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# Mapping the mosaic: Travel writers and the construction of urban imaginaries of Prague and Breslau, 1700-1914

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**Mapping the mosaic: Travel writers and the construction of urban imaginaries of Prague and  
Breslau, 1700-1914**

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Aubrey de la Mottraye had found the perfect spot. Here, on this stone bridge, was the best place to look around, observe the foreign city he had just entered, and rest for a moment. Not for too long: Mottraye was hurried. He had engaged himself in the increasingly popular genre of travel writing, and contracted with a variety of wealthy and powerful backers interested in his work. The kings of Prussia and Sweden, and a prominent cross-section of European nobility, awaited his account. His task was to write a thorough, objective and insightful description of this historic city. Mottraye committed himself to nothing less in the introduction to his work, *Travels through Europe, Asia, and into parts of Africa*, published in 1723. "I shall confine my self," he noted, "to an impartial and plain Narrative of Matters of Fact," and thereupon "promised accordingly," to render "an impartial Account" of his travels. Standing on the stone bridge that day, he may have contemplated the enormity of the task before him. He needed to catalogue everything of note in Prague. He had only three hours. He began to write.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly two centuries later, another man stood on the banks of the Vltava and began to think about how to sketch Prague for his readers. Will Seymour Monroe, an American educator, had also taken up travel writing. Sharing Mottraye's riverine vantage point, Monroe looked out at Prague and wondered. How could he describe this place in a way that made sense to readers back in his native Pennsylvania? He would have to pick carefully, aiming to include everything worth seeing. Such selection would amount to a map. Its elevations might be steeples instead of hills, yet cartography nonetheless. Before he could draw such a map, Monroe had to face the same obstacle as Mottraye: How to understand the city as an outsider, with limited time. Monroe's standards held that others, even professional travel writers, had failed. He judged Baedeker's overview of Prague "lamentably meager"

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<sup>1</sup> Aubrey de la Mottraye, *Travels through Europe, Asia, and into parts of Africa*, Vol. 1, London: Aubrey de la Mottraye, 1723: 1 and Aubrey de la Mottraye, *Travels through Europe, Asia, and into parts of Africa*, Vol. 2, London: Aubrey de la Mottraye, 1723: 176-177

and “niggardly,” and chastised the famous guidebook’s dozen-page summary as insufficient. He would do better. He stood on the Charles Bridge in 1910 and looked out at Prague, now a bustling metropolis of a half-million people, a half-million stories. He began to write. His account, while more substantial than Mottraye’s one-page description, mirrored his predecessor in the common obstacle of making urban space legible.<sup>2</sup>

Across time, both chose to describe Prague in similar ways. They begin from the same center – the stone bridge over the Moldau – and map the city from this point. Whether the author had three hours and a page or dozens of pages and considerably more time, what travel writers chose to include and exclude reveal common perceptions and mapping schemes.<sup>3</sup> Mottraye, Monroe and many others who visited and described Prague in their travel writing from 1700-1914 focused on the same pieces of monumental and religious topography, re-told the same stories from the city’s past, and used language to describe the city’s inhabitants that changed little over the centuries.

Travelers to Breslau, in Prussian Silesia, behaved similarly. Breslau and Prague are suitable subjects for historians interested in travel writing as a subset or genre of James C. Scott’s notion of high modernist urban planning and imposition of order from above on spaces perceived by planners as illegible or disordered. Much like the high modernist urban planners depicted by Scott, travel writers imposing narratives on Prague and Breslau did so with claims to objectivity and authority. Confronted with an illegible city they had arrived in but did not understand, travel writers leaned heavily on existing

<sup>2</sup> Will Seymour Monroe, *Bohemia and the Čechs: The History, People, Institutions, and the Geography of the Kingdom, together with Accounts of Moravia and Silesia*, Boston: L.C. Page & Company, 1910: 376-377, 465-466

<sup>3</sup> “To experience a geographical place, it seems, is to want to communicate about it. Innumerable works in a variety of media have been produced over the years as people have attempted to tell others what certain places look like and feel like, what they mean and how they got that way – efforts ranging from travel itineraries and guidebooks to landscape paintings and photographs to the formal academic descriptions of geographers and landscape historians. **Of all the media of communication about geography, the map is probably the first that comes to most people’s minds, and it has certainly been one of the most basic and long-lived.**” [Emphasis mine]. Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993: 19

narratives or ideas of the city to help impose order and create a scaffold of understanding. Dennis Porter described this seeming 'will to order' as in part a reflection of anxiety. Travelers by definition were adrift and sought to anchor themselves by imposing order and establishing fixed relationships of themselves and their civilization vis-à-vis others. Kent C. Ryden has taken this still further, arguing that the orderly artificial arrangements of foreign places become an objet d'art, less utile as empirical guide but telling in other ways as ideological constructs.

These common morphologies of travel writing, the way travelers constructed ordered narratives of these urban spaces, reveal travel writers' role as agents of 'civilization' arrived from the West into the liminal, semi-Oriental space of Central European cities. The act of representing Prague and Breslau involved making ideologically-driven choices about what to include and what to ignore – choices that, as Porter writes, inevitably sheds light on the prejudices and preferences of the writers themselves. Reika Ebert, in turn, emphasizes the "interconnectedness between the observer and the observed," and the impossibility of attaining truly empirical observations divorced from "the narrator's own historical, cultural, and ideological background."<sup>4</sup> Reading audiences' expectations also shaped the discourse. Their desire for "particular myths, visions and fantasies, and the voicing of particular desires, demands and aspirations," would have been apparent to any savvy travel writer looking to make a name in the genre.<sup>5</sup> A close examination 'unmasks' travel writing as a genre. Despite claims to authenticity and "just the facts" reportage commonly made by travelers, their work was not objective, their gaze was not wide-ranging and their research in the city hardly archaeological or scientific.<sup>6</sup> Travelers discovered (and re-

<sup>4</sup> Reika Ebert, "Re-Creating Constantinople: The Imperial Gaze of Seventeenth-Century Hapsburg Travel Writers upon the City at the Bosphorus," *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 38 (2003): 118

<sup>5</sup> Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography 1600-1830*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999: 9

<sup>6</sup> "The modern, detached cartographic imagination has much in common with the touristic imagination, the viewpoint of outsiders who come into a place with little prior knowledge of, or thought about, what they are going to see. Such viewers will frequently be limited to largely aesthetic impressions – they will comment to themselves on how the local landscape fits in with their notions of what makes for pretty or ugly scenery and leave it at that. They share with the cartographer (and the cartographically minded) a concern with surfaces ..." a concern with

discovered) the same urban artifacts, landmarks and stories. Again and again, they elided or de-emphasized competing views, populations and places. Instead of a kaleidoscopic, Technicolor exploration, readers of travelogues went on the ultimate in guided tours. The limits of these tours included the way travelers imposed a dichotomy between the inside and outside of urban space, the approach to the city from without and urban space viewed from a particular, fixed center. These constraining 'tours' or maps limited readers' understanding of the human space of the city also. Travel writers brought certain 'exotic' populations, like the Jewish community in Prague and Breslau, to the fore; other groups, like ordinary working people, received short shrift.

These claims about how travel writers understood, described and warped Central European cities from 1700 to 1914 demand a threshold of significant evidence. An examination of Prague alone would be open to fair charges of potential exceptionalism – some might say the discernible trends in the travelogues were simply place-specific. This is why Breslau and Prague, different cities that occupied oppositionally defined imaginaries of industrial/ancient and modern/romantic, are excellent for comparative purposes. Travelers understood Prague and Breslau as very different from each other. The cities are not far apart in distance – today a short three-and-a-half hour drive down the A4 and E40 motorways. The cities even reached broadly similar levels of population and industrialization at the end of our period, c. 1914.<sup>7</sup> Travel writers, though, saw Prague as a charming city of medieval monuments and beautiful women; Breslau, in contrast, was a city of bustling industry – a denuded landscape of coal, steel and rails. Breslau and Prague certainly had their differences in this period, but we should ask why medieval Breslau and industrial Prague fail to emerge from the pages of Western travelogues. In this

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surfaces that failed to adequately capture more than a semblance of the real city travel writers wrote about. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 43

<sup>7</sup> 395,000 people in Prague (1905) and 470,000 in Breslau (1910). It should be noted that Prague's population continued to grow rapidly in the early 1900s, while Breslau's plateaued, so that even this gap of 75,000 citizens would have narrowed in the near-decade between 1905 and 1914. Karl Baedeker, *Austria-Hungary including Dalmatia and Bosnia: Handbook for Travellers, Tenth Edition*, Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, Publisher, 1905: 219; Karl Baedeker, *Northern Germany as far as the Bavarian and Austrian Frontiers: Handbook for Travellers, Fifteenth Edition*, Leipzig: Karl Baedeker, Publisher, 1910: 376

comparative look, a stronger case emerges that imposing order on illegible cities was a fundamental aspect of the travel-writing genre in these years, and not an exceptional accident confined to Prussian Silesia or Austrian Bohemia. We may reach firmer conclusions about the nature of the travelers' gaze as a Scottian imposition of order by outsiders on a foreign space that appeared, to them, disordered and illegible.

This work makes use of a selection of the extensive body of travelogues from 1700 to 1914 originally published in English or that scholars have since translated from French, German or Italian into English. The period examined here is fortunately full of primary source accounts of travel to Prague and Breslau –incorporating additional, as-yet-untranslated sources into this argument should enrich this discourse. Travel writing and urban space possess their own wealth of theoretical writing in English, and the ideas advanced here owe a great debt to the work done by other scholars.<sup>8</sup>

Readers may very well question the framework of 1700 to 1914 – in some senses this is an uncomfortably long period for a work of this extent. Many thousands of travel accounts were published in English and otherwise by an increasingly numerous class of travelers, and the source base could be considered overwhelming, the lessons drawn from it overly broad. However, our focus is narrow in other ways. This comparative study of Prague and Breslau, for instance, focuses on precisely these two cities and therefore excludes hundreds of authors who did not visit, or record their visit, to either city. Our selection of sources is admittedly a sample of a larger corpus. Nonetheless, we may regard this sample as significant, incorporating over 30 separate travelogues. More to the point, it is precisely the unusual similarities of travelogues over time that spurred this investigation. If the genre of travel writing ostensibly required travelers to record accurately the cities they saw, then travelogues of Breslau and Prague over such a range of years ought to reflect the dynamism, growth and change over time that

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<sup>8</sup> Particularly: Peter Bugge, James C. Scott, Walter Benjamin, Richard Sennett, Nathaniel Wood, Eric Leed, David Frisby, Orhan Pamuk, Peter Fritzsche, Dennis Porter, Renzo Dubbini, Kent C. Ryden and Katherine Turner.



writers must have seen. Yet the discourse of travel writing is one of surprising stasis, as if travelers were describing by rote two cities frozen in time.

Finally, the 18<sup>th</sup> century represents, if not an ideal departure point for a study of this kind, then at least a convenient one. As other scholars of travel writing have noted, the early modern period immediately prior to industrialization was an “entire age ... dominated by travelers,” where travel accounts were “written in order to gain historical and objective knowledge,” of the world.<sup>9</sup> Travel writers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century had begun to move away from the model of the Grand Tour, whose limited itinerary and largely aristocratic viewpoint would make our examination of liminal spaces like Breslau and Prague difficult.<sup>10</sup> Most of the writers consulted for this work are middling-to-upper-class. While this is still an articulated viewpoint with its own exclusivity (the poor, in any age, have limited mobility and limited capacity to record such when it occurs), it nevertheless allows the historian to divert away from the traditional lands of the Grand Tour and a narrative of ballrooms and etiquette. While 1700 is therefore something of an arbitrary beginning date – just an entrée to the 18<sup>th</sup> century explosion of middle-class travel writing discourse – 1914 represents an ominous and final end. Wartime put a violent stop to mass travel, especially from the West to Central Europe, locked behind 400 miles of trench lines from the lowlands of Belgium to the Swiss Alps. The Napoleonic Wars, by contrast, while a disruption to

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<sup>9</sup> Ebert, “Re-Creating Constantinople,” 119; Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760-1840*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984: 20, quoted in: Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991: 18

<sup>10</sup> “Only a handful of these works [the hundreds of travelogues produced by 1800] were produced by aristocratic Grand Tourists (by whom publication was deemed a vulgar enterprise): the overwhelming majority were by travellers from the ranks of the middle classes, or ‘middling sort’, ranging from professional writers like Tobias Smollett and Ann Radcliffe, to pseudonymous ‘Gentlemen’.” Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender and National Identity*, Ashgate: Burlington, VT, 2001: 3

travel on the continent, were not to prove the long-term obstacle that two world wars, several decades of totalitarian politics and border controls would become post-1914.<sup>11</sup>

The common way foreign travel writers navigated, mapped and described their urban space united the different cities of Prague and Breslau in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This paper will explore how and why this strange union occurred, the sophisticated schemes of order imposed by travelers, the complications introduced into this argument by the differences between travelogues and travel writers and the mosaic of the “imaginary” Prague and Breslau travelers constructed. When Monroe surveyed Prague in 1910 and vowed to describe its totality to his readers, he faced a set of problems: What is important? How much time does it take to understand the city? Can the city be legible to those who never experience it? What paths – real and imaginary, social, historical and associative – should one take? Monroe wrote in a tradition of travel writing that answered such questions by offering intuitive, heuristic maps of the foreign city that travelers could rely on for the framework of their narrative.

One such heuristic was hoary indeed. As far back as the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Western culture understood the city as separated into two halves. Isidore of Seville, in his *Etymologies*, identified these halves of the city as *civitas*, or “emotions, rituals, and convictions that take form in a city,” and *urbs*, the “stones of a city,” its built environment and physical surroundings.<sup>12</sup> As the city’s literal building blocks, chapter one will build a strong foundation by focusing on the stones of the city. Travel writers engaged in various narrative strategies to represent the built environment: centering narratives around the same landmarks or organizing ideas, separating representation of sacred and secular architecture and

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<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the chaos of wartime made for a better adventure. Robert Semple described Breslau in transit as a Prussian prisoner around the time of the Battle of the Nations in 1813 and as a European gentleman “could not yet persuade myself that they [the Prussians] seriously meant to detain me in prison; and I considered my journey to Breslau as a kind of circuitous route to Colberg,” his original destination. Robert Semple, *Observations made on a Tour from Hamburg through Berlin, Gorlitz, and Breslau, to Silberberg; and thence to Gottenburg*, London: Robert Baldwin and J. Murray, 1814: 126

<sup>12</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990: 11

focusing on a recurring set of landmarks. All of these choices in narrative construction of the cities' built environment contribute to a coherent, if partial, representation of the city. Or, at least, certain ideas of the city. In the first chapter, we begin with an examination of travelers' approaches to Prague and Breslau. Travelers consistently used their approach to Breslau and Prague to distinguish between the city proper and its not-city environs. In treating approaches to the city, however, we are not concerned only with the physical. The set of images, superstitions and stories travelers already possessed of Prague and Breslau before setting foot there powerfully influenced their subsequent navigation of the city as well as the values they assigned to otherwise neutral physical spaces, and constituted a mental approach to Breslau and Prague long before their physical visit. Moving from the outskirts into the city itself, we will examine the travelers' separation of sacred and secular space as an example of categorizing urban space into more manageable narrative chunks. We will consider the process of landmark creation and continuity in narratives, the influence of legibility in constructing Breslau and Prague, and finally how travelers entangle space, place and time to create sites of specific memory and association.

