Foreign Correspondence

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Edited by

Jan Borm and Benjamin Colbert

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

JAN BORM AND BENJAMIN COLBERT

The Lithuanian writer and artist Romualdas Lankauskas, whose painting "Carnival" (2001) features on the cover of this collective volume, observes: "Well-written travel books are by no means inferior to fiction produced by famous writers; they can be fascinating and valuable because they impart knowledge about foreign countries, brighten the reader's horizons and help to better know the world which is important indeed. The experience of reading a travel book is like taking a journey together with the one who has visited other countries."[1] Several key issues are addressed by Lankauskas in his remarks which focus on the value of travel writing, notably in allusion to the shifting status the form has been frequently exposed to. Though writers and readers have agreed from the earliest times that travel does not only broaden the mind but that it is useful to report on such an experience, an idea then repeated with renewed vigour during the Renaissance by Montaigne[2] among others, the question of what to report on and how has remained a matter of debate, a number of authors including Sir Francis Bacon offering their own advice and lists of items to be remarked on.[3] Whether one intends to write a full-length travelogue or letters from abroad, the problem remains the same.

Which items make it into the *New York Times* the narrator of Uwe Johnson's monumental novel *Anniversaries* wonders?[4] And, one would be tempted to add, in what form? The question is notably raised by one of the chief correspondents of France in Poland-Lithuania in the seventeenth century, Pierre des Noyers, secretary to the French Queens of Poland Louise-Marie de Gonzague and Marie Casimire de La Grange d'Arquien, complaining repeatedly about the lack of accuracy in reports published in the *Gazette de France*.[5] Travellers have not only been pinpointed as notorious liars, liable to produce yarns about faraway places that correspond more or less, if at all, to what may indeed be observed out there, but have also revealed themselves to be lame ducks, as it were, when it comes to perceiving a situation correctly. Some travellers have inspired extraordinary tales, as Alexander Selkirk did, thanks, partly, to Richard Steele's article in *The Englishman* that sparked Daniel Defoe's

imagination.[6] Others have used the press to advertise their own achievements, as Bougainville did, in suggesting that his friend Dr Commerson publish a letter in the *Mercure de France* about Tahiti baptized "New Cytherea" by the former, an epistle that was to inflame the minds of many.[7] A century later, Robert Edwin Peary's and Frederick Cook's attempts to reach the North Pole made for excellent stories that newspapers did not refrain from publishing without having any verifiable information at hand other than what either explorer claimed to have achieved.

At the other end of the scale of such foreign correspondence, one would find secret reports sent from abroad, including the coded reports of diplomats that would then only be transcribed at home and made available to a strictly limited circle of readers; witness the secret correspondence of French ambassador to Poland-Lithuania, Béthune, in the second half of the seventeenth century, now kept with the transcriptions written directly above the coded messages at the archives of the French Foreign Office, as well as unpublished private letters. However wide or reduced the readership of such foreign correspondence may have been, this type of travel writing contributes to the image a reader may have about elsewhere. Foreign correspondence therefore plays an important role in the construction of views about other places and people, and is consequently of prime interest in the field of comparative cultural history and the study of textual (but also visual) representations of otherness. The use of literary strategies in such productions may vary considerably, depending partly on the interaction between exterior pressure (instructions, taste, and convention) and individual expression (observation skills and style). The chapters of this volume primarily focus on the notion of foreign correspondence, a dual problematic oscillating between the private and the public, as one of the principal media of travel writing, whether it be actually letters or other forms of writing sent from abroad.

Nevertheless, for as long as travel has been established as a commercial and cultural practice, the letter has had a special status. Its forms include the letter of introduction, the letter of credit, letters carried abroad and letters sent home. Letters solicit material aid, testify to the bearer's character, and serve as informal passports to networks of exchange, culture, and conversation without which the traveller would be left to his or her own devices. Alternatively, letters home represent the traveller-cum-tourist's descriptive medium, self account, translation and transfer of foreign manners, customs, events, statistics, and anecdotes, the full range and texture of life that must serve to represent and demonstrate the verisimilitude of travel experience. Such is the letter's status that

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing adopted the epistolary genre (as did many novels), along with the journal, as one of its principal formal structures, whether or not the letters so crafted ever paid postage.

To think of travel and travel writing as "foreign correspondence," however, is to apply metaphorically a phrase that has its own complex and overlapping history in journalism, politics, and international culture. In English journalism, foreign correspondence has long been associated with a transnational world of letters. In the late eighteenth century, *The London Review of English and Foreign Literature*, for example, supplemented its regular domestic correspondence with occasional "Foreign Correspondence." From 1757 *The Monthly Review* ran a section, "Foreign Literature. By Our Correspondents," shortened to "Foreign Correspondence" in the running header, its function again being to acquaint home readers with the literature of European and American writers, in translation where necessary.[8]

