

of archaic language, and compositional techniques referring to the bylina genre. It also presents the structure of a fictional post-imperialist, isolationist society with its inherent mechanisms of power, noting that this novel “extends its interpretive potential to any form of totalitarian government, past or present” (48). In the chapter on *Telluria*, the novel with the most intense and extravagant spatial structure, Pešková discusses Sorokin’s approach to a subject which is atypical for Russian literature, that of Russia’s collapse: “the revival is only possible through diminution” (60). She also highlights the postcolonial character of the fictional micro-states created by Sorokin and the respective hybrid character of fictional languages.

The final chapter, on *Manaraga* and *Doctor Garin*, contains a valuable example of immersion into their novelistic worlds, through which the author has managed to reconstruct the internal chronology between all the novels in the cycle. Pešková notes that for the world of *Manaraga*, Russia as such does not exist, and even the contemplations over the reasons for its disappearance, although still present, are losing their relevance. In the monograph’s conclusion, which summarizes and recapitulates the content of the previous parts, one may be interested in a

table listing the attributes of “Russianness” contained in the novels and their gradual disappearance from novel to novel (98). It is noteworthy that the last “survivor” in this table turned out to be Russian literature.

Pešková’s monograph has no ambition to be an exhaustive resource on Sorokin’s body of work, but with its narrowed thematic focus and broader methodological focus, it could be useful for expanding the knowledge of the writer’s later work, particularly since the themes raised by Sorokin himself and analyzed in the monograph are more relevant in the present situation than ever. On a critical note, there are a few formal shortcomings, and the lack of translation of quotations from Russian into English seems like a missed opportunity for attracting a broader audience. I think that the monograph is a worthy addition not only to Czech and Slovak “Sorokinology” (among the already existing texts by Tomáš Glanc, Zuzana Močková-Lorková, Helena Ulbrechtová etc.), but also to the international body of analytical texts about this influential Russian writer.

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MARKÉTA KRÍŽOVÁ – JITKA MALEČKOVÁ (eds.): Central Europe and the Non-European World in the Long 19th Century

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The volume *Central Europe and the Non-European World in the Long 19th Century* edited by Czech historians affiliated with Charles University in Prague, Markéta Křížová and Jitka Malečková, is a contribution to the slowly growing literature on the relationship of the various regions of Central Europe to the non-European world. Although its

main thrust is historical, it also contains chapters devoted to art and literature.

There is already quite a substantial research literature on the topic in the regional languages. However, volumes synthesizing the scattered findings under the wider umbrella of Central Europe or a similar supranational term in English are quite rare.

A German volume edited by Robert Born and Sarah Lemmen entitled *Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa: Diskurse, Akteure und Disziplinen vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (2014) was, as far as I know, the first significant attempt to bring together scholars researching this topic (for my review of the book see *World Literature Studies* 1/2015). In this regard, I would like to mention that two issues of *World Literature Studies* were exclusively devoted to exploring the images of the non-European world in Central and East European literatures: “Frontier Orientalism in Central and East European literatures” (1/2018), edited by Charles Sabatos and the author of the present review, and “Images of Remote Countries in the Literatures of Central and Eastern Europe” (2/2019), edited by Anton Pokrivčák and Miloš Zelenka.

The volume under review gathers contributions presented on a panel at the Sixth European Congress on World and Global History, which was organized by the European Network in Universal and Global History in Turku, Finland, in June 2021. This is probably one of the reasons that no attempt was made to treat the topic exhaustively. As a consequence, the focus is on the Ottoman Empire and the Turks, and some regions which played an important role in the European imagination of the Orient in the 19th century, such as India, hardly find a mention. The editors, as they write in the introduction, are aware of this limitation and of the problematic character of the term “non-European”. They also take a position on other problematic terms used in the title of the volume, “Central Europe” and “the 19th century”. Given the temporal context of the long 19th century, they define Central Europe as the region of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. In addition, it should be noted that the editors took inspiration especially from (post)colonial studies. As stated by them, the texts collected in the volume show that “the persistent oscillation between the self-perception as those dominating and those being dominated constitutes one

of the characteristics of Central European self-fashioning in the modern era” (16).

