

# “Space Hinges on Time...”<sup>1</sup>:

## New Modes of Transportation and Non-Places in Travel Writing

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The early nineteenth century witnessed sweeping and revolutionary developments in our modes of transportation. In 1825, the world's first railway line went into operation in England, and between 1840 and 1860, dynamic railway projects were already underway. The train quickly ceased to be a mere curio of technology and was increasingly sought after as a favored mode of transportation. Similar changes played out in ocean travel. The first passenger steamships sailed the waters at the turn of the nineteenth century and quickly gained enormous popularity. These developments opened up new opportunities for travel. New approaches to travel were also reflected in the travel literature of the period, which often directly addressed themes related to the new resources provided by ongoing technological advancement.<sup>2</sup> The world seen from the train compartment window had an altogether different appearance than the one traversed by traditional means. Detailed accounts of the

<sup>1</sup> W. Smaczniński, *Kolej żelazna. Oda*, [in:] *Zbiór poetów polskich XIX w. Księga druga*, ed. P. Hertz, Warsaw 1961, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Wojciech Tomasiak has comprehensively researched these themes and has published his findings in several books on train motifs in literature: W. Tomasiak, *Pociąg do nowoczesności. Szkice kolejowe*, Warsaw 2004; *ibid*, *Inna droga. Romantycy a kolej*, Warsaw 2012; *ibid*, *Ikona nowoczesności. Kolej w literaturze polskiej*, Torun 2015.

entire route were no longer possible. If we examine travel writers active in the period, we can distinguish a few signature paradigms they used to convey their impressions of this radically new travel. Most important among these are remarks on the disappearance of space, time's capacity to supersede space, and kaleidoscopic representations of travel impressions.

## Space is Time

By analyzing individual travel texts, we can observe how time becomes a category of increasing importance in early nineteenth-century travel. Spatial intervals between the beginning and endpoints of travel forfeited their relevance to the time required to traverse space. Time gradually replaced space as the unit that segmented the individual phases of travel.

Such a shift in perspective was surely no product of chance. As Marc Augé has claimed, the tendency to use time as a unit of measurement is a hallmark of the non-place: "Since non-places are to be passed through, they are measured in units of time."<sup>3</sup> I should mention that Augé uses the term "non-place" to describe spaces that resist definition in terms of identity, relation or history.<sup>4</sup> In other words, these are emotionally neutral places. The scholar usually applies this category to the "supermodern" period: a world fully dominated by rapid modes of transport. Augé's exemplary non-places include train stations, supermarkets, airports, freeways, and so on. Of course, not all of these non-places date back to the nineteenth century. What's more, even those that did exist do not necessarily qualify as non-places. The status of the nineteenth-century train station, for example, remains up for debate.<sup>5</sup> This being said, if we confine our focus to the actual act of traveling by train, the non-place category seems entirely applicable.<sup>6</sup> For nineteenth-century writers, train travel was a radically new experience and a vivid collision with modernity. On the one hand, train travel allowed them to rapidly traverse space, and on the other, it forced them to accommodate new constraints: timetables, pre-determined routes, and the company of random travel companions.<sup>7</sup> Due to these limitations, the train car became a foreign space belonging to no one: a form of non-place.

The texts I will analyze here demonstrate that authors of the period acutely detected the groundbreaking nature of these new forms of travel and often emphasized this feeling in their work. One widely described feature of modern travel was the speed at which trains traveled,

<sup>3</sup> M. Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. J. Howe, New York 1995, p. 104

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52

<sup>5</sup> Here we should mention Aneta Włodarczyk's article. Włodarczyk attempts to demonstrate how nineteenth-century train stations figured as "non-neutral architecture for the humanist impulse" and therefore meets the criteria of a place. See: A. Włodarczyk, *Samotność tłumie. Analiza przestrzeni dworca w świetle koncepcji niemiejsc*, [in:] *Kolej na kolej...*, pp. 258-259.

<sup>6</sup> Kamila Gieba has written about the relevance of the "non-place" for scholarship on train motifs. See: K. Gieba, *Kilka słów wstępu o torowisku humanistyki*, [in:] *Kolej na kolej...*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> See also: W. Tomasiak, *Pociąg do...*, pp. 25, 53-54.

which was increasingly referred to as “rush/impetus” (in Polish, *pęd*). Władysław Syrokomla has described the idea of “*pęd*” as speed seen from above,<sup>8</sup> while Józef Kremer has described it as an “arrow” soaring over the earth.<sup>9</sup> Józef Ignacy Kraszewski has called it “satanic flight”<sup>10</sup> and has also commented: “at this speed, nobody had before seen a view of the mountains but the birds flying over them.” Speed and time seem to be the dominant forces in the travel writing discussed here.

