

how to compare” (47), but, unfortunately, he is silent about one of the most radical projects in comparative literature which claims that the European conceptualization of literature differs from the traditional Chinese, Indian and Arabic literary criticism which developed independently of the West.

The final chapter, “The futures of comparative literature”, presents an optimistic view of the potential development of the discipline, as Susan Bassnett also writes in her blurb endorsing the book. After decades of pessimistic scenarios talking about a crisis or predicting the death of the discipline, Hutchinson’s enthusiasm is encouraging. The reason for this optimism lies in the confidence that comparison is ubiquitous and all knowledge is necessarily comparative. Thus his exposition of comparative literature comes full circle. He sees the value of comparative literature in political education, understood as education to transnationalism, and aesthetic education, as proposed by the German poet and thinker Friedrich Schiller. This Schiller-inspired model of comparison is one “in which free ‘play’ of literature embraces all peoples equally, regardless of national history and linguistic status” (117). This is a very humanistic and idealistic message which I personally find appealing. However, as Hutchinson himself states earlier in the book, comparative liter-

ature “was often little more than competitive literature” (55) in the past. Isn’t the language of commerce which is penetrating the study of literature, as, for example, in the current notion of world literature (note Hutchinson’s marketplace metaphor used in the first chapter to describe the discipline), bringing back this “competitive literature”? What kind of play is comparative literature? A play understood as competition? What kind of play is comparative literature? A game understood as competition? Can we reconcile egalitarianism with competitiveness? Can all peoples and literatures meet as equal partners in a world dominated by the Anglo-sphere? These questions are not answered in the book, despite the fact that Hutchinson is a proponent of multilingualism and is sympathetic toward the world beyond what is called the Global North. However, these questions necessarily arise in the globalized world we live in.

As an introductory text, the book is meant for a wide audience. It is a very good summary of the current developments in the discipline in the Anglophone world, and it is an interesting reading even for a seasoned comparatist because of its optimistic view of the state of the discipline.

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CHARLES SABATOS: *Frontier Orientalism and the Turkish Image in Central European Literature*

Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020. 183 pp. ISBN 978-1-7936-1487-2

In recent years, the concepts of Orientalism and frontier Orientalism have been receiving increasingly more attention in comparatist scholarship. The literatures of the Central European region are riddled with the presence of Ottoman invasions and the proverbial culturally and morally antagonistic “Turk”. Creating such representations has been crucial to the formation of ethnic and national identities from the Early Modern

period until the present. In *Frontier Orientalism and the Turkish Image in Central European Literature*, Charles Sabatos meticulously and masterfully dissects frontier Orientalist narratives in Slovak and adjacent Central European literatures. Frontier Orientalism, a concept introduced by Austrian-American anthropologist Andre Gingrich, refers to a set of “metaphors and myths” imprinted into the popular imaginary of Eastern Europe

(specifically the Balkans) concerning the Ottoman invasions. Sabatos extends the concept of frontier Orientalism to the Central European region. At long last, these narratives (so deeply part of how we learn to understand ourselves as Slovaks) have received the scholarly attention they were due. This book is remarkable not only for masterfully tackling a subject that has hitherto not been addressed, but also for the sheer scope of material Sabatos is able to elucidate – his analysis traverses barriers of history and language as he contextualizes historical circumstance from the Early Modern period to the present, drawing on regional literary traditions of the Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, partly Poles and more.

Sabatos tackles the representation of the Ottoman subject or “Turk” in relation to regional ethnic and national identities in specific contexts of history and genre from the fifteenth century to present-day. In Chapter 1, encounters with different (Muslim, Native American) identities and environments, as found in captivity narratives, become a point of testing the author’s (Christian) faith in many literatures, and captivity by the Ottomans in Central European literature has similarly served to affirm one’s ethnic and religious identities. In the Bohemian nobleman Václav Vratislav Mitrovic’s memoirs *Přihody* (Adventures) authored in the late 16th century, but published in Czech in 1777, Vratislav’s account of the Turks is balanced but still instrumentalized as a call on Czech unity with the fellow Christian nations of Europe to join the call to arms against the Ottomans.

The Ottomans make their first appearance in Slovak prose in Jozef Ignác Bajza’s novel *René mládenca príhody a skúsenosti* (The Adventures and Experiences of the Youth René, 1774/5). Just as the first English novel *Robinson Crusoe* is a narrative of exotic adventure and exploration, but also captivity, so is this “first Slovak novel”. The story follows the journey of the youth René, son of a Venetian trader and his companion Van Shiphout in search of René’s sister, Fatima. The layered social and political commentary in *René*

sets the blueprint for literary representation of “the Turk”, informed by René’s (1) capture and (2) “double conversion/identity transformation” from Christian to Muslim and back. Sabatos marks *René* as a turning point for the representation of the Turk from the unambiguously barbarous “enemy of the Christians” to a more complex “metaphorical antithesis to the Enlightenment spirit”, whereby resilience of one’s national and religious identity is placed high as a value. It is precisely travel adventure narratives situated in the Orient that are, historically, the stories at the heart of national and cultural identities.

