

It is unusual to read a contemporary scholarly book on cinema that spends as much time on plot descriptions as Insdorf's book does, but in terms of his lesser-known later films this is indeed necessary, given the difficulties that remain for the reader to actually see the films; unfortunately in the case of some films the chapters go little beyond recounting key narrative events and dialogue, rather than doing any fresh analysis. In the better chapters of the book, however, Insdorf combines descriptions of the films with key analysis of their visual style, pointing in *The Noose*, for example to a repetition of circular motifs indicating the lack of any escape for the doomed suicidal protagonist, as well as other key aspects of the mise-en-scène including lighting and camera movements that reinforce this fatal foreshadowing. Insdorf also does a good job of contextualizing the film in relation to both critical assessments and other filmmakers, as well as engaging with the writing and career of Marek Hłasko, who wrote the story that the film is based on.

Other chapters follow a similar pattern—detailed descriptions both of narrative and (audio)visual style, followed by engagements with the literary sources of the films, and critical evaluations of them. In cases like *The Saragossa Manuscript*, there is a relatively rich field of interpretations to draw on, such as the film's complex relations with orientalism, Judaism, and Islam, as well as the issue of what it might have to say, if anything, about contemporary Poland in the 1960s. But here, as elsewhere, it is not always clear what Insdorf adds to these pre-existing accounts. Perhaps two things stand out, however; a formal interest in the repetition of a circular or perhaps helix-like structure in Has's work; the idea of a kind of labyrinth in which protagonists in very different narrative worlds are caught; and an emphasis on the importance of Judaism for Has, which not only inflect and orient the readings of key films, such as this one and *The Hourglass Sanatorium*, but also her more biographical engagements with Has's career. In the chapter on the latter film, Insdorf mentions rumors that Has himself had Jewish ancestry that her own research tends to disprove, yet also notes the considerable interest in Judaism, Jewish writers, and the Kabbalah throughout Has's work: "these records make it all the more intriguing that Has was so deeply and consistently drawn to Judaism" (80).

Despite its largely self-imposed limitations to brief textual engagements with Has's work, this book is a valuable contribution not only to Polish cinema studies but studies of world cinema more generally, and hopefully will serve as an impetus for other critics and scholars to add to and enrich this engagement with an unjustly neglected filmmaker.

MICHAEL N. GODDARD
University of Westminster

Form and Instability: Eastern Europe, Literature, Postimperial Difference. By Anita Starosta. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2016. Flashpoints Series. x, 221 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. \$34.95, paper. doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.324

What is there *really* to know about modern Polish literature? This might constitute a slippery question for most readers of *Slavic Review* who do not happen to be Polish studies specialists. Anita Starosta's new book seeks to offer a set of generalist responses, and a novel theoretical structure that would contain them. The greatest insight of her lucid though too cursory account is that it is a corpus that indexes and articulates a set of existential conditions elaborated from a place of temporal delay and general untranslatability, and that these conditions and practices, in sum,

both mark and enact a kind of cultural mutual illegibility with respect to western audiences.

The book is broken into two parts and five chapters, of which all but one examine selected narratives by a major twentieth century Polish author in the twin contexts of Polish marginality or hermeticism which enables forgetting and “misprision” (165), and a frisson of “postimperial difference” that these works presumably offer readers today (Chapter 2 comparatively reads two authors, one of a late nineteenth century writer). In sequence, the writers under discussion are Tadeusz Konwicki, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Joseph Conrad (re-assimilated for the text’s purposes), Witold Gombrowicz, and Jozef Tischner.

In Chapter 1, “The Passing of Eastern Europe,” Starosta traces the spectacular changes that the region has experienced over the last several decades. This reading of postimperial difference is taken up again in the final Chapter, where she analyzes a recent French work of comparative philology, the *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*, to see whether the new status of eastern Europe has at all increased its visibility and indeed its representability. She shows that marginalization of east European culture is still emphatically the *modus operandi*, the *Vocabulaire* devoting exactly zero space to Poland’s thinkers and movements.

