central premise that globalization is a historical process and not a feature of the human psyche.

Although in a letter of December 5, 1903, to Kazimierz Waliszewski Conrad admitted that his point of view, “both at sea and on land,” was British, he never went so far as to identify himself as British. “Homo duplex has in my case more than one meaning” he added, emphasizing the multiple dimensionality of his personality. That was very true. Conrad was not one but multiple. “A Polish nobleman cased in British tar” (as he described himself in 1890) was also an individual entrapped in the global world. However, he also was a conservative in a world of bursting social revolutions and a painter of the eternal human condition at a time when it got shattered or changed by irreversible processes (we all remember the famous dictum by Virginia Woolf about the human nature that got transformed around 1910). Jasanoff at one point states: “Conrad’s experience of the world had made him skeptical that you could change systems, or redirect fate. He kept his focus on the individuals bound up in those systems and pegged his hopes for good outcomes on a sense of human solidarity that encouraged individuals to be just and true” (p. 286). It sounds right, but we should remember that these two dimensions—human solidarity and transnational globality—started to divorce in Conrad’s era and that Conrad was always choosing morality over politics. It was a great testimony to his allegiance to the Polish and British tradition of individualism, different for sure, but comfortably mixed in Conrad’s mind. It also shows that truth, solidarity, and fidelity, which flourish in that tradition, have become—as shown by the continuous growth of populist movements all over the globe, combined with the unstoppable machinery of social media—values under a massive attack in today’s world of the total network. Thus, one could argue after Maya Jasanoff that Conrad is one of us, a citizen of the global world. But one could also argue, against Maya Jasanoff, that he was one of them: a nostalgic citizen of a world that was drawing to an end. Which point is better to take—the individualist ethics of freedom or the collective politics of solidarity—should be the reader’s choice, and The Dawn Watch, although not aware of this dilemma, sets the general parameters for this choice very clearly.

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While the basic outlines of the Holocaust are generally known even among non-specialists, the Operation Reinhard Death Camps—where most Polish Jews were killed—are far less familiar. To fill this historiographical lacuna, the important Holocaust researcher Yitzhak Arad published a version of this book three decades
ago. The present volume is updated, expanded, and even more valuable. For anyone interested in the operation, ideology, and everyday inhumanity of the Nazi death machine, in particular in the Polish context, this volume is an absolute must-read.

Arad structures his work mainly chronologically, from an introduction covering the period from September 1939 and ending with the liquidation of the camps in 1943. The book is organized into four main parts, “The Extermination Machine,” covering the setting up of the camps, their workings, the extermination of Jews, Gypsies (Roma), economic looting of the victims, and attempts to cover up the crimes; “Life in the Shadow of Death,” providing some information on the major perpetrators and a quite detailed discussion of the prisoners’ daily life, including religious activities, health/disease, and social life; “Escape and Resistance,” including attempts to escape from transports even before arriving at the camps, the underground in these camps, and the uprisings in Treblinka and Sobibór; finally, Operation Erntefest, the cynically-named action to liquidate those few Jews still alive and to dismantle the camps. The book concludes with a discussion of the estimated numbers of victims cited by various historians. While acknowledging the extreme difficulty of ascertaining exact numbers, Arad concludes that around 1,600,000 to 1,735,000 Jews were killed in the Operation Reinhard death camps (p. 440).

It goes without saying, given the well-deserved reputation of Professor Arad as one of the foremost Holocaust researchers on earth, that the scholarship here is thorough, meticulous, and based on all available sources. Arad’s writing is sober and factual, as befits the subject of this book. Very often the author employs extensive quotations from primary sources that obviate the need for moral commentary, for example, Rudolph Höss’s statement about watching Soviet prisoners-of-war asphyxiated by Zyklon B: “I must even admit that the gassing set my mind at rest, for the mass extermination of the Jews was to start soon, and at the time neither Eichmann nor I was certain as to how these mass killings were to be carried out” (p. 21). Along similar lines is the statement by SS high official and organizer Odilo Globocnik who claimed that, rather than covering up the crimes, “We [Nazis] ought, on the contrary to bury bronze tablets stating that it was we who had the courage to carry out this gigantic task” (p. 432).

Arad provides a great deal of detail on the organization, construction, and operation of these death camps, including maps of each and detailed information (including, again, many primary sources in translation) on the organization of trains, deportations from various ghettos, and the “processing” of the prisoners once they arrived (most, of course, were immediately killed). A short chapter consisting mainly of primary sources acquaints us with the horrors of the “trains of death” that conveyed Jews from ghettos to the camps.

While most of those arriving at these camps were immediately put to death, others were put to work for the Nazi death machine. Throughout the process, the Nazis cynically made use the survivors’ hopes, assuring them that good work would allow them to avoid the fate of other Jews. Arad discusses a number of different work groups (Kommandos) that existed in the camps, for example: platform workers...
who opened up the arriving train cars, allowing new arrivals to disembark, then cleaned the cars), to transport workers (who directed victims to disrobe and to make their way to the gas chambers), so-called Goldjuden whose job it was to search for valuables and then pass these along, properly organized and sorted, to the proper authorities, the hair cutters, Lumpenkommando who sorted out the clothing left behind by the victims, and the Forest and Camouflage teams whose job it was to gather wood and branches to help with the burning of bodies and to disguise the sites of mass graves (pp. 144–47).

Despite all odds, as Arad points out, resistance also existed in these camps. The camp underground was considerably hindered by the unspeakable conditions of labor and the rapid turnover of workers, but it did nonetheless exist. Resistance began with attempts to escape from the railroad cars before arriving in the camps. The most famous examples of resistance, of course, were the uprisings in Treblinka (August 2, 1943) and Sobibór (October 14, 1943). Arad provides great detail to the planning, execution, and outcomes of these two acts of heroism. Neither, of course, succeeded as planned, but in both cases some individuals did survive due to their participation in the uprisings. Indeed, the uprising at Sobibór, led by a Soviet prisoner-of-war, became something of a Soviet (though not entirely Jewish) lieu de mémoire, embodied in the 1987 film, Escape from Sobibor (interestingly, this film has recently been resurrected in Russia). Arad concludes that the uprisings “can be considered a success from the point of view of the prisoners” (p. 416). While the uprisings did not lead to the closing of these death camps (that had already been decided) and most participants did not survive, Arad estimates that “about 120 to 130 prisoners from Sobibór and Treblinka survived the war,” the great majority of these due to the uprisings (p. 417).

Over 1.5 million Polish Jews, from Lublin, Lwów, Kraków, Rzeszów, Warsaw, Siedlce, Kielce, Częstochowa, and Białystok (to name only a few of the largest centers), found their deaths in the Operation Reinhard death camps between March 1942 and February 1943. Yitzhak Arad’s classic and now updated work on these three death camps is a testimony to human evil and to human resistance. This book belongs in the library of anyone interested in Polish or Jewish history in the twentieth century.

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This book is a revised version of a doctoral dissertation based on some three years of anthropological fieldwork in the early post-communist years of the 1990s in the small town of Dobra, population ca. 750, in Opole Voivodeship, in Upper