich's work in his analysis of the representation of Ottoman Turks in Central European literatures and folk genres from the 16th century to present. As he emphasizes, "In East Central Europe, in contrast to the expansive Western empires, the image of the Turk was not a discursive justification for imperialism or colonialism but a means of preserving cultural identity" (2014, 15). As he has argued, the historical menace posed by the Turkish Other paradoxically

> served to strengthen individual national identities, which eventually led to the fall of the very empire this image had been intended to unify […] However, the Turks portrayed in historical songs, captivity narratives, and other genres often did not reflect a factual representation of the conflict between these two cultures, but served as a means for "self-fashioning" in which Czechs, Slovaks, and Hungarians could assert Christian, European, and later national identities (32, 81).

As I will analyze below, all of these characteristics, and others, can be found in Bajza's self-fashioning of a Slovak modernity in *René*. In casting his protagonist René as a Venetian rather than a Slovak young man, Bajza wanted to associate the Slovak people with Western Europe (and especially with the ancient European civilizations such as the Greek and Roman, as is evident from his casual references to Greek and Roman myths, gods and goddesses) and differentiate them from the Hungarian people under whose political and cultural domination they lived. Ottoman Turkey, on the contrary, becomes the common enemy of the Europeans, its civilizational anti-thesis (see also Istvánová 2016, 115). However, as will be shown, not all Turks are necessarily "Bad Muslims" (Gingrich 1998; 2015) – some of them can become allies in the nationalist narrative. Finally, I will analyze the narrative and ideological function of the representation of Ancient Egypt, the only truly "remote" culture in the novel.

THE PLOT OF *RENÉ*

The novel is divided into two parts: Part I narrates René's adventures in the Orient; Part II tells of René's experiences in Austria and Upper Hungary. This analysis will focus solely on Part I. The narrator's frequent didactic monologues suggest Bajza uses the narrator as a device to express his own opinions, as is typical for an 18th-century satirical novel or novel of education; therefore, I will treat the narrator and the author as the same person.[2]

Part I includes many side plots, hidden histories and chance encounters and some details will of necessity be left out. René, a young Venetian, leaves home with his teacher Van Stiphout in search of his lost sister, Fatima. Their boat arrives in the Lebanese port of Tripoli di Soria, which is controlled by a pasha under the rule of the Ottoman sultan. The pasha's daughter Fatima recognizes René as her long-lost twin brother. His plan to take Fatima with him to Venice is thwarted by the bandit Aboris, who kidnaps her. René and Van Stiphout leave Tripoli, are shipwrecked and separated. René's lifeboat takes him to Egypt, where he is enslaved and bought by a Cairo merchant, an Arab of Coptic Christian faith, who grants him liberty. A Cairo mufti employs René to teach his son and daughter Hadixa. She falls in love with René and writes him a love letter, but he believes this is nothing more than a treacherous plot to convert him. He is influenced in this belief by the devious family doctor (who has been rejected by Hadixa and jealously observes her feelings for René). He writes to Hadixa that he does not share her feelings and asks to be released from service. Soon after, he is poisoned, but his life is saved. He believes he was poisoned by Hadixa, while she is distressed to learn that René's life is under threat and begs her father to release him from service.

René realizes he had been misled by the jealous doctor and falls in love with Hadixa. Before the two are able to elope, the mufti has them imprisoned, as he cannot accept a non-Muslim for a son-in-law. Like René before him, the mufti falls under the influence of the unscrupulous doctor and his hired dervish who performs "miracles" to prove that Allah wishes both René and Hadixa dead. When facing a public execution, Hadixa proves her innocence by exposing all those "miracles" as fake. The mufti recognizes he has been manipulated and consents to the marriage of Hadixa and René under the condition that René convert to Islam. René refuses and leaves for Venice, where he and Hadixa are reunited, but he tells her he cannot marry her (yet), since he first needs to learn about the world and choose his profession freely.

The second parallel storyline concerns René's and Fatima's history as abducted babies taken at birth from their Christian mother by Ottoman pirates. Her captor gives away her babies and wants to marry her, but she refuses. The pirate (now a qadi) sends her back to Europe. René, then named Ibrahim, and his sister Fatima grow up in Tripoli di Soria as the children of a rich mullah who later becomes a pasha. From childhood the siblings are drawn to Europeans. As a boy Ibrahim runs away from home, reaching Venice under the protection of Don Varlet, a Venetian merchant, who adopts him and calls him René. In the end all are reunited in Venice: René; Fatima, who manages to escape from Tripoli with the help of Van Stiphout; Don Varlet, who turns out to be their birth father; the nanny from the house of the

Cairo Coptic merchant, who turns out to be their birth mother; and Hadixa. Fatima wants to marry Van Stiphout, who had saved her life, but that is not possible as he is a Catholic priest.

ORIENTALIST PLOT MOTIFS IN *RENÉ*

The story of René's adventures in the Orient features a typical repertoire of Orientalist motifs present in European Orientalist narratives at least since the 15th century (see Sabatos 2014; 2015; 2018). These include Christian children abducted by the Turks who later rediscover their Christianity; the battle with pirates or bandits; captivity, the pressure to convert and the struggle to preserve one's cultural identity; the harem rescue; as well as stock characters such as the Oriental despot, the sadistic Muslim soldier, the janissary helper and the Oriental princess who falls in love with the Christian hero. Below, I will analyze some of these, mapping also the sources of Bajza's imagery.

The harem rescue

The motif of "harem rescue" – European men rescuing a European, Greek or Oriental woman from an Oriental harem – is widespread in 18th- and 19th-century European literature and arts (see DelPlato 91–95). The representation of a harem as a prison serves to portray Muslims as violent tyrants incapable of true love and European men as romantic lovers. Its best-known representations are in W. A. Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (1782), based on a libretto by Christoph Friedrich Bretzner, or in Lord Byron's epic poems *The Giaour* (1813) and *The Corsair* (1814), upon which Verdi's opera *Il Corsaro* (1848) and Saint-Georges' ballet libretto *Le Corsaire* (1856) are based. Bajza took this motif from the novel *Kartigám* by the Hungarian author Ignác Mészáros, published in Pressburg in 1772 and extremely popular at the time (see Brtáňová 2016). The novel is in itself an adaptation of the German heroic novel *Der unvergleichlich schönen Türkin wundersame Lebens- und Liebesgeschichte* (1723) by Menard, which in turn was an adaptation of a French novel (see Staud 1999; Bednárová 2015, 40). It tells of the destiny of Kartigám, the virtuous daughter of a Turkish pasha. Her story begins in Hungary, when Buda is recaptured from the Turks. She is captured as war booty by a French lieutenant and taken to Paris, where she is baptized as Krisztina and becomes a Christian. Prince Sándor asks for her hand; after overcoming many obstacles in their journey, they finally get married. It then turns out that Kartigám/Krisztina is not really Turkish, but the daughter of a Hungarian nobleman who had fallen in battle for Buda. This confirms that only a European Christian woman can be virtuous, while the Ottomans are immoral barbarians.

According to André Gingrich, frontier orientalism differs from colonial Western orientalism in its gendered tropes. As he argues, the Oriental of frontier orientalism is

> an almost exclusively male person. […] Frontier orientalism is a tale of male confrontations and alliances; the only women playing any role in it are "our" women, who are threatened by the Bad Muslim and have to be protected by our men. […] It has no repertoire of standard European, male erotic fantasies about Muslim women (1998, 120).

This is evident in Mészáros as well as in Bajza, where the only two female Oriental characters – Fatima and Hadixa – are "our women": both dislike their own culture, are intensely drawn to René and Van Stiphout and desperate to run away to Europe; one of them is later revealed to be a European-born woman. Fatima, surviving shipwreck, is devastated to have to return to her father's harem, where her destiny is an arranged marriage. She is "eager to free herself from this Mohammedan prison […] when René learned this, he firmly decided he would help her, whatever effort this would require" (Bajza 1970, 108). Eventually, Fatima is rescued by Van Stiphout while René is in Egypt. Hadixa takes her destiny into her own hands and escapes her father's house without waiting for René's rescue because she wanted, as she explains to René, "become yours with my own doing, so that you suffer no risk" (164). This female independence is a deviation from the harem rescue motif and serves to underline Hadixa's agency (see also Istvánová 2016, 118). Arguably, however, Hadixa finds the motivation to escape only after she falls in love with René; he is therefore instrumental in her liberation. Fatima's and Hadixa's escape from the harem thus serves to emphasize the backwardness and violence of Muslim men and the heroism and gallantry of European men who know how to treat women.

The double identity transformation

The motif of double identity transformation, in which a Turkish person converts to Christianity to find out he or she was born a Christian, Bajza also borrowed from Mészáros. It was also very popular in orientalist literature and a similar example can be found in the Slovak epic poem *Turčín Poničan* (The Turk of Poniky, 1863) by the Romantic author Samo Chalupka. It reflects the actual reality of Ottoman Turks capturing young Christian boys for janissaries, who were then sent to occupy the European lands they came from. In Bajza it is primarily a narrative device to preserve and celebrate the Christian identity of the Slovak people at a time when the memory of the Turkish invasions was still alive. It confirms René's and Fatima's Christian identity as heroic and virtuous and the Muslim culture of their rearing as barbaric. Bajza gives many advance signs that Fatima and René (Ibrahim) were born Christians: both are from childhood instinctively drawn to Christians and dislike the Oriental culture; both are highly intelligent, brave and virtuous; both express romantic love.

The abduction by pirates and the saving of a maiden from execution

The abduction by Ottoman or Barbary pirates (corsairs) is another orientalist trope typical of 17th and 18th century European adventure narratives, present, for example, in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Ebenezer* (1675), a British narrative by William Okeley of his forced service on an Algerian pirate ship, or *The Algerine Captive* (1797), a fictitious memoir by American author Royall Tyler. Bajza most likely took this motif from the Ancient Greek romance *The Adventures of Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius, a 2nd-century Greek author from Alexandria (Števček 1989, 96–97). It involves two young lovers, Clitophon and Leucippe from Tyre, who elope together on a ship, are shipwrecked and captured by the Nile delta pirates. If in Tatius the Egyptian pirates are barbaric because they are not Greek, a difference

marked by their shaven heads (Tatius Book II, Episode 7), in Bajza they also have shaven heads (95) but it is their Islamic faith that makes them evil. In addition, Bajza evidently borrowed from Tatius the episode with a raging boar (Book II, Episode 34) that appears in Hadixa's dream (74–75), the description of the hippopotamus (Book IV, Episode 2), the crocodile (Book IV, Episode 19) and the Egyptian irrigation of the fields (Book IV, Episode 14) that all appear in Chapter 2 of *René*. He may have been inspired also by the mock public sacrifice of Leucippe in Book IV, Episode 2 that bears similarities to the thwarted execution of Hadixa (126–137). The key images of this motif are an innocent, beautiful maiden, "our woman" (Gingrich), to be killed by cruel barbarians in a public, extrajudiciary execution for religious or ideological purposes. The maiden is saved by "civilized" men who trick the barbarians, thus demonstrating their moral and cultural superiority.

Hadixa is imprisoned by her own father, who is under the influence of the dervish's "miracles". She starts to hate her own religion that condemns her to die (89). Through her loyal janissary, René sends Hadixa messages in which he "instructed him and the maiden about what needed to be prepared and how to proceed" (134). Thanks to Rene's scientific knowledge of herbs, potions and chemical substances, Hadixa exposes the dervish's "miracles" as fake: she smears her hands with rose mallow and submerges her hands into burning lead harmlessly; she smears her soles with tallow and walks on hot iron without pain; she creates a "burning" inscription on a blackboard using white phosphorus, and so on. René thus saves Hadixa's life without physically being there: "René was filled with great happiness to learn that it was he, with his ingeniousness and sharp wit, who had saved Hadixa and himself from the death prepared for them by villains" (148).

THE REPRESENTATION OF ISLAM AND MUSLIMS IN *RENÉ*

Islam and Muslims in the novel are a central trope that serves to define Europeans as culturally, morally and intellectually superior to the Orientals. Through a confidential narrative voice that assumes the Slovak reader shares his opinions, the narrator draws a sharp distinction between the Christians and the Muslims that confirm the superiority of the Christian culture (including the novel's Slovak readers). The stereotypical representation of the Muslims can be divided into four groups for a close analysis:

- Muslims are described as heathens or infidels. Their religion is a collection of superstitious and blasphemous ideas, while Christianity is the only legitimate religion that teaches virtue. Islam is also a violent religion.
- Muslims are described as backward, uncultured barbarians who have no conception of culture, justice, romantic love or good governance.
- Muslims are deeply immoral: false, devious, treacherous and cruel. They engage in sinful sexuality such as polygamy, homosexuality and sodomy.
- Not all Muslims are Bad Muslims; there are also some Good Muslims.

Islam in *René*

Muslims are described as infidels from the very beginning. Don Varlet tries to dissuade René from travelling among the "backward heathens" ("zaostalí pohania", 15). Muhammad is described as a treacherous, stupid bandit (18), "the greatest criminal" (55) and a "mad criminal […] only a completely blind person could believe in his fables" (139). Islam is described as a "godless" (141) and dogmatic religion: "nobody can ever argue with anyone about the smallest segment of their faith, nor examine its veracity, but all must believe everything with humble obedience, which is the greatest blindness" (140). Here, Bajza is a typical rationalist humanist. He describes Islam as a collection of superstitions and false myths and mocks the Muslims who believe that dreams are divine revelations: "[M]ad followers of a madder leader! Undoubtedly they swallowed the deception of the creator and originator of their faith, as Muhammad made up many magical stories […] Can one wonder that this nation believes in such trickery when such superstitions are imbibed even by respected and learned people?" (76) The narrator offers his own theory of dreams: dreams reflects the dreamer's character, especially if they occur repeatedly.

Islam is described as a violent religion. "If anyone tried to question anything, he would be running the risk of torture" (141). Muslims convert people to Islam against their will (43, 47) and forcefully circumcise anyone who dares to criticize their religion or their prophet (48). In Cairo, René witnesses a conversion ceremony and is terrified the same might happen to him. The person undergoing conversion is described as a "victim" that is forcefully circumcised (42) and the entire ceremony as a deep humiliation: "When the circumciser finished, he started shouting that the honouree is a Mamluk, which in Arabic means a bought or a forcefully captured person" (43). The Muslims have "mouldy brains" because they spread their religion by violence (43). Anyone who abandons Islam is tortured and killed. René reveals to Hadixa he is the lost boy to whom she had been engaged at birth; therefore, he is a Muslim and Hadixa did not commit a sin by loving him. Hadixa suspects René would be executed for revealing he gave up Islam in favour of Christianity and keeps René's true identity a secret from her father (88–89).

Ramadan is seen as a senseless ritual, since it forbids day-time eating and drinking during the hottest season of the year; Bajza recommends avoiding this irrational self-torture by sleeping during the day and staying awake at night (45). Muslims praying in a mosque are described as mad: "they beat their breasts and hips, shout as loud as possible, gesticulate wildly and nod their heads like Jews. Some of them lose their senses, others foam at mouth, turn pale, and half-dead fall down, hoarsely reiterating the word 'hou', meaning god" (46). The perceived madness of Islam is evident here, while the comparison with Jews emphasizes the otherness of Muslims and the strangeness and even perversity of their religion.

The narrator describes in detail the institution of Muslim priesthood and monkhood. He spares no good word for the monks (dervishes), whom he describes as madmen, gypsies, robbers and bandits (123–124). He derides the practice of ritualistic masochism among the dervishes as "deranged" (125) and the superstitions that inspire it: "When they drink a drink called mašlok, they lose all sense and the faithful

believe they are visited by the holy spirit and see all divine secrets. My own feeling was that they had gone mad. […] They stab and cut themselves and even stuff a burning beam into their wounds" (125). To mock the "saint" dervishes even more, Bajza writes that "they look as if they had escaped from hell" (124).

On the contrary, Christianity is represented as the only true, legitimate religion. Christians are the only people who offer compassion and help René in his quest: the janissaries, Fatima (his twin sister, therefore a Christian by birth), his birth mother, who saves him after he is poisoned (without knowing his identity), Don Varlet, who takes him to Venice as a boy, and the Cairo merchant of Coptic faith, who rules his house with wisdom and tolerance:

> As soon as René stepped into the Arab's house and saw its decorations and splendour, he immediately saw that his saviour did not belong among those who idle with Iros […]. His grazing fields were full of cattle and his palace boasted a variety of riches. And since he was refined by the wiser and more tolerant religion, he possessed rationality, moderation and tolerance. This was clearly visible also in his house, where the greatest order presided. It was however not the result of the servants' fear, but their devotion (37).

The wiser and more tolerant religion is of course Christianity: the Cairo merchant is a wise, rational and tolerant master because he is a Christian and as a result his house flourishes.

Muslim cultures in *René*

Bajza's opinion of Muslim cultures is very low indeed. The only enlightened Muslims are those who abhor their own culture and want to become Christians, like Hadixa, who "was resentful that her compatriots still rotted in stupidity and savagery" (17). Muslims do not have the notion of individual liberty. They abduct and enslave people, their marriages are arranged and women are the property of the husbands. In an Egyptian market, "they sold all arrested foreigners who refused to convert to Muhammad's faith, just like we sell cattle". They are cruel slave-owners who "believe they have right not only to the products of their slave's labour, but also the slave's life" (33). Undoubtedly, Bajza had this information from the widespread Ottoman captivity narratives by European writers (see Snader 1998; Sabatos 2015).

Muslims have "no operas or theatres" and their forms of entertainment are described as primitive, such as a street festival with performers, dancing camels, equestrian acrobats, and so on. "The reason why there are no merrier or wittier amusements is the inborn stupidity of the people, who are not only incapable of anything better, but hostile to anything cleverer" (100).

Muslim rulers are invariably corrupt and devious. The Tripoli pasha takes the fruits of the people's labour "as soon as they create it", resulting in the people's neglect of their fields and everything going to ruin, since "everyone knows that by accumulating property he is making a rod for one's own back and prefers to be idle" (106). The pasha is killed by the sultan, who fears any potential rivals. The sultan also routinely kills his sons-in-law so that he can get hold of their property (104).

On the contrary, European culture is superior in all respects. The Coptic Christian merchant of Cairo asks René that he teach his son "your language, morals and

manners, educate him, according to your best conscience, in the customs of the more cultured world" (37). Subsequently, a Cairo mufti employs René to teach his children in order to "lift them from the unbearable stupidity of their ancestors" (41). As a young boy, René runs away from his Tripoli family, because something "irresistibly" drew him to Don Varlet: "I therefore asked him to take me with him, because I wanted him to be my father, and not the beglerbeg" (87). The point here is not that René is instinctively drawn to his biological father, but that he is drawn by the European culture, just like his sister Fatima and his lover Hadixa: "and in this way I reached a much more rational and honest world" (92). The rationality of the European culture is emphasized throughout, juxtaposing it to the superstitious Muslim culture. Thanks to his scientific knowledge, René saves Hadixa's life by giving her detailed instructions on how to perform the dervish's "miracles" and later uses his medical knowledge to cure Hadixa's wounded leg while the others helplessly look on (147).

Muslim morality and sexuality in *René*

Muslims are described as false, treacherous and devious. In his letter to Hadixa, René writes of "your damned heathen race […] your devious, false and treacherous ways, that even savages living without any laws have always condemned as loathsome" and claims that "you have made these devious, I repeat, false and treacherous ways your own to the extent that you consider them not only permitted but unavoidable […] we will never be able to trust any of you, because everyone lies, male or female, young or old" (55).

Bajza's most damning criticism of Muslim morality, however, comes half-way through Part I. Here, the author dares to attack the holy scripture of the Muslims – the Quran: "What else could this nation carry in its heart and on its tongue but embraces, given that they believe in eternal embracing. They imagine their celebration in the other world as a continuous banquet with food, drink and many beautiful women" (69). The narrator goes on to cite Surahs 46, 48, 54, 62 and 65 and comments:

> What sort of paradise is this! […] First-degree saints will enjoy seventy women […]. And this teaching causes that the Mohammedans consider their eulenmech [polygamy] not only permitted and honest, but also unavoidable. […] If the husband develops a dislike to a wife, he can let her go, drive away and divorce. This trick was probably made up by Muhammad to cover up his own dishonesty when he kidnapped the wife of his servant Zeiden and closed her in his own harem (70).

Bajza's condemnation of Islam's hedonistic imagination and polygamy is nothing unexpected from a Catholic priest. However, he also expresses his Enlightened modernity by embracing the romantic idea of love: "A marriage is not instituted for property or even dusty portraits of the ancestors, but for what is created by faithful and devoted love" (72). Unlike Muslims, European men are capable of romantic love: René writes to Hadixa he would rather accept death than a forced marriage, since "love is based on freedom" (53–54). This romantic idea of marriage, presented as European, is ranked as superior to the arranged marriage, polygamy and female submission of the Muslims.

Muslim men, in contrast to Europeans, are described as violent, cruel and even sadistic, incapable of true love. The mufti orders the execution of his own daughter without a hearing. Similarly, the doctor and his helpers have no qualms about preparing Hadixa's death only because she is in love with another man. After their treachery is exposed, the mufti has the dervish and a servant brutally tortured: "Every day they brought them out on the main square and pinched them with hot pincers, but not fatally, so they could torture them as long as possible. After long suffering, when they were almost dead, they cut off their heads and hanged them on minarets. Their bodies were cut into pieces and also hanged along main streets" (152). These images emphasize the barbarity of the Orient.

The epitome of despotic Oriental masculinity is the sultan Mehmed the Conqueror, whose legend is recounted by Hadixa on p. 79. To affirm and consolidate his power, he publicly and with his own hand executed his favourite concubine, a Greek maiden named Irene. The legend has passed down through a number of orientalist writers including the English George Peele (1589), Richard Knolles (1603) and the Hungarian Kelemen Mikes (1794) (see Sabatos 2014). Like *One Thousand and One Nights*, it emphasizes the perversity of Oriental men who treat women as disposable objects.

In addition to polygamy, Muslim men also engage in sodomy with the janissaries:

> Pashas in the entire empire received the sultan's orders to rob every Christian citizen of his third or fourth son in childhood years. These, or those captured in war or kidnapped in foreign countries, were all brought to Stambul. There the sultan chose the most beautiful ones for his servants and also for committing sodomy (159).

Sodomy is another typical trope of orientalist writing. On the one hand, it reflects the reality of a rich tradition of same-sex sexuality in the Ottoman Empire that had passed on from Ancient Greek and pre-Muslim Turkish and Balkan cultures and is well-documented in European travelogues (see Drucker 2012). On the other, its function is to portray the Orientals as sexually depraved, as is the case here.

The Good Muslim in *René*

André Gingrich's analysis of the Habsburg narrative of Muslim Orientals as having a dual register can also be recognized in Bajza's narrative. In contrast to the corrupt, violent, and cruel Muslims, the narrative also includes one Good Muslim: the qadi (a Tripoli judge). Originally one of the pirates who captured René's and Fatima's parents, he showed compassion and instead of killing both prisoners sought to smuggle them to safety. Unable to carry the wounded Don Varlet, he at least raised his chances of survival: "I carried him out of the cave so that he was not found and killed by the others. I hid him in a better place, quickly anointed and bandaged his wound. I also slid some precious gems into his clothes, for him to live on if he survived and managed to get out of there" (117). The qadi then took the young woman with him to Jerusalem as his booty. There, she gave birth to twins, whom he gave away for adoption, hoping she would forget about them and the other man. "I repeatedly asked her to become my wife. But since she continuously resisted, I could not and did not want to force her to love me" (118). By not raping the young woman, and later setting her

free, the qadi demonstrates an extraordinary civilized behaviour that separates him from the other, Bad Muslims. His good character is confirmed in the closing speech of the mother of René and Fatima, who, seeing her adult children for the first time since their birth, unexpectedly grants the qadi forgiveness:

> Good man […] your only sin is that you were helping your mates when they captured us […]. What followed later I do not keep against you, rather, I thank you from all my heart, since I know none of the others would have treated me like you. It is true that you kidnapped me as your booty, but when you saw that I was unwilling to submit to you, you did not try to satisfy your desire by force, which among your kind is unheard of and so even more extraordinary (166).

According to Gingrich, the trope of the Good Muslim shows that the Muslim can be an ally. The question is, whose ally is a Muslim man who captured a pregnant Christian woman, tricked her into walking away from her wounded husband and after she gave birth to twins took her newborns from her by force? The answer is that he is the ally of Christian men, because he protected "their" woman from violation by Muslims. This shows, as Gingrich suggests, that the Central European orientalist narrative is a "tale of male confrontation and alliance" (1998, 120). In this narrative, women figure only as objects of contestation between men and symbols of male honour, glory or degradation of their manhood. This is confirmed by the fact that René's mother, as opposed to his father, remains nameless in the story. Her only role in the story is to give birth to René and later save him from poisoning, symbolically giving birth to him again (62) and enabling him to fulfil the destiny of his name, which means re-born. Clearly, this is a story of male quest, in which the main heroes are René, Van Stiphout and Don Varlet, while women are for the most part in passive positions of objects of desire, war booty or awaiting rescue. However, this is not a story of romantic quest. Contrary to expectations, there is no marriage at the end: René refuses to marry Hadixa and Van Stiphout refuses to marry Fatima; instead, they embark upon a new adventure together.

This unexpected ending suggests that Bajza's central concern in the novel is not the heterosexual romance but the homo-social nationalist self-fashioning. René and his teacher Van Stiphout are drawn to each other through asexual, selfless love, which stands in contrast to Oriental sodomy. This idealized affection between men is expressed verbally and through unspoken innuendo. When they face death in a sea storm, René calls Van Stiphout "my beloved friend…Van Stiphout understood what he wanted to say, that he was more worried about his than own life" (30). He responds: "Don't torture yourself, you have rewarded me for my love. But you will reward me even more if you […] completely give yourself into my protection" (31). Van Stiphout then carries "the half-dead René on his shoulders from the flames like Anchises had been carried by his son from burning Troy" (31). The references to total trust, self-sacrifice and the classical hero Aeneas suggests Bajza was thinking about the Aristotelian *philia*, or asexual love between lifelong friends, parents and children, fellow-voyagers and fellow-soldiers, etc., as the purest form of love. At the end of the story, Van Stiphout confirms "I have done everything out of true love and not for a reward" (167). It could even be argued that René hesitates to marry Hadixa

because his love for Van Stiphout is much stronger and mutual. When René selflessly encourages Van Stiphout to abandon priesthood and marry Fatima, "Van Stiphout said nothing and only gave René an affecting look" ("rozcítene pozrel na Reného", 167), suggesting that their unspoken love is stronger than any affection they might feel for women.

The observations above all reinforce the now widely accepted notion that nationalism, and especially anti-colonial nationalism, is always figured as an enterprise of male solidarity among brothers, fathers, and sons (see Boehmer 2005). While the men represent the nation, as the questing heroes, historical players, and agents of change, the woman, or rather her body, is only a sign of the state of the nation. This confirms that patriarchal gender hierarchy is essential for imagining the nation, which is figured as a traditional family in which the sexes are intrinsically different and unequal. This inherent sexism of nationalism does not merely reflect transhistoric patriarchal attitudes; as Elleke Boehmer has pointed out, nationalism ideologically depends on gender structures, legitimating itself through recourse to traditional organic social and cultural forms (31, 22). If Fatima's and Hadixa's subjection to unpredictable Oriental men symbolize the Slovak nation's subjection to Hungary, then their role in the story is to be liberated by René, who in this way proves his heroic European masculinity and his belonging to the nation, which is figured as a community of men (which is emphasized even more in Part II, where no speaking Slovak female characters appear). This is clearly expressed through the figure of Hadixa, who, as I show below, becomes reduced to her body that stands as a metaphor for male ideas of a nation's racial purity.

RACIAL IMAGINATION IN *RENÉ*

While the novel does not focus on racial descriptions, race becomes crucial in the moment when Hadixa is brought to her execution. Even though Hadixa is by all accounts an Egyptian Muslim, the narrator takes pains to show that her features have none of the Oriental colour or shape, but possess evident European characteristics. The narrator makes clear assumptions about race: Oriental features are ugly ("excessively wide and round", resembling "soot and charcoal"), while European features are beautiful. It is her European beauty – her whiteness – that make Hadixa "amiable" and stirs the crowd to believe in her innocence:

> She bore no resemblance to other Mohammedan women. Her body was not as wide as it was tall, and neither was her face excessively wide and round, even though she ate local dishes. Her complexion did not have the yellow or sallow colour, and even though the Egyptian climate had darkened her, there was nothing in her face resembling the colour of soot or charcoal. Everyone was delighted by her brightness and loveliness, a rare, exceptional amiability that had never before been seen. Her wrinkle-free forehead shone more brightly than fresh snow and its whiteness could shatter darkness like a growing moon. […] Her cheeks were flowering gardens, comparable to Venus's roses and Diana's lilies […] The nape of her neck needed no gems, being whiter than milk (126–127).

Hadixa's European features synchronize with her hatred of Islam and her desire to escape to Europe. She becomes less Egyptian and more "like" a European woman,

"our woman" (Gingrich) worthy to be saved and adored. Her white femininity, compared to Roman goddesses, is the prize for René's heroic deed of saving her life in a way that Oriental femininity could never be, since Oriental women are marked by the stereotypical characteristics associated with their race: sexual voluptuousness and deviance, seductive but treacherous eroticism linked to the darker elements, passivity, stupidity, lack of personality, and so on, belonging to the Orientalist repertoire of Arab and Turkish femininity from the 17th century onwards (see Kabbani 1986). This is important, because Hadixa can be eligible to become René's wife and the mother of his European children only if she is described as white. At the end of the narrative, René confirms Hadixa's superior Europeanness by comparing her with Ancient Greek and Roman goddesses: "Oh, Hadixa, you are all Juno, Diana, Venus, Palas Athena!" (165) As Istvánová also confirms, Hadixa, despite her independent arrival in Venice, "does not represent modern female emancipation; on the contrary, she embodies tradition, more specifically, Christian tradition: the Virgin Mary is the originator of the body of the soul […] the woman is in this sense the symbol of the body, the material principle" (120). Hadixa's virginal figure (she is called a "virgin" throughout the narrative) could not be farther from the Oriental sensual femininity as imagined by French painters such as Eugène Delacroix, Jean-Léon Gérôme, and Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.

