

Three Variations on the Road to the Far East: On Strategies for Generating Cultural Difference in Polish Travel Writing from the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Anna Kołos

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As a branch of writing, travel literature poses a range of hurdles to any attempts at theoretical, methodological, genealogical or poetic classification. In a canonical reference book for philologists in Poland, *Dictionary of Literary Terms (Słownik terminów literackich)*, Janusz Sławiński defers to the broadest possible definition for the genre, arguing that travel literature operates between two poles: that which is “fully factual” sits on one end of the spectrum, while on the other, we find contrived travel tales both realistic and fantastical.¹ This vast range includes Herodotus, Marco Polo, the alleged Mandeville, Columbus, More, Benyovszky, Swift, Sterne and Krasicki, to name just a few. Those who did indeed travel find themselves in the company of those who mystify or simulate travel, as well as those who experiment with the conventions of travel writing. Yet even if we were to try to impose some order on Sławiński’s semantic chaos and claim that on the level of textual ontology, writing that describes a factual journey should be differentiated from tales of fabricated voyages, the problematic categories of authenticity and literariness still prevent us from reducing this textual field to a simple definition.

The “realness” of experience, which ostensibly precedes its submersion in writing, remains up for debate. After all, poets and travelers alike are prone to lie,² as Diderot has aptly shown us:

In what way could man, drawn by his very nature to the miraculous, see things just as they are?
After all, he is always seeking the extraordinary to justify the great effort he makes to observe

¹ J. Sławiński, *Podróż*, [in:] *Słownik terminów literackich*, ed. J. Sławiński, 2nd edition, Wrocław 1988, p. 363.

² D. Carey, *Truth, Lies and Travel Writing*, [in:] *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. C. Thompson, Abingdon, New York 2016, pp. 3–14.

these things in the first place. Out of all men of letters, the erudite must be singled out as the most gullible and naïve. We can say a similar thing of historians: out of all of them, those who travel lie, exaggerate and deceive, and they do all of this without ill will.³

Even if we optimistically wished to read Diderot's judgment as hyperbole, we must admit that whether we like it or not, the transfer of information "from one party" to another is immanently and unconditionally mediated by the act of reading, images, myths and everything else that falls within the horizon of the individual traveler's preconceptions. Moreover, the literary mode of writing subjects empirical experience to an imbalanced game that condemns it to failure. In this game, two orders of understanding merge, thus undermining the privileged status of the nonfictional account. In this sense, the travel text appears as a continuum that stretches from the pseudo-factual and often non-narrative record, to literature that fictionalizes the reality of travel.⁴ A pressure forms between topography as a textual trope of reality and the literary system that greedily absorbs everything into itself, usurping the territory of "non-fiction." This tension becomes transparent in the ironic strategy adopted by Słowacki in *Voyage to the Holy Land from Naples (Podróż do ziemi świętej z Neapolu)*:

I set off on the road, through Apulia, Otranto,
Corfu... Where am I going? The next canto will tell you (verses 5-6).⁵

It takes no hardened structuralist to see that in this verse, the artistic function (in Jakobson's sense) towers over the travel report while words, place names and one strictly literary term (Otranto and *canto*) seem to marvel at their own proximity (think of Horace). Literature thus devours reality at the same time as it permits the trip to live within its attractive narrative, thanks to which its story will be told.

When it comes to ghostwriting, a phenomenon rather prevalent in the world of travel literature, these problems of form and literariness become particularly transparent. An example of this dynamic long-embedded in European culture is Marco Polo's collaboration with Rustichello da Pisa.⁶ The merchant postponed publishing his notes from his journey to China so long after returning to Venice that we might reasonably suspect Marco Polo in fact lacked the writing skills needed to go down in history. Yet as luck would have it, after a few years in Italy, Marco found himself imprisoned in Genoa, where he shared a cell with the novelist who had penned

³ D. Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, Baltimore 1935

⁴ See also: S. Burkot, *Polskie podróżopisarstwo romantyczne*, Warsaw 1988, pp-7.

⁵ J. Słowacki, *Podróż do Ziemi Świętej z Neapolu*, [in:] *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 2: *Poematy*, ed. J. Krzyżanowski, Wrocław 1983, p. 7.

⁶ Here, I am accepting the authenticity of Marco Polo's travels in spite of the controversies that persist today. Let us recall that in 1978, John W. Haeger directly contested the claim that Marco Polo was ever actually in China. In 1996, in the study *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*, Frances Wood answered this question in the negative. Her skepticism was largely informed by the lack of references to Marco Polo in Chinese materials, which seems to undermine the author's claim that he held high rank in the court of Kubilaj-chan. She also cites the fact that *Il milione* never mentions the existence of the Great Wall, whose trajectory in fact ran rather close to Beijing. Among recent research on the subject, an extensive discussion on the authenticity of this trip can be found in H.U. Vogel's text *Marco Polo Was in China. New Evidence from Currencies, Salts and Revenues*, Leiden 2012, pp. 11-88. This study's author goes to great lengths to reconstruct the historical economic conditions in China at the dawn of the Yuan dynasty, juxtaposing this picture with the information conveyed in *Il milione* on the production of salt, paper money and the usage of other currencies as well as financing and administrative structures in the country. After comparing these portraits, the sinologist comes away convinced by the Venetian traveler's tales.

the first Italian adaptation of the King Arthur legends. Marco would tell him stories, and the writer would arrange them into seductive literary narratives, producing an ambivalent tension between experience and literature. As soon as the ghostwriter took over, this writing was no longer based in experience. He was writing stories, with one word propelling the next, while the thing itself... but that's just it, could anyone else have possibly spoken a truer word?

Dependent relationships of the kind were by no means a secret in the early modern world of books. In 1759, the editors of the English periodical "Monthly Review" certified the travel book *French and Indian Cruelty* as authentic with a certain caveat: "We imagine the story of Peter Williamson to be, in general, matter of fact with a few pardonable embellishments by the hand of some literary friend."⁷ Of course, it is difficult to imagine any piece of travel writing available to readers that lacks this literary "adornment."