The practice of English journalists acting as foreign correspondents, sending dispatches of events abroad for publication at home, is of a later date. Arthur Young, for the *Morning Post*, and John Walter I, editor of *The Times*, first introduced foreign staff onto their papers; while Walter's son, John Walter II, began sending reporters abroad, including Henry Crabb Robinson to Altona outside Hamburg in January 1807.[9] In the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, several journal editors, including William Jerdan for *The Sun* and John Scott for *The Champion*, joined the throngs of sightseers and battlefield tourists to send back exclusive reports, in Scott's case collected into a bestselling travel book after serialization in his journal.[10] From 1814 the Paris-based English-language newspaper *Galignani's Messenger*, meanwhile, built itself around an informal network of agents and correspondents, who took it upon themselves to transmit European periodicals, private letters, and third-person accounts to the editors in Paris, who in turn translated, abridged, rearranged, and grangerized their source materials into the fabric of the paper. By the 1830s, the role of the newspaper foreign correspondent had become established as other international papers began to vie with Galignani's for this new market, and journals began claiming exclusivity abroad with reference to "our own correspondent."[11]

The traveller-as-correspondent appears also in the many figures whose cosmopolitanism in the sciences, arts, and humanities qualified them to be considered correspondents to the many learned societies that were formed during the Enlightenment throughout Europe, with such foreign correspondents holding honorary positions blazoned on the title pages of books. Joseph Baretti, James Boswell, and Prince Hoare all advertised

themselves at one point or another as Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Royal Academy. C. E. Boettiger was Secretary for Foreign Correspondence to the Saxon Bible Society; the Rev. Dr McClure to the American and Foreign Christian Union, 1855-57. Other organizations that had such a post included the United Foreign Missionary Society; the Royal Institute for British Architects; the Medico-Botanical Society of London; and the American Anti-Slavery Society.

Of course, as already suggested, the purposes of foreign correspondence were not always so high minded, for the phrase also at times denoted a form of espionage, the private gathering of information on foreign affairs for the benefit of home security. With this kind of correspondence, discretion and secrecy were the order of the day; as Sir James Steuart advised in his *Political Oeconomy* (1770), "It is the duty of every statesman to watch over the conduct of those who hold the foreign correspondence, as it is the duty of the master of a family to watch over those he sends to market"[12] (Tom Paine was ejected from the Committee for Foreign Affairs in the United States for making public through the newspapers material that could only have been obtained through foreign correspondence.) During the early stages of the French Revolution, British corresponding societies represented their interests to the French National Assembly, which, if their critics' charges have any basis, were at times taken as representations of the British nation.[13]

As Mary Favret puts it, "by means of the angle of presentation, the letter becomes public property";[14] its audiences shift with the uses to which it is put. Similarly, the phrase "foreign correspondence" has multiple dimensions, some wrapped up in the histories of journalism, correspondence, and tourism, and some more metaphorically invoking the links between nations sutured within the textual spaces of travel writings considered more broadly. The essays collected here all take correspondence as their starting point, though letters are not always the sole signs of such correspondences; even when epistolary forms are under interrogation, however, the essays here show too how letters themselves are involved in complex webs of personal, political, social, and cultural negotiations between travellers and their hosts.

Notes

[1] Romualdas Lankauskas, interview by Jan Borm, May 2014, Vilnius; trans. Regina Rudaitytė.

[2] Michel de Montaigne, "Of the Education of Children," *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press,

1958), bk. 1, ch. 26, p. 112: "For this reason, mixing with men is wonderfully useful, and visiting foreign countries, not merely to bring back, in the manner of our French noblemen, knowledge of the measurements of the Santa Rotonda, or of the richness of Signora Livia's drawers, or, like some others, how much longer or wider Nero's face is in some old ruin there than on some similar medallion; but to bring back knowledge of the characters and ways of those nations, and to rub and polish our brains by contact with those of others."

[3] Sir Francis Bacon, *Bacon's Essays* (London: J. Parker and Sons, 1858), 195-97.

[4] Uwe Johnson, *Anniversaries: from the life of Gesine Cresspahl*, trans. Leila Vennewitz and Walter Arndt (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), vols. 1 (1975) and 2 (1987).

[5] See Jan Borm's chapter in this volume.

[6] Richard Steele, *The Englishman: Being the Sequel of the Guardian* 26 (Dec. 3, 1713): 168-73.

[7] "Lettre de M. Commerson," in *Mercure de France*, November 1769, 197-207.

[8] See Advertisement, *The Monthly Review, or Literary Journal* 15 (1756), n.p.: "A succinct account of Foreign Publications having been desired by several Friends to our Review, we take this Opportunity of acquainting them, and the Public, that this Task is undertaken by a Set of learned and ingenious Correspondents. / These Articles will be regularly continued, every Month, unless prevented by the Accidents to which a foreign Correspondence is liable . . . The foreign Articles will commence in the Review for February, 1757."

[9] John Hohenberg, *Foreign Correspondence: the Great Reporters and Their Times* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), ch. 1, esp. 2-5.

[10] See Benjamin Colbert's chapter in this volume.

[11] The earliest reference to this phrase, "our own correspondent," appears in *Cobbett's Political Register* 36 (June 10, 1820), col. 954, reporting on Queen Caroline's landing in France (and possibly excerpted from *The Times*) and occurs with increasing frequency in the 1830s and beyond, often in quotation marks. See *Foreign Conspiracy against the Liberties of the United States* (New York, 1835), 135, which mentions "the foreign correspondent of the Evening Post" in "Florence, Italy."

[12] Sir James Steuart, *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy; Being an Essay on the Science of Domestic Policy in Free Nations*, 3 vols. (Dublin, 1770), 1:416.

[13] See *A British Freeholder's Address to His Countrymen, on Thomas Paine's Rights of Man* (London, 1791), 16-17: "[The Revolution Society] depreciate[s] the House of Commons for not being annually elected by the whole body of the people; and yet this self-elected club usurps the power of representation of the kingdom—for foreign correspondence: and there are members of the National Assembly who, on such authority, speak of the British nation as favourable to their schemes."

