

of what is said about them is not new; there are many more analytical examinations of his literary work. It is a shame that on occasion the book contains striking errors: for example, a photograph, claimed to be of Kiš with his friend, the Serbian artist Leonid Šejka, and the back of Bulat Okudzhava's head, actually shows Okudzhava's face and the back of Šejka's head.

Readers of this book will find that Thompson adds little to the existing scholarship on Kiš's literary works and contributions to international letters. When he does comment on Kiš as a writer, Thompson usually points to the international influences on his work or to coincidences in style and theme which his subject shares with authors from abroad, but he has little interest in the domestic context of his work and is dismissive of what he unjustly describes as "the realist inertia of his Yugoslav milieu" (117). While he rightly emphasizes Kiš's talent, it is unfortunate that Thompson ignores the changes in the Yugoslav literary scene arising from the polemical debates between modernists and realists in the 1950s which prepared the ground for the upsurge in literary experiments that would be characteristic of Kiš's output, of the work of other writers of his generation, and of those of the younger writers who came after them. Thompson mentions some of Kiš's contemporaries (such as Filip David, Mirko Kovač, and Borislav Pekić) as the author's friends, but he leaves aside their collective impact. The lack of serious reference to the Serbian and Yugoslav contexts from which Kiš emerged as a writer, and where there remains the clearest engagement with the legacy of his literary career, means that this biography often seems to serve as a contribution to the construction of Danilo Kiš's mythic persona.

The most significant weakness in Thompson's approach to his material is the book's structure, which is based on Kiš's own words. It is known, and Thompson acknowledges, that Kiš assiduously and deliberately managed the creation of his authorial image. His interviews and essays, in which he expounds his literary credos and primes his critics on points about his forthcoming books, are clear testimony to that management style. A biographer faced with this fact must adopt a critical stance to what Kiš says about himself and to the impressions he has left on others—a stance that is largely absent here. Thompson's biography also contains some glaring omissions in the life of his subject: for example, there is no mention of Kiš's membership in the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, an odd oversight considering Thompson's remarks about the role of this organization in Serbia's cultural life.

This is a lively, if superficial, exposition of the life of one of Yugoslavia's greatest writers. Its errors, simplified approach, and omissions will probably not be of great concern to a general audience, among whose number it might attract new readers of Kiš's work. In that case, it will have served some useful purpose.

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Cinemas in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989. Ed. Catherine Portuges and Peter Hames. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013. viii, 288 pp. Index. \$94.50, hard bound.

This is a highly successful and welcome volume that brings together much information and insight about "cinemas in transition" in a region that has itself been transitioning for some twenty-five years now. The book assembles some of the most prominent names in central and eastern European cinema scholarship and includes contributions on Bulgarian, Czech and Slovak, East German (querying "Is There Still an East German Cinema?"), Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Ukrainian, and post-Yugoslav

cinemas. Helpful background information on the basic political and cinematic environments of the earlier communist period is included, as well as a consideration of the region's traditionally strong documentary, animated, short, and experimental films.

Individual chapters efficiently balance an often thriller-like historical narrative, built from dense but well-organized information with plenty of names and events inviting further research, on one hand, with a more elaborate, in-depth interpretation and contextualization of select films and directors, on the other. The contributors tell the stories of each country's changes in the cinema infrastructure, funding, politics, priorities, venues, and audiences. Despite individual differences, general trends are clearly discernible. The transition from state socialism to the free market meant the sudden disappearance of both good and bad aspects of state-sponsored cinema. While lighter or heavier censorship and the possible allocation of state funding based on nepotism are gone, also gone is much or all of that funding. The secure structures that at certain times fostered truly great cinema (e.g., Czechoslovak New Wave), and at others ensured consistent cinematic output, have mostly been dismantled. The initial effect was a tremendous decrease in the number of films made, the dismantling of studios, and the firing of film professionals. The number of movie theaters has dwindled and Hollywood films claim the largest chunk of ticket sales, while the national cinemas fight for the remainder, getting anywhere from less than 5 percent of the market in Romania to a high of 30 percent in the Czech Republic in 2006.