In *Mosaic on Commission* (*Mozaika kontraktowa*), Aleksander Groza observes: “Now, you can get from Paris to Warsaw in three days, and for that matter, you can get to Kiev in the same amount of time if you don’t count the nights [...]”<sup>11</sup> In this passage, the author equates a trip from Paris to Warsaw with a trip he most likely took himself from a small Ukrainian village (where he was based while writing *Mosaic*) to Kiev. Time is the force that makes this comparison possible. The geographical distances on both sides of the analogy are starkly different. Time offers a more reliable index than, say, miles, for a distance can be traversed at different speeds depending on the travel conditions.

In *Travel Notes* (*Notatki z podróży*), Maurycy Dzieduszycki compares two trips separated by an interval of nearly twenty years. As a young boy, Dzieduszycki traveled with his parents to Vienna from somewhere in the vicinity of Drohobych. According to his account, the trip took ten days and was made by way of “our own courier coach, complete with a servant and butler.”<sup>12</sup> The trip comes across as a real journey. Dzieduszycki made the second trip as an adult, when he decided to use time off from work to visit Vienna. After arriving in Krakow from Bochnia, he went on to Ołomuniec by train. As he notes, from Ołomuniec, “for the first time in my life I took a freshly built railway line and made it to Vienna in five hours.”<sup>13</sup>

If we analyze specific texts, we might notice that travel time is increasingly measured in hours (and sometimes even quarter-hours) rather than days, even when the hours add up to a figure that could easily be tallied in days. In her book *Last Journey to France* (*Ostatnia podróż do Francji*), Łucja Rautenstrauchowa notes how: “[...] in Frankfurt, train tracks transect the city perimeter, heading in all directions. One of them conveyed me to Mainz in one hour’s time.”<sup>14</sup> Further on in the text she continues: “as soon as you leave Aachen you are already passing into Belgium with its steel tracks, and in only a few hours you’ve traversed the twenty miles between the border and Brussels.”<sup>15</sup> In Ludwik Pietrusiński’s travel account *Journeys, Drives and Strolls through Europe* (*Podróże, przejażdżki i przechadzki po Europie*), the reader learns one can get from Krakow to Vienna in only fifteen hours, although in reality, this trip took almost three days.<sup>16</sup> In *Travel Letters* (*Listach z podróży*), Zenon Leonard Fisz writes that a train jour-

<sup>8</sup> W. Syrokomla, *Podróże swojaka po swojszczyźnie*, Warsaw 1914, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> J. Kremer, *Podróż do Włoch*, t. 1: *Droga z Krakowa do Triestu; Opisanie Wenecji*, Wilno 1859, s. 98.

<sup>10</sup> J. I. Kraszewski, *Kartki z podróży 1858-1864*, vol. 1, ed. P. Hertz, Warsaw 1977, p. 56

<sup>11</sup> A. Groza, *Mozaika kontraktowa: pamiętnik z roku 1851*, Wilno 1857, pp. 64-65.

<sup>12</sup> M. Dzieduszycki, *Notatki z podróży 1821-1872*, 6724/I Mf. 1789, k. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Ł. Rautenstrauchowa, *Ostatnia podróż do Francji: ostatnie jej wrażenia*, Lipsk 1841, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 15

<sup>16</sup> L. Pietrusiński, *Podróże, przejażdżki i przechadzki po Europie*, vol. 1, Warsaw 1843, p. 60.

ney from Pest to Vienna takes eight hours.<sup>17</sup> Travel time is also measured in hours in the context of travel by courier coach. According to Pietrusiński, by courier coach you can "get from Lviv to Vienna in 100 hours."<sup>18</sup> In *Journey to Scotland and England (Podróż do Szkocji i Anglii)*, Teodor Tripplin measures the trip's length in quarter-hours: "In five quarter-hours we traveled by rail from Manchester to Liverpool. Nine geographic miles, no more and no less, from one place to the other."<sup>19</sup>

As a rule, the motif of perceiving of traversed space in terms of the time required to cross it comes up in reference to Western Europe and the pinnacle of development it represents. Travel literature shows us, however, that these transformations also played out elsewhere in the continent. In *Journey through Scandinavia (Podróży po Skandynawii)*, Tripplin compares the time required to get from Drontheim to Hammerfest during the author's latest trip and twenty years earlier:

Twenty years ago, the trip from Drontheim to Hammerfest took one whole month; today, thanks to steamships donated by King Bernadotte to Finmark, the same trip takes only eight days.<sup>20</sup>

As we can see, travel time (in this case due to steamships) is reduced almost four times over: what once took an entire month now took eight days.

