HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

Title	Marijeta Bozovic and Matthew D. Miller, eds., Watersheds: Poetics and Politics of the Danube River (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), 380 pp.
Author(s)	Abe, Kenichi
Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 39, 99-100
Issue Date	2018
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/ASI.39.99
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/84116
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	39_08_pp.99-100.pdf

Hokkaido University Collection of Scholarly and Academic Papers : HUSCAP

Marijeta Bozovic and Matthew D. Miller, eds., *Watersheds: Poetics and Politics of the Danube River* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), 380 pp.

In 1942, Martin Heidegger delivered a lecture course on Hölderlin's hymn "The Ister" in which he claimed that rivers and their origins will be the test of what people can become. This discourse was controversial because he was dealing with politics as philosophers do, i.e., through poetry. Moreover, his Germanocentric approach had enormous repercussions for the treatment of the Danube in later generations. During the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, two ambitious books on the Danube, Claudio Magris' *Danube* (1986) and Peter Esterhazy's *The Glance of Countess Hahn-Hahn* (1991), appeared and marked a change of currents. These travelogues brought new perspectives toward the river. Magris nostalgically describes the multicultural space of the Danubian monarchy, whereas Esterhazy tries to relativize Magris' work with experimental writing, such as a parody of Calvino's *Invisible City*. Here, literary works went before academic studies; however, a group of scholars based at Colgate University in Hamilton, NY, have attempted to fill this gap.

As the Danube connects 10 countries and carries the flow of economic, cultural, and other forms of international exchange, the approach to the river must be flexible as well. Hence, the 14 chapters in this work from the multidisciplinary field of Danube studies each have their own academic approaches. These approaches vary from exploring the image of the Danube in Austrian and Central/Eastern European cinematic history (Chapter 2), its assimilation and exclusion in Viennese popular music (Chapter 3), textual analysis on Elfriede Jelinek and the Roma as a Danubian tragedy (Chapter 7), to an anthropological study on environmental conflicts involving hydraulic infrastructure and turbid water at the Ukrainian end of the Danube (Chapter 14). However, the authors' interests coincide in employing the suggestive term "Danubia," which "serves [...] as a river-oriented cultural concept to shadow, challenge, and complicate official politics' unfolding" (p. xvii).

The two main orientations of the book can be summarized as follows: first, there is a marked preference for the "Black Danube" over the "Beautiful Blue Danube"; i.e., the authors attempt to highlight the darker memories and unmastered histories of bloodshed. The slaughter of the Jews and Serbs in Novi Sad by Hungarian troops in January 1942 was examined several times through an analysis of András Kovács' film *Cold Days* (1966) (Chapter 9) and an essay by Dragan Kujundžić (Chapter 11). This shows a historical approach that tries to explore the depths of memories that Magris and others tried to evade.

Second, the authors' focus on Central and Southeastern Europe leads to a reevaluation of the East. Not only Heidegger's appropriation of classical culture for Germany, which is one of the central currents in the studies on the river, but also the omniscience of Magris' work left the Germanocentric imprint of his orientation. Against these currents, this book tends to take the Danube in a broader sense in terms of time and space. Kujundžić's essay "Against the Stream: The Danube, the video, and the Nonbiodegradables of Europe" (Chapter 11) makes up the core of this volume. Kujundžić, who also participated in producing a two-part video-film-essay-installation, *Frozen Time, Liquid Memories*, discusses *The Ister*, a 2004 documentary by two Australian students of philosophy and political theory, David Barison and Daniel Ross, remarking on the nonbiodegradable flotsam in the river; the image repeats several times in *The Ister*.

Kujundžić states that "[t]he plastic garbage thus becomes the non-locatable, silent, pre-symbolic, uncanny, visual 'other,' dispersed through the narrative about the river and about the 'west'" (p. 237).

Kujundžić also mentions, "the interruption of Europe, the West, and of the river flow by means of the destroyed bridges, marks the epoch by means of which Western modernity violently interrupted yet again the flow of its own history by a rupture" (p. 238). When the image of flotsam in the Danube is an object of academic study, a shift has taken place in discourses on the river, i.e., from a Germanocentric approach to a multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual one. At the same time, this book goes beyond the Danubian study and shows us the possibility of transnational culture in general.

However, it is true that some points can be improved. The selection of themes in this volume is unclear; we feel that there is little necessity for the analysis of the transatlantic transference in Kafka's *Amerika* (Chapter 5) to be included in this volume. The diversity of approaches causes an unexpected resonance (the image of fog in *Cold D100ays* responds to the turbidity of the river) and a vague correlation among the papers. We can find few things in common between the folk in socialist Romanian architecture and the deposits at the ends of the Danube. An axis for orientation would be indispensable for any further study. Nevertheless, the aim to create a new river-oriented study has just begun. We expect that studies on Danubia will continue and will be refined.

Abe Kenichi