CONCLUSION: THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION IN *RENÉ*

Bajza's detailed descriptions of the Ancient Egyptian civilization in the novel prove that not all distant cultures were perceived as inferior to Christian Europe. The Ancient Egyptian civilization, which is remote enough not to be perceived as a threat to Europe, is described highly positively. The narrator follows René in his touristic explorations of the "miraculous" (37) city of Memphis, the water tank built by "pharaoh Meris" (39) and the "Palace of the Twelve Pharaohs" (probably the Great Temple of Ptah, 39), and takes keen historical, archaeological and scientific interest in aspects of the Ancient Egyptian culture such as mummification, the irrigation system, the Memphis necropolis, and so on (37–40). The narrator shows no abhorrence for alien practices such as mummification. The Ancient Egyptian civilization is portrayed as by far superior to the contemporary Muslim Egypt, and is admired and emulated:

> This city was once very famous […] but time almost completely destroyed it. Even so parts of it resisted destruction […]. Underneath Memphis lies another city, like we have crypts under churches. If someone wants to see it, they will lower him on a rope through a narrow opening; inside one can see the vaulting built with beautiful white stone, many pillars […] Near Memphis is a water tank built by the Pharaoh Meris and the locals still benefit from it. […] We must therefore highly estimate the intellect, ingeniousness and wisdom of the Ancient Egyptians (38–39).

By making this value-judgment, the narrator confirms himself as someone who is in a position to make such a statement precisely because he is a modern, educated European knowledgeable about the past who takes a scientific interest in Memphis. His protagonist and alter-ego René is a Western traveller to the East, an archaeologist and a historian, that is, a true orientalist scholar who, as Edward Said writes, is

authorized to describe and make statements about the Orient because the Orient is unable to represent itself (21). His orientalism is however less "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1978, 3) and more a discourse intended to construct and preserve one's own cultural identity. Through René's touristic peregrinations among the ruins of the Ancient Egypt and the knowledgeable narrative voice that assumes the Slovak reader takes interest in these sights and appreciates them in the same way, Bajza confirms the Slovak people's identity as a modern Western nation firmly belonging to Christian enlightened Europe. In Part II, Bajza goes on to describe the Slovak nation as distinctively separate from the Hungarians, the Czechs and the Jews. In this way, the novel simultaneously seeks to consolidate Slovak identity as European and to strengthen its identification as a national community – albeit only a community of men.

NOTES

[1] All translations from Slovak are by the present author.

[2] In Part II, Bajza expresses his opinions through the character of the Guide (Sprievodca) who joins René and Van Stiphout in Upper Hungary.

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Travels among "backward heathens": J. I. Bajza's "The Adventures and Experiences of the Young Man René" as a frontier orientalist fantasy

Jozef Ignác Bajza. André Gingrich. Frontier orientalism. The novel of education. Slovak nationalism. Slovak Enlightenment.

This article analyzes the Slovak novel *René mládenca príhody a skúsenosti* (1783–1785) by Jozef Ignác Bajza as a frontier orientalist fantasy. Unlike in Western European orientalist texts, where images of alien Muslim cultures served as a justification for imperialism, here they are used to fashion a Slovak modernity, confirming the Slovak people's Christian, European and Slavic identity at a time when it was politically just starting to come into being as a nation. It is further argued that the novel departs from the typical Western orientalist fantasy, figured as a heterosexual heroic romance, towards the narrative of homo-social nationalist self-fashioning.

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Questioning China: (Mis)understanding strategies in László Krasznahorkai's "Destruction and Sorrow Beneath the Heavens"

ÁGNES BALAJTHY

In his often-cited essay on travel writing, Tzvetan Todorov attempts to define the genre in terms of its thematic concerns: "The 'true' travel narrative, from the point of view of the contemporary reader, recounts the discovery of others, either the savages of faraway lands, or the representatives of non-European civilisations – Arab, Hindu, Chinese, and so on. A journey in France would not result in a 'travel narrative'" (1995, 68). It is enough to refer to W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, a brilliant re-invention of the British home tour narrative (coincidentally, the book was published in the same year as the English translation of Todorov's text) to – at least partially – refute the literary theorist's statement. Yet, it can truly be observed that the most significant pieces of 20th-century and contemporary travel writing are usually set outside of the Euro-Atlantic area; one could mention here Robert Byron's Afghanistan, Bruce Chatwin's Patagonia, V. S. Naipaul's India or Christoph Ransmayr's Tibet. This is an international literary trend whose influence has curiously left Hungarian literature unaffected; the last five decades have produced travel narratives that focus exclusively on Central and Eastern Europe. While this is easily explainable in the case of Hungarian authors (like Miklós Mészöly or Péter Esterházy) who published their works in the communist era, it is more surprising that the travel texts written by the younger generation of novelists (for example Noémi Kiss or János Háy) also concentrate on this region. Actually, the only contemporary exception is provided by the oeuvre of László Krasznahorkai, whose writings have been permanently concerned with the issues of the narratability of travel and the literary representation of radical cultural otherness since the beginning of the 1990s. His books attempt to map an almost incomprehensibly heterogeneous cultural landscape which is usually referred to as – with an obviously simplifying metaphor – "the East."

Although India and Japan often appear as the setting of his short stories and novels, Krasznahorkai's deepest interest seems to lie in China. He published his first Chinese travelogue, *Urgai fogoly* (The Prisoner of Urga) in 1992, which was followed in 1999 by a short, although exciting reportage entitled *Csak a csillagos ég* (Only the Sky with the Stars) that has only been published in a literary journal so far. His third book set in China – the main target of my paper – came out first in 2004 with the title *Rombolás és bánat az Ég alatt* (*Destruction and Sorrow Beneath the Heavens: Reportage*, English trans. 2016; it will be referred to below as *Destruction and Sorrow*).

Although these writings differ in many respects, they share certain common features: they all portray a traveller who admires the ancient Chinese culture, they are interwoven with references to Dante's *Divina Commedia*, and – most importantly – they ignore the political and social reality of China in favour of pondering aesthetic and philosophical questions.

Thus, while the undecidability between the factual and the fictional status of travel narratives is crucial in the Anglophone context of the genre (Holland and Huggan 2000, 7) and it is bound up with the problem of "its place in the literary hierarchy" (Duda 2005, 69), Krasznahorkai's works refuse to have a documentary quality, and – through their highly rhetorized, eloquent use of language – call attention to their literariness. For instance, the first-person narrator of *The Prisoner of Urga* is attracted by the perfection, timelessness and transcendental nature of Chinese culture – therefore, instead of analysing the state of affairs in the country of the late 1980s, he focuses only on its thousands-year-old cultural values. In comparison, Paul Theroux's *Riding the Iron Rooster* (1987), which is also set in China, explores the after-effects of the Cultural Revolution via interpreting external phenomena. The miniature details of everyday life scrutinized by his travelogue are outside of Krasznahorkai's scope of interest. However – precisely because the traveller considers these features as inherent, previously given properties, not as qualities that emerge in the dialogue between the own and the alien – he can only bear witness to his exclusion from the Chinese perception of the world. The more painful the unreachability of the experience is, the more valuable it seems – this self-generating process is described by the narrator as "melancholy", and it can also be connected to the repetitive structure of the text.

As the title reveals, melancholy is displaced by a more bitter sense of despair in *Destruction and Sorrow*, which explores the endangerment of ancient Chinese traditions. As the book has two different text versions, the first issue in analyzing it is deciding which one to focus on. The 2004 edition is written in the first person and the protagonist-narrator is referred to as Mr László. The identical first name of the author of the protagonist and the narration's quasi-autobiographical mode still links the book to the generic norms of travelogue outlined by Jan Borm ("any narrative characterized by a non-fiction dominant that relates [almost always] in the first person a journey or the journeys that the reader supposes to have taken place in reality while assuming, or presupposing that author, narrator and principal character are but one or identical"; 2004, 17). The novel's excellent English translation by Ottilie Mulzet is based on the second Hungarian edition from 2016, in which the narrative voice switches to third person singular, thus the text distances itself much more from any kind of autobiographical readability and presents itself simply as a piece of travel writing in the broader sense (Borm 2004, 14). In this case the protagonist is called László Stein, bearing a family name that does not reveal anything about his origins: one can say that it signifies merely his Central-Europeanness. He remains the central focalizer of the narrative; what is more, his discourse permeates that of the narrator owing to his use of free indirect and indirect style, but the changes carried out by Krasznahorkai emphasize the fictional dimensions of his figure. Due to the fact

that this is the more recent edition and also owing to its availability in translation, this article will concentrate on the second version, but I will also touch upon the differences between the Hungarian variants (and their English counterpart) when necessary.

(POST)MODERNIST ANXIETIES AND THE RHETORIC OF MOURNING

As opposed to *The Prisoner of Urga*, where the traveller is concerned with "unnameable", "*verydeep*" questions (Krasznahorkai 2004, 36–37), *Destruction and Sorrow* clearly outlines the goal of the protagonist's endeavour from the beginning. He is on a quest for the "detritus of Chinese classical culture" (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 15), searching for traces of the ancient Chinese worldview in the post-Maoist "New China" that has created a bizarre, although obviously successful version of capitalism. The quest for the ancient China is not governed simply by intellectual curiosity or a thirst for adventure; already in the first chapter Stein takes a trip to a sacred Buddhist mountain called Jiuhuashan. Portraying him as someone who he tries to learn more about the Buddha, Confucius and Taoism, pondering on the possibilities of a "new metaphysics" that is not "built on any kind of dichotomy" (215), the novel figurates his ambitious project as a pilgrimage. The pilgrimage motif, the intertwining images of inner and outer travel ("he […] sees clearly that he *is on the right path*, that he had to come here, exactly here, on these muddy roads and these life-threatening serpentine bends"; 15) and the recurring topos of the quest all evoke the spiritual allegories of journey, which can be found both in the Christian and the Eastern philosophical traditions (although the world-views encoded in these variations are far from homogenous.) The allegorical dimensions of Stein's journey are also enhanced by the allusions to *Divina Commedia*: the modern Chinese metropolis is depicted like the Inferno ("Not only on 5 May 2002 is Nanjing hopeless; Nanjing is *always* hopeless, because there is nothing, really nothing that is more hopeless than Nanjing […] just hell and hell and grime everywhere"; 54–55), while the relationship of the traveller and his interpreter – who accompanies him everywhere – allude to that of Dante and Virgil.

At the same time, Krasznahorkai's novel moves farther the conventions of travel writing in the sense that it deconstructs the archetypical tripartite pattern of setting out, seeking adventures and returning home with the aim of "reintegration into society" (Fussel 1982, 208). Instead, the novel can be divided into three travel narratives that mutually interpret each other. The first one is the story of the above mentioned trip to the Jiuhuashan, which follows the transition from the grey and crowded modern China to the sacred place of devotion. The relation of the two worlds can be described as a form of simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, and the mountain adventure becomes the *mise en abyme* of the whole Chinese adventure. The first chapters are followed by the story of Stein's disappointing "great journey" to the South, whose experiences are reflected upon in the subchapters "Conversation on the Ruins". In this part of the book, movement is replaced by stasis and storytelling is interchanged by dialogues; the discussions with the members of the Chinese cultural

elite are all centred on the notion of crisis. However, Stein and his companion set out again, and their time spent in Suzhou culminates in an epiphany-like moment, which has been foreshadowed by the story of the Jiuhuashan trip. Disrupting the linearity of the narrative, the novel closes with a chapter in which a previously untold episode of the trip to Jiuhuashan transforms into an allegory that sheds new light on the whole journey. The additional potential meaning that stems from the arrangement of the chapters and subchapters, along with the titles that markedly play upon the topoi of travel writing ("Two Pilgrims", "The Great Journey", "The First Steps", "The Spirit of China"), presume a subsequent interpretative horizon that completes the present tense narration.

The lack of the travel narrative's traditional elements not only undermines a reading of Stein's journey as a teleological process of self-realization, but also contributes to the effacement of his origins. Although we learn that he is Hungarian, we do not know where exactly László Stein comes from and where he returns to – his occupation, dwelling place, age and family status remain unveiled throughout the novel. The few times when the protagonist directly reflects on himself in the dialogues, he simply calls himself an aficionado of Chinese classical culture; with his personal background being put into brackets, his portrayal focuses only on the complex relationship that ties him to China. Consequently, *Destruction and Sorrow* does not employ comparison – the typical structuring principle of travelogues – in the customary way. In other words, the novel does not contrast the thinking patterns, customs and reflexes embedded in the traveller's own culture with the new, alien and subversive impressions gained in the foreign country. Instead, it juxtaposes what Stein knows, anticipates and remembers about China with his freshly gained experiences, highlighting the fact that his return to the new China of the 2000s puts his curious identity construction at risk. During his encounters with Chinese artists and intellectuals, Stein repeatedly raises the question whether there is any guarantee of the continuation of the tradition that is so essential for his self-understanding. Although the analysis of the local intelligentsia is usually optimistic, the traveller's own reactions waver between absolute desperation and some fragile hope. Whereas the vivacity of the ancient belief system is taken as a fact in *The Prisoner of Urga* (among others, it is embodied in the marvellous Huadan theatre performance witnessed by the protagonist), and the traveller mourns for himself because of his exclusion from the non-tangible, spiritual world of China, in *Destruction and Sorrow* the object of grief becomes the rapidly decaying tradition itself. Hence the intensity of the hyperbolic language of crisis and loss dominating the narrative. The episodes of the journey taken in South China are all structured by the contrast between the previous expectations and the disappointing reality:

> At one time, according to the descriptions, the accounts and the drawings, the temples here were magnificent […] as Stein and the interpreter draw closer, however, once again they are confronted with the infinite damage done by the system of reconstruction in New China, the monstrosity of crudely vulgar taste […] more and more they fall into a kind of enraged despair which then is transformed into the deepest repugnance (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 69).

As the passage shows, "destruction" is conceived in the book not only as the demolition of a monument; it is understood as the transformation of buildings and landscapes with the purpose of serving the demands of the tourism industry, and as an attitude that is unfaithful to the original aura of the objects to be restored. The Disneyland-like plastic playground surrounding the Jinshan monastery, the monks who ask payment for everything, the fake marble and golden decorations of the distastefully renovated temples become symbolic of this new wave of reconstruction as they only offer a simulacrum of the past: "they are not viewing Jiangtian, but, rather that they have been dropped into a safari park where nothing is real" (69). As a consequence, the travellers feel uneasy even when they find something that is still "real" and unharmed, like the 1500-year-old Grove of Stone Tablets: "we weep for the fact that it is here, we weep for its defencelessness, its endangeredness" (72). Krasznahorkai's rhetoric of mourning can be reminiscent of a classic of 20th-century travel writing: similarly to Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropique*, it presents the distinction of tradition as an irreparable and irreversible, therefore unambigously tragical event. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of old and new, original and fake, depth and surface, greed and ethic, "a traveller such as him" (13) and the ordinary tourist suggest a worldwiew that is – as opposed to the traveller's vision of a "new metaphysics" – governed by binary oppositions. Krasznahorkai's approach refers back to a certain understanding of cultural encounters that dominated the interpretation of otherness in the first half of the 20th century. His novel evokes the modernist anxieties that has associated the mixing of distinct cultural formations with a sense of distortion, threat and loss. We can find traces of this view in almost every travelogue of literary modernism. In Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936) the isolated villages of the West African wilderness are considered more attractive than the coastal towns which have already been transformed by the arrival of Westerners; in Auden's and MacNeice's *Letters to Iceland* (1937) the travellers prefer the Icelandic villagers to townspeople, because they have not been influenced by foreign fashion yet; D. H. Lawrence's idealizes the island in *Sea and Sardinia* (1921), because it is outside the circuit of history, thus it never changes. Similarly, according to the novel's argumentation, the Euro-Atlantic influence can only have disastrous effects on China. Krasznahorkai's prose depicts the spread of globalized New-Chinese culture – epitomized by the image of the shopping mall – as a tangible process that fills the traveller with physical disgust:

> and horrifying as well is the spirit of the so-called new China: as one of its most characteristic signs – in the form of the world's most dispiriting glittering department stores – stands here on the main street, disgorging the most aggressively nauseating Chinese pop music, it relentlessly attacks from the loudspeakers, and as if every single street and corner in the city has been shot up, really, as if every single nook has been amplified with this sticky, infectious, loathsome phonic monstrosity (55).

The hyperbolic use of the tropes of illness, contamination and corruption indicate a perception of cultural hybridity that can be found strongly simplifying. Both English and Hungarian reviewers of the book have remarked that "the complaint of rampant commercialism is familiar, if not trite" (Kerschen 2016), the representation

of contemporary China seems too homogenous (Bazsányi 2004, 21), and its criticism takes the form of a one-sided monologue (Szirák 1998, 74). However, the close reading of the novel can also reveal how the seemingly fixed codes of cultural otherness are subverted by the textual manoeuvres that do not necessarily mirror the narrator's – and the protagonist's – intentions.

CULTURAL OTHERNESS AND AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

The title of the first chapter ("Introduction into an Obscurity") simultaneously refers to the actual environment of the journey's starting point (a gloomy, crammed bus station in a foggy Nanjing) and metaphorically to the difficulties awaiting the traveller. "Indescribable", "unforeseeable", "unpredictable" – the adjectives proliferating in the account of the uncomfortable bus trip suggest that the protagonist enters into a landscape that is culturally alien to him. Similarly to *The Prisoner of Urga*, it is the local public transport, something by its essence systematic and regular, but still incomprehensible to the European observer that signifies China's irremediable foreignness. Of course, the slow, crammed and unpunctual bus is a familiar, cliché-like element of the literary and visual representation of non-Western destinations, but the text does not aim for a humorous or self-ridiculing effect. Instead, it calls attention to the uncanniness of Stein's situation:

> because surely, says Stein to his sleepy companion, still shivering in the cold, both of them, the two white Europeans, cannot understand anything of this at all, they cannot even understand how a bus route like this operates: how could this woman know that she had to wait here, and how could the bus driver know that this woman would be waiting exactly here, in this bend in the road, and at exactly this time, let's say, at around eight o'clock, because you can't speak about schedules at all, that's how it is (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 5).

As Bernhard Waldenfels explains in his phenomenologically oriented work, one has "little control [over] the pull that emanates from the alien in general and especially from an alien culture" (Waldenfels 2011, 40). This first episode of the novel stages this experience, highlighting the fact that the subject who encounters the alien is exposed to a power that he cannot fully control; just like the confused European passengers on the old bus, who lose their normal sense of orientation, he "is not his own master" anymore (75). The first chapter also introduces another trope of China's obscurity, which later on returns in the text several times. The following, strongly self-reflexive passage focuses on a woman who gets on the bus in her soaked clothes:

> in vain does he look at that face, as much as he can see from his seat at the back, a completely interchangeable face, almost the complete average of a face… he is incapable of distinguishing it from the others, because it is not possible, because it is exactly the same as thousands and thousands and millions and millions of other faces in this inconceivable mass which is China, and where can this "China" be other than in this immeasurable and inexpressible mass of people unparalleled in world history, this is what […] renders it so frighteningly massive, so frighteningly unknowable (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 6).

The projection of the presupposed characteristic features of the local culture on one figure, the synechdochic substitution of one person for the whole people, is

another conventional strategy of travel writing. However, in this case the reading of the face transforms into the experience of its unreadability; the rhetoric manoeuvres of defacement juxtapose Western individuality and Eastern collective non-identity, alluding to the central dichotomy of Orientalism. Avoiding the mere reproduction of another cliché, the passage constructs the conflict between the East and the West in such a way that it also reveals one of the paradoxical assumptions underlying the dichotomy: the protagonist feels that the Chinese are "frighteningly" different precisely because he cannot apply the usual signifiers of distinction to them. It should be also mentioned that the representation of the Asians as a homogenous mass marks only the beginning of a hermeneutical process in Krasznahorkai's text: in the end the same, "completely interchangeable face" is given an individual voice that utters one of the key sentences of the novel.

Whereas the China of the introduction is represented as inscrutably obscure, in the following chapters it is split into two, parallelly existing but radically different worlds – an ancient, atemporal, and a modernized one – and as a result the experience of China's "frighteningly unknowable" nature seems more restricted and calculable. Playing upon the denotative semantic layer of "obscurity", the "grimy and hopeless fog" (2) metaphorizes the polluted and technicized modern country, where the remnants of the ancient traditions are preserved only in the form of kitsch and simulacra. As we have seen it above, the traveller's constant mental and bodily unwellness can be read as a reaction to the modernization that is signified by the metaphors of illness and infernal darkness. What is striking about this criticism is that it always attacks the originally "Euro-American" phenomena. Thus the otherness of "New China" is domesticated from a perspective that constructs Asian metropolises as places that gather together and condense the shortcomings of Western civilization. Whereas the story of the bus trip has illustrated the eventfulness and incalculability of the encounter with the alien due to its circumstances being both familiar (as Waldenfels puts, "the alien begins in ourselves and not outside ourselves"; 2011, 74) and still radically different, in the following chapters the place of the alien is fixed. Its recognition does not lead to the re-evaluation of previous assumptions, only to their reproduction: "He has seen the cities, he has walked along the streets, and here is a world which unfortunately he knows all too well. The supermarkets, the mega shopping centres – […] the fever to buy" (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 142). It seems that the traveller is not interested in the ways that differentiate the modernization of China from that of the Euro-Atlantic world; he does not address the question whether there are any local strategies of the adaption of Western customs apart from imitation, exaggeration and overstatement. Although the above mentioned meta-reflexive passage stages the unreadability of the Chinese face (and therefore "China" in general), later on the traveller easily deciphers the countenance of the locals:

> Why? What's the difference? – they read this in the people's eyes: for it to be evening in the morning, or to see nothing, doesn't bother them – while in this partial withdrawal of the light it is nonetheless perfectly clear: not only is this unnatural fact incapable of throwing them off but also that nothing, but nothing, in this entire godforsaken world ever could;

the grimy, distrustful, morose and immovable faces convey this in their own communicative way, they are going about their business (66–67).

While in *The Prisoner of Urga* the smile and "sympathetic eyes" of Beijing pedestrians suggest an understanding that overcomes the linguistic barrier dividing them from the European traveller, in this case the look and the mimics (or their lack) of the locals denote unambiguous refusal. It is also worth noting that the criticism of the present always implies an idealistic view of the past – the economic and technological developments can be seen as the symptoms of decline when compared to the era of Chinese classical culture. In fact, the attitude of the traveller, who is always disappointed with the present state of affairs, appears as a strange form of nostalgia. In accordance with the word's etymological origins (nostalgia initially meant homesickness), his longing is both spatially and temporally coded – what constitutes the central paradox of the novel is that he feels attached to a place and a time he has never really belonged to. Stein himself is also conscious of the fact that the object of his desire is an era he has never ever experienced directly. He has only built up a vision of it based on "the descriptions, the accounts and the drawings" (69) for himself; still, he never questions the hierarchical relation between this imaginary past and the actual present. By giving voice to the insatiable longing for an idealized past and laying emphasis upon the aesthetic appeal of alterity, Krasznahorkai's novel situates itself in the Romantic tradition of travel writing. The construction of Stein's figure can remind us of the persona of the Romantic traveller seeking "situations which arouse strong feelings and sensations of sublimity or spiritual intensity" (Thompson 119). When he admires the "untouched" landscape of the Jiuhuashan, the depiction of the scenery refers to Chinese landscape painting ("as if they had strayed into the mirage of a painting by Huang Shen or Ying Yujian"; Krasznahorkai 2016b, 22) and the impression made by the sacred Buddha statue on him is expressed via the vocabulary of Romantic aesthetics, deploying the notion of the sublime: "it is beautiful, sublime, exactly the kind of Buddha in which a believer can truly find the Buddha" (24). The episode offers a conclusion that can be extended to the whole novel: the encounter with Chinese classical culture – synecdochically figured by calligraphy, garden art or kunqu theatre – always affects the traveller's subject as an aesthetic experience. One can argue that the novel's reflections on aesthetics do not enter into a dialogue only with the Romantic tradition but also (as the book does in other regards as well) with the discourse of literary modernism. The co-existence of two influences is not surprising, as modernist literary travel writing has inherited and re-invented several elements of the Romantic mythology of travel (Fehskens 2014, 309). Thus, *Destruction and Sorrow* re-interprets the modernist principle according to which wholeness can be recreated within the aesthetic sphere – but it does so by linking the possibility of fulfilment solely to Chinese culture, avoiding any kind to reference to Western art. In consonance with aesthetic modernism's counter-reaction to the crisis of modernity, the novel offers a "discursive construction of atemporal time, an eternal present" (Feshkens 2014, 304), but – generating an unresolved tension that permeates the whole text – also presents this essential beauty as endangered, transient and ephemeral. We need to add that the idea of an imperishable essence is

bound up with the issue of China's spiritual heritage, too. It is not by accident that the traveller's first, evidently aesthetic experience takes place in the shrine of a Buddhist monastery. Before he arrives there, Stein symbolically crumples his map, a device that contains scientific information on the area, "because it doesn't matter what direction they go in, it won't be them who will find Jiuhuashan, Stein calls back over his shoulder, but… but?" (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 21) The unuttered, only implied rest of the answer (something like "it is Jiuhuashan that will find them"), with its disruption of the hierarchy between subject and object, can expand the episode into an allegory on the hermeneutical model of understanding (suggesting that a piece of art – the statue of Buddha – addresses those, who are responsive to its call), but it also endows the sacred mountain with some kind of transcendental power. The novel is interwoven with reflections that merge religious and aesthetic ecstasy into each other; they can be perceived as Krasznahorkai's attempts to translate the "Eastern" world-view that does not separate beauty from morals into the language of Hungarian literature.

PILGRIM, DISCUSSION PARTNER, ANTI-TOURIST: BLINDSPOTS OF THE TRAVELLER'S SELF-FASHIONING STRATEGIES

The narrator outlines that the beauty of the Buddha is "unexpected" by the travellers, but the reason for their surprise is not that the statue is any way different from their former notions of Buddhist art – they find the object astonishing because, as opposed to the "new-made, exasperatingly soulless, primitive, shoddy" (24) pieces, it looks exactly how an authentic statue of Buddha should do. Thus, the text often emphasizes how difficult it is to find those rare and hidden paths that lead to the ancient China, but it never elaborates the fact that the access of the traveller to this world is hindered by his double (both temporal and cultural) separateness. The encounter with cultural alterity does not alter the travelling subject's self-perception; these occurrences rather affirm his self-image. Whenever Stein admires a piece of Chinese art, his epiphanic joy stems from the triumph that at last he has found something that "really" is what is should be; in other terms, something that is immediately recognizable for him, something that perfectly fits his horizon of expectations. We can come to the conclusion that the narrator's most important rhetorical goal is to convince us that the European outsider can relate to Chinese culture as if it was his own – the representation of "classical art" as atemporal and universal can be seen as a strategy that aims at the stabilization of this ambiguity. The passionate tone of the complaints of the otherwise expressly impersonal figure indicates what is at stake: the vanishing of old traditions would also entail the eradication of his carefully constructed self-image.

Stein's constant urge to stage himself as an expert, or – even more precisely – as someone who has been initiated into the secrets of ancient China, becomes especially striking in the interviews in which he almost self-parodistically repeats again and again the same rhetorical formulas which are intended to persuade his partners of his worthiness and the legitimacy of his quest. The interviews are built of unexpectedly lengthy questions and answers, some of them seeming more like a short essay than a piece of an actual conversation. Instead of creating an atmospheric effect or charac-

terizing a figure by their speech, they present discussion as a device of learning about China that is as equally important as gaining empirical knowledge. With placing as much emphasis on what is heard as on visual information (the latter one usually being associated with modern travel), Krasznahorkai's book evoke the pre-Enlightenment, renaissance ideal of "travel as discourse" (Adler 1989, 8). As Adler summarizes, "the art of travel" the young aristocrat of the 16th century "was urged to cultivate was in large measure one of discoursing with the living and the dead – learning foreign tongues, obtaining access to foreign courts, and conversing gracefully with eminent men, assimilating classical texts appropriate to particular sites, and, not least, speaking eloquently upon his return" (1989, 9). Curiously, the behaviour of László Stein, who expresses himself "gracefully" in the conversations with the "eminent" members of the Chinese intelligentsia can be described more accurately by the set of codes governing the 16th-17th century art of travel than (what would follow from the subtitle of the book) by the working methods of a 21st century journalist. The ceremonious gestures of the talk partners, the formal rigour of their utterances and the regulatedness of their communication mark a point of intersection between two distinct traditions: the sophisticated rules of Chinese politeness and the early modern European cult of discussion.