[14] Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics & the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2.

CHAPTER ONE

BETWEEN THE WEST AND THE EAST: IDENTITY IN LITHUANIAN TRAVEL WRITING

REGINA RUDAITYTĖ

Since antiquity, people have always been fascinated by travels to distant foreign lands associated with unknown experiences and exciting adventures. But travel is not only a means of acquiring knowledge about the unknown "Other"; by travelling we shape the world with our minds, thus shaping ourselves. Travelling also means a journey of self-discovery. Homi Bhabha speaks about "re-creation of the self in the world of travel."[1] Travelling means negotiating with cultural difference and cultural hybridity, with cross-cultural initiation and, probably, with one's own multiple identities opened up in the world of travel. These problematic issues are mirrored by travel writing in the form of a record of journeys, diaries, and memoirs with the focus not only on the discovery of places but also on their creation. As Peter Bishop rightly observes, "travel accounts are involved in the production of imaginative knowledges. They are an important aspect of a culture's myth-making."[2] A travel text, structured as a narrative, becomes an important cultural document, and, as with any other form of narrative, raises not only the issue of representation but also the question of national and cultural identity construction. Identity is marked by ambiguity and fluidity; it is never fixed and stable, changing across time; it is determined by history, ideology, power relations, and constructed by historically and ideologically specific discursive practices. This is the discursive approach to identification which is seen as a construction, an on-going process never completed. Stuart Hall writes:

> Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking

> of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity.[3]

Identity is constructed through difference, through the relation to the Other. According to Bhabha, identity is shaped through "visual demand for a knowledge of the Other, and its representation in the act of articulation and enunciation."[4] Thus the discovery of the Other acquires a particular significance for the construction of identity. It is through cultural difference, through the knowledge of the Other that national identity is reflected. I should think this could be a valid theoretical frame of reference for my argument. It is through this lens that I will look into Lithuanian travel writing as a reflection of personal and national consciousness, focusing on a few of what I assume to be iconic texts pertaining to different historical epochs. I will try to situate Lithuanian travel writing within social and historical contexts, reading some chosen travel texts in relation to culture and ideology as their appeal essentially lies in their ideological implications.

Lithuanian national and cultural identity was shaped by multifarious historical and ideological factors and experiences, and this process is in a way mirrored by travel writing. For the historical background, I am drawing on the seminal book *The History of Old Lithuania: 1009-1795* by Alfredas Bumblauskas, Professor of History at Vilnius University.[5] The Grand Duchy of Lithuania which existed from the mid-thirteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century was a multilingual, multicultural, and multi-confessional country. It gave rise to a nation that included noblemen not only of Lithuanian but also of Belarusian and Polish descent. A cradle of religious tolerance and the last pagan state in Europe to be baptized, Lithuania adopted Christianity in 1387 and, as Prof. Bumblauskas notes, "became an integral part of the then most advanced civilization of the world."[6] The adoption of Christianity incited the process of Europeanization of culture the outcome of which was the integration of Lithuania into European society. The last pagan state managed to make a "cultural leap" over a period of 150 years: it embraced the ideas of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and created a legal system and Europe's easternmost university. It became a symbiosis of cultures and the centre of several civilizations with its heritage of both Catholic culture relevant to Italians, Spaniards, and Latin Americans, and the westernised heritage of Orthodox culture important to Russians, Ukrainians, and Bulgarians. The teaching staff of Vilnius University boasted professors from nearly all European countries, from Spain to Norway. Historic Lithuania produced some outstanding figures in world culture and politics, like Romain Gary, Oscar and Czeslav Milosz, Nikolai Lobachevsky, Fyodor Dostoevsky,

Ivan Bunin, and Piotr Stolypin. Interwar Lithuania offered shelter to Lev Karsavin and Mstislav Dobuzhinsky, who had fled from Bolshevik Russia. Germans can find traces of their culture, and not only in the Klaipėda region, which for 500 years belonged to the German Order of the Cross, and later to Prussia and Germany, but also in other parts of Lithuania. They can find their Gothic and Baroque monuments, to say nothing of the German communities that existed in Vilnius and Kaunas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[7]

Italian and Dutch masters created Renaissance and Baroque architecture, coming through the Milanese princess Bona Sforza who brought the Renaissance and the fork to Lithuania. Also in 1562, Lithuania got its first and firm link to Western Europe and Italy, when the postal route Vilnius-Krakow-Vienna-Venice opened. Originating in the sixteenth century, the Lithuanian Calvinist community maintained direct links with John Calvin, and Lithuania itself received preachers from Switzerland. Hungarians may find traces of Stephen Batory and Kaspar Bekes important. The English would be surprised to learn that Klaipėda once had an English quarter, and that Kėdainiai boasts Scottish houses, and archaeologists occasionally dig up Scottish pipes in the countryside.[8] Traces of European culture found in Lithuania form an interesting cultural document and a testimony of Lithuania's adopting Western values in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. On the one hand, Western values and cultural influences were instrumental in the construction of national identity. On the other hand, the multicultural, multilingual, and multi-confessional character of the country made the issue of national and cultural identity problematic: it was not always possible to define who the Lithuanians were. The educated people of the time noticing the resemblances between the Latin and Lithuanian languages, started looking for the traces of Lithuanian origins in ancient Roman history. This gave rise to the legend about Lithuanians coming from the ancient Romans, which was very popular and treated in all seriousness for a long time. Consequently, Renaissance ideas, Christian associations with European values, as well as the theory of the ancient Roman origins of Lithuanians were all instrumental in the formation of a Latin cultural model in Lithuania with Latin becoming the language of letters. The language issue again makes the construction of cultural and national identity controversial. Should we take Samuel Johnson's assumption that "languages are the pedigree of nations" at face value, what do we make of the Lithuanian pedigree when Lithuanian, Polish, and Belarusian were spoken, and Latin was used as a written language by the educated in Old Lithuania? The language of instruction at Vilnius University was also Latin. In her study *Renaissance and Baroque*