The next chapter will examine how travelers organized and made legible *civitas*, the human space of the city. The arrangement of these stones into spaces – cathedrals, castles, streets, alleys and squares – as well as their organization into distinct places imbued with everyday life and in relation to one another, created discourses of perception, classification and memory – often self-replicating and symbiotic.<sup>13</sup> Travel writers, extraordinary visitors to the city that carefully took note of their surroundings and, in so doing, constructed the city for their readers, are one window into the spaces

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<sup>13</sup> "Space contains place, but it also misrepresents place; space is an object of thought, whereas place, according to Tuan, is 'a center of meaning constructed by experience. ... Since places are fusions of experience, landscape, and location, they are necessarily bound up with time and memory as well.'" Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 37-39

and places of the physical city. By peering through that window, we may better understand how the physical city interacted with travelers to generate durable and persuasive imaginaries.

In the second chapter, we will observe how travel writers used marginalization and exoticization as tools that allowed them to categorize, classify and thereby control and impose order upon the populations of Prague and Breslau. Travel writers (including women travel writers, who ironically engaged as equals in the male-dominated and female-dominating discourse of travel writing) excluded most women from the human landscape of the cities they described. Inevitably, travel writers allowed women's presence to peek through the pages only when they were notable for their beauty or high social rank – a case of exoticization/eroticization just as distorting as simple invisibility. Jews in Prague and Breslau suffer the same treatment, condemned to lengthy, probing – and polemical – narrative treatment, or swept underneath the story.

Lastly, travel writers' treatment of diversity in the city reveals a preference for the simplicity of the mononational city, and the consequent elision of ethnolinguistic variety in Prague and Breslau. Travel writers continued to support the notion of Prague and Breslau as firmly 'German' cities, decades after the shifting realities of national awakening and urbanization had altered the basis for such claims. Importantly, this gap between writing and observable reality belies travel writers' professed commitment to objective empiricism and the influence of travel writers' sympathy or affinity with the legitimacy of the ruling class of German-speakers – 'civilized' Westerners like them – in altering their depictions of Prussian Breslau and Austrian Prague. Travel writers, as we shall see, treat *civitas* in the city similarly to *urbs* – in both cases, what is important is the underlying will to order that informs the discourse of travel writing. That common Aristotelian prejudice – to order is to know – will lead to departure from professed commitments to empiricism. It will lead to an entire genre's embrace of legible cities of fantasy rather than the threatening chaos of fact.

## CHAPTER TWO: BRIDGES, STEEPLES AND SMOKESTACKS

In 1884 “T.H.S.W.,” an anonymous contributor to the journal *Outing: Sport, Adventure, Travel, Fiction*, and a dedicated member of a Berlin bicycle club, set out on a multi-day cycling excursion through Prussian Silesia. Arriving in Breslau at three in the afternoon, he recorded his first impression of the provincial capital: “The nearer we got there the better the road became, until it was almost perfection, running through a rich undulating country, belonging to some of the richest land-owners of Germany, among whom the Silesian magnates rank first. Entering the city through the Nicolai Gate, we set our bells going, crossed the market place, or Ring, as it is called in those parts, although the space is always rectangular, past the ancient Town Hall, or Rathhause, and dismounted in the court-yard of the ‘Golden Goose’ hotel.”<sup>14</sup>

Particular to this description is the focus on the quality of the roads stretching through Breslau’s hinterland and leading into the city.<sup>15</sup> The bicyclist’s approach to Breslau is prominent for two other reasons. First, there is the dichotomy presented here between the “rich undulating country” and, once passage through the gate has occurred, the abrupt beginning of the city’s physical space, described cursorily as the market place, town hall and, finally, the courtyard of their lodgings. For the cyclist, there are no buildings, markets, homes or people outside the walls and gate of 1884 Breslau that merit commentary. Second, we may glean from T.H.S.W.’s account that the city had, in fact, extended itself into the surrounding countryside – had extended itself in the way most important to the writer –

<sup>14</sup> T.H.S.W. (Berlin B.C.), “Cycling Germany,” in *Outing: Sport, Adventure, Travel, Fiction Volume 4*, W.B. Holland, 1884: 305

<sup>15</sup> A cyclist values the road for its smoothness and comfort while traveling. “The manufacturer passes over the asphalt conscious of its quality; the old man searches it carefully, follows it just as long as he can, happily taps his cane so the wood resonates, and recalls with pride that he personally witnessed the laying of the first sidewalks; the poet ... walks on it pensive and unconcerned, muttering lines of verse; the stockbroker hurries past, calculating the advantages of the last rise in wheat; and the madcap slides across.” Alexis Martin, “Physiologie de l’asphalte,” *Le Boheme*, 1, no. 3, (April 15, 1855) – Charles Pradier, editor in chief, quoted in: Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999: 421

namely, in the quality of the roads reaching into the city. By calling attention to the increasingly perfect quality of the road, the writer implicitly pointed to wider processes of urban industrial expansion and the correspondingly greater investment in transportation occurring in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany.<sup>16</sup>

Twenty years earlier, the Irish-American observer J. Ross Browne, writing for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, gave a very different impression of the "rich undulating country" around Breslau that would greet Berlin cyclists later in the century. The weather had been foul – "raw," and "murky" – during his whole stay in the city. As he looked out the window of his third-class carriage departing the city, he described it as a waste. It was "a desert of sandy plains, dotted here and there with a scrubby growth of pine, and but little improved in its scenic effects by the occasional columns of black smoke that rise from the zinc foundries and iron factories in the distance." He had never had, he concluded, a "more dreary journey."<sup>17</sup> This stark contrast with the Berlin bicyclist's later account is interesting, in part, because Breslau only continued to industrialize and grow in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>18</sup> The landscape for the Berlin bicyclist in 1884 ought to have been more "dreary" and Dickensian than it had been for Browne in the early 1860s. Yet in the "rich undulating country," there was not a whiff of sulfur.

Other itinerants who passed through Breslau did not share Browne's strong dislike. Travelers who recorded their entrance to, or first sight of, Breslau stuck to basic, consistent details, especially regarding the skyline, dominated by church steeples. Curiously, what must have been a bevy of

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<sup>16</sup> Eight years earlier two engineers made a similar observation on Breslau's transportation extensions into the nearby country and "Coal fields," remarking on the network of "six different lines of Railway," which girdled and penetrated industrial Breslau in 1874 and were "totally inadequate to the increasing demand for carriage" of coal and goods traffic, an insight into the ongoing growth of industry and commerce in the Silesian capital in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The engineers' disappointment at the quality of Breslau's transportation network hints that perhaps the Berlin bicyclist's celebration of it was more fantasy than reality. Or perhaps the engineers were overly dour to better serve their recommendation of transport changes. F.J. Meyer and W. Wernigh, *Steam Towing on Rivers and Canals: By means of a submerged cable, with a description of their cable system*, 1876: 13

<sup>17</sup> J. Ross Browne, "Poland Over-Ground and Under-Ground," in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Volume XXV, June to November, 1862. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers. 721-722

<sup>18</sup> "Yet rapid urbanization characterized much of Central Europe during this period, as could be seen in Vienna, Berlin, Prague, Breslau, and other urban centers." Robert Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005: 115

prominently visible smokestacks, as the century wound on, do not appear. This is in line with the romanticizing of travel writers, who sorted out the beautiful (recordable) from the prosaic or ugly (excised).<sup>19</sup> While Carl Gottlob Kuttner found the “exterior of Breslau ... disagreeable,” as far back as 1798, calling it a “dirty, old, and dull town,” the consensus among travelers was more forgiving. Most wrote descriptions similar to Robert Semple, who visited in 1814. “The spires and towers of Breslau,” he noted, “are visible at a great distance over the plain.” John J. Valentine, then-President of Wells Fargo, simply described the surrounding plain in 1900 as “unbroken and slightly rolling.” A New York newspaper correspondent in 1855 reported that Breslau was “situated in a plain” that was “dead level” to the surrounding mountains and the city’s church towers were the only remarkable part of the city from a distance.<sup>20</sup>

Those “spires and towers” of Breslau mentioned by Robert Semple in 1814 were echoed forty years later by British traveler Walter White in his 1857 visit to Prague. As he “went down the ... continuous descent, the tops of towers and spires came into view in the distance below, and on either hand appeared indications that a metropolis was not far off.”<sup>21</sup> Those “indications” of the metropolis were probably much the same as they had been for Robert Semple in Breslau. Namely “the roads bordered with trees,” indicated ordered civilization emanating out from the city, as well as “scattered

<sup>19</sup> “The artist seeks eternal truth and knows nothing of the eternity in his midst. He admires the column of the Babylonian temple and scorns the smokestack on the factory. Yet what is the difference in their lines? When the era of coal-powered industry is over, people will admire the vestiges of the last smokestacks, as today we admire the remains of temple columns ...” Pierre Hamp, “La Litterature, image de la societe” (*Encyclopedie francaise*, vol. 16, *Arts et litteratures dans la societe contemporaine*, 1, p. 64), quoted in: Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 437

<sup>20</sup> Carl Gottlob Kuttner, *Travels through Denmark, Sweden, Austria, and part of Italy, in 1798-1799*, 127; Semple, *Observations made on a Tour*, 123; John J. Valentine, “A Tour of the World. John J. Valentine, President of Wells-Fargo & Co., writes his friend, Aaron Stein, of San Francisco, an account of his travels,” in *The Oregon Native Son*, Volume 2, 1900: 263; From Our Correspondent A.W.T., “Breslau, Germany. June 10, 1855,” in *New-York Musical Review and Gazette*, Volume 6, 1855: 234

<sup>21</sup> Walter White, *A July Holiday in Saxony, Bohemia, and Silesia*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1857: 112; This may have simply been a borrowing from the popular Murray guidebook to Prague, as Peter Bugge notes of a source: “Gleig’s description of his first view of Prague testifies to his travelling with Murray in his pocket: ‘A thousand towers, spires, minarets[!], and domes, shed over the whole an air of magnificence which in some sort partakes of the oriental.’ Peter Bugge, “Something in the View Which Makes You Linger’: Bohemia and Bohemians in British Travel Writing, 1836-1857,” *Central Europe* 7, no. 1 (May 2009): 17

houses, and [a] number of vehicles of different kinds.”<sup>22</sup> These tendrils stretching into the countryside did not constitute the formal city. Conveniently for travel writers seeking to pin limits on the “complex, shifting mosaic,” of the industrial city, Prague and Breslau were ringed by fortifications that, even when demolished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, still acted as convenient shorthand for the definition of urban space.<sup>23</sup>

Passing through formal gates into the city was also the usual experience. The Berlin bicyclist had come from the west through the Nicolai Gate into Breslau; in Prague, most travelers entered from the north-east, passing White Mountain as they did so, at the Strahov or Reichsthor gate. Indeed, “more than one-fourth of all the roads to Prague ... unite” there, compared to the city’s seven other gates in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>24</sup> The direction of entrance is an important consideration when examining how travel writers interacted with urban space. One explanation for the consistent ways travelers constructed urban space is their first encounter with the cities. As they approached through the same gates, they experienced similar vistas and encountered the topologies of the city in a set order. Directionality of approach can “color the impressions of the traveller,” as Magnus Morner points out in his article on travel writers in Latin America in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>25</sup> An example of the way changing directionality of approach to the city could interfere with a traveler’s impression of the city is

<sup>22</sup> In fact they were. White observed “the road ... alive with vehicles,” and reserved an admiring description of Bohemian women walking into town, “showing a neat ankle and clean white leg to the morning sun.” White, *A July Holiday*, 113; Semple, *Observations made on a Tour*, 123

<sup>23</sup> Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998: K935-936; E.K. Washington described the wall ringing Prague in 1860 as “very thick” with “roads and promenades, which are planted with avenues of trees,” on it, while in Breslau the “old fortifications of the town ... [had] since been completely levelled and converted into fine boulevards,” by 1887. E.K. Washington, *Echoes of Europe; or, Word pictures of travel*, 1860: 311; Leo de Colange, *Voyages and travels: Or Scenes in many lands: Volume 2, Part 2*, Boston: E.W. Walker & Co., 1887: 389-392

<sup>24</sup> White, *A July Holiday*, 113; Colonel George Bruce Malleson, *The Battle-Fields of Germany: From the outbreak of the Thirty-Years’ War to the Battle of Blenheim: with maps and one plan*, London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1884: 218; A.F. Busching, *A General Account of the Situation and Limits, the Manners, History, and Constitution, of the several Kingdoms and States in the known World; And a very particular Description of their Subdivisions and Dependencies; their Cities and Towns, Forts, Sea-Ports, Produce, Manufactures and Commerce, Vol. 4*, London: A. Millar, 1762: 71; “Breslau” in: *Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, Vol. V Blois – Buffalo*, London: Charles Knight, 1836: 393; J.G. Kohl, *Galicja, Styria, Moravia, Bukovina and the Military Frontier*, London: Chapman and Hall, 1843: 14

<sup>25</sup> Magnus Morner, “European Travelogues as Sources to Latin American History from the Late Eighteenth Century until 1870,” *Revista de Historia de America*, no. 93 (Jan. – Jun., 1982): 101



Alexis de Tocqueville's visit to New York in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Richard Sennett describes how Tocqueville's experience differed:

In his time the usual way for a foreigner to journey to New York was to sail into the harbor from the south, a route that afforded the voyager a sudden view of the crowd of masts along the packed wharves, which spread to offices, homes, churches, and schools. This New World scene appeared to be a familiar European one of prosperous mercantile confusion, like Antwerp or the lower reaches of London on the Thames. Tocqueville instead approached New York from the north, through Long Island Sound. His first view of Manhattan was its bucolic upper reaches, still in 1831 pure farmland dotted with a few hamlets. At first what excited him about the view of the city was the sudden eruption of a metropolis in the midst of a nearly pristine natural landscape.<sup>26</sup>

For Tocqueville, already looking for "democracy in America," this approach to New York and the city's "sudden eruption" from the wilderness of the new world must have reinforced any impressions he already had about the United States as an utterly different and novel society, demanding serious attention and study.

For many travelers to Prague and Breslau first impressions akin to Tocqueville's only reinforced existing ideas about the character of the city. They had often made up their minds before feeling the stones beneath their feet. Their approach to the city was not divorced from their own socialization, the images of the city they had encountered in previous travel writing, popular histories or literary accounts, as well as the social and economic background from which they emerged.<sup>27</sup> These pre-existing associations of the city could steer travel writing away from objective reality very quickly indeed. As Reika Ebert notes in an insightful article on Western travelers to Constantinople, claims to objectivity dissipated when subjected to the cultural bias of Constantinople as inherently Christian and the Hagia Sophia as its chief, representative landmark. "Constantinople," she writes, "was in large part depicted as a representation of one of the major seats of the Western, Christian world," though this had not been true for centuries by the time Western writers recorded their visit.<sup>28</sup> The trope of Constantinople as a

<sup>26</sup> Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 51

<sup>27</sup> Holger Kersten, "When You Don't Get What You See: What Mark Twain Knew About Germany Before He Visited the Country," in: Waldemar Zacharasiewicz, ed. *Images of Central Europe in Travelogues and Fiction by North American Writers*, Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verlag, 1995: 77

<sup>28</sup> Ebert, "Re-Creating Constantinople," 126

Christian city proved hard to see past, despite the reality of Turkish occupation and dominance, and belied travelers' claims to objective reportage on their journeys.

