

Decoloniality in Eastern Europe: A Lexicon of Reorientation

Ana EDITOR
Vilenica

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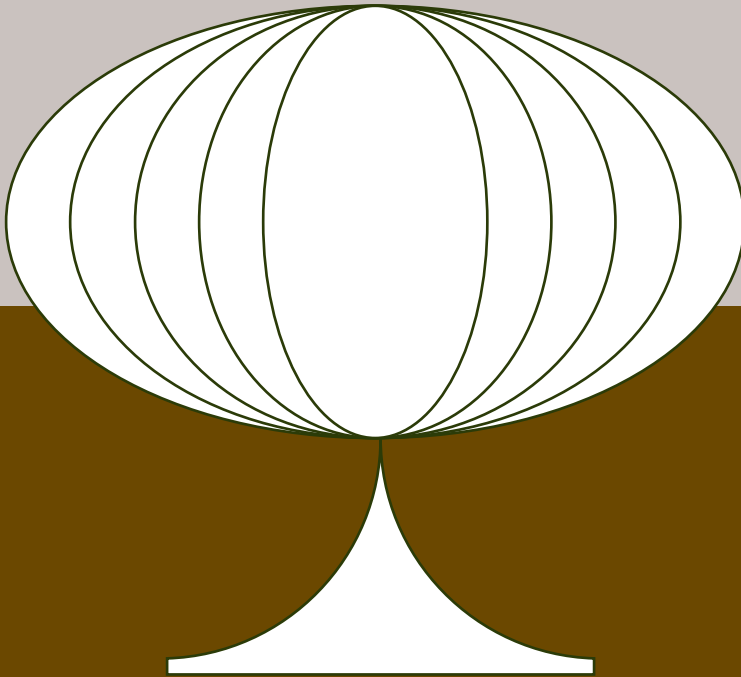
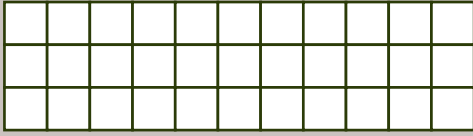
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Ana Vilenica

Why a Lexicon

Understanding the decolonial trajectories of Eastern Europe is a difficult task: there are complex global, transnational, transregional and local colonial processes to consider. The terrain of decolonisation in Eastern Europe is constitutively contested by competing visions of role assignments: who is the colonizer, what is the (post-)colony, and to what political projects do these visions belong? As both semi-periphery to the capitalist world system with aspirations to the whiteness and civilization granted by Europe, Eastern Europe acquires its dual status of the colonizer and the colonized. How to navigate this space populated by numerous competing narratives and tales?

The authors in this volume offer multiple perspectives on how to navigate Eastern Europe by thinking through the intersecting interpretations of coloniality and imperialism, as well as their effects on anti-colonial, decolonial struggles and forms of contemporary solidarities and forms of life. The decolonial frameworks offered by the contributors to this volume make room for anti-capitalist, post-colonial and decolonial discourse. They work with particular localized issues, but do not shy away from difficulties in moving through and engaging with the region.

Why publish a lexicon now? This Lexicon is an archive of multiple voices and perspectives — anti-racist, post-colonial, de-colonial, feminist, anti-capitalist — and as such refuses a normative relation to lexicography. Lexicons, after all, bare histories of violent colonial modernisation(s) as well as alternative socialist modernisations. Here, instead, the work is to build upon a deep history of counter-lexicons that point to reclaiming collective power of knowing the world, against the grain of dominant political economy of meaning-making. This

lexicon creates space for the suppressed anticolonial critique of knowledge production and activism in Eastern Europe, bullied out of sight by those who feed on reactionary politics, opportunistic stances of those whose careers and jobs depend upon the perpetuation of (neo)colonial politics and practices, as well as by inexcusable ignorance. The lexicon aspires to create meaning by thematizing local Eastern European experiences and creating from them an index of reference that can assist in future criticisms, debates and practices.

This lexicon is far from exhaustive. Following the efforts of groups and individuals that have organized and created spaces for discussions, events, and gatherings, to learn and produce knowledge about these histories and struggles in the last few years, I have invited sixteen contributors who have taken an active part in these discussions. Fifteen of them offered up notions around which to organize critical examination. This lexicon-in-progress is a space for an ongoing discussion of the terms of the debate that have been created and recreated, demonstrating how 'inventing' terms of debate is not an easy task.

A special challenge lies in the translation of the terminology made available by the postcolonial studies of European empires for use in local contexts and the decolonial speech from and to different languages we use in Eastern Europe. This time we made an effort to translate this discussion into two Eastern European languages, Serbian and Hungarian, paradoxically from the English language that we use to talk to each other. The challenge is not only in translating between national languages, but in the idea of translation that draws on the language designed by anglophone historiography for its postcolonial studies and presumes it will fit a different historical situation, different geography, and different framework. It makes apparent the necessity of inventing new concepts for postcolonial and decolonial study that speak to local situations.

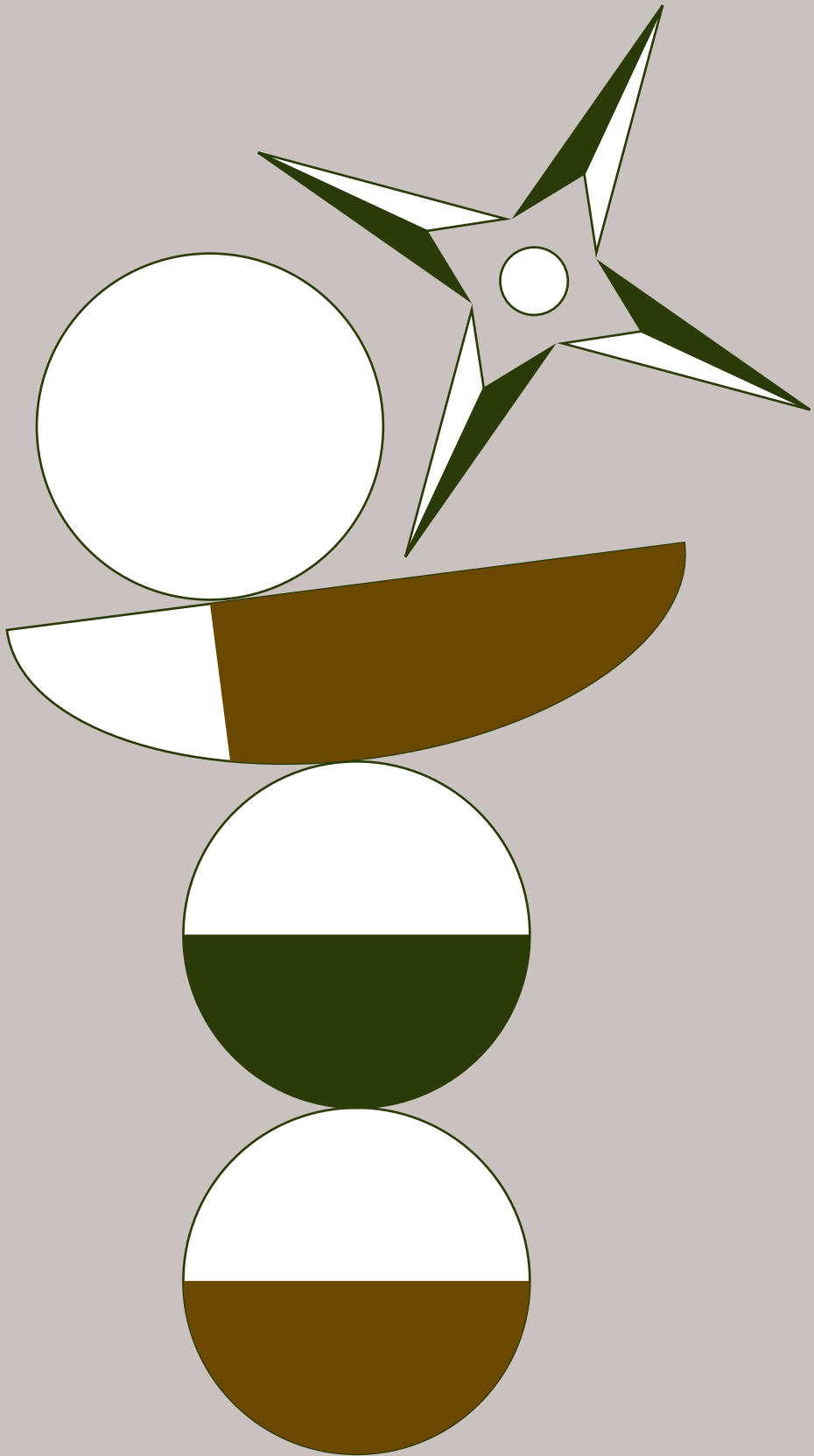
As we complete this project, we inhabit a permanent economic and social crisis, of which the war resulting from the invasion of Ukraine and the cost-of-living crisis are but the latest iterations. They have affected our work and living condi-

tions, our movements and activist collectives, and our physical and mental health, including our capacity to participate in this project. Bringing this project to publication reflects our deep commitment to critical knowledge production and worldmaking beyond the fundamental dynamics of colonial and racial dispossession in Eastern Europe.

This commitment is not a one-time deliverable but a continuous engagement with problems that we observe, analyse and fight against as organisers, activists, artists, curators and writers, each in our own capacity and our own way. With this in mind, I would like to think about this project as an occasion to take time and reflect on where we are in the ongoing process of re-orientation in knowing Eastern Europe, amidst a general lack of knowledge and understanding of colonialism, decolonialism, anti-colonialism, and decoloniality from a historical global perspective.

My hope for this project is that it helps to set up Decoloniality in Eastern Europe as a field of enquiry with which to reflect on our positions and imagine different paths towards our insurrectionary futures.

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Ana Sladojević, independent curator

An anticolonial museum

More than ever, our thoughts are, today on May 23, with you all in Belgrade — to you we send our greetings from the vicinity of the Equator, and from the meridian in Accra, which we shall, in a few weeks, be leaving forever. Veda and I have not felt that on this day — when our small initiative has definitely become part of the currents of social organism — we need to be physically present, because we are aware that what we do individually is valid only if it is socially accepted and justified. In such ethics, created and taught by Tito and the Communist Party, we were brought up and grew, from our earliest days. In its enduring existence, Belgrade is offered today a new cultural dimension, which is also the hallmark of Tito's era. The Museum of African Art has grown as a direct result of Yugoslav international non-alignment, whose conference was hosted for the very first time in Belgrade.

Accra, May 1977.¹

The Museum of African Art in Belgrade — an example of a decentered decolonial practice

No museum is anticolonial as such, or at least not yet. In order to understand why, we need to see museums as products of imperial and colonial discourse and context. The way they are set up, organized, their methodologies systematized — all of these elements of museum work have a long history and a considerable weight in knowledge production. There are numerous ways that museums exercise control over their narratives, manipulate time and space, and in combining these ways of manipulation, establish control over the dominant his-

¹ From the letter that Veda Zagorac and Dr Zdravko Pečar, initiators of the Museum of African Art, and collectors of its core collection, sent on the occasion of its opening. Translation from Sladojević & Epštajn, 2017, p. 31.



Image 1 Detail: part of the in situ curatorial installation/intervention within the permanent display. *Crno telo, bele maske* (Black body, white masks) exhibition, curated by Dejan Sretenović. Museum of African Art – the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar Collection. 2004. Photo: Ana Sladojević.

torical narrative. Such normalized production of knowledge is set up to perpetuate inequalities, prescribing subsequently the regimes of visibility and invisibility for different protagonists, events, and meanings.

The Museum of African Art, the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar Collection in Belgrade (MAA), has frequently been declared the only anticolonial museum exhibiting African art in Europe. More often, however, it was called ‘nonaligned’, as in the press coverage at the time of its opening in 1977². This language was shaped by Socialist Yugoslavia’s positioning within the Non-aligned Movement, which was from 1961 among the primary vehicles for articulating the country’s anticolonial sentiment.

From the museum’s inception, the MAA management strived to seek new models of representation, recognizing

² *Znamen vremena nesvrstanih, Borba*, Belgrade. May 28, 1977.

that museums in the West were formed out of ‘colonial plunder’, offering part of a broader socialist criticism of capitalism. A major change in political discourse took place during the 1990s: devastating wars of that decade left deep traumatic wounds throughout the post-Yugoslav region, influencing national and cultural narratives. Following the all-encompassing erasure of the Socialist Yugoslavia and its values, the heritage of nonalignment and anticolonialism was all but forgotten.

First attempts at re-thinking this particular museum, its collecting and past discourses, were introduced in 2004, starting with the exhibition *Crno telo, bele maske* (Black Body, White Masks) curated by Dejan Sretenović. Sretenović’s work references Frantz Fanon’s seminal book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986), underlining both cultural continuity and discontinuity between this Museum and the region, and the imperial/colonial episteme (Illustration). An art installation by Barthélémy Toguo followed in 2006, accompanying the exhibition of his prints under the title *Transits*, curated for the MAA by Mihael Milunović. Toguo named the installation, assembled from objects in the museum storage and the museum shop, *Hommage to Zdravko Pečar*. His artwork exposed the very act of collecting African art as colonial.³

Renewed interest in topics of anticolonialism and nonalignment expanded significantly in the past ten years, in search for alternative models for museums and collections to exist in the world. The work of this particular museum has often been received uncritically, however, its functioning seen as self-evidently anticolonial, although it deserves new theorization as well as meaningful changes in the museum practice.⁴

³ I am particularly interested in the work of Sretenović and Toguo as forms of institutional critique. There were not the only exhibitions of contemporary curating/art in MAA between 2004 and 2006. Artist Zoran Naskovski had two noted exhibitions: *Precious Memories*, part of which was simultaneously on show at the O3one gallery, then a multimedia space (2005), and *Black, Red and White* (2006), while artists Klaus Hollinetz and Werner Puntigam exhibited multimedia (sound and photography) artworks: *Mbirations* (2005) and *Gwenyambira, Hommage to Simon Mashoko* (2006).

⁴ Following the invitation from the Museum of African Art — the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar Collectio to take part in re-thinking the museum’s future in summer 2021, I proposed a reorganization around the concept of *An anticolonial museum*. As an open-concept long-term project, it will take into consideration all aspects of the museum that bear on knowledge production.

A long-term phased methodology aimed at re-framing the anticolonial potential

Drawing on my doctoral thesis and museum-related projects spanning more than a decade, I present here three main methodological steps aimed at creating space in which to re-think anticolonial discourse within this museum. The steps are: detection, (re)historicization and emancipation.

1. Detection

I approached *detection* by delineating colonial and anti-colonial practice within this museum. Ethnographization and collecting of African art as a construed field were what the MAA had in common with the colonial model of representation. However, certain emancipatory, anticolonial practices, were reflected in collaboration, focus on contemporaneity and diverse modes of producing knowledge and learning. That emancipatory thinking, however, set at the beginning of the museum's operation, was no longer present once the values of anticolonialism, antiracism and solidarity disappeared from public discourse. In collaboration with the MAA's curator Emilia Epštajn, I proposed a series of talks, *Contexts and Representations*, that ran between 2014 and 2018. The *Open research hour*, as unscripted talk and/or document overview, was held on Museum premises (permanent display, museum garden etc.) and open to the public. It made ongoing research entirely accessible to anyone interested in listening, watching, or interacting with the invited speakers. As the research process became more transparent, the public discussion about art and museum became as important — if not more so — as the static permanent display, unchanged since 1977.

2. (Re)historicization

(Re)historicization became necessary once it became obvious that there were considerable differences in the perception of the somewhat decentered cultural positioning of the museum, largely dependent on the presence (or absence) of an emotional response to its nonaligned and anticolonial history. In addition to the research on mapping counterhistories, erased protagonists, facts and discourse, what became exceptionally important was recognizing the models of knowledge production that contributed to their erasure in the first place.

This step went on display in the museum through the exhibition in the form of an interpolation, which Emilia Epštajn and I co-curated, *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi, One Man No Chop, (Re) conceptualization of the Museum of African Art – the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar Collection* (2017). The exhibition brought forward the until then invisible or unrecognized anticolonial collections and documents, bequeathed to the Museum by Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar. Collaboration with the colleagues at the museum was immensely important in this regard. It was the external researchers and collaborators, however, among them film theorist Olivier Hadouchi (Hadouchi, 2016) and historian Nemanja Radonjić (Radonjić, 2017), who were the first to offer appraisal of certain documents, such as the photographs from the Algerian war of independence that Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar wholeheartedly supported. Besides the erasure of the values of anticolonialism, antiracism and solidarity, also conspicuous was the erasure of women, such as the almost entirely neglected contribution of Veda Zagorac to the founding of the Museum of African Art (Epštajn, 2018).

Even though (re)historicization may have seemed to yield the proof of a particular failure of decolonization of the mind back in the 1960s and 1970s, I prefer to see this historicized discourse as a kind of *affective heritage*: a potentiality that we can connect to, a hope that a different approach with regard to the hierarchies of power can indeed be possible.⁵ It should not be seen uncritically, however, as uses of such heritage can also vary and serve different (always political) purposes.

3. Emancipation

Finally, *emancipation* in this context means thinking beyond historicization: it means recognizing one's own position, doing the necessary work on unlearning certain 'truths' that were normalized in our own societies and finding an authentic language. Emancipation has yet to challenge many deeply

⁵ The phrase 'affective heritage' draws on the work of museum theorist Laurajane Smith (2021), in particular the shift of focus from museums to visitors, regarding their roles in creating particular emotional meanings linked to certain heritage sites/museums. The 'affectively anticolonial' potential of the Museum of African Art – the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar Collection is part of a situated, lived experience not immediately readable or accessible unless such affective response already exists. To prefer the notion of anticolonial over decolonial in my work is to point to the museum's history and to emphasize the need for a more contextualized, nuanced and case-sensitive approaches to decolonial practice worldwide.

entrenched beliefs, among them the Yugoslav exceptionalism in regard to construction of race, and hence racism, and the reluctance to recognize one's positioning within the global racialized hierarchies. It also has the task of embracing a more nuanced and decentered approach to a whole array of cultural specificities that do not allow for each museum to be interpreted, criticized, and decolonized in the same way. It has to be meaningful above all for the engaged constituencies or have no meaning at all.

In practice, these methodological steps or stages of research overlap and repeat. I also bring to your attention to how the focus on what is being detected, (re)historicized and emancipated has also moved away from objects towards discourses. This shift makes sole reliance on formal traces, whether of collections, photographs, documents, audio and film recordings, extremely problematic, as the search for an 'anticolonial archive,' albeit important, may not be emancipatory in itself if it turns into a mere repetition of existing models of knowledge production.

A shift from objects to values — translating theory into practice

Inspired in part by curator Bojana Piškur's contribution to A Non-Aligned Museum conference (proposed by curator Katarina Živanović for the Museum of Yugoslavia, in 2016),⁶ I suggested the two most important lines of thinking and acting, for the Museum of African Art:

I. Re-actualization of the affirmative legacies that informed its construction, not in the form of artifacts but in terms of values.

II. Employment of the knowledge produced thus far in the course of different collaborations with theorists, curators and artists, in order to disrupt the work of the museum as such, as a colonial institution *per se*.

⁶ Bojana Piškur, curator at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Ljubljana, MG+MSUM (Slovenia), presented another version of her conclusions regarding a non-aligned museum within the scope of NAM Talks (event at the MAA in September 2021), due to be published in 2022.

Instead of conclusion, therefore, I present here an attempt at translating theory into practice, as a set of recommendations and possible guidelines for the museum's work:

↪ Delineate the values you stand by, express them clearly, and inscribe them into every segment of your work. Set the anti-colonial, decolonial, anti-fascist, and anti-racist thinking as the main lines of research, work, exhibiting, publishing, as well as public engagement and actions.

↪ Reconsider the active and changing roles of communities in thinking about heritage and museums, specifically bearing in mind the decentralization of decision-making, use and care; a current and potential displacement of constituencies; transformations of socially and legally recognized roles of individuals and groups, or introduction of previously unrecognized individual or group, formal or informal participants, who may affect how either past or future could be construed.

↪ Establish collaborations with individuals, organizations and institutions not based on the perceived importance of a particular institution within existing hierarchies, but rather on the knowledge they can contribute. Do not speak on someone else's behalf, but rather open space for more people to share their point of view on topics that centrally concern them or on which they are knowledgeable. Do not use other people as informants, but address them as interlocutors with respect for their knowledge and worldview.