Literature in Lithuania (2001), Eugenija Ulčinaitė, Professor of Classics at Vilnius University, states that "it is the Latin language and the culture of antiquity that linked us to Western Europe; Renaissance Latin texts postulated the most significant ideas of Lithuanian statehood, defined the forms of relationship between an individual, nation and state. Finally, it was on the basis of literature written in Latin and its cultural impact that Lithuanian writings grew and developed."[9] According to Ulčinaitė, "thanks to Latin, the University of Vilnius was able to integrate itself into the general scholarly life of Western Europe, assimilate new scientific achievements and in its own turn spread the ideas generated by professors of Western universities."[10]

The first Lithuanian travel texts were also written in Latin and appeared in the sixteenth century, although Lithuanians travelled in Europe already in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, particularly monks, traders, and diplomats. In the fifteenth century travelling became wide-spread, when many young Lithuanian noblemen went to study abroad to universities in Poland, Germany, Italy, France, Belgium, and Holland. Travel abroad became fashionable. It was also regarded as an inseparable part of one's education as well as a mark of distinction, creating the possibility of moving up the career ladder in the royal court. Professor Ulčinaitė points out that the oldest Lithuanian travel text seems to be *Kelionė į Italiją: 1575 metų dienoraštis* (A journey to Italy: the diary of 1575) by Jurgis Radvila.[11] Radvila (1556-1600) was a duke, a priest, as well as a politician and a literary man who at the very young age of twenty-three became bishop of Vilnius, and later was consecrated a cardinal. His biography and career is emblematic of noblemen of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. For us it is important to note that Radvila played a key role in helping obtain the consent of the Pope and King Stephen Batory for the foundation of Vilnius University. His journey to Italy started on 11 October 1575 not far from Trakai and ended in Padova on 7 December, the same year. He and his entourage travelled via Warsaw, Vienna, and Venice, stopping on the way to change horses, to take meals, and to rest. As the title indicates, his travel account is written in the form of a diary in which the author meticulously registers all the details of the journey, providing descriptions of the places visited, people he met, all the dates of arrivals and departures, distances between places, and the most important sights visited. The travel record, written of course in Latin, is quite schematic and sometimes sounds naïve, and were it longer (it is merely a 16-page text), it would probably be dull. Still, what appeals to the reader is a sense of immediacy and a sense of wonder with which the traveller registers his impressions, sometimes displaying a sense

of humour. It is also an interesting cultural document of the bygone epoch. While in Vienna, Radvila, then a nineteen-year-old youth, was struck indeed by the grandeur and beauty of the emperor Maximilian's palace, its gardens with pools, "full of various birds, especially pheasants and also rabbits."[12] For instance, the entry of 14 November reads: "In the morning I saw an elephant—an animal of enormous size—given as a present to the emperor by the King of Spain. In the afternoon I went to pay my respects to Mr Johan Bernstein, Chancellor of Bohemia."[13] He also records being received by the emperor with due respect and then, shortly afterwards, going hunting for the wild boar with the emperor and his four sons, killing five boars and experiencing great pleasure. A special mention is made of the fact that "returning from the hunt the emperor and the King of Rome were kindly disposed towards me and chatted pleasantly with me."[14] From his diary we find out that Radvila was greatly impressed by the Jesuit College in Vienna and the neighbouring church with miraculous relics of Blessed Virgin Mary. Radvila's identity as a dignitary, a nobleman, and a bishop undoubtedly emerges in his travel narrative. It leaves no doubt that the travel account is written by a deeply religious man as a particular focus is on the objects of religious worship. However, we find some mundane and even funny entries. After a long and difficult crossing of the Alps on the way from Vienna to Venice, which lasted for ten days full of dangers and fear, they came down to the Italian plain, "the most charming in the Venetian area," and the entry of 1 December reads: "Thus having crossed the unbelievably high Alps, we recovered and felt as if we had escaped from hell and entered paradise."[15] Radvila also mentions tasting for the first time "very delicate Italian food—frogs" in a small although pretty town of Sacile; however, he does not elaborate on the taste or effects of the meal. We learn that he did not stay long in Venice; in fact, he was forced to leave it in a hurry because of the rumour about an outbreak of plague that "did great harm not only to this city but also spread to Milan, Mantova, Vicenza, Bergamo, Brescia."[16]

The travel diary ends with two entries from Padova, where the young duke visited a few churches, a famous school, was taken to the circus, and went to see two comedies that he liked very much. One of the comedies was titled "A Pastoral"; seeing it, as he put it, was a rather costly experience because a wallet with money was stolen from his servant Grayovsky. With this last entry of 7 December his travel diary ends.

