



Kafka's Travels: Exoticism, Colonialism, and the Traffic of Writing

John Zilcosky

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In 1916, Kafka writes of *The Sugar Baron*, a dime-store colonial adventure novel, "[it] affects me so deeply that I feel it is about myself, or as if it were the book of rules for my life." John Zilcosky reveals that this perhaps surprising statement-made by the sedentary, Prague-bound poet of modern isolation-is part of a network of remarks that exemplify Kafka's ongoing preoccupation with popular travel writing, exotic fantasy, and travel technology. Taking this biographical peculiarity as a starting point, *Kafka's Travels* elegantly re-reads Kafka's major works (*Amerika*, *The Trial*, *In the Penal Colony*, *The Castle*) through the lens of fin de siècle travel culture. Making use of previously unexplored literary and cultural materials-travel diaries, train schedules, tour guides, adventure novels-Zilcosky argues that Kafka's uniquely modern metaphors of alienation emerge out of the author's complex encounter with the utopian travel discourses of his day. The book offers a lucid, readable introduction into Kafka's life and work, and sophisticated analysis of Kafka's major writings in relation to contemporary literary theory.

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