This seems to suggest that modes of transportation instigated a revolution in travel and prompted major shifts and distortions in how we perceive space. Suddenly, two places were considered close to one another not because a modest distance lay between them, but because one could travel from one to the other in as little time as possible. This logic is what prompted Ludwik Pietrusiński's assertion that "today, we ought to say that London is closer to Istanbul than Królewiec is to Warsaw."<sup>21</sup> Similar observations apply to England and its colonies: "fast and cheap transport for passengers and mail brings England and its colonies closer together than some countries occupying the same body of land, separated by some twenty or thirty miles."<sup>22</sup>

The contraction of travel time also affected the nature of travel. "Journeys" give way to motor-powered travel that fits into the length of a vacation, as we saw earlier in the case of Maurycy Dzieduszycki. Leon Potocki paints a picture of a vacation spent in Paris by a bureaucrat of modest funds:

Today, now that Europe's whole body is criss-crossed with railway lines, we go about from place to place with great speed and at little expense, even when our destination lies on the other end of the continent. In 1847, I met a certain bureaucrat who made a modest salary of 5,000 zloties and still managed to scrape together a few thousand to visit the capital of France. So he takes a 28-day vacation, hops into

<sup>17</sup>Z. L. Fisz, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 3, Wilno 1859, p. 292.

<sup>18</sup>L. Pietrusiński, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 4-5.

<sup>19</sup>T. Tripplin, *Podróż do Szkocji i Anglii*, "Biblioteka Warszawska" 1852, vol. 2, p. 396.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, *Podróż po Skandynawii odbyta w roku 1855: dwa tomy w jednym*, vol. 1, Vilnius 1861, p. 114.

<sup>21</sup>L. Pietrusiński, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 375.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 1, p. 330.

a train car, and in just four days he is propelled by steam power to Paris. In Paris, he settles down and has a ball for three weeks: he visits museums, archives, painting galleries, theaters, restaurants, cafés... He procures himself a whole new suit, indulges in all sorts of whims, and then turns around heads back the same way he came.<sup>23</sup>

In travel accounts of the period, the words “travel” and “journey” (in Polish, *podróż*) are increasingly replaced with words like “jaunt,” “ride,” or “vacation,” all of which diminish the trip’s status. These terms are reminiscent of everyday life and hardly evoke the sense of something extraordinary that would require long and arduous preparations.

## Vanishing Space

The second paradigm among travel writers’ responses to new travel resources is the emphasis on the traveler’s inability to get to know the space he traverses, or the superficiality of travel. Some travel texts go so far as to refer to the disappearance of space. In *Mosaic on Commission*, Aleksander Groza states outright that: “beyond the network of train routes, space vanishes.”<sup>24</sup> On a similar note, *Paris Chronicle (Kronika Paryska)* (published in 1959 by “Biblioteka Warszawska”) describes the motif of “railway lines abolishing space.”<sup>25</sup> The author also observes how the collapsing of space reduces the distance between various cultures, linking them as neighbors.

These Polish authors reinforce these observations. Space has disappeared: it has become invisible, unfathomable. In *Travel Notes (Kartki z podróży)*, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski describes his journey to Paris by postal train. He informs us that the train sped along too fast and that as a traveler, he saw nothing: “the most beautiful region of France raced by me like a dream.”<sup>26</sup> He describes his impressions of the trip (which we might call a “flight,” taking the author’s cue) as “fleeting.”<sup>27</sup> He is only able to fill out his image of the region during a later trip, when he manages to set aside some time taking breaks and reading about the sites.<sup>28</sup>

Władysław Syrokomla also seems sensitive to his inability to get to know space traversed by train. He writes: “I was there but saw nothing.”<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that he has no chance to experience the sites he passes, Syrokomla maintains an awareness of their significance (for he presumably read or heard about them in the past). Through the train window, he sees only placards with place names:

We’ve already reached the edge of the Grand Duchy of Posen. The train flew faster than a bird: we

<sup>23</sup>L. Potocki, *Mania jechania za granicę. – Białoruś; Płock; Hory-Horki. – Powrót do Warszawy*, [in:] J. Kamionka-Straszakowa, *“Do ziemi naszej”: podróże romantyków*, Kraków 1988, p. 108.