In the last few decades, an enormous effort has been made to overcome the paradigm of treating travel texts as autonomous entities and focusing on their internal structures of representation. There has also been a push to overcome culture's dominant role in the relationship between travel and its historical contribution to the expansion of Europeans' geographical knowledge, particularly in the early modern period. It seems that the Polish humanities in particular have long doted on the analytical habit of ascribing only innocent intentions to historical authors. If we begin with the first phase of exploration by Spanish and Portuguese fleets, we often come across aphorisms describing an intensifying "thirst for knowledge" or "curiosity about the world,"⁸ as if academic discourse is trying to camouflage European expansionism. Since Polish travelers seldom took one step beyond the continent, scholarship on travel writing has been free to focus mainly on the "foreign but close" and discuss local modes of travel⁹ as a hobby of the intellectual Polish nobility. By embracing this subject, they could avoid getting entangled in the more difficult problem of the poet's relationship to politics as expressed in the diction of travelers and ethnographers.

Compared to other branches of literature, travel texts have a strong potential for agency. They can expand the scientific and public discourse of their home culture and are often active nodes of the elaborate relational network through which power operates. This approach to texts is not at all new: it is supported by the substantive New Historicism movement, cultural poetics and imagological¹⁰ and postcolonial studies, all of which foreground the role of construction in the creation of literary and mental images and the imagination's processes of deindividuation. In the Polish humanities, however, we are arguably still far away from piecing together a comparative and comprehensive view of these themes. This being said, when it comes to travel writing, the diversity of material and persisting methodological chaos¹¹ surely obstruct our ability to formulate complex theses on the genre, regardless of what analytical optics we adopt.

⁷ "The Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal. By Several Hands" 1759, vol. XXI, p. 453.

⁸ For example: H. Dziechcińska, *O staropolskich dziennikach podróży*, Warsaw 1991, p. 9 et. seq.

⁹ A. Kucharski, "Theatrum peregrinandi." *Poznawcze aspekty staropolskich podróży w epoce późnego baroku*, Torun 2013, p. 13.

¹⁰ See: *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters – A Critical Survey*, ed. M. Beller, J. Leerssen, Amsterdam, New York 2007; J. Leerssen, *Imagology. On Using Ethnicity to Make Sense of the World*, "Iberic@l. Revue d'études ibériques et ibéro-américaines" 2016, issue 10, pp. 13–31.

¹¹ P. Kaczyński, "O staropolskich dziennikach podróży," *Hanna Dziechcińska, Warsaw 1991* [review], "Pamiętnik Literacki" R. 84: 1992, vol. 4, p. 235.

If we give up all pretensions of comprehensiveness, we must still fundamentally rethink the analytical categories we apply to certain types of literary material whenever we situate it at the crossroads of poetics and intellectual consciousness. By reflecting on these categories, we might be able to reveal how the text allows us to see the world as well as the ideological conditions informing it and the political ramifications that follow. This perceived reality (I choose this word fully aware of how much is lost when we privilege the sense of sight) operates at the intersection of the physical act of travel and empirical experience on one side, and a mental image of geography, history and politics on the other. As we know, this mental image accompanies the traveler as soon as he sets off from home. In this preliminary study, I propose to map these relations by looking at Polish travelers (although national qualifications can sometimes be problematic) exploring the Far East. I will mainly focus on the influences of Chinese culture. By foregrounding the material dimension of travel, which precedes and informs various perspectives within the text's internal organization, we can observe how the road traveled reveals a great deal about specific historical moments in exploration of the Far East. These variations include (1) maritime transport used by explorers, (2) traveling by land via Siberia, and (3) modern tourism by sea.

The Eighteenth-Century Explorer and the Poetics of Island Paradise

Even before Ignacy Krasicki reached for his pen to bring us the first modern Polish novel, a swiftian utopian tale that experimented with conventions of travel writing, *The Adventures of Mr. Nicholas Wisdom* (*Mikołaja Doświadczyńskiego przypadki*, 1776), an earlier set of adventure tales in the vein of the "Robinsonade" was published by Maurice Benyovszky (in Polish, Maurycy Beniowski).¹² Benyovszky had been exiled to Kamchatka as a Bar Confederate. The baron's story is well known: it was not enough that while in exile, he started a victorious rebellion against the Russians; he also hijacked the largest ship in the port and set sail with a group of rebels. If we look at the fugitives' journey as a whole, it is worth highlighting one revealing yet rarely discussed episode that brings up the key issues of textual representation for Benyovszky, who published his accounts as *Journals* (*Pamiętniki*). The episode I have in mind is the crew's short sojourn on the island of Usmy Ligon (which was then under Chinese rule, but is now located in the Japanese Riukiu archipelago).¹³

Benyovszky's travel account offers a late testimony of travel by the explorer's ship, representing a model that had left its mark on European literature. The tale focuses on maritime imagery and coastal exploration depicted in the imaginative mode of adventure tales known as "Robinsonades." In this particular episode, the rebel ship runs up on shallow waters, and the Europeans explore the land nearby and ultimately meet the island's population. One would be hard pressed to find a more

¹²It is widely known that Benyovszky's national status is extremely complex. The baron's life story includes interactions with Hungary, Slovakia and Poland, but due to the author's own declarations of Polonophilia, his participation in the Bar Confederation, and his usage of a Polish ensign, we might allow ourselves to include his contributions in the history of Polish literature. To make things more complicated, Benyovszky wrote in French, but his work was first published in English (1790). Edward Kajdański's contemporary translation seems to be the most reliable textual reference. In the years preceding his work on the translation, Kajdański analyzed the signature devices of his *Journals* (*Pamiętniki*) and reconstructed the baron's journey. As a result, we can feel confident that he went to great lengths to bring the reader the fullest and most accurate version of Benyovszky's "original." See: Kajdański, *Przedmowa tłumacza*, [in:] M. Beniowski, *Pamiętniki*, translation and commentary by E. Kajdański, Warsaw 1995, pp. 7–19. See also: E. Kajdański, *Tajemnica Beniowskiego: odkrycia, intrygi, fałszerstwa*, Warsaw 1994.