↪ Have a *longue durée* perception of the phenomena you engage with, *sewing through*⁷ the past, the present and the future responsibly and consciously, and with an awareness and critique of your own ideological position in the *longue durée*. Do not only look backward or forward, but understand the urgency of the moment in which we find ourselves and link all of your production to the contemporary articulation of our current condition as a society.

⁷ *Sewing through* or *stitching through* is introduced here as a theoretical notion that expresses how certain museum elements from the past are significant in thinking of present issues, with the aim of imagining different futures. The author of this text formulated it based on contemporary psychological trauma theory and practice. Its counterpart *unstitching* points at the need to unlearn the old patterns, that prevent trauma from being resolved, while *stitching through* tells of the need to create new links in thinking and acting, so that new modes of imagining the world and our own position in it can be devised.

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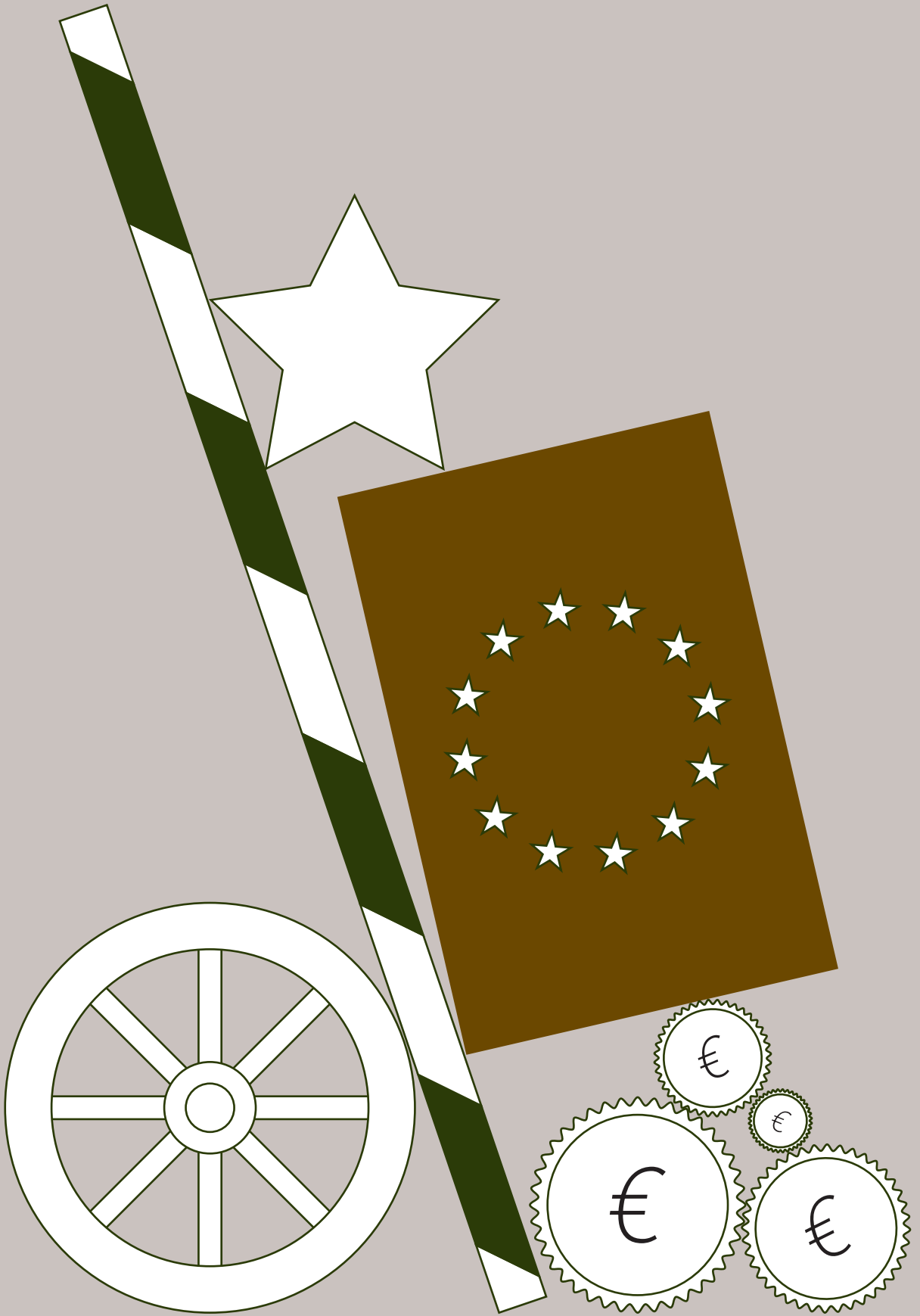
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ANA SLADOJEVIĆ is an independent curator and art and media theorist. She studied museums as complex objects, whose previous discourses, often inscribed within different unrecognized or 'invisible' elements, such as 'surplus' of museum production in form of archives, documentation, or study materials, bear influence on how a meaning is formed. She researched these questions particularly within the context of the Museum of African Art – the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar collection, and the Museum of Yugoslavia, with emphasis on certain aspects of these institutions that are related to historical non-alignment. She took part in the following projects: Southern Constellations: The Poetics of the Non-Aligned, Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova / Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana (2019) / Asia Culture Center, Gwangju (2020); Tito in Africa: Picturing Solidarity, Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade (2017) / Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (2018) / Wende Museum, Los Angeles (2019); NYIMPA KOR NDZIDZI, One Man No Chop, (Re)conceptualisation of the Museum of African Art – the Veda and Dr Zdravko Pečar Collection, MAA, Belgrade (2017-2018); Non-Aligned Modernisms, Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade / ERSTE Stiftung (2011-2016).



Piro Rexhepi

Our 'Raceless' Region Revisited

White supremacy is the unnamed political system
that has made the modern world what it is today.

Charles W Mill's (1997, 1).

Debates about the relationship between racial capitalism and coloniality abound today, and these discussions around the world generally reflect local and regional particularities. This short piece is a reflection on how our common regional histories are connected to the accumulation and circulation of global capital, from its deployment towards colonial expansion to the present.

When we talk about racial capitalism and coloniality, we are always talking about the protracted continuities and deeply embedded connectivities, from the emergence of capital and colonial expansion to the ongoing shifts and transformations of contemporary racial and carceral capitalism. Needless to say, these connections are seldom straightforward or self-evident, frequently obscured by national temporalities and modernist hegemonic epistemologies. The starting point is perhaps to acknowledge that no part of the world remains untouched by modernity/coloniality.

The challenge of thinking through how modernity, capitalism and coloniality have structured power relations across different regions around the world therefore requires different methods and vocabularies that at times coincide with global debates about anti-capitalism, decolonization and abolition and at times depart from them. I say this because, for instance, while our post-socialist vocabularies of decolonization and anti-capitalism are largely informed by Marxist praxis, this is not

the case in other parts of the world. There decolonization can, and frequently does (especially in settler colonial contexts), take indigenous forms of resistance for which Marxism can also be a bearer of eurocentrism, a product of European modernity/coloniality. I bring this up here because it is important to acknowledge the tensions and contradictions in decolonial praxis and thought.

There are two main challenges in our region that require close attention in relation to these debates. One is racism, generally neutralised by attention to 'nationalism' or replaced with 'ethnicity' and similar colourblind and raceless politics, and the other is colonialism and coloniality. I address these two more so than capitalism because, as I said, while there exists a strong praxis of anti-capitalist politics, the critique of capitalism in post-socialist spaces is often presumed raceless and colonialess, and rendered through orthodox and Eurocentric Marxist critique that often discounts the work of Black Marxist thought and even more so of decolonial praxis.

Thus, when we think of labour and class struggle, the question of racialized labour in our region is almost entirely absent, even though our cities and industries were not only built by racialised labour but also by displacement of racialised communities, which at different times in history were or continue to be Roma, Muslim or other racialized communities, and, more recently and increasingly, migrant workers. For instance, today there is a gap in thinking connected to coloniality about how carceral and racial capitalism function in our region even as a region-wide multi-billion industry financed by the EU grows to create carceral spaces along the Balkan Route, where Europe seeks to seal its racial borderlands by sponsoring migrant prisons, encampments and confinement spaces.

So, when we think of capitalism, we have to start thinking about racial and carceral capitalism because labour under capitalism is always racialised and gendered but also connected to colonial racial geographies imagining where Europe starts and ends. In my upcoming book *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route* (2023), I point out how the integration of post-socialist people and

spaces into the Euro-Atlantic alliance has served as a strategic spatial bordering of racial difference. The redeemable and integrable whiteness of the post-socialist (former) other, and the irredeemable impasse of the postcolonial others, serve both to secure its borderlands and to recruit Eastern European white workers, addressing demands for cheap labour while also bolstering the white demographics.

The questions that emerge then are, Who builds these carceral camps? Who benefits from them and who is contained in them? If the camps are sponsored by Europe, built by Balkan states to contain and imprison refugees, then what is going on here? We cannot answer this question without asking how colonial cartographies that defined the racial borders of Europe and whiteness render this containment of refugees today a necessary measure to protect those borders. Thus the regional borderization and incarceration of refugees work in tandem with the integration of the region into the EU at the price of policing its racial borders.

This is not just a regional issue, but an issue that is visible and replicating itself on the local and state levels. The policing of borders, be it those of cities, states, or post-national formations like the EU, require the continuous confinement of racialised communities. It is also important to remember that these are not just projects of the far right and outright fascist governments like the Hungarian one, but also projects that define the left and right political formations. Since this is an art forum, I want to give an example of how artists in our region intervene to expose these links.

Selma Selman's work for instance raises questions about Roma racism in the region that unsettles not just the politics of the far right but also the silence and compliance with racism in the leftist movements. One of the best commentaries on this intersection of racial capitalism, class, gender and coloniality in postsocialism is her performance piece 'Self-Portrait.' In it, Selman takes the electronic waste that people deposit in Roma neighbourhoods across the peripheries of postsocialist cities to demolish them, into their city centres. In my conversations with Selman, she has described the process of the performance as wanting to spare no one from what the noise of



capitalist violence sounds like, because you can't deposit your waste in the periphery and return to the comfort of the centre making abstract noise about 'rights,' ...for instance, I chose to demolish a washing machine because I was trying to point out how the work of waste recycling that takes place in Roma neighbourhoods forces us to reckon with the racist, gendered and environmental violence that results from capitalism.



Figure 1. Selma Selman's 'Self Portrait' (2016) in Rijeka, Croatia.
Photo by Tanja Kanazir.

Selman's work is important because in confronting the post-socialist left and liberal peripheralization of questions of racism and refugees, it also exposes their comfortable collusion with the EU and its captive and carceral border regimes in the region. Selman comes from Bihac, the site of refugees, where the space once used for refugees from the Bosnian genocide now serves as the space for EU-sponsored camps for migrant detention. Connecting her own racialized reality in Bosnia to that of the refugees being pursued along the Balkan Route to prevent them from 'entering' Europe, in a virtual reality performance called 'No Space,' she says that 'There is no space here for you,' the phrase the Roma encounter in the Balkans when looking for jobs or housing, is not disconnected



Figure 2. Selma Selman, 'No Space' (YEAR)

from the message given to refugees when they are told that 'there is no space for you here.'

While I don't think we can define a universal 'how' of decolonization, anti-capitalism and abolition, what remains important and very obvious in Selman's work is to continue to engage with each other by always keeping in mind our local, regional and global positions in relation to power, capital and coloniality. Simply acknowledging this is not a solution or a path to redemption, but rather a starting point of our praxis lest we fall prey to reproducing the kind of euro-abstraction of thought that separates the theorist from the real politics, as Houria Bouteldja reminds us in her attempts to 'dismantle the foundations of "white good conscience" and its abstract humanism.'

In closing, I also want to bring attention to several other concepts that are important to think about concurrently with racial capitalism and coloniality that are generally absent in our region such as critique of eurocentrism, of secularism, of desire and sexuality, of whiteness and of borderization. In addition to the lexicon, I think it is important also to create a bibliography of works that are either foundational to thinking

about racial capitalism and coloniality broadly conceived or those particularly relating to our region, as well as works on borderland politics, resistance, and decolonization as, from a global perspective, our region is enmeshed in borderland projects of race, religion, and modernity. Below is an incomplete list of works relevant to these subjects.

Reading List:

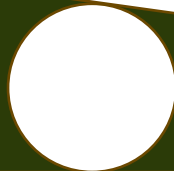
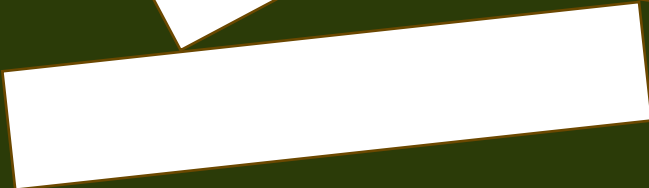
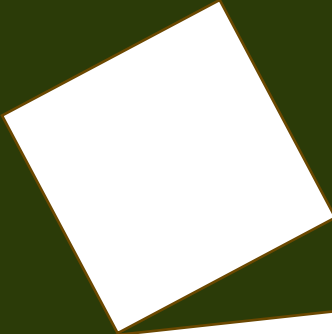
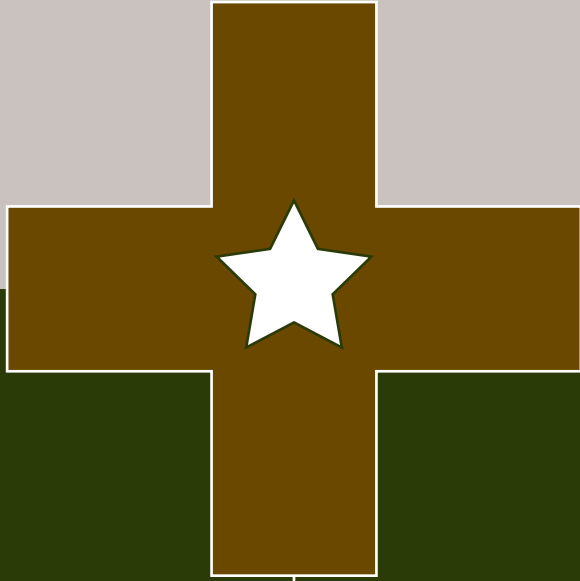
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Decentering humanitarianism from Southeast Europe

The Red Cross...should change the character of its activity, reject the notion of caritativeness and develop its activity into a system which establishes more objectively the existing needs and mobilizes forces necessary to satisfy them. It should fight against inequality of men, against discrimination of all kinds, particularly racial. (RCY, 1976: 12).

Ambivalence of socialist modernity

Over the last several decades, humanitarianism has expanded into a global industry of aid that has exerted political and governmental functions (Bornstein and Redfield, 2011; Dunn, 2018). Historians and cultural anthropologists have developed a critique of humanitarianism as a project premised upon hierarchies of humanity inherited from the colonial era that today reproduce coloniality (Fassin, 2012; Barnett, 2011; Schuler, 2016; Ticktin, 2011). Yet, much of this work concerns the relations between the former 'First' and the former 'Third' world. What happens when we approach humanitarianism from the perspective of the European semiperiphery? My research suggests that thinking about humanitarianism from the perspective of Southeast Europe captures the complex and ambivalent position this region occupies in the decolonial framework.

In this text, I will describe a relatively brief historical episode from the 1970s in which the Red Cross of Yugoslavia (hereafter, RCY) tried to inspire the International Red Cross movement to transform itself by drawing on socialist and Non-Aligned political projects and vocabularies. This Non-Aligned rereading of humanitarianism presented an alternative to liberal humanitarianism because it stemmed from the premises



of socialist modernity rather than those of liberal modernity. It still stemmed from a form of modernity, however, and so it was also a form of intervention and a developmental project of its own. Due to this ambivalence and the traces of coloniality in the work of the Yugoslav Red Cross, I speak rather about it 'de-centering' humanitarianism rather than about 'decolonizing' it.

This ambivalence reflects an 'awkward' (cf. Strathern, 1987) position of Southeast Europe (and especially socialist Yugoslavia) in conversations on decolonization. The reason for this awkwardness is an uncertainty over whether socialist modernity should be understood as a version of Western European modernity/coloniality nexus, or as a promising alternative to it. There are some authors who suggest that socialism was a form of modernity and, as such, it cannot provide us with the necessary conceptual tools to imagine the world in a radically non-Eurocentric way, beyond the modernity/coloniality nexus (e.g., Tlostanova, 2015). From this perspective, a decolonial approach means unearthing subaltern, non-modern, indigenous forms of knowledge and being that have been ignored and silenced both by socialist modernity and by capitalist modernity. There is yet another strand of thought about decoloniality in cultural anthropology. In it, the aim is to 'embrace the multiplicity of the world,' including its multiples modernities (especially African modernities) while keeping visible the power differences and unequal ways in which they structure the different positions (Mbembe 2021). This second approach is more useful for thinking about decentering humanitarianism from a Southeast European perspective.

In my reading, 'decentering humanitarianism' does not mean taking socialist humanitarianism as a progressive alternative to the liberal humanitarianism. It means, instead, exploring how actors located outside of the 'First World'/Global North occasionally used international humanitarian discourses and frameworks for their own purposes. They sometimes tried to create new global networks of circulation of humanitarian sentiments and objects, with an aim to rearrange the international relations in ways that would strengthen the Non-Aligned and communist political projects. They turned to humanitarianism to try to bring a different kind of a world into being. Let me illustrate this.

Non-Aligned interpretations of peace and humanitarianism

In the 1970s, the RCY actively intervened in the international humanitarian discourses. It started organizing a series of activities whose explicit goal was to get the International Red Cross movement to become involved in the struggle against racism and racial discrimination. One of those activities was the first Red Cross Peace Conference held in Belgrade in 1975. Some 220 delegates from 80 national and international Red Cross/Red Crescent societies took part. The RCY organized the conference in order to promote a Non-Aligned perspective on peace within the international Red Cross movement.

During the conference, the RCY challenged the existing Red Cross ideas about peace, neutrality, and humanitarian law. It asked the International Red Cross to change these ide-



Image 1: Photographs from the RCY (1976) publication *Peace and the Red Cross*

as, in a way that would encompass the historical experiences of the Non-Aligned countries.

The Yugoslav Red Cross claimed that there was a distinction between a 'peace of the conquerors and aggressors, keeping under heel other peoples in subjugation until they rise in revolt' on the one hand, and 'a peace founded upon certain principles – justice, equality, equity, the right to self-determination', on the other (RCY, 1976: 9).

Informing this distinction was the idea that the world was inhabited by people(s) who found themselves in profoundly unequal positions. A simple absence of violence did not really reflect respect for fellow humans. As long as the colonial or fascist governance were kept intact, absence of violence would not mean much. Such absence is not really a 'humanitarian' goal. As a humanitarian organization, the Red Cross must support the peace founded upon respect for the shared humanity of unequally positioned people—this was the main argument of the Yugoslav delegation. Peace is not an absence of violence, but a 'dynamic process of cooperation between peoples'.

The vision of humanitarianism in the background of the RCY proposal was not as we usually think about it, a liberal bourgeois project of the 'First World' that repays its debt to the 'Third World' incurred through colonialism and slavery. However, the RCY alternative vision can still be understood as humanitarianism, in the sense that this proposal presented a different way of imagining how moral relations within the world should be forged. Here, liberation was seen as the moral imperative for the humanity as a whole, and thus a humanitarian goal. The international Red Cross did not need to work towards the liberation of the former colonies, but then it was not really working for the sake of humanity. It was not really being a humanitarian organization. For the RCY, humanitarianism meant pursuing social change on a global level at all times: creating a more humane society globally.

Sense of entitlement to argue for global social change

The RCY tried to provoke the change within the international Red Cross movement not just in terms of narratives, but

also practices. It did so in two ways. First, it organized blood donations for the Non-Aligned countries such as India and Vietnam. Second, it started the Red Cross Centre for the Education of the Developing and NAM Countries and Liberation movements (1978-1980). The aim of this centre was to teach partners from the NAM how to set up their own Red Cross and Red Crescent societies. The Centre organized seven international seminars that were attended by the over 200 participants representing 42 countries from Africa and Asia and six liberation movements.

Both of these humanitarian initiatives of the RCY—blood donations and the training program—were part of Yugoslav efforts at ‘worldmaking’, the historically specific efforts to bring a certain kind of a world into being (Getachew, 2019; Stanek, 2021). Here, worldmaking meant establishing new networks of circulation of moral sentiments and humanitarian objects on a global level. The RCY tried to convince the International Red Cross movement to change their foundational principles. It also tried to bring together people, regions, and objects previously standing apart so as to bring a new world into being.