<sup>24</sup>A. Groza, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>25</sup>*Kronika paryska*, “Biblioteka Warszawska” 1859, vol. 1, p. 431.

<sup>26</sup>J. I. Kraszewski, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 252.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup>W. Syrokomla, op. cit., p. 29.

would pause at the station for hardly a few minutes and then fly onward, leaving hardly enough time to even read the town's name printed in black letters on the Bahnhof façade, and right next to it, the distance from Wrocław to Poznań [...]. Propelled by an invisible force, the train whisked across vast spaces, leaving no time to feel remorse for all we've left behind, or to scrutinize what sits before our very eyes, or prepare for what we'll see next.<sup>30</sup>

Prognoses for the future of travel were even more ominous. In *Humoresques (Humoreskach)* Teofil Nowosielski conceives a vision of travel to come. In his mind, the contraction of travel time has a negative impact on travel's cognitive benefits, leading to a scenario where "we will see more, but be capable of less."<sup>31</sup> For Nowosielski, the ability to see all of Europe by train may condense travel time, but this freezes the traveler's impressions at a superficial level:

A rich old dad sends his son on a voyage, giving him at least three years to see all of Europe. Later on, thanks to the railway, the young voyager covers all of Europe in a mere four weeks. Upon his return home, people ask about what he saw in Holland, for instance. He answers: I did in fact pass through Holland, but I didn't see it. Actually, I spent that portion of the trip asleep in the train.<sup>32</sup>

We might note that another frequent motif in these travel texts is an emphasis on the superficiality of the travel encounter and its contrast with the great potential of traditional modes of transport. Although a typical voyage through Europe might have taken as long as three years, this gave the traveler time to rigorously get to know the continent. For Nowosielski, the brisk train ride will never provide this. Włodzimierz Budzyński's personal observations lead to the same conclusions. Budzyński authored travel accounts of the German principalities and Switzerland. He notes that while travel has become more accessible, its cognitive benefits have been strictly curtailed:

Everything degenerated as it became more commonplace. Everything! Travel, knowledge, property ownership. You meet a stranger and take him for ordinary village folk, but no! It turns out he has seen all of Europe, and after a little time with him you notice that he is always going on about churches and theaters, which means he explored these places *in a hurry, seeing very little*. And you know that *what he did see was no good*. [emphasis – AMD]<sup>33</sup>

Budzyński also bemoans the fact that train travel erodes the traveler's imagination:

In the old days, they'd see a cross over the forest road and tell each other terrible tales about some Scheiderhun. Today, these stories are replaced with anecdotes about train mishaps. People swap stories about a slain mechanic, a few broken legs and a few dozen chipped teeth. This, too, leaves an impression, but it does not incite the imagination.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup>T. S. Nowosielski, *Humoreski*, Warsaw 1841, p. 239.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, pp. 238-239.

<sup>33</sup>W. Budzyński, *Niemcy*, Poznań 1850, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

Zenon Leonard Fisz points out another trend: the “malaise” of those brought up in Western culture. Fisz complains that his contemporaries are lazy and take the comforts of travel for granted. As a result, they limit themselves to destinations they can conveniently access. As a result, more demanding destinations seem to vanish entirely from their consciousness, earning the status of non-places. It was not the appeal of a place or space that drew the traveler, but convenience:

People today, especially those in the West, are so spoiled by comfort and luxury in travel that they will gladly forego the most beautiful regions if their train car or ship won't deliver them right there, or if no comfortable hotel awaits them.<sup>35</sup>

In this passage, we see how train access also imposes major constraints on travel. The existing system of railway lines now determined one's travel route, which in turn marginalized spaces that fell beyond its scope.<sup>36</sup> Teodor Tripplin observes this in *Recollections from Travel* (*Wspomnienia z podróży*), noting that “smaller cities fade away beyond the railway,” for the train directs “life and cargo to larger port cities” (such as Aix or Marseilles).<sup>37</sup> These limitations did not bother everyone. With relish, Tomasz Bartmiński describes sightseeing in a region of Italy that has deliberately been set up with full train access to meet tourists' needs:

I had the most wonderful experience a traveler can possibly encounter here. To see Herculaneum and Pompeii, I traveled along train routes prepared expressly for this purpose. Next, I saw Posilipo, Stromboli, Virgil's tomb and the famous grotto *del Cune*.<sup>38</sup>

For Bartmiński, this mode of travel actually yields the most pleasure. Paradoxically, most of the authors discussed here argue that railway expansion did not contribute to a better understanding of space, but in fact led to its disappearance.<sup>39</sup> The travel route thus transformed: only major sites were marked along the way, and the rest transformed into non-places.