A more sophisticated and mature, and more interesting travel narrative from the literary point of view is *Kelionė į Jeruzalę* (A Pilgrimage to Jerusalem) written by Mikalojus Kristupas Radvila Našlaitėlis (1549-

1616), a junior brother of Jurgis Radvila. He was one of the most powerful, influential, and richest noblemen of the Lithuanian and Polish State. A top ranking and highly educated dignitary, Radvila Našlaitėlis studied at the universities of Leipzig, Strasbourg, Paris, and Rome. In 1567 he converted to Catholicism. Being of poor health, he made vows to visit the Holy Land. Consequently, in September 1582 he set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in December reaching Venice. From there in June of the next year he sailed to Syria and came to Jerusalem where he stayed for two weeks, visited the famous places of religious worship, and in late July took a ship to Egypt. Here he spent two months and sailed back to Italy from where in 1584 he returned home. The journey lasted two years. His *A Pilgrimage to Jerusalem* was first published in Latin in 1601 and became one of the most famous European bestsellers of the time. Until today four Latin, nine Polish, two German, and one Russian edition of this travel text have been published. His authentic travel account remains a textual mystery for historians and literary scholars because his manuscript from which the book was first published in Latin has disappeared. Scholars do not agree on such issues as to who wrote the text—whether he himself or his secretary (Radvila Našlaitėlis might have dictated the text to him); when, where and in what language it was recorded; whether he was writing it during the journey or after he came back home; whether it was written in Latin or Polish. The opinions vary, but whatever they might be, the book still remains a valuable historical and cultural document.

A pilgrimage is a sacred journey having its own sacred places, sacred routes, and its account is often conveyed in a confessional mode that imparts authenticity. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries pilgrimages to Palestine were not rare. While it is not surprising that Radvila Našlaitėlis described his journey to Jerusalem, it is surprising how he described it. He gave his travel account an epistolary form popular at the time: the book is structured in the form of four letters allegedly written to an unidentified friend and to whom he is reporting and describing his experiences in distant lands. It is also obvious that the structural layout of the book was well thought out. The letters were put together much later, summing up the travel experience rather than following a chronological narrative. Events are not described in sequence, and the author digresses, sometimes filling in his narrative with amusing stories and philosophizing. This imparts a literary quality to the travel account, makes the text emotional, attractive, easy to read and comprehend, and also keeps the reader's interest alive—all these ingredients turned it into a proper bestseller. The story of the Egyptian mummies is an interesting case in point. While in Cairo, Radvila Našlaitėlis bought two mummies for

scientific purposes and, having packed them in boxes, loaded them onto the ship. However, during the voyage a storm broke out, and the priest started complaining about seeing two ghosts every night. Radvila Našlaitėlis decided that it was happening because mummies were pagan bodies, and he dumped them into the sea. The storm instantly subsided, and the ghosts vanished.

The confessional mode of his travel text is revealing of the author's personality, education, his broad interests, his knowledge of history and sciences. Radvila Našlaitėlis was interested in everything and wanted to see and experience whatever was possible to. Thus he often changed the itinerary of his pilgrimage. And it is not always the religious motives that determined the length of his visit to one or another location. He stayed in Jerusalem only two weeks, while he spent two months in Egypt. The scholar Jūratė Kiaupienė notes with amazement: "if we compare Radvila's route with the one offered for tourists today, it is obvious that wherever he went he visited the same places which are recommended for twentieth-century travellers."[17] Travel writing can tell us not only about foreign locations visited but also (and sometimes even more) about the cultural background of the travel writer himself. Radvila Našlaitėlis records his subjective travel impressions, detailed descriptions of places visited, of nations, plants, rivers, and his encounters with people. His text also demonstrates how knowledgeable and well-read he was; the reader sees his attempts to analyze phenomena, trying to draw scientific conclusions, even if they sometimes sound naïve, implausible, and hardly believable. For instance, he notes that most people in Egypt have bad eyesight because ordinary people live just on fruit and water. His text is filled with references to the Bible, to ancient Roman and Greek history; he refers to Herodotus and Pliny the Younger; he provides encyclopaedic data about, for example, the Library of Alexandria, Egyptian pyramids (noting that it took him an hour and a half to get to the top of the Great Pyramid), and mummies of Ancient Egypt. Radvila Našlaitėlis was particularly interested in the cultural "Other," i.e., in the Muslim world, in the history and culture of all its nations. He focused his attention on the people of Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, on their customs, manners, and life-style. In his descriptions of Oriental cities we find interesting and authentic historical and cultural details of material life tinged by the traveller's subjective reflections. For example, the reader finds out that Damascus is a big, pretty, and densely inhabited city, "however, rarely visited by European traders because it is distanced from the sea and its people intensely hate Christians."[18] Here he also discovered very good fruit to be recommended—*mauza,* a banana: "it looks like our cucumber, only it is a

bit longer and thicker and grows on bushes."[19] Many of his observations are valuable from the point of view of ethnography. Interesting is his description of Cairo which he compares to Paris; in his opinion, Cairo "is three times bigger than Paris, but not as nicely planned, and its houses are not as beautiful."[20] The reader is struck by the author's attention to detail: he scrupulously indicates that in Cairo there are 200,000 houses and 16,000 streets, over 6000 mosques, about 20,000 public canteens,