This is also where many problems emerged. For instance, all seminar participants headed to the Red Cross Centre for the Education of Developing and NAM Countries and Liberation movements were subjected to medical examination upon arrival because most came from the ‘tropical regions’. The idea that people from Africa and Asia had to undergo medical examination for tropical diseases before they could be allowed to enter Europe was strongly shaped by European colonial imagination, as well as Yugoslav public health traditions. In this moment we can see very clearly that the RCY vision of humanitarianism operated within the coordinates of the European modernity/coloniality nexus. It had the revolutionary aim of reorganizing the world—creating new networks of circulation of moral sentiments and objects—but it also derived its political imagination from the repertoires of Western European modernity.

Lessons to take away

What does this episode in the history of the Red Cross in socialist Yugoslavia tell us about coloniality and social justice

more broadly? The vocabulary that the RCY created and offered to others must be approached critically for various reasons. First, its interpretation of humanitarianism is inseparable from the 'national order of things' (Malkki, 1992)—it was about helping not just fellow humans, but fellow nations in need. Second, their project operated within some of the coordinates of the political imagination of Western European modernity/coloniality nexus. Third, the network of circulation of humanitarian sentiments and objects was global and directed outwards: the Red Cross within socialist Yugoslavia did not explicitly work on antiracism.

At the same time, this historical episode illustrates that political elites in socialist Yugoslavia felt they had the right to offer new ways of understanding the key political and moral terms of their time, and to try to convince other actors on the global scene to adopt those new terms. It is precisely this sense of being able to take part in global conversations as an equal participant – as a producer of knowledge – that has been lost with the transformation of Southeast Europe into a global semiperiphery.

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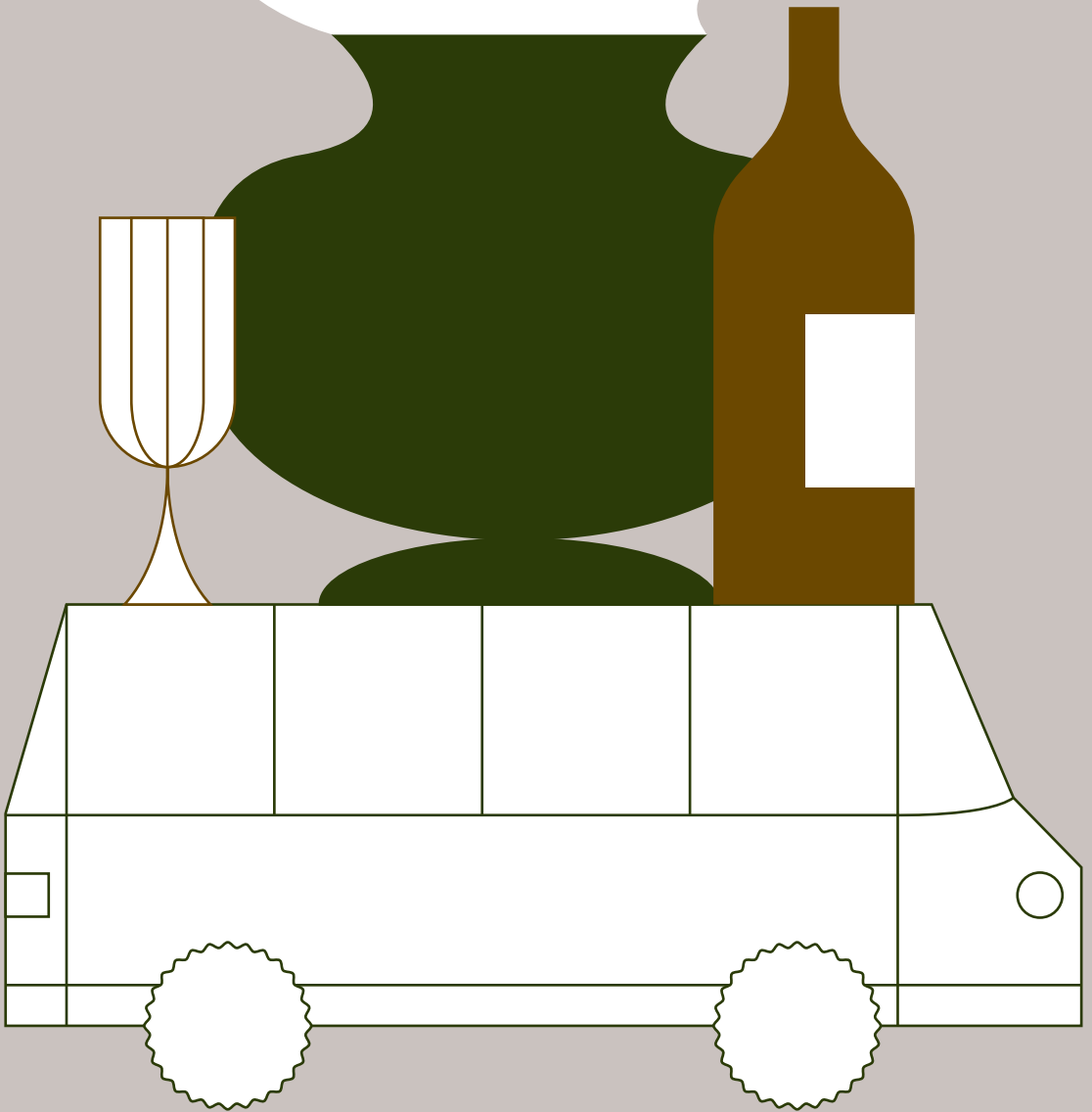
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Ovidiu Țichindeleanu

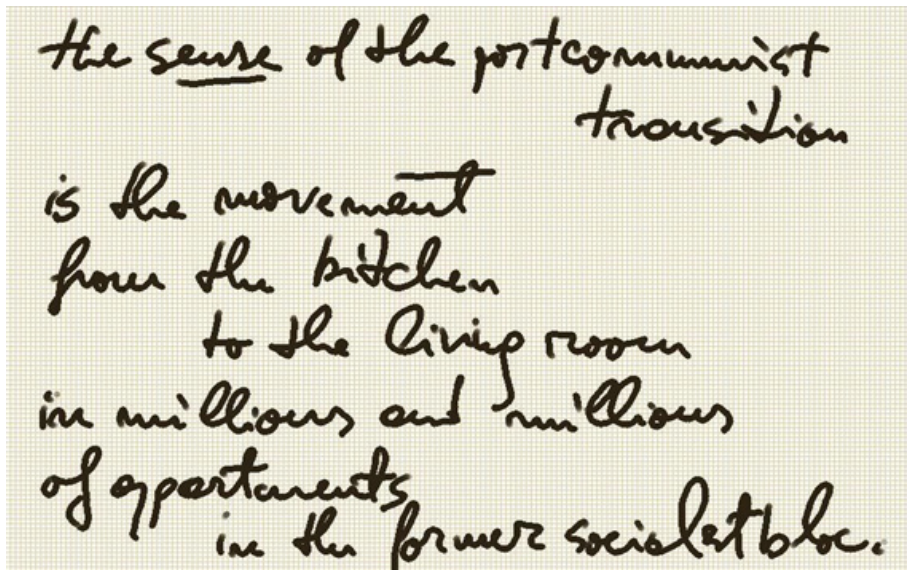
Intimate Colonization

The concept of *intimate colonization* is related to the problem and task of decolonizing everyday life. The idea came to me as a banal observation while looking at what was going on in Romanian society in the 1990s and the 2000s, during the postsocialist transition to capitalism and liberal democracy. Namely, the paradigmatic change experienced after 1989 in the former socialist bloc was affecting not only the state, the cities, the ‘free media’, the institutions of governance, and knowledge and education, but also the deeper levels of intimacy. The changes were broadly eliding the private/public divides, and in fact were changing the sites of such distinctions and the forms of subjectivity. ‘Outside’ (*afară*) came to mean exclusively ‘the West’ in the Romanian vernacular. The change moved hearts, minds, and working bodies towards the West, in a combined display of violence and seduction. As the former socialist bloc was reintegrated into the West-centered world, the coloniality of power was articulated at the level of the intimacy of people, institutions, and environments.

Western critical theory and social sciences had difficulties registering this phenomenon, while the concept of neo-colonialism from the Global South was too focused on macro phenomena. Other ways of conceiving and thinking about this ‘great transformation’ were needed, closer to local perceptions and local common sense. Following various conversations, I came to define the post-socialist transition as ‘a movement from the kitchen table to the living room’ in millions of apartments throughout the former socialist bloc (Tichindeleanu, 2010).

This small movement, over the distance of only a few meters, is a process that changed the nuclear family from within, but also the habitat of the socialist housing bloc and its urban



The image shows a piece of paper with a light-colored grid pattern. Handwritten in black ink is the text: "the sense of the postcommunist transition is the movement from the kitchen to the living room in millions and millions of apartments in the former socialist bloc." The word "sense" is underlined. The text is written in a cursive, handwritten style.

the sense of the postcommunist
transition
is the movement
from the kitchen
to the living room
in millions and millions
of apartments
in the former socialist bloc.

Figure 1. Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, "The Sense of Transition" (2011). Personal archive.

neighborhood, with all its power dynamics, communal relations, and social extensions. The kitchen and the living room are knots of the communal and social fabric that are connecting the political economy of a place with the specificities of its cultural history. The shift of gravity shakes up the relations between femininities and masculinities, eases the integration of the local into the global, pushes the alteration of the convivial in indirect discourse, and produces a widening gap in the relations between subsistence knowledge and the market economy. Non-capitalist forms of value are devalued and then converted into the general equivalent.

This movement points to an intense process of re-education and material transformation. It also helps one to remember the conviviality and communality of past experiences: the communal world of one's kitchen, the non-capitalist economy of the kitchen pantry, the self-support networks of women in the neighborhood, and the social power of the apartment parties (and exhibitions) during socialism. The movement separates a world where all the important decisions, conversations and planning took place in the kitchen, from the new world in which the center of power shifts into the abstract space of representation, and to the indirect speech of television, which often becomes the speech of the master of the house.

The idea of *intimate colonization* opens to a whole universe of sites and practices where coloniality and resistance are still in tension, subject to an open or unresolved dialectics, in different geographies and time-spaces. It is a way of asking the questions that can situate one in the middle of the contradiction, not outside of it, thereby connecting experience with systemic change. It is a way of opening research up to the gesture of sharing other experiences, with the purpose of building coalitions across intercultural differences and multiple oppressions.

The point is to take a direction: a decolonizing direction, against a deep-reaching coloniality of power, but oriented by the resistive set of knowledges and practices surviving in intimacy. Cultural work thus becomes the work at an epistemic transformation: a rethinking from the nearby of the tools and purposes of philosophy, political economy, cultural history, social anthropology, artistic research. At the same time, this is nothing extraordinary or new. It certainly does not mean reinventing the wheel, but rather re-appropriating common sense on a horizon of dynamic transformation. The quest for epistemic reconstitution has to take place amidst the meager remains, and, as Biao Xiang (2021) has also proposed, in the ‘humble nearby’.

Still, the quest for reconstitution can take the dangerous path that looks for authenticity and purity and fuels the radicalization of nationalism. This is where the concepts of intimacy and *intimate colonization* are intervening in all of their messiness. Intimacy crosses the private/public dichotomy. It is close to the heart yet it is shared, albeit within a finite economy. Intimacy also tentatively crosses the consciousness/unconsciousness, thought/affect, and human/nature dichotomies. It is fleshed out and responds to a world of relationality: it does not pertain only to the domain of loneliness, nor to the individual or to the nuclear family. Intimacy unfolds the connective affects, the willful choices, and the freedom of a humanity not reducible to sexuality, and neither is it exclusive to other humans. One can think of intimacy as an existential extension of the communal self into society and into the world.



Intimacy turns the 'gray zone' of the former socialist bloc, the 'in-betweenness' of Eastern Europe between the West and 'the rest', the 'off' in the 'off-whiteness' of East Europeans into an affirmative instrument. *Intimate colonization* considers the 'nested' ways in which Eastern Europe has been subjected to coloniality, or in which colonial difference has made a mark in the region, from different imperial designs, as well as the intricate ways in which it has affirmed its own responses, which include resistances but also complicities. It proposes *an alternative way of working with the cultural archive of our region*, which points to deep processes of subsumption, but also opens to local resources of conviviality and relationality. However, the phenomenon of *intimate colonization* is by no means exclusive to the region, nor is it exclusive to the ways the coloniality of power has been articulated in the region. It is only a facet of coloniality.

When Pavel Brăila brought the Moldovan staple food *sarmale* into the center of a Berlin gallery in his performance video *Eurolines Catering or Homesick Cuisine* (2006), he opened the camera to a social history that was not yet studied at the time by sociology or migration studies, and is yet to be seen in all its complexity or multi-scalarity. Since the Eurolines buses were the cheapest way to travel from Chişinău to Berlin, they also became the migrants' postal service transporting goods, documents, and money. Far from being only victims of neoliberalism and Western hegemony, the network of migrant buses created their own maps of 'Europe', which showed a reverse image of the expansion of NATO and EU into the East. Pavel Brăila activated that reverse image by tapping into the resources of intimacy: he kindly asked his mother to cook for his opening in Berlin as a 'European artist'. The food was collectively prepared in Chişinău, wrapped in raffia bags, then sent to the opening in the belly of a migrant bus. The two opposite images of Europe converge in the video when the bus stops right in front of the doors of the immaculate art gallery, and the drivers open the luggage compartment. The intimate baggage carried by the East Europeans with them in the West is then devoured by the Western audience. The powers of intimacy have crossed that night many borders: private collectors and the public gallery, low consumption and the high-culture of 'contemporary art' and, hungry bellies and conceptual reflection.

Importantly, *intimate colonization* does not imply small scale. The process of mass migration of East European workers to the West has transformed entire societies after 1989, without the awareness that they were only the most recent wave of a deep history of racialized groups set in motion by the forces of capital and coloniality. A massive re-education and transformation of sensibilities has taken place without as much as a warning about the different paths between assimilation and independence.

If one turns to thinkers from the Global South, one opens to the pains of the colonial wound, the difficulties of moving onto a decolonial path, but also to a source of hope and joy missing from Western criticism. Fanon (1952) described colonization as a process penetrating the flesh and the mind of the colonized subject, feeding the feelings of inferiority that ‘cannot be shed like an old skin’, but he also pointed out that undoing this delusion would bring nothing less than the ‘end of the [colonial] world’. Renato Constantino (1978) explained the experience of being a subject of colonial education in the Philippines: with the pain of learning about Filipinos as a ‘people without history’ came the formation of a counter-consciousness in interstices unseen by the dominant powers. Ashish Nandy (1983) reflected on the irreversible wounds of the ‘colonial self,’ including the process of the ‘decivilization’ of the colonizer, but also on the creative responses in resistance from India, particularly in the subtle revolt against the hyper-masculinity of the colonialist outlook. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) wrote about the ‘intimate terrorism’ experienced by a woman of color living in the borderlands between Mexico and Texas, but also about the liberating power of her ‘tolerance for ambiguity.’ Maria Lugones (1987) taught how the coloniality of power exerts a painful reduction of the person to their body, the Western society leaning heavily on its women of color, while playfulness and loving perception remain not only ways of survival, but tools for building coalitions against multiple oppressions. Sara Ahmed recalled living with her mother’s pain, and thus crucially explained that intimacy is not reducible to the private domain: ‘The solitariness of pain is intimately tied up with its implication in relationship to others.’ (Ahmed, 2014: 29). Jean Casimir (1981) showed what it means to carry the weight of an entire ‘oppressed culture’, yet also pointed



out that the main legacy of the Caribbean has been to offer joy to the entire world, through the intimate refuges in dance, music, and practices of wellbeing.

Beyond the academic minutia, I think that Central and Eastern European migrant workers, scholars, artists, and cultural workers can relate intuitively to the experience of *intimate colonization*, to the crossings of pain and pleasure, but also to the joy of a decolonial path. The work of sharing and confronting *intimate colonization* invites one to rethink the relations to the West and to the South.

Eastern Europe lies in the crossings of inter-imperiality and has been touched by coloniality in complex ways. Humor and sensibilities are colored with Balkan, Austrian, Ottoman, Russian and many other nuances. In the *long durée* of modernity, the labor force has been controlled through serfdom, rather than enslavement in the plantation system, and the region has been subjected to a mediated coloniality rather than direct colonial plunder. Yet this specificity does not grant 'innocence.' Particularly in the aftermath of the formation of the modern states, Central and East Europeans had partaken of dreams and projects imbued with coloniality.

These deep layers have come to play an important role after 1989, when Eastern Europe 'went West' with its bodies and minds, unquestioningly absorbing Eurocentrism, whiteness, Americanization, and developing aversion for seeing any of their inherited opposites or contradictions. Posing the problem of *intimate colonization* means looking for ways to regain an ethical political self (which is a collective self). It requires thinking from where we are, and actions for decolonizing the cultural archive of the region, starting with what is nearby.

The liberation from any articulation of coloniality requires a perceptual re-alphabetization. The focus on *intimate colonization* connects to a tension that is both personal and social, and begins a process of re-valuing the devalued social and the invisibilized communal. My hope is that it also helps to restore or affirm the ethical direction of anyone's own work, including artistic work.

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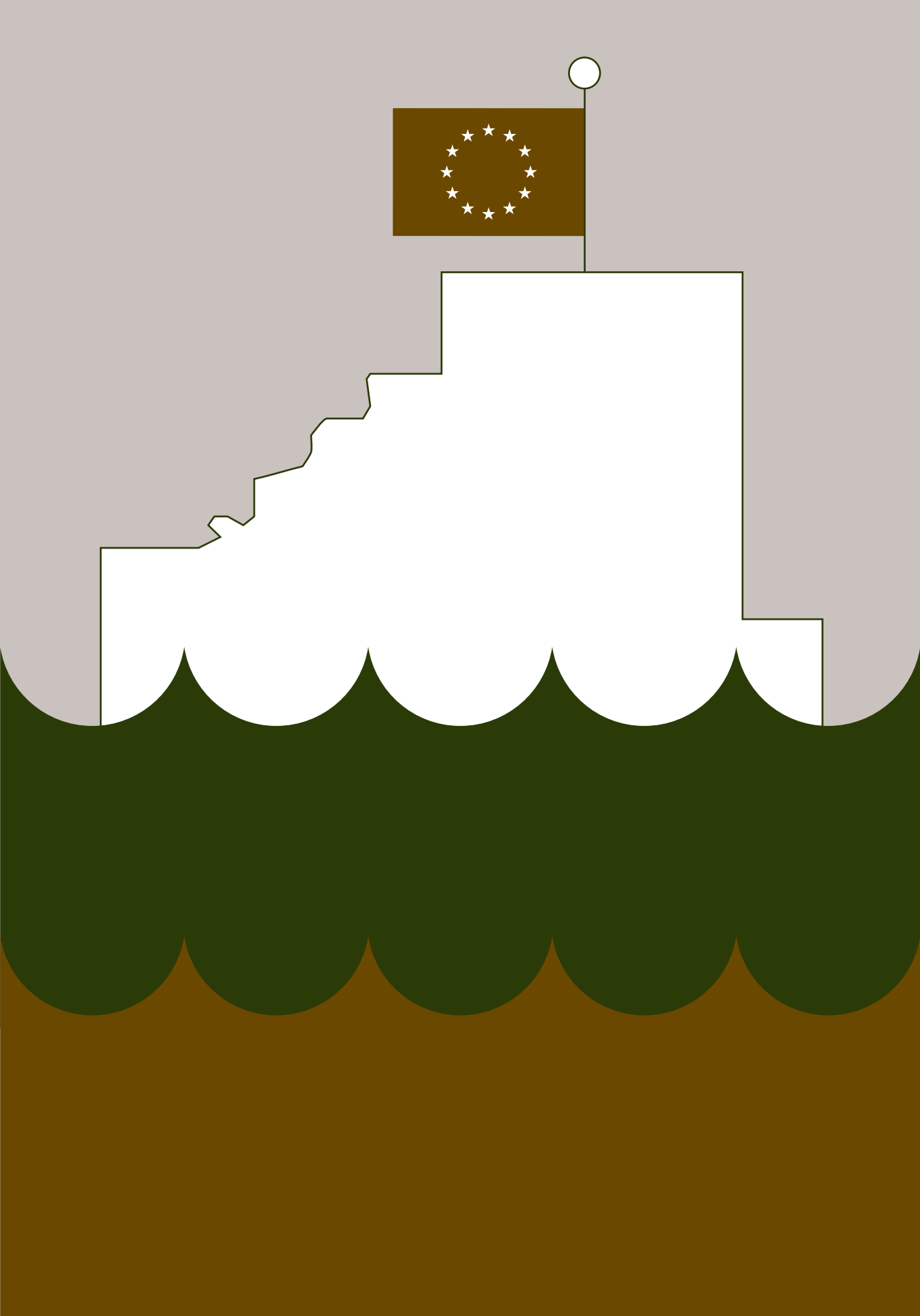
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Manuela Boatcă

Unequal Europes

The discourse surrounding the emergence, establishment, and later expansion of the European Union has been gradually monopolizing the label of ‘Europe’. At least before Brexit, only the then ‘EU 28’ member states or candidates for accession were considered ‘European’, and consequently included in this term. As a result, the processes of joining the European Union have consistently been defined as ‘Europeanization’ — irrespective of the geographically European location of the candidate states — from the 2004 enlargement round to the 2007 inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria and finally the 2014 accession of Croatia.