We should also take a closer look at how the authors of these travel texts described the very act of train travel and the feelings it provoked, for by no means were these feelings uniformly positive. Józef Kremer notes that passengers sometimes treated one another with pleasant cordiality, but hastily adds: “this cordiality is a rarity in train travel.”<sup>40</sup> Earlier in the text, Kremer

<sup>35</sup>Z. L. Fisz, *Listy z podróży*, vol. 3, Vilnius 1859, p. 270.

<sup>36</sup>Wojciech Tomasik wrote of the modern era's changing relationship between the protagonist's body to the road. The traveler ceased to be the master of the situation who determined the course of travel. Instead, he became merely a transported passenger entirely dependent on the system and established route imposed on him by the railway. See: W. Tomasik, *Pociąg do...*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>37</sup>T. Tripplin, *Wspomnienia z podróży*, vol. 11: *Francja i Włochy północne*, Warsaw 1852, pp. 23-24.

<sup>38</sup>*Wspomnienia z Hiszpanii z r. 1848. Wyjątek podróży Tomasza Bartmińskiego*, “Biblioteka Warszawska” 1852, vol. 2, p. 289.

<sup>39</sup>Karl Schlögel has noted that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought, on the one hand, the thought or idea of the disappearance of space. On the other hand, we can discern quite the opposite position as well, taking form as the need to study, learn about and dominate space. See: K. Schlögel, *In Raume Lesen Wir Die Zeit. Über Zivilisationsgeschichte und Geopolitik*, Berlin 2006.

<sup>40</sup>J. Kremer, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 34.

writes: "the temporary residents of the train car are so obliging and polite amongst themselves that it's as if they're one giant well-reared family!"<sup>41</sup> Kremer does point out a tone of cooperative friendliness among travelers, but at the same time, the fact that he refers to them as "temporary residents" emphasizes the situation's ephemeral nature. The train car does not earn the status of "place" in the word's traditional meaning, especially once we account for all the inconveniences of train travel. For Tomasik, these encumbrances imposed a certain standardized behavior on passengers.<sup>42</sup> The train car, then, appears to qualify as a form of non-place, conforming to Augé's definition of non-places as those that cannot be "places of identity, of relations and of history."<sup>43</sup> The train car is a place we dwell merely fleetingly to reach a designated destination.

The idea that we might think of the train car as a non-place is clearly reinforced in Józef Ignacy Kraszewski's travel account. The writer compares train passengers to packages, and describes train travel itself as voluntary submission to captivity:

Sure, horses or cattle transported to market by high-speed *Schnellzug* might be able to withstand this form of travel (although even this I doubt). Humans, however, could hardly imagine a more severe form of bondage when they voluntarily rescind their freedom and become mere numbered packages. Somewhere on the road from Vienna to Trieste, they might lament at how the enchanting landscape flies by. In just day, from six in the morning to eleven at night, how the miles fly by us... and how a country... how a marvelous region passes by in the blink of an eye, like fading dreams! How could we possibly write about these glinting views the human eye can hardly grasp?<sup>44</sup>

On the train, people give up their freedom and become mere objects to be transferred to a fixed destination. Travel leaves no opening to get to know the route whose views flit impassively before their eyes.

## Kaleidoscopic Images

Although the speed of travel seems to suggest the vanishing of space, this does not mean that spatial descriptions have no place in travel accounts. We should, however, take a closer look at how these descriptions change. Borrowing a term from Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, we might propose the category of "kaleidoscopic vision" and the "kaleidoscopic description of space" it yields.<sup>45</sup> The *Polish Language Dictionary* defines a kaleidoscope as "heterogeneous images, impressions or events in rapid succession."<sup>46</sup> Many travel writers process fleeting space in a similar mode. Heterogeneous images of landscapes seen from the train window displace one another at unprecedented tempos, hardly allowing one to grasp and register

<sup>41</sup>Ibid, p. 32

<sup>42</sup>See: W. Tomasik, *Pociąg do...*, pp. 25, 49.