Whilst Stein's questions and explanations are incorporated in the narrative in the form of indirect speech sentences, the answers of the Chinese partner are always directly quoted in typographically separated paragraphs. The asymmetrical visual organization of the interviews might hint that instead of merging the discourse of the other into itself, the text allows it to be visible with its differences. However, these separate paragraphs are framed – and interpreted – by narratorial remarks hinting that it is the interviewees who are responsible for the failure of communication. As opposed to the encounters with the silent pieces of art, these appointments usually prove unsuccessful: they re-affirm in both partners a mutual feeling of alienness and that of not being understood. The reason for the lack of understanding can be illuminated by a reflection on a conversation that – as an exception – turns out to have a positive outcome. Stein is invited to the modest home of Yang Winghua, "the last mandarin", who at last shares his worries, and whose "every verbal communication […] is a pronouncement" (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 207). This implies that Stein considers the perfect dialogue a series of pronouncement-like utterances that affirm each other's presuppositions. It is not surprising that his inquiries are always concerned with the potential coincidence and not with the difference of opinions: "Stein asks if this impression coincides with Yao's" (77). These interviews can function as *mise en abymes*, since they mirror the ways in which the narrative voice regulates its dialogue with the implicit reader, who is expected to be empathetic and responsive to his pronouncement-like rhetoric. Still, the textual complexity of the novel surpasses the narrator's intentions, indicating the blind spots of the communicative and self-representational strategies epitomized by his double, the figure of the traveller. For instance, in the subchapter containing Stein's interview with Abbot Pinghui, there is a slight discrepancy between his words and his social behaviour. Although addressing his partner with the utmost respect, Stein soon "tries to interrupt" him, "raises

his voice" (141), getting more and more impatient, because the abbot cannot give him proper answers that are worthy of a spiritual leader. The tension culminates when the narration constructs the viewpoint of the accompanying monks, thus putting even more stress on the contrast between the empty, ceremonious formalism of the their religiousness and the subversive behaviour of the traveller, who is driven by an inner desire to learn the truth. "It is now patently obvious to everyone in the room that this European has transgressed every last rule of courtesy and is engaging in something everyone knows to be proscribed. He – the European – considers, however, that he should keep on and that he should disagree with what the abbot is saying" (145). The reading of the episode offered by the narrator is obvious: it is only the European who is passionate about the dilemmas of present-day Buddhism, while the abbot, who keeps talking on his cell phone even during their conversation, might repeat phrases about the unchanged "essence" of tradition but embodies its absolute decay. However, this reading can be undermined by the above quoted passage, which, with its change of perspective, demonstrates that the "European" does indeed appear in a different light from the horizon of the locals than as he perceives himself. Relating this passage with the narratorial remarks on Stein's manners, we can come to the conclusion that his situation is hopeless from the first, because he "interrupts" and "disagrees" – in other words, he cannot accept the Chinese rules of social interaction, lacking the necessary tact and consideration. Thus, the episodes of the protagonist's communicative failures can lead the reader to new insights, revealing how and why the ambitious project that aims at mapping the relationship between the ancient and the present-day China cannot become successful. As Edit Zsadányi argues: "Through the succession of not understanding the other the reader might still gain an experience that can bring them closer to the Eastern civilisation. […] What does not happen in the narrated stories does happen on the level of narrative discourse" (2007, 786).

The crucial reason for the constant potential of misunderstanding is simple: Stein does not speak Mandarin. Whenever he gets talking to someone, they either talk in English or he depends on the mediation of his interpreter, who remains nameless and barely any information is given about his background or his exact relation to Stein. He is introduced as a student from Shanghai, who joins the traveller "out of sheer benevolence and enthusiasm for this topic" (26). This would imply that he is Chinese, but earlier the narrator has referred to him and Stein as "the two white Europeans" (5), which leaves his nationality an open question; we cannot even be certain whether he communicates with Stein in English or in Hungarian. In the beginning of the novel he is portrayed as a down-to-earth person, whose "enthusiasm" for the topic is not stronger than his wish to be comfortable:

> the interpreter doesn't wish to destroy his companion's wonder at the sight of this transformation and with his own usual cast of mind soothes himself by noting that, well, nightmarish, […] these are circumstances, he adds soberly, which certainly call for some kind of raincoat and warm clothing […] But he notes this in vain, for Stein is thoroughly captivated by what he sees, which immediately disappears with the next step (20–21).

While the interpreter "soberly" thinks of "warm clothing" in the rain, Stein comes to the fore as an ascetic person, whose need for bodily comfort is overshadowed by

the captivating, mysterious beauty of the Jiuhuashan mountain. The narration does not simply contrast the two attitudes but emphasizes the superiority of the protagonist, since it constitutes a normative framework of interpretation in which spiritual and aesthetic ecstasy always gains ascendancy over practicalities. The traveller's willingness to suffer for higher goals is also among the motifs that connect his figure to the generic persona of the pilgrim. The seemingly hierarchical relationship of the traveller and his interpreter is reaffirmed by the narratological qualities of the text. Throughout the novel, Stein remains the internal focalizer: the events of the journey are conveyed from his perspective, thus we learn about the subjective impressions of the interpreter only in the rare occasions when his utterances are more or less literally quoted – like the former one about his longing for warm clothing. At certain points the narrative voice switches to third person plural, creating the effect that the two travelling companions share a common point of view: "[I]n the days to follow they do nothing but gape at the ultra-modern buildings of Pudong from the railing of River Huangpu, and they try to remain awake, to clutch at reality, and to forget, forget – to forget what they saw, to beat out of their heads the fact that they saw anything at all" (104). Actually, the dramatic gestures of disappointment and the use of repetition and hyperbole echo Stein's ways of self-expression in the interviews. Any difference of attitude is effaced in the narrative rhetoric that totalizes the experiences of the protagonist, extending them over his companion. Still, the protagonist's sense of superiority is dismantled by the fact that the interpreter does not merely translate; he gains an influence over the discussions with the Chinese intelligentsia that cannot be fully controlled by Stein. During the catastrophic interview with Yao "he asks the interpreter to once again, and continuously now, add an apology. And the interpreter says that he's been doing so constantly. Practically after every sentence" (84). These apologies are obviously missing from the previous passages. It turns out that what we have read so far is not identical with the actual dialogue that goes on in Mandarin: as a consequence, these dialogues have not two but three participants, and neither the Chinese nor the Hungarian one can take it for granted that his words reach the other with his original intended meaning. "Stein is sitting the closest, but Wu speaks so softly that he can hardly hear him, and the interpreter – who tries to wedge himself in closer between them – can also hardly hear him" (255–256). The interpreter, who "wedges" himself in between the interviewee and the interviewer metaphorizes Stein's linguistic and cultural separateness, pointing to the mediatedness of the traveller's experience of China. The interpreter's allegorical figurativity is even more salient in the original Hungarian versions of the text (both the 2004 and the 2016 one) which do not leave only his name and nationality unknown, but also his (or more properly, his or her) gender. Due to the lack of grammatical gender marking in Hungarian, the third person singular sentences do not reveal whether it is a man or a woman who accompanies Stein on his journey, self-consciously playing upon the ambiguity of his or her gender. On the one hand the interpreter is called a "partner", a "student" and even a "young man" (although written in two words the Hungarian expression "fiatal ember" rather means "young person", possibly including women as its referents, too). On the other hand, this young person is someone whom Yao "woos", and

talks to about shopping, and, what is more, after the final, epiphanic meeting with Master Ji Stein "embraces the shoulder" (Krasznahorkai 2016a, 244) of the mortally exhausted translator. For obvious reasons, Ottilie Mulzet's otherwise fascinating translation cannot maintain this ambiguity: the interpreter becomes a "he", and the original "embrace" is transformed into a "pat" in the English text: "Stein pats him on the shoulder" (265). The intimacy of the embrace creates a powerful image that casts a new light on the relationship of the two Europeans, re-evaluating the implications of the former motif of the interpreter's being "wedged in between". Stein's act (the first instance of any physical contact between him and his companion) can symbolize that he has finally accepted his limits, his dependence on the interpreter without whom he would not be able to carry out his quest. As opposed to this, the English text version's "pat" remains an insignificant, even patronizing gesture. The untranslatability of the Hungarian original's textual playfulness is in itself highly self-reflexive because it mirrors the plethora of translational problems and dilemmas that the traveller always tends to forget about.

Stein's conversations do not only depend on linguistic and cultural mediation, but also entail the use of technical media. In a discussion about what the Five Hundred Literary would do in the other world, ("Su Dongpo would do that, he'd use a washing machine"; 248), Master Ji raises an interesting question: "[A]nd you, he turns to the interpreter, why are you using a camera, why are you using this tape recorder around your neck, do you need it?" (249) Again, while Stein stands for the immediacy of the spoken word, it is his supplement, the translator, who carries his project's hidden technical apparatus. This passage lets us conclude that the dialogues that are put down in writing are not based on immaterial, inner memories but external documentation, thus evoking a typically Western concept of accuracy, objectivity and truthfulness. The use of the camera – in the Jiuhuashan chapter it is Stein himself who takes a photo with the proud Buddha carving master – is telling in another respect too, since it serves as the metonymic emblem of the tourist, a role that Stein deeply and passionately disdains. Both Stein's questions and the narratorial reflections are informed by those theoretical and literary discourses that – with their basic assumption originating from Romantic aesthetics (Urry 2002, 20) – construe the distinction between the traveller and the tourist on the basis of the autenthicity and inauthenticity of their experiences (Culler 1981, 131). However, as Sándor Bazsányi points out, the passages admiring the beauty of the narrow streets and moonlit canals are not unaffected by the clichés and rhetorical patterns of travel guides (Bazsányi 2004, 21). Similarly, the representation of tourist groups as homogenous, animalistic, uneducated hordes is expressly stereotypical: "[T]he tourists are cheerful, they are yelling and screaming and making a rush at whatever they can, descending upon the marvellous little houses, completely denuded now of last night's tranquillity" (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 101). As Jonathan Culler's famous essay exposes, the hatred towards other tourists is paradoxically integral to tourism, and this dislike is always manifest in the discourse of Krasznahorkai's traveller, who is not an ordinary tourist on a package holiday indeed. His enthusiasm and his knowledge of Chinese culture is far above the level of involvement mass tourism demands from its participants,

but at certain points the text reveals that the construction of an identity based on the difference from tourists is not without contradictions. The first chapters demonstrate that the superiority of the traveller lies in his ability to distinguish between the original and the fake, the untouched and the distorted. His utterances suggest that authenticity is always an immanent property of an object, a building, a piece of art, and it is easily recognizable to the educated eye. However, the story of the trip to Zhou-zhuang shows that whenever discriminating between appearances and real value, context is also a factor that has to be taken into consideration. One evening the travellers stumble upon the ancient town of dreamlike beauty by chance. Wandering along the tiny stone bridges they feel that "nothing has changed here" (98) since the Ming or Qing era. The magic is broken when the next morning the „first air-conditioned luxury bus" (101) arrives, and the quiet streets get crammed with noisy tourists. In Stein's reading, the moral of the story that operates with metaphors of light and darkness (evening dusk stands for the "marvellous dream" of returning to the past, while daylight signifies harsh reality) is that everything has been conquered by mass tourism. From the point of view delineated in Culler's study, we can draw attention to another aspect of the episode: the travellers have to leave Zhouzhuang quickly, if they want to maintain the self-image according to which they are radically different from tourists. Consequently, the title of the subchapter ("In the Captivity of Tourism") can be linked to the town whose peace is destroyed by the "barbarian attack" of the crowds: "Zhouzhuang is like a prison, it opens at eight in the morning and closes at six in the evening" (102), and to the situation of the two "non-tourists", who literally have to struggle through the flood of people swarming on to the streets. However, the tropes of imprisonment can also refer to the way the traveller is entrapped in the paradoxical, circular logic of anti-touristic discourse. Although his identity is centred on the idea of not being a tourist (in this sense it is not the Chinese but the tourists who constitute his other), he cannot rely on any external confirmation of this self-image; the source of distinction is only himself. In fact, we can see that Stein is enchanted by "the same narrow streets, the same narrow canals with the same black, slowly drifting boats, the same saltpetre walls and the same gateways and teahouses" (103) that attract every ordinary tourist to the watertowns of Jiangsu.

TRAVELLING AND TEXTUAL PERFORMANCES

Although movement and discussion belong closely together in the "travel style" (Adler 1989b, 1371) represented by the protagonist, as we have seen, we can also notice a certain split between Stein's behaviour as an interviewer and his attitude towards travel. The interpolations inserted in the dialogues mirror his insistence that a conversation should always follow the trajectory he has previously planned for it: "[T]hey need to try and bring him back to the concrete question"; "Stein senses that the conversation is beginning to meander away from a promising path, so as a way of trying to get back to the subject of the ways of transmission of tradition, he recalls Lai's words" (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 112). As opposed to the figurative paths of his conversations, the routes he takes in China are far from meticulously planned. He

relies on tips and advices given by his friends, on sudden premonitions and whims, without following a previously given list of destinations or a strict schedule. Thus, while his failure as an interviewer stems from the fact that he always tries to keep the production of meaning under control, his travel performance – serving as a "means of 'world-making'" (Goodman 1978) and of "self-fashioning" (Adler 1989b, 1368) – self-consciously offers multiple interpretative possibilities, which are enhanced by the narrative. On the one hand, Stein's physical movement between little towns, industrial metropolises and the countryside – often interrupted by short or even longer breaks – suggest that the pleasure of wandering arises from its incalculable and uncontrollable dynamics. The opening of the chapter entitled "In the Captivity of Tourism" describes the province of Jiangsu as a territory whose unique geographical features quickly make the foreigner lose his sense of orientation:

> If a foreigner sets off in this region, he immediately encounters these canals winding back and forth, and the tiny lakes turning up here and there, so it is no wonder if after the first few kilometres he loses his way and, after a short time, he has absolutely no idea where North and South are situated: he has no idea, which means that […] only quick perception can come to his aid; not to force any earlier-planned destinations […] but to be content with whatever happens to fall into his lap (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 96–97).

Krasznahorkai's meandering sentence delineates an ethos of travel characterized by spontaneity, improvisation and the eventness of the unplanned. On the other hand, Stein's travel practice also enacts the trope of being guided by destiny. For instance, the protagonist finally opts for heading to Shaoxing due to a sudden occurrence: "[N]othing, but nothing else came up which could have influenced his decision, only this sudden sunlight in front of the ticket counter" (122). As this episode demonstrates, the protagonist gets close to the concealed cultural riches of China, when led by intuitive and not rational decisions, but the text's system of motifs also lets these contingencies be interpreted as manifestations of a hidden, quasi-transcendental order. Playing upon the fact that China's ancient name means "All that is beneath the Heavens" (271), the tropes of sun, light and sky form a tropological chain in the novel that simultaneously convey the incalculable dynamics of the journey and suggest the potential existence of an invisible power governing it. This ambiguity is maintained in the last chapters in which Stein gives up his prejudices and heads towards the "very citadel of the Chinese tourist industry" (225), following his friend's mysterious advice: "Go to Suzhou, Tang Xiaodu says one day […] and he provides no explanation" (224–225). In accordance with the previous episodes that have ironically contrasted the traveller's expectations with the reality of his experiences, Stein is provided with the final evidence that proves that the "spirit of China" is still alive precisely here, in this world-famous tourist paradise. When he engages in a conversation with a local artist called Wu, the novel presents their discussion as the final goal of the whole journey. The scene of their encounter is the epitome of China's classical, harmonious beauty: they sit in a hidden teahouse in the Garden of the Master of Nets, an environment that pleases all the senses. While almost all of the previous discussions have taken place in noisy and crowded public venues, this time the narration outlines the "exceptional silence" (236) looming over the room. This motif does not

only evoke the modernist aesthetics' mythology of silence and obscurity (Lindskog 2017, 21), but – as Edit Zsadányi summarizes – also illuminates the role silence plays in another culture: "An indispensable condition of understanding Eastern culture is to be aware of the Eastern concept of emptiness and silence" (2007, 787). Actually, Wu does not promise that Westerners are capable of fully understanding the significance of emptiness: "The essence rests on the surface of emptiness. It leaves room for thought. […] There is no place in you where you could understand what emptiness is. And the essence of Chinese art is this emptiness" (Krasznahorkai 2016b, 258). The conversation differs from the former ones also in terms of Stein's behaviour, who does not protest against Wu's declaration, calmly accepting his position as an outsider. Nevertheless, the text manifests the effect of Wu's words in the form of the blank spaces unfilled by printed letters that seem to multiply on the last pages of the novel. However, this kind of emptiness is something that can be perceived only via the materiality of the visual medium. Actually, we can notice that the binary oppositions that have operated throughout the whole novel (surface – depth, material – immaterial, visible – invisible) are reiterated in the chapter in a way that subtly undermines their fixed structure and implied value system. When Stein distances himself from the Chinese philosophers who did not need words, he reflects on the shift that affects his self-perception: "[H]e could never imagine life without words […] Because in order to depict how the eternal emerges from a landscape, some kind of material is necessary" (257). Whilst previously the protagonist has stood for the invisible and the immaterial, arguing for a "new metaphysics" in which words cannot have "any role" (215), this time he articulates his dependence on the verbal and the material. At the end of the conversation he says goodbye to Wu in Hungarian, demonstrating that their communication has miraculously conquered the cultural and linguistic obstacles dividing them: "He leans over to Wu, and following a gay outburst, says right into his ear in Hungarian: He doesn't know how to explain how this is possible, but he has understood, and he understands, every single word" (264). The metaphysically loaded dramatization of Stein's experience is obvious, but, again, it is worth mentioning that the traveller does not communicate with Master Wu via silence – he speaks in his mother tongue, using repetition and litany, forming an utterance that reaches the Chinese ear as a kind of rhythmical and sound effect.

Following the script of Romantic travelogues, László Stein's quest culminates in an epiphanic moment, but Wu's sentences, which sound enigmatic, sometimes even banal, such as "The strength of the heart is boundless" (258), do not generate the same epiphanic intensity in the reader that they create in the fictional world. Thus the protagonist's revelatory experience is transformed through reading into a form of not-understanding; the dialogue of the traveller and the wise Chinese man cannot be relocated to the dialogue of the text and the reader. However, the novel also contains a final, short chapter entitled "What Remains: the End", which takes us back to the bus trip to Jiuhuashan, during which the poor-looking Chinese woman with the "completely interchangeable face" (6) opens the window near her seat despite the cold rain. When a hostile passenger asks her what she likes about the wind, she gives a curious answer:

So then tell me: Why do you like the wind so much?
It is clear that the woman is afraid that the man will strike her.
The wind? She repeats the question. She is really afraid. She tries to muster up some reply. No one sees the wind.
Fine, but why do you like it?
Well… because it blows. (268)

The dialogue is not completed by any form of narratorial commentary. Its shortness and density invites us to read it as an allegory that sheds new light on the central issues of the whole novel. Contrasting the visible with the invisible has been both Stein's and his Chinese debate partners' favourite rhetorical device, but they used it with the opposite logic. In the discussion with Yao, the university instructor, Stein relies on inductive reasoning, thus he draws the conclusion that the traditional China has disappeared from what he "sees" and "feels" (79). In comparison, Yao argues deductively when he says that the European only sees "the surface" (93), whereas "Classical Chinese culture lives on in the depths" (81). In the context of this particular conversation Yao's argument does not carry much conviction, but the ending of the novel re-evaluates his words. The trope of the wind – something that is invisible but can be felt on the skin, something on the verge of the material and the immaterial – makes the novel's central binary oppositions collapse into each other, re-affirming the existence of the endangered tradition but also designating the traveller's limited capacity to understand it. As a result, our perspective meets with that of the Chinese woman, who has embodied earlier the radical otherness of the culturally alien. However, in order the experience this fusion of horizons, first we need to get from Jiuhuashan to Jiuhuashan. The figure of circle intertwining the end and the beginning becomes a figure of understanding – designating a route taken not by the traveller but by the reader of Krasznahorkai's intricate piece of travel writing.

With its portrayal of the traveller as a pilgrim, its ephiphany-centred narrative logic and its attempts to present the encounter with the culturally alien as an aesthetic experience *Destruction and Sorrow Beneath the Heavens* self-consciously evokes the Romantic mythology of travel and the binary oppositions of modernist travel writing. Although the novel's more recent version is written in third person, its narrative is internally focalized through the protagonist, whose directly and indirectly quoted utterances contrast the timeless values of classical Chinese culture with the inauthenticity of the technologically developing "New China". However, the novel's textual complexity exposes the ambiguities of his essentializing rhetoric, often shedding an ironical light on his carefully crafted self-image, and calling attention to the incalculable eventness of the journey.

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Questioning China: (Mis)understanding strategies in László Krasznahorkai's "Destruction and Sorrow Beneath the Heavens"

László Krasznahorkai. Travel writing. Otherness. Tourism. Modernism.

This article discusses László Krasznahorkai's *Destruction and Sorrow Beneath the Heavens* in the context of travel literature, focusing on the author's representation of China. The text presents two Chinas: an ancient one, whose beauty can be perceived as a form of aesthetic experience, and a dystopian, modernized New China. The criticism of tourism and globalization evokes the memory of the cultural anxieties articulated by high modernist travelogues. My reading of the novel reveals that its textual complexity surpasses the protagonist's statements, demonstrating the blind spots of the self-representational strategies epitomized by his figure.

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Petra Hůlová's representation of Mongolian women in "All This Belongs to Me"

JEONGYUN KO

In 2002, at the age of 21, the Czech writer Petra Hůlová published *Paměť mojí babičce* (In Memory of My Grandmother), introducing contemporary stories of five Mongolian women's lives to Czech readers. The work brought Hůlová commercial and critical success and was published in Alex Zucker's English translation as *All This Belongs to Me* in 2009. The unusual thematic choice of Mongolia for a Czech writer was understood in relation to Hůlová's academic background as a Mongolist and her experience of staying in Mongolia for one year. Hůlová had to repeatedly refute this common assumption that the novel was based on her knowledge and personal experiences in Mongolia. Instead, affirming that "[n]o one in Mongolia would have told me these things" (Bade 2013), Hůlová highlights that *All This Belongs to Me* is not a representation based on real people that she had encountered in Mongolia but a fictional account that she had created based upon the Czech society that she knew.

This interesting exchange between the writer and readers about how the story on Mongolia had been created is well captured in one interview. The interviewer Jan Velinger asserts, encapsulating Hůlová's statements: "[I]t's common knowledge that the characters weren't based on Mongols you met, but actually on Czechs, and Czech realities." Hůlová herself further explicates:

> This book is my opinion in a certain time, now or a year ago, how the life, how the world is. And for me it is about the relations, about love, about disappointment, about bitterness, about such feelings, basic feelings for me, and in Mongolia I think life isn't polluted – maybe not the proper word – polluted by artificial phenomena like in Europe. Media, advertising, career maybe, so, if I set the story in a Czech setting, I couldn't avoid writing about such things. But I'm interested in that, and I wanted somehow to write a rough, simple story about what life means to me (Velinger 2003).

Underlined in this statement is Hůlová's belief that the Mongolian characters represented in the novel share universal realities of any human beings, be them Czechs or others. At the same time, however, Hůlová emphasizes that she wanted to examine these universal realities of human lives in their "unpolluted" forms, and Mongolia was chosen because it was a less modernized place where typical phenomena of capitalist culture are less evident.

This envisioning of Mongolia as a location where a European writer can have more freedom in exploring human nature and life in their uncomplicated forms, what-

ever those mean, reveals traditionally Orientalist reasoning regardless of the author's decent intention. Indeed, although Hůlová herself notes that the expression "unpolluted" can be problematic, using the word to describe the difference of Mongolian and Czech society, identifying Mongolia in contrast to Europe in this way should be considered as a typical Orientalist understanding of Asia. Naoki Sakai's lucid explanation of how Asia "as a sign […] would be too arbitrary unless it is paradigmatically opposed to the West (or Europe)" can be helpful here in examining Hůlová's juxtaposition of Mongolia against Czechia. According to Sakai, Asia's "seeming reality depends on the very constitutive exclusivity, so that Western and Asian properties/proprieties are not attributable to the same substance." In short, "it is impossible to talk about Asia positively. Only as the negative of the West can one possibly address oneself as an Asian. Therefore to talk about Asia is invariably to talk about the West" (793). Hůlová's idea of Mongolia as a place that lacks what the Czech Republic has, and yet at the same time that reveals the same universal human nature and relations, discloses a European writer's quite romantic, thus possibly problematic understanding towards an Asian country.

Hůlová's interest as a writer in exploring human life in its "uncontaminated" form through Mongolian women should not be ethically judged. However, it is important to note that the position she holds as a European writer representing stories of Mongolia immediately bestows her with a dubious authority on the Mongolian women that she is representing. This authoritative power is not so much an individual choice one can opt to exercise as an automatically given privilege and bondage acquired just by being a part of the Eurocentric knowledge system of the world. We understand by now, inspired by Edward Said's groundbreaking work *Orientalism* (1978), followed by rich postcolonial theories for several decades, that this power of a Western writing voice representing what is considered non-Western calls for our careful scrutiny. In this context, Hůlová's desire to create Mongolian female characters and represent their world cannot be analyzed outside the history of the Western writing self's representation of Asia and its complicity with Orientalism. In the following, I will first discuss the historical tradition of the West's stereotypical representation of Asian women and consider Hůlová's complicity in the tradition through her act of representation of Mongolian women. Then, I will examine *All This Belongs to Me's* five Mongolian female characters' densely related narratives, all written from each woman's first person point of view, which upon close reading reveal their struggle to embrace and hand down traditional Mongolian ideals of women. In the final section, I will seek to further address questions related to Hůlová's complicity in Orientalism, attempting to consider whether Hůlová's representation of Mongolian female stories expands the West's desire for "coexistence and humanistic enlargement of horizons," not the will "to dominate for the purpose of control and external domination" (Said 2003, xix).

HŮLOVÁ'S IMAGINED MONGOLIAN WOMEN IN THE HISTORY OF WESTERN REPRESENTATIONS

All This Belongs to Me is narrated by five Mongolian female characters across three generations. The mother Alta and her three daughters and a granddaughter each give an account of their lives from the first-person point of view, creating a heteroglossia of Mongolian women's voices. As one interviewer rightfully notes, "any reader who might be expecting a romantic picture of distant Mongolia will be disappointed" because the portrayed five women's lives all reveal quite harsh realities of modern-day Mongolia (Vaughan 2013). It is true that Hůlová's portrayal of Mongolia is far from a blatant expression of familiar Orientalist stereotypes involving Genghis Khan or exotic nomads riding horses. However, considered in the historical context of the West's fascination with representing Asian women, Hůlová's creation of Mongolian female characters calls for a further examination.

The stereotypical representation of Asian women has a long history in the cross-cultural representational space of the West. Widespread images of Asian women in Western cultures have fluctuated between two extremes: Asian women as submissive and oppressed victims of patriarchal culture and/or highly sexualized and exploitable objects. These stereotypical images are well exemplified in one of the most well-known Asian female characters in the West, Kiku from Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème* (1887) who has been reborn again and again in the name of Madame Butterfly or Miss Saigon for over a century. These Japanese, Chinese, or sometimes Vietnamese women working as prostitutes have revealed invariably similar characteristics as docile yet at the same time exotic and sexually exploitable objects. Despite these female characters' different historical and cultural backgrounds, they all willingly live and die to serve the white men's desire and fantasy about Asian women. The Asian-American feminist Lynn Lu elucidates the stereotypical images that have been attached to Asian women for centuries:

> It's no secret that the exotic mysterious of our sex have long held a tight grip on the Western (male) popular imagination. A parade of familiar stereotypes populates our cultural landscape: concubine, geisha girl, mail-order bride, dragon lady, lotus blossom, precious pearl. In this environment, Asian women thirst for realistic and three-dimensional images of ourselves that will not dissolve like mirages as we draw near (1999, 17).

As discussed by Lu, repeatedly circulated and consumed stereotypical images of Asian women have generated critical awareness against yet another reproduction of such Asian women's images created by Western writing subjects.

It could be argued that Hůlová's complicity in the tradition of Orientalism is most obvious in the very fact that she has created a Mongolian world where every female character suffers from various forms of gendered oppression of Mongolian culture. It is true that the female characters of *All This Belongs to Me* are divided into girls forced into prostitution in the capital city of Mongolia and mothers/housewives fulfilling heavy domestic duties in the steppe, reiterating historically popular stereotypical images of oppressed Asian women. This emphasis on Asian women's gendered oppression should be considered in relation to the tradition of Orientalism. It is so because as Kathleen Uno notes "Orientalism […] has marked notions of Asian households,

resulting in an exaggeration of both their patriarchal character and the subordination of women" (2003, 43). Ironically, this Orientalist rendering of Asian patriarchal culture in the West has often been found in Western feminist approaches that highlight Asian women as beings "trapped in the earlier phase of the development of feminism (too familiar and thus either dismissed or condescendingly told what to do next)" as Shu-Mei Shih lucidly notes in her examination of unequal encounters between Western feminists and non-Western women. According to Shih, Western feminists have exerted "power of arbitrarily conferring difference and similarity on the non-Western woman" in various occasions of transnational encounters (2005, 77–78). This power enables Western scholars and writers to represent Asian women in the global representational space as sometimes similar to them yet in most of the time as inevitably different objects that are in needs of feminist development.

Hůlová's recent interview by Mark Reynolds interestingly reveals the similar logic of "difference and similarity" in the nature of represented Mongolian women. Questioned about how she became to create a story about Mongolian women in the first place, she explains:

> I just imagined I was a Mongolian woman, and tried to describe the world through her eyes […] Nowadays I see it as a very problematic project: how could I dare to do this? What would I think if, I don't know, a guy from Japan came to Prague for one year and then wrote a novel about being a Czech? […] [B]ut for many people it was I think a persuasive description of a place they'd never been to. I think I grasped something universal, and it does tell you something about the place. It's an amazing culture and I speak the language and have a certain insight into the place and the mentality, but it was a very courageous act and I wouldn't be able to do anything like that anymore (Reynolds 2018).

Although she acknowledges possible epistemological dangers in representing Mongolian women as a Czech writer, she also believes that her representation of Mongolian women and culture had an appeal to Czech readers because of both universality and uniqueness found in the represented world of Mongolia.

Despite the introduced positive reviews, one cannot help but raise a question: if the represented world was modeled after a Czech society that Hůlová knows of and also after the universal characteristics of human beings, what does it mean that they are represented in the exteriority of Mongolian women? Two key words, universality and difference become crucial ideas in discussing Hůlová's representation of Mongolian women and the possibility of non-exploitative Western representation of Asia. Is there any relation between the Mongolian difference and the popularity the novel acquired in Czech? Is there a chance that Czech readers were consuming stories of Mongolian difference in the form of poverty, patriarchal oppression, and thus backwardness of Asian culture in general? Or could it be argued that Hůlová succeeded in staging Mongolian women in the global representational space in ways that resist Orientalist consumption by appealing to the universality of human nature? In the following, I will attempt a close reading of *All This Belongs to Me* and in the process seek to consider these important yet difficult questions.