At the same time, Europe’s remaining colonies overseas have been graphically represented as part of the European Union on official maps, yet have played no part in the definition of either the normative European ideal or the corresponding common identity. The fact that they are physically situated outside the continental European location was never mobilized for the discourse of exclusion from Europe and directed at these territories on account of any supposed cultural, political, or economic difference. Administratively, most of these territories are either a part of the European states which colonized them and, by extension, of the European Union or the UK, or have associated status; they are included in official European Union maps, their citizens have European Union citizenships; Portugal’s ‘autonomous regions’ Azores and Madeira, Spain’s ‘autonomous community’ of the Canary Islands, and the French overseas departments all use the euro as their official currency and are represented on euro banknotes, which the European Central Bank claims ‘show a geographical representation of Europe’ (European Central Bank, 2017). The presence (and absence) of overseas territories on the banknotes is explained away with a reference to their size, while

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their connection with Europe appears almost accidental: 'The tiny boxes near the bottom of the banknote show the Canary Islands and *some overseas territories of France where the euro is also used*'. (European Central Bank, 2017, emphasis mine).

In fact, when superimposed on the official EU map, the areas covered by the euro provide 'a time-lagged photograph of colonization' (Muller, 2000: 328). Against this background, the discursive construction of a singular notion of Europe crucially depends on the silencing of the historical role of its member states and their predecessors in creating the main structures of global political and economic inequality during European colonial rule. As Böröcz and Sarkar (2005: 162) have argued, the member states of the European Union before the 2004 'Eastern enlargement' were 'the same states that had exercised imperial rule over nearly half of the inhabitable surface of the globe outside Europe', and whose colonial possessions covered almost half of the inhabited surface of the non-European world. The 34 colonial possessions still under the direct control of EU member states before Brexit represented more than half of the 58 remaining colonies worldwide (Dependencies and Territories of the World, 2016).

This is not a coincidence. The overseas empires of nation-states such as Britain, the Netherlands, France, and Belgium had been many times larger than the current size of their territories. The loss of colonial empires after World War II therefore significantly fuelled the political impetus behind the creation of the European Economic Community, the EU's predecessor, to which the contribution of remaining colonies was seen as decisive (Muller, 2001; Hansen & Jonsson, 2014). Upon its founding in 1957, the European Economic Community included not just Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany, but also their colonial possessions, officially referred to as 'overseas countries and territories', the same category used today for the remaining colonial possessions: 'they included, most importantly, Belgian Congo and French West and Equatorial Africa, whereas Algeria, which in this time was an integral part of metropolitan France, was formally integrated into the EEC yet excluded from certain provisions of the Treaty' (Hansen and Jonsson, 2014: 7). In turn, the 'moral geography' at work today denotes the symbol-

ic representation of the European continent that reflects the civilizing discourse advanced by its main colonial powers.

Most telling in this regard were the official maps of the European Union published shortly before the 2004 enlargement round, in which the European continent was color-coded to reflect the ‘different speeds’ of accession and, by extension, the candidate countries’ closeness to the European ideal (Map 1); yellow were the member states until 2004; blue were the 10 new members that joined that year; Romania and Bulgaria, that had been denied access in the 2004 enlargement round, were represented in purple, as was Turkey, which has been a candidate for accession since 1986. At the same time, Europe’s overseas colonial territories, while graphically represented as part of the European Union in yellow on the map just like full member states, played no part in the definition of either the European ideal or the corresponding common identity.

Their location outside of continental Europe never triggered any discourse of exclusion. At most, their existence has been instrumentalized in triumphalist and celebratory discourses of the metropole, as in the case of France’s *‘année de l’outre mer’* in 2011, which, among other things, claimed the biodiversity of the French overseas departments for Europe as a whole (Vergès, 2005; Éduscol, 2011). The very opposite is the case for Turkey, whose ‘semi-Asian’ location — across the anomalous continental divide between Europe and Asia — has repeatedly been part of the arguments for denying it EU membership decades before the start of the Erdoğan regime.

The implicit geopolitical imaginary at work here presupposes an ontological and moral scale ranging from a geographically Western Europe, whose modern, democratic and pacific character — and therefore superiority — remain unquestioned, up to a backward, violent and inferior part — as such of questionable Europeanness — frequently located in the Eastern part of the continent. The discourse of European unity and singularity thus paradoxically reinforces a historically consistent politics of difference within Europe that can best be described as a hierarchy of multiple and *unequal Europes* emerging in the 16th century (Boatcă, 2013, 2015).



Map 1: The EU and candidate countries before the 2004 enlargement round

The *unequal Europes* making up this hierarchy are the result of power shifts within the continent as shaped by the 18th century rise to core status France and England to the detriment of Iberian powers on the one hand and of the state formations in the East of Europe, on the other. They therefore have different and unequal roles in shaping the hegemonic definition of modernity and in ensuring its propagation. Four multiple and *unequal Europes* surface in the dominant (Western) European discourse (Table 1): 1. ‘decadent Europe’ (which had lost both hegemony and, accordingly, the epistemic power of defining a hegemonic Self and its subaltern Others), paradigmatically represented by the early colonial powers Spain and Portugal; 2. ‘heroic Europe’ (self-defined as the producer of modernity’s main achievements), primarily represented by the new colonial powers and self-proclaimed leaders of modernity’s main revolutions, the French Revolution and industrialization – France and England; 3. ‘epigonal Europe’ (de-

fined via its alleged lack of these achievements and hence as a mere re-producer of the stages covered by heroic Europe), best epitomized by Southeastern Europe or the Balkans, and, lastly; 4. ‘forgotten Europe’, the colonial possessions never included in the definitions of Europe, modernity, or the Western nation-state, although they were economically indispensable for these achievements and administratively integral parts of Western European states until well into the 20th century and some even today.

While ‘decadent Europe’ and ‘epigonal Europe’ were both characterized by a semiperipheral structural position, their different trajectories in having achieved this position acted to disunite rather than unite them in their interests. In Spain and Portugal, the memory of lost power and the dominion of imperial languages induced the awareness of a declining core – an imperial nostalgia. Instead, in that part of the continent that had only emerged as ‘Europe’ due to the growing demise of the Ottoman Empire, i.e., of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the rise to the position of semiperiphery within the world economy alongside the enduring position of periphery within Europe itself made the aspiration to Europeanness defined as Western modernity the dominant attitude. In the case of ‘forgotten Europe’, attitudes have ranged between the strong desire for decolonization, leading to the independence of most territories under European domination in the wake of World War II, to the voluntary relinquishing of sovereignty in exchange for EU citizenship and economic integration in the monetary union that to this day characterizes parts of the Dutch Antilles, the British Virgin Islands, the French overseas departments which, since 2011, also include Mayotte.

The subdivisions underlying the imperial map of multiple Europes served to positively sanction the hegemony of ‘heroic Europe’ – France, England, and Germany – as epitomes of what Hegel had called ‘the heart of Europe’, to become the only authority capable of imposing a universal definition of modernity and at the same time deploying its imperial projects in the remaining Europes or through them.

Such a model is nevertheless inevitably incomplete and meant to serve heuristic purposes, not to explain exhaustively

Europe	Prototype	Role in the history of modernity	World-system position	Attitude	Role in coloniality
Decadent	Spain, Portugal	Participant	Semi-periphery	Nostalgia	Founding
Heroic	France, England	Producer	Core	Hegemony	Central
Epigonal	'The Balkans'	Reproducer	Semi-periphery	Aspiration	Accomplice
Forgotten	British Virgin Islands	Reproducer	Periphery	Ambivalent	Instrumental

Table 1: Multiple and *unequal* Europes as defined from heroic Europe.

or even partially the trajectory of any European region in the *longue durée*. On the basis of its most prototypical examples, however, the model of *unequal Europes* as sketched above does help to illuminate the impact that the direct or indirect involvement in the extra-European colonial endeavour has had on the defining power associated with a region's structural position within the modern/colonial world-system in general and within Europe in particular. In other words, the further away from the historical experience of heroic Europe a part of Europe is or has been, the less authority it has tended to have over defining the discourses of modernity and European identity.

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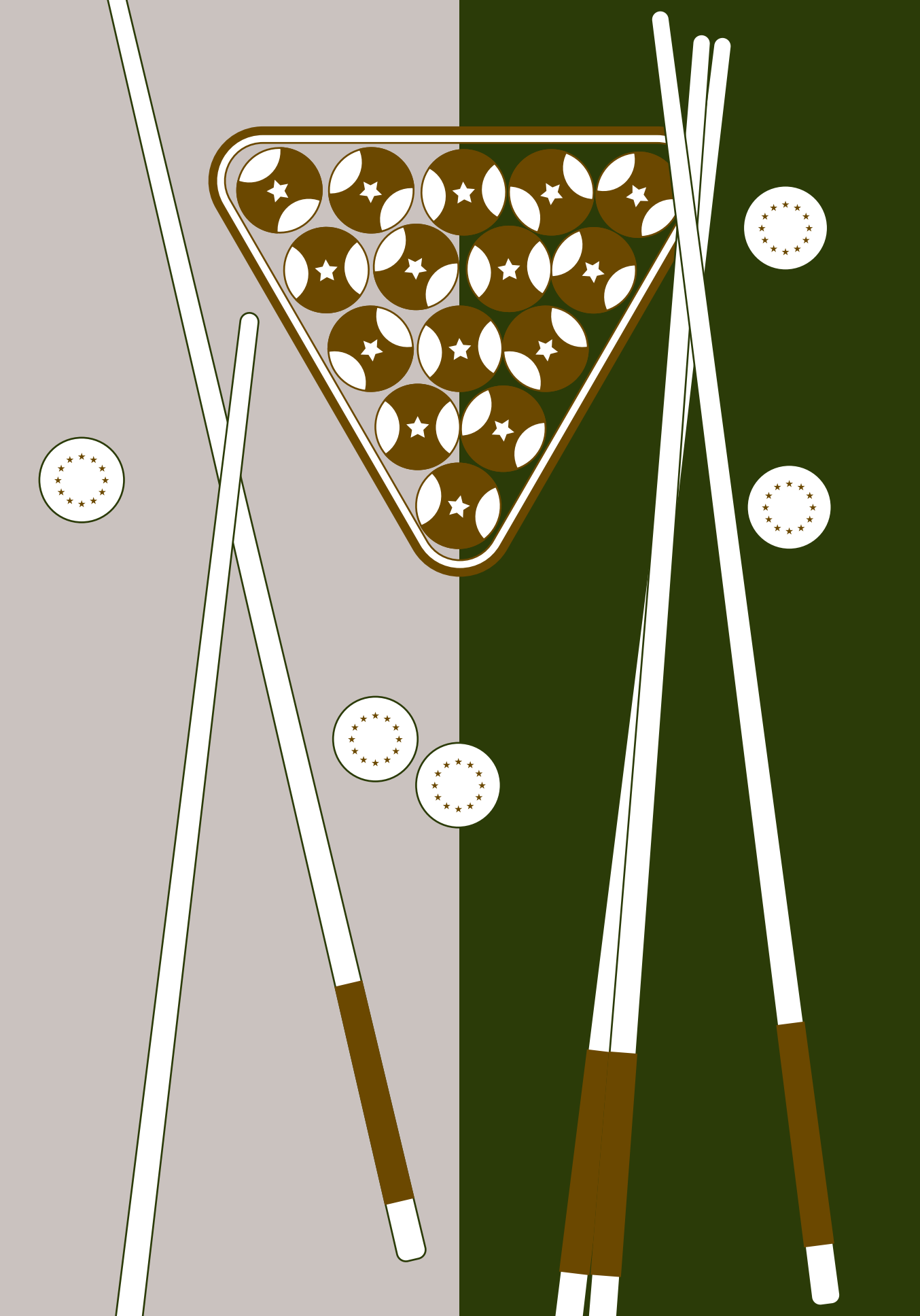
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Zhivka Valiavicharska

Restless History

‘Restless history’ is not a concept or a category — it is a way in which we can think about the history of twentieth-century socialism in the current moment. Today the socialist past is subject to stigmatization and erasure, but it continuously resurges and reemerges in unruly ways against forces that try to simplify, stigmatize, and erase it. In the face of unrelenting right-wing, neofascist, racist and patriarchal forces in the postsocialist East European region during the postsocialist years, it offers a complex historical experience that can be both a source of resistance and learning.

The socialist past in the Western imagination

In the West, the East European region within the former socialist world is often absent from the global histories of progressive politics and social movements. This absence is the effect of a continuous dismissal of the once-socialist countries, proclaimed to be failures by the Western liberals as well as the Western Left. Even in their most radical formulations, the Left in Western Europe and the United States has dismissed from afar the socialist societies and governments as totalitarian and authoritarian, corroborating Western mainstream liberal and right-wing arguments. Yet, most liberals and leftists in the West who considered these countries a failure never set foot in them and never experienced them directly. Speaking none of the countries’ languages, most of them never attempted independent historical or ethnographic research. Their information relied on dissident Soviet and East European voices which were pro-Western, anti-communist, and predominantly pro-capitalist, and which considered the state-socialist projects totalitarian and authoritarian monsters. In other words, the ‘Western Left’ never took the social realities of socialism on its own terms. Their imaginaries converge with colonialist

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and orientalist phobias of the East — a vast, vaguely defined region seen as a place with backward, dictatorial top-down governments, populated by people who could not govern themselves, therefore needing authoritarian regimes or outside saviors.

Even post- and decolonial critiques of the global dynamics from the 1980s onwards, which have re-centered the formerly colonized countries and the global South, have mostly neglected the role of the socialist countries in the anti-colonial liberation struggles and in the forging of global worlds resistant to Western power and hegemony. Focused mainly on the ‘First World’/‘Third World’ geopolitical dynamics, the post-colonial critiques from the 1980s and 1990s rarely mention the socialist countries, rendering invisible the geographies of the ‘Second World’, and subsuming them under the frameworks of Western modernity. Much of this disavowal is due to the rigid binaries pervading their understanding of the global political context, including analyses focusing on East-West, North-South, West-South, and even South-to-South global mobilities and encounters.

A recent body of work has returned to these histories to challenge existing narratives. Studying the relations between the ‘Second’ and the ‘Third’ Worlds from the mid-1950s to the end of the 1980s, we have begun the collective effort of rethinking the political dynamics between the socialist world and the formerly colonized countries against the dominant Cold War tropes and binaries. This work has opened wider horizons for historical revision that go beyond the prevailing Eurocentric and Western historiographies of the era. Thus, displacing East-West and North-South axes of analysis, we have begun to see alternative routes and locations where decolonial politics with anti-capitalist visions emerged and thrived during the socialist era (Matusevic, 2008, 2009; Popescu, 2010; Engerman, 2011; Ghodsee, 2014; Djagalov and Salazkina, 2016; Mark and Slobodian, 2018; Karkov and Valiavicharska, 2018; Dragostinova, 2018; 2021; Joseph, 2019; Valiavicharska, 2019; Djagalov, 2020; Stanek, 2020; Mark, Kalinovsky, and Marung, 2020; James and Betts, 2022).

Calling attention to the erasure of the socialist countries in a range of critical knowledge formations, Nikolay Karkov and I have proposed alternative ways of thinking about the geo-political and historical legacies of twentieth-century socialism in Eastern Europe and beyond. The state-socialist projects, we submit, should be acknowledged as a front of resistance to capitalism and as a force of disobedience and insubordination in the face of Western capitalist and colonial projects. They formed open, messy, and intractable environments, discontinuous histories, and resistant geographies, which interrupted or thwarted, however briefly or partially, the flows of global capital as well as the continuity of Western colonial orders. Their persistence throughout the twentieth century produced a kind of historical and temporal displacement that disrupted the totalizing spatial movement of capitalism and its unified world history – and they reordered the world with force (Karkov and Valiavicharska, 2018).



Fig. 1. A view of the interior of the monument Bratska Mogila in Plovdiv (1974), a landmark of socialist modernism. Architects: Liubomir Shinkov and Vladimir Rangelov; sculptors: Liubomir Dalchev, Ana Dalcheva, and Petar Atanasov. Photos by the author, 2019.

Complexity of history

Socialism is only part of the complex histories of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and we should always keep in mind that the colonial worldview cannot tolerate the complexity of its 'Other'. For example, throughout its modern history Bulgaria has been ambiguously positioned on the cusp of three different historical and political contexts – the Ottoman empire, the Soviet socialist project, and the current European Union regime. Situated on the margins of these geopolitical formations, in the shadow of their historical legacies or political influences, its historical experience casts a unique light on the worlds in which it is enmeshed, but to which it never entirely belongs. Because of the layering of these multiple histories the Bulgarian and Balkan contexts are quite dense. In them, entwined and colliding worlds coexist in ways that create zones of illegibility or discord that can be too much to unpack – so the region is prone to marginalization or simplification.

Let us remember that this is one of the ways in which colonial power works: by flattening the histories and cultures of the people to be controlled and dominated, by simplifying, ignoring, and erasing them, and by forcing them into simple binaries and oppositions. But our history always reemerges in unruly and defiant ways. Geography becomes a guiding methodology for a post- and decolonial rethinking, taking as its starting point the peripheries and the margins. Often at the thresholds of multiple worlds, our marginal geographies contain dense historical and cultural layers – they have the power to disrupt the coherence of homogenous and monolithic forms of thinking.

Socialist history in the context of 'Europeanization'

In the last three decades, the material culture of the socialist past has been stigmatized, destroyed, erased, appropriated, and turned into a resource for capitalist accumulation in unforeseeable ways. In Bulgaria this process has become particularly intense after the country joined the European Union, as Bulgarian society reimagined itself as a Western and a European nation. (Joining the EU was by no means the

ДОБРЕ ДОШЛА, АНДЖЕЛА!

«Особено щастлива съм, че мога да посетя родината на Георги Димитров» • Среща на Анджела Дейвис с младата творческа интелигенция



Само няколко месеца ни дели от дните, когато българската младеж целият свят е нероо заедно, прогресивните хора от петте континенти издигат глас в защита на справедливата кауза на младата борния за свобода и граждански права, младата комунистичка Авангард. Дейвис „Свобода за Анджела!“ — чиято оринив поеха десетки хиляди младежи и девойки от всички краища на България. Мрачните замисли на американската реакция, машинашите на расисткото „проеосъдие“ решетиите на загора в Сан Рафаел не издрожка, пред издигналата се вълна на международната работническа солидарност, пред гневния и справедлив протест на прогресивното човечество. Сега мъжествената и възхителна комунистка е на: свобода и не-никога щастливо да я притежаваме — със съдействието българско „Добре дошла“ на наша българска земя!

Вчера по покана на Централния комитет на БКП прославената американска борния за мир, демокрация и социален прогрес членът на Централния комитет на Американската комунистичка партия и гуртът на Димитровска награда Анджела Дейвис пристигна в нашата страна. Заедно с нея са и членовете на ЦК на АКП Кенаръ Александър и Франклин Александър.

На аерогара София скъпата гостинка бе посрещната от другарите Пеко Тикоо, кандидат-член на Политбюро на ЦК на БКП и заместник-председателя на Държавния съвет Елена Лагандинова, председателя на Комитета на българските жени Иванка Василева секретар на ЦК на ДКМС, Груди Атанасов, председателя на Националния комитет за

защита на ивра, ректора на Софийския университет акад. Христо Христоа, представител на столичната обществено-много младежи и интелектуалци.

Върховна радост е за нас — изтъкна при пристигането си Анджела Дейвис, — че може да дойдем в България в родината на Димитров, в страната, която строи социализма. Ние носим борчески топки привет от Централния комитет на Американската комунистичка партия, от всички американски комунисти.