¹³See more: E. Kajdański, *Długi cień wielkiego muru. Jak Polacy odkrywali Chiny*, Warsaw 2005, pp. 83–85.

conventional and tame instance of the motif of breaching the “contact zone” (this is Mary Louise Pratt’s term for the space where two remote cultures come into contact and affect one another).¹⁴ The literary trope Benyovszky is reproducing offers a whole repertoire of classical images cemented in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century canons that begin to radically transform at the break of the next century, impacted by Hegelian idealism. Benyovszky, however, preserves the archetype of the early capitalist explorer. He is an astute observer of natural resources and quickly picks up on all opportunities for trade and enterprise. He is a capable, resourceful and skilled administrator and sailor who often doubles as negotiator and mediator.¹⁵ The travel narrative’s ties to the archetypal journeys of Odysseus and Aeneas seem particularly pronounced, although our modern hero has no transcendental powers working for or against him. He is fully responsible for his own survival, and he surpasses Odysseus on many fronts. At the very least, he takes seriously his custody over his subordinates and takes great care that the crew’s immodesties and (to use the captain’s own euphemism) “dalliances” with women do not damage their rapport with the locals.¹⁶ Our hero avoids repeating the error of Odysseus, who neglected the men in his service on the island of Helios by forbidding them from slaying the island’s cattle. The archetype of the explorer-colonist is also reinforced by Benyovszky’s rational mastery over his base instincts and unrestrained urges. This attribute reinforces his power over his uncouth crew. We might see this superiority in parallel with the one often claimed by white men over the “dark” race in early modern sociopolitical thought. This superiority also seems analogical to that of lawful civilization over the anarchic state of nature. The civilizing logic that surfaces in this text is therefore embedded in the structure of Benyovszky’s voyage and pre-established before he enters the “contact zone.”

Yet this framework for conceiving the encounter with the other is associated with conventions from late antiquity and early modernity alike. When he describes meeting strangers who speak in a Mandarin dialect, Benyovszky uses the trope of the idyllic island and the utopian poetics that come with it. Sticking to a traditionally generalized register, the traveler depicts the indigenous people as virtuous, gentle, adverse to violence and peacefully good-tempered. The land they inhabit is described as fertile, enchanting, and distinct for its warm and pleasant climate. Describing the indigenous population, the captain adds:

[their] good nature and friendly rapport often awoke in me a desire to share their easy, happy life. For this island was remarkably beautiful. Its warm climate seemed perfect, and its people were free. These motives alone were powerful enough to sway a man who has already been crossed by fortune’s tireless game.¹⁷

This classical repertoire of praises for simplicity is embellished when the fugitive confederate makes a political observation that is new to the lexicon of primitivism: he admires the island people’s full sovereignty and lack of conflict with their neighbors. This reveals much about Benyovszky’s own sociopolitical consciousness and his identification with the Poles. Moreover, in the turn of phrase “fortune’s game,” we hear the echoes of the renaissance-era fatalism

¹⁴M.L. Pratt, *Arts of the Contact Zone*, “Profession” 1991, pp. 33–40; *Imperial Eyes...*, pp. 17–34.

¹⁵See also: D. Kalinowski, *Polska droga na Daleki Wschód (od oświecenia do romantyzmu)*, [in:] *Bez antypodów? Zbliżenia i konfrontacje kultur*, ed. B. Mazan, with S. Tynecka-Makowska, Lodz 2008, p. 26; D. Kalinowski, *Przybliżanie Dalekiego Wschodu. O trzech polskich podróżach orientalnych*, “Ars Inter Culturas” 2010, p. 159.

¹⁶M. Beniowski, op. cit., p. 361.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 358.

that preceded the modern belief in man's agency. Benyovszky, however, superimposes a dichotomy between movement (voluntary and compulsory mobility) and rest over the classical dichotomy between civilization and primitivism. These idyllic islands, a tropical paradise for Europeans, promise stability, consistency and intimacy with nature. This is expressed through the poetics of rest. In the century to come, rest will be understood as the absence of history and development, correlating to doomed stagnation.

Benyovszky goes even further in his apologia for primitivism, drawing on moralizing tropes and contrasting the virtue he praised earlier with the vices and degeneration of modern civilization. As we saw in the declaration cited above, the morality of the indigenous people "excited his imagination" and awoke in him the "daydream" of never leaving the island.¹⁸ The traveler also expresses sentimental Rousseauian motifs in his critique of his culturally debased crew. In an early stage of the voyage, the crew demands to spend some time on a deserted island. They are driven by material motives and hope to exploit the rumored gold deposits they expect to find on the island. Benyovszky uses the classic trope of enhancing his own character to allot himself sovereign status in the textual world. His amenable openness to the other is consistent with the nearly ideal archetype he represents of the enlightened explorer. On the other hand, he reproduces the classic tendency to force a binary between these separate worlds, as evidenced by the rhetorical intonations of the word "daydream." If we follow the text, white civilization means movement, transformation and action. Surely, our energetic baron is not ready to give all this up for one local community firmly "outside of history." His utopian mirage remains a figment of the imagination he can flee to for the duration of short, sentimental fantasies, but it does not give our hero what he needs to pursue the culturally conditioned ambitions from which he is clearly not immune. This also seems to inform the superficial status of his bucolic tale. I say superficial because the tale, assimilated in the course of reading, becomes a perceptive filter, rather than an observation born out of experience.

Until now, our hero has left his European identity in tact. Even if he pines for the "simple, idyllic" island life, he does not actually negotiate the gap between the values he represents and those espoused by the locals. At one point, however, the contact zone compels the sailor to second guess his position and suspend the axiology of his own culture (the culture of Christian Europe) in favor of a foreign culture and its own form of syncretism between Christianity and local customs.¹⁹ The hospitable locals urge Benyovszky to follow his crewmen and choose a companion for himself among the island's young ladies. At first, the explorer balks at this idea, asserting yet another indication of his moral and intellectual superiority to the rest of his entourage. Held back by his marital bonds, he finally gives in to their suggestions after learning that the locals are motivated solely by their specific customs. They tell him:

For us, a young lady is her own master. She answers to no one so long as she remains young (...). Only after her betrothal must she conform to strict requirements (...). So you may freely access

¹⁸See also: p. 359.

¹⁹For clarity's sake, I should add that the island's inhabitants had already undergone Christianization at the hands of Father Ignatius' missionaries of the Jesuit order. After the missionary's death, however, no further efforts were made to propagate and maintain the new faith. These and other circumstances informed Benyovszky's narrative's projection of the "noble savage" archetype. The author recognizes that their culture is superior to a savage state. The *bon sauvage* trope, however, was most often used in reference to non-Christian cultures.

these young girls. It is easy to tell them apart from the married ones, for the latter cover their heads and faces with a veil.²⁰

The link between white colonial expansionism and sexual desire can come as no surprise if we consider the history of the last three centuries as reflected in travel literature, ethnographies and other texts that fetishize ethnic difference.²¹ Benyovszky's escape from Kamchatka to Canton occurred shortly after the famous travels of Samuel Willis and Louis de Bougainville, who were the first to discover Tahiti, and subsequently transformed the land into islands of "earthly paradise" in the European imaginary. Echoes of these expeditions might well have been known to Benyovszky, although it is hard to posit any textual dependency between the works, for de Bougainville first published *Voyage autour du monde* in 1771. The two travelers fall within a close temporal window, and they both render portraits of the exotic that extend the European tradition of depicting a vision of paradise that was actualized much earlier in the experience of Tahiti.²² Diderot manages to encapsulate the work of de Bougainville using his signature pithiness that never fails to deconstruct the obvious:

You stroll along, good sir Bougainville, you and your people, throughout the whole island. Everywhere they accept you. You help yourself to everything and nobody sets any obstacles in your way. No doors are closed to you, for the usage of doors in itself is unknown. They invite you to sit down. The whole wealth of the country surrounds you. So, you want young girls? Don't bother seducing them, for their own mothers will lead you to where they wait, fully undressed. Out of all these huts full of men and women, you are the sole possessor of this young victim of the duties of hospitality. The ground is littered with leaves and flowers, the street musicians tune their instruments, and no one disturbs your sweet embraces. The damsel responds to them of her own free will. A hymn resounds, a hymn that incites you to be a man, that urges your lover to be a woman, a yielding woman, delightful, loving, tender...²³

The philosopher relentlessly exposed European explorers' signature penchant for taking possession of all things. It did not suffice that the perspective of sight alone indicated what would at least potentially succumb to the conqueror's rule; while exploring the seas, they masked their sexual lust as innocent simply because they encountered no resistance.

In the historical timeline leading up to this moment, this aspect of eighteenth-century poetics is, of course, nothing new. The sensuality and openness of the Orient framed by the European traveler or conqueror had long existed in the consciousness of the literary West. In certain verses of the medieval multi-text the Romance of Alexander, the leader and his male entourage would

²⁰M. Beniowski, op. cit., p. 361.

²¹In the Polish Context, Bartłomiej Szleszyński's writing on colonial and sexual fantasies is particularly interesting. See his text: *Bolesław Prus i pozytywistyczne "porno z Murzynkami," "Napis. Pismo poświęcone literaturze okolicznościowej i użytkowej"* 2012, issue 18, pp. 155–173.

²²R. Edmond, *The Pacific/ Tahiti. Queen of the South Sea isles*, [in:] *Travel writing*, ed. P. Holme, T. Youngs, 5th edition, Cambridge 2010, p. 139.

²³D. Diderot, op. cit., p. 42. As an aside, we should note that Diderot's critique exclusively targeted the conduct of white travelers, for whom all the riches and splendors of the islands were wide open for the taking. He himself indulged in fantasies regarding women's natural promiscuity in this region. For Diderot, promiscuity should not necessarily be condemned by Christian axiology preemptively imposed on a culture: "young girls gave in to the caresses of young people in front of their parents, among the innocent people of the island, to the sound of the flute, and you want to poison their souls with your cockamamie and false views and make them aware of their transgression by enforcing your delusional notions of shame." (p. 41)

make their way to an “enchanted” forest somewhere in the remote East, where sensual women of unbridled sexuality awaited them.²⁴ These classic tales always have a “gimmick,” and their folkloric structure asserts the idea that all wantonness, indulgence and violations of categorical prohibitions will be punished. Such is the case when Odysseus’ crew gets turned into swine on the island of Circe. Inversely, not one tale imposes restraints on the modern colonist. Tropes of earlier myths and romances fade into obscurity in the emerging body of literature that expresses the European’s new relationship to the world. “Our” explorer, distinguished from the ship’s crew and legitimizing his position of power on the basis of his extraordinary restraint and self-control, represents his ultimate submission to the indigenous people’s customs as a negotiation tactic between two distinct value systems: Christian virtue and the imagined promiscuity of the cultures of the Pacific. This action becomes a process of transculturation that affirms the traveler’s right to sexual indulgence by manipulating another language to account for his motives.

Although they only comprise one isolated episode of his escapades, Benyovszky’s tales from the islands of Riukiu represent a distilled set of pivotal themes of eighteenth-century travel writing and its poetics. The tale presents its narrator and hero as an enlightened explorer, proving the persistence of early modern myths and relativist modes for representing local and foreign cultures. Benyovszky’s adventures make transparent certain literary parallels drawn from empirical experience, while the traveler himself becomes a hybrid figure referencing Odysseus, Aeneas,²⁵ Robinson Crusoe and Lemuel Gulliver, in turn.

Savagery and Civilization. On the Chinese-Siberian Border

The earliest literary testimonies of exile from the late eighteenth century broached the subject of Russian intervention in Polish politics. Benyovszky’s work falls in this category, as does that of Karol Lubicz Chojecki, although the nineteenth century ushered in a whole new category of literature of exile on a broader scale. This literature tends to single out the circumstances surrounding Polish travel writing from the history of the European prose of the colonial and imperial eras. Polish travel writing did, however, have much common ground with the broader European landscape. Common threads include a focus on ethnography, the advancement of scientific discourses as evidenced in the work of Jan Potocki, and exploration into the interior of new lands as opposed to the coastal encounters emphasizing maritime transport that were more prevalent in the earlier phases of European exploration of the geographical world.²⁶ Poles’ actions and texts were consistent with this general thematic range (this is particularly true for Poles living within the Russian partition). For most of the nineteenth century, they traveled by land to the Far East, passing through the vast expanse of Siberia and the Mongolian steppe to reach Northern China and occasionally as far as Beijing.

This mode of travel, so characteristic for exiles, prisoners, fugitives and travelers attached to scientific expeditions and diplomatic missions in the Russian service, forced travelers to adapt

²⁴D. Buschinger, *German Alexander Romances*, [in:] *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. Zuwiyya, Leiden 2011, p. 311.

²⁵For more on the relationship between the erotic episodes of Aeneas and Dido in the context of eighteenth-century travel texts, see: P. Hulme, *Colonial Encounters. Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797*, London, New York 1986, p. 249.

²⁶M.L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 37–66.

to the entrenched cultural dichotomy between savagery and civilization. Affected by the many nomadic peoples living in Siberia and Central Asia and their route through expansive lands of unspoiled nature, they superimposed a continuum that stretched from barbarism to culture over their physical route.