Artists achieved freedom from the drawbacks of the previous system only to find themselves "free" in another, neoliberal sense of the word as well—that is, on their own, competing with Hollywood blockbusters, with new audiences who cared less for their films than before, and with a relentless new imperative to find their own funding, production tools, outlets, and public. Having to constantly hustle for money affects the scope and type of the filmmakers' ambitions. This situation is sometimes expressed through terms such as *market Stalinism* or *the censorship of the market*. However, while the outlook for film during the 1990s was rather bleak, the twenty-first century offers some hope. The numbers of both domestic films and their home audiences have lately been on the rebound, though neither has reached pre-1989 levels. Sources of funding are now on firmer ground, and the creation of organizations like the Polish Film Institute and the Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary helps, as does support from television, for which many films are made. Arguably speaking for the whole central and eastern European region, Catherine Portuges states that "most Hungarian film professionals eventually considered the new structures preferable to those they replaced" (111). Most importantly, these national cinema industries are producing exciting and high-quality films. One of the book's greatest achievements lies in the introduction of a large number of such films to new audiences by inspiring readers to see and learn more about them. Less familiar but fascinating new directions and directors are well represented alongside well-known names, such as the Czech Jan Svěrák and Jan Švankmajer or Hungarian Béla Tarr.

All of the chapters have much to recommend them, not least because each one creates its own set of major categories that best capture its own cinema. We read about the question of "Multiethnic Conviviality" as one of the topics in Bulgarian cinema, but have the "GDR as Exotic 'Other'" as an entry in the chapter on East German film and a "Typology of Post-totalitarian Film Narratives" in the chapter on Romanian cinema. My favorite chapter, though, may still be the one by Peter Hames on Czech and Slovak cinemas, because it pursues a deeper discussion of the regionally shared situation. Hames reminds us that public patronage of the arts has a long tradition and that, when it comes to the relatively "small" national cinemas of this region,

“apart from funding from television, institutional or state funding provide the only means whereby national cinema cultures can be maintained” (46). Promoting the notion of culture as a national good “concerned with discovery, imagination, and dialogue and as possessing a role distinct from that of the market,” Hames also emphasizes that such a culture regards “cinema as a public service,” different from the “Anglo-American concept of the ‘entertainment industry’” (70). This underlining of the legitimacy of public support for the arts and cinema, asserting the nature and goals of culture as distinct from those of the market yet still undoubtedly valuable, is a necessary first step toward healthier “transitions” for these cinemas.

The second step may lie in Dina Iordanova’s suggestion that “if marginality cannot be avoided,” it can “be turned into an advantage.” Iordanova’s assertion that one might as well stop deploring “one’s disadvantageous positioning at the periphery of Europe” and embrace the Balkans “as an apposite frame of reference” (34) should be extended to the whole of central and eastern Europe. One should not always look for the approval of the Cannes or Venice Film Festival or the U.S. Academy Awards. That kind of approval may or may not come, but building a central and eastern European net of what Iordanova calls the “mutuality” of creative collaborations and shared audiences, and an attitude of fostering interest in one’s neighbors rather than in the same old western centers, could go a long way.

The book’s few drawbacks include the absence of any stills, the intentional but still regrettably too-short timespans discussed in a few chapters, and the presentation of post-Yugoslav film in a single chapter (by Andrew Horton) that is of the same length as all the others. There are seven new post-Yugoslav countries now, with a fairly large total film output and some interesting national differences despite increasing regional collaborations; a longer chapter would have been warranted. There are also a few inaccuracies and imprecisions in the general histories presented in the volume.

In all, *Cinemas in Transition* is an excellent book full of energy and, at times, a welcome passion. It will be an extremely useful textbook for those of us teaching central and eastern European or world film. A fine read for both scholarly and general audiences, with real insight but no potentially alienating jargon, this book is here to stay. I will return to it often for an insider’s look into the fascinating cinemas in transition coming from the (still?) “lands in-between.”

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Contact Zone Identities in the Poetry of Jerzy Harasymowicz: A Postcolonial Analysis. By Ewa Stańczyk. Bern: Peter Lang, 2012. x, 276 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Maps. \$64.95, paper.

I have long wished that someone would write a critical history of non-aligned Polish literature, one that would set aside the *bogoojczyźniane* (patriotically engaged classics) in favor of literature without didacticism or the stripes by which we are healed. Considering the history of Poland, the former category will always predominate. And yet there is a refreshing current of art for art’s sake in Polish literature of the past century which finds its greatest blossoming in the uninhibited verses of Jerzy Harasymowicz. Ewa Stańczyk’s *Contact Zone Identities in the Poetry of Jerzy Harasymowicz* is not that book of my dreams, but it is marvelous to see young academics taking note of this fabulous poet, who “remains overlooked by scholars both in Poland and abroad”