Cultural Studies Approaches in the Study of Eastern European Cinema

Cultural Studies Approaches in the Study of Eastern European Cinema:

Spaces, Bodies, Memories

Edited by

Andrea Virginás

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PREFACE

The present volume might be described as a snapshot of various networks in a continual process: first and foremost, conceptual networks, which then animate the interpersonal and institutional networks. As with all snapshots that do justice to certain aspects of reality but miss important details, this book is also defined by the intention of capturing, quickly and faithfully, a moment deemed important by those participating in it.

This moment started nearly two years ago when, together with two of the authors (Zsolt Győri and György Kalmár), I participated in a panel entitled "The Use of Cultural Studies Approaches in the Study of Eastern European Cinema" at the 12th conference of the European Society for the Study of English/ESSE (Kosice, Slovakia, August-September, 2014). It was then that the commissioning editor of Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Sam Baker, approached us with the idea of a possible volume along the title and main idea of that panel. What followed, as is the case of all edited volumes, was an enthusiastic exchange of e-mails and chat sessions with the persons who became the authors of this volume, whom I approached as potential contributors based on their post-2010 presentations at various European conferences. As such, the present book is a snapshot of the eager and inclusive editorial practice active in European humanities and cultural studies, but also of the rich interpersonal, intercultural, and scientific experiences that we, as authors of the volume, have offered each other in the past five years as members of that early-to-mid-career generation of Eastern European film scholars who were formed in the postcommunist period.

With the texts starting to arrive in the spring of 2015, we agreed on the 2016 publication of an edited collection tentatively entitled *Spaces, Bodies, Memories. The Use of Cultural Studies Approaches in the Study of Eastern European Cinema* with Cambridge Scholars Publishing. In this first intuitive phase of assembling the collection, it was Warren Buckland's detailed account of what he calls the "container-contained" schemata in *The Cognitive Semiotics of Film* that governed my conceptual approach to editing. Space contains our bodies that contain our memories; or, vice versa, our memories are wired through our bodies that are interlocking with space. These features of our being in the world are, furthermore, fundamental for the medium we analyse: cinema is an art of spaces,

bodies, and memories, increasingly so in the era when the analogue platform runs parallel with the digitalized method of filmmaking. Since the initial choice of authors and texts had already been made along these keywords, it is not a surprise that the volume attained its present structure: a lead chapter and three sections, with the examined national cinemas – Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Romanian – appearing in each bloc but addressed from a different perspective every time.

Besides the effort to understand the cohesive forces that mark the postsocialist Eastern European region as a coherent cultural entity in its cinematic representations, the structure of the volume also stands as a witness to the importance of the transnational approach – even if the category of the national cannot be sidestepped. The lead chapter insistently argues for this idea: Anikó Imre's "The case for postcolonial, postsocialist media studies" appeared originally in *Boundary 2* (2014) and it is reprinted here with permission. Professor Imre's article constitutes a nodal point to which all the individual chapters connect not only by conscious design but also by their writers' engaged attention to feature film (and media) in the Eastern European context. As an editor, I hope that Anikó Imre's article, accessible once more through the platform of this volume, will contribute to Eastern European film scholars, students, as well as film critics incorporating her lucid statements into their argumentation.

The "spatial", the "bodily", and the "memory turn" in humanities and cultural studies are well-canonized developments, and their Eastern European reception is adequately presented in the various chapters: Zsolt Győri and Jana Dudková survey the milestones of studying space; Mihaela Ursa and Eszter Ureczky present an overview of examining the cultural usage of the body; and Elżbieta Durys, Claudiu Turcuş, and Katarína Mišíková reference in detail the subfield of cultural memory work. The Moebius-stripe mode of space, body, and memory mutually contributing to each other's emergence in the context of cinema is palpable in the approaches of Edward Alexander, Katalin Sándor, Doru Pop, and myself. Working with the texts, I was fascinated by the ease with which a national cinema and its examples appeared to give in more easily to one of these perspectives but not to others. Obviously, this attests to the spread of the respective subfields' concepts within our (often small) national academic markets, but I also think that the various national schools and modes of filmmaking result in favouring either space, body, or memory(work), often at the expense of the other two categories.

Although the volume does not have an index or an amassed bibliography, each chapter is meticulously researched, and interested

readers will find sound theoretical grounding concerning the three nodal concepts in each of the chapters, in every case specified through the lens of a given national cinema or a representative Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian, or Romanian film. Obviously, this collection does not cover the whole Eastern European region, a much contested, also imaginary, territory; a valid excuse is that this was never set as a target. What I hoped for as the editor was the simultaneous analysis of national film examples through the lens and with the methodology of those conceptual developments that European humanities and cultural studies in general, and film studies in particular, underwent at the dawn of the new millennium, a period that coincided with the academic self-identification of most of the authors in this volume.

Finally, some formal acknowledgments: I am deeply grateful to all the authors who embarked enthusiastically on this project. I repeatedly thank Anikó Imre, Zsolt Győri and György Kalmár for their continuous professional support. Ewa Mazierska also offered valuable advice on the book proposal; Emese Czintos and Marlene de Wilde took on the proofreading; and CNCS-UEFISCDI, the Romanian Ministry of Education (through the project PN-II-RU-PD-2012-3-0199) and the Institute of Research Programs – Sapientia University, Cluj-Napoca – partially funded the editorial and proofreading work. András Szabó generously offered the photograph of *Double Ann* (2015) as cover art. Without the initial proposal of Sam Baker and Cambridge Scholars Publishing, this volume would not exist.

My family (Emma, Boldizsár, and Attila) has allowed me to share my life between them and *Spaces, Bodies, Memories*: thank you for seeing me through.