MONGOLIAN WOMEN'S DIFFERENCES AND UNIVERSALITY

The Mongolian female characters in *All This Belongs to Me* are largely divided into two groups: the ones who choose to venture into the capital city, Ulaanbaatar and the ones who maintain the life in their family *ger* (traditional tent or yurt) located in the Red Mountains. This division is interestingly overlapped with another overarching theme of the novel, which is the discrimination against racially mixed Mongolians. The ones who head for the city are racially mixed daughters, the half-Chinese Zaya and the half-Russian Nara, whom their mother had from her extramarital relationships. The Mongol mother Altar and the youngest daughter Oyuna, whom she had with her Mongol husband, take full control of the family's traditional household in the steppe. Since the novel is divided into six narratives told by five female characters from one family, male voices do not occupy any dominant positions in the narrative. Ironically, though, male characters exert tremendous power upon most family women of the narrative, resulting in dramatic changes in the women's lives throughout the text.

This male dominance is possible because most female characters have internalized the patriarchal value systems inflicted upon them in Mongolian society. Indeed, what is interesting to note is that even though Hůlová presents these women's struggling lives trapped under the Mongolian patriarchal ideology both in the city and the steppe, she does not present the characters as actively condemning or challenging such ideology. As shown in the title of the English translation "all this belongs to me", taken from Zaya's observation on her life as an old woman, most female characters in general strive to conform to their given lives. Notwithstanding the continuous sacrifices and suffering caused by gender inequality omnipresent in their Mongolian society, they reveal their desire to belong and strive to claim their positions in patriarchal family systems of Mongolia through marriage. The results of such representation of suffering yet conforming and even optimistic Mongolian female characters are manifold, one of them being the possible minimization of the impacts of the fully illustrated pitfalls of patriarchal Mongolian culture. As David Bade notes in his analysis of *All This Belongs to Me*, many reviewers indeed consider that the strength of the novel resides in the fact that "none of the narratives of the five women are laments of lost and destroyed women" (2013, 143).

However, the "stunning affirmation of life by a complete failure" in Bade's words (2103, 143), cannot erase the fact that the Mongolian world presented through the narratives of five family women reveals a suffocating culture that does not render much room for the women to claim their agency. In the world of *All This Belongs to Me,* the patriarchal ideology governs the lives of both ostracized mixed-blood female characters and the ones who claim their Mongol Khalkah purity. Upon a close reading, it becomes evident that Hůlová succeeds in presenting the dauntingly oppressive society of Mongolia and how it completely dominates every female character's life.

For the main character Zaya, the life in the steppe when she was young is portrayed as a lethargic one that is far too removed from the "real life" happening in the capital city (Hůlová 2009, 128). Zaya's movement from the steppe to the city at age 16, however, is depicted as a backward step involving labor and sexual exploitation of her body. The city of Ulaanbaatar experienced by Zaya is so different from what she

naively imagined as a young girl: a place where she could only "do the rounds of the shops, gorge […] on jelly doughnuts, buy […] a soda or two, take a quick run through the Museum of the Revolution, and go home" (3). Zaya has been provided with only housing from her aunt, who has kept the secret of running a brothel from her family, yet she is oblivious to the excruciatingly arduous money earning life of the city she would soon face. Zaya's city life becomes a tragic saga of her self-defeating struggles to avoid life as a prostitute, following the path of her aunt and her sister Nara.

After beginning to work as a helper in a small restaurant called a *gaunz*, Zaya soon becomes disillusioned from the fantasy towards the city life. She mulls over her exhausting city life: "The days flowed one into the other, and everything else but my worries at work was washed right out of my head – my family in the Red Mountains, my school, my fantasies about life in the City – all of it had drained away, and I knew it, but what could I do? I was here and I needed money" (34). The first sign of hope for independence and happiness in her city life emerges when she meets her potential suitor, Biamkhu from the restaurant she works for. Dreaming of her future with him, Zaya feels "grown up and independent for the first time since [she] had come to the City" (36). Unfortunately for Zaya, this brief moment of hoping for her happiness disappears overnight, however, as she comes to have her first sexual experience not with her suitor but with an old man, Mergen, who was living with her aunt and who later turns out to be her biological father. At the moment, Zaya describes this disturbing experience as "nothing", insisting that it involved only her free will. However, in reality, this one-night sexual experience with Mergen causes a total disruption of Zaya's dream for the future as she is driven out on to the street by her aunt, and the man she was dreaming of getting married to abandons her. Zaya's first sexual experience under the influence of alcohol becomes a symbolic event in her life signifying an irrevocable path involving incest and "a bottomless black hole" (78) as well expressed in her much later confession as an old lady.

Overall, Zaya is represented as a character who can not challenge the patriarchal norms of her Mongolian society that constantly discriminates and ostracizes her half-Chinese heritage, an embodiment of her mother's outright defilement of the family patriarch. Rather, Zaya is a woman who embraces patriarchal norms imbued in her mind, ironically, by her own mother who repeatedly insists that "[t]here's no disaster greater for a woman. No punishment on earth more cruel" for a woman than not bearing a child (142). Zaya's own sense of failure in achieving this claimed happiness for woman through marriage is well revealed when she retreats to the steppe, taking a schoolteacher job in her small hometown of Bashkgan *somon*. Her temporary return to the steppe, however, only provides her with a feeling of uselessness because as an unmarried grown woman, she cannot find much role to fulfil in the traditional household of her family *ger*. She herself cannot take the pressure of being judged as an unmarried woman in her hometown and feels that she really "had no choice but to try again" (66) in the city.

Zaya's second attempt to survive in the city is much more challenging. If Zaya's first city life experience was limited to the small *gaunz* where she worked and the house where she lived with her aunt and Mergen, being older yet without any home

or stable job, Zaya has to vigorously explore the labour market of Ulaanbaatar without knowing that even with these trials she would only end up in her aunt's brothel. What is intriguing to note is how Hůlová portrays Zaya's path to the life of prostitution as almost a mysterious yet unavoidable fate. In a similar way that she lost her chance of marriage by stumbling upon a bizarre one-night relation with her biological father, Zaya rejects a stable job offer and a place to stay she gets from her former boss of the *gaunz*. Quite unconvincingly, Zaya narrates: "I needed work. I needed money. Someone who wasn't me said no. It was me and it wasn't me. I regretted it right away" (69). As the result of dismissing the offer, Zaya has to face the harsh realities of endless labours without a permanent place to stay, and it does not take that long until she finally gives in and knocks on the door of her aunt's brothel.

Before Zaya heads towards life as a prostitute, however, she tries her best working in different sectors of the city's secondary labour market: "working at the candy stand, cooking in the school cafeteria, stamping letters at the post office, babysitting the Russian lady's blond little Nikolai, tearing tickets in a nylon jacket and cutoff gloves for the bus" (76). Interestingly, it is only through this brief description of Zaya's trials to survive in the city that the reader for the first time finally gets a glimpse into the possible lives of female migrants from the countryside in the city of Ulaanbaatar outside of the aunt's brothel and the small *gaunz* the two sisters worked in. Zaya seems quite capable, working at these various places, but she experiences obstacles being a country woman without much education or skills as the people in the city "weren't about to do the country girl any favors" (80). However, Zaya continues her lonely struggles until she finally feels that "[t]here was no way. But to do something that I considered revolting, that I could do" (76) and joins in her aunt's brothel following her sister, Nara.

On the surface, Zaya's life as a prostitute seems to be the result of her failed challenges to survive in the city, mostly due to the lack of resources necessary for a successful migration to the city. However, it should be noted that what causes Zaya's dead end is directly related to Mongolian patriarchal norms from which she is unable to break off. Despite the seemingly liberal attitudes that Zaya shows towards her life, she is a character who holds on to the patriarchal trope and fantasy that "[e]very girl should love her first guy" and get married with him (78). In this context, Zaya's failure in the city was almost predestined when she missed the chance to get married with her first suitor, Biamkhu. When she goes back to the steppe and gets a chance to live as a schoolteacher, it is the pressure and the shame she herself feels as an unmarried woman which forces her again to the streets of Ulaanbaatar.

The sense of failure Zaya feels towards her own life is especially highlighted through the constant comparison she makes with the married life of her youngest sister Oyuna. Different from Zaya, Oyuna in her narration continuously expresses the sense of pride towards the life she has led. What is important to note is that this pride of Oyuna is closely related to her heritage of being pure-blooded Mongol: she describes herself as having "sprang from two Mongol clans, proud and pure" (149). Different from her two sisters with biracial backgrounds, Oyuna with her heritage of Khalkah purity has been expected to continue her family tradition in the steppe ever

since her other pure-blooded Mongol sister died in a horseriding accident. Asserting that she "wasn't nursed from [her] mother's breast to leave her behind in a cloud of dust just as soon as [she] could stand on [her] own," Oyuna fulfils her filial duty (149). Comparing her life with Zaya's, Oyuna explicates how she became to embrace her parents' patriarchal norms on ideal Mongolian women:

> While Zaya was still doing the petty jobs of a country girl in the City, I became a wife and a woman to be reckoned with. Mama kept me on a short string and didn't give me a moment's rest. A woman's fingers need to keep moving morning, noon, and night, flashing with dishes, stroking children's cheeks, kneading dough, or giving relief to a man's callused palms. I tell my girls that every day. Papa used to say that Mama's hands never lingered. And that the first thing he noticed about her was those fluttering wings of hers. This is the woman I want, he said, and Mama wanted a good man to say the same of me (151).

As the heir of her parents, Oyuna's world is completely governed by the traditional patriarchal duties women have to fulfil in the half nomadic culture of Mongolia. Despite "[her] dreams about the glittering lives of Zaya and Nara," when Oyuna finally meets her husband, she is convinced that "he was worth" her obedient and repetitive life in the steppe and declares that she has become "self-sufficient and whole, because a woman without a man is like a crescent moon" (152).

Not unlike Zaya, Oyuna certainly is a character who is governed by traditional patriarchal norms of Mongolian culture, which more than anything emphasizes the role of wife and mother for women. As Franck Billé explains in his research on how Mongolian nationalism has controlled women's sexuality, Mongolian culture "assume[s] that Mongolian women desire to marry, have children and work to help support the household financially […] [and] women who do not adhere to these expectations are seen as selfish actors, and as examples of failed womanhood" (2017, 168). So, although their life experiences are dramatically different, Zaya and Oyuna actually share this Mongolian cultural belief in fulfilling women's roles as it is well divulged in their upbringings of their own daughters. Unlike Nara who gave up the baby she got from working as a prostitute, Zaya gives birth to her daughter Dolgorma and attempts to fulfil the dream of forming her own family without a husband. As Nara criticizes, Zaya puts all her energy in taking care of her daughter while again "she was ignoring the most important thing of all. Who she was herself" (170). Interestingly, Zaya tries to inflict the patriarchal ideals of Mongolian women upon her city-grown daughter. By sending her back to the steppe every vacation, she hopes that her mother will teach Dolgorma how to live a proper woman's life. However, when Dolgorma finds out that her mother has been supporting her by working as a prostitute, Zaya's dream of fulfilling the ideal of Mongolian woman finally becomes shattered as her daughter severs her relationship with Zaya.

Oyuna disciplines her own daughter with the exact same preaching that she received from her mother Alta, who constantly argued that "[a]ny girl who doesn't save herself for the father of her children will end up being sorry for it" (153). Just like her mother, Oyuna asserts that "I don't know what all is coming her way, but all she'll ever catch with bait like that is one good man. If she decides that she wants more, then she ruins her reputation. If she decides that she wants better, then all the boys

are spoken for, her youth is gone, and even a moneyless drunkard looks good" (158). Even though Oyuna's world is quite confined to the small family circle around the *ger*, she affirms herself: "My family's all I've got. It's also all I've ever wanted, and I'm raising my daughters to be the same" (159), declaring to hand down the legacy that she inherited from her mother. Like her mother, she believes that "[a] woman should wait. For her own good. One day it'll come, and from then on she'll have everything taken care of" (152).

The mother Alta's insistence upon conforming to the patriarchal norms seems quite ironic though, as most patently revealed in the presence of her biracial daughters. Indeed, the mother recalled in her daughters' narrative is a presence who coerces her daughters and granddaughters, especially Oyuna, to live a life only as wife and mother. Despite love affairs, Alta herself has maintained the marriage with her husband whom she does not love. The mother's own narrative, however, reveals what a painfully unhappy marriage life she had and also how she had "regretted" her decision to [t]o live with a man, to know what his every slightest gesture means, to one nod bring food, to another go and quiet the kids, to mend his slippers and stay by his sickbed till pale morning comes, to know every little wrinkle" (121). She even confesses that "bearing that man children was the saddest thing in [her] life", but when she firmly announces that "it may've been [her] great fortune" at the same time (121), the paradox of her insistence upon marriage becomes somewhat answered. Alta had challenged the husband's patriarchal authority by having illegitimate relationships and pursuing her own desire, and she was punished and disciplined by the husband who "smacked [her] across the face, dragged her onto the bed, and said he wasn't letting her out of the *ger* until she could act like a proper woman again." However, it was she herself who made the decision to stay in the marriage (86). Now as an old woman, Alta only wishes that her granddaughters "would take some lessons from [her] experience" (145) and lead "the decent life of a righteous woman, the only one that bears […] children who know their father" (138).

Nara's life seems to well explain the reason why the mother Alta so firmly believes in the importance of marriage in her daughters and granddaughters' lives. Except for Alta, Nara is described as the only character from the five women of the family who actively challenges the patriarchal norms imposed upon Mongolian women. Indeed, it is very interesting how Hůlová portrays Nara, a character with her evidently Russian biracial features, as the woman who dangerously pursues her own desires of body and mind. In the other women's narratives, Nara's story almost appears to be a cautionary tale of what happens when a female does not conform to the Mongolian female ideals. Constantly ostracized as a non-Mongol because of her "bastard blood" from her Russian biological father, Nara is described to be "mysterious in a different sort of way" (73). As Zaya describes, Nara "ceased to be one of us – one of us women who knew their place: when it was proper to speak and where the driest *argal* was, what to do with a child who screamed all the time, and how to make milk tea as smooth as a new born camel's tummy. Nara knew nothing of any of that" (73). The marked difference of her body becomes even more highlighted as she challenges the roles imposed upon Mongolian women.

Hůlová's portrayal of Nara as a woman who was born unfit for the patriarchal norms of the Mongolian household is further explored when Nara passionately falls in love with her cousin and becomes what Mongols call a "wild woman." Eventually, Nara has to be sent away to a family shaman to be cured out of her madness of love. Interestingly, Nara's passion for the man is indisputably akin to what her own mother Alta had experienced, yet while her mother was claimed back by the family patriarch and succeeded in reproducing his Mongol heir, Nara is sent to the city only to end up living a life as a prostitute. As Nara hopes in vain to "squeeze […] out of [her] veins" (170) the blood of her Russian father, Nara's visibly non-Mongolian female body disables her to claim a space in her mother's Mongolian household. The representation of Nara as a wild woman outside the Mongolian patriarchal dominance and control makes her almost a symbolic figure of female defiance in the narratives filled with women who all try so hard to conform to the norms.

Many reviewers note that the female characters of *All This Belongs to Me* disclose highly respectable attitudes towards life, quietly accepting and acknowledging the fate they face. However, a close analysis of six different narratives from the characters reveals that the seemingly detached and quite compliant attitudes towards their life obstacles are in fact closely related to the women's lost battles against the patriarchal norms of the Mongolian culture. The lives of the mother, three sisters, and granddaughters are all governed by patriarchal ideology that the Mongolian culture imposes upon them, and each has to pay a high cost when she attempts to cross the line. The mother Alta's affairs with non-Mongol men in the end permanently have affected her two biracial daughters' turbulent life paths. The surveillance upon Oyuna, the only remaining pure-blooded Mongol daughter, has allowed Oyuna only a little world confined within the boundary of her husband's patriarchal dominance. In the end, Hůlová's portrayal of harsh realities of Mongolian females does not allow much room for any possibilities for changes when even the third-generation female characters are portrayed as having almost similar fates to the older generation women.

BEYOND THE BINARY OF EXOTIC OR MODERN MONGOLIA

Despite plausible doubts cast on the Orientalist rendering of Mongolia by the Czech writer Hůlová, many critics and reviewers seem to defend her from such an accusation. Bade argues that "Hůlová offers us Mongolia through the eyes of someone peering into the soul of Mongolia and seeing, not an exotic mystery, but the hard, harsh, and most unpleasant realities of the modern world, moving the reader to feel that Mongolia is indeed part of our world" (2013, 143). In a similar way, Bigosowa makes an interesting argument:

> The author does not spin tales of the culture and customs of Mongolia. She shows us modern life, the contemporary modern pursuit of happiness, difficult relationships between family members. This makes the novel universal and does not focus only on introducing the reader to the intricacies of a different culture (2011 [Bade 2013, 152]).

As the above reviews assert, the close reading of *All This Belongs to Me* also demonstrated that Hůlová's Mongolia is far from being exotic in the sense of traditional Ori-

entalism. Rather, the reader outside of Mongolia is given a solemnly realistic glimpse into the lives of five Mongolian family women. However, it is also true that the reader is introduced to a different version of Orientalism in the form of exaggeration of Mongolian women's suffering under poverty and patriarchal oppression.

Of course, it is important to note that this family of women do not represent Mongolian women's lives as a whole. To argue that the portrayed lives of women from one family can be taken as the representative story of Mongolian women would be groundless. However, it is also true that any reader who is not familiar with Mongolia could feel curious about the proximity between the represented Mongolian world of *All This Belongs to Me* and the real, contemporary Mongolian society. It is especially more so, when every Mongolian female character is invariably suffering from the lack of better life choices, and no one really finds a breakthrough for better agency and independence in their lives throughout the novel. It is true that there is not a single appearance of female characters, not even a passerby, who are highly-educated or pursuing great career opportunities. The closest we have is the generous owner of the *gaunz* where the two sisters worked. When even the granddaughter Dolgorma, who has been better educated and economically well supported by her mother, is lured into a relationship with an older married man, the reader cannot help but wonder whether this repeated pattern of family women's lives is intended to be considered as a mere family curse or a probable reality of Mongolian society.

Indeed, Hůlová's exclusive focus on the five female characters' lives from one family does not really provide diverse pictures of contemporary Mongolia outside the boundary of the characters' lives. There are not so much descriptions on contemporary Mongolia that expose historical or cultural changes happening around the family women. For example, there is no concrete background information on the two of the most important thematic concerns of the novel: female migrants from countryside engaging in sex work in Ulaanbaatar and the discrimination against *erliiz*, racially mixed people in Mongolian society. It is known that Mongolia ended its communist regime and set up a democratic government in the early 1990s, and some research on Mongolian contemporary history would easily reveal that "[t]he economic transition from a centrally planned (Soviet-supported) economy to a free-market economy led to devastating consequences, including over 32 per cent of the population living below the poverty line" (Carlson et al. 2015, 305). It is also known that facing drastic changes in the 1990s, "Ulaanbaatar, the capital city, experienced severe increases in survival sex work among women, homelessness, migration of workers within and beyond the country" (305).

In the same context, the reader is not provided with the information that despite the law stating that "a child with either a Mongolian mother or father will be given Mongolian nationality, […] [the] traditionally held belief […] suggests that one's father must be of Mongol blood to be considered ethnically Mongolian" (Tumursukh 2001 [Carlson et al. 2015, 306]). Of course, the reader is constantly provided with indications about the palpable discrimination against mixed raced Mongols in the society. The pure-blooded Mongol mother Alta and Oyuna make statements about Zaya and Nara's status as *erliiz* (racially mixed person). Having to live with

her conspicuous Russian physical characteristics, Nara is most vocal expressing her wrath living as an *erliiz* in Mongolian society as we can see from her angry statement: "I could drill a hole in my head and still I'd know" the presence of the "bastard blood" (170). Even Zaya who, according to Nara, pretended "as if she'd left the word *erliiz* behind on the steppe," finally confesses the ordeal she has faced as an *erliiz* for the first time in her life at the end of the narrative: "*Erliiz, erliiz, erliiz,* I say to myself when the rage come over me. Everything I've done in my life has been clouded by that" (192).

Provided with these descriptions of the characters' emotions, the lack of above-mentioned socio-historical information on the actual treatments of *erliiz* people born from non-Mongol fathers might not be such an obstacle in recognizing the pains of the two *erliiz* sisters. It could be even argued that the absence plays an active role in making the reader fill in the lacking specificities by performing self-research on the related issues when he/she is really moved by the women's narratives. Indeed, the omission of specificities of Mongolian socio-historical and cultural information can be considered as an intentional strategy taken by Hůlová for the purpose of making the novel be read not as an ethnography but as a universal story of human sufferings as she initially intended. Yet again, the dilemma on the part of the reader also inevitably arises as he/she is presented with contemporary Mongolian characters confined only within the boundary of a family circle but not so much with the information on the larger Mongolian society that can be presumed to have caused their struggling lives.

Given the fact that we are living in the revolutionary world of information, would the possibility of a reader falling into the epistemological trap of stereotyping Mongolian women (as beings who cannot avoid a life of prostitution when they fail to secure a husband) seem like a farfetched and irrelevant concern? Further research on contemporary Mongolia reveals that despite the increase of migrant sex workers in the capital city, the number of sex workers of Mongolia comprises approximately 0.1% of the whole population (Offringa et al. 2017, 1857). Interestingly, Hůlová herself expresses related thoughts about the possible negative effects of her representation of invariably suffering Mongolian women. Asked about local Mongols' reception of the novel, she introduces a negative review of the book in the Mongolian press, which "disapproved that a foreigner allowed herself to write about prostitution and poverty in Mongolia." According to Hůlová, the critic took her portrayal of suffering Mongolian females as her "denigrating Mongolia" (Flock − Vacula 2009).

Of course, these represented Others' negative responses against a Western representational attempt should be considered in the historical context of Orientalism. Having suffered from repeated Orientalist images, Asians have been quite sensitive to, even obsessed with, the ways Asia has been represented by the West. One such example can be seen in Rey Chow's analysis of China's rejection of the American-based Chinese novelist Ha Jin. In his novel *Waiting* (1999), Ha Jin presents the story of a Chinese village woman Shuyu who faithfully waits for her doctor husband when he has actually tried to get a divorce from her over the course of 19 years. Despite the book having received the National Book Award in the U.S., Beijing Publishing

Group cancelled its plan to publish *Waiting* in Chinese translation when the criticism against the text was formed by the Chinese media. Liu Yiqing, a Beijing University professor, played a role in forming such negative reviews on the work when he argued that the success the book achieved in America was "part of a plot by the American media to demonize China by showing China's backwardness and the stupidity of the Chinese people" (Chow 2002, 187).

Using Frantz Fanon's term "ressentiment", Chow explains Chinese people's hostility against *Waiting* as the "psychic structure of a reaction to the injustice created by the coercive and unequal encounter with the white world" wrongfully directed to a diasporic Chinese writer (2002, 186). Despite the relevant criticism of Chow, I would argue that the Chinese people's anxiety, caught within the prison of trauma caused by being constant objects of Orientalist rendering by the West, cannot be simply dismissed as "ressentiment" directed to a successful diasporic Chinese writer. Their accusation is not groundless considered in the context of repeated stereotypical representations of Asian women in the global representational stage. The popular images of Asian patriarchy and Asian women suffering represented in Ha Jin's texthave certainly played a role in fascinating readers and critics outside of Asia. This rejection and criticism from the members of the represented cultural Others then should be considered as the double-edged sword result accompanying Western writers' cross-cultural representational attempts.

It can be argued that the restricted portrayal of the Mongolian socio-cultural background works as a factor that both confirms and resists the charge of *All This Belongs to Me*'s complicity in Orientalist portrayal of Mongolian women's oppression. By making the novel as a story of just one Mongolian family, without much social background, thus potentially universal in a sense that it can be the story of any given family across the globe, Hůlová to some extent overcomes the criticism that she could get for representing perpetually oppressed Mongolian female characters. While it joins the Western tradition of representing Asian women's oppression, what makes *All This Belongs to Me* noteworthy is how its representation of Mongolian women defies the typical developmental ideology of modernity and Asian women. Most Western representations of Asian women that focus on the backwardness of Asian women's status tend to associate women's progress in relation to the degree of modernization, which is often understood as a process of Westernization. In *All This Belongs to Me*, modernity is represented as leaving their traditional household *ger* and moving into the city. As examined in the above reading, the movement towards modernity or the city, however, is not depicted as progress in the women's lives. Hůlová successfully complicates the binary dichotomy of modernized city and premodern steppe by deconstructing the linear and developmental understanding of modernity often found in many Western feminists' portrayal of Asian women.

Moreover, compared to the way how Mongolia has been represented in the Western literary field, Hůlová's representation of Mongolia certainly is a new attempt in that it presents Mongolia as a coeval space of our contemporary world. As Bade's research on Western representation of Mongolia well shows, the most dominant Western literary representations of Mongolia have been "either about the imperial era

– tales of Chinggis Khaan, Khubilai, the invasions of European and Asian lands – or […] adventure tales for children, with the addition of stories in praise of the glorious new Mongolian communist society found in socialist literatures" (2013, 135). Bade acknowledges that Hulova's *All This Belongs to Me* is meaningful in that it is one of the first Western representations of contemporary Mongolian society. Still, he raises an interesting question of whether these recent literary representations of modern-day Mongolia written by non-Mongolian writers "can lead a Mongolian reader to understand his/her own world better" (2013, 141). Indeed, for whom is this representation created?

Madeleine Clements' review of *All This Belongs to Me* in the *Times Literary Supplement* suggests a possible answer to these difficult questions. Clements acknowledges that "this European author's novel may seem to reinforce Western assumptions about the oppressed lives of women in developing countries" (2010). However, she gives emphasis to the fact that Hůlová's "representations […] are not straightforward." This means that despite the fact that the representation of *All This Belongs to Me* is "an acutely observed account […] of the lives of its semi-nomadic subjects," still the represented Mongolia and Mongolian women reflect "ambiguous cultural hybrids" of contemporary Mongolia (Clements 2010).

I would like to conclude by revisiting what Said noted in the preface to the 25th anniversary edition of *Orientalism*. Stepping back a little from his charge of Orientalism upon most Western representations, he clarifies that "[t]here is […] a profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of coexistence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purpose of control and external domination" (2003, xix). With this statement, he acknowledges the possibility of Western representations of cultural Others created as the results of efforts to expand the West's horizons of cultural understanding of Others. More importantly, different from Said's assertion made in the 1970s which claimed that since the Orient cannot represent itself, the Western "representation does the job, for the West […] and for the poor Orient" (1979, 21), we are now living in the globalized world of information. Equipped with ever-advancing technology such as the Internet and translation apps and also faced with a more globalized world, we can easily listen to the Orient speaking for itself, if we only have the will to do so. It is also true that our changed world has made much room for critical intervention on the part of Western readers in their process of creating meanings out of the represented world of Mongolia. Considering that the power of literature may reside in its potential to actually move people to have meaningful changes in reality, readers who are moved enough by Hůlová's portrayal of Mongolia would venture into exploring Mongolia and expand the horizon of their world view. In the process, they would certainly come across a heterogenous and always-changing Mongolia.

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Mongolia. "All This Belongs to Me." Petra Hůlová. Orientalism. Asian women. Representation.

This article examines the Czech writer Petra Hůlová's representation of Mongolian women in *All This Belongs to Me* in an effort to discuss possible epistemological dangers involved in such cross-cultural representation of Asia by a European writing self. Through a close reading of the text, the paper explores how the represented five Mongolian females from one family are invariably subsumed under the strong patriarchal ideology of their Mongolian society. This representation of Mongolian women's oppression is then discussed in the historical context of Orientalism, which has excessively exaggerated patriarchal culture of Asia and Asian women's oppression. Examining strategies Hůlová adopts to resist mere exoticization of Mongolian culture, the paper considers whether Hůlová's cross-cultural representation presents chances for opportunities for readers outside of Mongolia to expand the horizon of their Eurocentric world view.

