

The Enchanted Garden or The Red Flag: Eastern Europe in Late Nineteenth-Century British Travel Writing.

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

**The Enchanted Garden" or "The Red Flag":
Eastern Europe in Late Nineteenth-Century British Travel
Writing**

Katarina Gephardt (bio)

At the turn of the twentieth century, parts of Eastern Europe were yet to be explored by Western travelers, while others had opened to tourist travel. British travel writing of the *fin-de-siècle* reflected this shift, representing the region alternately as civilized and savage, familiar and alien. *Dracula* (1897), a novel that continues to influence Western perceptions of Eastern Europe, appears to parody the ambivalence of British travel writers on whose observations Bram Stoker based his opening chapters. When Jonathan Harker, Stoker's protagonist, crosses the river Danube in "Buda-Pest" in search of Dracula, he finds himself in the Orient: "The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering the East," he writes in shorthand, and he reminds himself to record a paprika dish recipe (1). Harker's initial reaction is to categorize and, thus, to contain his experience of traveling into "one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe" (1). Harker's strategies of viewing, writing, and mapping, which keep a safe distance between the traveling subject and the native objects, fail him when he encounters Dracula, an accomplished Occidentalist who has already mapped his invasion of London with the aid of "a vast number of English books" (19).¹ Dracula's affinity with Harker, which is reflected in a famous mirror scene, presents a nightmarish reversal of the conventional subject and object positions found in British travel writing, for **[End Page 292]** Dracula's purpose is to prey on English bodies. Although the alternating patterns of similarity and difference are common to all forms of travel writing, Eastern European travel writing depicts a region particularly close to home for British travelers and, thus, generates a characteristic combination of the alien and the familiar that Bram Stoker successfully exploits in *Dracula*.

Late nineteenth-century British travel writing on Eastern Europe parallels a development in travel writing on Western Europe, particularly Italy, in the early nineteenth century, when the Grand Tour was superseded by tourist forms of travel. The rise of tourism in Western Europe required travel writers to abandon the scholarly coverage of antiquities and to present the already charted Grand Tour sights in a

more subjective light. Conscious of the imminent advent of tourism in Eastern Europe, late nineteenth-century British travel writers tend to respond to fellow Western travelers with anti-tourist rhetoric similar to their early nineteenth-century predecessors in Italy. However, travel accounts of Eastern Europe present the experience as that of discovery and exploration in a way that resembles travel accounts of the non-European world. The rare systematic accounts of Western travel writing on the region generally focus on images of Eastern Europe rather than on the ways the specific East European itineraries lead British travel writers to adapt the existing tradition of travel writing. In this article, I demonstrate how representative travel narratives simultaneously draw on and contribute to the established modes of British travel writing at a period when Eastern Europe experienced dramatic political and cultural changes in the decades leading up to World War I. After providing a brief genesis of the ways Western Europe invented Eastern Europe as its less civilized "other" from the eighteenth century onward, I analyze the interplay of alterity and familiarity in two examples of British travel writing produced at different historical moments: Emily Gerard's *The Land Beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures, and Fancies* (1888), which provided an important source for Bram Stoker's information on vampires in *Dracula*, and Harry de Windt's *Through Savage Europe* (1907), a photojournalistic account of a vast portion of Eastern Europe. These texts represent British travel writers' tendency to depict the region as a quaint but potentially gothic and embodied space. The purpose of my argument is to trace the source of the images that engendered Stoker's *Dracula* and continue **[End Page 293]** to circulate in Western popular imagination in late nineteenth-century British travel writing.

As a contrastive analysis of these travelogues indicates, what gets marked as familiar or alien depends on the observers' gender and length...

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