In Chapter 2, Sabatos discusses the era of nation-building in the 19th century, in which the stereotype of the barbaric Turk became an integral mythical component of national consciousness – particularly for Romantic epic and folk poetry, exemplified by tales of “heroism and sacrifice” in historical songs and ballads that drew heavily on folk sources.

To an outsider, the historically constant presence of the Ottomans and “Turks” in Slovak national literature as the quintessential Other might be surprising at first glance, given the limited extent to which Slovaks were in direct contact with the Ottomans historically and given the relative geographical (and cultural) distance otherwise. Those of us who have grown up with these narratives, on the other hand, have perhaps taken for granted the extent to which the literary canon is permeated with the image of the “menacing Turk.” Canonical works such as *Slávy dcéra* (The Daughter of Sláva, 1824) by Ján Kollár or “Turčín Poničan” (The Turk from Poniky, 1863) by Samo Chalupka, known to any Slovak elementary school graduate, are doubtless formative for the image of the Oriental Other in the national consciousness. Further examples taken from or based on folk sources are ballads such as “Ten turecký mýtnik” (The Turkish Tollman) collected in Ján Kollár’s *National Songbook*, Božena Němcová’s “Vávro Brezula” or “O Turkovi a krásné Katarine”

(The Turk and Lovely Katarina) in *Slovenské národné pohádky a pověsti* (Slovak National Fairy Tales and Folktales, 1857–1858), Jonáš Záborský's *Faustiáda* (1864) carries a strong satirical overtone and social commentary, also targeting Slavic "traitor" converts to the Turks, while Svätozár Hurban-Vajanský's *Tatry a more* (The Tatras and the Sea, 1879) carries both pan-Slavic and nationalist sentiment.

Chapter 3 examines both nineteenth- and twentieth-century Slovak historical fiction, tied as it is to "broader concepts of historical representation". The earlier period frames the situation of the Slovaks during the Ottoman invasions as less favorable than that of the Hungarians, as exemplified in Ján Francisci-Rimavský's *Janko Podhorský* (1844) or Janko Kalinčiak's *Púť lásky* (The Pilgrimage of Love, 1850). A century later, Jozef Horák's *Sebechlebskí Hudci* (Sebechleby Musicians, 1946) is a historical adventure novel that evokes a "metaphorical past" which "strengthens the nation against its modern enemies: the former bourgeois elite and the capitalist foreign powers, giving even escapist historical fiction an ideological purpose" (79).

In Chapter 4, Sabatos's analysis neatly triangulates representations of respective national subjectivities in both interwar and Communist-era Czechoslovakia. Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* (*Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka za světové války, 1920–1923*) captures the sometimes ambiguous and contradictory views of the Ottoman Empire during and immediately after the First World War. Interwar Slovak authors reanimate a mythical past for Slovakia via folklore and folk tales, such as Eudovít Janota's *Slovenské hrady* (Slovak Castles, 1934). Literary modernism saw a revival of the Turkish theme in Prague-German literature by Jewish writers such as Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel or Leo Perutz while Czech-language authors like Jiří Langer and František Volf deliver mixed messages of national identity in relation to Turkish otherness. The Turkish image takes its place

in interwar and postwar Czech and Slovak poetry, drama, music and comedy as well. The years of Czechoslovak state socialism invited frontier Orientalist narratives into performance arts like opera and cinema, as exemplified by Ján Cikker's opera *Beg Bajazid* (1957) or Paľo Bielik's movie *Majster kat* (Master Executioner, 1966).

As the end of the Cold War heralded an age of free speech and increasing globalism, the postmodern, postcolonial and postsocialist narratives in Central European literatures discussed in Chapter 5 have continued to reflect on the Ottoman invasions. Milan Kundera, Pavel Vilikovský and Irena Brežná have all alluded in one way or another to myths and literary representations of the Ottomans in Czechoslovak literature such that Turkish identity has continued to be part of how Slovaks and Czechs continue to think about themselves, about their place in the Visegrad Group and the European Union, and of course about the Muslim world.

Charles Sabatos's *Frontier Orientalism and the Turkish Image in Central European Literature* is a dense read, meticulously researched and brilliantly crafted. It will be of interest to anyone, particularly those working on comparative Central European studies, imagology and Slovak studies. By elucidating the function of such representations of Turks in relation to the construction of Slovak national identity, the book comes as a fresh and timely perspective on nation and identity in the Central European region.

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