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The image of Mexico in Czechoslovak travel sketches of the 1940s and 1950s

MAGDA KUČERKOVÁ

The points made in this study were inspired by two books from the cultural sphere of the renewed post-war Czechoslovak Republic: *Mexiko (Niekoľko čŕt)* (Mexico [Several Sketches], 1949) and *Mexiko je v Americe. Črty a snímky z cesty* (Mexico is in America. Sketches and Images from a Journey, 1952). The author of the first book was Ján Boor (1915–2002), at that time an official at the literary-historical department of the Matica slovenská (a Slovak cultural institution). The second book was written by Czech journalist and diplomat Norbert Frýd (1913–1976).[1] While Frýd's trip to Mexico turned into a longer experience, and he worked there as a cultural attaché at least between 1947 and 1948,[2] Boor spent five weeks there as a member of the Czechoslovak delegation at the second UNESCO conference (held from November 6 to December 3, 1947). As far as their scope is concerned, both books seem to reflect the differing length of time the authors spent in Mexico, and above all, their different personalities and experiences. Both Frýd and Boor dramatize the place with scenes or images of life there, in conjunction with a "reflexive layer of imagination" (the term used by P. Valček; 2006, 122), which enables us to interpret both works in the context of the mental representation of another person. It should be emphasized that this is not the only travelogue that provides readers in Czechoslovakia with a look at Mexico. Other sources of the image of Mexico included reports from the motorist and promoter of the Czechoslovak automobile industry František A. Elstner (1902–1974) in the second half of the 1940s, the famous travellers Jiří Hanzelka (1920–2003) and Miloslav Zikmund (born 1919) in the 1950s, ethnographer Miroslav Stingl (b. 1930) and sports journalist Imrich Hornáček (1925–1977) in the 1960s, the editor and permanent correspondent of Czechoslovak Radio in Latin America Valentín Benčat (1941–2019) and the ethnographer and director of the Náprstek Museum in Prague, Václav Šolc (1919–1995) in the 1980s.[3]

In particular, the Czech botanist and ethnographer Alberto Vojtěch Frič (1882–1944), visited Mexico on the sixth of his eight expeditions to the Americas (1923–1924). He performed "great botanical-collector's journeys" (Frič [1942] 1977, 9), as

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part of his life objective of "looking through the great book of nature and searching for the hidden truth within" (5). He is known in European botanical history as an expert in cacti and other tropical plants. He was fascinated by "their mysterious, magical qualities – whether they were poisons or medicines (which is always possible)" (9). During the first Czechoslovak Republic, he published the results of his research, which also drew on a visit to the Amerindian Tarahumara tribe of northern Mexico, in his book *O kaktech a jejich narkotických účincích* (On Cacti and Their Narcotic Effects, 1924, reissued 1995).[4] In the preface to his ethnographically focused travel sketches *Indians of South America*, A. V. Frič reveals that his expeditions to the American continent became the source of unexpected discoveries among the Indian tribes, which he felt the need to record in order for them not to disappear completely in the face of the civilization process. His image of the Indians presented their "special ancient beauty", "wonderful thoughts", "the spiritual wealth of a healthy natural person", "auto-suggestive and suggestive superstitions, embodied in gentle singing and poetic myths", their habits and opinions, as well as their purity and morality in forms, and many of them (and A. V. Frič writes from his own experience) did not make it through the moral or puritanical censorship of the European scientific community, or of "civilized" Europe (11–12). The professional community of Frič's time refused to accept his description of otherness, although paradoxically it was the author who basically naturalized himself into the native environment (he lived longest with the Paraguayan tribe of Chamacoco, where his descendants still live now), and from this base he sought to penetrate their mentality. That is why this experience closely evokes the cultural tension between the Old and the New World which finds fertile ground for various discourses about the exoticization of the relationship between civilization and barbarism, the myth of the land of well-being and the noble savages, drawing on an idealized image of the native in the first travel-related texts from the other side of the Atlantic.

It took a long time for A V. Frič to write a text that would have the attributes of a travelogue – the preface to the aforementioned travelogue about Indians is dated 1942, therefore he wrote it as a sixty-year-old, with both the human and professional knowledge that belonged to that age. He clearly stated his reasons for the "delay": he did not want to copy (as was usual in his time) from other travel books, handbooks or tourist guides, and he did not know how to avoid it. In addition, he was sure that "even the most careful observer who lived for years among natives in the wild will find barely five percent of the observations that had not been made and described before him. Then there is perhaps about twenty percent which has been known and described by others, but in a false or distorted manner" (7), and it would therefore start a debate, the energy for which he only gained at the end of his life, aware of the cultural riches that he had accumulated on his repeated journeys to the Americas.

As this study is focused on literary travel material, a term which applies to the works of Norbert Frýd and Ján Boor, I will not examine the extent of the originality of the observations and information presented to the readers of their journeys to Mexico, although it is very unlikely to reach Frič's five percent. And what that remarkable traveller would describe as simplified, with shifted meaning or in a false context

serves as a valuable source of exploring the difference represented by Mexico and reflected in Central Europe, where the imagological potential of travel literature in the Central European area has been brilliantly revealed by several recent works (e. g. Gáfrik 2018; Hrabal, ed., 2015). They show that literature as such "plays an important role in the study of mental representations, although […] it is far from exhausting the possibilities of exploring the image of another culture" (Gáfrik 2018, 19–20).

The aim of this study is not to give a comprehensive view of Central European, or more precisely Czechoslovak literature, which found creative impetus in travelling to Mexico. Through selected travel texts I would like to try to reconstruct the image of Mexico as it was shaped by the Czechoslovak cultural discourse at the turn of the 1940s and 1950s. I have narrowed the space for interpretation to the travel sketches of Frýd and Boor, as they were written during a period with stronger influence from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the authors represent the same generation and represent the distinctive form of coexistence of Czech and Slovak culture in one state.

FRÝD'S MEXICO: CORNUCOPIA OR EMPTY POCKET

"Mexico is in America" the name of Norbert Frýd's travelogue appears to be a suitable contextualization of the subject, but it is also a leitmotif of the artist's own interpretation of the country. Indeed, Mexico's geographic location in North America, where it borders the US, has influenced its situation for centuries, but the south-eastern borders with Guatemala and Belize are already in the Central American region, and it has a Pacific coast in the west while to the east lies the Gulf of Mexico. This is a well-known fact, but it is important to remember that it is a strategic location, both geopolitically and culturally, which has affected the country and continues to do so. This is exemplified by the complex political and economic relations of Mexico with the United States, as well as with the consciousness of the essential cultural penetration with the other side of the American continent, with which Mexico, in addition to its natural wealth, also shares its pre-Columbian heritage, three centuries of European colonization, the urban phenomenon, cultural and religious syncretisms, struggles for independence or experience of dictatorship and, from the point of view of literature and art, also some sort of Hispano-American, or Latin American imagination.

Finally, Frýd also used the title for the whole book, anchoring the centre of gravity of his narrative towards North America, accentuating that Mexico's immediate neighbour is the US, the "leading force" of the continent. This geographical constellation is, in his view, a prerequisite for understanding the "peculiarities of life, work and revolutionary struggles of the Mexicans" (1952, 44). Already in this short quotation, Frýd's ideological basis and prism, which determines his interpretation, easily resonate. In two places, it also points out the importance of the country's "northernmost" position among other Latin American countries, and the roots (Spanish language and cultural heritage) of this community are described as a "fundamental truth" by means of comparison with Czechoslovakia ("you cannot explain its past well if you omit that […] it is the part of the Slavic family which is the most westerly and has

a particularly long border with Germany", 45), but the book is dominated by the paradoxes of Mexico presented as if the results of geopolitics. The way he portrays the Mexican situation in the whole book is represented by two images – the cornucopia (horn of plenty) and an empty pocket:

> In terms of its shape on the map, Mexico has often been compared to the cornucopia. Indeed, it has always been a cornucopia, at least for those who reached it from Spain or the USA. The empty pocket, in turn, seems to evoke its own inhabitants, who have so far never been able to eke out more than a very modest, even poor, living from all the richness of the land (45).

Frýd came to Mexico in 1947, only two years after World War II. His image of the country, however, was also formed over the following period when he was working in the US, and until he handed in the manuscript (around the first half of 1952). Unlike Boor, whom he met in Mexico in 1947, and whose experience – as follows from the postscript dated "in the summer of 1948" – was captured almost immediately, Frýd's view of Mexico is strongly influenced by developments on the domestic political scene. In the post-war period, Czechoslovakia sought to build on the extraordinary economic and cultural cooperation with Mexico from the second half of the 1930s, which was not so easy, as both countries found themselves on different sides of the divided world and especially after 1948 there was a limitation of mutual contacts (see Opatrný 2011, 59).[5] Paradoxically, World War II, as contemporary historians argue in apparent discrepancy with Frýd's well-known views, brought several benefits to Mexico; in particular, it stimulated economic growth. Relations with the US had never been so good before, as the world superpower needed Mexican help in both natural products and its workforce. And since Mexico could no longer count on business relations with Europe, it was forced to set up factories and workshops to meet its own needs, producing and exporting more goods by the end of the war and changing the country's character from rural to urban and industrial (Meyer 2014, 359).

Although customers of Czechoslovak business associates in the period after 1945 renewed their demand and Mexico itself took steps to free itself from dominating US economic influence by opening up cooperation with other countries (e. g., in 1950 under Miguel Aleman's government a commercial cooperation agreement was signed with Czechoslovakia); the political events in Central Europe complicated relations. After the Communist takeover in February 1948, the influence of the Soviet Union was stronger in Czechoslovakia and the country eventually became part of the Eastern Bloc. US foreign policy, which was dominated by the atmosphere of the Cold War, saw danger in the ideological harmony between the countries of the so-called socialist camp and the political tendencies spreading in Latin America, as well as the interest of the reformist governments there in cooperating with the socialist countries in arms production. The US tried to break the contacts in the first half of the 1950s with strong anti-communist propaganda, especially in Mexico. Finally, the East-West conflict marked Czechoslovak politics in this Latin American country: in 1948, politically undesirable persons were dismissed from diplomatic posts, over time they focused on "reactionary" forces (monitoring and control of Czechoslovak citizens living in Mexico, anti-Communist activities of the USA, the relationship between the

Catholic Church and the state, etc.) and espionage increased (see Opatrný – Zourek – Majlátová – Pelant 2015, 124).

The political atmosphere that Frýd and Boor describe is reflected in their work in a certain way. Their efforts to depict or describe Mexico in another category are manifested in the remarkable potential of travel literature: "It shows and affirms the direction in which societal interest is heading in the future. It has the ability to legitimize knowledge but also to question it. It becomes the bearer of ideological schemes and noetic confessions" (Hrabal 2015, 6). An important starting point for understanding the ideological values and ideological positions of both authors is their life stories. As noted, this can be read in particular from the story of Norbert Frýd and the events of the time. Frýd was already left-wing when he was a high school student. From 1930 he was a member of the Communist Student Group, in the mid-1930s he became actively involved in the political and cultural activities of the Left Front, and after 1945, he became involved in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Frýd's life philosophy, which is visible from his travelogue of Mexico, takes on more comprehensible contours in the light of his tragic experience in a concentration camp (1942/43–1945), from which he managed to escape, but where he lost his closest relatives. This tragedy was preceded by another difficult experience – the exclusion of the Jewish population from the public sphere. While in the years 1936–1939 he worked as a writer in the Czechoslovak branch of the American film company Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and later as a dramaturge for RKO Radiofilm, from autumn 1939 he worked only in the Prague Jewish community as an archivist and later an assistant labourer.[6] It is indisputable that after the radical political changes in Czechoslovakia in 1948, Frýd's communist profile must have been satisfactory as he remained on his foreign missions in Mexico and the United States until 1951 and later, when he was working as a career writer until the early 1970s, so also during the normalization period, he was a UNESCO delegate.[7]

The author portrays Mexico primarily as a country with enormous natural wealth and at the same time extremely poor, even starving. It is most explicit in naming the reasons for this situation: nothing can be protected from the US's miserable, dishonest, manipulative intervention, neither agriculture, industry, market prices, or the training of young officers in the Mexican army. The tentacles of North American diplomacy penetrate "to all the levers of the state" (47). The credibility of his testimonies about the impoverishment and exploitation of Mexico by foreigners, especially by the United States, which he presents as an imperialist power and a modern colonizer, and even in several places as an exponent of fascism, is backed up with concrete data (percentages, years, figures). He does not conceal the fact that his relationship with the United States is hostile, he reveals it with indignant, in places hateful tones that, in his authorial style, balance the affectionate depiction of the Mexican people approaching an ode. The Mexican people, who experience the greatest degree of oppression from the United States, become the collective hero of these travel features: "Long ago, they built pyramids larger than those of Egypt with their bare hands, without iron chisels, wheels, pulleys, and hauling animals", and even today they "believe only in the strength of all" (7). For Frýd, this strength is represented by ordinary

people, the miners, the workers, the poor peasants, the impoverished and murdered citizens of the regions. Their moral values are opposed to the greed, hypocrisy, and indifference of the wealthy, the coal barons, mine-owners, bourgeois leeches, bourgeois journalists, or sold-out trade union officials. He considers the Indians to be the strongest "cell" of the Mexican people; they survived despite the ruthless looting and oppression by the Spaniards. "In Mexico, however, the Indian not only survived, but is also the bearer of the best revolutionary traditions. In the course of history, the Indians have provided almost all the figures whom the people today regard as their true leaders." So Frýd not only considers the ability of the indigenous population for self-preservation, he appreciates the added value of their fiery temperament, which mobilizes hunger marches, strikes and demonstrations. In the author's vision, it is precisely "the flash that will eventually burst out of the brown eyes of the Indians" (21), which will awaken this force, as during the struggles for independence in the early 19th century or during the 1910–1929 revolution, and will provide the definitive victory over imperialism.

At the same time, the image of the simple Mexican man is an image of misery – the author seeks to show the large gaps between the social classes. They are individuals and whole families, people who have no more than a straw mat on which they can lie anywhere. They are used to travelling tens of kilometres even with large uphill sections or keep eating the same, non-nutritious foods; illiterate; without social security and health security and so on. Frýd refers to the Mexican people as easy prey for the "reaction" he defines in the opposition to world-wide progress (he considered this to be Marxism) and, in his critical view of Mexico, this is mainly represented by the political right linked to the US and the Catholic Church, as well as in the strong support from its northern neighbour. The author expresses his fundamental concern in relation to Mexican youth, which even here is not a neutral assessment of the situation. In the background is one of many comparisons which in the travel sketches are generally applied for better plasticity and which stem from associations to the Czechoslovak context – political, social or even geographical or natural. In this particular case, he compares the possibilities for education and success for young people, emphasizing the benefits of the educational system and social policy in Czechoslovakia against its permanent failure in capitalist Mexico, where young people do not have the means to study, are exposed to the pitfalls of delinquency and American propaganda in the form of Hollywood films and various types of propaganda. These, according to Frýd, deliberately divert young people's attention from objectives "for which it would be worthwhile to struggle and possibly bring to life" (35). He blames the social order and its inability to direct the "joyful power of young people and give them healthy fulfilment" (35), apparently unlike the Czechoslovak Union of Youth (founded in 1949), which shaped its cultural officers and exercise group leaders using dialectical materialism. The fanciful example of Frýd's empathetic focus on young Mexican people, personifying the future hope of the country and at the same time the tragic, bleak present, is the story from "Naked on an Aeroplane", where a young Indian boy, eager to fly, climbs onto a transport plane and miraculously survives an hour of flight at three thousand metres. "He was naked, except for the cuffs of the

shirt that remained around his wrists. His other clothes were torn from his body by the icy vortex up there. […] Nobody understood how he could have endured stretched out on the surface, holding only the front edge of the wing with his hands. But it seemed to have been the truth." (32). In the composition of the travelogue, the author uses this plastic description of the "adventure" of one of the many representatives of the Mexican people as a starting point for criticizing the capitalist system and the associated iniquities that make certain geographical areas a place of misery and increase the already large differences between the world of the poor and the rich: "The whole story only shows sadly what happens, when in a capitalist state, a brave boy for example desires to get into an aircraft and never does it simply because he is poor" (33).

The portrayal of the Catholic Church is a special case in the alternative imagination of Norbert Frýd's work. In principle, it depicts it exclusively as greedy, corrupt, full of intrigue, responsible for maintaining the feudal system and destroying the pre-conquest cultural heritage, guiding people to humble acceptance of life on earth in the hope of an afterlife. He therefore shares the attitudes of the Mexican revolutionary leaders of the first decade of the 20th century, who saw the church as a real obstacle in the attempt to establish a socialist state. The Catholic Church in Frýd's perception builds stereotypical images of the clergy or bigoted Mexican women; he characterizes the Vatican's politics as reactionary and anti-peace, as an "instrument of a small but rich group of imperialists and warlords". His fierce criticism is built on irony and sarcasm, especially in the context where the Catholic Church enters into a relationship with a dictatorship (in Mexico or Spain) or when it receives the aforementioned North American support. Frýd's opinion is rooted in social criticism, therefore he does not problematize the situation by considering the significance of the missionary activity in order to defend the indigenous peoples in the first centuries of the colony or to preserve the original oral tradition, nor the role of the Catholic Church in the spread of art and culture, or even the part of its representatives who participated in the struggle for independence and were suspended for it, etc.[8] His approach to the subject can be unambiguously characterized as anti-clerical: it reflects the ideological background of both the Czechoslovak Republic and the Mexican political elites, who since the 19th century manifested this in radical legislative decisions in various historical situations (see Krupa 2016). The author's sense of satisfaction in this context is reinforced by the created image of the Mexican people that hate the church, just as they hate the Americans. Indeed, "the people have hatred of overlords in their blood" (12).

Frýd's attitude towards the United States is expressed in the form of harsh condemnation, culminating in his last sketches, the names of which explicitly signal the political view of his narrative. The sketch "The Enslaved Continent" begins with Stalin's words about how the grimness and blind obedience of Latin American countries in the UN to the United States is a threat to world peace. He then describes the "dependent countries of the continent" as US economic vassals trying to "turn them into direct colonies of their imperialist empire" (151).

> And it is harder serfdom […] that rises directly from the centuries-old tradition of the colonial empire of the Spanish conquistadors. To see how far some countries have gone,

> we can look at the nice confession that the Americans let slip. It was in the days when they wanted to prove to the world that they had no interest in attacking China. "Why would we risk war for a country," shouted Time magazine, "in which we have almost no investment at all? Just in Mexico we have four times the investment!" (151–152)

In the light of the political and economic strategies of the Spanish colonial system, which he blames, among other things, for the deliberate economic ostracism of Latin American countries and the shameless looting, the author draws attention to the current state of the economy: the constant flow of foreign capital, as well as the continued efforts to "rapidly get money and get it overseas", knowingly hindering industrialization, exporting raw materials at low prices, importing for high etc. This is information that is spoken about in various ways through Frýd's book, but here it comes in a condensed form to conclude in an open indictment of the official activities of the United States government and the private sector.

> They break progressive movements, support reactionary dictatorships, and military coups […]. They sell old weapons to dictators and do not forget the fat commissions for their generals and ministers. They bribe the press, spend millions on direct propaganda through libraries, language courses, competitions, exhibitions and so on. […] The North Americans have taken over the Spaniards' dominion over the natives and continue their slaver's ways. […] For their economic achievements in Latin America, they often owe the brutal intervention of the armed forces, the landing of the navy, bombing and the full wars of intervention. The New York Herald itself compared the "police" action of the United States in Korea with a similar advance against Mexico in 1914 (the Veracruz attack). It is also hard to forget that some of the most important territories of the US today, such as Texas or the Panama Canal Zone, are the results of the robbery against Latin America (154–155).

In Frýd's discursive tone, ostentatiously directed against the northern neighbour of Mexico, is embodied the determined attitude of a committed fighter for class justice and women's equality in the way that he raised socialist ideology with Marxism-Leninism to the level of a scientific platform. Since Frýd's travel stories were published in Czechoslovakia during the period strongly affected by the political influence of the Communist Party, there was no reason for self-censorship. In addition to the aforementioned attitudes, evidence that this was more than the compulsory ideological nod in his case, we can present his obvious sympathy for the political exponents of the ideology of the regime at both poles of a world divided by the Cold War. Frýd's style was created by his political and civic engagement, personal beliefs about the truth and the sole correctness of the values declared by socialist doctrine, which seemed to him to be a firm refuge from his own experiences of persecution and violence emerging from the extremist right-wing political spectrum. Frýd's imagination of them works using association, which particularly comes out of the inner analogy he finds between the situation of the working but wounded Mexican people and a concentration camp: "Dirt, sweat, and the true concentration camp smell of malnourished workers. All of a sudden it was like a black cloud around the bright glitter of the palace" (9). Through the repeated labelling of North American monopolistic practices in Mexico as fascist, coming from his own ideological convictions, he brings the Mexican people's experience into the literary text: the people become

a working class, which leads to the realization that misery stems from capitalism and that the only way to national independence and fairer order is to eliminate the "foreign and domestic rich" (12). So Frýd's political and social perspective is allied with the left-wing affiliation of a broad strata of Latin America. The left-wing reform policy – focusing (especially during the governments of Cárdenas and later Ávila Camacho) on the redistribution of land owned by the state and the landowners for the benefit of peasant cooperatives, the nationalization of the oil industry, and gradually the literacy of the population and its social and medical security – undeniably meant a hope for a better future.

Despite the many valuable detailed sketches about the life of Mexicans and a wealth of factual information, *Mexico is in America* enters the Czechoslovak cultural space as an ideological appeal, invoking the attention of readers in the spirit of contemporary propaganda: the struggle of Latin America for economic independence and genuine national independence can only reach a successful outcome if all the workers are united on a single battlefield with defenders of peace around the world, and the Americas are freed from the exploiters – only then will there be equality and the other countries can "live in sincere friendship" with it (156). He sees the free future of the continent in his "Leaving America," as the author describes the Statue of Liberty – with its back to dry land and its torch to the east: "If it were not a riveted statue but a woman, she would have long abandoned her quarantined island and she would have gone to a better home somewhere across the Atlantic, with us" (168). The literary point of Frýd's reflections on Mexico's geopolitical position is revealed at the end of the sketch of the same name when the author gives its proximity to the imperialist, reactionary power a new, positive meaning in the form of an implicit challenge: "The [anti-imperialist peaceful forces of Mexico], are right at the borders of the United States, right in the heart of the continent and in sight of all Latin American republics" (48).

BOOR'S "MISSION" OF "INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING"

Boor's work *Mexico* is described by the *History of Slovak Literature III* as a "book of non-ideological travel sketches" (Marčok 2006, 348). Ján Boor's ideological beliefs are not unambiguously attested in the sources. Something perhaps in this connection is perhaps suggested by the words of his friends: "Around himself and among his students, always, even in the dull years of totalitarianism and normalization, he spread the spirit of European education and a free-minded view of the issues of European culture, regardless of 'class' boundaries" (Baláž 2002). The thirty-year-old Boor's text about his journey to Mexico is somewhat suggestive of these personality qualities, but also of youthful passion in the ideological plane that can be interpreted as a personal adherence to left-wing values, as well as a "compulsory" response to the expansion of communist ideology in Czechoslovakia. From his soulful and information-rich authorial style to a certain extent, his previous experience as a secondary school teacher also brought him a new job in the major cultural, museum and scientific institution Matica slovenská, whose aim was to build on the "traditions of learned societies and national-revival societies" (Mikula et al. 1999, 296). From Boor's description

of Mexico, especially in the second chapter, "Presence – a colourful adventure", what stands out is the artist's astonishment, similar to the amazement of the first chroniclers. He wants to become a "devout knightly herald" of Mexican beauty and arouse "interest in that far world" (7). In this mission, which he presents as a modest contribution to the great mission of UNESCO ("international understanding with the help of culture"), he clearly sees the need for his own country: "The people of Mexico and Latin America could perhaps be much closer to us than they are now. The basis for this is stronger than we think. Mutual knowledge will lead to sympathies that could develop on the basis of many common qualities, traditions and aspirations" (8). Certainly, this reasoning can also be interpreted explicitly as an effort to satisfy the institutions that arranged Boor's travel experience. However, the manner of narrating an experienced event afterwards, which we do not have space in this study to analyse, reveals that the atmosphere of the environment persisted – using expressive means to highlight this experience in its various observational and observed nuances, and suggestively capture it. In the author, the experience of the journey, the atmosphere of liveliness and the uniqueness of the environment (cultural-historical, social, artistic, linguistic, etc.) resonate, which also influences the exoticizing image of Mexico he brings to Czechoslovak readers: it is picturesque and romantic, with "amazing country scenery" and "valleys like Eden" (42, 60), with the enviable heritage of the most cultured of the ancient nations of the Americas (10) and at the same time linked to the oldest cultures of the Old World (11). As Boor's journey across the Atlantic Ocean takes place shortly after World War II, his understanding of the historical struggles for peace and independence is even more striking, as well as the belief that "it is the country of the future" (70) as are his personal wishes for the needed democracy and new age of prosperity (21).

In the work of Ján Boor, we can see traces of the efforts for enlightenment of the new age – motivated by the post-war atmosphere – to spread knowledge and understanding through culture. The fact that the Matica slovenská published the book in its series "Na cestách" ("On Journeys"), would further strengthen the "great mission" (1949, 8). It should be stressed, however, that this institution was also affected by totalitarian tendencies during World War II and in the 1950s (Mikula et al. 1999, 296), and it is therefore likely that the intervening period when the sketches from Boor's trip to Mexico were published was merely a sort of initial stage in the building of ideological positions. Similarly, we can only guess to what extent Frýd himself influenced Boor's view of Mexico's reality, as he also showed him Mexico. Boor mentions him as one of the guides of the delegation in several places. At the beginning of the book, he expresses explicit gratitude for his comfortable travel around Mexico to "countrymen, whether in the embassy or in the Czechoslovak colony of Mexico City" (1949, 7).

Boor's travelogue still reflects the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Czechoslovakia during the interwar First Republic and in a way also a traditionally closer relationship between Slovakia and the Catholic Church. Naturally, in his historical reflections in the first of the three chapters of the book, he uses the phrases "pred Kristom" ("before Christ") or "po Kristovi" ("after Christ") with dates.[9] His refined authorial

style is interwoven with Latin phrases, and in the passage where he captures his literally meditative mood when looking at the Pacific Ocean and the surrounding nature does not hesitate to use the introduction of the medieval Marian anthem "Ave Maris Stella" as a way of thankful and worshipful prayer associated with the bright star in the sky (66). His manner of describing Mexican history and culture, especially the impressive heritage of pre-Columbian civilizations, does not, unlike Frýd's interpretation, imply practical intentions that should be realized, for example, in the field of economic and cultural cooperation. He condemns the destructiveness of the Spanish colonial system, the rage and ruthlessness of the conquerors, while describing the ritual murder of some of them at the hands of the Aztecs – surprisingly inhumanly – as being in the interests of justice: "At least they have suffered for all the atrocities of the white conquerors" (13). His admiring European look at the magnificent and at the same time subtle artefacts of the pre-conquest world shatters doubts about the barbarism or the primitivism of these cultures. The author's upbringing in the Christian worldview, as may be presumed from the time in which he lived his formative years, provokes in him reservations about the actual ways of Christianity (Cortes "wanted to save the pagans with the sword", 15; "to the eternal shame of European and Christian rulers", 16). His criticism of the Catholic Church in the context of the return of the struggle between religious influence and laity, and its power over Mexican history, is equally clear: "it inherited powerful positions from the Spanish dominion in Mexico; unfortunately, as almost always with a powerful aristocracy it often stood as a bastion of reaction against social progress. Its influence is still powerful today" (19). He perceives the Church, along with wealthy landowners or foreigners, as an obstacle to social reforms, depicting it with a negatively accented attitude as a barrier to progress or a builder of missionary fortresses. Spanish culture represented Christian culture as such. In this sense, he interprets religious architecture as a symbol of colonial power. In these criticisms, he concurs with Frýd, although his tone is much more relaxed and he is rather neutral in connection with the same subject. Certain thought-related, if not ideological, affinities of both authors can be seen in the depiction of the USA. Boor refers to Americans as both exploiters and bandits (18–19), and it is not clear whether this is his personal view or a hint of the ideological pressures from the beginning of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia. At the end of the first part of his travel sketches, however, he presents himself as a supporter of collectivization and socialism, which he perceives as a means of achieving prosperity, progress, peace and democracy (21). However, private ownership of capital, as it turns out, is perceived negatively regardless of whether it is owned by Americans or by Mexicans (75).

As it appears in the composition of the first chapter and in the final passages of the travelogue, the Mexican people are interpreted by the author as creative, cultural and spiritual (in the sense of pre-Christian spirituality), but oppressed and exploited for centuries. This thought base then allows him to emphasize their regenerative power, ability to be awakened, to free themselves and to achieve great things in the future:

> One day however, these gifted people will be freed from all their bonds. As soon as the social system in the country is awakened – or overturned. We often like to judge the future

of a people according to their art. Although this view is burdened with old romanticism, if we take it carefully and critically, we can come up with many valuable and correct conclusions with its help. Accordingly, the Mexican people really still have their future ahead of them, because their art is rich and fresh (77).

The introduction to the third chapter (with the title "Looking to the Future") evokes in the reader the impression that the author will develop the above-mentioned ideological positions in the question of the role of socialism. However, compared to Frýd's sharply anti-capitalist attitudes, it is more of a human manifestation of compassion for the pain of the simple Mexican man, a natural disapproval of suffering rather than an explicit expression of pro-regime motivated attitudes, although sporadic use of terms such as proletarian, slave, repression, serfdom, or references to the Soviet context might suggest this: the average American cannot be without chewing gum, while the poor Mexicans collecting resin must slave away in the forests and are among the most pitiable proletarians in the world (72); the "Mexican government must pull the American cart, willing or not" (75); "One state language is needed, as in the Soviet Union" (74); "The great poet of socialism and the Soviet Union, Vladimir Mayakovsky" (80).

The focus of the narrative in this final chapter results in the accentuation of Mexicanness as a result of "the interplay and influence of the Spanish and Indian cultures" (76–77). The author anchors the creative fertility of the Mexicans in folk traditions, art and culture, which stems from the distinctive spirit of the Mexican people: "They can enjoy life, from nice and new things, from extraordinary and busy moments" (78). "Mexico is Americanizing, but hopefully only on the surface. It is just a technical-civilization coating, and the 'spiritus loci', the spirit of the place, remains immune at its core. There is still an old Spanish and Indian nobleness and knightliness that must save the morals, character and way of life of the Mexican people […]" (79).

CONCLUSION

Norbert Frýd and Ján Boor's travel sketches obviously reflect the atmosphere of their time, as well as the discursive means used in them. However, from the point of view of this interpretation, this is not as important as the fact that they arose in the space of rather "small" cultures, which themselves were not favoured in terms of the distribution of power, and also experienced different phases of serfdom or totalitarian pressures to a greater or lesser degree. The aforementioned starting point, on the contrary, made it possible to reveal the ideological platforms of the authors of the chosen narrative, their adherence, or sympathy for certain mental representations and the rejection of others. In this regard, we can present Frýd's imagination inspired by Mexico, or the image of Mexico as such, considering the already mentioned image of an empty pocket – in a country with significant natural and cultural wealth ("cornucopia") returns and with a strong emotional charge representing both the poor and dispossessed (above all) as the result of expansive imperialist ambitions and the neo-colonial practices of the USA.)