Ние посетихме Съветския съюз, първата социалистическа държава, страната на Ленин, биме в Германската демократична република, страната на Маркс и Енгелс, и сме особено щастливи, че сега може да посетим родината на Георги Димитров!

Спокой се състоя сърдечна среща на Анджела Дейвис с представителите на младата творческа интелигенция от столицата. На нея присъстваха председателят на Клуба на младата творческа интелигенция при ЦК на ДКМС Любомир Девчев, първи заместник-председателя на Националния съвет на Отечествения фронт, председателята на Комитета на българските жени Елена Лагандинова, секретарят на ЦК на ДКМС иж. Дочко Дивев, млади учени, писатели, артисти, архитекти, художници.

Тук бяха придружаващите Анджела Дейвис Кенаръ Александър, член на ЦК на Комунистическата партия на САЩ и Франклин Александър, член на Националния съвет на Комунистическата партия на САЩ.

(Продължава на 3-а стр.)

Greetings to the readers of Narodna mladezh!
Peace, Friendship
Solidarity
Angela Y Davis
17.9.72

Поздрави на читателите на „Народна младеж“. Мир, дружба, солидарност.
АНДЖЕЛА ДЕЙВИС

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Fig. 2. 'Welcome, Angela!' Article celebrating the arrival of Angela Davis in Sofia in September 1972, published in the youth newspaper Narodna mladezh (18 September, 1972), 1.

beginning of this process, but rather the triumph of this tendency.) Here in Bulgaria, as well as in other Eastern European countries, 'Europeanization' has become almost synonymous with 'decommunization', an agenda often pushed with the help of vaguely worded legislation that criminalizes in absurdly sweeping terms the cultural, material, and symbolic legacies of an entire historical period — that of the 'evil communist regime' (Stanoeva, 2016; Tsoneva, 2017). What is more, in the Bulgarian context, it is becoming more evident that 'Europe-

anization' has also been forcefully claimed as a right-wing project and has empowered some of the most extreme nationalist, ethnophobic, racist, Islamophobic, anti-immigrant, homophobic, and patriarchal political tendencies in the country. This climate has encouraged the flourishing of outright fascist formations, which have been spreading widely in grassroots forms, in the parliament, in the media, and in public space.

Various forces, from liberals identifying with the right to the far-right, have used the demonization of the socialist past to recuperate the fascist history of the interwar period in Bulgaria, and to restore or even fetishize the militaristic, authoritarian, nationalist, and outright fascist content of interwar era material culture (Ghodsee, 2015; Marinos, 2015; Medarov, 2017; Traykov, 2019). Liberals have advocated for these kinds of restorations by romanticizing bourgeois life from the pre-socialist period, and many of them have disavowed the local histories of fascism and dismissed or minimized Bulgaria's alliance with the Nazis during World War II. Neo-fascists and national patriots push, consciously and with full awareness, for the recuperation of historical figures and for the restoration of material culture from the interwar period with anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, or expansionist content. As a result of this fusion of anti-communist liberalism, neoliberal capitalism, and fascist nationalism, overt fascists and Nazi supporters are seen as victims of communist repression and commemorated in monuments. Right-wing nationalist and fascist organizations from the interwar period, banned by the socialist government after 1944, have now re-established their public presence and resumed activity. Extreme right-wing parties with direct links to fascist politics and figures have been continuously present in the parliament and the public sphere for several decades now, having the power to shape the law as well as public opinion.

The turn to neoliberal and right-wing politics in the post-socialist countries is an effect the demise and devaluation of the socialist worlds in the twentieth century. As neoliberal and right-wing agendas are emboldened from the 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up', reverberating across continents, they are casting the postsocialist situation as a global situation. How we read and mobilize the history of twentieth-century socialisms in Eastern Europe and the rest of the world then becomes

a crucial question. In these disturbing times, twentieth-century socialist history appears as a restless history — in all its tensions, contradictions and complexity, as a depository of historical experience to inspire, to caution, and to draw lessons from. In its unsettling multiplicity, it appears as an unfinished and a ghostly history — a history that will never rest.¹



Fig. 3. Detail from the sculptural series inside the monument Bratska Mogila in Plovdiv (1974). Sculptors: Liubomir Dalchev, Ana Dalcheva, and Petar Atanasov. Photos by the author, 2019.

¹ Some formulations in this entry were developed in Zhivka Valiavicharska, *Restless History: Political Imaginaries and their Discontents in Post-Stalinist Bulgaria* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021). See the book for further elaboration and historical analysis.

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NON-ALIGNED MODERNISM

Non-aligned modernism can be defined as both an aesthetic and a political concept shaped by Yugoslavia's particular place in the history of the 20th century's emancipatory socialist projects, non-alignment, and their related cultural forms. Taking into consideration 'the power imbalance between art centers and peripheries' (Hadjinicolaou, 2020: 3), *non-aligned modernism* is an example of how peripheral art productions entered the dominant 'art geographies' of modernism¹ by working to 'fit into' its hegemonic model, while at the same time striving to surpass it by creating infrastructural and aesthetic alternatives.

The relationship between art centers and peripheries has always been entangled with and shaped by imperialist and capitalist structures of the modern period. Hence, if we are to rethink modernism in the context of imperialism and class relations, we need to think about 'the question of resistance to, and/or the accommodation of, art production in the periphery to the art production of the powerful center' (Hadjinicolaou, 2020: 3). While *non-aligned modernism* offers a critique of the still-prevailing definitions of modernism, it does so not by rejecting modernism outright. Instead, it contributes to a realignment of the term by offering art of socialist Yugoslavia as

¹ Although definitions of modernism, its dates and its legacy vary, most historians use the term modernism to refer to cultural and artistic production of the Western world roughly corresponding to the era of modernity, between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries (for more see Harrison, 2003:189). Furthering and broadening of our definition of the term places its forms within the larger socio-political and economic structure of the modern world-system (Wallerstein, 2006: 22-24) shaped by capitalism and imperialism and the concurrent forces of industrialization and urbanization. Art and culture played an important role in structuring modern capitalist world-system by providing ideological backing to its ideals, as they in turn greatly benefitted from its extractive forces which brought unprecedented cultural riches from the conquered territories into imperial centres. From their inception, Western modernism and its institutions have been imbricated with capitalist, imperial extraction.





Image 1: Bernard Matemera, Family sculpture (1987); stone, Kruševač Park, Podgorica, Montenegro

a case study of the way modernism was adapted and changed in particular political economic contexts. It does so with the help of a materialist critique of aesthetics and what Warwick Research Collective has called ‘the theory of combined and uneven development’ (Warwick, 2015: 14).

Non-aligned modernism is an aesthetico-political category encompassing the heterogeneity of art practices and cultural productions under Yugoslav socialism: a ‘simultaneity of multiple, and sometimes seemingly opposing artistic currents (coexistence of conceptualist practices, various forms of abstraction, and Naïve art), its lively and varied artistic infrastructure made up of professional and non-professional institutions and associations (art museums, art galleries established by factories, self-taught and Naïve artist associations, etc.), and modes of artistic dissemination and presentation that rested on robust state support’ (Videkanić, 2023: 136).

The ways in which art and culture developed under Yugoslavia’s socialism and elsewhere in the Second and the Third Worlds, by producing aesthetic, political, economic, social, and other structures that spoke to a different sensibility of modernism, provided an alternative to the hegemony of its Western forms. This is not to say that modernism was not influential in Yugoslavia or in the art of other Second- and Third World countries. but that its influence was refracted. In other words, modernism did not simply sweep in exerting absolute power over the art peripheries.² The traversing of artistic ideas and influences was much more complex, ebbing and flowing between geographical locations, and structured by the world system of imperialism and capitalism. Moreover, what we traditionally viewed as modernism had already been shaped by the periphery in its germination,³ only to return to the periph-



² I am using the term art periphery to define modernist productions as they developed in countries outside the Western (European and North American) form, paying special attention to the ways in which Western modernism (or modernism of the art centre) exerted its control by penetrating art production of the peripheries through economic influence, various institutional structures (museums, galleries, art fairs), or through aesthetic and academic discourse of art history and art criticism which favored and universalized production of art in the West.

³ Even a cursory glance at Western art history offers numerous examples of how art of the peripheries had a profound influence on the beginning of Western modernism: Picasso’s appropriation of Congolese sculptures, Gauguin’s appropriation of Polynesian art and culture, Art Informel’s and COBRA’s usage of naïve and outsider art.

ery later on, transformed and universalized, in the form of high modernist influences. Its comeback was nonetheless hybridized, creating local artistic forms.

My definition of *non-aligned modernism* therefore follows the reconceptualization of the terms modernity and modernism not as a series of different, albeit lesser, copies of some original 'Modernism' and 'Modernity' originating in the West, but as a unified, world-literary and artistic system. Modernity is a singular phenomenon; however, its singularity does not imply sameness; on the contrary, it is 'everywhere irreducibly specific' (Warwick, 2015: 14–15). It follows from this that modernity and modernism take different forms in their lived social, economic, and cultural relations, and are, 'understood as governed always by unevenness, the historically determinate 'coexistence' in any given place and time 'of realities from radically different moments of time' (Warwick, 2015: 12).

As part of a larger modern world-system, *non-aligned modernism* was characterized by both its adherence to some forms of prevalent modernist practices, and by a radical departure from them. However, both its departures and adherences were conditioned by a general unevenness and inequality produced in artistic peripheries due to pressures from the capitalist/imperialist world order. Despite this, throughout Yugoslavia's forty-five-year existence, its socialist cultural workers continued to experiment, work through, and try out different forms of social and cultural organization. Many of these practices were vanguard in terms of their cultural, political, and social forms. For example, extensive state investment in cultural and educational infrastructure for the wider population included building tens of thousands of so-called 'homes of culture': cultural centers, youth centers, workers' universities, and similar institutions, which served as cultural and social hubs across the country in urban, peri-urban and rural areas (Prostran et al., 2017), and allowed local populations to use their leisure time for cultural pursuits. While immensely varied in size and scope, these multipurpose cultural hubs usually housed cinemas, theatre stages, libraries, meeting rooms, art and craft studios, practice spaces etc. used by everyone from school children to workers, farmers, and 'professional' artists. (Ivanišević & Nikolić, 1969: 139). Some were large, such as the

Radničko sveučilište Moša Pijade in Zagreb or *Radnički univerzitet Novi Sad* (both ‘workers’ universities’), while others were tiny, yet they all played key roles in allowing for mass participation in cultural production through amateur photo clubs, cinema clubs, exhibitions, sewing circles, painting classes, or lectures (Ivanišević & Nikolic, 1969: 140).



Image 2: Gallery of the Non-aligned: Josip Broz Tito's director Milena Vlahović with guests

Through such relentless efforts at making culture accessible to the broadest population (Yugoslav and later international), socialist cultural production contributed to the empowerment of people and their emancipation, and offered a way out of the binding imperial/capitalist world system. Nevertheless, socialism's cultural and political projects need to be re-inserted into histories of anti-imperialism and global socialism. How we think through these histories and apply post-colonial theory to the region, however, has to be closely examined to resolve any caveats. I would therefore like to make two interventions in the questions of postcolonial methodology and class struggle in the context of *non-aligned modernism* in Yugoslavia.

Firstly, examining postcolonial discourse itself is important for understanding how it does or does not apply to the Balkans and Yugoslavia more specifically. Benita Parry's (1997) short reflexive text on the field of postcolonial studies starts with a warning:

No discussion of the postcolonial should proceed without participants making known their understanding of the term, no word is more seductive in appearing to offer limitless possibilities for composing a revised narrative of colonialism and its consequences, and few words have proved more elusive. (Parry, 1997: 3)

Certain forms of postcolonial methodology which elide materialist analysis of colonialism and imperialism tend to grapple primarily with the 'representational systems of colonialism' (Parry, 1997), overlooking its complex material histories and multiple voices among the peoples who have contributed to diverse projects of socialism and anti-colonialism/imperialism in the 20th century. It is not enough simply to 'read' imperial knowledge production as the be-all and end-all of its power. Instead, to fully understand imperialism and the capitalist world-system it is crucial to analyze its underlying political economy, international social and political relationships, military power structures etc.

Its representational or symbolic systems are only a small part of the story. An equally important task is to register the historiography of postcolonial theory itself which was born in the midst of the late 20th century's geopolitical shifts as the ascendancy of neoliberalism began in earnest, dismantling the welfare state in the West and producing new tensions between capital and labor. While immediate post-World War II tensions between capital and labor were temporarily assuaged by the expansion of international socialism, they reappeared after 1989. Neil Lazarus (2011) places the postcolonial and more broadly postmodern theoretical turn in the Western academy within the context of these larger processes, the rise of the neoliberal order as socialism was waning. Lazarus observes how postcolonial theory, originating in the post-1968 political disappointment in academia, evacuated the Marxist critique of social antagonisms and capitalist contradictions,

effectively removing itself from the political economy and related material contexts (Lazarus, 2011).

Secondly, material conditions and political or ideological structures of the socialist states were markedly different from those of the capitalist ones. Any purely discursive analysis of the Yugoslav state, in representational and symbolic ways (outside and against its material conditions), inevitably produces partial histories of the era. Socialism's revolutionary potential cannot be denied nor idealized, but must be historically and materially positioned. As Tanja Petrović (2020: 103) notes:

With its radical modernization, self-management, and non-aligned international politics, socialist Yugoslavia embodied international solidarity and political economic alternatives. Of course, Yugoslav activities in the international arena should not be idealized. They did, nonetheless, open a space for alternatives and alliances outside of dominant orders that were to a larger extent a continuation of colonial power relations.



Image 3 - 1988 Seminar Museum and Gallery Cooperation and Exchange between Non-aligned Countries and Developing Countries

Without losing sight of postcolonial theory, or of capitalism as a world system, it is crucial to use a materialist methodology in the study of socialist modernism. Materialist class analysis is the only methodology that fully explains Yugoslav Communist Party's anti-imperialism during the interwar years, Partisan revolutionary struggle during the war, Yugoslavia's continued participation in efforts to confront new forms of imperialism after the war, its building of self-managed socialism and nonalignment. These struggles that were real and material (producing material outcomes in Yugoslavia and elsewhere) did not appear in a vacuum, or simply as political performances, but arose from real histories of centuries-long subjugation that peoples in the region had suffered through multiple imperial power-struggles, including feudal and capitalist economic exploitation.

The evacuation of materialist methodology from the post-1989 histories of the disintegration of Yugoslavia left an indelible mark on how the region would be understood. In his astute examination of the post-1989 social, political, and cultural situation in Serbia, Rade Zinaic (2017) shows how the dominant liberal theoretical discourses, and Critical Balkanology (CB) in particular, are deeply class-biased, gendered, and racist. In Zinaic's close reading of the work of Tomislav Longinović, a prominent representative of CB, he reveals a deep-seated resentment of the proletarian and sub-proletarian classes and their cultures, as well as a tacit rejection of the Yugoslav socialist project which foregrounded the widening political and cultural emancipation and agency of the proletariat. Nostalgia for and fetishization of a presumably lost urban bourgeois life revealed in the writings of Longinović and others in CB speak to the contradictions in Serbian liberal civility: yearning to eliminate what they see are unsavory elements of the proletariat and sub-proletariat, while at the same time using CB to critique the Western othering of Yugoslav peoples. Their exclusionary imaginaries and class contempt were kept in check during socialism, but were unleashed after the 1990s breakup of Yugoslavia and the installation of the neoliberal Western socio-political and economic order. Now, it is up to a new generation of cultural workers and thinkers to reinscribe material analysis, class struggle, and an anti-imperialist understanding of the region's history in order to re-focus our attention on the

emancipatory potential of Yugoslavia's socialist history and its proletarian, mass cultural movement. *Non-aligned modernism*, as I define it and wish to situate it within the cultural history of Yugoslavia, seeks to reintegrate materialist analysis back into our reading of art and culture during socialism, along with its relationship to anti-imperialist analysis.

Let me now come to a concrete example of what I see as *non-aligned modernism* in practice: the Gallery of the Non-Aligned Countries Josip Broz Tito in Podgorica (Titograd). The gallery was officially opened on September 1, 1984 following many years of planning. Under the patronage of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and UNESCO, the Non-Aligned Gallery's mandate was to collect, preserve and showcase the best of art and culture by the non-aligned member states and 'developing countries'. Its mission was unique in the world at the time (and still is), as the explicitly stated reason for its existence was to 'collect, preserve, and present visual arts and other cultural values of the non-aligned,' and thereby combat the cultural hegemony of the large and powerful nations (Marović, 1989: 2). In other words, the museum was to speak back to what Tran Van Dinh had called 'cultural imperialism' (Van Dinh, 1976: 41).

The Gallery collection was built from donated/gifted works of art and culture from different NAM member states and others who supported NAM activities. With over one thousand objects and a dedicated building, the gallery actively worked to engage artists, cultural workers from all over the world, as well as the local community. In its first five years of existence the gallery organized over one hundred exhibitions, its initial collection tripled, and the number of represented nations doubled (Marović, 1989: 2). Through lively community programming, temporary art exhibitions, film festivals, lectures, artist residencies, symposia, weekly programming, spotlighting national cultures, presenting TV shows, music, dance, films, and other cultural works, the gallery fully embodied its given mandate. It also opened its doors to local community to engage with the presented art and artists. Its permanent collection is unparalleled both in its scope and in its idiosyncratic formal and thematic range. For example, the gallery owns works by some of the most prominent modern-



ists, such as Iraq's Saadi al Kaabi, Yugoslavia's Edo Murtić, and Bolivia's Óscar Pantoja; along with the work of self-taught artists, such as Yugoslavia's Ivan Generalić and Nicaraguan Elba Jimenez; and ancient works, such as a 7th century jug from Cyprus, a 3rd century glass sculpture from Yugoslavia, and a rare copy of the famous Colombian Muisca Raft (*Balsa Muisca*) from ca. 600-1600 AD.

Unfortunately, with the end of Yugoslavia, the gallery was closed, its space repurposed into the Centre for Contemporary Art, and the entire collection relegated to the attic of the building that used to house the gallery in its entirety. The collection was preserved through the dedication and extraordinary work of its four female curators, who protected and took care of the collection even though it was bunkered. The reason for its removal was political: the new Montenegrin government, aspiring to a quick and easy road to integrate into NATO and eventually into the European Union, considered the politics of the non-aligned too unsavory for its West-oriented goals. As with most other cultural legacies of Yugoslav socialism, this unique institution is no longer open to the public although it still exists as a collection. Its more than one thousand objects speak to the emancipatory nature of socialist Yugoslavia's non-aligned project and its efforts to find agency through transnational solidarity.

