

blithely entrusted to the mercy of the Party would be among the victims of Stalin's paranoia. While their mother was executed for conspiring with the assassin, the children were dumped in an orphanage.

For a regime that prided itself in having constructed a worker's paradise, Comrade Nikolaev's initial claim that he had acted alone proved a public relations disaster of the first magnitude. Not surprisingly, Stalin found this possibility both too inconvenient and too disturbing to accept. The result was a thorough working over of the prisoner at the able hands of the NKVD. In the end, the assassin admitted to having been part of a broader conspiracy – precisely what Stalin needed if he wanted to wipe out his enemies. Several years after the crime, one of the key investigators, Genrikh Luishkov, defected to the Japanese where he issued a remarkable statement: Nikolaev had acted on his own, and none of the multiple conspiracies concocted by the NKVD had actually existed. For reasons that are not entirely clear Western historians have generally downplayed or disregarded Luishkov's extraordinarily important testimony. Leone rectifies this strange negligence. *The Kirov Murder and Soviet History* leaves us with the sobering realization that in Stalin's Russia even a committed Communist could reach a level of hopelessness where only murder would answer. On October 25 Nikolaev had jotted the following remarkable words into his personal diary: 'A thousand generations will pass, but the idea of Communism will not be made flesh' (226).

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Andrew Hammond (ed.), *Through Another Europe: An Anthology of Travel Writing on the Balkans* (Oxford: Signal Books Limited, 2009), 265 pp.

Every once in a while the academic reviewer comes across a book that is instructive, insightful, and immensely enjoyable. Andrew Hammond's anthology of Balkan travel writing is just such a rarity. The collection spans four centuries and covers ten countries, including the recently independent Kosovo. The authors, by no means only travel writers in the strict sense of the term, range from the genuine explorer to the army nurse, from the ambassador's wife to the anthro-

pologist. Their notes and reminiscences constitute an extraordinarily rich and colorful hodgepodge of voices, faces, landscapes, and impressions.

The anthology is divided into three parts. The first section deals with the roughly three centuries preceding the outbreak of the First World War. Here the reader encounters the Balkans of traditional lore: an untamed landscape inhabited by natives who are by turn charming, child-like, devious, and ferocious. Part two is devoted to the years from 1914 to the eve of the Second World War. In this section we find such dramatic accounts as the diary of Flora Sandes, Britain's equivalent of Russia's famed 'cavalry maiden' Nadezhda Durova, who served as a sergeant in the Serbian army. Also included are two excerpts from Rebecca West's splendid *magnus opus* *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, in many ways the quintessential example of Western travel writing on the region. Part three, beginning with the outbreak of war in 1939 and concluding with a scholarly description of a Dervish ceremony in modern Macedonia, encompasses the entire Communist era in Eastern Europe, its downfall, as well as its tragic aftermath.

The conflict that began to tear Yugoslavia apart in the early nineties profoundly unsettled Europe's self-esteem, not least because once again, the region associated with an often grisly past became the soil upon which bloody war was being waged. '[T]his was *Europe*, this was *now*,' wrote the horrified reporter Simon Winchester after visiting a refugee camp near the Kosovan border in 1999, 'and here we were at the close of the most civilizing century we have known, and yet here before us was the diabolical, grotesque, bizarre sight of tens upon tens of thousands of terrified, dog-weary, ragged *European* people who were just like us, and who just a few short days before had been living out their lives more or less like us...' (247, italics in original). Winchester evidently identified with the suffering Kosovar Albanians and viewed them as fellow Europeans. Few of the long line of Balkan travelers and commentators who appear in these pages would have done so. From the seventeenth century when much of the region was still under Ottoman control, the area loosely referred to as the Balkans had attracted intrepid individuals from Great Britain and America in search of adventure. Inaccessible and exotic, countries such as Bulgaria or Albania fed the Westerner's thirst for the unusual but also reinforced preconceived notions of cultural superiority. As Hammond notes, '[t]he history of British and American literature on the Balkans is, in many ways, a history of our own desires, presumptions and prejudices, and as such expresses some unpalatable truths for the modern readership' (xi).

Indeed, an encounter with the Balkans in the early modern period was as likely to invite disparagement of the society left behind as to elicit negative comments about the strange customs observed. Where Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, after visiting a Turkish bath, criticized the constraining nature of Western women's fashion, Lady Elizabeth Craven complained about the entertainment offered by the Prince of Wallachia as 'the most diabolical noise' that had ever assailed her ears (9). By contrast, male travelers who were obviously barred from setting foot in places like a women's *hamam* tended to emphasize the lack of respect for human life they detected in the persistent practice of the Albanian blood feud – a staple even of the modern Balkan travel narrative. Over time, criticism of the region's supposedly archaic cultures and customs tended to weaken, particularly with the growing insight that industrialization was creating much havoc and social discontent at home. Increasingly, world-weary Westerners began to romanticize the region and its peoples and to idealize their supposedly harmonious way of life. British musicologist Philip Thornton's fascinating account of a Bulgarian fire dance with icons, published in 1939, is only one example of the tendency, all too common among travel writers of all times and places, to read one's own wishes and expectations into a foreign culture.

Hammond deserves high praise for having scoured countless sources, many of them buried in some dusty library annex, and for retrieving such a wide variety of impressions from both male and female authors. Each excerpt is prefaced with a useful brief introduction that seeks to put it in its proper historical context and points out its peculiarities. The result is an anthology in which primary sources and comment are perfectly balanced. Rather than continuously intruding with his own theories, the editor largely lets the writers speak for themselves. *Through Another Europe* reminds the reader of the excitement of exploration, the often comic misunderstandings attending cross-cultural encounters, and the challenge and joy of seeking out the 'Other'. Above all, it conveys the sheer delight of boldly sallying forth towards distant shores and discovering unknown worlds.

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