Jerzy Tymkowski, a Russian Pole educated during a mission to China and profoundly influenced by Herder, conveyed the travel impressions he gathered from 1820 to 1821 rather meaningfully:

Is there any traveler who is not amazed when, after long exertions, passing through the formidable steppes and dense forests or threatening sea, in a word, after all the wild and ravaged nature that obstructs his yearnings and complicates his journey, he sets off into this totally ungoverned country in a rapture, where countless villages, sprawling settlements inhabited by millions of people who enjoy all of life's comforts in peace, safety and the order of the law, become a mere image in his eyes.²⁷

The author establishes a categorical and hierarchical opposition between the hardships of travel through untamed nature and the landscape sculpted by man, consisting of a network of “countless” settlements and a sense of safety produced by the imposition of law over the state of nature.

This binary comes across even more vividly in the work of Józef Kowalewski, a former Philomath turned Orientalist with an interest in Mongolia. Kowalewski, who was educated in Russia, uses the trope of the border in his text, positioning his perspective on a mountaintop:

Then, perched on the lofty mountain ridge that divided such disparate lands, I gaze out on one side and my insatiable eye takes in the naked steppe. On the other side, I see precipitous, terrifying cliffs fraught with danger, where the farmer's skillful hand has turned the bald, stony terrain into fertile flatlands. On this side, the [negligible] populace has vanished into the deserts, living an idle, pastoral life. Here, the silent millions move about as if in an anthill. After a few days in these parts, I went in search of a humble yurt to refresh myself with a pot of tea, break up the monotony with some a short conversation and stamp out the boredom that was gradually clouding my heart. Here, I wait for the crowds of thoughtful people who live here. From that direction, a pure but cold wind blows that pierces to the bone, which allows me to appreciate the pleasant air that dries the sweat from my brow.²⁸

Kowalewski's travel account describes the border in poetic terms: its physical dimension is diminished by the weight of its cultural connotations. The mountain, with its euphonic “precipitous, terrifying cliffs” implies a sense of the sublime. The sublime, as Lyotard has written, “In the event on an absolutely large object – the desert, a mountain, a pyramid – (...) like all absolutes can only be thought (...) as an idea of reason (...).”²⁹ In this text, however, the ineffability of the idea has been replaced by the narrator's totalizing point of view as he looks down from on high and

²⁷J. Tymkowski, *Podróż do Chin przez Mongoliją w latach 1820 i 1821*, trans. T.W. Kochański, vol. 2, Lviv 1828, p. 7. Tymkowski's original three-volume work was published in Russian, but a Polish translation followed only a few years later.

²⁸Cited in: W. Kotwicz, *Józef Kowalewski orientalista*, introduction by Marian Lewicki, bibliography by Maria Kotwiczówna and the unpublished correspondence of Józef Kowalewski, Wrocławskie Towarzystwo Naukowe, Wrocław 1948, p. 70. Text originally published in “Tygodnik Petersburski” (1835, issue 64, p. 374).

²⁹Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant Garde,” in *The Continental Aesthetics Reader*, p. 458.

categorizes the experience of traversing a continuum of values superimposed over the tangible border. It is worth noting that the Mongolian steppe and the desert do not function as signifiers of the sublime in the text, and their “insatiability” does not awaken pain mingled with pleasure. To the contrary, they signify stagnation (“monotony”), sadness, loneliness and alienation. The parallel established towards the end of the passage lists the discomforts and labors of life on the steppe, which are then contrasted with the Chinese reality on the level of cultural values as well as environmental conditions. It is as if the narrator is asserting a Tainean sense of environmental determinism.

This binary approach must have also impacted subsequent stages of entering the “contact zone,” as the narrator now seems intent on constructing a description of China that stands in juxtaposition to that of the first part of his trip, when he described the Chinese relatively to Mongolians in order to cast civilization in a negative light in contrast with the savage and wild:

Having our fill of the dirty, raw Mongol and his great void, the eye clings with enormous pleasure to the disciplined and tidy Chinese! The Chinese man has cast a spell over our souls: we praised everything we came across in this country developed centuries ago that is so original in all its details. On the steppe, we were met everywhere with the shrill cry of those desperate for anything new. Here, this cry was replaced with a quiet, phlegmatic greeting, imbued with a certain pride.³⁰

It is interesting that the author bases his valorization of the Chinese not only on eyewitness testimony: he also cites acoustic impressions. The eye remains the predominant arbiter, however. Unintentionally, as if on a level that precedes awareness, the eye “clings” to civilization. This is a nod to objective laws of aesthetics and involuntary physiological processes linked to the visual pleasure that comes after the torments of the savage world. Meanwhile, the ear, fatigued by the alleged “shrieks” of the people of the steppe, feels relief when it comes into contact with the quiet and proud disposition of the Chinese. This axiology engages an aesthetic system organized according to classical taste and favoring harmony and balance. For the romantic Orientalist, that which is “marred, clashing,” noisy and screeching is necessarily low and base, as opposed to that which reflects “specific mores and forms” and has been “enlightened for centuries.”³¹

In Kowalewski’s description of the Chinese, history as a category becomes somewhat synonymous with culture defined in opposition to savagery. This category, however, will subsequently take on clearer forms. The poetics of the philosophy of history are widely expressed in nineteenth-century travel writing. At first, these poetics mainly surfaced as the Hegelian concept of the phenomenology of spirit. Later on, affirming this same conceptual schema, travel writing absorbed the nomenclature of biological evolutionism. Agaton Giller, an activist for independence in the generation that followed Kowalewski’s, was exiled to Irkutsk. His route into China corresponded to the route through Siberia that shaped the poetics of Tymkowski and Kowalewski. Giller framed his impressions of Siberia in the spirit of Hegelian idealism, treating history as an absolute concept. Describing one Siberian community, Giller wrote:

³⁰Cited in: W. Kotwicz, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

³¹Cited in: *ibid.*

History has not yet been written on the brow of this savage sent from God. Here, the dream life reigns: an obscurity of thought and deafness of the heart. There is nothing that propels one into historical life. The noise of the forest ignites the imagination of the Oroch man, and he falls asleep like a child [...]. In the forest, there is no room for the historian, no room for the writer of romances. There is plenty of room, however, for the philosopher-observer. For only he might look at this man immersed in nature and the bliss of ignorance and discern the early reflexes of human thought. Only he might contemplate and recognize how thought takes shape in this human-animal, how it gains traction and might someday develop into autonomy.³²

