

methodological sources: first, periodical studies, which understands journals as complex entities requiring contextualization as a full *corpus* rather than as mere containers for discrete texts; and second, the multicultural, multilingual understanding of Prague modernism as harbor for subtle interactive dynamics between Czech- and German-language literature in this period.

The three capacious chapters and briefer “coda” of the study each apply distinct yet complementary frameworks to the material at hand. The first chapter provides a historical overview of the journal’s themes, contributors, and international connections over the three decades of its existence, and traces its progression from radical aestheticism (which nonetheless had political repercussions through the journal’s daring intervention in debates about Wilde’s trial) to defense of its own orthodoxy as the journal became an established venue, to its aesthetically and politically hidebound final years, when the journal took increasingly vile positions marked by xenophobic nationalism, racism, and antisemitism. Chapter 2 investigates Decadence as cultural category both across Europe as a whole and in its particular Czech manifestation. This discussion effectively links theoretical tensions in the association of Decadence with “modernism” to the paradoxes of the journal’s history, over the course of which the adjective *moderní* became increasingly unfitting. This chapter also includes extensive comparative discussion of Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* with a prose-poem by Karel Hlaváček depicting the (metaphorical) transformation of its protagonist into a spider—a valuable contribution to the growing scholarship on “Kafka and Czech literature.” Chapter 3 examines the multi-medial nature of the journal’s dual emphasis on literature and visual arts, as well as providing detailed analysis of how the design of the journal and its related book publications itself pursued programmatic aims. (Illustrations, unfortunately, are reproduced in regrettably small format.) The concluding coda uses Pierre Bourdieu’s notions of “field” and “habitus” to investigate some of the polemics that were such a marked feature of the Czech cultural landscape at the time, some of which were truly petty and personal while others reflected significant discursive tensions.

One might wish for further examination of Czech cultural antecedents (authors such as Jakub Arbes, Jan Neruda, and Julius Zeyer), successors (the paradoxical relation of the journal to the 1920s avant-garde) and competitors (the journal *Volné směry*, propagating many similar cultural impulses yet separated by personal animosities) for the journal’s particular conception of modernist Decadence. Many readers would also likely be interested to know that *Moderní revue* published several original poems by Rainer Maria Rilke (in German) in the late 1890s, a fact Stewart notes but does not discuss in any detail. It is, admittedly, mildly perverse to lament that a scrupulously researched, 500-page monograph has not examined *even more* topics. So perhaps the preceding comments can be reformulated as the hope that the author—for whom *bohemistika* constitutes only one of several areas of expertise—will find time and inspiration for related studies in the future.

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Polish Literature and National Identity: A Postcolonial Perspective. By Dariusz Skórczewski. Agnieszka Polakowska, trans. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2020. x, 341 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$99.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2021.183

This book presents dominant and unrevealed topics of Polish postcolonialism to the English-speaking world. Intellectually, it is a treatise offering a comprehensive

approach to Polish postcolonial studies that discovers new meanings in the classical arguments in postcolonial theory contained in such works as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism*, Ewa Thompson's *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism*, and other publications. The tome also provides an extensive examination of Polish identity.

The author keenly analyzes intricate landscapes of Polish postcolonialism using a well-rounded form of conceptual discourse and diverse methodologies of philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, literary studies, and postcolonial studies. Agnieszka Polakowska's translation from Polish into English makes this book, originally published in Polish in 2013, a rich and transparent debate easily available to English-speaking audiences.

The volume consists of three parts that relate to each other by constructing semantic synergy between the part and the whole. The first part builds a theoretical background to the idea of postcolonialism in Poland. It accentuates philosophical and ethical aspects of Polish postcolonialism and investigates expressions of national identity in a postcolonial framework (38–70). The second part provides varied representations of identity using literary as well as cultural examples, including Adam Mickiewicz's *Crimean Sonnets*, Pawel Huelle's *Castorp*, and Andrzej Stasiuk's *On the Road to Babadag and Fado*. Also, Skórczewski analyzes Maria Janion's *Uncanny Slavdom* as the example of the "Slavic issues with identity" (193–207). The above examples function as evolving interpretative paradigms that depict, elaborate, and enlarge, through the centuries, the concept of Polish identity to grasp its essence. The book's third part looks for answers linked to the function of contemporary humanities and postcolonial theory. It probes the relationship between Poland and the "Other Europe" and sketches a dichotomy between "Colonized Poland" and "Orientalized Poland" (176–92) by questioning how much the realm of colonial discourse, applied to Polish issues, orientalizes Poland. Orientalism plays a special role in the search for national identity. The third part also outlines the "borderlands discourse" in Polish postcolonialism.