Meanwhile, the romantic trope of Prague as the "ancient capital of the Bohemians," consistently emerges from writers who clearly visited the city with "towers and spires" and "spires and towers" already on the mind. Less easily discerned is such a shared approach to Breslau. Nevertheless, one exists. With the exception of Browne, visitors to Breslau recorded the surrounding country as a generally featureless, rolling plain marked here and there with trees. A conspiracy of silence existed. Breslau writers pointed out the church-dominated skyline but evaded the steeples' secular competitors, the increasingly prevalent smokestacks.<sup>29</sup> Source descriptions of the city's transportation tentacles – perfect roads and busy railways – strongly implied the commercial, industrial metropolis of Silesia extending itself into the surrounding countryside. We have already observed the important ways travelers both construct images of the city and partake in existing discourses of Prague and Breslau imaginaries through common physical and mental approaches. This shared approach extended to travelers' experience inside the city as well.

Once inside the walls, travelers faced a common challenge – navigating the city. Their literature points out how they did so, by establishing "centers" of the city from which they could map Prague and Breslau. Foreigners to the city, travelers and other groups of outsiders shared this approach to unfamiliar urban space. One such group of outsiders was the Polish girls who came into Cracow in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, looking for work. The center point of Cracow for them was: "the new statue of Adam Mickiewicz on the Market Square ... Regardless of whether she knew anything about the great poet-patriot ... she would have been told by others at home or along the way that this was the place to go to

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<sup>29</sup> Which would have been present as Breslau became ever more important as an industrial and commercial center, first in Prussia and then, after 1871, as part of the German Empire. Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse, *Microcosm: Portrait of a Central European City*, London: Pimlico, 2002: 219

find work as a domestic servant, particularly on the first day of the month.”<sup>30</sup> Here we have a center of the city, defined particularly in space and time. Gaining employment, such women doubtless went their separate ways and began to navigate Cracow differently, according to mental maps created by their own circumstances. Nevertheless, all such maps spiraled out from this central locus.

If we may treat travel writers to Prague and Breslau as such a shared group, then where were the centers from which they could venture forth and map the foreign city for their readers? According to some of the travelers’ accounts, Breslau, much like Cracow, had its center in the historic market square of the city – its *Rynek* or Ring, abutted by its historic Town Hall, or *Rathaus*. This relationship between the physical space of the market square/town hall and a fulcrum for the travelers’ gaze, though, is quite weak, and Breslau seems to have lacked a true, shared physical center for visiting travelers to orient themselves. In Prague, however, the fulcrum of the travelers’ gaze was not its market square, but the stone bridge over the Vltava called, beginning in 1870, the Charles Bridge after the ruler who commissioned its construction.<sup>31</sup> Here there is stronger evidence for a substantial relationship between a given physical space and the consistent orientation of travel writers to it over time. While we might infer the center of Breslau from the evidence of the *Rynek*’s central treatment in some of the available narratives, the role of the Charles Bridge is considerably clearer. Writers were attracted to perceived landmarks as points of orientation because of “the greater importance that specific sites had acquired in both the observation of the city and the construction of an urban image, an image that had been primarily mental, but that took on increased objectivity when it could be compared with the actual topography.” Thus a representation of Prague as romantic and medieval “took on increased objectivity”

<sup>30</sup> Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010: 24

<sup>31</sup> Derek Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia: A Czech Story*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998: 35, 100-101

when it could be tied to a specific landmark, or “actual topography,” such as the Charles Bridge, which had been constructed in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>32</sup>

Johann Riesbeck, an 18<sup>th</sup> century German traveler, described the population of Prague radiating forth from the stone bridge over the Moldau as if huddled around it. “Near the bridge, which stands at the upper part of the city, the number of people is very great, but the further you go from hence the more desolate you find every place.”<sup>33</sup> A later observer, the American travel writer E.K. Washington, saw the stone bridge as the very center of Prague, situated “in the vale and heights around which the city is built.”<sup>34</sup> The stone bridge was no ordinary piece of architecture. Thirteen of the sixteen travel accounts of Prague consulted between 1723 and 1910 extensively describe the bridge. Two over-arching patterns of narration emerge. Travel writers begin at the bridge itself, and then spiral outward into Prague to describe its other landmarks as well as ethnographic commentary; or such writers begin at the fringes of Prague and place the bridge at the center of their narrative.

Riesbeck’s description is the first type of narrative. After he set forth a general picture of the city for his readers, he described “the bridge over the Moldau.” Only then did he write about the royal castle, the archbishop’s residence and cathedral, and then the “mass of houses” which rose above the center stage of the bridge “like an amphitheatre to a considerable height.”<sup>35</sup> Riesbeck does not begin his survey from Prague’s royal castle or cathedral, the seats of aristocratic and episcopal authority in the city. Moreover, the Prague Hradshin dominated Prague from great height, enabling a more sweeping view. Riesbeck’s choice of the stone bridge as the central point for his outward-sweeping gaze is curious on practical grounds. Another writer who emphasized the bridge’s centrality by placing it first in his narrative was John Owen. After describing his approach and entry to the city in 1796 and offering a

<sup>32</sup> Renzo Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze: Urban and Rural Vision in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002: 52

<sup>33</sup> Johann Kaspar Riesbeck, *Travels through Germany, in a series of letters: Volume 2*, London: T. Cadell, 1787: 138

<sup>34</sup> Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 312

<sup>35</sup> Riesbeck, *Travels through Germany*, 138

general description of Prague, the first part of the city mentioned is the bridge, “which connects the two divisions” of the city and “makes a noble figure.”<sup>36</sup>

Other travelers highlighted Prague’s stone bridge by making it literally central, building their urban description around the Moldau’s landmark crossing. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sarah Knowles and Charles Edward Bolton began their tour through Prague with the Hradschin, and ended at the Radetzky monument near St. Nicholas’ church – with “the Charles Bridge ... one-third of a mile in length,” in the center of the narrative.<sup>37</sup> The bridge, physically joining Prague together, served also to join Prague’s narrative halves. Writing from Vienna in October, 1813, John Bramsen described the Hradschin, Lobkovitz palace, arsenal, university, Jesuit college, and the hospital of the invalids before circling back to “the bridge over the Muldau,” and concluded that the preceding places “are all elegant structures, and well worthy your attention.” He then finished by describing the gates of the city, its churches and cathedral, the palace of Tschernin and the ruins of Vischerod (Vyšehrad) palace.<sup>38</sup> Bramsen’s writing anticipated the narrative treatment of Charles Bridge by the Boltons nearly a century later.

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<sup>36</sup> John Owen, *Travels into different parts of Europe, in the years 1791 and 1792, Volume 2*, London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1796: 493; similarly, Mariana Starke begins her account of Prague with a general description and then immediately mentions that Prague is “famous for its Bridge,” before moving on to the city’s university, cathedral, and Church of the Holy Cross before returning, almost inevitably, to “the beautiful Bridge of Prague,” which “is thrown over the Moldau.” Mariana Starke, *Travels in Europe for the use of Travellers on the Continent, and likewise in the Island of Sicily; where the author had never been, till the year 1834. To which is added an Account of the Remains of Ancient Italy, and also of the roads leading to those remains*, Paris: A. and W. Galignani and Co., 1836: 512; Aubrey de la Mottraye also partakes in this narrative sequence. After describing Prague as “Tripolis, being divided into the Old, the New, and the Little Cities,” he focuses on what joins these three parts together – “a magnificent Stone-Bridge with twenty four Arches, adorned with divers fine Statues.” Mottraye, *Travels through Europe*, 176; William Bingley, *Travels in North Europe: from modern writers, with remarks and observations*, London: Harvey and Darton, 1822: 162; Friedrich Leopold Graf zu Stolberg, *Travels through Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and Sicily: Volume 2*, trans. Thomas Holcroft, London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797: 611

<sup>37</sup> Charles Edward Bolton and Sarah Knowles Bolton, *Travels in Europe and America*, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co. Publishers, 1903: 161

<sup>38</sup> John Bramsen, *Travels in Egypt, Syria, Cyprus: the Morea, Greece, Italy, etc. Vol. 1*, London: Henry Colburn and Co., 1820: 63-64; for additional examples of this narrative treatment of the Charles Bridge and its centrality to monumental discourse in Prague, see: White, *A July Holiday*, 115-116; and Kohl, *Galicia, Styria, Moravia, Bukovina and the Military Frontier*, 24

There are travel narratives that resist this binary narrative treatment of Charles Bridge's centrality to the city as the fulcrum for the travelers' gaze. Carl Gottlob Kuttner failed to mention the bridge at all in his late 18<sup>th</sup> century account, nor does it appear in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters.<sup>39</sup> Will Seymour Monroe wrote about the bridge extensively, but as part of a lengthy treatment of medieval monuments in Prague, and not with the kind of common structure employed by the majority of other accounts.<sup>40</sup> The idea of Charles Bridge as the center, from which foreign travel writers set out to navigate Prague, appears persuasive given the majority of writers' accounts examined here, but travel writers retained a degree of autonomy in their style.

The center of travelers' urban imaginary of Breslau is more difficult to discern. *Prima facie*, the lack of such a center seems a strong challenge to the argument that travelers imposed similar narrative schemes across different cities. The Breslau Town Hall and market square were central to the urban imaginary of the traveler in only three accounts.<sup>41</sup> Other accounts do not consistently settle on an alternative center. Most are concerned with Breslau as a commercial metropolis. William Maccrillis Griswold sketched Breslau briefly as a center of trade in "linen and corn," and in general "a stirring place," but was otherwise only concerned with the "crooked and dirty" streets and the railway stations of the city.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Augustus Bozzi Granville was principally interested in "a very large edifice, which

<sup>39</sup> Kuttner, *Travels through Denmark*, 130-133; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu descriptive of her Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa with Portrait and Biographical Sketch*, London: William and Robert Chambers, 1865: 55-56

<sup>40</sup> Monroe, *Bohemia and the Čechs*, 377-379

<sup>41</sup> Colange, *Voyages and travels*, 390-392; T.H.S.W. (Berlin B.C.), "Cycling Germany," 305; Ida Maria L.S.F.G. gradin von Hahn-Hahn, *Letters of a German Countess; written during her travels in Turkey, Egypt, the Holy Land, Syria, Nubia, etc. in 1843-1844, in Three Volumes, Vol. I*, London: Henry Colburn, Publisher, 1845: 2

<sup>42</sup> William Maccrillis Griswold, *Travel: A Series of Narrative of Personal Visits to Places therein Famous for Natural Beauty or Historical Association, Volume 2*, Cambridge, MA: W.M. Griswold, 1890: 64

we learned to be that of the University,” and the recently erected monument to Blucher.<sup>43</sup> In neither case did travel writers settle on a locus point for navigating Breslau.

One of the reasons for this is the nature of the “matrix of national auto- and heterostereotypes,” with which travel writers understood Prague and Breslau.<sup>44</sup> Travelers viewed Prague romantically, as the medieval Bohemian capital. Emperor Charles IV had set Prague’s landmarks in stone in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Travelers looked to these representatives of Prague’s golden age for inspiration.<sup>46</sup> The Charles Bridge, an impressive Caroline landmark, was therefore prominent in the mind of the Western traveler; it would have been a natural candidate for the central point of the city.<sup>47</sup> Travelers to Prague were not the only ones to fix a city in time. Robert Nemes, in describing 19<sup>th</sup> century Buda-Pest, commented that writers described Buda as a town frozen in time. “Such characterization,” Nemes says, “ignored Buda’s steadily growing population, expanding outer districts, and new buildings.”<sup>48</sup>

In reality, Prague too was a dynamic, industrializing city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with diverse industries, such as breweries, machine works and banking, as careful observers like Will Seymour

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<sup>43</sup> Augustus Bozzi Granville, *St. Petersburg: A Journal of Travels to and From that Capital; through Flanders, the Rhenish Provinces, Prussia, Russia, Poland, Silesia, Saxony, the Federated States of Germany, and France, Vol. II*, London: Henry Colburn, 1829: 570-571

<sup>44</sup> Kersten, “When You Don’t Get What You See,” 77

<sup>45</sup> “The king-emperor [Charles IV] did much to give the city the dimensions it kept into the nineteenth century and some of the landmarks it retains to the present day.” Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 35

<sup>46</sup> This, despite Don Sparling’s assertion that travel writers faced insuperable difficulties in defining the image of the Czech lands, since “the main problem that faces the reader seeking to define the image of the Czech lands [and presumably Prague] as reflected in fiction and travel literature: few conventional associations seem to exist.” Don Sparling, “Under Western Eyes: Closely Watched Czechs,” in Waldemar Zacharasiewicz, ed. *Images of Central Europe in Travelogues and Fiction by North American Writers*, Tübingen: Stauffenburg-Verlag, 1995: 292

<sup>47</sup> Other candidates would have been the Hradschin (a locus of secular and spiritual authority with a physically commanding view) or Prague’s marketplace. James C. Scott says that “What definition there is to the [medieval] city is provided by the castle green, the marketplace, and the river,” so the selection of Charles Bridge as the focus is less unusual than it may seem. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999: 53

<sup>48</sup> In Buda’s case, Nemes says that “the perception of immutability had everything to do with Buda’s relationship to Pest, and contemporary writers never tired of describing the towns in binary terms,” but in Prague’s case it seems likely that frozen perceptions of the city’s static medieval nature were simply the filtering lens of romanticism. Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest*, 109-110

Monroe noted.<sup>49</sup> Romanticism could be a powerful filter for travel writers. It influenced their preconceptions of Prague – what was worth seeing and recording – and their readers’ expectations and demands for travelogue narratives of the city. As Walter Benjamin pointed out, “the old Romantic sentiment for landscape dissolves and a new Romantic conception of landscape emerges – of landscape that seems, rather, to be a cityscape.”<sup>50</sup> Visitors seeing Prague accepted the imaginary of Prague as an ancient romantic capital, often eliding its modern aspects, and therefore were primed to view landmarks from this period of Prague’s past, in its medieval core, as the real city. Visitors to Breslau were keyed to accept the imaginary of the commercial, modern city – so they, in turn, paid less attention to the medieval landmarks in the core of Breslau, flipping or reversing the imaginary of Prague as ancient into a Breslau that is modern. Travel writers emphasized away from Prague’s modernity and Breslau’s history – different outcomes, for different cities, from the same process of constructing urban imaginaries.<sup>51</sup> “Urban places,” Peter Fritzsche has said, “resisted directories, maps, indexes, catalogues, surveys, and other authoritative references,” yet that imposition was necessary.<sup>52</sup> Travel writers constructed a narrative, a scheme of order for the city in a heuristic manner, with the landmarks they could see and the mental tools (preconceptions) they had at hand.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Monroe, *Bohemia and the Čechs*, 371

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 420

<sup>51</sup> As David Frisby writes, with regard to 19<sup>th</sup> century Berlin and Vienna: “In the coded systems of such imaginaries, a New Vienna outside its historical core may represent Berlin, but Old Vienna can only represent itself ... The imaginary of Vienna ... remains largely that of Old Vienna.” David Frisby, “Streets, Imaginaries, and Modernity: Vienna is Not Berlin,” in Gyan Prakash and Kevin M. Kruse, eds., *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008: 36

<sup>52</sup> Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*, K935-936

<sup>53</sup> “For a stranger or trader arriving for the first time, however, the town was almost certainly confusing, simply because it lacked a repetitive, abstract logic that would allow a newcomer to orient herself.” Most travel writers, moreover, did not spend enough time in Breslau or Prague to orient themselves, and therefore leaned quite heavily on available schemes of order to organize their narrative of the city. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 53; see also: Eric J. Leed, *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*, New York: Basic Books, 1991: 188-189. “the travel report was a peculiar form of literature in which all subjectivities were projected outward, into the world, as objects to be described, recorded, classified, named, and catalogued.”