Giller freely summons a range of cultural myths for his image of the “prehistoric” savage symbolizing a childlike stage of humanity. The savage is simultaneously assigned an animal’s place in the kingdom of creatures. Giller’s assessment conjures echoes of biblical anthropology in its intonations of man’s desire to dwell within the “bliss of ignorance.” The metaphorical images “dream,” “darkness” and “deafness” are meant to draw out a contrast with the image of the European spirit: historical man consummated by actions of the soul. The gentle rhythms of the forest noise offer another suggestive vision of passivity and lack of agency. It is particularly interesting that darkness, deafness and unrealized capacities to intellectually process sensory impressions all clash with the perspective of the European interloper: the “philosopher,” ethnographer, anthropologist, scientist or traveler whose ability to observe affirms his privileged power in this foreign environment. To fully legitimize his judgment of this savage land, the Polish exile must condemn the literary tradition that precedes him and expose its primitivist poetics as false:

So the philosophers and writers of old tales wish to take this so-called life in nature as a model for happiness. Well, if all those who fawn over simplicity and the virtue of life unspoiled by civilization were to actually come to Siberia and take a closer look at the Orochs, Buryats, Yukagirs and Chukchis, they would soon realize the vain falsehood of their praises. To all those who dote on this so-called “state of purity” or “state of nature,” those who glorify the patriarchal virtues and simplicity of the golden age: I invite you to Siberia to live among the savage folk. Once you observe the filth, syphilis, stupidity and vices of these nomadic people, you will learn to appreciate the virtues of civilization and you will understand that *civilization is the natural state of man*.³³

This emotional judgment confronts imagined textual representations that fail to account for their circumstances with empirical experience. This culminates in an antithesis that perfectly captures the nineteenth-century Hegelian position of viewing civilization and the folk hierarchically: man’s natural state is his destination, not his starting point.

The cultural poetics of Giller’s views on Siberian populations are no longer relative. The author does not dramatize any distinction between the nomadic people and settled Chinese civilization. Unlike Tymkowski and Kowalewski, his negative assessment of all non-European cultural works can only yield a gradient portrait. He forces no harsh contrasts between Siberia, Mongolia and China. Romantic Hegelianism, an elaboration on Herder’s philosophy of history, comes across more vividly in his assessments of the Middle Kingdom:

³²A. Giller, *Opisanie krainy zabajkalskiej*, vol. 1, Lipsk 1867, p. 227.

³³Ibid, pp. 222–223. Emphasis. – A.K. See also: D. Kalinowski, *Przybliżanie Dalekiego Wschodu*, pp. 162–163.

Many travelers exhibit a penchant for the past and old customs that distinguishes the Chinese from all other nations. For many of us, their conservative preservation of concepts, lifestyles, material goods and old-world forms has protected the Chinese nationality from being manipulated by foreign newcomers, sparing them from denationalization. While they never expelled their occupiers, their stubborn tradition of conservatism ultimately forced their occupiers to become like them. Perhaps this is why Providence never gave them the spirit of progress but instead burdened them with a persevering strength, because she wanted the new world to see the thoughts and ways of life developed by the remote antiquity of the East.³⁴

The Europeans quickly diagnosed Chinese culture as conservative in contrast to the rapid, radical changes unfolding on the Old Continent and the discourse of progress that had been building up since the Scientific Revolution. Yet Giller's background and ideological foundation caused him to adopt a position of ambivalence towards the conservatism of the Chinese. This position contrasts with the categorical allegations of stagnation formulated by Western travelers of the period as well as most Polish visitors to China in the later part of the century. It is difficult to decode the suggestion (never expressed outright) that the Chinese, by resisting change, have rescued their culture from denationalization and that invading foreign dynasties³⁵ – as history has shown us – never deprived them of their culture. To the contrary, it was the invaders who showed signs of becoming more Chinese. To be old-fashioned thus becomes a defense tactic against foreign forces. In the context of Polish ideologies of independence, this clearly raises the issue of rescuing Polish identity from the politics of conquering nations.

While Giller remains categorical and direct, he also expresses an idealist belief in the evolution of the Soul: its only cradle is located in the East, yet the Soul could only fully evolve in Christian Europe. Hegelianism, which came hand in hand with the idea of Providence for Catholic Poles, leads one to perceive China as an open-air ethnographic museum that exists only to be seen through European eyes. It would be hard to find a more apt textual example of construing the East as Europe's mirror: the East becomes a surface on which Europe can gaze at itself and study the wrinkles of a bygone world. It also becomes a contrived entity that does not exist on its own but is rather a museum designed for its visitors.³⁶ Johannes Fabian describes this issue succinctly by coining the term "denial of coevalness," which refers to the "persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse."³⁷

Hardly twenty years after Giller's sojourn on the Siberian-Mongolian-Chinese border, Polish travelers began to convey similar ideas through Darwinian poetics. Bronisław Rejchman, an evolutionist, naturalist and ethnologist, is a representative example.³⁸ At the turn of the eighteenth

³⁴A. Giller, op. cit., vol. 3, p. 242. See also: E. Kajdański, *Długi cień wielkiego muru. Jak Polacy odkrywali Chiny*, Warsaw 2005, p. 211.

³⁵Here, I am mainly referring to the Mongolian Yuan dynasty initiated in the eighteenth century by Kubilaj, the grandson of Ghengis Khan, and the Manchurian Qing Dynasty which ruled in China in 1644 (in Polish literature the Manchurians are identified with the Tatars).

³⁶A similar image of China comes across in the poetics of Herder's letters – see: R.J. Goebel, *China as an Embalmed Mummy: Herder's Orientalist Poetics*, "South Atlantic Review" 1995, vol. 60, issue 1, pp. 111–129.

³⁷J. Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, foreword by M. Bunzl, with a new postscript by the author, New York 2014, p. 31 (first edition – 1983). See also: D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, 2007.

³⁸In criticism he is also referred to as Rajchman.

century, conservatism (understood as resistance to assimilation) becomes equated with an exceptional capacity for biologically determined adaptation allowing for a species' preservation:

[...] for all his extraordinary conservatism, the Chinese is a man who is able to adapt to all conditions. While *adaptation* is a crucial aspect of the species' struggle, the history of China is not yet over, and these funny people with their braids might yet play a role in world history that is not necessarily for the better good, but will certainly leave its mark. As ruler Bogd Khan has already clearly knocked down the Chinese wall and sent out his coolies to America and his merchants to Russia.³⁹

The traveler does not conceal his belief in racial conflict as a necessity. This belief was conditioned by biological evolutionary determinism and propelled by socio-political phobias about the 'yellow peril,' which is most often referred to as the "yellow question" (*kwestya żółta*) in late nineteenth-century Polish texts. In travel accounts and academic discourse alike, the motif of the Great Wall of China was manipulated to many ends. Most often, Europeans conceived the wall as a symbol of isolation and security against the "barbaric" populations of Northern and Central Asia. After the fall of the Ming Dynasty, the wall became a prevalent symbol for the military weakness of the Chinese, who "despite the wall" failed to defend themselves from invaders.⁴⁰ In the face of mass migrations mainly to America,⁴¹ Rejchman metaphorically expressed how Chinese powers eliminated the wall to flood the world with cheap labor.