—Cluj-Napoca, 5th of August, 2016.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE

THE CASE FOR POSTCOLONIAL, POSTSOCIALIST MEDIA STUDIES[1]

ANIKÓ IMRE

As we have passed the 25-year anniversary of the fall of the Wall, it no longer seems necessary to argue that the postsocialist region is postcolonial. A number of scholars have successfully proven the legitimacy and timeliness of this claim. I start with an overview of the potential benefits of and obstacles to the encounter between the postcolonial and the postsocialist. I underscore the fact that postcolonial studies need the postsocialist infusion to reassert the relevance of a field in danger of exhaustion as a result of its academic institutionalization. In particular, the postcolonial history of (Eastern) Europe is a crucial component of the current crisis concerning the future viability of the European Union, whose rhetoric of unity and diversity has been increasingly disrupted by deepening divisions within Europe that are rooted in untold colonial histories. I show that postcolonial discourses are essential to unearthing and revising the complicated dynamic of co-dependence between Western and Eastern European nationalisms. This dynamic is haunted by internalized and rarely acknowledged traces of imperialism on both sides.

The project of postcolonializing postsocialism can only be effective if we refresh the standard conceptual and methodological toolkit of postcolonial studies. The spatial expansion of postcolonial discourse to Europe's own backyard needs to be matched by an expansion of research methods and objects. The postcolonial studies' traditional commitment to theory and textual analysis of literature and art cinema is beneficially complemented by engaging with popular media such as television, with close attention to the contexts of production and dissemination in which various aesthetic and theoretical models are formed. If the postcolonial lens selectively spots only high cultural objects, it risks reaffirming the

[1] Reprinted with the permission of Anikó Imre, "Postcolonial Media Studies in Postsocialist Europe," *Boundary 2* 41, no. 1 (2014), 113–34.

patterns in which Eastern European cultural nationalisms have reproduced and represented themselves, which have also functioned to contain and disavow racism and imperialism. Instead, I propose to draw into the postcolonial sphere methods and approaches from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and media and communication studies, which have by now produced a significant body of work on everyday socialist and postsocialist practices and pleasures that have remained under the radar of elite national cultures. Moreover, this body of work has stayed in fairly isolated disciplinary brackets as a result of the residual Cold War distribution of academic labour. It badly needs the sophisticated theorizing of ideology and identity of postcolonial studies, and its commitment to historiography.

I outline three sample possibilities for such a geopolitically expanded, methodologically hybridized encounter. The first one is the postcolonial study of popular (post)socialist television. I illustrate this with reference to the early socialist historical adventure series. This is a genre that travelled within a European and Eastern European circulation of technology, personnel, ideas, and programmes and thus invites a comparative approach to the political economy of the media during European socialism. Furthermore, it lived at the intersection of domestic and public concerns, entertainment, and propaganda. It thus disrupts the ingrained categories of Eastern cultural nationalism and Western infatuation with elite socialist dissident cultures alike. In addition, it thematically foregrounds periods of colonization in the region's history (the Ottoman and Habsburg empires) that have been officially treated as distinct from the global history of imperialism.

The second sample area rife for postcolonial intervention is that of socialist film cultures. A postcolonial lens reveals that the dissident art films that represented their respective national cultures at Western festivals were embedded in a context of a broader, multi-directional continental flow of socialist ideas and representations. This was enabled by a paradoxical postcolonial function performed by Eastern European artists and intellectuals: they traded the parochial nationalisms they were assigned to represent in the West for access to limited cosmopolitan Euro-mobility. In the third sample case I argue that postcolonial tools are indispensable to acknowledging and sorting the virulent forms that racism has recently taken in post-Cold War Eastern and the core countries of the Eurozone, which tend to find their most explicit expression in lower, debased media forms such as reality television.

The postsocialist-postcolonial encounter

In the mid-1990s, the first tentative efforts to extend postcolonial studies to the other Europe ran into the roadblocks put up by two different camps. Postcolonial scholars worried about the discursive dilution of postcoloniality and wanted to keep the field specific to the violent imperialism and racism of European empires. At the same time, intellectuals in postsocialist countries, which were in their first optimistic throes of a quest for re-entry into European capitalism and democracy, were reluctant to consider their own affinity with citizens of decolonized countries.

In the course of the past two decades, however, the concern within postcolonial studies over admitting the former second world has revealed itself to be less of a legitimate worry and more of a disciplinary gatekeeping. In fact, the expansion of postcoloniality promises a fresh blood infusion to keep from atrophy a field that has begun to lose its cutting theoretical and political edge as it has gained consolidated status within North American humanities departments. On the postsocialist side, as the euphoria about the region's overnight identity transformation has been tempered by the realities of its economic and democratic deficit, postcolonial studies has offered an increasingly attractive explanatory paradigm and historical perspective to academic observers.

Instead of the cross-pollination that one would expect between the two camps, however, the encounter's impact has been lopsided. Ironically, postcolonial studies positioned itself as a dominant Western paradigm available for scholars of the postsocialist condition to borrow from but without inviting any significant counter-flow or feedback. It is true that the attitude within postcolonial studies has mellowed from suspicion to tolerance; but it has not progressed to curiosity towards the former Soviet empire. But even this indifferent tolerance has enabled some scholars of postsocialism to shift the discussion from having to make a case for Eastern Europe's postcolonial qualifications to elaborating on the potential usefulness of such qualifications for the various parties concerned. Thanks to the work of Katherine Verdery, Larry Wolff, József Böröcz, Milica Bakić-Hayden, Vesna Goldsworthy, Maria Todorova, Alexander Kiossev, Natasa Kovačević,[2] and many others, an entire research field had sprung

[2] See Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 917–31; József Böröcz, "Introduction: Empire and Coloniality in the 'Eastern Enlargement' of the European Union," *Central Europe Review* (2001): 4–50; Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale

up at the intersection of the postcolonial and the postsocialist by the mid-2000s. This collective body of work bears out some of the potential benefits of thinking about the former Soviet empire through a postcolonial lens: it has analysed the thorough and systematic interlacing of the experience of external oppression with internal repression, of the political-economic and the subjective-psychological experiences of colonialism. It has also put the nail in the coffin of the three-world division that structured the Cold War. Perhaps most importantly it has offered an alternative historiography to hegemonic nationalistic narratives within a historical context that accounts for the region's multiple imperial legacies.