Travel writers accepted and reinforced existing narratives of “antique and unique” Prague and the “commercial metropolis” of Breslau to simplify the relation of urban imaginary constructions to their readers. Breslau was a rapidly industrializing city in an increasingly powerful kingdom (eventually, empire) which represented modernism *par excellence*.<sup>54</sup> When travelers visited Breslau, they looked for evidence of Breslau’s prosperity, its business and its busy-ness. Commerce was the center of Breslau; it was the organizing principle for travelers in need of a narrative. Nevertheless, travel writers had solved one problem – how to center their narrative of Breslau – and replaced it with another, namely: What physical space in the city best represents commerce and industry in the same archetypal way Charles Bridge in Prague could represent an image of the antique, romantic city? Factories were not suitable candidates to travel writers interested in the picturesque. Ultimately, travelers did not agree on a shared definition of a physical center, and the idea of commerce itself would remain the organizing principle.

While Prague, a rapidly industrializing city itself, attracted hardly any attention to its commerce, all travelers to Breslau could write about was business.<sup>55</sup> Some of them were enthralled with Breslau’s modernity, as was John J. Valentine, who called it “a modern, wide-awake city.”<sup>56</sup> Others, notably Kuttner and Browne, agreed that Breslau was modern, but disagreed that modernity was positive, instead emphasizing the stink, smoke and dirt of a workaday city.<sup>57</sup> Curiously, residents of Breslau – who are rarely present in the depopulated and anonymized landscape of urban travel writing – might not

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<sup>54</sup> Along with America, of course. When George Brandes, a Danish author, visited Poland in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, he felt moved to remark on the industriousness and modernity of the Germans: “... in this century, a whole manufacturing town (Lodz) has sprung up and grown with American speed; a town, which, lying in the middle of Poland, was founded and is inhabited by Germans only.” Breslau, which like Lodz would eventually be incorporated into post-World War II Poland, shared many of the same associations of Prussian speed and industry. George Brandes, *Poland: A Study of the Land, People and Literature*, New York: The MacMillan Company, 1903: K491-492

<sup>55</sup> Luxury or exotic goods like the “artistic Bohemian glass, exquisite laces made in the mountains, and beautiful garnets famous over Europe,” were what Charles and Sarah Bolton admired in their 1903 account. It is the only mention of commerce in their account, and lends the impression that hundreds of thousands of Prague inhabitants worked in just three trades. Bolton, *Travels in Europe and America*, 161

<sup>56</sup> Valentine, “A Tour of the World,” 263

<sup>57</sup> Kuttner, *Travels through Denmark*, 127; Browne, “Poland Over-Ground and Under-Ground,” 721-722

have had the same disconnect as travel writers in viewing their city as modern and medieval, commercial and antique. Browne's narrative gives us a hint of this, as his proprietor praises Breslau:

... he pronounced [Breslau] far superior to Paris in all the elegances and refinements of life, and quite equal to Berlin. It was the grand commercial metropolis of Prussia, combining within its limits the rarest gems of antiquity and the choicest luxuries of civilization. Here were brass and zinc in all their forms; here were metals from Silesia, and furs from Russia; here were linens and cloth ware of every description; here was the grand wool fair in which wool was gathered from all parts of Prussia and Poland. And in the way of antiquities, what could equal the St. Elizabeth Kirch, with its old pictures, enamels, and sculptures; and the Cathedral of St. John, a visit to which was worth a trip from America; and the Rathhaus ... one of the wonders of the world!<sup>58</sup>

Clearly, for this resident of Breslau, the city's appeal lay in its modern trappings of commerce – “all the elegances and refinements of life” – as well as its “antiquities,” which might interest an American tourist like Browne. For Browne, however, this sales pitch fell flat. He could not reconcile the idea of a Breslau that was ancient and modern – therefore complex, interesting, dynamic and resistant to easy classification and the imposition of narrative. After sneering at “all these attractions” he left the very next morning, “without seeing the interior of a single edifice except that of the Golden Tree,” his hotel. Disgusted by industrial Breslau, and unwilling to consider any imaginary beyond the “commercial metropolis,” Browne left disappointed.<sup>59</sup> Coming from one of the most energetically industrializing countries in the world, Browne wanted what Orhan Pamuk calls “the enthusiasm for seeing a city from the outside,” that is generated by “the exotic or the picturesque.”<sup>60</sup> If Breslau's grimy modernism and local boosterism offended, perhaps it was because it looked too much like home.

Other travel writers would orient themselves to Breslau in the narrative of commerce, but with happier results. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Countess von Hahn-Hahn observed the “very commercial look” of Breslau, but had nothing (else?) negative to add.<sup>61</sup> Griswold, Meyer and Wernigh are mostly concerned with the city's commerce in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, again treating Breslau's prosperity in a generally positive tone. Countess

<sup>58</sup> Although the speech Browne reports may well have been intended as satire on an overly enthusiastic local booster, who the writer patronizingly refers to as “a dapper little Jew,” and implies that his Jewish landlord merely wanted him to stay on at his lodgings for pecuniary gain. Browne, “Poland Over-Ground and Under-Ground,” 721-722

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, New York: Vintage Books, 2006: K3143-3144

<sup>61</sup> Hahn-Hahn, *Letters of a German Countess*, 2

von Hahn-Hahn offers perhaps the best summary of why Breslau might have lacked a dominating physical landmark that all travelogues could agree upon and to which writers might orient themselves: “it has not retained so much that is characteristic of ancient as to interest modern times.”<sup>62</sup> While this may be unfair to Breslau’s medieval topography, such as its Town Hall and some of its churches, this may be the reason why, unlike Prague, where the Charles Bridge became the fulcrum of the travelers’ gaze, travel writers describing Breslau had to orient themselves to the idea of Breslau as the commercial metropolis. Hence the faltering tendency, never quite carried through, to focus on Breslau’s Rynek marketplace as a possible center of the city.

Why couldn’t, say, Breslau’s St. Elizabeth Kirch serve as a center for travelers to focus their narrative of the city? It is, like Prague’s St. Vitus cathedral, mentioned in most of the accounts of the city. In examining travel writers’ approaches to Breslau and Prague, the predominance of churches in creating the distant skyline of the city is striking. Religious topography – the domination of church steeples and cathedral spires from a distance – was considered the standout feature of the skyline in Central European cities into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>63</sup>

William Clark, a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, visited Breslau in August, 1860 and centered his narrative around the city’s religious topography. “The nucleus of the city is an island in the river, where the cathedral stands,” he wrote. “Thence the city spread over a second island, and flowed over on to the bank ... The large and lofty churches, the Rath-haus, and the Stadt-haus ... date from ... when Breslau was ... united in one creed under its Prince Bishops.”<sup>64</sup> Clark describes the spread of Breslau as the growth of an organism, possessing a nucleus and “flow[ing]” like a living thing. Clark’s editor, Francis Galton – Charles Darwin’s cousin – would have been proud. It is clear that Clark believed the indisputable center of Breslau to be its island cathedral – its nucleus – so we should examine why this “nucleus” could not serve as the fulcrum of the traveler’s gaze. One reason is that Clark’s narrative is unique in the attention it pays to the city’s sacred architecture and the way in which he chooses to organize his description around it. No other travel writers seem to share his approach. Additionally, Breslau’s

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> As evidenced by another Central European city, Cracow, which in 1900 “lacked the appearance or feel of a modern metropolis,” in part because “Churches dominated its skyline,” and one of the city’s chief landmarks was “St. Mary’s Church ... with its imposing asymmetrical twin towers.” Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan*, 23

<sup>64</sup> William George Clark, “Poland,” in: *Vacation Tourists and Notes of Travel in 1862-3*, ed. Francis Galton, London: MacMillan and Co., 1864: 235-236

island cathedral – built by Catholics in a city dominated by Protestants – made for an uncomfortable representative symbol and, moreover, one which did not mesh with the overall conception of Breslau as modern and commercial (and thereby also secular). Finally, self-consciously modern travel writers typically chose to organize sacred space differently from other landmarks in their narratives.

Travel writers consistently treated secular and sacred space differently throughout the period 1700-1914. Churches were an inevitable feature of the European city and the assumption of their presence may have worked against their centrality. Countess von Hahn-Hahn divided her narrative of Breslau according to whether she was writing about secular or religious pieces of the built environment. So did Kuttner, the Berlin bicyclist and Robert Semple. In Prague, this sort of division was also common, with E.K. Washington carefully distinguishing between the “sixty church spires” that filled the skyline of the city against the “sixty clock and twenty-two other old towers,” that competed for attention.<sup>65</sup> This separate treatment of secular and sacred spaces may stem from the urban planning of medieval cities, and the different way religious buildings were situated. “As Christians, they [medieval masons and carpenters], knew only that secular space had to look unlike sacred space. This happened as the secular buildings of these cities grew jumbled together, the streets twisted and inefficient, while the churches were carefully sited, their construction precise, their design elaborately calculated.”<sup>66</sup> Medieval churches and cathedrals, then, were ideally situated to be the nuclei, the obvious central places of Prague and Breslau. They weren’t, because travel writers of the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, and later writers as well, were increasingly secular in their world view, and interested in centering their urban imaginaries firmly in that topos.<sup>67</sup> Churches had been the center of the medieval city, as places of divine – and temporal – authority. They were “a precisely made place where the Word ruled, in contrast to the flux of the secular.”<sup>68</sup> Even romanticizing writers,

<sup>65</sup> Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 313

<sup>66</sup> Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 12

<sup>67</sup> Notably in support of this is Colange’s summary dismissal of Breslau’s medieval churches: “There are several admirable old Gothic churches, *but the most beautiful specimen of mediaeval architecture is the Town House ...*” [Italics mine]. Colange consciously rejects specifying and lending importance to Breslau’s religious topography in favor of their contemporary secular counter-parts. Colange, *Voyages and travels*, 390-392

<sup>68</sup> Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 12

however, were still modern persons, and so their backward gaze into the history of Prague and Breslau concentrated on castles, tombs, palaces, bridges, and other lay monuments.<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, while churches like St. Vitus cathedral in Prague and the St. Elizabeth Kirch in Breslau commanded attention and description from travel writers, those writers claimed secular and sacred space differently.<sup>70</sup> By explicitly separating the worldly from the divine, travel writers chose to emphasize away from the centrality churches had enjoyed in the medieval city, and toward a model of self-consciously modern urban imaginary that placed the secular as the hub of the travelers' gaze. In Prague, this meant a model of the city dominated by the unifying nature of the Charles Bridge. Lacking an agreed-upon physical space for the center of urban imagination, travelers defined Breslau by its commercial nature instead, rather than a sacred place like the cathedral at its "nucleus".

In mapping the secular and sacred landmark topography of the city, and defining their initial approaches to the city, travel writers created maps of urban imaginaries. Their narratives of the city established relationships between monuments and landmarks, defining space in Prague and Breslau.<sup>71</sup>

What is more, those landmarks and their association with each other evoked associations and called

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<sup>69</sup> For example, Frances Trollope, novelist Anthony Trollope's mother, focused exclusively on Prague's Hradshin castle complex, without mentioning the adjoining cathedral. Frances Milton Trollope, *Travels and Travellers: A Series of Sketches*, London: The British Library, 1846: 4; the Boltons do not describe Prague's cathedral or churches; and Robert Semple's only reference to religious topography in Breslau is to the "thirty-six convents in the town" which had been closed by authorities, an action which he hopes will be "imitated all over Germany ... I dare not say all over Europe." Semple, *Observations made on a Tour*, 129-130

<sup>70</sup> For mentions of the St. Vitus cathedral in travelers' descriptions of Prague, see: Bolton, *Travels in Europe and America*, 160; Mottraye, *Travels through Europe*, 176; Starke, *Travels in Europe*, 512; Riesbeck, *Travels through Germany*, 138-139; Bramsen, *Travels in Egypt, Syria, Cyprus*, 64; Kuttner, *Travels through Denmark*, 131; Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 313. For mentions of the St. Elizabeth Kirch in travelers' descriptions of Breslau, see: Browne, "Poland Over-Ground and Under-Ground," 721-722; T.H.S.W. (Berlin B.C.), "Cycling Germany," 305; Hahn-Hahn, *Letters of a German Countess*, 4; John Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers on the Continent: Being a Guide through Holland, Belgium, Prussia, and Northern Germany, and Along the Rhine, from Holland to Switzerland. Containing Descriptions of the Principal Cities, their Museums, Picture Galleries, &c. the Railways and Great High Roads; the Most Interesting and Picturesque Districts; and the Most Frequented Baths and Watering Places; Also, Directions for Travellers, and Hints for Tours. Fifth Edition*, London: John Murray, 1845: 417

<sup>71</sup> Just as Victor Hugo set forth an initial trinity of monuments in 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris, "the Vendome Column, the Arc de Triomphe, and the Invalides" in a "historical and political ... real and literary" sense, although this trinity would change over time, with the Pantheon supplanting the Vendome Column. Charles Peguy, *Oeuvres completes, 1873-1914: Oeuvres de prose* (Paris, 1916), p. 419 ("Victor-Marie, Comte Hugo") in: Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 523

forth memory and story.<sup>72</sup> Again and again, a defining landmark like Charles Bridge in Prague, or the Town Hall in Breslau, prompted travel writers to include stories about those places that, in their telling, helped further define the shape of the city for their readers. In large part, this was also an act of reaching for authenticity. Travel writers, as foreigners to Prague and Breslau where, as a rule, they stayed only a very short time, were not privy to the ghostly cityscape of native residents, who occupied “‘lived and living’ places haunted with stories.”<sup>73</sup>

The almost compulsory re-telling of stories well-associated with the cities – of blind King John, of the drowned Saint Nepomuc, of the defenestration of Prague – lent an air of credibility to travel writers’ accounts. The defenestration of Prague, for example, is mentioned immediately in conjunction with a description of the Hradschin in Prague by the Boltons: “From one of its windows, 80 feet above the ground, members of the Imperial Government were thrown by Bohemian nobles.”<sup>74</sup> Walter White does much the same thing: “There, [in the Hradschin] as everyone knows, the Thirty Years’ War began, by certain angry Bohemian nobles pitching two Imperial commissioners and their secretary out of one of the windows.”<sup>75</sup> In Breslau, travelers associated its medieval Town Hall with the story of blind King John of Bohemia, who had built it and died at Agincourt.<sup>76</sup> The Charles Bridge, as the center of Prague, was

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin refers to this evoking as “the great reminiscences, the historical shudder,” which is common to tourists, “who think thereby to gain access to the genius loci with a military password,” in other words, to more truly depict the city to their readers by including its stories. This is a voyeuristic trip, not just for the writer, but for their readers, because the foreign city’s past “can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private.” Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 416

<sup>73</sup> “People call a city home, even if they come from elsewhere, when they are able to see its ghosts. Urban ghosts inhabit not buildings or courtyards, but the minds of city dwellers, for whom the city’s spaces are ‘lived and living’ places haunted with stories – individual, shared, imagined, fictive, and real. Registering transformations of the cityscape, locals map them onto the city of memory. Thus people who know a city intimately navigate its streets by remembering where a favorite bakery or a friend’s apartment used to be. Their mental maps include the present and the absent, the real and the remembered city. ... For natives, perhaps especially for those who have seen their city destroyed, the city’s streets are a palimpsest.” Mark Bassin, Christopher Ely and Melissa K. Stockdale, eds., *Space, Place, and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History*, DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010: 243

<sup>74</sup> Bolton, *Travels in Europe and America*, 161

<sup>75</sup> White, *A July Holiday*, 114-115

<sup>76</sup> Colange, *Voyages and travels*, 389-392; Browne, “Poland Over-Ground and Under-Ground,” 721-722; Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers*, 417

the focus for travelers telling and re-telling the story of Saint Nepomuc, who drowned in the Vltava for refusing to divulge secrets told to him at confessional.<sup>77</sup> In fact, J.G. Kohl grew sick of the inhabitants' penchant for telling tourists and would-be travel writers the same pieces of local color in the hopes of authenticating their rich, in-depth exploration of Prague. "Nothing is there that a stranger in Bohemia is doomed to have more frequently related to him," Kohl complained in 1843, "than the history of St. Nepomuk," and the history of the Prague defenestration.<sup>78</sup> Yet Kohl, like so many others, repeated the story in his own complaint, contributing to the discourse of Prague's urban imaginary.

