

**Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius: *Imaging and Mapping Eastern Europe*.** Sarmatia Europea to Post-Communist Bloc. (Routledge Advances in Art and Visual Studies.) Routledge, New York 2021. XVI, 235 S. ISBN 978-1-138-49085-7. (£ 130,—.)

Specialists in eastern European art history, visual culture, and spatial history will already be familiar with Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius's research from a series of carefully researched and elegantly crafted journal articles. This excellent monograph includes substantial portions of her previously published work—three of its five chapters are based on revised versions of these articles. In bringing together her earlier work and augmenting it with two new case studies, the present book offers perspectives and insights that are greater than the sum of their parts.

The subject of the book is the visual construction of Europe's east. This region is understood and described here as, successively, the historical space of (lower-case) eastern Europe, the Cold War "socio-political entity" (p. xvi) of (upper-case) Eastern Europe, and the post-socialist area of (non-hyphenated) East Central Europe. Although she considers the spatial role of Russia and the former Soviet republics, the focus of the book is on the territory of the former satellite states. Given that the unifying theme of the book is the indeterminacy and contingency of spatial forms, attributes, and identities, the diverse terminology used to frame the territorial focus and scope of the book's analysis is both inevitable and apt.

Through a series of case studies, each examining a different genre of visual culture—maps, ethnic dress, cartoons, and book dust jackets—the author builds a clear and cogent argument for the agency of the (static and reproducible) image in creating, sustaining, and disrupting our ideas and visions of space. Her exploration of the myriad intermediations between "iconosphere" (p. 11 and passim) and geoimaginary, from the early modern period to the present day, offers fascinating insights into processes of both "othering" and "self-fashioning" in relation to the many and diverse cultures and peoples of the region, their representation and self-representation and into how "Eastern Europe" has been created and transformed "by mapping it and populating it with bodies" (p. xv).

In doing this, M. does not overlook the agency of the peoples of the region too, and the role and responsibility they bear for shaping observers' perceptions. In her brief preface, M. notes that the recent political and sociocultural shift towards illiberal values and anti-democratic practices in some eastern European countries has "turned the otherised object of the 1990s into the othering subject of the 2010s, adding contradictory meanings to old images, and laying bare the contingency and temporality of my initial claims" (p. xvi). These words were written in October 2020, and it would be fascinating to learn how the author believes the intensified political, social, and security challenges facing East Central Europe since 24 February 2022 have reshaped the region, its self-conception, and self-construction, and the ways in which outsiders (to both the west and the east) have re-imagined and re-imaged it. We can only hope there will soon be an updated paperback edition.

Informing this scholarly, yet also lively and accessible, analysis of how the region has been pictured is an impressively rich abundance of imagery. The volume itself includes eighty illustrations, variously intriguing, appealing, amusing, and unsettling, albeit regrettably all reproduced in black and white, presumably to reduce printing costs. M.'s sensitive and sophisticated discussion of these sources shows how "visual knowledge" (p. xv) was instrumental in constructing and communicating different views of Europe's east as a unified space as well as of its many and diverse constituent territorial structures, political formations, ethnic groups, societies, and cultures.

The monograph is divided into an introductory chapter, four substantive case studies, and a brief conclusion. In Chapter 1, M. frames her study theoretically and situates it historically and historiographically. Her engaging critical discussion of the long-established and rich literature on Western conceptions and constructions of eastern Europe as an "Other" notes that this scholarship has generally focused on textual rather than visual

representations. She also raises salient questions about the “blatant reductionism” of traditional postcolonial critiques that collapse eastern and western Europe into one category based upon a supposedly shared culture, race, identity, and history. This disregards, she points out, “conquest and exploitation within the region of Europe’s east itself” (p. 6), as well as the historic—and I would argue, still prevalent—perception and representation of the region as a “semi-colonised subject” and “passive object of history” (p. 7). In response, M. asserts the analytical and ideological relevance of postcolonialism for understanding the construction of eastern Europe. “Even if eastern Europe cannot be neatly accommodated into race, class, gender, and sexuality binaries,” she argues, “it has attracted a wide range of othering procedures” (p. 7).

Subsequent chapters adopt a combined chronological and thematic approach: each looks at one visual medium that constitutes the principal body of sources for understanding one dimension of eastern Europe’s construction and representation through a particular period. Chapter 2 focuses on cartography, from the fifteenth to late twentieth centuries, discussing how maps served to frame the region, giving it spatial form underpinned by claims to scientific truth. The next chapter turns to travelers’ images of eastern European ethnic dress, arguing that the picture of the peasant woman in “traditional” costume has “risen to a timeless, omnipresent, and multivalent signifier of the region, fitting both the codes of representation and of self-fashioning” (p. 12). Chapter 4 examines cartoon images of eastern Europe in the British satirical magazine *Punch*, mainly in the twentieth century. The final chapter considers visual themes and tropes on the covers of academic books on eastern Europe in the twenty-first century.

M.’s work is imaginatively conceived, rigorously grounded in a wide, eclectic range of interdisciplinary methods, clearly structured, elegantly written, and persuasively argued. The volume—published by Routledge in its *Advances in Art and Visual Studies* series—is finely produced although, as noted above, it would have benefited greatly from the use of color.

The book can be highly recommended to cultural historians and historical geographers of eastern Europe, as well as to specialists in art history, image studies, nationalism and national identity, and the cultural history of cartography. It is particularly timely because of the case it makes for integrating postcolonial methods and concepts into the study of eastern Europe, which it does compellingly, while remaining aware of the complexities and nuances of this approach. Thanks to its accessible style and engaging exposition, it will also appeal to general readers interested in eastern European history and in the role of the visual in constructing, and potentially in challenging and subverting, ideological truths and political certainties about who “we” are—culturally, historically, geographically—and about our “others.”

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**Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe.** Power, Rituals and Legitimacy in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland. Hrsg. von Grischa Vercamer und Dušan Zupka. (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, Bd. 78.) Brill. Leiden 2022. 534 S. ISBN 978-90-04-49980-5. (€ 177,-)

Das hier besprochene Buch enthält die Beiträge von mehreren Autorinnen und Autoren aus Ostmittel- und Westeuropa und wurde von dem slowakischen Mediävisten Dušan Zupka (Bratislava) und seinem deutschen Kollegen Grischa Vercamer (Chemnitz) herausgegeben. Wie es der Untertitel ausweist, ist es der Herrschaft im Mittelalter, genauer gesagt der Herrschermacht bzw. -gewalt, den mit der Macht- und Gewaltausübung verbundenen Ritualen sowie Fragen von Legitimierung und Legitimität gewidmet.

Das Buch ist in fünf Kapitel gegliedert. Im ersten Abschnitt finden wir Beiträge der beiden Hrsg., die in den Gegenstand des Sammelbandes einführen. Zupka analysiert Herrschaft und Herrschergewalt in Ostmitteleuropa, während Vercamer in einer längeren Stu-