The most evident of these legacies is Eastern Europe's colonization by the Soviet Union following the end of World War II. In most countries concerned, this meant a full or partial military occupation coupled with more or less direct political control in the form of central ideological directives from Moscow, which permeated every state institution. With the exception of Romania, Yugoslavia, and Albania, led by "rogue" dictators Ceausescu, Tito, and Hoxha, respectively, Russian was a required subject of the centralized curriculum in the satellite states. Whether we can call Soviet domination colonization in the same way in each country concerned is open to debate given the tremendous diversity of experiences under Soviet rule.[3] Nevertheless, there are undeniable parallels between postsocialist and postcolonial states as well as states of mind. As David Kideckel argues,[4] such states emerge from common conditions that are characterized by a sharp opposition between provincial and cosmopolitan cultures;[5] have imbalanced, distorted neoliberal economies;[6] struggle with

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University Press, 1998); Alexander Kiossev, "Notes on the Self-Colonising Cultures," in *Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. Bojana Pejić and Elliot David (Stockholm: Moderna Museet Exhibition Catalogue, 1999), 114–177; Natasa Kovačević, *Narrating Post/Communism: Colonial Discourses and Europe's Borderline Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2008); Maria Todorova, *Imagining The Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Katherine Verdery and Sharad Chari, "Thinking Between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography After the Cold War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 511 (2009): 6–34; Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

[3] Jill Owczarzak, "Introduction: Postcolonial Studies and Postsocialism in Eastern Europe" *Focaal* 53 (2009): 3–19.

[4] David Kideckel, "Citizenship Discourse, Globalization and Protest: A Postsocialist-Postcolonial Comparison," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 27, no. 2 (2009): 117–33.

[5] See Katherine Verdery, "Whither Postsocialism?" in *Postsocialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*, ed. C. M. Hann (London: Routledge, 2002),

democratization; fall prey to violent nationalisms;[7] and have troubled relationships with past histories.[8]

The relevance of postcolonial paradigms also involves the hierarchical division between Eastern and Western Europe. This division has been traced back, most famously by Larry Wolff,[9] to the age of the Enlightenment, when (Western) Europe was identified as the bedrock of rationality and democracy[10] and Eastern Europe became associated with colonial Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.[11] While civilization was firmly tied to the West, Eastern Europe shifted to an imaginary location somewhere in between civilization and barbarism as the West's immediate and intermediary other. It was designated as a boundary marker, where Western Empires were protected from the invasion of uncivilized Eastern forces such as the Ottoman Turks.

The borderland's mission to protect Western European civilization became deeply internalized in the course of the struggles for national independence in the 1840s. Eastern European nationalisms were thus formed in the West's image of the region, around a core of self-imposed, voluntary identification Alexander Kiossev calls self-colonization.[12] This colonial mimicry was perpetuated through a wish-fulfilling cultural

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15–22; and Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[6] See Valerie Bunce, "The Political Economy of Postsocialism," *Slavic Review* 58, no. 4 (1999): 756–93; Caroline Humphrey, *The Unmaking of Soviet Life: Everyday Economies After Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002); David Stark, and László Bruszt, *Postsocialist Pathways: Transforming Politics and Property in East Central Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[7] See Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996) and *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

[8] John Borneman, *Settling Accounts: Violence, Justice and Accountability in Postsocialist Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Jean Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff, "Naturing the Nation: Aliens, Apocalypse and the Postcolonial State," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, no. 3 (2001): 627–51; and Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens After Chernobyl* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

[9] Wolff, *Inventing*.

[10] Janusz Korek, "Central and Eastern Europe from a Postcolonial Perspective," in *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality*, Vol. 32, ed. Janusz Korek, (Stockholm: Södertörn Academic Studies, 2007), 32–45.

[11] Michal Buchowski, "The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother," *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2006): 463–82.

[12] Kiossev, "Notes".

assimilation that rested on the assumption of shared racial and civilizational affinity with the West. Although Eastern European cultures did not directly participate in actual territorial imperialism, the hierarchical division between the two Europes qualifies as an imperial order sustained through mutually constituting Eastern and Western discourses.[13] In this sense, the Soviet empire was just the latest phase in the history of imperial struggles over the territory, which has been multiply conquered, and where rulers and subjects often shifted roles. Milica Bakić-Hayden calls these intertwined historical memories of conquest and exclusion nesting orientalisms.[14]

The fall of the Curtain renewed the hierarchy between East and West within the guise of neoliberal free market ideology. While joining the EU has undoubtedly brought more social and economic mobility to a small well-educated or wealthy East European elite, the majority of postsocialist populations have been designated the losers of capitalism, who are themselves to be blamed for their immobility and incapacity to adjust, increasingly by their own governments, too.[15] A postcolonial analysis foregrounds the continued sense of inferiority and resentment at the heart of nativist nationalisms. These nationalisms fester beneath the official European rhetoric of a swift generational change that supposedly creates brand-new postsocialist citizens for whom democracy and market rationality are second nature.[16] They have recently burst to the surface as right-wing Eastern European governments have appropriated the Euro-crisis to whip up nativist sentiment, even resurrecting the legacy of anti-Semitism. The most worrisome case in point is the far-right populist FIDESZ party's authoritarian neoliberal regime in Hungary, which was voted into near-absolute power in 2010.