When we concern ourselves with the stones of the city, with the city as *urbs* and not *civitas*, it is clear that travel writers from 1700-1914 constructed persuasive images of Prague and Breslau that borrowed from existing preconceptions and images of the cities. It also appears that travel writers engaged in a discourse with each other. From this discourse emerged a shared approach to urban space in Prague and Breslau. Despite the differences between the two cities, travel writers imposed schemes of narrative order on both: As a group, they treated certain physical places, like Charles Bridge, or ideas, like commerce and industry, as the organizing centers of their respective models. In both cities, travelers segregated sacred and secular space. Finally, in Breslau and Prague travelers approached prominent places of memory in similar fashion, describing the physical location and then telling and re-telling the same stories about these locations as a bid for authenticity, for the credibility of their imaginaries before a reading audience.

What does this mean? Above the practical matter of how Western readers understood Prague and Breslau along the lines of imaginary constructs, the travelers' perspective created new cities. If, as Richard Sennett says, "the eye, by changing perspective, can change how the world looks," and the "world can be made to cohere because of how one looks at it," then the perspective of the traveler is

<sup>77</sup> Bingley, *Travels in North Europe*, 162-163; Mottraye, *Travels through Europe*, 176; Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 312-313; White, *A July Holiday*, 116; Kohl, *Galicia, Styria, Moravia, Bukovina and the Military Frontier*, 24

<sup>78</sup> Kohl, *Galicia, Styria, Moravia, Bukovina and the Military Frontier*, 24

key.<sup>79</sup> Mapping and organizing Breslau and Prague around a few landmarks, ignoring an industrializing Prague and de-emphasizing medieval Breslau, travel writers manipulated points in space and time to transform the cities, for themselves and their readers, into how they were seen, rather than what they were. Understanding the city as imagined by travelers from 1700-1914, a time of great flux and dynamism in the Central European city, is one piece of reconstructing the actual lived history of those places.

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<sup>79</sup> Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 154-155



### CHAPTER THREE: PEAKS AND VALLEYS – WOMEN, JEWS AND SLAVS IN Breslau AND PRAGUE

When he visited Europe, that “grand old land of the dead past,” in 1860, E.K. Washington promised his readers that “we shall not over-burden ourselves with any more *thought* than is absolutely necessary, but content ourselves with broad sketches and outlines ... we shall let what we see write itself.”<sup>80</sup> In his journey to Prague that year, Washington devoted extensive commentary to the city’s battlements, its streets and principle landmarks, including the Hradschin and the stone bridge over the Moldau that would become Charles Bridge in ten years’ time.<sup>81</sup> Washington’s work was typical in this concern with well-established landmarks of Prague’s built environment. Historians might expect to see evidence of change over time in Washington’s account of Prague compared to earlier narratives by Aubrey de la Mottraye or later ones by Will Seymour Monroe. Such change is not apparent. Instead, Washington’s orderly urban cartography in 1860 is fundamentally the same map of physical space as Mottraye in 1723 and Monroe in 1910. The aim of this chapter is to discover if this peculiar shared approach to physical space in Prague and Breslau travel narratives is extended to human space also.

In keeping with an observable trend in the travel writing on Prague and Breslau, Washington’s Prague is a largely depopulated and anonymized urban imaginary, with few exceptions. As scholar Peter Bugge noted in an examination of British travel writing on Bohemia during this time, “Still missing in all our travelogues, for all the paternalistic sympathy expressed, is any direct presence of the native population of Bohemia as the subjects and actors of their own story.”<sup>82</sup> Except as groups, chosen by authors for ideological purposes, the streets of Prague and Breslau seem ghostly and vacant in travel narratives. The exceptional groups represented by Washington were the garrison of soldiers stationed in the city, the historic Jewish community of the Josefov district, and the “young girls” of Prague. These

<sup>80</sup> Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 13

<sup>81</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 100-101

<sup>82</sup> Bugge, “Something in the View which Makes You Linger,” 29

bear mention only as faceless groups - Washington did not record particular conversations or interactions with named individuals. Soldiers, Jews, and young women were the high peaks of Washington's map of human space – in this chapter, we will examine how travel writers used exoticization and marginalization on three distinct populations, or salient (legible, high) points in narrative topography. Two of these groups are the same as Washington's – young women and Jews. We will also discuss a third group, ethnolinguistic (Slavic-speaking) minorities, about whom Washington was silent. They had fallen into the valley of his cartography. In Washington's Prague, readers might judge that soldiers, Jews and young women were the sole inhabitants. However, this paper will argue that the author's initial injunction, to "let what we see write itself," was held to only loosely, in the author's ideological effort to construct an interesting, appropriate or exotic population for the urban imaginary created for his readers.

This chapter will examine how travel writers constructed the human spaces of the city in their travelogue narratives of Prague and Breslau from 1700-1914. As the previous chapter demonstrated, travelers shared certain common approaches to the physical spaces of the city, engaging in a discourse of imaginary creation that remained remarkably coherent across time and space. Even though "travel writing could accommodate a wide range of discourses," and "offered an excitingly wide range of narrative and stylistic options," to travel writers, one observes a fundamental continuity in travel writers' approach to both physical and human space. The city was a set of static characteristics (old, new, romantic, industrial), its landmarks an established, ordered procession of viewing, its limits and centers defined and reinforced, and its ethnolinguistic character, location in human geography, erotic opportunities and religious affiliations fixed as far as possible. A component of this underlying continuity in imaginary construction among travel writers was certainly "the arrival of what came to be known as the 'picturesque,' [where] representations grasped particular, distinctive characteristics and attempted to fix them within a general whole that varied in size from the enclosed space of a garden to an entire

city ... All of these modes of vision stood opposed to a world that was by definition unintelligible, monotonous, invisible, and closed to the gaze.”<sup>83</sup> For travel writers, the picturesque was not limited to town halls and stone bridges – the people of a city like Prague or Breslau could be picturesque as well, and hence liable to become a part of the ideological narratives travelers created to better map, control and represent the spaces they visited.

Travel writers knew the importance of including the human spaces of the city in any ordered representation they created. They knew that a city was more than just bricks and stones. Orhan Pamuk wrote “what gives a city its special character is not just its topography or its buildings but rather the sum total of every chance encounter, every memory, letter, color, and image jostling in its inhabitants’ crowded memories.”<sup>84</sup> Walter Benjamin might have agreed with Pamuk’s assessment, observing that newspaper sellers in 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris knew the neighborhoods intimately, according to the tastes and character of their inhabitants, and that in this way they defined the city’s spaces by the people occupying them.<sup>85</sup> Even today, modern people might experience difficulty, in thinking of a city like London or Chicago, without relying on an imaginary composed of both physical spaces (Tower Bridge, Millenium Park) and human characteristics (Buckingham Palace’s changing of the guard, the St. Patrick’s Day parade). Travelers included these kinds of representative pieces of human space to convey Prague and Breslau the way they ought to have been from the travelers’ perspective. As part of an overall project of extending order into disordered or illegible spaces, travelers like Washington exoticized, caricatured, or rendered invisible native inhabitants of Prague and Breslau. Despite the temptation to construct imaginaries devoid of life and “peopled” solely with churches, monuments, tombs and squares

<sup>83</sup> Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe*, 21-22; Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze*, 4-5

<sup>84</sup> Pamuk, *Istanbul*, K1353-1355

<sup>85</sup> A. Privat d’Anglemon, *Paris inconnu* (Paris, 1861): 154 quoted in: Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 522

- truly Washington's "dead past" - travel writers included representative pieces of the "lived and living" cities they visited in a bid for their narrative's authenticity and as local color to interest readers.<sup>86</sup>

The trend that unites these accounts, and which we will explore through the lens of travelers' narratives of the *civitas*, or life-defined spaces of the city, is what Dennis Porter refers to as "a form of cultural cartography." This is the effort, in representing the city, to control it ideologically by presenting a static portrait of its people and their relationship to its *urbs* or physical space.<sup>87</sup> Dividing the foreign, incomprehensible mass of people actually living in cities like Breslau and Prague into groups, and then fixing those groups into established relationships with each other and the city they lived in enabled travelers to create a more legible city. Kevin Lynch's sense of "districts or landmarks or pathways [that] are easily identifiable and [which] are easily grouped into an over-all pattern," is helpful to consider – this was the process travelers embraced with regard not just to "landmarks or pathways," but, as we will discover in this chapter, people too.<sup>88</sup> This sort of cultural cartography as exercised by travel writers is related to James C. Scott's argument that modern states also sought ways of making cities more legible, in this case to a reading public in administrative bureaucracies, not one seeking fireside adventure.

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<sup>86</sup> Ryden described the mapping process thusly: It "compresses the landscape's ambiguities into an arbitrary and simplified flatness – it is all surface, lacking depth. This lack of depth takes in the human dimension as well; just as the map freezes the landscape in stasis ... so too does it depopulate the land, removing from it any vestige of life and movement and history. ... it is an aesthetic object, little more than an artful arrangement of color and shape. It lies under glass like a painting on a wall." Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 21-22

<sup>87</sup> "From the beginning, writers of travel have more or less unconsciously made it their purpose to take a fix on and thereby fix the world in which they found themselves; they are engaged in a form of cultural cartography that is impelled by an anxiety to map the globe, center it on a certain point, produce explanatory narratives, and assign fixed identities to regions and the races that inhabit them. Such representations are always concerned with the question of place and of placing, of situating oneself once and for all vis-a-vis an Other or others." Porter, *Haunted Journeys*, 20; for *civitas* as used here, see "the emotions, rituals, and convictions that take form in a city;" in other words, the human-derived and intangible space of the city that is so valuable for constructing lively urban imaginaries. Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 11

<sup>88</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960: 2-3, quoted in: Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 33

**“You May Make Love with More Ease Than at Vienna”:  
Women as Objects and Authors of Travel Discourse**

Sex and gender are a key piece of travel writing discourse and inform travelers’ efforts to project ordered mapping schemes on the unfamiliar populous environment of the city. A significant minority of travel accounts consulted for this period reflect the authorship of women.<sup>89</sup> After the mid-eighteenth century women began to travel with increasing frequency as the style of travel writing shifted from one dominated by “a commentary of scholarly compilation,” to a “commentary of viewing” that more readily accepted the contributions of women travelers, who were “no longer excluded from the position of authoritative subject within the discourse of European travel.”<sup>90</sup> The presence of women travel writers in the primary sources consulted for this paper reflects this reality. They vary from aristocrats like the Countess von Hahn-Hahn to pragmatic middle-class writers like Mariana Starke and Sarah Knowles Bolton. One might expect, as does Gillian Rose in *Feminism and Geography*, that “the belief that everything is knowable and mappable is fundamentally a patriarchal concept.” Therefore women travel writers, unlike their male contemporaries, might “engage with the everyday as an end in itself,” and not attempt to “circumscribe, define, and hence control the world,” in quite the same manner. However, the female authors consulted here participated equally alongside men in ordering certain consistent schemes of urban imaginary, physical and human, in Breslau and Prague.<sup>91</sup>

Women travel writers are not, however, precisely the same as male travel writers. Both engage in a discourse of constructing imaginaries, and the previous chapter integrated their treatment of

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<sup>89</sup> It is difficult to avoid treating women travel writers as exceptional – according to Susan Bassnett, “one of the classic ways of marginalising women’s achievements” – in this case, as only a minority of accounts consulted for this paper were authored solely or primarily by women. However, this paper is concerned, not with how women saw travel differently as women, but in the equality women travel writers shared with their male counterparts in constructing animate and inanimate urban models. Susan Bassnett, “Travel Writing and Gender,” in: Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002: 228-229

<sup>90</sup> Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt*, 35

<sup>91</sup> Given the small sample size of women travel writers examined in this study, it is possible that the different trend Rose expects to see would emerge in a more comprehensive survey of specifically female authors. Bassnett, “Travel Writing and Gender,” 230

ordering physical space in cities with male travel writing. When describing the human spaces of the city, women travel writers do not emphasize gender alterity in the same way as men. Men, in describing the people of Breslau and Prague, were frequently careful to note especially the presence of young women as part of a broader sexualization of travel that stemmed from traditions of the Grand Tour.<sup>92</sup> When James Boswell was on his inaugural grand tour in Italy in the eighteenth century, for example, he explicitly noted “My desire to know the world made me resolve to intrigue a little while in Italy, where the women are so debauched that they are hardly to be considered as moral agents, but as inferior beings.”<sup>93</sup> This kind of treatment of women as objects to be conquered in travel accounts of the period is present, though in reduced form, in the spotlight male travel writers focus on women in their construction of human space in Prague and Breslau.

After a lengthy description of Prague’s commerce and disparaging commentary on the number of belletrists in the city, Johann Kaspar Riesbeck notes in a flippant aside “the women of this place are handsome, and you may make love with more ease than at Vienna.”<sup>94</sup> Although the Grand Tour tradition typically saw the warmer regions of the south, like Italy, or east, like the Orient, as the more erotic locales with accessible women, here it is the reverse. Prague is farther north and west than Vienna geographically, but the comparison in ease of sexual conquest between civilized Vienna and liminal Prague is a telling indication of the way the depiction of human space in the city is used to reaffirm the mental topography of center and periphery in Europe. Such casual observations on female accessibility in liminal spaces like Prague and Breslau signaled the construction of a more permissive sexual space in these cities, implicitly compared to their own homes. It also served to reinforce existing ideas of

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<sup>92</sup> “The nineteenth century saw a proliferation of travel accounts by male writers that overtly sexualised whole areas of the globe, contrasting the ‘masculine’ northern regions with the softer, eroticised, feminine Orient. This distinction is less apparent in women travel writers.” Though Central Europe was by no means Oriental, its status as removed from the traditional Grand Tour route and peripheral status in German-dominated lands often conferred upon it liminal, semi-oriental status. *Ibid*, 239

<sup>93</sup> Porter, *Haunted Journeys*, 34

<sup>94</sup> Riesbeck, *Travels through Germany*, 145

acceptable female roles, and as a projection of wish fulfillment – the desire to transgress sexually with the Other encountered in Central Europe.<sup>95</sup>

Sometimes the desire to transgress sexually was frustrated. In Walter White's *July Holiday*, he recorded his disappointment with the women of Prague, who failed to live up to their reputation for comeliness:

As for the gentle sex," White wrote, "never have I seen so many ugly women as in Prague. Those of the working classes are very dowdies, not to say slatterns, in many cases; and the rows of market-women squatting by their baskets resemble so many feather-beds tied round the middle, in a flimsy cotton dress, and crowned by a red or yellow kerchief pinned under the chin. Even among the graceful and gaily-dressed ladies I saw but very few pretty faces. Perhaps I expected too much, or it might be, as I was told, that all the pretty women had gone away to the watering-places!"<sup>96</sup>

All White has left is the exclamatory hope that the famous beauties of Prague are just over the horizon. Even in the absence of beautiful women, however, the author constructed an imaginary of Prague that should contain beautiful, accessible women – White "expected" their presence. Clearly, when his expectations faltered, he refused to believe the evidence of his eyes, and inquired where the 'real' women of Prague, the ones who matched his imaginary, had hidden. White described the women he encountered solely in terms of appearance, keeping them at arm's length by anonymizing them, giving them no voice in the narrative, and explicitly comparing them to objects like "feather-beds."