For Skórczewski, Mickiewicz's Crimea symbolizes the Orient identified by its natural and beautiful scenery. The lyrical subject of Mickiewicz's *Crimean Sonnets* approaches it as otherness. The Orient's exotic otherness stimulates the subject's process of self-definition and enhances the mechanism of redefinition applied to the lyrical subject's past and the present. The author argues that Mickiewicz's portrait of Crimea is ambiguous as it neither possesses the human element in its construction, nor represents a typical orientalist discourse. Nevertheless, *The Crimean Sonnets* formulate brand new questions about the relationship between the lyrical subject (a human being) and the world perceived as otherness (135). In Mickiewicz's masterpiece, there is a hidden definition of Polish identity viewed as the "ongoing reconstruction" (6). This stress on a dynamic and evolving character of Polish identity is not only captivating, but defining. Skórczewski keeps the balance between synthetic and analytical approaches to postcolonial theory that makes his speculative discourse enjoyable.

In the tome, the issue of identity plays a pivotal role. It is initially defined as a thematic category, but finally emerges as an analytical classification allowing for a deeper examination of Polish postcolonial theory. Postcolonial encounters and contexts are approached from the angle of "Heideggerian clearing" in which consciousness, human subjects, and identity play an important function. This "illuminating light" of awareness allows for projecting an expansive definition of a human being on both sides of the colonial divide (as the oppressed and the oppressor) and enables postcolonial theory to save universal human values such as identity, integrity, and the dignity of personhood (239).

The volume is addressed not only to academic audiences, but also to a broad community of readers who are interested in Polish studies and postcolonial theory. It provides a speculative interpretation of the notion of identity, through a prism of “otherness” and Polish literary themes, which should be recognized as original. For Skórczewski, the significance of difference and “otherness” must be stressed in postcolonial studies as it is an essential epistemic principle that departs from the idea of “sameness, identity, and unity” (238) to show the unknown landscape and discourse of the Other. Also, postcolonial studies should be enlarged by reflections about evil and human susceptibility to it. Various expressions of colonial violence should be understood, rejected, and changed into positive values. Postcolonial theory thus must learn how to focus on universal human experience, stress human consciousness, and reject but forgive colonial oppressors to save the “mystery of humanity,” according to the author.

In conclusion, Skórczewski’s tome should be widely promoted. The author innovatively applies personalistic thought to the methodology of postcolonial studies and retreats from Said’s initial phase of postcolonialism to stress the value of human experience as well as the spirit of humanity that go beyond the existing postcolonial methodology. He writes, “Human experience. . . cannot be enclosed in postcolonial conceptualizations” (240). Promoting personalistic thought in postcolonial theory leads Skórczewski to a highly creative and original solution.

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Steppe Dreams: Time, Mediation, and Postsocialist Celebrations in Kazakhstan.

By Margarethe Adams. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020. x, 238 pp. Appendix. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. \$45.00, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2021.184

In *Steppe Dreams*, Margarethe Adams provides a broad, nuanced account of postsocialist life in Kazakhstan through the lens of holiday celebrations. She examines media and song to tease out the temporal complications involved in nostalgically celebrating years and regimes past while also looking toward an uncertain future. Her book provides rich, thick descriptions of performances, media, and settings (mostly in urban Kazakhstan). Adams cites work and analyzes songs in the Russian and Kazakh languages and her English translations read accurately and smoothly. *Steppe Dreams* is free of excess jargon and technical musical terminology, so it can be easily read and appreciated by generalist scholars in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, and would be useful in graduate seminars on ethnography, media, and postsocialist culture.

The major contribution the work makes to the fields of sound studies and ethnomusicology is its drawing together of existing scholarship on timbre to posit it as an important and often under analyzed sonic method of producing meaning. Reading from a specialists’ perspective, I would love to see this aspect of Adams’ work expanded in the future, to provide richer and more detailed accounts of the power of musical timbre throughout its different manifestations of musical life in postsocialist Kazakhstan.

One highlight of the book is its in-depth examination of teacher-student relationships, as Adams engaged in a study of the *qyl-qobyz* (bowed fiddle) over the course of her research. Her account of beginning to learn the qobyz in Chapter 1