Towards new postcolonial methods and objects

The relevance of the postcolonial paradigm to uncovering the region's alternative histories and to understanding its fraught arrival in late capitalism and its "return" to Europe has thus been firmly established. Virtually all commentators also agree that taking full account of the end of

[13] Verdery, "Whither", Böröcz, "Introduction".
[14] Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting".
[15] Buchowski, "The Specter".
[16] Piotr Sztompka, "The Trauma of Social Change: A Case of Postcommunist Societies," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 155–95.

the Cold War and the opening of the postsocialist arena to research would enrich, rather than dilute, postcolonial studies. Why, then, has this remained a partial encounter?

One of the solutions proposed to move postcolonial and postsocialist discourses from an impasse towards a mutually fruitful conversation has been to broaden the geopolitical and ideological scope of postcolonial studies. As Neil Lazarus writes in a themed issue of *The Journal of Postcolonial Writing* on postcolonialism and postcommunism, "What is then called for is not only an expanded remit for postcolonial studies, but the development of a broader-based geo-historical comparativism than has hitherto been in evidence in the field."[17] In the same issue, Monica Popescu writes that postcolonial studies and research on the former Central and Eastern European empires "need to be brought together in an integrated vision of various European forms of domination–within the continent and abroad, of classical varieties or 20th-century avatars."[18]

Indeed, postcolonial discourses can be reinvigorated by making a contribution to understanding the economic crisis of the Eurozone and the deepening political "deficit of trust" in the European Union. Europe's monetary crisis has re-opened the divide within the Eurozone between the core north-western countries and the peripheral south-eastern region. But the financial crisis is an extraordinary historical event only to the extent that it crystallizes the cultural logic of the neoliberal economy and the symptoms of Europe's much more enduring identity crisis, which also forces a reassessment of Europe's suppressed postcolonial baggage.

I think that this suppressed postcolonial baggage can only fully inform the "broader-based geo-historical comparativism" that Lazarus recommends if such comparativism is facilitated by a methodological and disciplinary opening on both sides of the postsocialist-postcolonial encounter. While the geopolitical obstacles have been at least addressed, the majority of such work has adopted the same disciplinary boundaries and proper objects of study.

Postcolonial studies emerged from literary and cultural theory and consolidated itself within English departments in the West. Accordingly, its major intervention has been made through textual analysis applied to what is by now a fully-fledged canon of literary and theoretical writing.[19]

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[17] Neil Lazarus, "Spectres Haunting: Postcommunism and Postcolonialism," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48 (2012): 119.

[18] Monica Popescu, "Lewis Nkosi in Warsaw: Translating Eastern European Experiences for an African Audience," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48 (2012): 180.

[19] As an indication of the field's emphasis, four of the five journals with

More recently, this canon has also begun to embrace cinema. However, this has been as much a conscious opening towards more popular objects as the result of the shift of cinema studies itself into a consolidated and arguably conservative status within academia, and away from the varied cultural terrains covered by media and communication studies. In effect, incorporating cinema has been a logical step for postcolonial studies. It has meant the selective inclusion of arthouse films that thematically focus on postcolonial rupture and yield to textual analysis by virtue of their self-reflective visual grammar. For the most part, it has added to the high archives of the postcolonial without questioning the criteria of selection and methods of interpretation.

I need to emphasize that my point is not to object to this high cultural preference in itself. On the contrary, my investment in the potential of the postcolonial grows out of the realization that it had to define itself and refine its tools in a sophisticated environment carved out by writers, theorists, and filmmakers. My point is that the toolkit needs an update if postcolonial studies want to stay productive and relevant following the end of socialism and the three-world division. Postcolonial studies can only derive relevance from its cross-fertilization with postsocialism, and the lessons of postsocialism can only provide a useful matrix for understanding global capitalism if those working at their crossroads also engage with the economic and political underpinnings of cultural production. This involves a much broader and more layered understanding of culture than that enabled by textual analysis and marked out by a literary and theoretical canon. Otherwise, the meeting between the postcolonial and the postsocialist will continue to confirm the legitimacy of the same selective registers and, by extension, the illegitimacy of the many methods and objects of analysis that fall beyond these boundaries.

I believe that the future of postcolonial studies depends on its openness to integrating a range of approaches and methodologies to match the field's expansion of its geopolitical range. For instance, since the mid-1990s, anthropologists of Central and Eastern Europe have turned their attention from studying the postsocialist "transition" at the macro levels of the state and the economy to changes in people's everyday practices. This was one of the consequences of the three-world division's breakdown at the end of the Cold War and the disruption of the corresponding three-way disciplinary distribution within the social sciences. According to this divide, as Hana Cervinkova explains, the first world was studied by the theoretical social sciences such as economics, political science, and

"postcolonial" in their title in my research university's library holdings are almost entirely focused on literature and theory.

sociology; the second world was studied by area studies, and the third by anthropology.[20] More recent ethnographic studies of postsocialism are concerned with the values and meanings of everyday practices and are often driven by themes such as memory, identity, and nationalism,[21] which are also central to postcolonial studies. However, very little of this work has infiltrated postcolonial studies, and vice versa: the valuable theoretical frameworks of postcolonial studies have hardly informed the social scientific studies of postsocialism. Narcis Tulbure identifies fruitful areas of future interaction such as rethinking the past and present projects of Europeanization through postcolonial theories, developing an anthropology of global socialism and postsocialism beyond Europe, and reinventing anthropology as a study of global processes.[22]

A marked division of academic labour also persists in the study of media, my main focus here: the postcolonial opening within the study of Eastern and Central European cultures has ignored the massive changes brought on by the end of state monopoly on the media, the globalization and corporatization of media industries, the convergence of media forms and technologies, the demise of the dissident intellectual, and the rise of the participatory public. Instead, postcolonial approaches have continued to pursue traditional areas of Slavic Studies: literature and, more recently, art cinema. Meanwhile, the monumental media transformations of the past three decades have been taken up by communication studies. For the most part, the latter have adopted the bird's-eye-view vision typical of area studies during the Cold War: their focus remained on media regulation and efforts at building democratic media institutions within specific nation-states. They have stayed untouched by the theoretical and critical potential of postcoloniality to unsettle guiding assumptions about the nature of democracy, Europeanization, and nationalism, and to lend historical depth to postsocialist developments.