At times male travel writers were satisfied merely as voyeurs. When E.K. Washington strolled through Prague, he observed that the city's "agreeable" nature resided in the "beauty in the common classes of the people," but of course "especially ... the young girls who preside in the shops with grace and unconscious dignity."<sup>97</sup> There is something unaware about the "girls" Washington described – implicit in his description of their "unconscious" dignity – and thereby appealing for the uninterrupted assessment of the male gaze. Washington, the avid lepidopterist-cum-narrator, had the work done for

<sup>95</sup> "At one level, most forms of travel at least cater to desire: they seem to promise or allow us to fantasize the satisfaction of drives that for one reason or another is denied us at home. As a result, not only is travel typically fueled by desire, it also embodies powerful transgressive impulses." Porter, *Haunted Journeys*, 9

<sup>96</sup> White, *A July Holiday*, 120-121

<sup>97</sup> Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 313-314

him. The young women he described were not active, challenging, engaging or, it seems, even moving. How much more easy it must have been to pin these women into their static role in human space, unconscious beauties ready to be admired under glass. The women Washington included in his urban imaginary were doll-like, publicly accessible to the male passerby's view. They were part of a discourse of travel writing that treated "vulnerable females as ... objects of contemplation."<sup>98</sup>

When not treating women as objects notable for their attractiveness and the possibility of sexual conquest, voyeurism or erotic transgression, male travel writers erased women from the human landscape of the city. Besides White, Riesbeck and Washington, none of the other 13 other sources consulted on Prague mentioned women in any significant capacity, or at any length. In Breslau, in turn, women simply do not exist in the travelers' construction of the city. We may contrast this with a different genre of writing, the memoir or autobiography. As a personal document not concerned with constructing coherent urban models in the same way, a memoir could feature individual women with agency. Although based on personal recollection, and therefore prone to the creation of its own, retrospective imaginaries, the memoir or autobiography might illuminate the kind of individuals travel writing elided.

The composer Hector Berlioz provided evidence of this kind in his own recollections. After complaining of the seemingly cold reception of a Beethoven piece performed in the city's famed Aula Leopoldina, he recorded "a lady, enthusiastic herself about the great master after her own fashion, told me I was mistaken. 'The public,' said she, 'admire that masterpiece as much as it can be admired, and if they do not applaud, it is from respect.'"<sup>99</sup> Here was a woman presented with agency, an individual identity – the confidence to challenge the great composer himself when she thought he was wrong. Berlioz's description is admiring, if slightly patronizing – "after her own fashion" – and this encounter

<sup>98</sup> Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe*, 8

<sup>99</sup> Hector Berlioz, *Autobiography of Hector Berlioz: Member of the Institute of France, from 1803-1865. Comprising his travels in Italy, Germany, Russia and England*, 1884: 251-252



seems to have touched him enough to record it in his autobiography. Moreover, the Breslau woman is not a vulnerable object of the male gaze, nor is she reckoned or dismissed based on her appearance, at least in Berlioz's writing. It is precisely this kind of construction of women that fails to appear in the travelogues concerned with creating a narrative of human occupation, roles and presence in Breslau and Prague from 1700-1914.

Women travel writers, with the exception of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, participated in the male-dominated genre's portrayal of urban space in Prague and Breslau as one singularly lacking women who, when present, were notable for their suitability as eroticized objects of seeing. Women were, in their travelogues, apparently no more likely to see native women as autonomous individuals or worth recording than men were. They differ from male travel writers in that they do not present women in Prague and Breslau erotically, but they participate equally alongside men in silencing or sidelining women in their own cities. Mariana Starke, one of the exemplars of sensible, middle-class travel writing, pays no special attention to women in the city, talking about human space only in terms of undifferentiated "inhabitants".<sup>100</sup> Sarah Knowles Bolton's account is particularly notable for its engagement in marginalizing Prague's people, including its women. "Without urging," she wrote, "you buy artistic Bohemian glass ..."<sup>101</sup> From whom? Ordinary merchants or traders are dropped from Knowles' description even as a faceless group. Luxury items, mere things, have replaced them as worthwhile subjects. In Lady Montagu's case, a letter to her sister in 1716 (which she may not have intended for publication) featured a lengthy description of women in Prague but focused on women's fashion in the city – an account in line with Gillian Rose's idea of engaging in the everyday as an end in itself.<sup>102</sup> The satiric description she relayed to her sister of how poorly the women of Prague dressed

<sup>100</sup> Starke, *Travels in Europe*, 512

<sup>101</sup> Bolton, *Travels in Europe and America*, 161

<sup>102</sup> In accounts like Lady Montagu's, women travel writers distinguished themselves from their male counterparts in part by focusing "attention to details of clothing, accounts of domestic life, or the inclusion of romantic episodes," as Montagu does in her description of women's fashion. Bassnett, "Travel Writing and Gender," 239

likely related to Montagu's own aristocratic background and presumed good taste, as well as Prague's peripheral status on the edge of German-speaking Europe. The city was in "the most desert" of all the German lands she had ever seen.<sup>103</sup>

### **The "German" Cities of Prague and Breslau: Language and Ethnicity in Travel Writing, 1700-1914**

The great English historian of Russia Sir Bernard Pares recorded, in his 1919 book *The League of Nations and Other Questions of Peace*, an old French proverb: "the hem is stronger than the cloth."<sup>104</sup> In Pares' case, the proverb applied to Alsace-Lorraine, a recently recovered French province where some inhabitants claimed stronger French patriotism and identity – although marginal to France proper – than did Frenchmen closer to the center of the country and its national life. Travelogues, too, are insistent on this score. Lady Montagu did not misstate geography when she identified Prague and its inhabitants as firmly located within the sphere of German-speaking Europe – perhaps provincial, or peripheral, but German. Perhaps more German than Germans, as the slavish over-the-top devotion of Prague elites to Vienna fashions indicated in Montagu's letter. While travel writers constructed imaginaries of Prague and Breslau that located them firmly in German, not Slavic, Europe, they did make some accommodations to the growing presence of Slavs in the actual cities, especially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

William George Clark, for example, saw evidence of Breslau's Slavic past in the name of its market square, which was still referred to as the 'Rynek' – this oddity provided proof to Clark that Breslau was "originally inhabited by Slavonians," although at the time of his visit, "the major part [was]

<sup>103</sup> William and Robert Chambers (publishers) put out an edition of Lady Montagu's letters in 1865 – one may presume posthumously, as the letters themselves date from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Montagu described the women of Prague as "dressed after the fashions there [Vienna], after the manner that the people at Exeter imitate those of London; that is, their imitation is more excessive than the original. 'Tis not easy to describe what extraordinary figures they make. The person is so much lost between headdress and petticoat, that they have as much occasion to write upon their backs, 'This is a Woman,' for the information of travellers, as ever sign-post painter had to write, 'This is a Bear.' [Emphasis in original]. Montagu, *Letters descriptive of travels*, 55-56

<sup>104</sup> Sir Bernard Pares, *The League of Nations and Other Questions of Peace*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919: 31

German and Protestant.”<sup>105</sup> Clark’s description of the population of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Breslau establishes the order of ethnic relations and dominance in the city. German Protestants are “the major part” in the valuable present, while the traces of Breslau’s ‘original’ Slavic heritage remain, vestigial and pointing to the past where they belong. This construction of Breslau has the advantage of reaffirming power relationships among groups in the city, acknowledging the presence of non-Germans in this Prussian provincial capital while noting their ‘place’ as a legacy of the past, contrasted with the expected continued dominance of Germans.

Some twenty years earlier, Countess Ida von Hahn-Hahn faced the same trouble as Clark had – for travel writers, the conception of a multi-ethnic city did not yet exist, and so the presence of others, especially Slavs, in German cities like Breslau demanded an explanation. This struggle is sometimes plain in the language they used. Countess von Hahn-Hahn observed that in Breslau “Polish is found mixed with German,” on shop signs and “in the streets we also heard Polish spoken; and the inns were full of Poles, on their way to the baths.”<sup>106</sup> This presence of Poles makes sense to a modern observer – Breslau had been a German city at this point for a lengthy period, but as Clark correctly stated, the city had Slavic, specifically Polish (and Czech) origins.<sup>107</sup> Countess von Hahn-Hahn resolved her dilemma by adding “Few other foreigners come to Breslau, the great majority of travellers, native and foreign, proceeding to the south and the west.”<sup>108</sup> Here the Polish are not put in their place by confining their claims on the city’s space to the temporal dimension of the extinct past, but by assigning the label “foreigners”. That these foreigners are present in such numbers that even the inscriptions above the shops are a mixture of Polish and German did not seem to faze Hahn-Hahn, a German aristocrat whose conception of Breslau as thoroughly German was probably not easily shaken.

<sup>105</sup> Clark, “Poland,” 235-236

<sup>106</sup> Hahn-Hahn, *Letters of a German Countess*, 2-4

<sup>107</sup> Between 1000 and 1526, Breslau had been under Polish or Czech (Bohemian) rule most of the time. Still earlier, recognizably Slavic populations had begun to fill the region around Breslau in the fifth and sixth centuries CE. See Davies and Moorhouse, *Microcosm*, especially Chapters 1, 2 and 3 and specifically p. 53

<sup>108</sup> Hahn-Hahn, *Letters of a German Countess*, 2-4

Earlier still in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Augustus Bozzi Granville acknowledged the “curious fact,” of the Polish presence in the Silesian capital by reference to religion, instead of language. “One-third only,” of Breslau’s population, he wrote, “are Catholics, while nine-tenths of the remainder are Lutherans; yet the former have not fewer than twenty-two churches ... and the latter not quite half that number.”<sup>109</sup> This figure of “one-third” of Breslau’s population as Catholic meshes closely with Clark’s mid-century observation that “about one-third [of Breslau’s population] is Slavonian and Catholic.”<sup>110</sup> It seems likely that Granville’s reference to Breslau’s Catholic population earlier in the century was a means of acknowledging the continuing presence of Breslau’s historic Polish community without explicitly labeling it as such. Granville participated, alongside Clark and Countess von Hahn-Hahn, in constructing a German Breslau by carefully structuring and navigating narrative around observed realities to arrive at a convincing imaginary of the city’s rightfully dominant and natural inhabitants – German-speakers.

Still other references placing Breslau in the ranks of Germandom abound. Berlioz felt receipts from his concerts there “far exceeded what I usually made in German towns;” John J. Valentine noted “the German element predominating,” in the population, and failed to describe what that German element might have been “predominating” over; Griswold described it as the best “market for wool in all Germany;” the Berlin bicyclist felt secure describing it as the second-largest city in Germany after Hamburg; a correspondent for the *New-York Musical Review and Gazette* thought the city’s character was definitely “South German,” or “Austrian;” Robert Semple, finally, intoned that the suppression of convents and monasteries that had taken place in Breslau was an example he hoped might be imitated “all over Germany.”<sup>111</sup> Comparisons of Breslau to other cities are most frequently to German cities, such as Berlin, Nuremberg, Dresden, Hamburg and Prague.

<sup>109</sup> Granville, *St. Petersburg*, 570

<sup>110</sup> Clark, “Poland,” 235-236

<sup>111</sup> Berlioz, *Autobiography of Hector Berlioz*, 251; Valentine, “A Tour of the World,” 263; Griswold, *Travel: A Series of Narrative*, 64; T.H.S.W. (Berlin B.C.), “Cycling Germany,” 305; A.W.T., “Breslau, Germany. June 10, 1855,” 234; Semple, *Observations made on a Tour*, 129-130

After all, Prague too was German. At least, travelers structured Prague as such in travel narratives of the 18<sup>th</sup> and (long) 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's account of Prague high society, the inhabitants of the city are "those people of quality, who cannot easily bear the expense of Vienna," and these people of quality, exiled unfortunately from the capital, are likely German-speakers based on their association with the capital and the ruling Austrian elite.<sup>112</sup> Middle-class traveler par excellence Mariana Starke separated her description of "the inhabitants," of Prague from those in "Bohemia, and part of Moravia," whose "vulgar tongue ... is a dialect of the Sclavonic."<sup>113</sup> In specifically setting apart such groups, Starke created distinct ethno-linguistic spaces – one for the denizens of Prague, whose language is unidentified (perhaps readers are supposed to assume German) and one for those in the surrounding country who speak in a vulgar dialect of the Sclavonic which, dismissively, does not seem to have warranted further definition by Starke.

When John Owen traveled to Prague in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, he faced the same quandary as some of his contemporaries had in Breslau – how to represent the city, not as multi-ethnic (let us say multi-peopled to avoid anachronism), but as a German city, with the political, cultural and social equipage that implied. He resolved it in similar fashion. Owen used the language of his narrative to place the Bohemian Czechs to one side, and Prague's 'real' inhabitants on the other. On his way to Prague, Owen claimed to have overcome the "barbarous and unfavourable" prejudice he felt against Bohemians by conversing with them. Then, the Bohemian question resolved and set aside, he entered Prague and "was introduced to a family of some consideration," with whom, by a Prussian friend's mediation, he "drank Tokai ... and talked [French] politics." Given that Owen considered "Bohemian" unintelligible, "a barbarous sound [that] ... differs very widely from the German," it is unlikely that Owen talked French

<sup>112</sup> Montagu, *Letters descriptive of travels*, 56

<sup>113</sup> Starke, *Travels in Europe*, 512. It goes without saying that Czech is not identified as a separate, distinctive language in many accounts of this period. It is typically grouped dismissively with other "barbarous" and little-understood Slavic languages – in one case, it is identified simply as "allied" to Polish, which is itself referred to only as an "idiom". Bingley, *Travels in North Europe*, 162

politics with the Czech-speaking Bohemians of Prague. Instead, the “citizens of Prague,” that Owen pleasantly bantered with probably spoke German or French. Finally, Owen went out of his way to assure readers that despite the barbarous presence of “the Slavonic dialect,” “German is ... very much spoken here, and the name of every street is announced at its entrance in both languages.”<sup>114</sup>

Owen’s observation of bilingualism in Prague in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century is noteworthy. Like Granville, Clark and Hahn-Hahn in Breslau, Owen subscribed to the travel writer’s commitment to present the city as they actually saw it.<sup>115</sup> But Bohemians, like the Poles of Breslau, speaking a barbarous Slavic dialect belonged in a subservient position vis-à-vis the more ‘civilized’ and familiar German-speaking elite population, who constituted for travelers like Owen the natural inhabitants and leaders of Prague and Breslau. Presentation of the city in a structured narrative therefore became also a projection of the writer’s self, which led to imaginaries in Prague and Breslau that actively ignored or misrepresented Czech-speaking Bohemians.<sup>116</sup>

Later 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts begin to complicate this otherwise fairly consistent picture. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, as the Czech national awakening began to gather steam, Walter White concluded in a surprised tone “judging from the number of queer-looking names over the doors, Prague must be the headquarters of the Czechs.” From a physiognomic perspective, however, White had his doubts. “Yet one meets comparatively few examples of the fine intellectual brow and handsome features of which I had seen noble specimens in the villages,” where, White seems to argue, Bohemians more naturally

