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Migration and Mobility in the Modern Age, edited by Anika Walke, Jan Musekamp, and Nicole Svobodny, focuses on East Central Europe and Russia, combining methodological and theoretical approaches to migration and mobility studies with detailed case studies on ways of moving, people in motion, and narrations of migrations and mobility from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries. The overall question is how migration and mobility altered identities and affected images of the “other.”

In the introductory chapter Anika Walke outlines the volume’s topical and methodological framework. The term “mobility” is defined separately from “migration” as a subject of interest in its own right—the ability to move. Walke draws attention to the nexus between spatial and social mobility, the impact of frequent border redrawings and increased efforts to guard borders in Eastern Europe during the period considered, the importance of the means of transportation for migration history, as well as the broad issue of forced migration, which in the geographical area considered includes topics such as ethnic cleansing, expulsion, deportations, population “exchange,” and displaced persons.

The case studies are divided into three parts. The first one centers on ways of moving. Using the example of the route between Paris and Saint Petersburg, Jan Musekamp discusses the phenomenon of shrinking spaces in the nineteenth century. When historian Nikolai Karamzin traveled from the Russian capital to France in 1789, it took him 35 days to get from Saint Petersburg to Berlin and another 14 days from Berlin to Paris. During the nineteenth century, the gradual implementation of better roads, railroads, steamships, and the telegraph had dramatic effects on travel times and the transmission of information. Indeed, railroads and telegraphs were among the most important elements of nineteenth-century globalization. However, as Musekamp concludes, political events such as the two world wars and the redrawings of political borders after 1918 reversed this process for large parts of East Central and Eastern Europe. Nathaniel D. Woods provides a case study of early adapters’ dreams of personal mobility by the example of the advent of bicycles and automobiles in Poland. Nicole Svobodny’s contribution focuses on how physical and psychic mobility were represented in the diary of the Polish-Russian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky. Chia Yin Hsu considers through the lens of postcolonial studies the impact of the Chinese Eastern Railway in fostering an epistemological order for tourists and Russian émigrés in Manchuria during the interwar period.
The second part presents case studies of people in motion. Anna Weinstein’s contribution analyzes the structures and functioning of the Russian Artistic Circle in Paris, which in the years preceding World War I was just one of several Russian artistic societies in the French capital. Keely Stauter-Halstead presents the issue of sex trafficking in partitioned Poland as a migration problem, suggesting that the melodramatic narrative at the time of sexual coercion and captivity was at least partially tied to larger anxieties about the shifting role of women in late nineteenth-century Eastern Europe. Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch examine Soviet evacuations during World War II in the framework of migration history. Christopher J. Ward discusses Soviet and non-Soviet (Latin American and East Central European) railway workers’ experiences during the construction of the Baikal-Amur Mainline Railway between 1974 and 1984.

The third part concentrates on literatures of migration and mobility. Elizabeth Blake’s chapter is about Siberian narratives of Polish exiles between the uprisings of 1830–1831 and 1863. Harriet Murrav presents the temporary exile of Russian-language Formalist writer and critic Viktor Shklovsky and Yiddish prose author David Bergelson to Berlin in the 1920s. George Gasyna discusses the myth of the literary Gastarbeiter (guest worker) through the example of Polish writer, journalist, and critic Andrzej Stasiuk. And Andrew Wanner’s contribution “Journeys of Identity” looks at the current phenomenon of Soviet-born, Russian-speaking Jews who have become fiction writers in Germany and Austria, such as Lena Gorelik, Vladimir Vertlib, Olga Grjasnowa, Katja Petrowskaja, Wladimir Kaminer, and Jan Himmelfarb.

On balance, most contributions provide interesting insights into multiple facets of the modern history of migration and mobility to, from, and within East Central Europe and Russia. However, the volume on the whole is topically too heterogeneous and largely leaves out some of the big topics of the field such as ethnic cleansing and population “exchanges” in the processes of the building and consolidation of nation states, or the mass exoduses in the course of politically and ideologically motivated persecutions, as well as after unsuccessful uprisings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.