<sup>43</sup>M. Augé, op. cit., s. 52.

<sup>44</sup>J. I. Kraszewski, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 55.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, p. 57.

<sup>46</sup>*Słownik języka polskiego PWN*, ed. L. Drabik, A. Kubiak-Sokół [et al], Warsaw 2006, p. 300.



them. It is no wonder that travel accounts often lack detailed descriptions of these landscapes. Complex accounts of adventures encountered on the road are gradually replaced with lists or epithets that depict the landscape in broad brushstrokes. Kraszewski also defers to this strategy:

The first segment in particular of the trip up the mountains to Semmering offers a host of incomparable beauties, transforming like a kaleidoscope that rearranges the same elements in various iterations. The distant mountaintops with their airy intonations, the lush greenery of meadows, dark forests and red cliffs all come together to form this mobile landscape.<sup>47</sup>

This journey through Semmering, as Wojciech Tomasiak has noted, was no ordinary trip, for its purpose was not transport, but the spectacle of travel.<sup>48</sup> It is no surprise, then, that these landscapes made such a strong impression on Kraszewski. Józef Kremer, who traveled by more or less the same route, also comments on the rapidly changing landscapes. He compares the act of watching them through the window to admiring paintings in a gallery or drawing back stage curtains:

Suddenly – and at every moment – the approaching hillocks, mountains and groves displace one another like alternating stage curtains in the wondrous theater of nature. The train window frames these images, turning them into landscape paintings by the great masters hung about on the wall of a gallery. In this case, the only difference is that these passing views are constantly changing, and are always suffused with the brilliance of the sun.<sup>49</sup>

Relative to other texts, the description in *Travels to Italy (Podróży do Włoch)* is rather detailed, but remains within a generalized register. The writer mentions houses, sketches their general appearance, provides a silhouette of the landscape, and goes even further, attempting to convey the play of colors and light:

The lighting and coloring of these views are constantly changing – this metamorphosis is so vivid and frequent that it is almost as if nature itself is showing us how to paint landscapes and adorn them with shadows, light and color. Nature is no modest master! Through the train window, we glimpse a private world: little houses with red roofs and snow-white walls, a pale green meadow, azure, sun-dappled water, and just above it a wreath of silver-leaved willows, and further on bales of yellow wheat. Nature brushes all these objects with its own paint, honoring the rules of shadow and light.<sup>50</sup>

It would be difficult to identify any actual location on the basis of this description. Instead, we have a general vision of places flitting before the traveler's eyes. We might also add that this view is confined to what the author manages to see through the square of the window. The admired landscapes may be dynamic and always changing, but they remain rather flat. They

<sup>47</sup>J. I. Kraszewski, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 57.

<sup>48</sup>W. Tomasiak, *Pociąg do...*, p. 106.

<sup>49</sup>J. Kremer, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 101-102.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, pp. 102-103

are images: views that lack depth. The rapid march of the train does not allow one to take root in any space or to render it as "place." Landscapes are merely observed from the train window; they are never experienced or explored. Of course, this mode of observation held a certain appeal for romantics, particularly in the case of landscape descriptions of Semmerling and its feasts for the eye.<sup>51</sup> This does not change the fact that the mode of perception for the passing landscape has been fundamentally altered. The kaleidoscopic transience of these landscapes undoubtedly impedes any attempt to contemplate them.

Władysław Syrokomla also reflects on the transience of these images. In *My Own Travels through My Own Lands (Podróży swojaka po swojszczyźnie)*, he writes:

The imagination compels us to quickly consolidate an image that then rapidly fades into another one, leaving faint traces in its wake. I do not know if I'll ever come back here again; I was there, but saw nothing. Near tears, I told myself: this is train travel! We've passed the border into Silesia, we've passed the town of Rawicz, the former Przyjemski estate, then the Opaliński estate, the town memorable for its textile factory and printing houses of which not a trace remains today. We've passed Bojanowo, the birthplace of the Junosz, the Bojanowski coat of arms [...].<sup>52</sup>

Franciszek Morawski conveys a similar impression in his poem *The Railway*. Traversed space seems to be moving itself: its image changes at a fast tempo, hardly allowing one to discern the individual elements of the landscape:

It races onward like a clap of thunder,  
Forests, mountains flee;  
Somewhere behind them, in the obscure distance  
Ragged clouds whisper  
Hardly glimpsing the Alps, the Tatras,  
It leaves them behind with its elephantine immensity.<sup>53</sup>

Train travel thus becomes synonymous with the kaleidoscopic perception of images and impressions. We see further proof of this in a critical review of Ludwik's Pietrusiński's travel text *Memories from Venice, the Lipniki-Vienna Train Line, Vienna, the Carpathian Mountains in Wadowice, Frankfurt am Main, and from Krakow to the Spiski Tatras (Wspomnienia z Wenecji, kolei żelaznej Lipnicko-Wiedeńskiej, Wiednia, Karpat Wadowickich, Frankfurta nad Menem, i przelotu z Krakowa do Tatr Spiskich)*. The review was published by "Biblioteka Warszawska," and its author critiques the text's hurried descriptions of Venice, comparing the prose precisely to views "escaping" by train:

"Venice" becomes a mere catalog of buildings, images, artists, Italian phrases, dates, names and historical facts alluding to its former glory. We hardly get any details about contemporary life. The

<sup>51</sup>See footnote 48

<sup>52</sup>W. Syrokomla, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>53</sup>F. Morawski, *Droga żelazna*, [in:] *ibid*, *Pisma*, vol. 1, Wrocław 1841, p. 213.

text describes views, a few towers, columns, copulas, altars and windows, often in *such a hurry that it's as if everything is escaping by train*. [emphasis – AMD]<sup>54</sup>

Texts describing train travel often turn into long or short lists of the constituent parts of passing space. These spaces defy closer scrutiny and can never be described in detail. Passing space can never be truly encountered; it will never transform into “place.” It therefore takes on the role of the non-place.

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The paradigms for describing train travel illustrated above do not operate in isolation. Often, they mutually complement one another. Kaleidoscopic perception and kaleidoscopic descriptions of passing landscapes often coexist with observations on how the rapid pace of travel makes it impossible to get to know these landscapes. Other texts omit descriptions of passing space and in their place emphasize the time required to cover a certain segment of the trip. Nevertheless, the passages collected here indicate the novelty of high-speed travel. Some authors embrace this experience optimistically, seeing the promise of new opportunities and sensory impressions in the rapid expansion of transportation systems. An equal share of authors feels threatened by new modes of transportation and emphasizes the constraints they impose. This analysis also identifies shifts in the travel writer's consciousness provoked by steamship or train travel. Time has superseded physical distance ceased to be a reliable unit of measurement. This shift reveals itself in minor details in texts describing travel through regions at staggered levels of development. The more developed a region, the more developed its network of train connections, and the less chance the traveler will have to actually encounter the place.

This analysis also demonstrates how travel prose from as early as the nineteenth century conveys a specific sense of space and place, recalling the category of the “non-place” proposed by French anthropologist Marc Augé. Augé, however, uses this language in the context of modernity and maintains that supermodernity is the very force that generated the non-place:

But non-places are the real measure of our time; one that could be quantified – with the aid of a few conversions between area, volume and distance – by totaling all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called ‘means of transport’ (aircraft, trains and road vehicles), the airports and railway stations, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets, and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purposes of a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup>*Kronika literacka*, “Biblioteka Warszawska” 1846, vol. 1, p. 192.

<sup>55</sup>M. Augé, op. cit., p. 79

Despite Augé’s assertion, the non-place might be useful as a category for thinking about earlier epochs. It goes without saying that the quantity of non-places dating back to the early nineteenth century was much sparser (lacking planes, cars, airports, cable skeins and wireless networks). Railway systems aside, this era also witnessed the advent of train stations, hotels and other travel novelties. As a result, the distinction between place and non-place (despite the lack of this terminology at the time) was intensely felt.

# KEYWORDS

travel writing

non-place

space

**ABSTRACT:**

This article attempts to describe how nineteenth-century travel texts reflected the rapid expansion of transportation modes and new travel resources suddenly available to travel writers. Three characteristic descriptive modes are outlined: the disappearance of space, time's tendency to supersede space, and kaleidoscopic descriptions of travel impressions. The article also discusses how we might apply Marc Augé's category of the "non-place" to the experiences of romantic travel writers.

## TRAIN TRAVEL

T I M E

p l a c e

r o m a n t i c i s m

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