<sup>114</sup> Owen, *Travels into different parts of Europe*, 496-497

<sup>115</sup> “the claim to be ordering knowledge and, however obliquely, offering practical advice – are constantly combined within travel writings,” of both the Enlightenment and Romantic periods. Even when the obsession with the picturesque reached fever pitch, travelers still laid claim to status as authorities delivering facts, not fables, to their readers. Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt*, 10

<sup>116</sup> “Nowhere perhaps as much as in the field of travel writing, in fact, is the fundamental ambiguity of ‘representation’ more apparent. To represent the world is a political as well as an aesthetic-cognitive activity. It is an effort both to put something alien into the words of a shared language for someone else at home and to put oneself in the Other’s place abroad in order to speak on its behalf. One is at the same time *representator* and *representative*, reporter and legislator. **And in all that one writes one also inevitably (re)presents, however imperfectly, oneself.**” [Bold emphasis mine; italics original]. Porter, *Haunted Journeys*, 14-15

(and harmoniously) resided. The implication that their arrival in Prague has given them a more “common cast” may reflect White’s lingering suspicion of the growing Czech community in the city.<sup>117</sup>

That growth, however, would continue. Six years before White’s visit, in 1851, Derek Sayer writes that Prague “was a walled city of around 150,000 people of whom (maybe) 41 percent were German-speakers,” but that these figures would swell to half a million by 1900. The overwhelming majority (93 percent) then spoke Czech as an everyday language.<sup>118</sup> Already at mid-century White observed that some shops “display none but Czechish books,” and that among these works descriptions of Prague by Czechs, claiming their own city, were “favourite subjects.”<sup>119</sup> White is an early exemplar of a trend. Nevertheless, the old imaginary of Prague as German died hard: the meta-narrative travelers’ accounts had helped reinforce and, in some measure created, proved surprisingly inelastic. Ten years after White’s discovery of the Czech headquarters, Murray’s authoritative guidebook still placed Prague in “southern Germany” and paid special attention to the number of Germans residing in the city who spoke German only (1/6; Murray offered no comparable figure for the city’s Czech-speaking population). Indeed, while Murray listed half Prague’s population as being native Bohemians, this sort of description would have been inclusive of both German- and Czech-speakers, and is therefore less supportive of a switch to an imaginary of Czech Prague than might be supposed, *prima facie*.<sup>120</sup>

Not till Will Seymour Monroe’s exhaustive account of Prague, just prior to the First World War, would Prague be presented unreservedly as a Czech city – the Czech city. Monroe’s account no longer referred to place-names in the city in German, or by placing German and Czech side-by-side, but only in Czech. His discourse on Germans and Jews in Bohemia has titles like “Foreign elements in the population

<sup>117</sup> White, *A July Holiday*, 120-121

<sup>118</sup> Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 85-86; Pavel Cibulka, Jan Hájek, and Martin Kučera, “The Definition of Czech National Society during the Period of Liberalism and Nationalism (1860-1914)” in: Jaroslav Pánek, Oldřich Tůma et alia, *A History of the Czech Lands*, Prague: Karolinum Press, 2009: 340; Hugh Agnew, *The Czechs and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2004: 156

<sup>119</sup> White, *A July Holiday*, 119

<sup>120</sup> John Murray, *A Handbook for Travellers in Southern Germany*, London: John Murray, 1867: 502-503

of Bohemia,” and “Failure of the Germans to get a permanent foothold in the country,” as if German-speakers had been an invasive, parasitical element.<sup>121</sup> It is a traveler’s account engaging in a new kind of imaginary construction of Prague, informed by and reflecting Czech nationalism. In its own way, especially in the language it used and the history it chose to present, it was every bit the simplified construction early 19<sup>th</sup> century travelers like Starke and Owen had narrated.

German domination and presence in Breslau and Prague from 1700 to 1914 was, in reality, never a monolith – both cities had substantial populations of Polish- or Czech-speaking populations throughout the period. Indeed, this was a natural situation for both. One might expect to see, then, a more complicated and nuanced depiction of the ethnolinguistic facet of Prague and Breslau’s human space by travel writers explicitly committed to relaying facts and accurate information back to their reading audience in this period.<sup>122</sup>

What one does see is a series of narratives throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that largely affirm German dominance and the natural quality of German presence in these “German” cities. Travel writers did not exist in a vacuum – they were not completely free to create their own narratives of who lived in these cities.<sup>123</sup> When the facts on the ground were overwhelmingly different, long-held narratives had to be changed to reflect new situations, as one can see in Monroe’s pre-World War I

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<sup>121</sup> Monroe, *Bohemia and the Čechs*, 177

<sup>122</sup> “As a result of the quest for increasingly exact knowledge of the planet and its creatures, or of the newly discovered variety of human racial types, a more determined critical effort was made, beginning early in the eighteenth century, to separate out the factual from the fabulous, to distinguish between genres, and to condemn those ‘fireside travelers’ whose fabrications complicated the task of acquiring accurate information about remoter regions of the globe.” A reminder that Mottraye and Washington were not exceptions when they claimed their authority and purpose from relating “an impartial and plain Narrative of Matters of Fact,” and letting “what we see write itself.” Porter, *Haunted Journeys*, 26; Mottraye, *Travels through Europe*, 1; Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 13

<sup>123</sup> Not least because travel writers wrote in an already-established genre from which they could not diverge too excessively, and because their depiction had to in some measure reflect a city their readers might visit or have previously encountered. “All the writings ... provide information about a particular topography of the foreign – whether or not they define the provision of information as their primary aim. Many of them also assume that the reader might visit that topography in person, and might well make practical use of some of the information ...” Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt*, 9



description of Czech Prague. However, in a consistent approach to creating models of ethnolinguistic space in Prague and Breslau, travel writers embraced a narrative of firmly “German” cities that sidelined prominent indigenous populations, supported existing power relationships in the cities, and simplified the story they had to tell. This simplification represents well the process of cultural cartography travelers engaged in: on the one hand, a projection of power by Westerners engaged in ordering the chaotic linguistic space of Prague and Breslau; on the other hand, an admission of defeat in the traveler’s inability to “read” the complicated actuality of the city.<sup>124</sup>

#### **“Leaves in Autumn”: Travel Writing and Jewish Communities in Breslau and Prague**

Like women, travel writers regularly singled out Jews in Prague and Breslau for commentary in travel accounts. While Prague’s historic Jewish quarter, Josefov, is relatively well known, Breslau too held a substantial population of Jewish citizens that travel writers remarked upon. As Till van Rahden remarks, the “history of relations between Jews and other Germans has a place: Breslau. ... Because of Breslau’s religious, political, and economic heterogeneity, the city is particularly well suited for a study of relations between Jews and other Breslauers.”<sup>125</sup> According to van Rahden, Breslau was home to one of the three largest Jewish communities in Germany between 1800 and 1933, while the community’s roots as a substantial population in the city reached back at least to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>126</sup>

In Prague, similarly, Jews made up “a considerable part,” of the city’s population in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, part of a community with roots stretching into the Middle Ages and the golden age of Prague

<sup>124</sup> “The real city gave the lie to the unity and ingenuous simplification that the theatrical panoramas [to say nothing of the panoramic urban imaginaries constructed by travelers] provided. From the mid-nineteenth century on, only a plurality of fragmented views could satisfactorily describe the urban scene.” Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze*, 186

<sup>125</sup> Till van Rahden, *Jews and Other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity, and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860-1925*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000: 16

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

under Emperor Charles IV.<sup>127</sup> Much like van Rahden's assessment of Breslau as place well suited to examining interactions between Jewish inhabitants of the city and other native denizens, Gary Cohen, a scholar of Central Europe at the University of Minnesota, concurs with regard to Prague. In Cohen's view, Prague is an "instructive locale" for studying the relationships between Jews and other Prague inhabitants, particularly acculturation processes as Jews chose to affiliate themselves with German-speakers, Habsburg rule, and German cultural life more generally. As late as 1900, Cohen notes that Prague's Jewish community numbered 6.7 percent of the population, even as Czech-speaking Bohemians flooded into the industrializing city from the countryside and the overall percentage of German-speaking Prague natives declined precipitously.<sup>128</sup>

Travel writers chose to depict Jews as a salient point of their constructed human space of Prague and Breslau, relayed back to readers, for several reasons. Perhaps the most basic was that Jews were an easily-defined 'other' – a group of people that, it went almost without saying, were exotic, foreign, and unfamiliar to readerships in Western countries with proportionately smaller Jewish populations, like Britain, France, Italy and the United States (prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century). Walter White has a telling line in his description. He defended his focus on Jews by saying that they highlighted the interesting difference between Prague and London: "For, besides the difference in architecture, which heightens the general effect, foreign Jews, whether in consequence of shabbier clothes or dirtier habits, have always a more picturesque appearance than their brethren in England."<sup>129</sup> London is the pole to which Prague is the anti-pole – how one tells them apart, in White's argument, is by the city's physical,

<sup>127</sup> Riesbeck, *Travels through Germany*, 141; according to Kuttner, the population of Jews numbered approximately 9,000 in 1791, of a total city population of 71,500; so, a little under 13 percent. This is already a larger community of Jews (in 1791) than in Breslau, where in 1861 according to van Rahden's figures the community accounted for 7 percent of the population. Both communities are nevertheless significant components of human space in the cities. Kuttner, *Travels through Denmark*, 133; Rahden, *Jews and Other Germans*, 27; Unhappily, evidence for Jewish presence in Prague's Josefov district in the 14<sup>th</sup> century comes down to us as a record of pogroms and discrimination. Miloslav Polívka, *The Expansion of the Czech State During the Era of the Luxemburgs (1306-1419)* in: Jaroslav Pánek, Oldřich Tůma et alia, *A History of the Czech Lands*, Prague: Karolinum Press, 2009: 134

<sup>128</sup> Gary B. Cohen, "Jews in German Society: Prague, 1860-1914," *Central European History*, Vol. 10, no. 1 (Mar., 1977): 30; Sayer, *The Coasts of Bohemia*, 85-86

<sup>129</sup> White, *A July Holiday*, 131-132

built space, or “the difference in architecture,” coupled with an observation of the city’s population and the human space it creates for itself. While White manifestly could have chosen a different subset of the population to focus upon, he picked the Jews, who in his account chaffer, whine, gabble, extort, ply, mutter and engage in subterfuge. All in one paragraph. White’s word choice is important, because it reflects the kind of language, laden with negative meaning and painting a deeply unflattering picture that other travel writers would also use to describe Jewish communities and individuals in Prague as well as Breslau.

As with women inhabitants of the city, travel writers’ accounts often seem torn between representing Jews as a piece of the city’s human space or ignoring them entirely, rendering them invisible from their depiction of the city. The ‘invisibility’ approach seems to have been preferred overall. If we conclude that one reason behind the consistent strategies travel writers used to construct urban space was the urge to simplify in order to map, then the representation of one less complexity, especially when it involved dealing with a population considered by travelers as distasteful, makes sense. At a time of prevalent anti-Jewish thought, this is perhaps unsurprising. But the vehemence (not to say the venom) with which travel writers sustained this binary approach is surprising.

After all, in the same vein as White, when travelers chose to use Jews as local color and a sample of the ‘exotic life’ they had encountered in these liminal Central European spaces, they could unleash a vigorously dehumanizing polemicism. Riesbeck noted that Jewish workers in the streets of Prague could easily be “distinguished from the Christian ones by their clownishness and dirt,” not to mention the “yellow handkerchief, which they are obliged to wear round their arms.” To Riesbeck, however, the Jewish condition, dirty and “infinitely behind” as it might have been, was too good for them. Riesbeck complained at length at the leniency of an Austrian government that allowed Jews

“freedom of thought” and religious liberty even though Jews were “the professed enemies of Christianity.”<sup>130</sup>

E.K. Washington’s exploration of Prague’s Jewish quarter, meanwhile, deserves quotation at length to grasp fully the role and characteristics travel writers assigned to Jews in their urban maps. Just as in White, the word choice is notable:

Here is the old Jews’ town without streets – only narrow passes, between old lofty houses, and here is a strange mournful-looking old brick building of oriental style, peaked-pointed, gabled, and irregular. You enter – it is dull, dreary, dreary, has high vaulted roof, strange seats; old men, long-bearded and serious, earnest-looking, move about in the lamp-lit darkness; and here is a large book in the Hebrew character, and old Testament without any new – this world without another. It is the place of an extinct religion, which was once glorious and imposing in Asiatic lands and old days – a religion which had God for its author and destroyer ... And here is the old Jews’ Cemetery, full of plain monuments, strewn thick as leaves in Autumn, and as dreary.<sup>131</sup>

Washington used language in his narrative as a tool to marginalize, exoticize and dehumanize Jews; to place them outside the context of ‘civilized’ life such as he and his readers understood it. Jews don’t live as other civilized people do – their town has no streets, only “narrow passes”. Their temples are “mournful-looking,” “old” and in an “oriental style,” as well as “irregular,” firmly disassociating Jews’ houses of worship from ostensibly much cheerier and modern Christian churches. Their religion is “extinct” and, even when it had been great, was marginalized in space – “Asiatic lands” – and time – “old days”. Indeed, as Washington made clear, the Jews were at fault for their own destruction. They had failed to adopt Christianity, sticking to their “old Testament without any new,” and thereby forfeiting Heaven and leading to God as their “destroyer”. Even the language Washington used to describe their community burial place had the effect of fixing and marginalizing Jews. The whole place is, like their temple, “dreary” while their “plain” monuments hold no interest and the invocation of autumnal imagery evoked death and the passing away of things.

Unfortunately, while the tendency of travel writers to fix human space in Prague and Breslau as specifically German would yield grudgingly to the passage of time and new demographic realities

<sup>130</sup> Riesbeck, *Travels through Germany*, 141-142

<sup>131</sup> Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 311-312

(especially in Prague; Breslau would remain primarily German-speaking until that city's annihilation in 1945), disparaging depictions of Jews and their roles would remain constant. Writing in 1910, Monroe would describe Jews as forming one alien, antagonistic people, alongside the Germans, sharing "a common hatred for the Bohemians." Jews owned the anti-Czech newspapers. Jews used their wealth and their political connections with the imperial Austrian government against the Czechs, and so exerted "an influence in the kingdom altogether out of proportion to their numerical strength." The familiar anti-Semitic tropes manifest themselves. Monroe uncritically quoted for his readers a lengthy excerpt from an American novel *The Witch of Prague* which described Prague's Jews as "crooked, bearded, filthy, vulture-eyed ... chattering, hook-nosed and loose-lipped, grasping fat purses with lean fingers ... terrible in intelligence, vile in heart, contemptible in body, irresistible in the unity of their greed." He reported the opinion that "the Jews are obtaining a position which menaces the agricultural and industrial proletariat of Bohemia."<sup>132</sup> Such was the depiction of Jews in Prague that Washington built into his narrative representing human space in the city.

Travel writers do not generally seem to have treated the Jewish community of Breslau with any more respect or sensitivity than White, Riesbeck, Washington or Monroe had used in Prague. We have already seen, in the previous chapter, how J. Ross Browne related the story of his overly-eager landlord, "a dapper little Jew" who he presented as eloquent in praise of Breslau with, of course, purely pecuniary motives. As Browne winkingly recounted, the Jewish landlord ended his spiel on the glories and virtues of sightseeing Breslau by telling him "Furthermore, I [Browne] could have a room at forty-five kreutzers a day, and breakfast, dinner, and supper a la carte."<sup>133</sup> While van Rahden tells us that "from the early 1870s to the end of imperial Germany, relations between Jews and other Breslauers were close and marked by mutual acceptance," travel writers did not commit themselves to presenting the same reality

<sup>132</sup> Monroe, *Bohemia and the Čechs*, 181-186

<sup>133</sup> Browne, "Poland Over-Ground and Under-Ground," 721-722

of fairly widespread integration.<sup>134</sup> They singled out Jews to fix their location and role in Breslau's human space much as travel writers had done in Prague.