His view is clearly based on the principle of contrast, the rhetoric of a pro-communist ideology that was essentially close to him. Despite the fact that it also shows

Mexico's richness in other aspects (e. g. historical, artistic), the imprint it leaves on the reader is more political and ideological. Boor's travel prose does not feature similarly obvious and similarly vehement thoughts, though here and there, a certain degree of engagement in the name of social justice is evident as mentioned in the interpretation. But in the author's portrayal of Mexico, the fascination with the abundance, inexhaustibility, diversity and originality of the Mexican spirit and environment is very strongly present, underlined by frequent use of rhetorical questions, exclamations, and epithets as the cornerstone of his poetics. Both travel texts open up space for the reader to begin stimulating and adventurous exploration in the footsteps of a defined historical period, dominated by well-known ideas and value expectations, which, together with the author's subject, created the contemporary atmosphere together.

Translated from Slovak by Richard Swales

NOTES

[1] Boor's book was published by Matica slovenská in Turčiansky Sv. Martin (now called Martin). Frýd's book was prepared by the Prague publishing house ROH – Práce, which was the publishing house of the Revolutionary Trade Union (founded in 1946), a monopoly trade union in Czechoslovakia, under the strong influence of the ruling Communist Party after 1948.

[2] I say "at least" because resources diverge regarding this information. *The Dictionary of Czech Literature* states that Frýd began to work in Mexico in 1947, moving to the USA around late 1948–early 1949. Available at: http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=324 [16. 2. 2019]. Another source gives the years 1947–1951 for his time in Mexico (Opatrný – Zourek – Majlátová – Pelant 2015, 123), while another does not distinguish between the missions in Mexico and the USA for the years 1947–1951. Available at: https: //www.chuchle.cz/100-let-od-narozeni-norberta-fryda.html [16. 2. 2019].

[3] The topic of Czech travellers (pursuers of happiness, missionaries, researchers, diplomats, adventurers, etc.) from the 16th century are the focus of Josef Opatrný (31–64), Simona Binková (65–77), and Markéta Křížová (79–93) in the monothematic issue of *Ibero-Americana Pragensia* "Las relaciones checo-mexicanas" (ed. Opatrny 2011). A useful insight into the issue of mutually stimulating relationships – literary, translation, artistic, but also economic – are given by studies by other authors (P. Štěpánek, J. Stískal, V. Rouč, J. Novotný – J. Šouša, L. Majlátová, M. Flores, M. Uličný). After the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Slovakia became part of a common state with the Czech Republic, in 1918–1938 (the First Czechoslovak Republic) and 1945–1992 (the Czechoslovak Republic, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic), therefore it was also part of these international relations, which is reflected in the publications, for example, by mentioning some Slovak personalities in Mexico. The study of relations between Czechoslovakia and Mexico, as well as between Czechoslovakia and Latin America, was based on the results of research by the team of authors Opatrný – Zourek – Majlátová – Pelant 2015.

[4] The expression "Indian", as used in this study by the authors, is the designation of the indigenous peoples during that period, but it should also emphasized that this term is being rehabilitated from the environment of indigenous cultures that have been preserved or appear to be close to the present (such as the Mapuci Indians and Guarani Indians) claiming their own cosmogony and cultural identity. The importance of this use is also discussed by A. V. Frič. See e.g. http://delsectorsocial.org/frase/Indios [30. 3. 2019] or Serrano, Sebastián: "Indio e indígena." El País (opinión), 22 January 2006. https://elpais.com/diario/2006/01/22/opinion/1137884409_850215.html [30. 3. 2019].

[5] Pre-war economic co-operation was developed mainly on the basis of the activities of Ambassador Vlastimil Kybal (1880–1958), with the support of some representatives of industry in the Czecho-

slovakia of the time, and it was initiated based on the belief that Latin America was a region with a future, a good buyer of products (e.g. from the glass, engineering or armaments industries) and a supplier of raw materials. Kybal's efforts resulted in 1937's conclusion of a relatively exclusive Czechoslovak-Mexican trade agreement, which was also helped by the fact that his diplomatic mission overlapped with the government of President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), a supporter of reform policy. Kybal, a historian and connoisseur of Romanesque cultures, had been involved in deepening relations between Mexico and Czechoslovakia at various levels of public and professional life, as well as the Association of Friends of Czechoslovakia established in cooperation with Mexican intellectuals, artists and state officials. During his work, cooperation in the field of culture and art developed considerably. An example of this is the magnificent exhibition of modern Czechoslovak graphic art in Mexico and the exhibition of Mexican archaeological monuments, ethnographic objects and folk art in Prague. Kybal's activities were followed after 1939 by Czechoslovak emigration to Mexico (e. g. E. E. Kisch, L. Reinerová, O. Odložilík, K. Sokol) (Opatrný – Zourek – Majlátová – Pelant 2015, 120–122).

[6] Kučera, Martin, "Frýd Norbert 21. 4. 1913 – 18. 3. 1976". In *Biographical Dictionary of the Czech Lands*. Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. Available at: http://biography.hiu.cas.cz/Personal/index.php/FR%C3%9DD_Norbert_21.4.1913-18.3.1976 [30. 3. 2019]; In *Dictionary of Czech Literature after 1945*. Available at: http://www.slovnikceskeliteratury.cz/showContent.jsp?docId=324 [15. 2. 2019].

[7] This assumption is also supported by the fact that Frýd's name appears on the official lists of collaborators of the State Security, although without the indication of the method of co-operation or any information on monitoring by the StB, there is no date of birth, only the date when his file was put into the archive: 23. 2. 1956, or 1966. Available at: http://www.upn.gov.sk/regpro/zobraz.php?typ=centrala&kniha=143&strana=18&zaznam=343 [18. 2. 2019].

[8] It is worth mentioning, for example, that in Mexico during the colonial period, one of the most important figures of Hispano-American (and literary) history was the Dominican father Bartolomé de las Casas (1484–1566), later bishop of the Chiapas diocese. Along with other religious brothers, he initiated a controversy about the legitimacy of the conquest. And although this does not mean, as Roberto Fernández Retamar argues, these men in a minority representation "managed to assert their own criteria, yet they have been able to defend them against the highest authorities, they have been heard and in some way satisfied" ([1976] 2011). Thanks to his influence, according to the French historian P. Villara, in the mid-16th century, the human rights debate moved from a humanitarian level to a legal one (1960, 49; Fernández Retamar 2011). A remarkable reconstruction of the work of Bohemian and Moravian Jesuits in the Mexican province is seen in the study by Markéta Křížová: in addition to the missionary activity, which they understood as a "form of active social criticism", they studied the fauna and flora there, local geography, wrote grammars and dictionaries of native languages, described the habits of indigenous peoples. They were architects and engineers (ed. Opatrný 2011, 79–93). Regarding the intellectual background of the struggle for independence, the development of the canonical chapter at Valladolid (1809), for example, contributed significantly to the development. Many priests responded to the difficult social situation of their believers and were among the vanguard of the rebels, which can be explained by "their influence on the population, priestly sensitivity, unwillingness to accept the situation or their intellectual formation" (Monreal Sotelo 2010). Finally, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla himself (1753–1811), the leader of the popular uprising against the colonial regime that led to the achievement of Mexican independence (1821), was a Catholic priest who was excommunicated in 1810.

[9] In the period of the socialism the terms "BCE – Before the Common Era" and "CE – Common Era" were used in order to distance from religious coordinates.

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The image of Mexico in Czechoslovak travel sketches of the 1940s and 1950s

Image. Mexico. America. Czechoslovakia. Travel sketch. Norbert Frýd. Ján Boor.

This study presents literary material that originated in the postwar Czechoslovak Republic in the late 1940s and early 1950s, inspired by the experience of traveling to Mexico. The subject of interpretation is two books of travel sketches: the Slovak literary and theatre scholar Ján Boor's *Mexico* (1949) and the Czech journalist and diplomat Norbert Frýd's *Mexico is in America* (1952). Based on the aforementioned texts, the study seeks to reconstruct the image of Mexico as it was shaped by the Czechoslovak cultural discourse of the period, while at the same time aiming to reveal the ideological platforms of both authors' narratives. The selection of interpreted works was marked by the fact that both were written during a period of stronger influence of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the authors represent the same generation and represent a distinctive form of coexistence of Czech and Slovak culture in the territory of one state.

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Images of remote countries in Russian classical sea voyage literature

GALINA G. TYAPKO – IRINA D. BOBRINSKAYA

White sail lonely
In the mist of the sea blue! […]
What is he looking for in a faraway country?
What did he throw at his native land?
Mikhail Lermontov

Russian classical literature of the 19th century boasts many literary works related to sea voyages and round-the-world travels. There were frequent expeditions to far-off lands to explore new countries, learn the mysteries of the world's ocean and establish new trade routes: more than 40 expeditions took place only in the first part of the 19th century (Gaidaenko 1980, 3). As regards literary merit, popularity with readers of different age groups and generations, critical acclaim and the number of reprints, sea voyage literature has its more and less popular writers. Russian traveler-writers' sea voyage literature abounds with curious facts and revelations about new lands and their peoples. Interestingly, however, writers of the most revealing portrayals were drawn predominantly to Europe with its busy cities full of contrasts, Western cultural and industrial hubs and the ways of their local people. A vivid example of this is *Ret-visan*, a literary sea voyage by Grigorovich (Xian Yiling 2018). Russian traveller-writers' interest in Europe is only natural. Russia was stripping off the confines of feudal serfdom and was looking up to the enlightened Europe in an attempt to find the best way forward. Yet only a few writers were as interested in the life of remote countries in the age of the latter's active Western European colonization.

The most prominent Russian sea travel writers to deal with this matter were Ivan A. Goncharov (1812–1891) and Konstantin M. Staniukovich (1843–1903). They both undertook round-the-world voyages and gave descriptive accounts of those in their literary works which became renowned bestsellers for many generations of readers. These are Goncharov's travelogue *Frigate Pallada* and Staniukovich's short story "Round the World on the *Vulture*", as well as one of his sea stories "Maximka", with "the sea voyage stories being the best of Staniukovich" (Vengerov 1900, 437; Zhang Mengija 2018). The narratives describe round-the-world voyages of two Russian clippers, the *Pallada* and the *Vulture*, which both departed from Kronstadt (Saint Petersburg) on their three-year voyages, and the sequences of stops are almost the same. While the plot of these literary works is similar, the accounts of round-the-world

voyages by Staniukovich and Goncharov vary. What makes these two sea voyage narratives different in terms of their portrayal of images of remote countries?

Konstantin Staniukovich's short story "Round the World on the Vulture" follows the tradition of Russian classical literature and although it describes life at sea, it contains all the features of the short story genre. Staniukovich's main character is Vladimir Ashanin, whose personality is shown in his rise from cadet to garde-marine, up to midshipman. This story has the image of the author (Vinogradov 1971, 113–114), who tells the story in the third person singular and who cements all the events, different kinds of discourse (monologues and dialogues, dialects and professional vernacular) into one solid whole (Likhachov 1971, 214), with the main character in the middle. This character is an embodiment of the biography of Staniukovich himself, portrayed in the traditions of this genre. Nominally, the life of Vladimir Ashanin on the ship is the main storyline, and actually, it is a way of telling the reader about a variety of other problems, the images of remote countries included. A shift from a straightforward documentary style is evident in Staniukovich's chronology of events from the very first page: "On one gloomy nasty day early October 186*" (2018, 23).

Alternately, Ivan Goncharov chose a different genre to describe his voyage as specified in the sub-title of *Frigate Pallada: a travelogue*. The story is told by the writer himself in the first person; he gives exact dates relating to the travels and his writing. His manner of telling the story is letters to certain addressees, but in essence it is a talk with the reader in the epistolary-diary genre. In terms of its plot, it is a typical travelogue (Maiga 2014, 254–259) written as memoirs. The writer's sketches, opinions and judgments are extremely interesting as they contain unique information on the land and culture which is still relevant today. Besides, Goncharov is a true master of ethnographical description who created an unforgettable gallery of portraits of exotic faces of indigenous peoples of remote countries and continents.

The differences in the literary characteristics of both writers are considerably determined by the differences in their outlooks which, in their turn, were molded by their different backgrounds, upbringing, education, lifestyle and immediate environment. Unlike other writers of his time, Ivan Goncharov was born into an affluent merchant's family which enabled him to gain a top-quality education along with a business affinity. His reading preferences were books on travels, and he took a keen interest in listening to stories about far-away travels told by his seafaring godfather. Years later it was his childhood passion for travels that sent him on a round-the-world sea voyage. When a student of Moscow University's Department of Fine Arts and Languages, he continued to spend much time reading, getting acquainted with classical writers of all countries and nations. The famous critic Semyon Vengerov notes that Goncharov's characteristic prose style is undoubtedly the fruit of his careful study of classical literary works (1893, 201).

It was at the age of 40 that Goncharov, already a renowned Russian writer, author of the famous novel *Oblomov*, who was used to having tea with jam in his cozy house, suddenly recalled his childhood passion for sea voyage stories, and to everyone's surprise set off on a voyage as a secretary to admiral Putyatin, head of the delegation.

The delegation (1852–1855) set off to Japan to establish diplomatic relations with this remote and secluded country. Owing to these exciting experiences Russian literature was enriched by a contribution of a remarkable Russian writer. These are the portrayals of the peoples in the most exotic far-off lands made by a writer with a rich cultural background and a keen eye for detail. Goncharov set off on his voyage in the Baltic Sea to make his voyage around Europe, Africa and Asia, setting the route for Vladimir Ashanin, the main character in Staniukovich's short story.

Goncharov places special emphasis on the culture of the East and the relations between local indigenous people and European colonizers who actively involved the labour force of the former to enrich themselves. His work also contains an analysis of the cultural and religious policy of the West. In China he focuses on the English and the Chinese. His letters from Hong Kong and Shanghai abound with interesting sketches. For instance, at the stop of the Russian clipper in Hong Kong the writer's eye is caught by a once-deserted cliff with a wonderful city on it. The Chinese had sold it almost for nothing to the English, not foreseeing that it would be by their own labours that a beautiful European city would be built. In the abominable heat of the day no European can be seen outdoors, while the Chinese are everywhere; and the excessive heat seemed to be no hindrance to them. Everywhere around one can see their bare shoulders, backs, legs, heads and hair in two plaits. All the Chinese are busy working by the sweat of their brow, especially coolies, who carry Europeans as well as delivering goods and post (Goncharov 2018, 306).

Besides this, Goncharov sees the Chinese quarter as an antithesis of the European part of the city. The Chinese quarter is overcrowded and buzzing with activity, with cramped living space, unbearable heat and a plethora of smells. There are long rows of small shops with housing on the upper floor. The Chinese sell fabrics, dishware, tea and fruits with the sellers sitting at the counters, on their legs, absolutely naked. In the small workshops nearby local craftsmen, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, etc. are busy at work. In this quarter, in the mixture of shouts and smells, in an unbelievably cramped space, with piles of all kinds of goods around, the Chinese look much more cheerful (307). The critical eye of Goncharov notices that the space, freshness, cleanliness and the grandeur of the European part of Hong Kong makes some of the Chinese quarter dwellers ill at ease, hinting at the pirates (307, 281, 421, 434).

In addition, Goncharov resorts to vivid metaphors in the portrayal of the Chinese. He compares them to "peas falling out of a pea sack filled up to the rim" (421). Likewise, the Chinese people extend to all the neighbouring and far-off islands from the island of Java to California. Goncharov notes that the Chinese are plentiful everywhere. The Russian writer makes a favourable portrayal of the Chinese in Shanghai and notes their livelihood and business-like nature (438, 502). No Chinese can be seen resting in Shanghai. Unlike the Chinese in Hong Kong, the Chinese in Shanghai are peaceful, modest and very neat. Both men and women are neatly dressed (438). Goncharov does not only regard the Chinese as arduous labourers (noting that human labour and time spent on it were worthless in China) and he is amazed to see delicate time- and effort-consuming carvings which yet had no practical application. Those impressive

carvings of temples, houses, people and even their faces on almond nut and walnut shells are sold almost for nothing: Russian sailors would buy whole bunches of such shells for 5 or 6 dollars (441). Hence, Goncharov comes to the conclusion that no other people, not even Germans, would have the patience to produce such high-quality work or else it would cost a fortune (440, 445). Other portrayals of the Chinese in his travelogue include merchants and clever craftsmen and workers. Goncharov foresees that this people will have a great role to play in trade and other fields (421).

Goncharov's travelogue contains a profound analysis of the life of the local population of the countries and continents he visits. Wherever he goes, to the Cape of Good Hope, to Singapore, to Java or China, he takes a particular interest in the nuances of everyday life, sketches of everyday routine and portrayals of average people: "In taverns and in theaters I keep a keen eye on what people are doing, how they are drinking, eating and entertaining themselves" (42). But he perceives other lands through the lens of his own culture and outlook characteristic of the solid Eurocentric stance shared by the majority of the mid-19th century Russian intelligentsia (Kurilo 2018). Hence, the comparison of "them" to "us". For instance, when commenting upon the traditional national dress of Portuguese women, he compares them to those of Russian country women, a popular Spanish promenade in Manila is reminiscent of Russian popular promenades in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and Chinese provincial country fairs are compared to the Moscow fair or a fair in a little Russian town (Goncharov 2018, 442). Therefore, comparison and juxtaposition, analysis and fusion, acceptance or criticism of the past experiences are indicative of both Goncharov's and Staniukovich's narratives. Besides, both writers touch upon a whole range of philosophical issues such as the value of and respect for human life, fairness in society, as well as commenting on various social ills and technological progress.

Typically, most Russian 19th-century sea narratives are in line with the travelogue genre and invariably contain two intrinsic features: images of foreign countries and their peoples as well as sketches of the routine on board, coping with life at sea and seascapes. Both writers follow this tradition, but there is a difference in the emphasis they put on each of these components. Goncharov is merely "a passenger" on board the naval ship (Lozovik 1955, 88) and regards it just as a means in pursuit of his overall literary objective (Vilchinskii 1966, 83). While, being alien to the naval routine, Goncharov takes little interest in the life on board the ship and focuses primarily on portrayals of new lands, other life styles, new people and different cultures and outlooks, Staniukovich has a keen eye for detail what concerns both components. He compares "them" to "us", both on shore and at sea. His portrayals of remote countries and images of indigenous peoples are also of high literary merit and are in line with Russian classical literary tradition. Undeniably, Staniukovich's original perspective comes from his different background and upbringing, as the descendant of a renowned noble family of "a tough old-school admiral of the Russian fleet" (Vengerov 1900, 436). Staniukovich's name as a writer, traveller and sea officer is associated with vast seascapes and depictions of "exotic" places and peoples. Staniukovich's prose set a high standard for sea voyage genre writers (Vilchinskii 1963).

As an 18-year-old cadet, Staniukovich set off on his first around-the-world voyage on board a Russian Imperial fleet ship from Kronstadt (Saint Petersburg) in October 1861. The ship was to sail from the Baltic Sea up to the Sea of Japan through the Atlantic, Indian and the Pacific Oceans. On their voyage the sailors visited Hamburg and London, the Madeira Island and Cape Verde, Indonesia (then called Batavia), Hong Kong, San Francisco and Honolulu. Later Staniukovich spent a year on board of different ships in the Pacific waters. Then he was assigned to Saigon and in September 1863 he returned to his native city of Saint Petersburg through China and Siberia. It is at this time that Staniukovich resolved to become a writer, but he would put his impressions of three unforgettable years of naval service down on paper only three decades later. In 1895 the first chapters of Staniukovich's future sea story "Round the World on the *Vulture*" were published in the Rodnik magazine, and in 1896 the full story was printed by the A.A. Kartsev publishing house in Moscow. The main protagonist of the story, Vladimir Ashanin, remade the journey of Staniukovich as cadet, revealing the beauty and grandeur of the sea world, far-away countries, the way of life and culture of people from other continents to the readers. The writer's sketches, opinions and judgments are extremely interesting as they contain unique information on countries and cultures which is still relevant.

The story of the round-the-world sea voyage as told by the main character of the story, the 17-year-old naval college graduate Vladimir Ashanin, is an exciting account which can be read in one sitting. For Ashanin, bidding farewell to his family and to his influential uncle-admiral, an old sea wolf who had taken good care of him, marks the beginning of a new independent life. On the ship the cadet makes friends with young garde-marines, graduates of the same naval college, as well as with some sailors to whom he took at once and whose hard labour he respected. Yet Vladimir is greatly impressed by the captain of the ship, a smart, well-educated, reserved man and a highly skilled sea expert who calls on the officers to abolish corporal punishments for sailors as humiliating. The captain sees it as an issue of honour, especially "following the greatest reforms of Emperor Alexander II which had set millions of people free by abolishing serfdom" (Staniukovich 2018, 52). Most of the sea officers on the ship praise this initiative, and Staniukovich himself hails the initiative to abolish serfdom (Vengerov 1900, 436).

The theme of coming to the rescue of people in a shipwreck is recurrent in other Staniukovich's sea stories. This subject helps the writer to reveal the best traits of average Russian people at sea, who come to the rescue of "any 'other' whoever they were, irrespective of their race, colour or creed" with the heartfelt sympathy for others inherent in the Russian national character (Staniukovich 2018, 90). Among those rescued in Staniukovich's stories there is always one special person, usually a teenager, who is taken good care of by an elderly Russian sailor. In "Around the World on the *Vulture*", this special person is a French young sailor boy named Jacques who survives a shipwreck. A sailor named Bastriukov takes the boy into his care, bringing him to meals, giving him an outfit he had bought in Copenhagen, and making boots for him (92). A similar episode is described in Staniukovich's short story "Maximka".

Another recurring theme in Staniukovich's sea stories is the slave trade, a social ill which was thriving back in the 19th century and which the writer posits was a deplorable relic of the past. Ashanin mentions it in the course of an English and American sea officers' courtesy visit to the Russian Vulture clipper which had anchored at Saint-Vicenti not far from Cape Verde. The American captain tells them that their clipper is assigned to that location to trace slave trafficking ships that sailed between the coasts of Africa and South America to provide the latter with slaves. During their sea voyage poor Africans suffer abominable treatment by slave traffickers, with frequent instances of some of the live cargo onboard not reaching the destination. One or two captured ships a year are no deterrence for ruthless captains, who earn huge fortunes in a few years' trafficking, then quit that shameful activity and settle in remote colonies. When asked, the American captain tells them about the latest captures, adding that the captain of the slave trafficking ship was an American from the South, as there would hardly be any Northerners involved in such dirty business. When the African slaves (three hundred people) are told that they were free, some of them settle on the Cape Verde islands with its predominantly African population, others want to go to America, and some, whom he labels "dummies" with a giggle, want to return to their motherland, risking being sold again (111).

The next remote country that Ashanin describes is Indonesia (then called Batavia), and some of the youth on the ship go to have a dip in the ocean. The next morning, when the local traders in various goods come onboard the ship, the sailors learn how dangerous it is to swim in those waters as they are swarming with abominable predators – sharks and alligators, and one careless captain has recently had his hand bitten off by an alligator (146). Ashanin gives a vivid portrayal of the indigenous people of Java, who are naked except for bright-coloured thigh belts and green turbans on their heads. The Russian sailors are astonished at the misery of the part of Batavia which was inhabited by the natives and the luxury of the European part of the island with palaces and villas inhabited by its Dutch masters, who live in every comfort with extremely cheap local servants. Ashanin compares their way of life to that of American slave-owners and Russian serf owners, yet he notes that the Dutch lack the violence of American and Russian masters towards the defenceless people who are entirely at their mercy (149). Ashanin gives an interesting account of his visit to the luxurious residence of the Governor General of Java. He sees the famous botanic gardens which had the richest variety of tropical plant species in the world and notes the mesmerizing beauty of the luxurious greenery and blooming flowers in Batavia (155).

Ashanin also shares his experience of visiting a tiny Malayan village surrounded by cacti, banana and mango trees where the bamboo cabins look quite miserable but the coachman leads the Russian sea officers into a tiny hut which looked quite neat. The hosts, who are almost naked, give the visitors a warm welcome and treat them to some fruit, which helps Ashanin learn that Malays, especially rural dwellers, are quiet, polite, non-imposing and hard-working and proves the depictions of that people in the books he had read. Ashanin mentions Malays' staple diet – rice with green produce and smoked fish that they get from rivers. On his way back he gives vent to

his passionate 17-year-old youngster's criticism of the unjust exploitation of the 20 million population of the archipelago by a small group of people.

However, it is not only the beauties of remote countries that Ashanin focuses on in his story. He also gives one of the most terrifying accounts of events that happened in a remote place. In Hong Kong, where the Russian ship anchored for two weeks, he encounters piracy which Staniukovich sees, along with slavery and people trafficking, as a grave relic of the past. Ashanin describes his encounter with the captain of an English ship, who tells him a hair-raising story of an attack of the Chinese Hong Kong pirates. In the open sea the English ship was surrounded by 20 Chinese boats filled with pirates. The English sailors offered fierce resistance to the pirates, but since there were only 19 English against 200 Chinese, all the English were killed except for the captain and a carpenter. The Chinese pirates plundered the ship and the two wounded survivors had to stay several hours in the water before they were rescued by a passing ship (170–172).

During Ashanin's stay in Hong Kong, one of the young Russian sailors has to stand trial at a local English court of law. The young sailor was drunkenly and loudly singing on his way to the harbour, and when stopped by a policeman for the excessive noise he was making, the sailor did not make out what the problem was and showed rude resistance. After the Russian captain gets an official paper summoning the sailor to court, Ashanin accompanies the sailor there as his interpreter and defence. On admitting his guilt, the sailor has to pay a 3-dollar fine and rejoices at the leniency of the local court judge, who has understood that the sailor had just been drunk and meant no harm (174–176).

Ashanin describes another encounter in the Southern hemisphere, where the Russian clipper anchored at the town of Honolulu, the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Ashanin joins the official Russian delegation led by the captain on their visit to the residence of the local king and queen. The palace looks like an average house with a modest interior and the thrones look like big red leather armchairs. The attractive young royal couple had had a terrible blow – their little son had died of a sunstroke a week before – so the queen is wearing a well-fitting black silk dress which was indicative of her refined taste in clothes. Ashanin gives a detailed depiction of the visit of the royals to the clipper – they were given a cordial welcome, a fireworks display and a hoistering of the Hawaiian flag on the main mast. The captain offers a bouquet of white roses to the queen, one of which is given to Ashanin who entertained the queen and told her about Russia. At the end of the function Ashanin is asked by the captain to take the honorary guests to the harbour, and he receives a box of oranges and a bunch of bananas as a farewell gift, which is long remembered by his fellow officers.

Ashanin describes his two-month stay in Saigon in Indochina (also known as Cochinchina after the 1862–1867 French invasion) and all the atrocities of war, including French violence towards the Vietnamese (then called Annamites) who treat the invaders with hatred and fight back with unprecedented courage and valour (257). If taken as prisoners they prefer to die and treat death with indifference as they were shot dead by ferocious invader soldiers (264). As Ashanin cannot (out

of politeness) refuse the French admiral's offer to join the military campaign against the indigenous Annamite locals, he finds himself in the thick of the poorly managed campaign that turns out to be a complete fiasco for the French. Back on board, Ashanin begins his report for admiral Korneev in which he commits to paper all his deliberations on the unjust colonial wars.

At their stop at Porto-Grande, Cape Verde, the local fruit sellers are allowed to get on board the ship *Vulture*. The sailors marvel at the unfamiliar looks of the indigenous people, but their attitude proves the Russian tolerance and brotherly treatment of all people whoever they were, let alone "Africans or people of unknown origin" (112). This humane attitude of Russian sailors to people of different race, colour and creed is seen by Ashanin not only in Porto Grande, but wherever they went. The sailors particularly take to a 17-year-old boy named Paolo clad in miserable rags, who comes to see the ship and starts to help the sailors with their work. The sailors start calling him "Pavel" and each of them gives him items of a sailor's uniform (112). The portrayal of Paolo reminds the reader of the "chocolate-coloured" boy saved by Russian sailors in Konstantin Staniukovich's short story "Maximka". Such recurring themes and episodes, called "filiation" by critics, are highly characteristic of Staniukovich's writing (Petrushkov 1966, 69), though critically seen both as an asset (69) and as an imperfection of style (Novich 1953, 6).

Ashanin gives a portrayal of other African and Creole locals in Porto-Grande. The fewer than fifty white people in the town, include the English, who have coal warehouses, and the Portuguese, who engage in trade. The African population of Porto-Grande do all the hard, menial jobs, labour in the coal ware-houses, unload steamers and clean waste, yet the Portuguese traders called them "lazybones". At the seaside African women spend their days washing and singing their sad songs (Staniukovich 2018, 112–113).

Vladimir Ashanin describes his visit to a house of the local Africans. Once while having a stroll around the town he meets Paolo, surrounded by a group of Africans jealous of Paolo's new sailor's uniform. Paolo catches sight of the Russian sea officers and invites them to his house. A Portuguese guide, one of the local traders, wants to stop them, claiming it is filthy inside, but they accept the invitation, to Paolo's delight. The guests find themselves in a clean and spacious room where three women and two men are playing cards. Paolo's sister and the other two women, her guests, are quite neatly dressed in bright striped skirts, white blouses, and white turbans, while the men wear rags. The women start entertaining the guests, and the men go on playing without paying any attention to the guests (113). The women sing a sad song about misery, complaints, deep distress and acceptance of fate, without a single note of joy, in which the Russian officers discern something reminiscent of their homeland. The Portuguese guide is quite taken aback by such an opinion, telling Vladimir that it is only regular whining, complaints about the whites, sympathy for their brothers-slaves, etc. (114–115).

In his three years on the *Vulture*, Ashanin is gradually promoted to garde-marine and later to midshipman. In one of the most touching chapters of the story he describes the return of the clipper to their motherland, which by that time was already

much dearer to their hearts than the bright southern sun, the warm sea, wonderful fruits and luxurious greenery (312).