As scientists, orientalists, exiles and naturalists, Tymkowski, Kowalewski, Giller and Rejchman all arrived in China by way of a similar route through Russia, reaching the borderland between China, Mongolia and Siberia. This route left its imprint on their strategies for representing cultural difference in texts that draw from empirical experience. Although the cited statements are staggered by an interval of only fifty or so years, they reveal rapid transformations in how we generate cultural difference based on the current status of European discourse.

Modern Tourists

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and, in particular, Britain's seizure of it in 1882 significantly facilitated maritime transport to India and East Asia. This led to the expansion of commercial steamship services that made travel accessible for trade and tourism alike. The logistics of travel by sea diverged entirely from the conditions of traveling to the East by land. Due to the expansion of luxury services for the wealthy "leisure class," maritime transport was

³⁹B. Rejchman, *Z Dalekiego Wschodu. Wrażenia, obrazki, opisy z dobrowolnej podróży po Syberyi*, Warsaw 1881, p. 173. Emphasis – A.K. It is worth noting the author's emphasis on the "free will" behind his Asian voyages in order to distinguish himself from political exiles.

⁴⁰As an example, take this statement from an eighteenth-century geography reference book: "Despite the long and terrible wall that marked this nation's border on the side of the Tatars, the fortifications fell and the Tatars called Mantheous conquered the Chinese Throne and possess it to this day." (D. Szybiński, *Krótką wiadomość o znakomitszych w świecie monarchiach, starodawnych królestwach, rzeczachpospolitych...*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1772, p. 12).

⁴¹It is telling that a review of Rejchman's work published in "Gazeta Polska" and written by Henryk Sienkiewicz confirms the traveler's diagnosis based on Sienkiewicz's experience in America: "The author foresees the future calamities for Europe represented by the influx of Chinese workers. Their arrival in America already shows signs that fully justify the so-called "yellow" issue. In the very near future, this might lead to a dangerous social revolution." (H. Sienkiewicz, *Publicystyka. Krytyka, studia i wrażenia literackie i artystyczne*, published by L. Bernacki, vol. 5, Lviv, Warsaw 1937, pp. 422–423).

intrinsically and incomparably modern. This mode of travel suddenly allowed one to choose from a range of destinations: port towns between the Suez Canal and the coast of Japan were all accessible. These hubs had predominantly been given over to European control. As a result, this route depicted the world as somewhat homogeneous. The journey was associated with visiting the progressive stages of colonization, and contact with local cultures was limited to a minimum: small doses the tourist could experience as “local color.”⁴²

The painter and watercolorist Julian Fałat described his journey around the world⁴³ between 1884 and 1887 in his posthumously published journals. Fałat’s route embarked from the Suez and passed through the Red Sea, Aden, Colombo, Singapore, Hong Kong and Yokohama, finally ending in San Francisco. Compared to nineteenth-century travel diaries, Fałat’s text is striking for its debonair naivety and thin reflexivity on a political, historical and social level. At the same time, the text’s superficiality beautifully illustrates the “tourist gaze.” Fałat limited himself to ephemeral impressions that were mainly visual and had a tendency to exoticize cultural difference. The journals convey the privileged position of a white man padded in comfort, enjoying himself among other white people and residing in hotels exclusively for white people (the noted names of Singaporean inns “Hotel de France” and “Hotel de l’Europe” are significant in this context).⁴⁴

Technological progress and advancements in cartography and navigational tools facilitated maritime tourism in Asia. Passing the Bab al-Mandab Strait between the coast of Africa and the Arabic peninsula, Fałat evokes history by reminiscing on traditional place names. This strategy is typical of the tourist’s encounter with the world:

At its most narrow, the isthmus that links the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean is only three kilometers wide. Here, the sea is always boisterous and splashes the rocks with white foam: on some of these rocks, you can see the hull of a ship through whose interior waves rush out. The name “Gate of Tears” obviously hails from the time when little sailing ships were commonly used. The passage must have been dangerous for these small vessels. Today, now that electricity and underwater supports have been installed on fantastic platforms, steamships can navigate this isthmus without any risk and without even slowing their pace.⁴⁵

On the one hand, Fałat seizes the opportunity to convey a suggestive image of restless waves passing through ships. On the other hand, by establishing a contrast with the isthmus’ metaphorical name, he emphasizes the safety and comfort of this new mode of travel. Even in his brief description of the restless sea, we see a hunger for sensory impressions and potential themes for painting. This informs the young artist’s strategy for perceiving the exotic. We see this most clearly on the island of Ceylon. Fałat’s language evokes the tradition of the idyllic poetics of the tropics:

A new world permeates the window of my cabin – an unknown world that already baits the senses. We quickly get dressed to catch a first glimpse of this earthly paradise, perhaps from the deck. The greenery of palm groves shining with their promise of eternal summer, some ethereal fragrance,

⁴²A. Wieczorkiewicz, *Apetyt turysty. O doświadczeniu świata w podróży*, Krakow 2008, p. 204.

⁴³See: J. Malinowski, *Podróż Juliana Fałata do Chin i Japonii w 1885 roku*, [in:] *Orient w kulturze polskiej. Materiały z sesji jubileuszowej z okazji 25-lecia Muzeum Azji i Pacyfiku w Warszawie, 15-16 października 1998*, Warsaw 2000, p. 75.

⁴⁴J. Fałat, *Pamiętniki*, Katowice 1987, p. 115.

⁴⁵Ibid, p. 108.

a sun that suffuses the whole world... all these things tear a yelp of wonder from my heart: everything here is miraculous, unusual, and so different from anything my imagination could have conceived.⁴⁶

The phrasing “perhaps from the deck” makes it clear that Fałat’s actions were governed by spontaneity and direct sensory stimuli (both visual and olfactory). Yet the artist was not after any kind of ethnographic immersion in the foreign environment, nor did he try to intellectualize his impressions. The expressions “eternal summer,” “the greenery of the palms” and “an ethereal fragrance...” resemble slogans from tourist brochures in their level of generality. These things offer something of intrinsic value to the artist in pursuit of exotic “marvel” and “the extraordinary.” They demand no further commentary beyond these poetic exclamations. A surplus of impressions leads directly to creative impotence: “I would like to paint something, but that would be impossible; a true ‘embarrass de richesse...’ I cannot say what is the most beautiful, the most quintessential....”⁴⁷ This pursuit of something that might distill and represent the experience of cultural difference demonstrates the severe essentialism endemic to tourists.