Starosta’s project is to resituate Polish culture into a liminal place, between monocultures (western Europe through its synecdoche, Paris) and political blocs (Cold War binaries). The emergent Poland is variously a constitutive part of eastern Europe and an important player in the postcolonial, “postimperial” world—with the two terms applied sequentially and sometimes interchangeably, as in the chapter on Conrad. The resulting slippage and lack of denotative precision constitutes the first obstacle to the argument’s legibility: she means to say that Poland is actually both an “eastern” European space/culture, thus nominally delayed, inferior, “othered” both through external representational practices and internally, in response to those practices, and post-colonial, its cultural offerings over the last 200 years providing proof of a pedagogy of the marginalized. This tenuous positionality, Starosta tries to show but not always convincingly, has guided Polish national self-expression and “successful[ly] reifi[ed]” its cultural identity (137). It is somewhat unfortunate that the authors chosen for explication of the central hypothesis occupy the “spaces” of contestation only partially: for example, a propos of “postimperial” discourse, it seems an anachronism to devote a chapter to Gombrowicz or Konwicki, who wrote between the 1930s and 1980s, but not Andrzej Stasiuk or Olga Tokarczuk, who are writing now, and may have something direct to say about postimperial “difference” as a category of experience felt on one’s skin. Referring to Conrad as principally a Polish or even east European writer, when his own repeated proclamations on the subject sought to align his life and particularly his work (perhaps too desperately?) with Britain, when he wrote his fictions and memoirs *only* in English is even more confusing. The book is beset by a still more fundamental problem, however, with respect to the thematic trajectory and the readerly horizon of expectation established thereby.

That central shortcoming of the book’s approach is one of effective scope, and this is signaled right in the title. Despite the foregrounding of “Eastern Europe” the study is only remotely interested in this region as a whole, focusing almost exclusively on Polish literature and culture, both domestic and diasporic. Anyone interested in a sustained discussion of how east European cultures in Poland’s general neighborhood may have negotiated problems of social, cultural, and political transition from state socialism to being part of a globalized market economy, or what authors hailed from these places—as well as literary and cultural critics who “globally” work on these regions—may have written on the subject, will be disappointed. And even the discussion of the Polish experience seems rushed, the author more interested

in laying out the groundwork for framing the discourse of audience reception and reading theory as a way of explaining minor-literature legibility, “cognizability” (131), and marketability (though that Deleuzoguattarian term does not appear anywhere, in favor of Franco Moretti’s notion of “distant reading” and “the great unread,” effectively a passing over of texts coming from “marginal” cultures, which consigns them to perpetual exclusion [133–35]).

Despite the misleading subtitle—Literature, Postimperial Difference, and *Poland* (is what this is really about), the work, which colonizes, so to speak, new spaces of cultural contestation and cognizability in a (hoped for) post-Eurocentric world, has much to offer the general reader. Starosta deftly interrogates the space of production for the writers surveyed, proceeding from a careful articulation of formal concerns—for instance, issues of genre and belatedness—and the processes of *de*-formation exerted on art of the not exactly postimperial and not quite postcolonial Poland of the last hundred or so years.

That being said, the study does not have much to offer the specialist reader, in particular the two chapters treating the biggest “names,” the Polish-exile Gombrowicz, and the hyphenated-Polish (yet still perennially “foreign”-in-Britain) Conrad. Readers familiar with their complex personal and artistic itineraries and seeking new insight will find none here, the author mainly rehearsing well-known arguments, respectively, on form and deformation (as two posts of authentic self-articulation for the four-decade long Gombrowiczian subjectivity project), and duality and subversive irony (which undercut or multiply the meanings of Conradian textuality).

In contrast, Chapter 2, “Strategies of Accession,” where Starosta closely reads a set of lectures and essays by the famed Polish journalist and writer Ryszard Kapuscinski, merit wide recognition. Through her juxtaposition of early writings on and from a still-colonial Africa published for the early 2000s volume *The Other*, Starosta brilliantly adumbrates the extent of Janus-faced games with reality employed by this globe-trotting “reporter of reality.” The primary contribution of this chapter is her innovative reading of Kapuscinski’s blindness and insight with regard to race, which represents a continuation of Polish attitudes to the non-western and non-white “others” encountered in earlier authors, particularly Sienkiewicz’s 1910 adventure *cum* pedagogical novel for adolescents, *W pustyni i w puszczy*. Starosta offers a key revision, and in linking Kapuscinski’s treatment of “whiteness” (60–65) to Sienkiewicz’s tale’s “nesting Orientalisms” (5) and blindly “declarative” racism (66–69), performs a critical coup. Along with the introduction, (its somewhat misidentified scope notwithstanding), the judiciously prosecuted Chapter 2 reveals Starosta at her polemicizing best.

GEORGE GASZYNA

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

“The Time is Out of Joint”: Shakespeares Hamlet in den Ländern des ehemaligen Jugoslawien. By Alexandra Portmann. Materialien des Instituts für Theaterwissenschaft, Bern no.15. Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2016. 277 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Photographs. Tables. \$40.00, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2018.325

The interdisciplinary field of theater and memory studies has recognized a special connection between Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and remembrance. Throughout the play, the Danish prince compulsively remembers the noble shape of his late father; at its end, he addresses a triple summon to Horatio to see to it that he is himself remembered in Fortinbras’s new state. Somewhat more imaginatively, however, *Hamlet* can