In the first contribution, Robert Born examines Orientalist/Orientalizing paintings of a number of artists associated with the region of Central Europe. He comes to the conclusion that they were influenced by centers of academic painting in Paris, Munich and Vienna. However, Born also notices differences due to respective national traditions and prevailing political agendas. Jitka Malečková focuses on non-fictional Czech writings about the Ottoman Empire and Bosnia-Herzegovina from the late 19th and early 20th century and searches for an answer to the question whether it reflects colonial ambitions. She concludes that Czechs adopted the Western colonial rhetoric without having previous colonial experiences and calls this kind of colonialism “borrowed colonialism”, which is a term originally suggested by Selim Deringil.

In the next chapter, Charles Sabatos turns his attention to literary fiction and explores the impact of the early modern Ottoman invasions on 19th-century Slovak culture. From his analysis it follows that the Slovak writers of the late Habsburg era diverged from the dominant Orientalist rhetoric. Sabatos uses Edward Said’s terms “hidden elements of kinship” and “sympathetic identification” to describe their literary adaptations of legends featuring Turks as Romantic heroes. Markéta Křížová focuses on scientific expeditions, museum exhibits, ethnographic shows, and travelogues which originated in the Czech lands of the second half of the 19th and the early 20th century and presented “savages” especially from North America and Africa. She sees Czechs and Germans living in the Czech lands as competitors for political power, wealth, and prestige. Czech and German intellectuals are supposed to have transformed their “defensive nationalism into offensive one, positioning themselves and their fellow citizens alongside the imperial powers of Western Europe” (30). However, the Czechs, according to Křížová, showed some sympathy with those who were

subject of oppression. Bálint Varga explores the activities of Hungarian Catholic missionaries in China and Portuguese Southeast Africa (Mozambique). He comes to the conclusion that their writings and public activities were tinged with colonial concepts and prejudices, despite the fact that they did not come from a colonizing country.

The last chapter of the volume by Barbara Lüthi does not concentrate on any historical, visual, or literary material, but serves rather as a kind of theoretical conclusion. Unfortunately, Lüthi seems to have completely done away with the concept of Orientalism and sees only colonialism in Central Europe, more precisely, a special version of colonialism, “colonialism without colonies”. However, in my opinion, we lose a significant insight by abandoning the concept of Orientalism in the discussion of colonialism, especially of one without colonies. Orientalism is not only an aspect of colonialism; it is its very foundation. I do not deny the fact that the concept of “colonialism without colonies” helps to show that even countries without colonies in some way profited from colonialism. Nevertheless, as Lüthi herself states while discussing Ulla Vuorela’s concept of “complicit colonialism”, there is a danger of “being ‘seduced’ by universal thinking and practices of domination” (205–206). Isn’t the broad application of the concept of “colonialism without colonies” to Central Europe also a case of such a seduction?

Both the editors in the introduction and Barbara Lüthi in her chapter notice that the depictions of the Turks in Slovak literature as discussed by Charles Sabatos are conspicuous by the absence of “the position of strength”. The editors also admit that the term “colonialism” “does not exhaust the entire reality of colonial entanglements” (31). I believe that these statements point to the need for developing a concept of intercultural relations that would take into account the operation of power, but at the same go beyond the conceptualization of these relations as power relations. The historian’s task is to narrate and interpret the past, thus

not only describing but also constructing a world. A question one may ask, therefore, is whether it is possible to improve upon the construction of intercultural relations, including colonial ones, as practices of conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. Namely, if we conceptualize the relations between the various racial, ethnic or cultural groups predominantly as agonistic, we obliterate their complexity. In my opinion, instead of taking inspiration from (post)colonial studies with their primary concern with power, conflict, and guilt, further research on the imagining of the non-European world in Central Europe would benefit from a conceptual framework based on imagology and intercultural studies. I think that especially the chapters by Robert Born and Charles Sabatos indicate this more nuanced approach.

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