International Cultural Centre and Wien Museum. *The Myth of Galicia.* Eds. Jacek Purchla, Żanna Komar, Wolfgang Kos, Monika Rydiger, and Werner Michael Schwarz. Album published on the occasion of the exhibition *The Myth of Galicia*, organized by the International Cultural Centre in cooperation with the Wien Museum. Kraków: International Cultural Centre, 2014. 480 pp. Illustrations. 120 PLN, cloth.

Where can you find Galicia? For the German-Jewish author Karl Emil Franzos, it was *halb-Asie*, or "half-Asia." His coreligionist, the writer Joseph Roth, evoked echoes of an African "heart of darkness" in some of his fiction set there (Hartmann 230). The Austrian diplomat and intellectual Dr. Emil Brix shrewdly pointed out that Galicia "became at one and the same time a distant province and a near suburb of Vienna" (100).

The legendary Habsburg realm of the Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria transcends time and space. The intellectual initiative for an exhibition and the subsequent catalogue of art, maps, and artifacts loaned by a distinguished multinational list of museums, galleries, and collectors—all accompanied by a fascinating collection of essays exploring the multifaceted meanings of this enigmatic land—was launched in Poland. Prof. Jacek Purchla, the director of the International Cultural Centre in Kraków, reminds us in his introductory essay that his organization, which was "born from the political watershed of 1989," was in the "epicenter of Galician mythology" (90). This mythology was greatly facilitated by contemporary Austria's rediscovery of its multinational Habsburg heritage, a rediscovery in no small part encouraged by Dr. Brix, who co-authored the seminal *Projekt Mitteleuropa* in Vienna in 1986 and opened Austria's Consulate General in Kraków.

The exhibition and accompanying volume, which brought together "experts in all things Galician" (Purchla 91), including historians, writers, and cultural institutions from Austria, Poland, and Ukraine, coincided with the centenary of the start of the First World War, a shattering inflection point that forever destroyed the old Galicia and gave rise to myths of "extraordinary vitality," as labelled by the Ukrainian academic Yaroslav Hrytsak. These resilient myths have not only survived and gathered momentum but also—just as one hundred years ago—have an impact on the political future of all of Europe (Hrytsak 119).

Wolfgang Kos, the director of the Wien Museum, points out that the Austrians helped develop the concept of the project in dialogue with Kraków, especially in efforts to put myths "through analysis and scrutiny from a variety of perspectives" (92).

Myths can carry a greater veracity than truths, as Monika Rydiger reminds us in her essay "Myth and history," where she writes that "myth is a communication not of information but of meanings," set not in "a linear,

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historical time" but in a continuity that "may be interrupted, halted and reversed" (241). Katrin Ecker, in her essay on meanings in myth, expands on this idea by noting: "An enduring and decisive difference between myth and history is that myth, in contrast to historiography, works and functions through emotions" (238).

Dr. Brix restrains his emotions in carefully lauding the Habsburg administration of Galicia for its ability to create "a dedicated space of Polish, Ukrainian and German-Jewish cultural blossoming," which was an effective "model of civilisation" addressing the challenges of pluralistic societies living together in one state (102). This is an enormously powerful myth that has sustained generations of Galicians and their descendants worldwide. Furthermore, this myth fuses elegantly with the proclaimed values of strength in diversity in today's European Union.

Krzysztof Zamorski, in his essay "On Galician myths," sarcastically challenges "the myth of the cultural polyphony of Galicia," where "various voices resounded in polyphonic harmony akin to the fugues of Johann Sebastian" (130). On the contrary, he argues. Galicia was a territory burdened with poor social and economic conditions and the various populations despised each other; in reality it was "a cacophony of traditions, intentions, and ambitions" in a "sea of mutual accusations, more or less justified" (131).

This viewpoint is amplified by the unsentimental Martin Pollack, whose landmark book *Nach Galizien. Von Chassiden, Hutzulen, Polen und Ruthenen. Eine imaginäre Reise durch die verschwundene Welt Ostgaliziens und der Bukowina* revived the concept of Galicia for the German-language world in the 1980s. He acidly notes in his essay, "Galicia: A faraway, foreign land," how the indulgence of schmaltzy nostalgia for a long-destroyed folkloric Jewish world reflects the ignorance and arrogance of people in the West. He asks, "How are we to explain the fact that today many people all but yearn for the world so brutally destroyed by their fathers and grandfathers?" Furthermore, this yearning ignores what Pollack calls the "country of unknown talents." These talents include Ukrainian authors such as Vasyl Stefanyk, whose depiction of Galicia does not fit the prevailing nostalgia. The "Western gaze" is incomplete and, above all, dishonest (200-01).

Two sinister offstage presences are merely alluded to. The Russian/Soviet giant to the east and Germany in its later malign incarnation as the Third Reich do not, of course, fit into the imperial Austrian chronological framework of this project, but they had a decisive effect on altering the fate of Galicia's various populations and mutilating memory and myth.

Visually sumptuous (the ironic erotic paintings by the Lviv artist Vlodko Kostyrko are especially striking) and a cartographer's delight, *The Myth of*

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Galicia offers nuance, ambiguity, and wry deconstructions of what are perceived as dominant narratives in its grand overview of the complex histories and art of what is once again a European borderland. The only puzzling lapse in an otherwise excellent volume is the lack of an institutional affiliation or short biography for almost all of the contributors.

While for Austrians, Jews, and Poles, Galicia is the rosy—or tragic—past, for Ukrainians it very much remains a politically urgent prologue. As the public intellectual Mykola Riabchuk asserts, "The westernmost part of the country symbolizes Ukraine's Europeanness" and, thus, "the myth of Galicia is the most future-oriented, the most clearly connected to the idea of (European) modernity and modernization" (138).

Dr. Rydiger reminds us, "Although Galicia is gone, it still functions as an imagined space" (241). Within the imagination, the search for Galicia continues. So, again, where can you find Galicia? Perhaps Maria Kłańska in her discussion of German-language writers and their encounter with the mythical realm, provides the best answer: "Galicia was to remain the 'landscape of the soul'" (222).

Peter Straton Bejger
San Francisco

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