> as only the rich and the nobility cook their meals at home, while the simple folk eat in canteens which offer a lot of meat, especially mutton. Also plenty of duck and chicken; but rice and doughnuts cooked in oil sell best. . . . There is no wine in Egypt. . . . Thus Christians mostly drink Cretan wine. European consuls get their supplies of wine from Italy.[21]

A chance encounter with a rich local trader who informed him about his life-style gave the writer an opportunity to reflect on the condition of women in Arab countries. Radvila Našlaitėlis was appalled to hear that the trader had twelve white wives and eighteen Ethiopian women. He kept each of them in a separate room under lock and key which he carried in his pocket, because, according to Radvila Našlaitėlis, if all the wives could meet, they would strangle each other and would murder him. Food was served to them through the window. The husband could also kill them all if he chose because he bought the wives so they were his property, and everybody can do what he likes with his property. Radvila Našlaitėlis expresses his sympathy with the plight of the slaves exclaiming: what a poor life those pagans lead! However, he does not judge or criticize the foreign manners and morals; on the contrary, attention to and respect for other religions and confessions can be easily detected in his text. The cultural "Other" is not demonized in his travel account. He looks upon the cultural "Other" not with a look of an arrogant foreigner but with tolerance which is also a reflection of his national consciousness and identity. We see national self-definition and image emerging through experiencing foreignness and through extreme geographical and cultural differences.

Eugenija Ulčinaitė assumes that Mikalojus Radvila Našlaitėlis might have been the first Lithuanian who had climbed to the top of the Great Egyptian pyramid, who had described the Sphynx and the ancient acropolis of Memphis, who had seen the Nile flood, and who had opened the way for Lithuanians into the Orient.[22] This proves that Lithuanians have always been a nation of travellers, although it seems to contradict the traditional stereotypical nineteenth-century image of Lithuanians as a nation of sedentary quiet peasants firmly rooted in their farmlands. Research shows that, curiously enough, travel writing makes up a

substantial amount of the Lithuanian literary heritage, even if it has often been regarded as an inferior genre and not favoured by our reviewers, critics, and scholars. Travel writing particularly flourished in the early twentieth century, in the so-called "Golden Age" (from 1918 to 1940) of the Independent Lithuania before it was occupied by the Soviet Russia. Historically, it was a very short but very productive period in many spheres of the country's life, including literature and culture in general. I will briefly mention a few of the most outstanding and conspicuous travellers and travel writers, although I am aware that they deserve separately more lengthy discussion. Their fascinating life-stories encapsulating the workings and somersaults of history and fate could be an object of fiction in their own right. Matas Šalčius (1890-1940), a famous journalist, actively involved in politics and in shaping the image of Lithuania, was the director of the Lithuanian Press Agency (ELTA) as well as the precursor of "the new journalism" in Lithuania, who tried to combine the fictional mode with factual journalism, the genre of the short-story with the news article. He published his travel impressions of India in six volumes entitled *Svečiuose pas 40 tautų* (A Guest visit to 40 nations; 1935-36) which enjoyed immense popularity. His life ended while travelling in Brasil. His travel companion to India was Antanas Poška (1903-92), a man of extraordinary fate, whose life is a picaresque novel of adventures. It was his idea to reach the mysterious India by motorcycle. Having left India to return to Lithuania, Poška was taken for a British spy in Turkey, arrested, and imprisoned. After a series of trying experiences and misadventures, he was finally deported to Bulgaria. At long last after seven years of travelling he came back to Lithuania and recorded his travel experiences in the book, *Nuo Baltijos iki Bengalijos* (From the Baltic to Bengal; 1936). His other forced "journey" began in 1946 when he was arrested by the Soviet KGB and deported to the Gulag (where he nearly died of hunger but was lucky to survive) and, finally, only in 1958 he returned home to Vilnius.

One of our best inter-war novelists, Antanas Vienuolis, was commissioned by the daily paper *Lietuvos aidas* to record his travel impressions from various European countries. Subsequently, after many years his travel accounts were published in a separate volume *Kelionių apybraižos* (Travel Sketches; 1988). Most of the texts were written in the form of letters, and they form separate parts or chapters of the book, such as "Letters from Paris," "Letters from Finland," "Letters from Munich," and "Letters from Salzburg." This travel book also deserves separate discussion as a valuable cultural document providing insights into pre-World-War-Two European life and culture filtered through the outsider's focus.

Sacred or utopian places exert a particular fascination and, in Lithuanian travel writing, are mythologized—for example, the West in Soviet times or the Orient in postmodernity. Travel books by two very different Lithuanian writers of the late twentieth century, Romualdas Lankauskas and Jurga Ivanauskaitė, are good cases in point to support this thesis.