Sometimes Jews seemed to be the one of the only groups that did stand out in Breslau. Radford Ramble, who visited in 1836, thought the entire city was nothing but Jews or soldiers. "The entire male population seemed to be either soldiers or Jews," he wrote, and although he explained that this was due to the distinctive "military foraging-caps ... and, altogether ... very martial appearance," of the militia present in the city, he was silent on how the Jews were distinguished.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, for Ramble as for others, Jews were a salient point of Breslau's human landscape – to the point where soldiers only stood alongside them in visibility because they had uniforms to set them apart from other civilians in the city.

However, despite these depictions of Jews as separate and apart from the normal population of the city, an element of the exotic and unfamiliar in their own right, we lack the sort of in-depth, lengthy negative portrayals of Jews found in travelogues written about Prague. We can find one clue as to why this might be so in William George Clark's writing. He described the religious split of Breslau between Catholics and Protestants and, in the fashion of an afterthought, added "there is a numerous colony of Jews," as well.<sup>136</sup> Unlike in Prague, Jewish Breslauers did not possess a specific physical quarter or space of the city as well-known and limited as Josefov. They were only a dispersed "colony" and not, as Washington had noted in Prague, possessors of their own "Jews' town".<sup>137</sup> This decoupling of people from place in Breslau may very well have made it more difficult for travel writers to visit a concentration of Jews in their 'environment' and observe, catalog and distort them for the sake of their narrative construction.

Nevertheless, travel writers in Breslau focused on Jews as a separate, notable category of human space in similar fashion to those in Prague. Jews, like women and ethnolinguistic minorities in

<sup>134</sup> Rahden, *Jews and Other Germans*, 3

<sup>135</sup> Radford Ramble, *Travelling opinions and sketches in Russia and Poland*, London: John Macrone, 1836: 204

<sup>136</sup> Clark, "Poland," 235-236

<sup>137</sup> Washington, *Echoes of Europe*, 311-312

the city, were fair targets for marginalization and/or exoticization. Their treatment by travel writers as elements of human space in the construction of Prague/Breslau imaginaries tells us much about the common sets of assumptions and approaches travelers took to the Central European city's human space from 1700-1914.

When travel writers approached the problem of representing human space in Breslau and Prague, they reached for solutions that enabled them to bring order, in the form of the narrative structure they created, to disordered, illegible foreign places. Sometimes these approaches were techniques of long-standing, with deep roots, such as the approach to women. Most travel writers were men, and travel writing had long held foreign women beyond the pale of northwestern 'civilized' Europe as accessible, erotic and notable for their physical appearance – nothing else. Those women became elevated peaks on the male travel writer's topography of human space. If men did not present women as erotic subjects, then men simply did not present them as a feature of the lived city at all, rendering women invisible in the cityscape they constructed. Moreover, as we observed, women travel writers generally participated in this discourse of sexual erasing, failing to mention, interview or include other women in their narratives.

A similar technique of rendering populations invisible or alien is extant in the traveler writers' approach to ethnolinguistic minorities, such as the Czech-speaking Bohemians prior to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (after that, the same approach was flipped and used on German-speaking Bohemians) and the Polish-speaking Slavic minority in Breslau. Although travel writers acknowledge that these cities bear traces of dominance from the past, such as Breslau's Rynek and Prague's golden age under Karel IV, the dominance of Germans, and the nature of Prague and Breslau as typically 'German' cities is stressed repeatedly. This, once more, is a symptom. It is a manifestation of the underlying force in travel writing – imposing maps of understanding, schemes of order on a city, a place, a people. Treating Prague and Breslau as axiomatically German acted as shorthand, an efficient way to both affirm existing

relationships of power and political authority and sidestep lingering questions of occupation, imposition and control.

Finally, travel writers treated Jewish communities and individuals in Prague and Breslau in similar fashion, refusing to talk about the community or highlighting its existence as exotic, alien, and fascinating in a sort of mordant way. Most of the time Jews were ignored by travel writers, as was certainly the case in Breslau, where their presence is rarely highlighted in the accounts consulted for this paper. Some of the accounts for Prague, however, show what happened to the Jewish community when travelers highlighted it: they hauled out vocabulary as a tool to articulate difference, impose distance and render Jews and their spaces of the city alien.

If the landscape of human space in Breslau and Prague begins to look familiar, perhaps it is because the maps travel writers created for them were so similar. There were high points – salient populations that travelers chose to describe more than others, and whom they created a consistent discourse around. There were also featureless plains, bounded only by the horizon – null flat-lands where most of the city’s population lived, unconsulted about the shape of their city in the imaginary construction travel writers made for the readers back home. We should not be surprised at travel writers’ failure to describe the complex actuality of the city’s life-defined spaces – they were a mosaic that shifted and changed, and which even a lifetime of residence might not properly have schooled them in representing. But travelers could have approached this ideal, if only asymptotically, by offering readers the “plurality of fragmented views,” that Renzo Dubbini believed were the only way to “satisfactorily describe the urban scene.”<sup>138</sup> Instead, travel writers used techniques of marginalization and exoticization as a heuristic system to simplify the lived space of Prague and Breslau and aid them in constructing a coherent imaginary of that space for their readers. In the end, travelers valued, not the empirical objectivity they claimed, but the ideological temptation to fix human populations in

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<sup>138</sup> Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze*, 186



relationship to one another, to map them and impose order on them. That 'will to order' emerges from this study as perhaps the most powerful single underlying impulse travel writers possessed collectively, and it is that will which shaped the course of their imaginaries as if by an invisible hand.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CONCLUSION

“For ours is a most fictile world; and man is the most fingent plastic of creatures. A world not fixable; not fathomable! An unfathomable Somewhat, which is not we; which we can work with, and live amidst – and model, miraculously in our miraculous Being, and name World.” – Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution*

“Let us think the unthinkable, let us do the undoable, let us prepare to grapple with the ineffable itself, and see if we may not eff it after all.” – Douglas Adams, *Dirk Gently’s Holistic Detective Agency*

Carlyle and Adams represent well the dilemma that faced Western travel writers as they engaged in creating and responding to the discourse of travel writing about Prague and Breslau from 1700 – 1914. As Carlyle exclaimed, the world around us is “a world not fixable; not fathomable” – at base, we must acknowledge the limits of empirical knowledge, of organizing or mapping a world that is so constantly in flux. This recognition of limits bothered travel writers across the centuries. Confronted with Prague, Aubrey de la Mottraye and John Owen both made prominent mention of its unwieldy “extent,” and, implied in this, the difficulty of description.<sup>139</sup> We can only confront such difficulty, Carlyle implied, by creating a model and naming it “World”. Adams represented another strain of empiricism, the impetuous ambition to “grapple with the ineffable” and to attempt the creation of some kind of understanding. This is a powerful strain of thought in Western culture. It lay behind Will Seymour Monroe’s desire to create a better guide to Prague than the official Baedeker. It also drove the insatiable appetite in Western reading audiences for reliable reports of what the outside world was like from authoritative travel writers who had been there, done that.

Even those travel writers who embraced the conquest of the unknowable city with gusto, however, must have felt a short, sharp tug of anxiety, an awareness of their fundamental “outsider” status in a city filled with physical and human spaces they did not have the contextual knowledge or

<sup>139</sup> Mottraye, *Travels through Europe*, 1, 176-177; Owen, *Travels into different parts of Europe*, 494

time to comprehend.<sup>140</sup> William James faced a similar experience when visiting Appalachia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. His aesthetic distaste for the treeless hills and filthy hovels around him was sharply rebuked by his driver, who reminded him that locals saw both as evidence of prosperity and progress, and each crude dwelling reflected the victory of hard labor and family sacrifice. James concluded of travelers: “the spectator’s judgment is sure to miss the root of the matter, and to possess no truth. The subject judged knows a part of the world of reality which the judging spectator fails to see.”<sup>141</sup> Yet writers and publishers continued to sell travel accounts of Prague and Breslau to a receptive public throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and (long) 19<sup>th</sup> centuries until the First World War. Increasingly, those readers were buying into the “fictile world” of persuasive urban models writers constructed around Prague and Breslau.

Travel writers squared the circle by creating persuasive, if fictional and unrepresentative, imaginaries of Prague and Breslau. They engaged in an ideological discourse that remained powerfully consistent over the time and the cities examined in this paper. That consistent discourse, in turn, gave individual travel writers a prop to their authority as reliable urban empiricists – repetition of the same landmarks, orders of viewing and extant populations confirmed pre-existing mental images of the city for both writer and reader. The discourse loaned writers a set of heuristic tools, or methods of mapping, readily available to writers with limited time to experience and describe Prague or Breslau, and grappling with the ineffable quality of large, complex city environments.

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<sup>140</sup> A note from Walter Benjamin provides an example of the (humorous) way a lack of contextual understanding or local knowledge could alter travel writers’ perspectives on a city like Prague or Breslau. “It is not superfluous to observe that a foreigner, who, on arriving in a city, starts out everywhere judging by appearances, could well suppose, in coming upon these unsystematic and insignificant street names, that the reasoning of those who live here was no less loosely connected; and, certainly, if several streets presented him with base or obscene names, he would have grounds for believing in the immorality of the inhabitants.” J.B. Pujoux, *Paris a la fin du XVIII siècle* (Paris, 1801): 77 in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 521-522; Richard Sennett noted the need for time spent in the peculiar nooks of the city to gain understanding even of these odd corners. “It isn’t clear what is happening on them, who lives on them, and how to use them – at least not before spending some time on these byways and becoming involved in their secrets. In these streets people make discoveries as prosaic as an unexpected shop, an odd votive offering lodged in the cracks between two buildings, or a house of the deaf. ... Such streets are prized, we commonly say, as being full of life.” Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye*, 151

<sup>141</sup> William James quoted in: Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape*, 41

In chapter one, we saw that such heuristic tools for the built environment included several tactics common to writers of this period. Travel writers wrote about Prague and Breslau with a clean separation of city and not-city, with travel writers giving prominence to the directionality and moment of their entrance to the city. They centered the narrative model around a representative landmark, such as Charles Bridge in Prague, or lacking one such, then a representative idea, like commerce/industry in Breslau. They intentionally separated the sacred from the secular. They created oppositional imaginaries that helped further define Prague as antique, romantic, medieval, and Breslau as modern, industrial, and charmless. Finally, they re-told the same stories evoked by the same spaces, such as the Hradschin and the defenestration of Prague, indissolubly linking space with specific time and memory. In doing so, travelers fashioned a Prague or Breslau that felt manageable. They also revealed their travel writing as a genre implicated in a kind of Scottian high modern project for imposing order on illegible spaces. The stories they chose to report (the death of Blind King John at Agincourt; the defenestration of Prague and ignition of religious war) reflected Western concerns and interests. Travelers chose to emphasize Breslau's industrial modernity, and not its medieval history, because it reflected Western interest and anxiety about the rise of Prussia (eventually Germany) as a power. What writers chose to include, and exclude, can tell us much about the writers, their audience, and the liminal, not-quite-settled place of Central European cities in the Western perspective.

That revealing process of inclusion and exclusion was further elucidated in chapter two of this paper, when we examined the set of narrative strategies writers used to order human space in the city. We looked at three specific groups of Prague/Breslau inhabitants that were alternately marginalized and relegated to the valleys of travelers' urban cartographies, or exoticized and made subjects of the writer's and reader's gaze, salient points on those same maps. Travelers relegated women in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Breslau and Prague to the status of beautiful, unconscious objects prized for their decorative function in the cityscape. When reality failed to conform to this pre-existing expectation,

sources like Walter White lashed out in erotic frustration, frustrated in their desire for the kind of voyeurism and erotic accessibility we witnessed in E.K. Washington's account of the young girls of Prague. In keeping with the power and persuasive consistency of the travel writing discourse, women travel writers themselves participated equally alongside men in marginalizing women who were not young, beautiful, erotically accessible or upper-class.

Travelers also subjected the Jewish communities of Breslau and Prague to this exoticization/marginalization dichotomy. An interplay of space and population meant that Breslau's Jews, who Till van Rahden established were a prominent part of the community but who lacked a defined Jewish ghetto or quarter, were largely passed over in travel accounts. The Jews of Prague's Josefov quarter were not. Multiple accounts lavish attention on the Jewish presence in Prague. These accounts are uniformly negative and broadly anti-Semitic. They present Jews as a sort of semi-Oriental people, certainly not civilized Westerners, and by emphasizing their prominence in a city like Prague, further confirm the city's liminal status as not-quite-Oriental, but not-quite-European either.

Finally, we examined in depth how travel writers treated the presence of ethnolinguistic, Slavic-speaking minorities in Prague and Breslau. We concluded that there was evidence for a consistent marginalization of Poles in Breslau and Czech-speaking Bohemians in Prague.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, this marginalization and the corresponding central role of Prussian and Austrian German-speaking elites revealed a further ideological choice made by travel writers, in support of existing power structures. This

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<sup>142</sup> For example, see Peter Bugge's analysis of British travel writing in Bohemia for marginalized and ghostly residents of the city. "Gleig also brings up another trope commonly associated with Prague, namely its power as a place of memory. The city, we hear, 'more completely separates [him] from the present' than any other city in the world. Every building, street, or square seems to him 'connected by the strong link of association with the mightiest and the most enduring struggle of principle in which the Christian world ever was engaged'. But in Gleig's accounts of this struggle and its sites in Prague the Bohemians are present only as ghosts, not in the present." Bugge, "Something in the View Which Makes You Linger," 18

capped a process of simplifying, sorting and ordering human space in Breslau and Prague that was, like the parallel procedure travel writers applied to physical space, an exercise in ideological choice.<sup>143</sup>

A critical appraisal of travel accounts as ideological documents is significant for the ways in which it takes the orderly, incomplete imaginaries of Prague and Breslau writers drafted between 1700 and 1914, and uses them to expose processes of narrative construction, lend insight into biases and prejudices of the time, and reassess the genre as participating in the kind of order imposition James C. Scott would record in later high modernistic urban planning. In addition, Dennis Porter writes that travel accounts “have traditionally been the vehicle by which our knowledge of things foreign has been mediated. As such they merit a more sustained, less belletristic attention than has frequently been accorded them.”<sup>144</sup> Scholarship on travel writing has for the most part been concerned with important questions of gender, period, regional coverage and other topics. Yet travel writing is also a lens through which to understand the situation of representative Central European cities like Breslau and Prague in the Western imagination. In so much as that is true, introducing approaches from the rich historiography of urban space help frame a critical review of travel accounts from this period and open the way to future insights from other scholars. Doubtless, they will soon discover that the corpus of travel writing on Prague and Breslau, like the cities themselves, is of “vast extent,” an “ineffable” subject demanding rigorous empirical commitment and, yes, not a little imaginary construction of their own.

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<sup>143</sup> Topographies such as the map of human space in the city were not exercises in pure empiricism but, “as George Duby puts it, ‘The topography that the geographer has before his eyes and attempts to understand depends of course on elements as material as geological formations, but it also depends, much more than one would think, on mental representations, value systems, and an ideology. Moreover, it represents the translation, the inscription on the terrain, of the whole of a culture.’” Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze*, 10

<sup>144</sup> Porter, *Haunted Journeys*, 3

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