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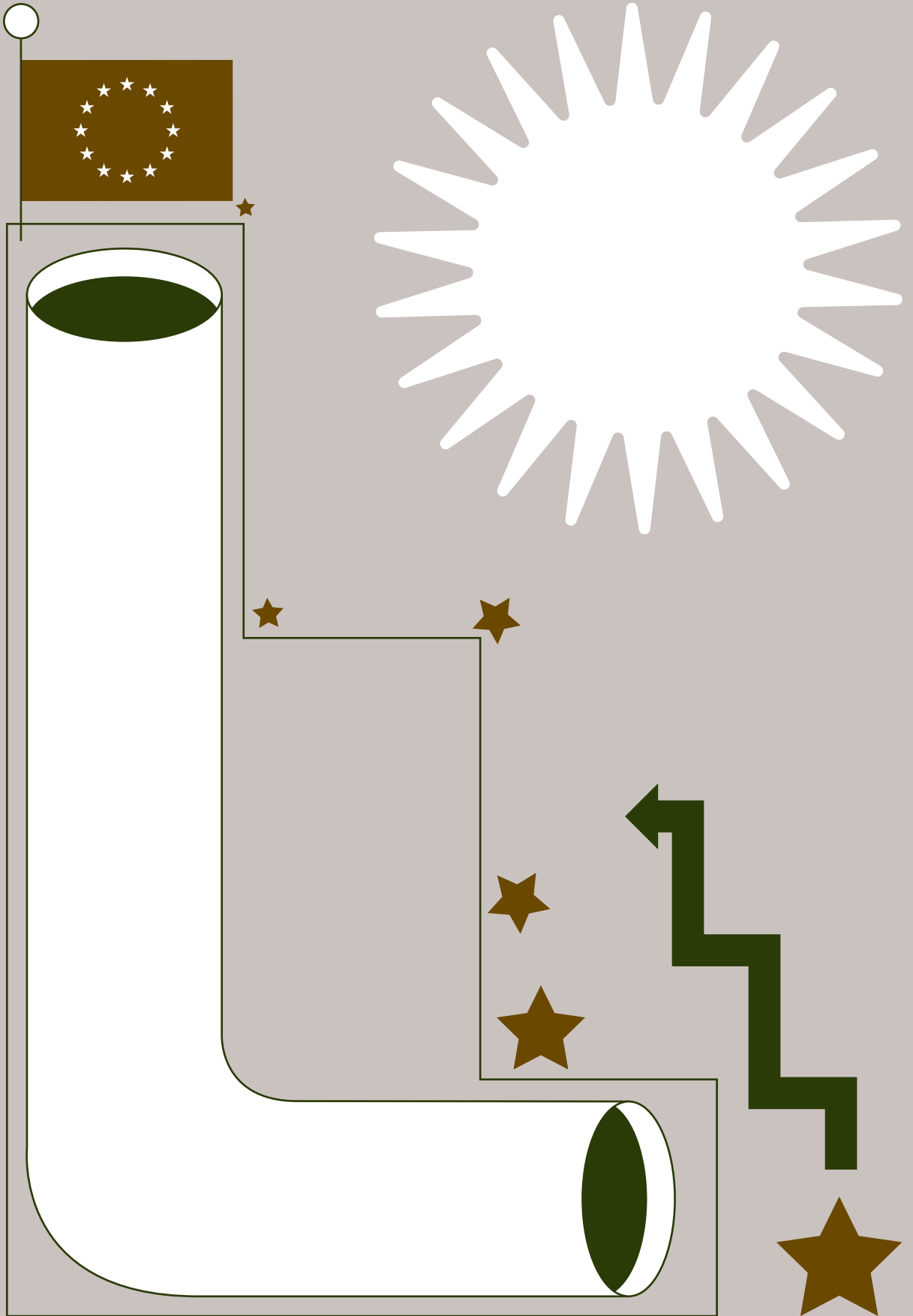
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Veda Popovici

Disavowal

English dictionaries define *disavowal* as an act of stating that you know nothing about something, or that you have no responsibility for or connection with something. This piece proposes the concept of *disavowal* as an intervention on the level of subjectivation in a wider decolonial strategy for the not-quite-Western postsocialist Central and Eastern European subject: *disavowal* as the refusal of and distancing from the interpellation by Westernization. My proposal builds on my experience as an engaged scholar and political worker based in Bucharest and involved in anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian struggles locally and internationally.

Coloniality postulates the story of Western superiority (Quijano, 2000). In the context of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), this story is based on centuries-old dynamics of coloniality and, with the end of the Cold War, it has reached a new high point: Western liberal capitalism as the only possible future. Recent years, however, have been marked by a growing global consensus that this system is bringing about planetary destruction. Driven by such momentum, decolonial thought becomes increasingly useful for developing the tactics for refusing complicity in such destruction.

While scholarship bringing decolonial thought to CEE is extensive (Țichindeleanu, 2013; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009; Gržinić, Kancler & Rexhepi, 2020), the engagement of social movements with this knowledge is still fragmentary and disjointed. The post-1989 era has been marked by the saturation of the region with the story of Western superiority across the spectrum of the political elite and throughout society, across diverse categories to a degree that may be unprecedented. Elites are particularly keen on upholding this fiction as it serves them well in masking their intentions. From the per-

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spective of an activist, it is precisely this insidious aspect of coloniality that may be the most relevant: the hegemony of the story of Western superiority produces politicized consent throughout the society to such great extent that it seems to have become one of the most efficient tools in masking neo-liberal violence.

The Central Eastern European subject in the global distribution of coloniality: forever catching-up

CEE coloniality mostly functions as a story of never-enough or forever-catching-up. The postsocialist subject is cast in the role of a near-European who can never be white, capitalist or developed enough. Westernization—that is to say, Europeanization—is a never-ending process since being of the West is forever deferred. This ontological narrative applies to all or most domains of life, its ubiquity efficiently mimicking truth.

Within this modernization project, it is not only the postsocialist but the CEE subject as representative of a particular historical region that is put in an infantile geopolitical position. This ‘child’ needs constant surveillance and direction supplied by a strict albeit generous tutor that is the Western world (Buden, 2010). Fixed in this position, it is locked in a state of permanent aspiration for reaching the liberal markers of political maturity: prosperity, democratic process, and individual freedom.

In the role of a backward, new-but-old global semi-periphery, the region takes up the path of derivative development (Starosta, 2016). In this “all-encompassing discursive construction” (Starosta, 2016: 7), the only possible scenario in which it can be a part of Western historical time is the one in which it adopts a belated approach to all domains of life: political, cultural, and economic. As a perpetual ‘teenager’ transitioning to adulthood, the postsocialist world must be educated and raised out of the ruins of historical communism. As such, it must engage in a process of decommunization, which requires an erasure of the past: the postsocialist subject ‘must forget all subjectivations, all memories from communist and socialist times’ (Tlostanova, 2017: 6). The ‘haunting’ communist past is

exorcised, and the disjointed present is saved through pursuing a second-hand future, a future past that has already happened in the West.

To better understand how this affects the postsocialist subject's capacity for political and historical affirmation, we should look at how the 1989 events have been perceived by the Western liberal voice: ignoring their diversity, they become one single event, 'die nachholende Revolution' (the catch-up revolution) (Habermas, 1990). Given the Western world's epistemic privilege, and the fact that these events are foundational for all postsocialist societies, this reading has exerted great influence on the regional movements' critical analysis and organizing practices. This is why it is not only scholars who analyze CEE's social movements in terms of 'catching up' with their Western counterparts, but also local activists who measure the relevance of their organizing by comparing their work to the Western historical narratives of resistance (Popovici, 2017). All of these assemble the epistemological position that places the postsocialist subject within the global distribution of coloniality.

Local elites try to meet this expectation with two versions of development: nationalist or Europeanist. Both formulated as early as the 19th century, one emphasizes the affirmation of national specificity, and the other processes of Western integration by adapting the local to the West (Gagyi, 2015). Produced by the upper classes — aristocratic, intellectual, political and clerical elites — these narratives reflect their aspiration to be seen as representatives either of a country that is different and unique but just as good as the West or a country recognized as being Western. Apparently opposed, they both actually serve the integration of local societies into global capitalism and the reproduction of the colonial hierarchy that puts the Western world over the rest.

Monopolizing all political and cultural debates, the nationalism vs. Westernization binary creates the illusion that this is all there is. Consequently, as long as it fails to match the binary — either all nation or all Westernization — any left-oriented narrative seeking liberation from labour exploitation, patriarchal dominance, or state authoritarianism will be dis-

missed from the normative spaces. This constitutes a key aspect of how resistance is then defined, recognized, and practiced in the region.

Within the global distribution of coloniality, CEE political workers and activists are then faced with these two simultaneous conditions of the political subject: 1) an epistemic subaltern character of their historical agency: their interventions become part of history only if they contribute to development as 'catching up' with the Western world; 2) the continuous marginalization of emancipatory narratives that do not fit the nationalist vs. Westernizing binary.

Beyond consent

The civilizational discourse of 'forever-catching-up' places the postsocialist subject in an epistemologically subaltern position masking the racist, classist, neoliberal core of Western aspirational politics. Naturalized and presented as 'truth', both Western recognition and belonging pass unquestioned as a necessity and an inevitable future. In the arena of political contestation in which political workers oppose the ruling classes, the civilizational discourse takes up a specific function: that of producing consent.

In the context of liberal capitalism, the political, financial, and cultural elites need a continuous flow of legitimate and naturalized narratives to frame their actions as acceptable and thus, to produce consensus (Gramsci, 1976). These stories serve to naturalize the fiction of the few having the right to rule over and decide for the many. In a region like the semi-peripheral CEE, these stories are dominated by a civilizational discourse. This means that bringing together classist, racist, patriarchal, ableist, and anthropocentric principles constitutes the promise of Western recognition and belonging that emerges as the most widely accepted story legitimizing any intervention of the ruling classes. In other words, as long as the character of an initiative is to enable Westernization or inscribe itself in a scenario of Western recognition, it can be made acceptable no matter how violent. For example, in the arena of urban housing justice movements, CEE social movements face the imperative that cities *must* become Western



Image 1. Poster of SLIMME (Sindicatul Liber al Muncitorilor și Muncitoarelor din Europa de Est/ The Free Union of Eastern European Workers), a fictional union created as part of the speculative history project *History Does (Not) Repeat Itself* by Veda Popovici and Mircea Nicolae*. The poster reads "We don't want a country like outside" referencing the popular aspirational slogan of the 2017 anti-corruption protests in Romania "We want a country like outside", where "outside" refers exclusively to the Western world.

(Popovici, 2022). In the name of this goal, we must all accept evictions, gentrification, touristification, financialization, rising rents, mass dispossession etc.

In the activist field of anti-capitalist organizing, classist and racist readings have been somewhat easier to identify,

and critical positions addressing questions of class and race are quite prevalent. However, a decolonial perspective is still to be developed in social movements in the region. Becoming critical of the narrative of inevitable Westernization and the consent it requires is crucial for understanding and intervening in the concrete contexts of violence.

Disavowal: an accountable delinking

Building on Samir Amin's concept of 'delinking' the Third World from the economic and everyday life standards of the Western world (Amin, 1987), Walter Dignolo's vision for delinking integrates epistemological and ontological distancing as well as epistemic disobedience (Dignolo, 2007). Such distancing consists of a redefinition of the subaltern subject and of their prescriptive expressions. Inspired by the proposal of delinking, *disavowal* refers to an active position of the subaltern subject in a concrete situation, when called on to become complicit in the civilizational discourse.

I propose the strategy of *disavowal* as an active practice by which to identify, withdraw from, and refuse participation in the process of producing consensus through civilizational discourse. In the field of political organizing, activists face continuous calls to participate and cultivate the necessity of Western recognition and belonging. This is the main way by which ruling classes produce consent and pacify the agents of organized resistance.

Disavowal would take three related strategies: opposition to aspirational politics; claiming agency by refusing complicity while taking responsibility; and unveiling the real price of Westernization: neoliberal violence. Furthermore, *disavowal* proposes a level of intentionality: reaffirming agency in the context of contemporary and historical complicity to processes of Western dominance and white supremacy. At the core of this is also an anti-racist position that takes responsibility for the historical participation of CEE societies in the system of slavery and exploitation of the Roma population, and the genocide of both Roma and Jewish populations. Thus *disavowal*, while refusing participation, is not a tactic that can make claims to innocence. Rather, I envision *disavowal* as an ac-

countable delinking where the affirmation of agency is contingent upon taking responsibility for the historical role in such violence.

This anti-racist dimension of *disavowal* may render visible the contemporary strategies of producing consent and complicity with Western dominance and white supremacy such as the production of whiteness in the CEE region. While always portrayed as ‘not-white-enough’, the CEE political subject is lured into complicity by the promise of becoming white enough eventually. The price for this of course is the full embracement of white supremacy by consolidating anti-Roma racism in particular, as well as racism against Asian and Global South migrants and refugees. This manifests in the current reordering of geopolitical powers triggered by the war in Ukraine, and the Western world’s recognition of Ukrainians as worthy enough to be rescued based on the Western projection of whiteness on the entire population (Lyubchenko, 2022).

In the concrete field of political organizing, *disavowal* as a reaction in the face of pressure from civilizational discourse opens up the space for a variety of decolonial tactics for emancipation:

- refusing to grant consent for the ruling class to push neoliberal violence dressed up as Westernization;
- revealing the true cost of the Westernizing transition as neoliberal violence, exploitation and dispossession;
- a critical analysis of the liberal, pro-Western, and colonial tropes present in social movements that reproduce the subaltern position of the CEE political subject;
- showing that nationalism, racism, and all their right-wing siblings are never anti-colonial, but actually serve a greater goal of Western recognition;
- revealing the complicities of local right-wing networks with Western imperialism;
- renouncing liberal political vocabularies that define resistance, since the only tactics understood as political are the ones recognizable by the West;
- examining material histories of resource distribution and the states’ complicity with racial histories that dispossess and dislocate Roma populations;
- unearthing and archiving histories of working-class an-

ti-fascist resistance and other histories of popular resistance to exploitation and authoritarianism.

Integrating such tactics in wider strategies of anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist, and emancipatory social movements may empower CEE political workers to push through the hegemony of the ruling classes that heavily rely on the civilizational discourse. It can also give us momentum and dignify us as historical political subjects. With its key anti-racist, historically accountable dimension, decolonial *disavowal* may also bring us closer to radical intersectional alliances between anti-classist and anti-racist initiatives. Wider decolonial visions integrated in the strategies of our social movements remain necessary to unveil the true face of neoliberal violence under the mask of Westernization.

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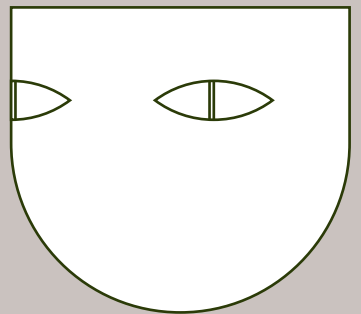
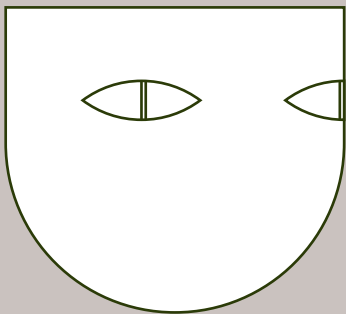
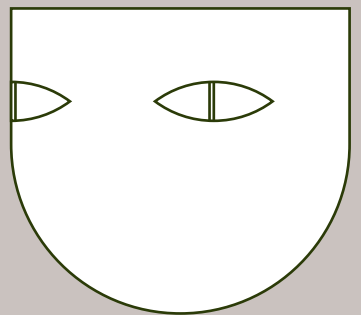
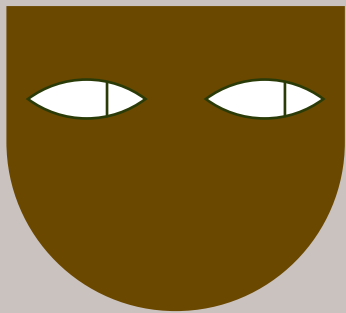
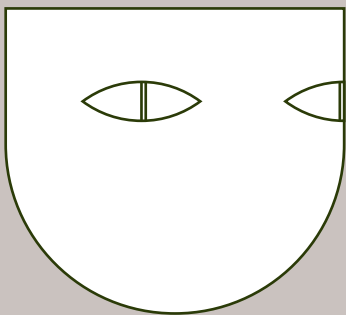
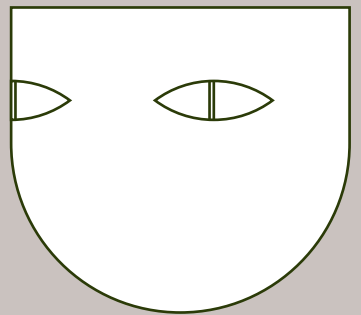
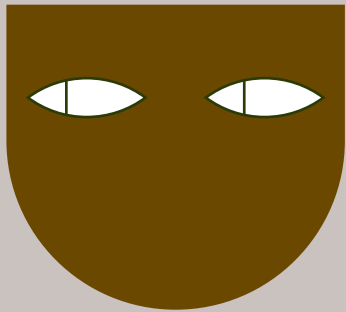
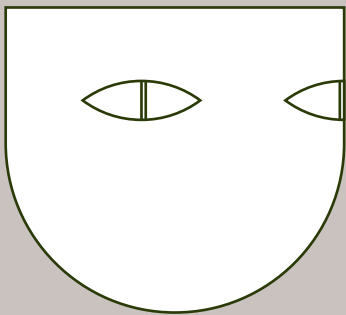
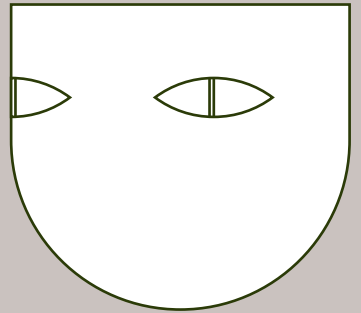
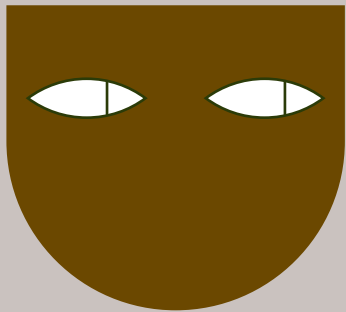
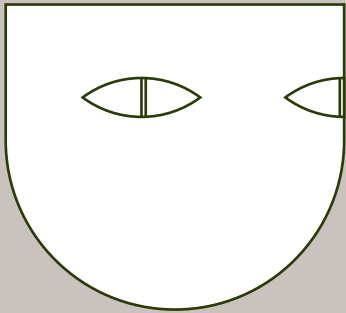
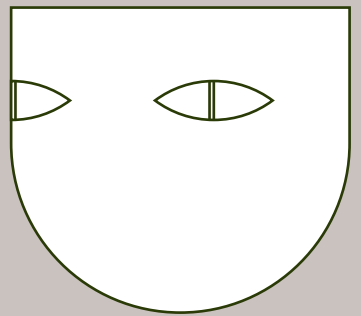
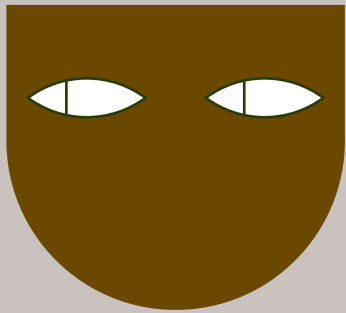
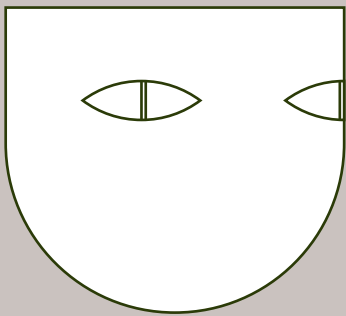
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Performing solidarity

I've learned the recipe for turning solidary: invite a Romani woman—a token, or a cartoon character—to the event you're organizing; pin a badge; recite a few lines from Butler's books; say a prayer; even make a cross if you want; from then on, every morning meditate yourself into feeling solidary, in perfect British English, then amaze yourself at how well you put it in words; go on to take a sip of your hipster plunger-brewed organic, free-trade, and aromatic coffee, or ginger-beetroot smoothie from your colorful cup carrying the feminist message 'We Are Solidary.' There you go—you're now declared solidary.

(Savić, 2017; author's translation from the Serbian original)

This excerpt from a text authored by the Romani critical race scholar, decolonial feminist theoretician and poet, Jelena Savić, describes what she called—invoking Judith Butler (1990)—a solidarity 'performance'. Although written half a decade ago, this seminal text epitomizes enduring class and racial formations upholding the monopolistic and abusive relations in activist and theoretical feminist circles in Serbia.

Taking on what I read as Savić's call to decolonize the politics of feminist solidarity in Serbia, and in line with Butler's (1990) concept of *performativity* as a cultural practice, I approach solidarity as a performative or (re)iterative practice of complying with a set of prescriptions which regulate discursive production of an exemplary feminist activist/theoretician. As Savić implies in the passage above, the repertoire of (speech) acts whose rearticulation constitutes a solidary figure unmistakably draws on a liberal-democratic understanding of ethical agency and social engagement. Serbia is located within Eastern Europe, a space marked as Europe's geopolitical periphery, the past, the Orient, or the 'other' (Adamovsky, 2005). However, the adopted solidarity figure rearticulations



in Serbia is devoid of any critique of the historical coloniality inscribed in the liberal-democratic order as essentially a racist formation (Goldberg, 1993). Whiteness is implicit in such spaces, their feminist circles included.