Romualdas Lankauskas (1932) is a famous short-story writer, a novelist, and a painter who for his laconic and terse style has been labelled by Lithuanian critics as "the Lithuanian Hemingway." In his article, "The City, Travel and Time: an Exhibition of Romualdas Lankauskas' Paintings and Art Objects," the art critic Vidas Poškus reviewing Lankauskas's recent exhibition of paintings and art objects points out that Lankauskas "is one of the pioneers of abstract painting in Lithuania" and "a representative of the Lithuanian beatnik generation of the mid-sixties," whose organic synthesis of literature and painting relates him to Friedrich Durrenmatt.[23] In the era of mass travel which started taking off probably in the 1960s, the Iron Curtain separated Lithuania from the Western world, and West European countries which are very close geographically were ideologically distant and unreachable, thus becoming a source of mysterious fascination. The forbidden fruit is always sweeter. Two travel books, *Cicadas of Tokyo* (*Tokijo cikados*, 1989) and *Europe: What is it like?* (*Europa, kokia ji?*, 1994) by Romualdas Lankauskas, emblematize Lithuanian national consciousness, manifesting the images of the West and the Orient imprinted in the nation's mentality and articulating how the West and the East (Japan in this case) were experienced and imagined in the Soviet period. Apart from its aesthetic and cultural value, Lankauskas's travel writing is socially and ideologically conscious, resisting the colonizer's discourse. His travel books explicitly demonstrate his fascination with the geographical and cultural Otherness of the West and Japan – "the forbidden Other" which is not demonized but celebrated as a place of a more advanced civilization, a superior social system, human values, and life-styles. Thus, his travel texts in a way turn into a delicate ideological weapon to challenge the system by demonstrating different existential possibilities and a superior set of values inscribed in them. The West and Japan are mythologized as a utopia, as something desirable, a place of hope and aspiration, where darkness is excluded; the West becomes a metaphorical space instrumental in the critique of the Soviet system and society. The notion of the Orient is problematized in Lankauskas's travel text about Japan which is conceptualized and reflected on as a cultural rather than a geographical space – as a site of Western values. The writer firmly believes that Western values have always been the basis of Lithuanian national and cultural identity and his travel writing

postulates this idea both implicitly and explicitly. In his travel book *Europe: What is it like?*, Lankauskas writes:

> I have never felt a stranger anywhere, particularly in Europe because I also belong to this very continent marked by common cultural history and psychology. After all, I was born in Klaipėda, the westernmost part of Lithuania. Thus Europe has always been my true home. Of course, Lithuania today differs greatly from France or Holland, and its sole resemblance to Finland extends merely to the green landscape. . . . This crucial difference essentially lies in lagging behind in all the spheres of life, which is the choky fruit of Soviet socialism and of long years of occupation.[24]

On the other hand, the most striking feature of the aesthetics of Lankauskas's travel texts are visual elements, the poetic touch that he imparts to what otherwise would be an ordinary travel account, a record of facts and events. As in his fiction, in his travel texts the topos or motive of "a journey" also acquires a symbolic and existential meaning. His travel books, similarly to diaries and memoirs, are marked by the author's individuality and reflexivity, tinged by subjective emotions. It is this reflexivity and subjectivity as well as the visual quality that define the greatest value of his travel books. Reading them leaves no doubt that they have been written by a novelist and a painter who keeps moving back and forth in time and space, who is playing with light and colours, for whom the smells and the taste of things are extremely important and who at times becomes a philosopher. In some flashbacks he plunges into personal reminiscences turning the private into the public. This is, for instance, how *Cicadas of Tokyo* that also bears the subtitle *Memories of A Journey* begins:

> Japan …Could I ever, let us say, a few decades or more ago have believed that the day would come when I would visit it? No, I could not because to dream of a journey to Japan would have meant to be carried away into the realm of sheer fantasy which, it seemed, was never to become reality. . . . To find myself in Japan, to see it with my own eyes, to set foot on its soil––could this dream come true? Sometimes one is suddenly visited by a strange thought about things having magic power . . . Why? What things? Well, for instance, an old and very beautiful porcelain sugar-bowl with a typical Japanese landscape painted on its side; since childhood it has stood in our family cupboard and by sheer miracle has survived until now when everything else is long gone . . . My father must have bought it about fifty years ago in Klaipėda, or maybe in Germany where every spring the famous Leipzig fairs took place. Time passed, and I would often gaze at this exotic, colourfully painted sugar-bowl, trying to imagine a terribly

> distant and mysterious country from which it had come to Lithuania and into my life. I grew up with it. Could this sugar-bowl have really contained some magic power or could have hidden a certain sign of fate as if saying that the time would come when this charming little picture painted on its side would turn into tangible reality, that a live, authentic landscape of the country of the Rising Sun would unfold before my eyes in all its subtle and amazing beauty?[25]

Lankauskas's *Europe: What is it like?* is structured like a mosaic of fragments, a record of impressions of his shorter or longer visits to various European countries. The very titles of the chapters are telling, suggestive and at times emblematic, like, for example, "The French Collage," "Portuguese Colours," "The Light of Athens," "Reflections in the Lagoon," "A Return to Rome," "Gentlemen and a Pastoral Landscape with Ghosts." His own identity as a writer and an artist is clearly inscribed in this book which is saturated with references to literature and art. For instance, writing about Paris, Lankauskas reflects on innovative artistic movements that defined the character and atmosphere of early-twentieth-century Paris; he refers to Emile Zola, to the writers of "the lost generation," like F. Scott Fitzgerald and, of course, to Ernest Hemingway and his book *A Movable Feast* about his youth spent in Paris as a young American journalist and writer just embarking on his literary career. Lankauskas also remembers numerous Lithuanian writers and artists who studied and lived in Paris before the Second World War, including the poet Juozas Tysliava who edited and published "Muba," an avant garde literary magazine to which Jean Cocteau was a contributor. This referentiality often triggers self-reflection and adds substance and "a third dimension" to the travel account.

