

editorial

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Travel writers have always relied to a good degree on barbarians. Barbarians in the offing spice up any journey. It was just over a hundred years ago that the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy wrote his much celebrated poem *Waiting for the Barbarians*. As it happens, Cavafy's barbarians never arrived:

“Now what is going to happen to us without barbarians?
They were, those people, a kind of solution.”

The demise of barbarians has undoubtedly made travel tamer in Europe. Nowadays you can brave the route via the Despeñaperros pass to Andalucía without fear of being waylaid by brigands along the way. Even the Balkans — the very name once conjured up images of intrigue and insurgency — have been tamed. Believe it or not, the slow train to Sarajevo is perfectly safe nowadays.

But on what are travel writers expected to dwell, if they cannot write about barbarians? For generations, we have been regaled with tales of imminent danger. Just think! Tobias Smollett's fear of being poisoned by garlic or robbed by Burgundian brigands, Mary Wollstonecraft's worries over rough Scandinavian manners, and Ann Radcliffe's Gothic accounts of rampant armies laying siege to the Rhine valley.

There are no barbarians. No longer do the sirens' voices lure us to *terrae incognitae*. The rhetoric of peril has been upstaged by modernity. So our journeys become quests of other kinds — a search for our own souls perhaps, or merely an attempt to refresh our habits of perception by seeing, smelling and feeling something different. The barbarians may have gone, but the lure of 'the Other' still remains.

In this *hidden europe*, we make tracks for places that earlier writers suggested were full of barbarians. Today the mountains of Montenegro are rather lovely. South Ossetia is interesting rather than really dangerous, and the only real peril on the island of Helgoland is that a storm might play havoc with the boat schedules.

In this issue we welcome three outside contributors. Karlos Zurutuza has written for us before. Rudolf Abraham and Amanda Wilson both pen essays for *hidden europe* for the first time. To all three our warmest thanks.

Nicky Gardner & Susanne Kries
EDITORS

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front cover: Helgoland's famous sea stack *Lange Anna* (Tall Anna)

top left: the red cliffs of Helgoland, Germany

middle left: the library in the Bosnian town of Brčko

bottom left: Kučka krajina mountains, Montenegro (photo by Rudolf Abraham)

above right: Settle railway station, England

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