In several passages, Fałat is by no means stingy with his praises for European colonization, especially when it comes to Britain as a world power and his investment in the prestige of the “white race”⁴⁸ and the Anglicization of the locals. According to Fałat, the locals learn English of their own free will and with enormous passion. When he encounters the Sinhalese and Chinese wearing braids and playing cricket or tennis, he infantilizes them and depicts them in a “funny” light, recalling Homi Bhabha’s now classic thesis on mimicry, which requires “a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.”⁴⁹

In Hong Kong, the traveler declares that he has no interest in seeing the colonial buildings of the “white” quarter or other testaments to the glory of Britain. His *idée fixe* is the exotic: his image of the quintessence of local culture. Interestingly enough, this “quintessence” appears in the form of referential familiarization when Fałat imposes his painter’s filter over the image of otherness of Chinese people of Singapore. Observing poor children sharing a pineapple on the street, he conjures up a classic painting by Murillo:

The suburbs are full of picturesque alleys mainly inhabited by the Chinese who are engaged in trade or the crafts. They make up one quarter of the population of Singapore, and the hygienic conditions they live in are downright horrific: they live at the mouths of canals, surrounded by mud. In spite of all this, judging from their appearance, they are healthy and live a good life. I once saw a group of small Chinese rascals devouring a delicious pineapple, lifting it with their fingers into their mouths piece by piece; the scene called Murillo to mind.⁵⁰

⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 112–113.

⁴⁷Ibid, p. 113.

⁴⁸The author cites racial segregation in trains and on ships as an example of the prestige of the “white race.” (ibid, p. 125).

⁴⁹H.K. Bhabha, *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* [in:] *The Location of Culture*, London and New York, 1994, p. 85.

⁵⁰J. Fałat, op. cit., p. 119.

The artist's gaze is surely meant to transform this episode into a scene he can paint. The scene's intensity is marked by his unverified belief in the "deliciousness" of the fruit that cannot be found in Europe. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, a Spanish baroque artist, was famous for his monumental religious scenes as well as his portraits of children sunken in poverty. These works often fall somewhere on the border between realism and aestheticizing sentimentalism.

Julian Fałat was most likely the first Polish artist to embark on a journey around the world. Right on his heels, however, Karol Lanckoroński (author of *Around the World 1888-1889. Impressions and Views / Na około ziemi 1888-1889. Wrażenia i poglądy*) joined the masses of "tourists" crossing the Indian Ocean. Paweł Stapieha also joined their ranks, writing *Journey to East Asia 1888-1889 (Podróż na wschód Azji 1888-1889)*. Stapieha's journals are particularly symptomatic of the poetics of mass tourism in the Far East due to the text's lack of reflexivity. The artist swaps out his sketchbook and pencil for a camera, creating a vivid record of the contemporary tourism experience. In terms of their lust for the exotic, however, Stapieha and Fałat's texts belong to the same paradigm.

Conclusion

Within this sketch, these three distinct routes into the Far East taken up by Polish travelers convey how the physical mode of travel, at various historical moments, left its imprint on the poetics of these travel texts. The texts are saturated with ideological content that points back to the discourse circulating among the authors' milieus (be they Polish or, more broadly, European). The nineteenth century in particular witnessed radical shifts in the perception of the East driven by the advent of imperialism, which freely absorbed significant models of thought for culture and science, such as Hegelian idealism and Darwinian evolutionism. Although European and American literature on the subject, mainly devoted to exposing the colonial ambitions of Western civilization, offers a great many insights, it is also valuable to constantly highlight the nuances of Polish identity in these travel texts. Poles self-identified as representatives of the broader entity that was Christian Europe, whose predominance over the rest of the world was rarely contested in the nineteenth century. They also problematized their own nation's entanglements in the politics of expansion in terms of its "situation of dependence."⁵¹ The employed basic strategies such as creating cultural difference, familiarizing (domesticating) or collapsing the distance between local and native culture, and defamiliarization (alienation).⁵² This last strategy, appearing here as imperial orientalism or exoticization, strives to preserve a belief in total otherness.

⁵¹H. Gosk, *Opowieści "skolonizowanego/ kolonizatora." W kręgu studiów postzależnościowych nad literaturą polską XX i XXI wieku*, Krakow 2010, p. 10.

⁵²These categories are borrowed from Viktor Shklovsky's theory of literature and have been carried over to translation theory. They remain relevant for travel writing criticism if we treat the text as a form of translation between local and native culture.

KEYWORDS

cultural difference

TRAVEL

C h i n a

t h e s a v a g e

EXOTICISM

ABSTRACT:

This article explores three routes into the Far East, starting with the explorative and adventurous escapades of Maurice Benyovszky, moving on to the exploring of Siberia and the Chinese border, both common in the nineteenth century, and ending with mass maritime tourism that developed after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Texts by Polish travelers including Benyovszky, Jerzy Tymkowski, Józef Kowalewski, Agaton Giller, Bronisław Rejchman and Julian Fałat have been selected from a great wealth of source materials to represent categories of material routes into Asia that informed specific conceptual frameworks and shaped the writers' methods for representing different cultures. These methods were also impacted by the contemporary intellectual experiences of the authors.

East Asia

civilization

Orientalism

postcolonialism

*s i t u a t i o n o f d e p e n d e n c y***NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

Anna Kołos (b. 1987) – has her PhD in Literary Studies. She defended her doctoral thesis, titled “Skepticism in Polish Baroque Literature,” in 2015 at the Department of Polish and Classical Philology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. In 2013, she published a book titled “*Fides quaerens intellectum.*” *Wiara i rozum w barokowym konceptyzmie Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego i Stanisława Herakliusza Lubomirskiego*. Aside from early intellectual culture, her main research interests include imagology, postcolonialism, theories of monstrosity, mental geography and images of “foreign” cultures in writing. Since 2015, she has been a participant of the NCN Grant Project *Chiny w polskim i serbskim podróżopisarstwie (od początku XVIII wieku do połowy XX wieku)*. Since 2107, she has worked at the Poznan Association for Friends of the Sciences. |