1896 also saw the first publication of Staniukovich's short story "Maximka" (Little Maxim) by the *Detskoe chtenye* (Child's Reader) magazine. The writer did not attach much importance to this short story and was even amazed by its great success with readers of all ages. Later, the short story was included in a collection of the writer's best "Sea Stories". Fortune favoured "Maximka" so that nowadays the short story is still widely popular and gets frequent reprints both as part of a collection of works and as a separate work in the *Secondary School Reader* series. The historical setting of "Maximka" has similarities with "Round the World on the *Vulture*". The timeless appeal of this short story comes not only from its intriguing plot and vivid portrayals of the characters but also from the noble message of the story in which the writer teaches the lesson of tolerance towards people of a different race, colour and creed. As the sailor Luchkin says to his shipmates who offer a seat by their side in a friendly way at mealtime to the "unchristened pagan coloured boy", "God treats all people as equals […] Everyone needs bread to eat […]" (24).

One morning the Russian war clipper *Zabiyaka* is moving at high speed across the Atlantic, when a lookout notices the wreckage of a mast with a person on it. The captain sends a boat with sailors and an officer to rescue the drowning person, and to their amazement, it is a thin African boy aged 10–11. The boy recovers quickly and is given the nickname "Maximka" after St. Maxim, whose religious festival fell on the day of his rescue. An interpreter helps to reveal the boy's life story: he was an orphan whom the captain of an American ship had bought in Mozambique a year before, and had been severely beaten by his master for any fault. The American ship had been bound from Senegal to Rio with African slaves on board, when it was hit by another one and sank. The boy spent nearly two days on the mast awaiting a horrifying death when he was miraculously saved by the Russian sailors.

The writer adds vivid touches to describe people of different cultures who happened to be on board the ship due to the emergency. Thus, the Russian sailors are taken aback by the boy's frustration when offered a seat at the dining table with white people. He had been accustomed to other ways on the American ship, such as eating unseen in a hiding place. When a Russian sailor brings him a bowl full of hot *schi* (traditional soup), the boy cannot make himself touch the food although he was very hungry, and it is not until the old ship carpenter Zakharych caresses Maximka's curly hair and touches his lips with his own spoon that the boy overcomes his fear.

Staniukovich vividly depicts his time in "Maximka" as well as in all his sea travel prose. As a writer he witnessed all the most significant historic events both in Russia and in remote countries. It was then that in Russia Emperor Alexander II had just abolished serfdom (1861), a new order to ban corporal punishment for sailors was underway, with the American states torn by the bloodshed of the Civil War which turned into a fight against the slave trade and the abolition of slavery there. This problem concerns the Russian clipper sailors who had first-hand experience of slavery, serfdom and beating. Feeling resentment caused by the severe ill-treatment of the African boy by his master, the captain of the American ship, they naïvely think that

African slaves were similar to Russian serfs: "Some Americans want their African slaves to be free, whereas others cannot accept it. They are those who have African slaves as serfs […] Yet they say that some Americans stand up for their African slaves and they will take over!, said a young sailor named Artiushka with pleasure" (Staniukovich 2015, 15).

Ivan Luchkin, known to be one of the best sailors on the ship, is a drunkard when ashore, but caring for the African boy gives his life meaning. Likewise, Maximka refuses to leave him during a stop at the Cape of Good Hope. The captain agrees to the sailors' pledge to keep the boy on the ship as a young sailor boy, and he is formally baptized with the name of Maxim. His last name became Zabiyakin after the name of the clipper. When after three years the Russian clipper returns to Saint Petersburg, the captain arranges for the boy, now fluent in Russian, to attend a medical school, and Luchkin stays in Saint Petersburg to remain close to him.

The analysis of the sea voyage literature by both Goncharov and Staniukovich proves that there are two distinct dimensions to the narratives. The first dimension is concerned with the portrayals of remote countries and cultures, as well as images of local people per se. Alternately, the second dimension builds upon the first one and raises a number of philosophical issues, such as the eternal fight between good and evil, the value of human life, human dignity, justice and social fairness, equality and non-discrimination, one's responsibility towards those around and society at large, and the eventual triumph of the good. All these features bear the trace of classic Russian literature.

CONCLUSION

Any narrative of a sea voyage is sure to have two features: a replica of the motherland on board, and the rest outside – a vast endless sea and foreign lands. The similarities include the following features: the given literary works are based on personal experiences of both authors, the plot is concerned with a round-the-world sea voyage of the same time span (three years) and route (from Russia through the Baltic Sea around Europe, Africa and Asia), as well as almost the same sequence of stops on the way. Besides, both authors and their respective characters display an ardent desire to get an insight into the remote lands, their cultures and outlooks, establish contacts with their people and learn more about their respective lives and mindsets. Additionally, those portrayals prove to be vivid, rich in colourful details and true-to-life observations in which the remote countries are compared to Russia. Furthermore, the portrayed images are indicative of a sympathetic attitude to the locals along with good-natured humour. Finally, both the life of Vladimir Ashanin on the ship, which constitutes the main storyline in Staniukovich's narrative, and Goncharov's references to his personal experiences while travelling are actually a way of telling the reader about a variety of other problems, images of remote countries included.

Alternately, Konstantin Staniukovich's and Ivan Goncharov's works contain respective differences. To begin with, there is a genre difference – Goncharov's almost documentary travelogue versus Staniukovich's fictional stories. Secondly, while Staniukovich is a career Navy officer highly knowledgeable about the seafaring routine

as the son of a Navy admiral, Goncharov is merely a passenger on board a ship, the secretary to the head of a diplomatic mission, unaware of the intricacies of the sea trade. Thirdly, there is a difference in the two authors' respective outlooks. Whereas Goncharov has a solid Eurocentric stance shared by the majority of the mid-19th century Russian intelligentsia, Staniukovich represents a new generation. He is a proponent of reforms and the abolition of serfdom in Russia, strongly opposed to corporal punishments of lower rank sailors and the oppressed. Fourthly, the main character in Goncharov's travelogue is the author himself, a middle-aged man of a conservative outlook, while Staniukovich's main character is Vladimir Ashanin, the author's alter ego and an embodiment of the new liberally-minded generation.

This accounts for the differences in the portrayals of remote countries and their people: Goncharov hails the progress brought over to pristine remote countries by advanced colonizers, but Staniukovich deeply sympathizes with the oppressed locals, whose hard labor contributes to the prosperity of overseas colonizers. All in all, the analyzed sea voyage stories by Staniukovich ("Round the World on the *Vulture*" and "Maximka") and Goncharov's *Frigate Pallada* are valuable literary records of culture and history which have not lost their relevance even today.

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Images of remote countries in Russian classical sea voyage literature

Russian sea voyage literature. 19th century. Round-the-world voyages. Ivan Goncharov. Konstantin Staniukovich.

The article deals with the portrayals of remote countries and indigenous peoples in the sea voyage narratives by Ivan Goncharov and Konstantin Staniukovich, renowned Russian writers of the 19th century. The research is based on their literary works which describe the round-the-world voyages of their respective characters, their numerous experiences in remote lands, their encounters with new cultures and peoples. The article analyzes Goncharov's famous sea voyage travelogue – *Frigate Pallada* and Staniukovich's stories "Round the World on the *Vulture*" and his short story "Maximka". The analysis of the given literary works is preceded by a brief note about the writers, followed by the conclusion which reveals a number of similarities and differences of the narratives.

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Foreign travels in "The Doll" by Bolesław Prus as a comment on the condition of 19th-century Poland

AGATA BUDA

The novel *Lalka* (1890, *The Doll* 1996) by Bolesław Prus is undoubtedly one of the most important works in the history of Polish literature. It links both the presentation of the Polish nation in the 19th century with its political, social and cultural aspects, but also shows the cause and effect relationships between the history of Europe and the creation of national identity and the fight for independence. Moreover, *The Doll* moves around the images of other countries, both European and distant ones, which constitute a crucial background for understanding the situation of Polish citizens in 19th-century Poland under the partitions (1795–1918). Prus does not directly portray the oppression of Poland by one of the invaders, the Russians, which was typical for 19th-century writers, because he did not want the preventive censorship of the time to cut out all the negative comments on Russian politics towards the Polish nation (Sobieraj 2011, 137).

The action of the novel takes place in the years 1878–1879. There are also retrospective scenes dating back to the year 1837 as well as comments on such events as the Revolution of 1848 or the January Uprising. The main character, Stanisław Wokulski, is the owner of a shop with different types of goods who is dedicated to his work. He is widowed and falls in love with a beautiful representative of the noble class, Izabela Łęcka. Prus depicts the clash between the progressive businessman Wokulski and the spoilt Izabela, the epitome of a typical impoverished representative of a noble class. Their relationship appears to be unsuccessful, but it becomes the background for the reader's observation of Polish society, the country and its history. Wokulski's adventures are interlaced with the diary of Ignacy Rzecki, Wokulski's employee, who perfectly and in a very detailed manner, portrays the difficult time for Poland as well as some historical events, putting them in an international context (travelling abroad and describing various figures and countries).

The idea of analysing the images of other countries in *The Doll* by Prus with the help of the concept of imagology is especially accurate here, due to the fact that the writer decided to present Poland oppressed by other countries (Russia, Austria, Prussia). The hetero-image (the image of other countries) together with the auto-image (the image of one's own country)[1] gives the reader the basis for creating his or her own concept of foreign places presented by the famous 19th-century novelist.

THE ATTRACTION OF DISTANT COUNTRIES FOR THE POLES

One group of foreign places portrayed in *The Doll* is the group containing Asia, America and Africa. One of the reasons the characters travel to those remote countries is the fact that their image differs from that of everyday life of the inhabitants of the monotonous, grey and oppressed 19th-century Poland. In the 19th century, Polish culture was perceived as very conservative (Forajter 2017, 620) so distant countries were attractive. As Waldemar Zacharasiewicz accurately notes while analysing the images of distant countries in a literary work, "the imagologists must also consider the potential appeal of the foreign, the exotic, all those features in the 'other' which differ from the mundane, humdrum everyday experience" (2009, 26).

One of the distant countries mentioned by Prus's characters, matching the above idea of the otherness and exoticism is India. Its image appears not as a place to which the characters travel, but as the presentation of its location and imported goods. Wokulski's shop (earlier belonging to Mincel) is very well stocked and offers a wide range of colonial products. Rzecki, one of the oldest employees, mentions the way he used to gain his knowledge of India and other distant countries from his employer, Jan Mincel:

> "*Sag mir* – tell me: *was ist das?* What is this? Das ist *Schublade* – this is a drawer. Look and see what is in the drawer. *Es ist Zimt* – it is cinnamon. What is cinnamon needed for? For soup, for dessert. What is cinnamon? It is bark from a certain tree. Where does the cinnamon tree grow? In India. Look at the globe – India is over there. Give me 10 groszy worth of cinnamon… *O, du Spitzub!* If I discipline you ten times, you will know how much cinnamon to sell for 10 groszy…"
> We would go through each drawer in the shop and he would tell me the story of every article (Prus 1996, 20).[2]

The above quotation offers an unusual depiction of a distant country – from the perspective that can be called dislocation, or spatiotemporal compression.[3] The interlocutors move far away from Poland, to India, while staying in the same place at the same time. The exotic character of the country and its distance from Poland impressed young Rzecki and subsequently shaped his character, when he became the most trustworthy employee of the shop. Here appears one more crucial element referring to the perception of a distant country – food. Cinnamon appears here as the element of exoticism, something that lets the person imagine a colourful distant country, so different from the monotonous Polish cities. Through the auto-image of Poland, Rzecki creates his own idea of India and food helps him to notice the differences. This corresponds to the concept of Ármann Jakobsson, who claims food can play an important role in the construction of identity (2009, 69). Moreover, as Jakub A. Malik claims, the shop is portrayed in such a way in the novel that it becomes the very centre of the plot; it is the major point of reference in the spatiotemporal dimension. The shop constitutes a miniaturized model of the world, it is the axis mundi (2005, 25–26).[4]

Poland at this moment in history was a country waiting for a saviour as life became more and more difficult. The landscape of Warsaw was rather sad and depressing:

> "Nothing, nothing…" [Wokulski] repeated, wandering through the alleys with their shacks sunk below street level, roofs overgrown with moss, buildings with shutters and

doors nailed shut, with tumbledown walls, windows patched with paper or stuffed with rags. He walked along looking through dirty window-panes into dwellings, and absorbed the sight of cupboards without doors, chairs with only three legs, sofas with torn seats, clocks with one hand and cracked faces […].
"This is the microcosm of Poland," he thought, "where everything tends to make people wretched and to extinguish them" (Prus 1996, 69).

Ignacy Rzecki also expresses his own opinion on the situation in the country, writing in his diary:

"The world is going to the dogs […] Food's getting more expensive, a man's wages are gobbled up in rent and even absinthe isn't what it was. […] Even Napoleon himself wouldn't live to see justice done!"
To this [Rzecki's] father would reply: "Justice will be done even if Napoleon doesn't come. But a Napoleon will be found all the same" (14).

This particular episode is one of many other mentions of the political situation that Rzecki included in his diary. The old clerk also recalls his father's love towards Napoleon which took the shape of strong adoration; he used to collect portraits of Napoleon in different places of the world: in Egypt, at Wagram and in Moscow. The awareness of the fact that Napoleon travelled a lot helped Rzecki's father to believe that someday "after the first Napoleon, a second would be found, and even if he came to a bad end, another would come along, until the world had been put to rights" (13). The way Ignacy Rzecki was brought up influenced his later perception of the world – he became an acute observer of social and political life.

An essential part of Polish society then was the group of noblemen, among them the Łęcki family. Tomasz Łęcki, father of beautiful Izabela with whom Wokulski fell in love, used to be a very wealthy man; his father had a fortune which was later devoured in part by political events, such as the January Uprising and the repressive measures of Russian government (Prus 1890, 1275). Being impoverished in the second half of the 19th century, Łęcki has tried to regain his lost position mainly by modelling his life in Warsaw on foreign places. His daughter is the best example of such an attitude: she is spoiled and does not work but at the same time she dreams of the beautiful world she used to visit:

If anyone had asked her point-blank what this world was, and what she herself was, she would certainly have replied that the world is an enchanted garden full of magical castles, and that she herself was a goddess or nymph imprisoned in a body. […] There was no difference in geographical location, since in Paris, Vienna, Rome, Berlin or London she would find the same people, the same manners, the same objects and even the same food – soups from Pacific seaweed, oysters from the North Sea, fish from the Atlantic or Mediterranean, animals from every country, fruits from all parts of the globe (Prus 1996, 34).

The image of distant countries here is created based on particular references which are important for the whole concept of imagology. First of all, the attraction to the exotic, as well as the reference to food that is not known in Poland. Moreover, Izabela Łęcka's image of a distant world takes the shape of a fairy-tale, magical place, and "no difference in geographical location" means the places she thinks of are remote and timeless, they can serve as an escape from the real world (Oslund 2009, 93). In the

case of Izabela, it may correspond to her noble origin and loss of fortune; she is trying to find comfort in imagining life in charming remote places full of attractions.

Izabela is also attracted by people who travel abroad. Her house becomes the place of spatiotemporal compression, as it is visited by different people, for instance:

> [It] might be an engineer who had linked two oceans or drilled through mountains, or a captain who had lost his entire company in a battle with savages and, although gravely wounded, had himself been spared by the love of a Negro princess. He might be a traveller who was said to have discovered a new part of the globe, had been shipwrecked on a desert island and even tasted human flesh (Prus 1996, 35).

The images of distant countries in the above description are not typical, as the names of the places are not given. However, this makes the description even more mysterious as it offers more possibilities for the reader to interpret it. Here appear some contradictions between what is known by Izabela and what she has just learned from her guests. For instance, the contrast of the colours: pale versus dark complexion (Polish nobility versus an African princess), a captain's fight with savages, as well as the motif of food (tasting human flesh) may suggest extreme differences between a civilized country – Poland – and a distant place characterized by some barbaric elements (savage warriors, cannibalism). The distant places described here may be defined as wild, lawless and free,[5] in contrast to the well-ordered European country. Nevertheless, for Izabela and her father these locations are attractive, as they present a totally different life than theirs, and allow them to escape from their difficult position as impoverished nobles. The comparison is based here on a hetero-image (the characters' perception of far-off, exotic countries) and auto-image (the perception of Poland and the characters' social situation).

One of the people who visit Izabela's house is Rossi, a famous tragedian from Italy. Because he has travelled to America, for Izabela he becomes an ideal man, a representative of the world, a cosmopolitan. When she compares him to Wokulski, the Polish "tradesman seemed so ludicrous in comparison with Rossi, whom the whole world admired, that she was quite simply overcome with pity for him. Had Wokulski been on his knees to her at this moment, she might even have stroked his hair, played with him as she would with a big dog" (227–228).

The image of a person who travels abroad to distant countries becomes attractive and works like a magic spell for Izabela and her father. She lives in an illusion, in a parallel universe, which helps her survive in the grey reality of her own country. Another citizen of the world admired by Izabela is Kazimierz Starski, her cousin. When she hears that he has just returned from China, she blushes and cheers up. He is said to be "as handsome as ever" (291). When Starski arrives at Izabela's house, in which he meets Wokulski, both Starski and Izabela start speaking English, paying no attention to the tradesman. It is a manifestation of ignorance, as Izabela and her cousin look down on the representative of a lower class. During the conversation the reader learns about Starski's travels:

> "Travellers don't pay compliments, for they know that compliments discredit a man in the eyes of a woman in no matter what latitude."
> "Did you make that discovery in China?"

"In China and Japan, but mainly in Europe."
"And you expect to apply this principle in Poland, cousin?"
"I'll try and in your company, if you'll allow me" (300).

The above discussion in which some remote countries are mentioned produces a distance between Wokulski, who stays in Warsaw, and Starski whose life is mainly based on travelling. The distance is symbolic, as they both are in the same place, but, as Diana Petkova claims (2009, 170), geographical distance can symbolize social distance. And in the case of the tradesman and Izabela's cousin, their experience in travels is analogous to their social position: Starski is a nobleman and a man of the world, whereas Wokulski is a tradesman taking care of his business in Poland who is ignored by his interlocutors. Moreover, the image of places Starski has visited seems to be associated with freedom, which Poland of the 19th century lacks; when he makes advances to one of the Polish ladies, he is admonished that he should abandon his Japanese customs. Starski replied that "[t]hey are universal customs" (Prus 1996, 406), which confirms the openness of the people who travel a lot in comparison to those who usually stay at home. In this case staying at home also means being under foreign oppression. Later, one can notice that the figure of Starski has actually been rooted in Wokulski for a very long time: Izabela wanted to find Starski in Wokulski, to wake his potential and enable him to become the man of the world (Rutkowski 2010, 7).

Still, the image of such countries as America is characterized by allusions to its otherness. When Wokulski decides to travel to Paris, he meets numerous people there, among them Jumart – a man who describes America and other countries he visited. For him America is a place that teaches tolerance, and a real traveller for him means somebody who does not care about nationality (Prus 1996, 358). This remains in contrast to the Polish attitude towards nationality, as the novel by Prus depicts Poland under foreign partition and the desire of the Poles to regain full independence. This contrast influences the perception of remote places by the inhabitants of Warsaw and other Polish cities. America entices Polish people and appears to be paradise.

The difficult history of Poland in those days is accompanied by the life of Wokulski, who tries to win the hand of Izabela Łęcka. When he fails to do so, he becomes depressed and decides to escape from reality by reading books, which are particularly important, as they take the tradesman to distant countries. His symbolic journey starts with books from his childhood – to the period of life which is cheerful and carefree. He brings back memories connected with the travels of Robinson Crusoe and it seems that "his wounded soul had escaped from the earth to wander in magic lands where only noble hearts beat, where vice did not dress up in the mask of deceit, where eternal justice ruled, curing pain and rewarding injustices" (Prus 1996, 600). What is more, Wokulski understands that he could only find solace in foreign literature, noting that Poland may never become free, though its citizens would always be a nation of dreamers (Prus 1996, 600). Later, Wokulski starts reading about other journeys including the United States and China, and it appears that his personal failure (unfulfilled love) corresponds with the whole nation's situation (being under the oppression of foreign countries). The mental escape to the desert island and to other civilized countries is a micro-image of the nation's desire to escape from oppression

and to become free. Finally, Wokulski decides to realize his dreams of distant travels, and having understood in Poland he will never find a true love, he first goes to Odessa, then to India, China and Japan and eventually America (Prus 1996, 660). He does that as he dreams of gaining status similar to that of the noblemen. The reader hopes he will find happiness somewhere else, far from the social and political limitations. Wokulski, the only character in the novel to do so, travels to all possible countries both literally and mentally; he is not only a brave cosmopolitan, but also a person who is not afraid of crossing cultural and social limits. In this way, from a faraway and constantly changing perspective, he shows that what Polish people dream of is a very distant country, and this paradox will be true till his homeland regains its independence.

OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE POLISH IMAGINATION

Apart from the places discussed above, Prus also portrays those which the characters were forced to visit, for instance, Siberia. Wokulski was sent there after the January Uprising and the place, surprisingly, brought him relief. He got frostbite on his hands there – something which made Izabela consider him a hero. Nevertheless, it was Siberia which offered him education and the possibility of becoming a scientist: "There he had been able to work, had gained the recognition and friendship of Czerski, Czekanowski, Dybowski. He returned to Poland almost a scholar, but when he sought employment in that field, he had been laughed at and scorned and sent into trade" (Prus 1996, 68–69).

This is another example of a country which offered a kind of personal development to the character; however, this was lost in Poland in which Wokulski had to fight to survive.

Prus also invites the reader to different countries which are connected with a particular plan of the character, for instance gaining a fortune. In contrast to the places people used to go to with the aim of living there, there existed countries people chose to go to in order to earn money. Such a distinction is noted by W. Tad Pfeffer, who states that the occupation of a particular place "is for habitation (people choosing to live and work in a landscape) or purely extractive" (2009, 83). Travelling to America, China or India was for Wokulski and for other characters an escape in the search for a better life or for consolation, whereas the tradesman's visit to Turkey or Bulgaria was aimed at "extracting" wealth and subsequently bringing it to Poland. Wokulski made a fortune in those countries – while there he was considering going back to Poland, to prove that he was able to be an enterprising businessman and to find a beautiful noble lady. His business successes and his knowledge of the world seem to give hope to the Poles for their country to become more open to other countries, more attractive, and finally, more technologically developed. That could give it the chance to get rid of the complex of a subjected country, which, after the loss of independence, needed a shred of hope to change its status. However, once back in Poland, in conversation with Rzecki, he admits:

> "You've no idea what I suffered, far away from everyone, never knowing whether I should ever see them again, so terribly alone. For, don't you see, the worst loneliness is not the

one that surrounds a man, but the emptiness within himself, when he has not carried away with him even a warm look or a friendly word or spark of hope from his homeland" (Prus 1996, 27–28).

The fact that Wokulski treated his visits in Turkey and Bulgaria as a temporary situation influenced his mood; he was not happy there and hoped to go back to his homeland and start a new life. However, it was not easy; to gain respect he decided to help the poor and impoverished noblemen with the money he had earned abroad. As a consequence, the only thing he achieved was gaining fortune; he was never approved of as a candidate for a husband by the noble class and he finally leaves for an unknown destination.

CONCLUSION

The Doll presents several images of remote countries created by the figures of the novel. The first group includes places such as America or Asia, which are perceived as exotic, attractive and ideal places to live in. Their image is shown either in the descriptions by the characters who travelled there, or in the form of dislocation – the discussion over a particular country with the movement both in time and space. Another group of distant countries constitute the places the characters are forced to visit either due to political or financial reasons. These are, among others, Siberia and Turkey. The general image of the distant countries in the novel by Prus seems to be constructed on the belief that they were perceived by 19th-century Polish citizens as better and wealthier places, rather like paradise, offering freedom and liberty, as an asylum for those who fought at war and were exiled in order to regain independence for their homeland.

NOTES

[1] Hugo Dyserinck distinguishes these two types of image of a country, characteristic for the concept of imagology: "every 'image of the other land' has ultimately an underlying basis in the image of one's own country […]. Hetero-image and auto-image belong together" (2007, 5).

[2] All the quotations from *Lalka* by Bolesław Prus come from its English version translated by David Welsh.

[3] Dareen Massey claims dislocation refers to the movement and communication in time and space (1994, 147).

[4] It should be pointed out that both India and America were equally attractive for the Poles, but their image was based on different factors; America was a land of freedom, while Asia attracted attention with its exoticism and its status as a colonized country in which exploited citizens produced goods not available for the inhabitants of Poland. 19th century colonialism was closely associated with orientalism, as Edward Said states, and orientalism for Europe was *a domain with a continuous history of unchallenged Western dominance* (1979, 2, 73).

[5] Kirsten Hastrup distinguishes "wildness, merriness, lawlessness and freedom" as the elements of an image of a distant place (2009, 110).

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Foreign travels in "The Doll" by Bolesław Prus as a comment on the condition of 19th-century Poland

Imagology. 19th-century Poland. Travel. Distance. Bolesław Prus.

The Doll (*Lalka*) by Bolesław Prus is one of the most significant books known by every Polish person. It is not only a great example of a novel presenting the Poland of the 19th century, but it is also a work of a didactic character, full of romantic, political and social references. Furthermore, it is a novel concerning the condition of 19th-century Polish high society which perceived travel abroad as a way to regain their lost position or to improve their personal situation. In Poland, only the wealthiest people could travel. In *The Doll,* for instance it is Tomasz Łęcki who shines abroad till he goes bankrupt. The novel presents Paris as one of the most desirable destinations. Other places such as Bulgaria and Turkey were popular destinations for gaining one's fortune. The characters' travels to these places are both a way to escape from the grey reality of Polish towns and to find the promised land of prosperity. As the 19th century was also the age of distant journeys to Africa, Asia and America, Prus's characters travel there; Starski is perceived as a man of the world due to his numerous exotic journeys, Wokulski searches for happiness in Asia and America after being rejected by the woman he loves. The images of the remote countries are presented through the perspective of imagology. Travel was connected with the nation's own search for identity till the moment that Poland regained full independence in November 1918.

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ERNŐ KULCSÁR SZABÓ – ZOLTÁN KULCSÁR-SZABÓ – TAMÁS LÉNÁRT (eds.): Verskultúrák. A líraelmélet perspektívái
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If we think in a historical context, it seems plausible that the proliferation of postmodern perspectives in literature has been more favourable to prose than to lyric poetry. The revaluation of the role of lyric poetry in modernity, however, does not mean that verse techniques are exhausted, but rather that the post-Pynchon media technology shift of the novel attracted more attention. On the other hand, it is undeniable and very telling that in the period in question, the strategies of interpreting poetry were hardly affected by the media and cultural theoretic turn of literary criticism. Accordingly, the professional reception of the lyric poetry remained at close reading that meant the monomedial refinement of the technology. However, the fact that the abovementioned turn has not left lyric poetry culture untouched proves best the inadequacy of the interpretations reduced exclusively to linguistic codes; in fact, it actually made us aware of all the things lyric poetry is in contact with. Theatre, music, film, video clip, performance, prose (the latter through intertextual poems) are just a few examples of the inter-media pattern of which lyric poetry is a part.

As an introduction, let me show an extreme example of this. William Gibson's composition *Agrippa: A Book of the Dead* is a book packed in Kevlar with a computer disk inside, the latter containing the poem, but the file is deleted while it is being read, making it impossible to re-read. The actual pages of the book consist of a series of letters from the fruit fly genome. The parallels between language and genetics are very interesting: in a technological sense, the DNA chain is similarly structured as any language, but the set consists of just four elements. The relationship between alphabetisation and genetics therefore implies an exciting similarity that the number of possible genomes is astronomical, as are the sentences of a single language, but not all of them will be meaningful. (Put together the DNA of any creature in an arbitrary combination, only one will be operational, so a genome assumes a sequence that is surrounded with the non-viable, dead or rather to say: non-living mass.) *Agrippa,* therefore, is not exclusively a bibliographical code but it is also unique in terms of the functioning of the DNA, similarly to the book of the dead, it recalls the already existing ones as well as those not yet living. At the same time, it is, of course, subject to a specific tension with the biblical code, insofar as it is contradictory to the planning. The lyric poetry appears here in such a stratified media configuration that indicates the termination of the book's archiver monopoly, and the ontological position of the poem starts to compete with the computer. The examples can be continued.

From this point of view, the publication of the rather large volume of *Verskultúrák* (Verse Cultures) is definitely welcome and counts for a timely enterprise. The foreword of the book speaks about the validity of the concept as follows: "It can be assumed that interrogation aiming at the cultural, social, medial, anthropological or cognitive performance of the lyric poetry gains more useful starting points if it approaches the poetry rather as a function completeness, perhaps the unique manifestation of a language's function completeness, instead of reducing it to a particular function" (11). This approach may prove to be productive as it opens up the reductive perception of poetic function in the direction of the verse texts understood as

media configuration or as the culture technical medium, thus exceeding the dogma of total self-referentiality of the poetic language. At the same time, this leads to the opening of literary theoretical closeness, the essays of the volume do not write into a broad framework presumed in a preliminary position, but they use many smaller, autonomous approaches. In this way, it really creates the cultural-scientific mosaic of lyric poetry. Let us briefly summarize the mode of interrogation of the four chapters.

The writings of the first block "Keretezések – Műfaj, intézmény, önprezentáció" (Framings – Genre, institution, self-presentation) primarily reveal the image of poetry in the tradition of lyrical interpretation that touches upon the interconnection and network of language and institutions. The study by Tamás Molnár Gábor, "Ars/poetica: a költőiségen kívül és belül – Poétikai vázlat a modern költészet önreprezentációs lehetőségeiről" (Ars/poetica: inside and outside poetry – A poetical sketch on the possibilities of self-presentation of modern poetry), may be highlighted in the block examining the figure of *ars poetica* in a world literature context. The train of thought deploys many examples of the figurative function of *ars poetica f*rom Quintilian's genre denomination through various poetics and Hungarian aspects (for example János Arany, Dezső Kosztolányi, Attila József, Ágnes Nemes Nagy, György Petri, Ottó Orbán etc.) to contemporary poetry. The author's rhetorical analyses not only promote the deciphering of fine structures but also provide a continuous insight into the metapoetic paradigms of historically changing theoretical frameworks.