In the rest of this essay, I make more specific recommendations for exploring areas within the study of media where disciplinary mixing and a broader range of research objects would beneficially accompany the geopolitical expansion of postcolonial studies to the postsocialist terrain.

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[20] Hana Cervinkova, "Postcolonialism, Postsocialism and the Anthropology of East-Central Europe," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48 (2012): 156.

[21] Narcis Tulbure, "Introduction to Special Issue: Global Socialisms and Postsocialisms," *Anthropology of Eastern Europe Review* 27, no. 2 (2009): 4.

[22] Tulbure, "Introduction to Special Issue," 2–18.

Postcolonial television and media industries

Madina Tlostanova writes with some nostalgia about Russian writer Alexander Goldstein's Joycean novels, which "only a handful of people are able to understand": "With this wonderful but lonely note Goldstein symbolically closes the last phase of post-Soviet post-imperial literature, which has lost its imagined linguistic and value community. A transcultural translation of peripheral Eurasia into a language understandable to the rest of the world takes place rather in the field of visual arts, which are obviously easier to translate, and in synthetic-performative arts such as theatre and the cinema, which often veer in the direction of sheer visuality, pantomime, animation or dance."[23]

Sporadic voices like this have begun to acknowledge the shrinking reach of high literature and advocate for the extension of the scope of postcolonial studies to "the visual arts," which travel more easily in the increasingly global post-Cold War era. Tlostanova's note recalls the question posed by Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller in the introduction to their recent collection *Postcolonial Cinema Studies*, why postcolonial studies has not been more interested in cinema until recently.[24] I fully agree that this is an overdue interest. As I said earlier, I would even call it a belated interest in that cinema studies is by now essentially an extension of literary studies.

By contrast, television has been and continues to be subjected to systematic exclusion in postcolonial and postsocialist studies alike. While linguistic and institutional barriers to access are certainly to blame, the main culprit is a widespread assumption about the medium's low cultural value. Television remains a vast area to explore for interdisciplinary, comparative postcolonial studies of (post)socialism. This is a particularly conducive time for such an exploration, when the political economy of the media has come centre stage across film and media studies. Political economy is impossible to ignore in the case of television and, more recently, new media practices, where industrial and commercial imperatives are inseparable.

Ironically, it is the very attributes that sustain prejudice about television's cultural value that make it so valuable for postcolonial-postsocialist studies: it is a mass, rather than strictly art, medium, which

[23] Madina Tlostanova, "Postsocialist = Postcolonial? On Post-Soviet Imaginary and Global Coloniality," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48 (2012): 140.

[24] Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller, "Introduction," in *Postcolonial Cinema Studies*, ed. Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller (London: Routledge, 2012), 1–11.

appeals to a range of demographics; it bridges the public-private divide much more thoroughly than literature and art cinema do. It is consumed in the home but is easily manipulated by nation-states and imperial and corporate influences. At least since the 1980s, when the dual public-commercial system of broadcasting was introduced in Europe, television has consistently foregrounded its economic bottom line. This commercial imperative compels one to study audience practices within their larger cultural context of dissemination and reception rather than in a narrow circuit of sophisticated producers and readers. Since television exposes its economic and ideological underpinnings in a way that cannot be ignored, it invites analysis of these practices along with those of textual features and programme content.

One exemplary area of this kind of complex postcolonial analysis is research on the socialist historical drama series.[25] Early dramatic series such as the Polish *Janosik* (dir. Jerzy Passendorfer, 1974) and the Hungarian *A Tenkes kapitánya* (Captain of the Tenkes, dir. Tamás Fejér, 1964) were not only immensely popular but also key to socialist governments' historical revisions, aimed to consolidate their own power around patriotic narratives of male heroism. They display the tension between the socialist state's paternalistic, top-down efforts to educate a supposedly docile and homogeneous national audience and television's positioning as a home-based medium of family entertainment. They also reveal the coexistence and interplay of national and cross-national dimensions in the various series' striking aesthetic similarities, international distribution, and international cast of actors. Moreover, such programmes conjure up a deep regional culture arching over and contesting the singular national histories. They consistently revolve around the Robin Hood-like outlaw heroes immortalized by both folk and high cultures and in organic continuity with pan-European cultural and television histories. The historical drama, like other entertainment genres that have been overshadowed or excluded in studies of socialist cultures, also bridged television and film, two industries that shared production facilities, creative and below-the-line personnel, and institutions of funding and ideological control. Historical film epics have also invited analyses that employ the postcolonial lens.[26]

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[25] See Anikó Imre, "Adventures in Early Socialist Television Edutainment," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 40, no. 3 (2012): 119–30.