In 1994, the novelist, essayist, poetess, and painter Jurga Ivanauskaitė (1961-2007) went for the first time to India where in Dharamsala she studied Tibetan Buddhism. A few years later the writer spent a year travelling in India and Nepal, staying for some time in a Buddhist monastery high in the mountains, in total seclusion, far away from the civilized world, immersing herself in the study of religious texts, in mantras, mandalas, and meditation. She wrote about her travel experiences in *Kelionė į Šambalą* (A Journey to Shambhala; 1997), which is more than a travel account. Rather, it is a journey of self-discovery, the search for the Self. The travel atmosphere and way of travelling are very important, coming across through Ivanauskaitė's sometimes mildly ironic descriptions of hotels, cafes, guides, and the means of travel. India and Nepal are used as an imaginative escape, a relaxation from Western values

and rigid rationalism. In Ivanauskaitė's travel book, these places are both real and imaginary: they function as precise geographical locations (replete with people, customs, landscape, weather, food, clothing, etc.), but they are also imbued with symbolic meaning. The title-word *Shambhala* (which is also the key-word) assumes a special significance: it is both a concrete and a symbolic space. First, "Shambhala" is a small café described as "probably the most popular meeting-point in all Dharamsala";[26] it also functions as a sort of post-office with its notice-board, and as a point of allocation bustling with "newcomers hunched under the burden of big back-packs and still bigger illusions."[27] The concept of *Shambhala* is, however, expanded to signify the Oriental milieu, which, according to Ivanauskaitė, induces a bizarre change in the newcomers' identity. Casting a critical and ironic gaze on the newcomers to the East, including herself, the writer observes: "The Oriental environment hypnotizes and drugs them, enslaves, subjugates, depersonalizes, and completely dissolves them. This might be the bliss of Extinction that the decadents of the West dreamt about, but it is by no means Freedom or Light."[28]

The writer provides the reader with the insider's view of the East, combining her personal experiences with general observations about the oriental life-style, Buddhist philosophy, and religion, throwing in theorizing about such things as psychoanalysis, the sacred, and the profane, interweaving her narrative with historical excursions and legends. Hers is an interesting text with a strong self-reflexive quality, full of references to diverse philosophical and religious sources. Ivanauskaitė's book combines external and internal stories; an external chain of events serves as a spring-board for self-reflection and philosophizing. Thus her travel account reads both like an adventure novel, a confession revealing the writer's existential anguish caused by the crisis of values, and, at times, like an essay; it leaves no doubt that Ivanauskaitė is well-versed in the Buddhist doctrine; however, often she becomes too fond of dealing out simplistic truths. The adventure stories she is spinning is her greatest asset, not theorizing and naïve philosophizing drawn from other texts, the list of which she provides at the end of her book, ranging from works by Mircea Eliade and E. M. Bernbaum to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Ivanauskaitė herself admits that all those texts "accompanied, protected and inspired" her on her sacred journey. Her strength as a writer lies in her powers of observation, in the subjective account (often tinged with irony and self-irony) of her travel experiences, of encounters with all sorts of people, both local and strangers to the East. Her impressions and detailed, expansive, "baroque" descriptions of the people and places all open up the

unfamiliar, bizarre, and fascinating world of the Orient upon which the writer looks with admiration and in which nothing astounds her except two things: a young nun with a shaved head, breast-feeding a two-week old baby in the bus station and a turbaned Sikh, the owner of a small and cosy restaurant, who is stuck behind the cash register, passionately immersed in and completely carried away by Nabokov's *Lolita*. Time spent in the East taught the writer Peace and Wisdom.

The writer plays with the opposition between the West and the East, and it is the East that is privileged while the West is demonized. According to Ivanauskaitė, "the West increasingly suffers from the dangerous abyss dividing the intellect and the Spirit."[29] Although this issue is more problematic than it might appear at first sight, and the writer is conscious of the ambivalent situation she and other foreigners find themselves in exploring the East, she herself feels stuck between the two cultures—that of the East and of the West—and is keenly aware of the differences between them. Observing life in India and Nepal with its dire poverty, its squalor and stink, and in spite of all the hardships she herself experienced in the East, the writer draws the conclusion: "I do not know why this everyday reality speaks to me while the other one, obscured by the facades of posh houses, glittering and spotlessly clean shop-windows, abracadabra of advertisements, is increasingly becoming more and more mute."[30] In the Himalayas she is astounded by the dire poverty of the people who nevertheless seem to be able to live a happy life in a friendly community, in harmony with each other and with nature. Moved by her experiences in the East, she makes the following declaration: "Because deserts actually do not stretch here where it is so easy and free but in hysterical big cities of the West, in the hearts of their well-fed inhabitants."[31] Thus her travel book also casts an ironic look on Western civilization; it is a critique of consumerism, and functions as a construction of new myths: the wisdom and peace of the East is postulated, the East which is very much desirable but not attainable for the westerners. Ivanauskaitė's text ironizes the clichéd Western image of the East as an earthly Paradise where crowds of westerners flock looking for escape, salvation, and redemption; however, their spiritual search turns out to be not that simple, because all the problems, according to Tibetans, are not caused by the external world but are lurking inside ourselves. Having fled their own lives with the spirit of materialism and consumerism, foreigners are trapped in the enclosure of exoticism, and their search for spirituality (or novelty and break, rather, as one suspects) becomes problematic while their newly assumed identity is ambivalent. The "psychonauts" (the term coined by Ivanauskaitė) who come to the East