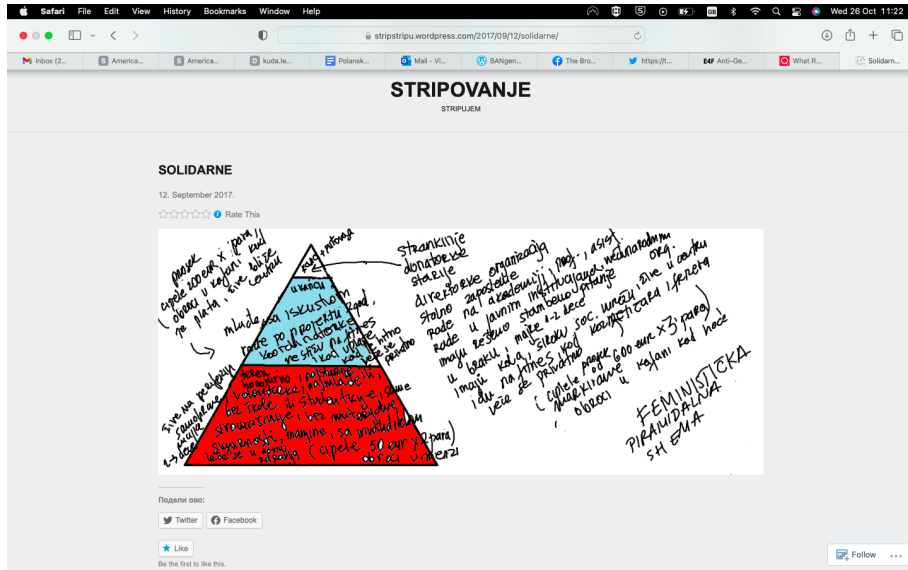


Image 1 Jelena Savić's blog page screenshot

In contrast to the unaddressed endurance of the colonial¹ (Stoler, 2016), Serbian feminist circles have long acknowledged the need to pay attention to race² as a source of inequalities and an obstacle to a universal and homogenous sisterhood. In fact, in its campaign of solidarity with the Roma population facing imminent displacement from the informal Belgrade settlement Belvil, the peace-activist and feminist

¹ This may come as a surprise given that an introduction to a collection of interviews with a number of prominent feminist activists in Serbia, which discussed the relationship between feminist politics, solidarity, and the politics of difference, liberally quoted Chandra Mohanty's (2003) *decolonial* cries for dismantling a homogenous category of woman as victims for being historically dominated by white (i.e., Western) feminists, and replaced it with a transnational feminist politics of solidarity respecting differences (Lončarević & Višnjić, 2010: 14–15).

² The tradition of quoting U.S. black feminists, such as bell hooks or Adrienne Rich, in Serbian feminist circles rather than epistemologically adapting to local feminist considerations of historicised privileges is a long-standing one, which goes back to the late Yugoslav period (Mladenović, 2012). Even more recently, in her reflections on solidarity as a community-building political philosophy Vasiljević (2019) initially pays lip service to bell hooks's (1984) insistence that race must complicate the universal category of woman, only to proceed with her review of liberal political discussions on solidarity completely devoid of a race-centred heuristics.

organization Women in Black insisted that the state respect ‘the basic human right to shelter and home’ when it came to this ‘poorest’ community in Serbia, and fulfill its internationally binding obligations (Women in Black, Solidarity, Not Mercy, 11 February 2012). Apparently, the attempts made thus far to condition the feminist politics of solidarity with anti-racism have been undertaken in the name of a liberal understanding of equality and the rule of law, rather than addressing questions about the mutually constitutive relations between racism and colonialism, liberalism and slavery, capitalist exploitation and egalitarianism.

Solidarity and whiteness: transnational feminist networking in postsocialist times

The Yugoslav socialist nation-building project under the slogan ‘brotherhood and unity’ drew upon the legacy of solidarity as a promise of egalitarian society stemming from the French Revolution. Whereas the hitherto dominant concept of ‘brotherhood’ vanished in the wars of the 1990s, the institution of ‘sisterhood’ as a feminist supplement to the male-dominated socialist project endured the collapse of Yugoslavia (Bilić, 2019: 12–13).

As Miglena Todorova (2007) convincingly argued, however, in the aftermath of communism, feminists in Bulgaria (and Serbia, I may add), had to unlearn their socialist ‘backwardness’ inherent in their (women’s) struggles until that moment, and embrace the new parameters for ‘sisterhood’ (‘such as ‘liberation’) dictated by their ‘progressive’ and ‘enlightened’ counterparts in the West, and the U.S. in particular. In fact, after the founding of the Network of East-West Women in 1991 in Dubrovnik, upon the initiative of well-established, middle-class, white academic feminists from the U.S., women in postsocialist Eastern Europe were systematically (self-)taught how to ‘reinvent’ sisterhood and practice solidarity in line with liberal expectations (Cirstocea, 2012). This is how transnational networking disseminated not only the mainstream (white) liberalism in Serbia, but also facilitated a periodic reinvention of the second-wave U.S. (lesbian) feminism (Bilić, 2020: 127) in the (lesbian) feminist activist circles in Serbia.³

³ One of the most recent such ‘reinventions’ is a compilation of Serbian translations of 100 U.S. second-wave feminist texts (Pavlović & Urošević, 2017).





Image 2 Jelena Savić's blog page screenshot

Beyond Serbia, Todorova has argued that postsocialist feminist production in general suffers from what she has referred to as 'racial innocence', defined as a refusal to deal with the racist legacy sustaining existing racial and class privileges, despite the fact that the vast majority of feminists in the region belong to the ethnically and racially dominant populations (Todorova, 2018). Either way, a critique of colonialism and (U.S.) imperialism, which would have (hopefully) ushered in a discussion of internal racial hierarchies, colonial histories, and legacies of racism or anti-Ziganism, as noted earlier, has been entirely absent from mainstream feminist activism and academic production in Serbia.

Feeling right, not feeling white

Bojan Bilić has recently shown that in 'authoritarian and impoverished' contexts it is hard to conceptualize and practice 'democratic prefigurative politics', as civil society organizations are characterized by 'the *leader*-oriented style of governance', which prevents discussions and silences dissenting voices (Bilić, 2020: 144).

Once race is placed at the center of political struggles, the affective dispositions to racial inequality become a new

site of control over dissenting feelings deemed inappropriate for ‘civility’ thus conflated with whiteness (Goldberg, 2009, p. 44). As Jelena Savić has recently written,

[w]hite women are wary of Roma women. If they are not following the rules of white civility dominating the world in which whiteness does not exist and hence does not cause any harm or *bad emotions*, in which in fact [white women] do not exist as subjects of white supremacy, it is as if [Roma women] were evil destructive witches with dark inexplicable magical powers to crush their white world of inclusivity and their roles of good white perfect caring mothers of the world. (Savić, 2021, my emphasis)

Perhaps it would all be different if white feminist leaders in Serbia allowed themselves, at least occasionally, to experience *bad emotions*, to feel *bad* about their racial privileges which have resulted from the contingent fact of having been born white. Perhaps then they would be solidary anonymously, rather than abuse the performance of solidarity for self-promotion and as a means for maintaining their influence and hegemony. Perhaps then they would even step down, or aside, and let others, so many Others, define the priorities of solidarity struggles. Perhaps, then, there would be less fear around them, and more other emotions. Perhaps we would stop for good hearing about the necessity of a ‘feminist dictatorship.’ Perhaps... and yet it is hard to imagine.



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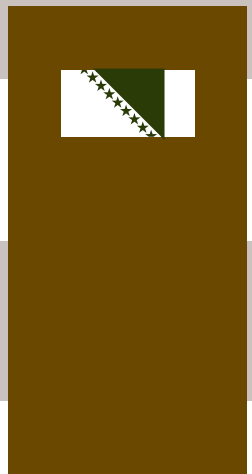
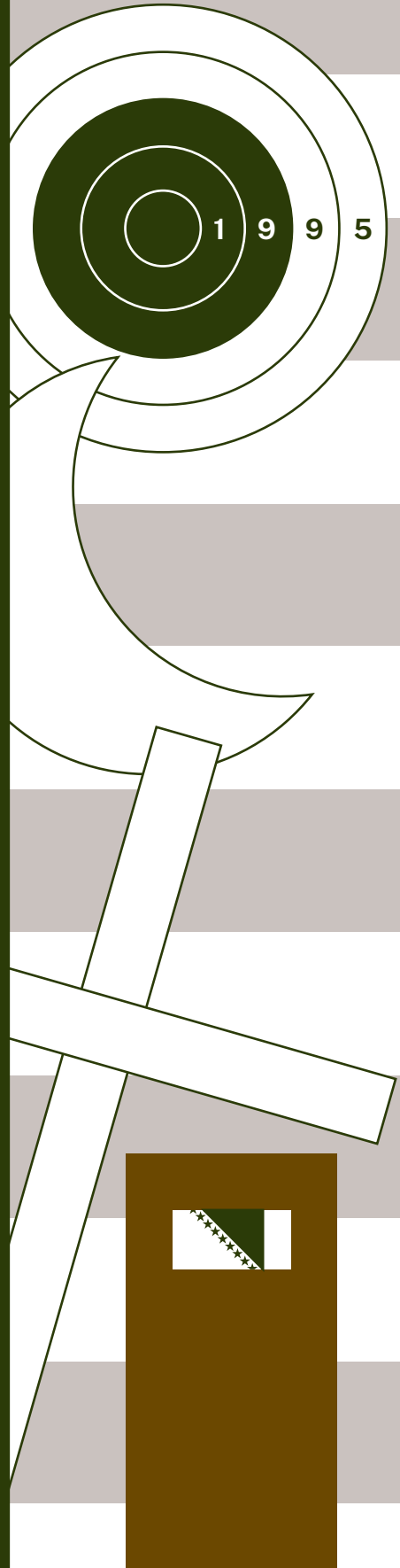
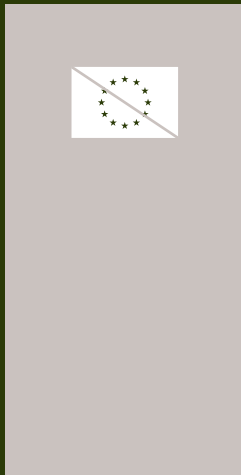
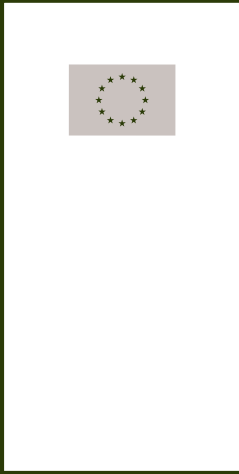
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Danijela Majstorović

Peripheral selves

Introduction

The conceptualization of peripheral selves comes from placing the previously undertheorized postcolonial optics in the Balkans in relation not only with the post-socialist but also postwar complexities. The postcolonial condition in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) as a European periphery, after the bloodiest war in post-WWII Europe and more than two decades of a contested peace resulting from the Dayton Peace Accords, has been marked by a new post-Dayton political and economic order freezing the postwar status quo along with the processes challenging it. These processes include the rise of new social movements seeking social justice and resource redistribution, but also migration. Two migrant figures, the Global Eastern and the Global Southern one, are emblematic of post-Dayton BiH as a waiting room, a country of double transit and a nodal point where postsocialist and postcolonial entanglements take place. The traits of these entanglements are precaritization, as the ‘new global proletarianization’ (Amin, 2004), but also heavy securitization and humanitarianism — and peripheralization as a gendered and racial revalorization of peripheral bodies feeding to the capitalist expansion those who have already left, are preparing to leave or have been stranded on their route in BiH (Majstorović, 2021).

Spatially conditioned disparities as well as non-spatial intersectional axes of oppression are particular dimensions of peripherality and complicate the center/periphery relations. Whereas the non-spatial dimensions are structural, exploitative and historical, the so-called *longue durée* dimensions, including those of the imperial past, colonial legacy, wars and capitalism in which *peripheral selves* are socially nested, the spatial dimensions are mostly geographical. Center/periph-



ery relations understood in spatial terms have marked differences in terms of regional and national development, the urban-rural divide, and infrastructural discrepancies. Taking the body as the minimal unit of the political, and affect as its praxis, my book *Peripheral Selves* (2021) sought to incorporate the affective, somatized dimension into the analysis of post-socialist discourses in BiH by looking at the peripheral selves emerging as social protesters, Bosnian emigrants in Germany, and non-European migrants and refugees currently stranded in BiH as part of the Balkan route. I looked at these subjects as being ‘materially embedded and embodied’ (Braidotti 2011, 128) within particular socio-cultural frameworks situated in the historically conditioned politics of location (Rich, 1984) in BiH as the new European peripheral borderland.



Image 1 Justice for David protest, Photo by Buka

In the process of affective attachment to these particular populations via ‘researcher-researched assemblage’ (Fox and Alldred, 2014), I reflected on my own moving along the subjective/objective axes in terms of proximity and epistemological commitments. Transitioning from a position of an

activist researcher and someone actively involved in opposing nationalism, patriarchy and privatization of socially owned property, to becoming a body under research, I also suffered illness and became a temporary migrant as a result of the political and economic uncertainty that marked the twenty years of working and living in the country. My contextual embeddedness and the assemblages and contingencies I had with my research partners operated as plateaus formed by specific interconnected rhizomatic relationships (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) in which we all felt peripheral. My approach to these complexities was via a feminist optic, a Marxist commitment, a body-centered and eclectic epistemological approach, which is inevitably about one's politics and social change within specific historical, economic, racialized, gendered, and social infrastructures of oppression and injustice.

Contextualizing Bosnia as a Periphery

In the context of Yugoslav socialism, BiH as a semiperiphery was a relatively stable federal republic where people lived and worked side by side marrying across ethnic lines, until the 1992–1995 war shattered the former sociality as well as the social infrastructure. In tearing down what was left of the Yugoslav socialist past and centuries-old cohabitation and tolerance despite difficulties, the war further peripheralized the country. The economy deteriorated and the society became impoverished, its people drifting apart in a hostile atmosphere which continued in the postwar Dayton BiH marked by divisions and fabrications, legitimizing historical revisionism and giving rise to feelings of fear, abandonment and exhaustion with world systems scholars classifying BiH as a 'periphery' (Dunaway and Clelland 2017: 415), 'super-periphery' (Bartlett, 2009), or even 'periphery of the periphery' (Bechev, 2012). Many left and continue to leave, while those who stayed quietly accepted the ideas of exclusionism, patriarchy and conservatism, which the ethnonationalist comprador elites pushed to the fore.

There are many neuralgic spots in the Dayton Peace Accords as a document resulting from a top-down, elite-driven approach to ending the war in BiH even if through the deployment EUFOR units and the Bonn Powers (Gilbert, 2017). The postsocialist, postwar era overlooked some of the greatest



achievements of socialism, including the famous founding principle of the ZAVNOBiH¹ (1943), that the country belonged to ‘neither Serbs, nor Croats nor Muslims, but to Serbs *and* Croats *and* Muslims.’ The ethnocapitalist structure of the Dayton Agreement prevents people from seeing the ethnonational elites for who they are, as the new political classes promote divisionary politics in pursuit of personal and party interests via capillary networks of political clientelism. In such an atmosphere, people witnessed the privatization and deterioration of healthcare, particularly noticeable during the Covid-19 pandemic as BiH faced one of the highest death rates in Europe (Ozturk, 2022); the improper conduct of police and judiciary investigations apparent in the protracted inquests into the deaths of the young men David Dragičević and Dženan Memić (Weber, 2021), and ‘a general learning crisis’ entrenching inequality as a consequence of generally impoverished education (Majstorović, 2021: xi-xii).

Instead of strengthening the BiH institutions, the conservative ethnonationalist political elites have leveraged them in their weakened state for their own interests while the Western powers installed the Office of the High Representative (OHR) with EU, Russia and China continuing to play their roles in the postconflict period. The international community’s colonial approach to peacebuilding in BiH coupled with the feudal and authoritarian postwar restructuring of the local ethnonationalist elites has left BiH in the lurch. It has enabled both of these social actors to secure enormous power without any social responsibility, turning a blind eye to the diminished and divided public sector. Some BiH authors have warned against such practice too but to no avail:

Having lived in this neoliberal ‘experiment’, wrapped in the language of peacebuilding and recovery, we are very familiar with its insidious workings: reducing democracy to an election day, using reconstruction and recovery as a paravane for privatisation and onslaught on our public sector and commons, using the implementation of the peace agreement as a pretence for transforming our political economy without giving us a say in it, introducing fiscal consolidation and austerity measures and claiming

¹ ZAVNOBiH (*Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine*), the State Antifascist Council for the National Liberation of BiH, became the country’s highest governing body of the antifascist movement during World War II.



Image 2 Davor Dragičević, Photo by Danijela Čuček

those are socio-economic reforms, consolidating political and economic power in the hands of few and calling it progress, using the international loans under the presence of investment in sustainable energy and infrastructure while at the same time destroying and polluting our ecosystem and pushing us further into debt (Mlinarević and Porobić, 2022).

Towards epistemic decolonization

Conceptualizing peripheral selves arises from an empirical analysis of the BiH people, including myself, temporarily left after the war in the wake of privatization, deteriorated institutions, injustice, ethno-kleptocracy and massive emigration. Moreover, BiH became a place where its own emigrants met with the other disenfranchised and pauperized people waiting at the EU's door and became a locus of neocolonial encounter of two migrant figures or, rather, two populations on the precarity continuum (Cabot, 2018), those from the Middle East, North Africa and Southeast Asia (MENASEA) currently stuck in BiH, and Bosnians and Herzegovinians leaving their country after 2015.

The urge to decolonize the knowledge on/from peripheries has been gaining momentum lately, echoing activist practices of solidarity in forging new unions despite limitations and incommensurabilities between more and less traditionally defined colonies. In discussing the applicability of 'post/colonial' approaches to Habsburg Central Europe, 'Bosnia and Herzegovina may be the only territory which fully qualifies for a case study of *k.u.k.* colonialism in a nonfigurative way' (Ruthner, 2018: 5) despite the disagreement about 'the master/subject relation within Europe, pointing to a system of colonial administration and exploitation of whites by whites' (Kann, 1977: 164). Colonialism's 'unholy trinity of imperialism, capitalist exploitation, and oppression on racial grounds, all of them imposed by force' (Kann, 1977: 164) would provisionally exclude BiH on the grounds of 'exploitation of whites by whites'. Although race in the Balkans is a matter of another debate (Baker, 2018), there is plenty of historical evidence suggesting BiH can be viewed as a colony (Ruthner, 2018; Donia, 2007) albeit using a less traditionalist definition.

As a social researcher of the contemporary period following the dismantling of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, I found plentiful evidence in the discourses and practice of the OHR and the postwar ethnonational elites. Although the Yugoslav state was built on anticolonial foundations but still characterized by an uneven development of its republics and antagonistic stances towards Roma and Kosovo Albanians.

The colonialist imagination was most notable in the processes of privatization that followed and even predated Dayton that were emblematic of neocolonialism (Majstorović, 2007; Majstorović, Pepić and Vučkovic, 2016). Yet epistemic decolonization, even in the former hybrid colonies such as BiH (Donia, 2007), had to be understood as a ‘praxis beyond metaphors,’ a thoroughgoing political commitment, and a way of ‘learning *with* and *from*’ rather than learning *about* what has been disavowed in the colonialist unfolding of modernity (Vizcaíno, 2020). In giving peripheral selves a voice, I was recognizing my own implication, exercising a kind of ‘epistemic humility’ as ‘an awareness of the limits and contingencies of one’s beliefs and commitments’ (Allen, 2016: 76).

Positing peripheral selves as peripheral bodies invites questions about how much of this politico-economic peripherality is contained in our bodies, discourses, and desires. Engagement with bodies, focusing firmly on the social production rather than social construction, and the concern with ‘material workings of power’ (Fox and Alldred, 2014: 399), reveals that ‘the defense of living conditional and physical integrity’ permeates the agendas of this social movement more tangibly than ‘any of the more conventionally understood ideological precepts’ (Vishmidt, 2020: 33). The slogan ‘No justice, no peace,’ shouted by the *Black Lives Matter* protesters following the murder of George Floyd on May 25 2020 in Minneapolis, resonated with the slogans of 2018 protesters in Bosnia, who shouted ‘Justice for David and Dženan,’ signaling an acute lack of justice globally.

Speaking from a periphery about the periphery means elevating the politics of location (Rich, 1984) to a radical political function in order to foster an activist practice among embodied peripheral selves notwithstanding our different genealogies of peripheralization:

The politics of location is first and foremost about experience within certain material conditions — it means that one’s thinking, one’s theoretical process, is not abstract, universalized, objective and detached...one’s intellectual vision is not a disembodied mental activity; rather, it is closely connected to one’s place of enunciation, that is, where one is actually speaking from. (Braidotti, 1994: 237)

To inquire about peripheral selves from the periphery means to ask how the condition of such bodies can serve as the basis for a livable life? Who is to be held accountable for the structural and random violence inflicted over time, and what kinds of compensation and of struggle are available?