[26] See Nikolina Dobreva, "Eastern European Historical Epics: Genre Cinema and the Visualization of a Heroic National Past," in *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, ed. Anikó Imre (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 344–65; Irina Novikova, "Nation, Gender and History in Latvian Genre Cinema," in Imre, *A*

Socialist entertainment media tend to be dismissed either as mere distraction or pure propaganda, something that lacks the imprint of outstanding auteurs and is expected to have had a uniform impact on national populations. But a postcolonial view of the joint industrial and textual features of socialist television reveals a more complex picture: national regimes' own political agendas were produced in careful negotiation between two colonizing influences: directives from Moscow, which handed down a standardized blueprint for television production, involving everything from organizational structures through programme schedules to ideological content; and a voluntary association with Western European and even American broadcasters. The latter resulted in a surprising level of import flows, whose influence has just begun to be acknowledged. This is another area rife for postcolonial-postsocialist studies.[27] Beyond import flows, Western influences underpinned the very philosophy and organization of socialist television. Romanian television's first vice president, Silviu Brucan, embarked on a collaboration with the BBC as early as 1962, which continued into the Ceausescu era through official agreements and regular exchanges of personnel and technologies. Dana Mustata explains that Brucan's management challenged the political supervision of the Party over the new broadcast institution.[28]

A more thorough look thus reveals socialist television industries to be not simply propaganda factories that served the Soviet empire and national party leaderships but also instruments of cultural and economic assimilation to Western Europe, a process often facilitated by the socialist state governments

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Companion, 366–85; Petra Hanáková, "The Hussite Heritage Film: A Dream for All Czech Seasons," in Imre, *A Companion,* 466–82; and Anikó Imre, "The Socialist Historical Film," in Ponzanesi and Waller, *Postcolonial ,*47–60.

[27] As Sabina Mihelj shows, as early as the 1960s, the proportion of foreign programs in Eastern Europe (excluding the Soviet Union) ranged from 17 per cent in Poland to 45 percent in Bulgaria. In the early 1970s, 12 percent of all imported programming on Hungarian television came from the UK, 10 percent from France, and 10 percent from Western Germany. In non-aligned Yugoslavia, a full 80 percent of all imported programs came from outside of the socialist bloc and 40 percent from the US alone. In the early 1980s, an average of 43 percent of imported programming in Eastern Europe came from Western Europe, almost equalling the 45 percent from the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries. See Sabina Mihelj, "Television Entertainment in Socialist Eastern Europe: Between Cold War Politics and Global Developments," in *Popular Television in Eastern Europe During and Since Socialism*, ed. Anikó Imre, Timothy Havens, and Katalin Lustyik (London: Routledge, 2012), 13–29.

[28] Dana Mustata, "Television in the Age of (Post-)Communism: The Case of Romania," in Imre, Havens, and Lustyik, *Popular Television*, 50–53.

themselves. This history partially explains why postsocialist markets opened up to global media corporations so eagerly after 1989. The ensuing relationship of dependence should not have come as a surprise, either. Even within the expanded European Union, which has overtly identified as its goal the creation of a unified audiovisual arena, the East-West division prevails. For instance, Bottando, Havens, and Thatcher show that the European Union's Television without Frontiers (TVWF) Directive, now named the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, has become a back door for the importation of commercial programming from large Western European nations, especially Germany, the UK, and Italy. TVWF has created the conditions for large Western states to become net-exporters while smaller Eastern nations have become net-importers. The authors argue that the situation in the European television trade is best understood as part of a larger trend toward Western European neo-imperialism.[29]

Eurocentric (post)socialist cinemas

Research into the economic and political contexts of cultural production across the high–popular divide also offers an opportunity for a much-needed postcolonial intervention into the history of cinema in a socialist Europe ostensibly divided by an impenetrable Iron Curtain. Only such a multi-layered, interdisciplinary context can reveal the moral entanglements in which the position of economic marginality and a compensatory drive for cultural assimilation implicate writers, filmmakers, and politicians.

Tracing the Eurocentric assimilationist drive of socialist cinemas highlights a network of cultural, economic, and political circulations and collaborations within Europe as a whole, interlacing the two Europes more intricately than Cold War accounts would have us believe. It also calls into question the image of a region entirely determined and dominated by Soviet socialism, cut off from the bloodstream of European culture and economy. Conversely, socialist ideas had a wide influence, which regularly crossed the East-West divide.

The 1960s was a period of particularly thriving cinematic exchange among Eastern and Western European filmmakers and cultural administrators. Co-productions also extended beyond the Warsaw Pact's boundaries.[30] The Polish documentary films of the *czarna seria* or "black

[29] Evelyn Bottando, Timothy Havens and Matthew Thatcher, "Intra-European Media Imperialism: Hungarian Program Imports and the Television without Frontiers Directive," in Imre, Havens, and Lustyik, *Popular Television*, 123–40.

[30] Ewa Mazierska, "International Co-productions as Productions of Heterotopias,"

series" enjoyed a warm reception at European festivals, and were closely associated with the British Free Cinema movement.[31] Francesco Pitassio writes about an entire cultural and political network dedicated to importing, exhibiting, and deploying Czech films in Italy thanks to the Italian Communist Party's efforts to implant a version of socialism in the 1950s-80s.[32] Nowhere in the region were European exchanges as formative as in Yugoslavia. As Greg DeCuir puts it, Yugoslav filmmakers such as Aleksandar Petrović, Miodrag Popović, and Boštjan Hladnik "enjoyed an international upbringing in cinema, a cross-pollination that would continue throughout their careers." Institutional venues of cinematic exchange also enhanced this cross-pollination. The 1954 French Cinemathèque exhibit was organized by Henri Langlois at the Yugoslav Cinemathèque in Belgrade and the Korčula Summer School in Croatia, and was attended by notable Western Marxists such as Ernst Bloch, Erich Fromm, and Jürgen Habermas. Decades before the region's official conversion to capitalist democracy, the economic reform policies implemented in the 1960s turned Yugoslavia into a liberalized haven within the bloc and a production centre for international collaborations.[33]

Perhaps the least explored and acknowledged aspect of East-West interaction during the Cold War is the extent to which the economic foundations of socialist film industries depended on European validation. Dorota Ostrowska shows this in her account of Polish film units – unique economic and artistic collaborations established in 1955, among which the National Film Board divided state funding each year. While the Board ostensibly placed much more weight on the political outcomes of the creative work conducted within the film units, these teams were in fact linchpins in the economic functioning of the socialist film industry. The industry depended on the hard currency derived from sales of Polish films from the Polish distributor Film Polski to foreign distributors. This favoured festival-worthy films, which were exactly the kind that expressed subtle, often allegorical critiques of the very authoritarian system that

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in Imre, *A Companion*, 483–503.