The second block of the volume, entitled "A költői szó igazsága – (Ön)megértés és (ön) megszólítás" (The truth of the poetic word – (Self)understanding and (self)addressing), comments on the phenomenon of poetic performativity understood as linguistic event and truth in progress in a way that affects modernity too (for example, the studies by György Eisemann, "A 'létezés poézise'Arany János lírájában" (The "poetry of existence" in the lyric poetry of János Arany), and Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, "Honnan és hová? Az 'önmegszólító' vers távlatváltozása a kései modernség korszakküszöbén" (From where and where to? The perspective change of the "self-addressing" type of poem on the threshold of the period). Following the case studies, we may read "Hívás, megnyilatkozás, visszatérés – A költői szó 'igazságának' kérdéséhez – a hermeneutikai változat" (Calling, manifestation, return – to the question of the "truth" of the poetic word – the hermeneutical version), the final study of the block by Péter L. Varga, that speaks in detail about the components and argumentation system of the hermeneutical-philosophical discourse commenting on the forms of lyrical manifestation (discussing the relevant works of Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer). Particularly interesting is the fact that the subheading "the hermeneutical version" implies that the line of poetry's philosophical approach may be supplemented with the argumentation technique of other discourses (e. g. of science).

The third block, entitled "A líra antropológiája – Kognitív-, bio- és poszthumán poétikák" (The anthropology of the lyric poetry – Cognitive, bio and posthuman poetics), addresses the question of lyrical approaches connected to human existence, starting from a varied repertoire. The stake of the writings here is to expose the interventions of those kinds of border areas and the perspectives through which the human consciousness as a constituent force is restricted and loses its central position with the appearance of the posthuman (or inhumane) dimension. Perhaps the most complex piece of the block is Csongor Lőrincz's study "A ritmus némasága?" (The silence of the rhythm?), providing the interpretation of Attila József's poem "Téli éjszaka" (Winter Night). The interpretation starting from the mediality of rhythm and from the self-representing code of "measurement" in the poem, convincingly draws a parallel with the scientific results (i. e. quantum mechanics) contemporary with the poet's point of view. The

meticulously presented poetic mnemonic in this reading seems to diverge from the physical world view where it locates the difference between time and out of time, referring to the poetical mode of existence of lyric poetry.

The fourth and final block of the volume, entitled "A líra médiuma – A médiumok lírája – Írás, tér, ritmus" (The medium of lyric poetry – The poetry of media – Writing, space, rhythm), concentrates on the mediation capacity of the poetic language. Finally, among the studies of the block motivated by media theory, it is worth referring to Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó's "Író gépek" (Writing Machines). Traversing the typewriter-poetics, the train of thought opens up new horizons on the correlations between lyric poetry and recording-techniques through the poems of John Ashbery, Dezső Kosztolányi, Heiner Müller and Dezső Tandori. It is important, however, that the study ends by relating to Tibor Papp's project titled "Disztichon Alfa" in that writing and lyrical language is a kind of software that mediates between unspeakable data and meaning-bearing discourses. And it does so by trying to disguise this mediation with the most sophisticated techniques. At this point it can be assured that *Verskultúrák, in the light of the* aforesaid, is the most prominent volume on the subject that has been published in Hungarian, because it motivates the reader to medial and reflective rethinking of lyric poetry in such a way that in a theoretical sense, it gets synchronized with the international elite of cultural science; repositioning the culture of verse.

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Americká literatúra ako svetová literatúra je ďalšou publikáciou z edície Literatures as World Literature (Literatúry ako svetové literatúry) vydavateľstva Bloomsbury. V minulom ročníku časopisu *World Literature Studies* sme z nej recenzovali dve knihy: *Brazilian Literature as World Literature* (3/2018; N. Hromová Burcinová) a *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (4/2018; L. Vajdová). Kniha, na ktorej sa autorsky podieľalo trinásť amerikanistov a komparatistov z USA, vychádza zo základného rozporu, ktorý vzniká pri diskusii o americkej literatúre (teda tu o literatúre USA) ako svetovej. Podľa amerického komparatistu a riaditeľa Inštitútu pre svetovú literatúru na Harvardovej univerzite Davida Damroscha je svetová literatúra tá, ktorá „sa vo svete šíri ďaleko za hranice svojho jazykového a kultúrneho miesta zrodu" a „prekladom sa obohacuje" (*What is World Literature?*, 2003, 6). V tomto zmysle sa zdá tvrdenie, že americká literatúra je svetová, celkom jednoznačné a nekontroverzné. Bezpochyby, literatúra USA patrí vo svete k najrozšírenejším a najznámejším jednak preto, že je písaná v svetovom jazyku, jednak cez preklady do iných jazykov a napokon prostredníctvom filmových adaptácií, ktoré gigantický americký filmový priemysel úspešne produkuje a distribuuje, čím opätovne budí záujem o literárne predlohy a nové preklady. Vďaka tomu celý svet pozná dnes už klasických amerických autorov a autorky ako Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mark Twain, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edgar Alan Poe, Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Henry Miller, J. D. Salinger, John Updike, Margaret Mitchell, Tennessee Williams, John Steinbeck, Saul Bellow, Philip Roth či Toni Morrison, ale aj populárnych autorov ako John Grisham, ktorý, ako poznamenáva zostavovateľ recenzovanej publikácie Di Leo, bol preložený do 29 jazykov a predal viac ako 250 miliónov výtlačkov po celom svete. Isteže nie celá americká literatúra je svetová

v tomto zmysle, ale jej značná časť áno. Na druhej strane sa jasne ukazuje, že nazvať americkú literatúru svetovou je politicky problematické vzhľadom na históriu (a prítomnosť) amerického kultúrneho imperializmu. Americká literatúra by pravdepodobne nebola taká rozšírená, keby Spojené štáty americké nemali vo svete taký významný politický, vojenský, ekonomický a kultúrny vplyv, ktorý po skončení studenej vojny ešte väčšmi narástol. Súvisí to tiež, ako pripomína zostavovateľ, s korporatizáciou a monopolizáciou globálneho vydavateľského priemyslu, kde si USA držia dominantnú pozíciu – jedným z jeho centier je New York.

A preto namiesto príbehu, ako sa americká literatúra „exportuje" do zvyšku sveta, sa väčšina autorov knihy snaží sledovať iný príbeh: Ako „svet" prichádza do Ameriky a ako sa americká literatúra vďaka tomu mení. Zásadnými míľnikmi v tomto príbehu sú jednak koniec studenej vojny, keď americkí autori, stručne povedané, mohli definitívne prestať predstierať patriotizmus a necítiť sa preto ako zradcovia, a jednak šok vyvolaný udalosťami 11. septembra 2001, ktoré zásadne zmenili geopolitickú imagináciu a pozíciu Ameriky v nej. Ako to dramaticky pomenúva Jeffrey R. Di Leo: „Po 11. septembri 2001 sa americká literatúra skončila tak dramaticky, ako sa začala. Stratili sme nezávislosť od sveta […], tiež sme stratili našu národnú literatúru vo vzťahu k svetu, ktorý sa objavil v našich uliciach. […] Tento teroristický čin poukázal na to, že naše bohatstvo a prosperita nám zamedzujú prístup k ľudskosti iných" (74). Amerika, ako zdôrazňujú autori knihy, sa po tejto udalosti už nemôže uzatvárať do seba a vytvárať si vlastný svet, v ktorom je zvyšok sveta iba perifériou. Naopak, svet sa čoraz viac dostáva do americkej literatúry, lebo Američania si uvedomujú, že sú jeho neoddeliteľnou súčasťou: americké romány sa viac ako kedykoľvek predtým odohrávajú na medzinárodných trajektóriách a udalosti odohrávajúce sa mimo USA zásadne ovplyvňujú americké príbehy.

Ako vo svojom príspevku poznamenáva Christian Moraru, v tejto novej dobe už americká literatúra nie je tým, čím bola predtým, keď sa dalo neochvejne veriť v americkú výnimočnosť. Ďalšou významnou zmenou je, že medzi jej najvýraznejších predstaviteľov patria imigranti prvej generácie (mnohí z nich prišli do USA až v dospelosti), resp. transnárodné autorky a autori, ktorí často cestujú medzi USA a krajinou svojho pôvodu a vo svojich dielach opisujú svoje nové identity a vytvárajú nový pohľad na USA. Patria sem napríklad Nigérijčanka (alebo Američanka nigérijského pôvodu) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Rus (alebo Američan ruského pôvodu) Gary Shteyngart, Bosniak (alebo Američan bosenského pôvodu) Alexandar Hemon, Dominikánec (či Američan dominikánskeho pôvodu) Junot Díaz, Pakistanec Mohsin Hamid, Američan kórejského pôvodu Chang-rae Lee, Ír Colum McCann, Ír zmiešaného pôvodu Joseph O'Neill a pod. Sú to práve títo autori s dvojakými (či trojakými) identitami, ktorých „periférny" pohľad na Ameriku sa dostal do centra záujmu a nahradil typickú „amerikánu", teda kultúru považovanú za charakteristickú pre USA a rozpoznateľnú všade na svete ako americkú. Sú to autorky a autori, ktorých je ťažko zaradiť a interpretovať cez klasický naratív a imagináciu americkej národnej literatúry, no napriek tomu sa ich romány pokladajú za diela, ktoré výnimočne presne zachytávajú pulz súčasnej Ameriky, ako sa javí z mnohých ocenení, ktoré dostávajú – príkladom je román *Netherland* (2008) írsko-tureckého spisovateľa Josepha O'Neilla, ktorý vyrástol v Mozambiku, Holandsku, Iráne a Turecku, študoval v Británii a potom sa presťahoval do New Yorku, alebo román *Americanah* (2013; *Amerikánka*, 2017) Chimamandy Ngozi Adichie, ktorá prišla do USA z Nigérie študovať na univerzite a odvtedy žije striedavo v USA a Nigérii.

Tento fenomén odzrkadľuje nové usporiadanie sveta, v ktorom slovné spojenie „národná literatúra" prestáva mať jasný význam a rozmazáva sa „korešpondencia medzi geografickým a etnolingvistickým pôvodom textu" (Moraru 130), ako na to už dávnejšie poukázali aj teoretici svetovej literatúry ako

Bertrand Westphal, Michel Collot, Peter Hitchcock (teória transnárodnej priestorovosti), Franco Moretti (teória svetových systémov), Masao Miyoshi a Gayatri Spivak (teória „planetarizmu") a iní. Tento postnárodný alebo transnárodný „obrat", ktorý sa v západnej literárnej teórii datuje po roku 1990, znamená, že kategória „národná literatúra" už nie je adekvátnou základnou kategóriou uvažovania o literatúre ani písania literárnej histórie. Koncept národnej literatúry, ako vysvetľuje Moraru, totiž predpokladá organický, teleologicky chápaný vývin literárnej komunity, ktorý odráža (nie nevyhnutne mimeticky) historický vývin spoločnosti. Ak by dnes chcel niekto napísať také dejiny americkej literatúry, musel by toho veľmi veľa vylúčiť, aby dosiahol aspoň minimálne koherentný naratív (139). Americká literatúra sa dnes podobá skôr na heterogénnu mozaiku ako na jasný obraz krajiny.

Samozrejme, transnárodný obrat neznamená, že by národné štáty prestali existovať. Ale keďže fyzické mapy krajín a svet literatúry sa čoraz väčšmi vzďaľujú, podľa Moraru, Gilesa, Di Lea a iných si to vyžaduje nové zmapovanie americkej literatúry, inými slovami, americká literatúra potrebuje novú „imaginárnu kartografiu" alebo nové „kritické geopozicionovanie (*geopositioning*)" (134), alebo „geoimagináciu (*geoimaginary*)" (135) či jednoducho nový „geoliterárny poriadok" (143), ktorý umožňuje „spôsob videnia súčasného sveta nie takého, aký je, ale ako sa postupne, pomaly, často nekonzistentne a násilne, posúva k predtým nepredstaviteľnej integrácii" (135). V tomto duchu vznikajú nové dejiny literatúry ako napríklad *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time (*Inými kontinentmi: americká literatúra naprieč hlbokým časom, 2007) od Wai Chee Dimock alebo *The Global Remapping of American Literature* (Globálne premapovanie americkej literatúry, 2011) od Paula Gilesa, ktoré hľadajú vplyvy inonárodných a inojazyčných literatúr a orálnych kultúr na americkú literatúru prostredníctvom prekladu, kolonizácie, obchodu s otrokmi či rozvoja leteckého cestovania. Takto prehodnocujú americkú literatúru a kolektívnu identitu, ktorá sa čoraz menej dáva do súvislosti s národom a národnými tradíciami a čoraz väčšmi definuje integráciou do supra- a transnárodných spoločenstiev. Di Leo to nazýva „worlded literature", teda literatúra poznamenaná svetom, prepojená cez globálne siete, migráciu a preklad. Čo v tejto situácii znamená byť „American Scholar" (Americký učenec) – názov slávnej Emersonovej eseje – je podľa Di Lea také zložité, ako to, čo dnes znamená byť Američanom (81). Nedostatok konkrétnych príkladov v príspevkoch Di Lea, Hitchcocka, Moraru a Buella však znamená, že takéto tvrdenia zostávajú trochu visieť vo vzduchu. Argumenty, že „americká literatúra vždy čerpala energiu zo zvyšku sveta" a „jej verzie miestneho diania vždy ovplyvňovali dianie vo svete" (10), sú bez konkrétnych príkladov dosť vágne.

Ďalší spôsob definovania americkej literatúry ako svetovej je cez jej recepciu, teda hľadaním vplyvu americkej literatúry na inonárodných autorov, ako to robí vo svojom príspevku napríklad Jonathan Arac, ktorý poukazuje na vplyv Poeových detektívnych poviedok na Baudelaira a Dostojevského alebo na vplyv Melvillovho románu *Moby Dick* na súčasných autorov ako napríklad Ind Amitav Ghosh a Brit Barry Unsworth. Ghoshovu románovú trilógiu *Ibis* možno podľa Araca považovať za „svetovú americkú literatúru" nielen preto, že Ghosh je inšpirovaný Melvillom a žije v New Yorku, ale aj preto, že jednou z hlavných postáv je Američan, hoci román sa odohráva prevažne v Kalkate a rozpráva o ópiovom obchode medzi Indiou a Čínou v 19. storočí. Niektorí autori recenzovanej publikácie si takto pojem „svetová literatúra" veľmi špecificky prispôsobujú svojim potrebám a vytvárajú nové definície, napríklad podľa Roberta L. Caseira sú svetovou literatúrou tie americké diela, v ktorých sa hlavní hrdinovia snažia „vyslobodiť z národa a odísť do sveta" (229) ako napríklad romány *The Europeans, The Tragic Muse* a *The Portrait of a Lady* Henryho Jamesa (na tomto je vystavaná aj argumentácia Paula Gilesa), ale aj všetky diela napísané americ-

kými autormi s migrantskou skúsenosťou ako Jack London, Elizabeth Bishop, Hart Crane atď. To je však dosť zjednodušujúca definícia – je známe, že mnohí ľudia cestujú nie preto, aby sa vymanili zo svojej kultúry, ale aby sa, naopak, vo svojej kultúrnej identite potvrdili, a toto možno povedať aj o autorovi ako Hart Crane, ktorý bol scestovaným Newyorčanom, no cudzincov v New Yorku považoval za nemiestny element.

Podľa Daniela T. O'Haru možno americkú literatúru definovať ako svetovú prostredníctvom toho, ako táto literatúra (kriticky) zobrazuje vstup každodennej americkej kultúry do priestoru neskorého kapitalizmu, v ktorom všetky národné kultúry imitujú konzumnú globálnu kultúru. Je teda reč o americkom kultúrnom imperializme a „amerikanizácii" globálnej populárnej kultúry. Vo svojom príspevku tento fenomén opisuje aj Emily Apter v súvislosti s americkými politickými televíznymi seriálmi, ktoré považuje za novú svetovú literatúru, teda formu, ktorá nahradila literatúru pre masové publikum po celom svete. Podľa Apter však tieto seriály nie sú formou kultúrneho imperializmu, pretože, naopak, odhaľujú rozpory, problémy a „bahno" vysokej americkej politiky. Napriek uvedenej politike zobrazovania však problémom zostáva nielen klasifikácia televíznej produkcie ako novej literatúry, ale aj skutočnosť, že autorka sa vôbec nezamýšľa nad tým, čo to znamená, ak publikum po celom svete sleduje seriály odohrávajúce sa v čisto amerických prostrediach.

Problémom knihy je, že mnohé príspevky sa „svetovosti" literatúry vôbec netýkajú a tento pojem spomínajú len okrajovo alebo vôbec, ako napríklad príspevky Jeana-Michela Rabaté, Emily Apter alebo Roberta Caseira, resp. ho parodujú pomocou slovných hier, ako to robí Gabriel Rockhill, ktorý poéziu Walta Whitmana nazýva New World Literature, teda literatúrou Nového sveta, koloniálnym termínom na označenie amerického kontinentu. V jeho príspevku sa dozvieme, že kánonický americký básnik Walt Whitman okrem toho, že sa snažil o poetickú revolúciu ako nevyhnutný doplnok politickej revolúcie, bol otvorený xenofób a rasista. V tomto zmysle sa vynára otázka, ako patrí do knihy, ktorá sa snaží zdôrazňovať „svetovosť" americkej literatúry, teda jej otvorenosť voči svetu. Celkovo publikácii chýba teoretické ukotvenie a súlad s témou. Asi najviac sa o teoretické uchopenie pojmu svetová literatúra snaží Aaron Jaffe – celý svoj príspevok venuje českému filozofovi Vilémovi Flusserovi (1920 – 1991) pôvodom z Prahy, ktorý utiekol pred nacizmom do Londýna a potom do Brazílie a ktorý vo svojich textoch príznačne tematizoval aj migráciu a národné identity. Pre Jaffeho je Flusser „ideálnym príkladom istej formy americkej svetovej literatúry" (195). Odôvodňuje to tým, že to bol človek mnohoznačnej identity – Čech, Žid, Nemec –, ktorý hovoril minimálne piatimi jazykmi, stal sa osobou bez štátnej príslušnosti, usadil sa v Južnej Amerike a túžil publikovať v USA, považoval ich totiž za „jediné miesto na svete, ktoré sa vyhlo nacionalizmu v striktnom slova zmysle" (196). Skúsenosť s nacizmom v ňom, prirodzene, vyvolala odpor k akýmkoľvek prejavom nacionalizmu, sníval o filozofickom inštitúte, v ktorom by vedľa seba študovali príslušníci najrôznejších národností a nasledovatelia najrôznejších filozofov a náboženstiev od Croceho cez Heideggera, Ortegu, zen-budhizmus, judaizmus atď. Táto argumentácia „túžbou", resp. multikultúrnou identitou je však značne problematická, pretože Flusser nebol Američan v *žiadnom* slova zmysle a Jaffe si ho – síce elegantne a obdivne –, ale predsa len privlastňuje.

Nedostatkom publikácie je teda to, že každý autor termín „svetová literatúra" interpretuje podľa toho, ako sa mu to hodí do jeho argumentácie, a že pri tom vznikajú príliš vágne, všeobecné, prehnané a nepodložené tvrdenia. Jedným z takých je téza Jonathana Araca, že všetka americká literatúra je svetová, pretože koloniálna história USA znamená, že „takmer všetka písomná kultúra USA čerpá z predošlých literatúr z iných kontinentov" (149). V takomto kontexte sa termín „svetová literatúra" vyprázdňuje a prestáva byť zaujímavým pre rozmýšľanie

o literatúre. Kniha ponúka niekoľko inšpiratívnych postrehov (jedným z nich sú už spomínaní autori a autorky s dvojakými identitami), no snahou o inovatívnosť za každú cenu sa vzďaľuje od hlavnej témy edície, ktorou je svetovosť v literatúre.

DOBROTA PUCHEROVÁ
Ústav svetovej literatúry SAV, Slovenská republika

ALEIDA ASSMANNOVÁ: Prostory vzpomínání. Podoby a proměny kulturní paměti

Prel. Jakub Flanderka – Světlana Ondroušková – Jíři Soukup. Praha: Karolinum, 2018. 482 s. ISBN 978-80-246-3433-3

V roku 2018 vyšla Aleide Assmann, nemeckej literárnej a kultúrnej teoretičke i anglistke, prvá kniha v českom preklade pod názvom *Prostory vzpomínání. Podoby a proměny kulturní paměti* (*Erinnerungsräume. Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses*, 2011) s doslovom Tomáša Glanca. Vydaniu publikácie predchádzal v roku 2012 cyklus autorkiných prednášok, ktorý sa začal na pôde Ústavu pro českou literaturu Akademie věd ČR v rámci literárnovedného fóra Paměť, trauma a jejich narativy, a v roku 2013 recenzia nemeckej pôvodiny pod názvom „Paměť jako kulturní fenomén" (51 – 55) z pera jedného z jej prekladateľov Jakuba Flanderku. Recenzia vyšla v prvom čísle časopisu *Česká literatura* spolu s prekladom úvodnej časti knihy Aleidy Assmann („Paměť jako ars a vis", 56 – 61) a rozhovorom s autorkou („Bílá místa kulturní paměti", 62 – 67), ktorý pripravili Jiří Soukup, Alexander Kratochvil a Jakub Flanderka. Recenzovaná monografia tak nevstupuje do česko-slovenského čitateľského prostredia in medias res, ale nadväzuje na prekladateľský záujem o tému pamäti a predstavuje pokračovateľskú líniu od Émila Durkheima, naprieč dielom Mauricea Halbwachsa, Frances A. Yates k Janovi Assmannovi. Aleida Assmann síce neprináša látku, ktorá by bola málo reflektovaná, no ponúka pohľad literárnej teoretičky na interdisciplinárnu problematiku.

A. Assmann (nar. 1947) je v našom kultúrnom prostredí známa zo svojich pôvodných nemeckých, resp. anglických vedeckých textov, napr. *Die Legitimität der Fiktion: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der literarischen Kommunikation* (Legitimita fikcie. Príspevok k dejinám literárnej komunikácie, 1980), či projektov, na ktorých spolupracovala aj s egyptológom Janom Assmannom, okrem iných napríklad zborník *Kanon und Zensur: Beiträge zur Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation* (Kánon a cenzúra. Príspevky do archeológie literárnej komunikácie, 1987). Pre mnohé ich práce je ústrednou témou pamäť ako konštituujúca zložka kultúry. Tento spoločný záujem potvrdzuje aj Assmanova monografia z roku 1992 *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, ktorá vyšla v roku 2001 v českom preklade Martina Pokorného pod názvom *Kultura a paměť: písmo, vzpomínka a politická identita v rozvinutých kulturách starověku*.

A. Assmann interpretuje pamäť ako široký medziodborový problém, a to cez prizmu filozofie, literatúry, lingvistiky, kultúrnej antropológie. Prostredníctvom veľkého množstva náhľadov, ktoré vychádzajú z poznatkov rôznych disciplín a viažu sa na kultúru a kultúrnu prax, sa usiluje uchopiť fenomén pamäti aj v jeho historickom vývoji, od antiky až po holokaust a postmodernu. Východiská autorkinho uvažovania majú zázemie predovšetkým v európskych dejinách a kultúre, z ktorých využíva aj najviac príkladov. Tie slúžia na osvetlenie oveľa širších a všeobecnejších problémov, spoločných pre všetky kultúry, napríklad utváranie kolektívnej pamäti, ukladanie spomienok, zabúdanie a spomínanie, vyrovnávanie sa s traumou.

Napriek snahe o komplexné tematizovanie pamäti výskum neústi do artikulovania

ucelenej teórie. Prekážku jej vytvorenia predstavuje podľa autorky rozporuplnosť zistení, tá sa však zároveň vyjavuje i ako podstata problému pamäti (17). Skúmaniu pamäti ako určujúceho prvku kultúry predchádzala debata o medzigeneračnom procese kultúrneho obsahu. Dôvody záujmu o tieto témy sú podľa Jana Assmanna definované elektronickými médiami; vymieraním generácie, ktorá bola očitým svedkom druhej svetovej vojny a koncom jednej kultúrnej etapy reflektovanej iba ako spomienky.

Ukázalo sa, že vysvetlenie odovzdávania informácií medzi generáciami v skriptúrnych kultúrach nebolo dostačujúce pre niektoré javy alebo pre národy, ktoré si značnú časť svojej histórie neuchovávali prostredníctvom písma, ale najmä vďaka tradovaniu. Vplyv orálnej histórie na uvažovanie o kultúre sa prejavil aj inštitucionálne, keď sa okrem hmotného dedičstva UNESCO uznala i dôležitosť nehmotného dedičstva. Podľa A. Assmann tak došlo k zrovnoprávneniu orálnych a skriptúrnych kultúr (2013, 66), čo predmet výskumu presunulo na médiá pamäti.

Kniha *Prostory vzpomínaní* je rozdelená do troch rozsiahlejších celkov: v prvom sa autorka zaoberá funkciami pamäti, druhá sa zameriava na médiá a tretia na úložiská – archívy, ktoré nie sú len miestom na uchovávanie minulosti, ale podieľajú sa aj na jej vytváraní. Výskum zahŕňa reflexiu obratu od písma k iným spôsobom uchovávania spomienok, čomu sa autorka venuje aj v druhej časti knihy. Recenzovaná publikácia je výsledkom dlhoročného bádania, A. Assmann sa problematike venovala už v skorších textoch (*Arbeit am nationalen Gedächtnis. Eine kurze Geschichte der deutschen Bildungsidee*, 1993 – Práca na národnej pamäti. Stručná história nemeckej idey vzdelanosti a *Zeit und Tradition. Kulturelle Strategien der Dauer*, 1998 – Čas a tradícia. Kultúrne stratégie trvania).

Chápanie pamäti ako prostriedku na ukladanie a rozpomínanie sa u A. Assmann prelína s funkcionalitou pamäti v podobe *ars* a *vis*. *Ars* (umenie v zmysle techniky, umeleckej zručnosti) autorka vymedzuje ako tradíciu rétorickej mnemotechniky so zameraním na organizáciu poznania a *vis* ako silu, v ktorej je prepojená pamäť, predstavivosť a rozum. Pamäť nie je v prípade vis iba médiom, neuchováva iba informácie, ale je aj „imanentnou silou" (30). Človek (v širšom chápaní skupina, národ) na základe vôle, potreby alebo rozumu mení uhol pohľadu na spomínané alebo spomienku vytesní. Pamäť sa takto stáva výrazným modifikátorom identity jednotlivcov a národov spojených tým, na čo skupinovo zabúdajú alebo spomínajú a čo považujú za súčasť svojej histórie. Autorka na literárnych príkladoch (napríklad Shakespearove historické hry) poukazuje na spätosť pamäti a osobnej i národnej identity. Literatúru spája aj so spoločensko-politickými a morálnymi otázkami, keďže na ne umenie dokáže relevantne odpovedať.

Výskum pamäti presahuje v recenzovanej monografii hranice literárnej vedy. Literatúru vníma A. Assmann najmä cez jej historickú a spoločenskú úlohu, ktorá je definovaná veľkou mierou slobody. Pretože literatúra, existujúca v rámcových podmienkach vyplývajúcich zo spoločensko-politického kontextu, môže reflektovať zabudnuté alebo opomínané aspekty, a tak dokáže meniť historické perspektívy. „Díky svým uměleckým postupům má literatura potenciál nalézt nové narativní techniky a zprostředkovat tak historické zkušenosti včetně traumatických zážitků. Literatura totiž může fungovat jako seismograf – zprostředkovávat cizí prožitky a zároveň vyvolávat empatii pro utrpení druhých, cizích lidí. […] Existuje však ještě jeden podstatný aspekt literatury: totiž její význam pro historickou kontinuitu tehdy, scházejí-li archivy nebo nejsou dostupné. V takové situaci má literatura potenciál vyplnit mezery v historiografii, znázornit to, co historiky z nejrůznějších důvodů nezajíma a čím se nemohou zabývat (2013, 66).

Uvažovanie v širších rámcoch, v tomto prípade o funkcionalitách literatúry, uplatnila autorka monografie aj pri médiách, ktoré sprostredkúvajú materiálnu podobu pamäti. Písmo ako dominantné médium odkazuje na archív v podobe množstva uskladnených

papierov, ktoré uchovávajú to, čo spoločnosť považuje za potrebné alebo hodné zapamätania. Archív teda slúži nielen na uchovávanie pamäti, ale aktívne sa podieľa aj na jej vytváraní. V digitálnej dobe sa spôsob archivovania mení, množstvo papiera je nahradené súbormi v počítači, a tým sa zväčšuje aj kapacita pamäti. Nové technológie umožňujú pamätať si viac, a zároveň produkujú viac „odpadu", ktorý inherentne patrí k existencii archívu. „Odpad jako ‚úložiště naruby' však není pouze symbolem likvidace a zapomínaní; je také novým obrazem latentní paměti, […] přebývá od jedné generace k další v zemi nikoho mezi přítomností a nepřítomností" (24).

Záber vedeckého výskumu Aleidy Assmann je pomerne široký. Napriek množstvu odkazov a citácií z prameňov a sekundárnej literatúry z viacerých vedných odborov je autorkin výklad pútavým, plynulým a celistvým čítaním. Ambiciózne, ale zároveň vnímavo interpretuje aj javy za hranicami literatúry (napríklad výtvarné diela Sigrid Sigurdsson, Anselma Kiefera či Anne a Patricka Poirierovcov). Logické, koncízne a transparentné štrukturovanie argumentácie dovoľuje textu porozumieť, viesť s ním dialóg alebo s ním aj polemizovať. Kniha *Prostory vzpomínání. Podoby a proměny kulturní paměti* nie je uzavretým myšlienkovým univerzom existujúcim iba pre seba, ale odvážnym hlasom v diskusii so zaujímavými otázkami a pohľadmi na vec. Jej preklad je významným príspevkom k prehĺbeniu tejto diskusie v česko-slovenskom kontexte.

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