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.

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***"The Time is Out of Joint": Shakespeares* Hamlet *in den Ländern des ehemaligen Jugoslawien*.** By Alexandra Portmann. Materialen des Instituts für Theaterwissenschaft, Bern no.15. Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2016. 277 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Chronology. Photographs. Tables. $40.00, hard bound.

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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

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become a convenient medium to remember a vanished country, its political myths, suppressed histories, and theatrical traditions. The latter option is the central theme of Alexandra Portmann's book *The Time is Out of Joint*, the first comparative study of the late-Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav productions of *Hamlet*.

The architectonics of Portmann's study is rather complex in its balancing of theoretical, synoptic, and interpretive blocks. Yet, the argument is consistent and evolves in several logical stages. In the first, theoretical stage, Portmann sets the scene for the analysis by homing in on *Schlüsselbilder* (key images), dramaturgical frames which are anchored in the text but in successive productions act as tokens of the text's polychronic afterlife (Warburg) and as tenors of theatrical agency (Worthen). In the second stage, she proceeds to define what those key images might be in the actual case of *Hamlet* and comes up with a tentative list of three: the Ghost of Hamlet's father, the spirit of memory who spurs revenge and reversal; the episode of the mousetrap, which epitomizes theater's internal memory and capacity to reflect upon itself; and, finally Fortinbras, who problematizes the remembrance of political reversals *post factum*. In the third stage, Portmann activates these key images in a dynamic analysis of six theatrical productions from the late Yugoslav and the post-Yugoslav periods, where socialist and nationalist memory narratives overlap and clash: Dušan Jovanović's *Hamlet* (2005) and Slobodan Šnajder's *Gamllet* (1987) for the figure of Ghost; the *Hamlet* productions by Ljubiša Georgievski (1989), Gorčin Stojanović (1992), and Tomaž Bandur (1990) for the mousetrap; the production of Luko Paljetak's *After Hamlet* (1994) for Fortinbras. In the fourth stage, finally, Portmann pins down several contemporaneous strands of political and theatrical memory in former Yugoslav lands, which are found at two distinct levels: the thematic content (*die inhaltliche Ebene*), which has to do with narrative adaptations of the Hamlet plot, and the dramaturgical structure (*die strukturelle Ebene*), which encompasses the sundry dramaturgical tools to enact those alternative plots.

At its most productive, Portmann's method demonstrates the great variety and connectedness of creative adaptations of Hamlet in the cultural space of former Yugoslavia. Metatheatrical strategies involved play within play, which ranged from inserting *Hamlet* into a cognate contemporary plot (Šnajder), to inserting a contemporary plot into *Hamlet* (Georgievski), to the exuberant baroque allegory of *theatrum mundi* (Pandur). There were also occasional experiments with the audiences' memories of actors' previous roles, whereby an actor playing Hamlet would be asked to take on the role of Claudius in a subsequent production (Stojanović, Jovanović). Another coveted method was refocalization often combined with plot expansion: an ironic glance was cast on the victims by self-satisfied survivors, Osric or Fortinbras (Paljetak).

When it comes to demonstrating that the *Hamlet* productions were not driven only by theatrical memories but also by neuralgic political memories nourished in the former Yugoslav republics, Portmann's argument becomes more convoluted. Namely, it faces the dual challenge of making credible links to the external political context without appearing deterministic. In Portmann's view, the *Hamlet* productions ought to be seen as a reflection foil (*Reflexionsfolie*) for conflicting memories of different nations and different historical periods, but they are also assigned the more active role of a mediating site (*Aushandlungsort*) for those discourses (16, 57). To be sure, this works well in those productions where references to Yugoslavia are explicitly interpolated into Shakespeare's plot (the level of content): the most striking effects seem to have been achieved by blending external political memories with internal theatrical memories as in the case of Šnajder's and Georgievski's *Hamlet*. If, however, no such references are apparent—Stojanović's and Pandur's productions were described as apolitical—the reader is invited to associate postmodernist ontological ambiguities (the level of structure) with more elusive concepts of the political, such

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as those formulated by Jacques Rancière and Walter Benjamin. Clearly, this leads to an entirely different type of argument that makes active mediation and subversion less likely.

Portmann's argument is most vulnerable when it ventures into one-dimensional political readings of isolated elements of the *Hamlet* productions. Suggesting that in Jovanović's production six ghosts accompanying the Ghost of Hamlet's father necessarily refer to the six republics of former Yugoslavia (83) or that in Pandur's production of Pedro Calderon de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* as Hamlet's mousetrap has to do with the revival of Catholicism in Slovenia (194) means pushing the argument beyond what it can yield and would certainly need additional evidence.

In addition to this intrinsic tension between staging political and theatrical memories, the reader may get perplexed by a few other idiosyncrasies, for instance the somewhat outdated Structuralist apparatus that categorizes analytic findings according to predetermined levels and relatively frequent misspellings of South Slavonic words (especially proper names).

Nevertheless, none of these quirks can obscure the key qualities of Portmann's book: a thoughtful, interdisciplinary theoretical framework, a balanced approach to the conflicting memory discourses of Yugoslavia and an empathetic, comprehensive reconstruction of historical stage productions of *Hamlet*. Above and beyond its immediate context, the book will appeal to scholars of theater, performance, and memory studies. It is to Portmann's credit that she has outlined the areas for the future research of *Hamlet* productions: transnational exchanges, gendered memories, and institutionalization through festivals.

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Subversive Stages: Theater in Pre- and Post-Communist Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. By Ileana Alexandra Orlich. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2017. xx, 217 pp. Bibliography. Index. $50.00, hard bound.
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I approached the invitation to review this book with some interest. "Subversive Stages" suggested to me that we would have a survey of the ways in which, as the cover suggested, "theatre practices in communist and post-communist, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria" had contributed to the fall of communism in its productions in the three countries isolated. This is something that is well needed. As I read, however, I found that "subversive stages" actually meant a set of play texts, and that "exploring theatre practices in communist and post-communist Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria" actually meant an analysis of selected play texts. Furthermore, as I read there was no analysis of any theater practices, but a set of close examinations of these texts, accompanied by some really valuable insights into the cultural conditions in the various countries that had controlled the writers concerned.

As I read on I began to realize that the book had been written by a practitioner and teacher of comparative literature, which gave the clue as to why I was beginning to find it a little frustrating because, although the choices, historical insights, and juxtapositions were fascinating, they were all seen from the point of view of the playwright rather than the practitioners—actors and directors—who must have made the chosen texts live on stage. I then realized that, in the world of this author's perceptions, "stages" meant the play texts that the author had chosen as representative of dissent. There was no particular reason given as to why these particular writers or these countries had

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