[31] Bjørn Sørenssen, "The Polish Black Series Documentary and the British Free Cinema Movement," in Imre, *A Companion*, 183–200.

[32] Francesco Pitassio, "For the Peace, for a New Man, for a Better World! Italian Leftist Culture and Czechoslovak Cinema, 1945-1968," in Imre, *A Companion*, 265–88.

[33] Greg De Cuir, Jr., "The Yugoslav Black Wave: The History and Poetics of Polemical Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia," in Imre, *A Companion*, 403–24.

supported film production – such as those of auteurs Wajda and Zanussi, also artistic leaders of film units.[34]

While "national cinema" travelled within the narrow circuit of cultural institutions, national intellectuals, Western critics, and movie buffs, the majority of national populations avoided art films and quietly migrated to television and popular films during socialism. Of course, as Andrew Higson writes, national cinema, at least in Europe, is always an idealistic and paradoxical construction in that it foregrounds the most diverse hybrid and progressive elements within a national culture.[35] In Eastern Europe this contradiction – and the gap between national cinema and national spectator – was further deepened by the ideological pressure of Soviet occupation, in some cases the lack of national independence, and the peculiar leadership role assigned to national intellectuals.

By virtue of being cast as figures who have bridged the enlightened West and the backward East, intellectuals have inevitably acted as double agents. The divisive ideological force of the Cold War singled out the most mobile *cosmopolitan* elements of East European cultures, auteurs, and films and designated them to be representatives of the *national* cinemas that together made up Eastern European cinema. These cosmopolitan auteurs were instrumental in enabling the European circulation that affected every level of film culture, from ideology through aesthetics to economy. This intra-European power dynamic hinged on the paradoxical performance of Eastern European intellectuals, who have historically been granted cosmopolitan mobility within Europe in exchange for being fixed as representatives of their national cultures, and their artistic products. The mutual imbrication of cosmopolitanism and nationalism confirmed in cultural and ideological terms a political and economic hierarchy between West and East. In this division, the East is permanently limited to a national position while the West is afforded a universal cosmopolitan outlook.

Such a cross-European framework reveals that the auteur films that are usually selected to stand for specific national cinemas had little to do with national audiences. Instead, they targeted European festivals in search of political and cultural recognition and often even economic revenue. Native audiences were catered to by a rather different, popular kind of media production, hidden in the shadow of representative art films.

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[34] Dorota Ostrowska, "An Alternative Model of Film Production: Film Units in Poland after World War Two," in Imre, *A Companion*, 453–65.

[35] Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), 57–68.

Since 1989, the division between high and popular culture has blurred rapidly, further clarifying the economic underpinnings of cultural production. From the ruins of state-run film industries, cash-strapped Eastern Europe has emerged as an indispensable site for a transnational rearrangement, offering a cheap resource of production and a new consumer market. While the nation-state is still one of the players, state funding for film and other arts has been consistently dwindling in the region, especially in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis. The moral obligation to sustain national cinemas still lingers and is encouraged by European cultural subsidies but the state's most important job has become the creation of an economic environment that allows for the gradual lowering of regulations to seduce the foreign investment to which much of the actual support of the film industry has been transferred. Offering a cheap and experienced work force and generous tax credits, Eastern European capitals such as Prague and Budapest have recently become desirable destinations for outsourcing Hollywood-based film and television production.

Eastern Europe has also turned from a Cold War other into an important component of the European Union's policy to establish a Europe-wide media and communications area able to stand up to competition with global media empires. The Council of Europe's Eurimages fund has been key to the financing of co-production, distribution, and digitization projects among European states. The MEDIA (Measures to Encourage the Development of the Audio Visual Industries) Program, another EU initiative, has provided crucial support for film projects in the areas of training, development, distribution, promotion, and Europeanization. These European initiatives have certainly helped reinvigorate media production in the former socialist states. At the same time, European integration has further exposed Eastern Europe to neoliberal deregulation, weakening the political and economic power of nation-states and reinforcing existing geopolitical inequalities within Europe, something a postcolonial approach is primed to explore.

Cultural racism

A recurring obstacle that has been levelled against the case for Eastern Europe's postcolonial relevance is the historical whiteness of the majority of the region's population. This has led some observers to believe the fallacy that racism cannot develop in the absence of racial diversity. More recently, postcolonial-postsocialist research has pointed out that such logic is not only naïve but also harmful as it leaves racism at the heart of Eastern

European nationalisms – and at the heart of European culture more broadly – unchecked. Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery identify state-sanctioned racism as one of the major areas where thinking between the two "posts" can be most productive.[36] Vedrana Velickovic adopts Balibar's notion of "racism without race" to describe the post-Wall attitudes directed at Polish and other Eastern European labourers and immigrants in Western Europe. She also traces continuities between the current worrying rise of racism and fascism in Eastern Europe and the cultural racism of Yugoslav popular culture, directed at Albanians as well as African and Asian students studying in Yugoslavia.[37]

Eastern European nationalisms have received ample treatment in the social sciences. While the Ottoman and Habsburg empires ruled over a melting pot of ethnicities across shifting national borders, the role played by racial distinctions in national identification has been downplayed by historians much like it has been rendered irrelevant in national narratives themselves. In these narratives, "race" is generally occluded by "ethnicity," a term used almost synonymously with "nationality" with reference to linguistic and cultural identity markers. While these identity markers are understood to be as powerful as genetic codes, "race" itself is not part of the vocabulary of nationalism. It has a hidden trajectory in Eastern Europe because the region's nations see themselves outside of colonial processes and thus exempt from post-decolonization struggles with racial mixing and prejudice. As a result, Eastern Europe may be the only, or the last, region on Earth where whiteness is seen as morally transparent, its alleged innocence preserved by a claim of exception to the history of imperialism.

