

identifies Kusturica's appreciation for Gabriel García Márquez and the Latin American tradition of magical realism as well as for the similar Balkan traditions of magical realism, which are seen in *Time of the Gypsies*, as the young main character, Perhan, has the power to make objects move with his mind.

Many who have seen Kusturica's films have thrown up their hands at how this Balkan director could move from *Time of the Gypsies*, which is so richly wrapped in the culture and history of the former Yugoslavia as seen through Romani eyes, to *Arizona Dream*, made in the American west with Johnny Depp, Jerry Lewis, and Faye Dunaway. But once more, Bertellini is impressively astute in exploring it not as an "American" film but as a work similar to those made by other foreigners in America, such as Wim Wenders, Louis Malle, and Michelangelo Antonioni. Bertellini thus sees it as a film made by a Yugoslav exploring his own themes through America with, yes, real Hollywood stars.

Without a doubt, the most powerful section of the book is Bertellini's discussion of Kusturica's most controversial film, *Underground*, which became his "most dramatic act of disconnection from Yugoslav and Western culture—whichever way one assesses his allegorical constructions" (73). Made after the Yugoslav wars and the final breakup of Yugoslavia in 1992, *Underground* starts with the tale of a Serb leader, Marko, trying to save lives during the Nazi invasions by hiding hundreds of people "underground." The narrative then becomes a dark fable, as Marko does not inform the people when the war ends and he and his team keep everyone underground for the next fifty years, until there is a final breakout and everyone realizes that not only did the war end decades ago but Yugoslavia no longer exists.

The film won the Palme d'Or at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival, but, as Bertellini describes well, critics around the world made various attacks on the film as everything from Serbian propaganda to a reversal of all of Kusturica's previous accomplishments. Bertellini is remarkable in summarizing the criticisms but then pointing out how much the film does still contain Kusturica's carnivalesque quality, with influences that include Terry Gilliam, Werner Herzog, Chaplin, and Fellini.

How does Bertellini close his insightful study of Kusturica's complex life and cinema? With hope! "It resides," he notes, "in the projects hidden away in a drawer—always numerous and fascinating, in spite of the periodic renunciations" (148).

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The Remnants of Modernity: Two Essays on Sarmatism and Utopia in Polish Contemporary Literature. By Przemysław Czapliński. Trans. Thomas Anessi. *Modernity in Question: Studies in Philosophy and History of Ideas*, vol. 6. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015. 194 pp. Notes. €47.95, hard bound.

In the case of this author, there is no need for an introduction in a specialized periodical such as *Slavic Review*, as he is at the forefront of leading Polish intellectuals. A renowned critic and a prolific scholar of contemporary literature, Przemysław Czapliński has garnered wide acclaim in Poland not only because of his groundbreaking books but also through his active presence in the literary and theater life of the last two decades. Like his previous publications—notably, *The Effect of Impassivity: Literature in Normal Times* (2004) and *Poland for Replacement: Late Modernism and Our Grand Narratives* (2009)—his latest quickly became an intellectual event that has captured the reading public's attention.

At first glance, Czapliński's book narrates recent developments in literature with

the same kind of zest we know from his previous works: it is an extensive yet intricate construction made up of political events, sociological observations, historical facts, readings of fiction, and subsequent theoretical claims. This careful interweaving of diverse discourses usually leads him to some form of a diagnosis regarding the current state of Polish literary production. In comparison with his prior publications, *The Remnants of Modernity* is a much more dynamic work in which the author puts into an agonistic motion two fundamental cultural categories of Polish modernity and tradition—Sarmatism (the dominant culture and ideology of the *szlachta*) and utopia. Considered not merely as fixed opposites but also as sites of continuous negotiations and pressures, Sarmatism and utopia—in their numerous formulations—were brought together through their shreds and remnants, yet at no stage does Czapliński perceive their struggle as a dialectical movement between modernity and tradition resulting in a predictably mixed end product.

There is a rather subtle difference, in my opinion, between decycling and recycling. Decycling is an ineffective recycling. It does not produce perfectly new forms from waste but displays signs of its provenance as if it was incapable of a complete recycling. Such a decycling of tradition was a manifold process, which replaced the romantic paradigm dominant from the second half of the nineteenth century until the systemic change of 1989. According to Maria Janion, after this date, mass culture became the central model for Polish culture, but Czapliński devotes considerable energy to reconstructing the engagement of Sarmatian ideals during the entire postwar period. The understanding of the Sarmatian tradition here is deliberately not historical; for Czapliński, Sarmatism resides in the sphere of a myth powerful enough to subdue modernity. Moreover, he is solely interested in how the fragments of this Catholic gentry culture were decycled. In doing so, he points out that the massification of this elitist legacy, mainly through cinematic adaptations of Henryk Sienkiewicz's novels and contemporary works of literature, was a modernizing process that turned workers into egalitarian Sarmatians. This claim may be one of Czapliński's most unfavorable assessments of postwar Poland, which was married to the use of Sarmatism in a conservative discourse critical of modernity as deprived of cultural and historical validity. In this agon, modernity's loss of vigor proved Sarmatism's flexibility in absorbing such modernist values as egalitarianism, but thus reformed, it ceased to be an adversary, leading to the end of Polish modernism.

The other line of argument in Czapliński's monograph has to do with the modernist utopia's split into two streams: the quest for truth (personified by Faust) and the quest for freedom (personified by Prometheus). Since utopian thought cannot explain, let alone justify, the failed projects of the totalitarian regimes that devastated Europe in the past, utopia was compromised as both an idea and a genre, and its subsequent, post-1989 development limited it to traces. These leftovers of a once-lofty imaginary tool were unable to articulate any vision of a perfect future or of progress. Utopia thrives when it offers a vision of total order, and since this is precisely what the genre in the twenty-first century could not prophesize, its demise opened the door for a variety of anti-utopian themes modeled after Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. What follows is a complicated literary domain, which Czapliński composes from the revised genre but also with new elements such as biocriticism, the posthuman ontology, and cyborgs.

This deft book delivers a diagnosis of what used to be an unthinkable reconciliation of modernity and tradition as effecting a change of individual and collective consciousness thrown into a new, previously unknown cultural uncertainty.

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