This racial exceptionalism, the East's function as an unapologetic reserve for unbridled, because it's mostly unconscious, white supremacy, serves as a proof of Europeanness, a way to disavow the colonial hierarchy between Western and Eastern Europe and to make up for the region's long-standing economic and political inferiority. While the kinship ties that guarantee national bonds in the East are officially understood to be the result of shared languages and cultures, the implied cohesiveness and hegemony of these "cultural nationalisms"[38] in fact rests on a racial agenda shrouded in the invisibility of whiteness. The organicity and

[36] Verdery and Chari, "Thinking".

[37] Vedrana Velickovic, "Belated Alliances? Tracing the Intersections between Postcolonialism and Postcommunism," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 2 (2012): 172.

[38] Joep Leerssen, "Nationalism and the Cultivation of Culture," *Nations and Nationalism* 12, no. 4 (2006): 559–78.

ethical transparency of shared "cultural" values is guaranteed by the unspoken but taken-for-granted superiority of whiteness. It is hard to miss the contradiction that whiteness as a moral category, itself a product of imperialism and racism, provides immunity to charges of imperialism and racism. Until recently even the Roma, the largest visible minority, have been persistently categorized in ethnic, rather than racial, terms. In socialist states' strategies, this was clearly not to foreground the constructedness of ethnicity and the hybridity of the Roma but to disavow the violence of racism.

Once again, the insistent focus of both "posts" on intellectuals and high cultural products distracts from such racial undercurrents. The selective cultural inclusion of Eastern Europe within European culture through key national filmmakers and films has kept in place a dynamic of Eurocentric colonial mimicry, which has an unacknowledged but all the more crucial racial component: whiteness as a "natural" common denominator across European cultures underscores a "natural" cultural affinity between West and East, with national-cosmopolitan intellectuals serving as conduits. However, cultural admission into Europe is conditioned on an ongoing compulsion to prove one's right to belong by overidentifying with the host culture and outperforming its whiteness–at the expense of racialized others.

Zooming in on the postcolonial role of Eastern intellectuals as double agents – of universal cosmopolitanism and parochial nationalism – uncomfortably taints the realm of European (high) culture with that of xenophobic and racist nationalisms. Through this lens, the strict national classification of the cinemas that opened the doors of European cosmopolitanism to selected Eastern intellectuals and the explosion of ethnic nationalisms following the fall of the Wall appear to be two complementary functions of the same Western European expectation towards the postsocialist region, to be performed in a token fashion by national-cosmopolitan cultural conduits. As David Morley writes, homogenizing the East as "national" has also implied deferring the ills of nationalism eastward of the European core. Post-Yugoslav nationalisms, in particular, were viewed as some dark alien element of a primordial nature, "once banished to faraway empires, but now picking its way back to Europe through long-forgotten provinces of Habsburg-Tzarist and Ottoman empires."[39] Nationalism was deemed to be the unfinished business of Eastern nationality, a blood-based, heroic, and exclusive cult, the atavistic force of an ethnic revival, which threatened the civilized order of world affairs when the Berlin Wall fell. Morley correctly concludes,

[39] David Morley, *Home Territories* (London: Routledge, 2000), 241.

"while these new forms of nationalism may seem to simply represent a return to a pre-1914 historical agenda, they also function . . . as a way of evading the past and making a bid for modernity, in the form of entry to the Euro-club."[40]

The postsocialist opening of national borders and media to the flow of diverse images, ideas, and people has begun to burst the bubble of racial exceptionalism. The illusion of white nationhood is under attack by migration from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as well as tourism and other people flows from all directions. Until recently, it was possible to overlook the interdependence of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, of cultural and racial affiliations, in sustaining a continental division. But the "outsourcing" of the ugly business of nationalism to the East via a symbolic and selective cultural inclusion can hardly be sustained at this moment of European crisis, when Europe as a whole is regrouping within nationalist factions and Western Europe has retreated behind the walls of Fortress Europe to protect itself from undesirable immigrants. This has confronted Easterners with their own effective second-class status in the eyes of the West.

Current European reality programming that "documents" the lives of working-class or underclass "trash," "chav," migrant and immigrant Muslim, or East and Southern European groups has been instrumental in representing and also neutralizing the new cultural racism within Europe. Reality programmes that hover between documentary and fiction, claiming the mantle of education in an entertaining narrative format, are particularly important to scrutinize for the way in which they frame economic and political issues. Programmes such as Channel 4's "My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding" activate a racialized synergy between the political management of the European debt crisis and its symbolic management in popular culture. They offer a community-forming exercise of self-affirmation to the supposedly post-racist European majority based on their shared distaste at the spectacle of the racialized pre-modern underclass.

At a time when the multicultural fantasy of Europe has been considered fulfilled thanks to what Alain Badiou terms an official "politics of recognition,"[41] the flare ups of the neoliberal free market crisis justify as rightful crisis management exposing and symbolically expelling from the European family the unworthy "Gypsy." Cultural representations align with a policy direction in the EU and within its member state governments

[40] Morley, *Home Territories*, 240.

[41] Alana Lentin and Gavan Titley, "The Crisis of 'Multiculturalism' in Europe: Mediated Minarets, Intolerable Subjects," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 15, no. 2 (2012): 127.