To reverse the peripherality of the Global East and South and to decenter Europe and the West is to insist on a global solidarity framework and 'deep coalitions' (Lugones, 2003), recognizing the specificities of political subjects of decolonial struggles without dismissing other anticolonial causes, many with socialist roots. Here, I would also like to point to Al-Haj Saleh's a recent critique of solidarity aiming at this decentering as always 'unidirectional' and expressed by 'affluent, powerful Western nations towards troubled countries elsewhere and the political misfortunes faced by their peoples.' (2018) Saleh notes that 'the solidarity marketplace seeks to rank victims in groups,' opening doors to the white Ukrainians or Bosnians but not to non-White Kurds or Pakistanis, for instance. To counteract the selective structure of the concept of solidarity, which reproduces discrimination and injustice and has a Western center, he suggests the notion of partnership:

What was valuable in the concept of solidarity was the framework of worldwide responsibility, breaking down the segregation of human pains from one another. What could retain this value is transcending solidarity to partnership in a world that today progressively forms a single framework of responsibility, but still provides levels of freedom and capability of utmost disparity. (Al-Haj Saleh, 2018)

Bringing the selves on the periphery together in dialogue may be a way of reversing the unidirectionality of solidarity. It would entail recognition of us as bodies conditioned by multiple oppressions, including wars, racialization, policing, privatization, denial of justice, and various gatekeeping processes from within and without that inhibit the circulation of knowledge and people from such spaces. Building peripheral partnerships should be about realizing our mutual entanglements, predicaments and wounds. It may also be a way of saving the global left politics.

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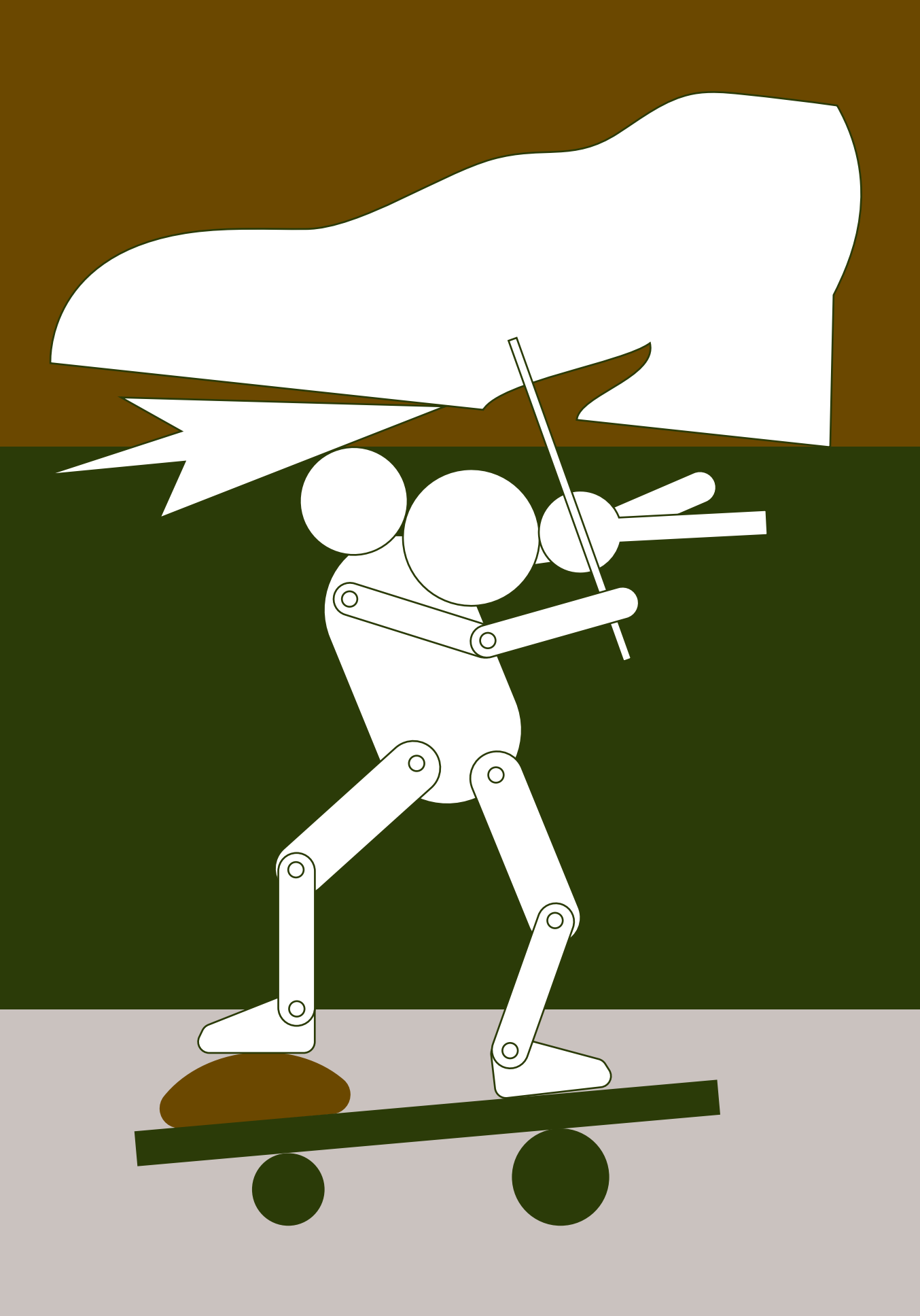
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Jelena Savić

Drunken Whites

Systemic violence of the working conditions for Roma musicians in the *kafana*¹ follows from the historical Othering of Roma in Europe and its largely unaddressed Nazi legacy. I propose that Gadjó ignorance², a type of non-Roma ‘white ignorance’ (Mills, 2008), cannot be regarded as its only explanation. Within the Gadjó affective economy, Roma suffering has become the precondition for ‘successful’ performances of Roma emotional labor in the *kafana*, where suffering is evaluated on the spot by Gadjó people who come to get *drunk on whiteness* – a performance of Gadjó superiority and privilege played out in Roma suffering.³

Violence towards musicians became a recurring motif of Serbian cinematography. Emir Kusturica was probably the most prominent director making a spectacle of it (Aydođan, 2017; Murtic, 2015). Hofman points to less hyperbolic, more realistic, but still vivid representations of such violence in cinematography, ‘[p]atrons forcing musicians to play on their knees, to climb a tree or to lie or dance on the table, as well as cursing or beating them, can be found, in many other films also portraying a female performer as a central figure

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¹ Kafana can be translated as a pub even though it should be understood within the historical context of the Balkans as somewhat different as Hofman suggests in her work.

² Mills defines white ignorance as ‘an ignorance among whites – an absence of belief, a false belief, a set of false beliefs, a pervasively deforming outlook – that was not contingent but causally linked to their whiteness’ (Mills 2008: 217). I adjusted the term for the non-Roma or Gadjó how Roma call them: Gadjó ignorance refers to the ignorance that is the privilege of the non-Roma, unexamined beliefs about Gadjó superiority, entitlements and privileges that Gadjó have in relation to Roma, and the complex history, structures, and dynamics of anti-Roma racism within the system set to serve the interests of the Gadjó on account of Roma in Europe more broadly, which I also call the European Gadjó supremacy. This system is set up to serve the interests of the Gadjó at the expense of Roma in Europe.

³ Gadjó privileges originate in the undeserved advantages attributed to being non-Roma under the regimes of European Gadjó supremacy.

of abuse' (Hofman, 2015: 3).⁴ Beyond representation in visual art, Hofman also addresses actual violence directed against women in *kafanas* while they work, but race or ethnicity is not an analytical category in this author's work (Hofman, 2015; Hofman and Tarabić, 2006). In much of feminist, leftist or, paradoxically, post-colonial literature that address the Orientalization and Othering of Eastern Europe (Abazović and Velikonja 2014; Gržinić 2012; Todorova 2009; Kovačević 2008; Bjelić and Savić 2002; Goldsworthy 1998; Wolff 1994; Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992), Roma subjectivity is often missing, or gets used as an epistemic crutch, which often appropriates Roma positionality and suffering using explanatory efforts whose hermeneutics serve the interests of non-Roma.

Violence against Roma in the *kafana*

Below I present a few cases of violence against Roma in the context of the *kafana*. My grandfather, a concentration camp survivor and former musician never spoke about his experiences during the war or about his experiences at work. We heard only from my grandmother that on one occasion he was forced at work to play from a tree, which he found humiliating. For a long time, this remained just an awkward family story, and I almost forgot about it, until at some point I watched the movie *The meeting point* [Sabirni centar] (G. Markovic et al., 1989). One scene opens with Roma musicians in a tree, singing a song that starts with the line 'the Gypsies' suffering is tremendous [Ciganska je tuga pregolema].⁵ The song refers to the Ustaša⁶ imprisoning Roma in Vojvodina and taking them to the Jasenovac concentration camp, but the tone of the scene is comical, since one musician is playing while literally hanging upside down from the tree. A drunken white Serbian man,

⁴ Hofman's list includes *Gypsy Woman* (Ciganka, 1953); *Boiling Town* (Uzavreli grad, 1961); *Cross Rakoč* (Krst Rakoč 1962); *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (Skupljači perja, 1967); *Poor Maria* (Sirota Marija, 1968); *Wager* (Opklada, 1971); *Deer Hunt* (Lov na Jelene, 1972); *And God Makes a Kafana Singer* (I Bog stvorio kafansku pevačicu, 1972); *Always Ready Women* (Uvek spremne žene, 1987); and *Wanderer* (Lutalica, 1987).

⁵ The song refers to the actual event taking place in Vojvodina, village Molovin, where in June 1942 Roma family of musicians with surname Familić was taken to Jasenovac by Ustaša. "See Savićin.

⁶ Ustaše were Croatian fascists operating since the 1930s who led the Independent State of Croatia formed 1941 on the occupied territories of Yugoslavia, a puppet state of the Nazi Germany.

the *kafana* owner [gazda], holds up a gun and demands that the Roma musicians continue to play.

When I started to look beyond the awkward experiences of my grandfather and the dark comedic phantasms of the director, who responded more recently with great insensitivity to the issues of poverty or racism (Koprivica, 2022; Novosti online, 2022), I discovered that this odd practice is in fact well known to Roma musicians. Šaban Bajramović, known as the ‘King of Roma music,’ said about singing at weddings that ‘it was some hard-earned bread. The money was great, but sometimes we had to climb a tree and sing for the guests from there’ (Jovanović, 2008: 3). Moreover, many Roma musicians thought it their professional duty to perform on such requests. Snežana Jovanović, called Šikica, a successful Roma *kafana* singer, explained how a good singer has to go through all kinds of uncomfortable situations in order ‘to be a professional,’ and with dutiful, even joyful acceptance reported that she was required to sing from a tree, which she did without complaint (Bukovičić, 2021).

Yet the forced conditions of artistic performances for Roma musicians go far beyond the animalistic dehumanization of ‘bat singing.’⁷ ‘Once, we had to follow the best man on foot for ten kilometers and sing for him the whole time, we weren’t allowed to stop,’ said Šaban Bajramović (Jovanović, 2008: 3). Mattijs van de Port also noted the phenomenon of Roma singing at gunpoint:

One of the men from Belgrade had carried a gun, loaded and all. At one point he had brought the thing out and put it on the table. They had made jokes about the direction in which it pointed; alternately they had turned the gun around, aiming the barrel at one another. Later they had baited the old Gypsy musician with it. They had forced him to play something beautiful, something sentimental. They had yelled at him that he should sing the complete

⁷ ‘Bat singing’ refers to the performance of singing while hanging upside down from a tree, but I use it here to refer to any singing from a tree. In the context of dehumanization studies, either would belong to the set of animalistic dehumanization, first as there is the general stereotypical presumption of Roma being genetically and instinctively drawn to the production of music, and then in placing them on a tree as a habitus of animals producing sound, such as birds or bats, so they slide lower on the ‘great chain of being’.



song, that he should not try to leave out a couple of stanzas or so. With the gun pointed at him he had refrained from such dirty tricks. He had trembled with fear, the old Gypsy. (van de Port 1999: 298)

In another account, ‘a band of drunken football supporters of the club Red Star Belgrade kidnapped four members of the *Crni Panteri* from their boat on the Ada Ciganli beach and spirited them away to a bar in Novi Belgrade, Belgrade’s socialist tower block quarter, where they forced the musicians to satisfy their musical wishes at gunpoint before someone informed the police and the Gypsy musicians were eventually freed.’ (Rigney, 2015). As the phenomenon remains greatly under-reported and under-researched, we can reasonably assume that this is not the worst that happens to Roma musicians.

Constructing the ‘Gypsy soul’

Roma musicians are expected not only to deliver their suffering, but also to perform the ‘happy Gypsy soul.’ When the performance is not satisfactory to the patrons, the normalization of violence against Roma allows threats and demands at gunpoint, which reveal the underlying character of the arrangement. Instances of violence speak to the severity of duress under which Roma perform in order to sustain their existence in economic terms or even their bare lives. While Hofman is undoubtedly right in her claim that violence against musicians is prevalent in the *kafana*, I argue that the practice of extorting and controlling Roma musicians’ performance under the threat of violence is specific to institutional contextualization and historicization. Under the conditions of systemic Othering and racism, Roma are left with little social or political power, often live in poverty, and have access to few employment opportunities (FoNet, 2021; Government of Republic of Serbia, 2016: 43). Therefore, their only available option for survival is often entertainment, where they are supposed to perform their ‘Gypsy soul’ under the regime of European Gadjó supremacy.⁸

⁸ Relying again on Mills and his idea of global white supremacy (Mills, 2015), my term of European Gadjó supremacy denotes the system set to serve the interests of the Gadjó on account of Roma in Europe: exploitative and discriminatory institutional structures, policies, ideologies, and cultures supporting the idea of Gadjó superiority and privileges, and nurturing Gadjó ignorance, existing on the politics of Othering and fear, which are deeply ingrained in Orientalism and the legacy of Nazism.

With this knowledge in mind, violence against Roma workers in the *kafana* can also be understood in the context of the historical legacy of radical violence, the legacy of Nazism. Nazis used music as a political tool of terror. Under the overarching motto of ‘strength through joy’, it is estimated that, willingly or not, around 14,000 German artists, actors, singers, and musicians entertained the Nazi troops, while ‘[a]ll armed services had bands attached with the best musicians often assigned to the SS (*Schutz-Staffel*) Waffen divisions.’ (Moller, 1980: 43) As soon as concentration and extermination camps were established, ‘music on command’ became a part of camp life. As Fackler explains, music was not simply used to boost the morale of the soldiers, but to ‘exercise mental and physical force [...] to intimidate insecure prisoners: it frightened, humiliated, and degraded them’ (Fackler, 2007: 2). Prisoners were required to sing when going to and from work as well as at work, and they often had to sing lyrics specifically chosen to humiliate them. To add to individual acts of producing ‘music on command’, camp orchestras (*Lagerkapellen*) were soon made up of prisoners, and gave instrumental background to the prisoners’ singing. Their performances accompanied tortures and executions, and they had an instrumental role in confusing prisoners about the severity of their situation and their proximity to death by masking the sounds of shots and screams (Fackler, 2007: 7).

As the tradition of funneling Roma into the entertainment industry is of long standing, there was a number of Roma musicians among the Jewish prisoners significant enough to create ‘Gypsy orchestras.’ Documentation suggests that Nazis had a preference for Roma musicians. Lynn Moller says about Buchenwald that ‘a *Lagersmusikkapelle* or prisoners’ band was established in 1938. Initially, it was composed of gypsies [lowercase g in the original] with guitars or accordions, but later trombones, trumpets, and drums were added as the people became more diversified.’ (Moller, 1980: 43) In the Falkensee camp too played a ‘gypsy orchestra’ [lowercase g in the original] (Moller 1980: 15). Fackler also mentions that

[l]ike other SS-men, Thies Christophersen, an SS officer (SS-Sonderführer) at Auschwitz, enjoyed what was called ‘Gypsy music,’ and so when he was assembling his work detail he favored Gypsies, also known as the Sinti

and Roma. In this way musicians and singers with musical gifts or with a musical training were turned into a sort of personal musical slaves, available at all times. (Fackler, 2007: 12)

This happened at moments of socializing, bonding, entertainment, drinking sessions, orgies, and feasts (Fackler, 2007: 13), that is, in settings very much reminiscent of the *kafana*.

Drunken whites

While Gadjó people often falsely believe Roma are 'genetically' predisposed to produce music, when they speak about Roma music, the music produced 'from Gypsy soul', it is clear that they expect music saturated with Roma suffering. This suffering is normalized, decontextualized, and depersonalized, as it is 'a fact of nature'. Gadjó also expect Roma themselves to accept their suffering and to continue to 'be happy'; to infuse their work with emotion, but not to expect that their expressed emotion will contribute to the building of an empathetic community with Gadjó. While suffering remains the key ingredient of the magical Orientalist narrative of Otherness van de Port describes, Gadjó continue to require the emotional labor from Roma, who serve as the always-available containers filled with suffering to draw on.

This suffering is not only not respected or revered, nor used to restore Roma dignity and humanity, but in fact appropriated and instrumentalized to accord with the mainstreaming of violence against Roma. It is further normalized to 'enrich' existing Roma suffering with violence on the spot. Issuing a threat to life is designed to generate fear, suffering, and a standard of musical 'good performance' emanating from the 'proper Gypsy soul.' This is a practice ominously reminiscent of dehumanization and anti-Roma racism during WWII. A particular kind of 'Gypsy soul' is conjured up: one that fears for its life and guarantees that suffering appears as a commodity produced on order in the *kafana*, as a potent 'drug' for the Gadjó, who may get drunk on alcohol but also on the Otherness and Roma suffering. These are the '*drunken whites*.'

'You smile, even when you don't feel like smiling'

In their production of sound, Roma musicians are aware of the predatory requirements for the delivery of the constructed 'Gypsy soul' and the services of Othered emotional and racialized attunement. Although some try to survive and ensure their existence managing white projections of Otherness more or less successfully (Markovic, 2015), they are indeed largely forced to accept violence as a normal part of their life and their job, and hardly ever reporting any of it. As violence is commonly inflicted upon all musicians, though in different ways, contexts, and severity, it would simply be bad for business to be singled out as the only one who reported it. More importantly, since violence against Roma is being mainstreamed under European Gadjó supremacy regimes (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2020: 38; Luković, Muhi, and Spitalski, 2022), Roma in general have low trust in institutions and do not report violence for fear of further victimization, knowing that Roma lives in fact 'do not matter'. In public, Roma are only allowed to mention these events as anecdotes in entertainment shows or tabloid interviews that cultivate the imaginaries of an 'exotic Balkan' style and a 'wild' party culture [luda zabava]. Snežana Jovanović, or Šikica, the Roma kafana singer, with a calm smile that bespeaks wisdom gained from a lifetime of survival, says in an interview that 'you smile, even when you don't feel like smiling, that is your job.' (Bukovičić, 2021)





Roma as the European Other
Oriental & black



Drunken

Imaginary Dichotomies

Gypsies / European host society
wild / tame
marginal / mainstream
disorderly / orderly
lawless / lawful
violent / peaceful
untrustworthy / trustworthy
emotional, irrational / rational
(Silverman 2011, 232)

Life expectancy -12

Roma in Serbia can expect to live in average twelve years shorter.

Average life expectancy is 78 for women, and 73 years for men in Serbia.



Ljiljana Batler
(1944-2010),
66

Vida Pavlović
(1945-2005),
60

Džej Ramadanovski
(1964-2020),
56



Sinan Sakić
(1956-2018),
62



European Gadjo supremacy

Systemic violence
suffering
fear



Education

Coverage of children aged 3 to 5.5 in preschool education is 6%, while it amounts to about 50% in the general population (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2016, 22).

Housing

70% of Roma live in Roma settlements (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2016, 35), 67% of Roma households live in homes that have no connection to the sewage system as opposed to 37% of such households in the majority population (ibid, 22).

passion
sexuality
despair
anger
deception
etc.
suffering
+
happiness

Culture/Art
/Movies/Music
"Gypsy soul"

suffering as a requirement
for successful
kafana performance of
Othering
for Gadje

Employment

The State does not have reliable data, (Government of the Republic of Serbia 2016, 43) but recent preliminary data goes up to 70% as permanently unemployed Roma, while employment is half of the employment in general population being around 48% (FoNet 2021).

Music industry

“
After a long day of hard manual work, being forced to sing meant an enormous physical effort for the weakened prisoners (Fackler 2007, 2).
”

whites

+

Real

Gender

Othering
Dehumanization

Violence

Class

Suffering

Race/
Ethnicity/
Roma

Sexism & classism &
racism & Nazism

Kafana

**At gunpoint
performance**

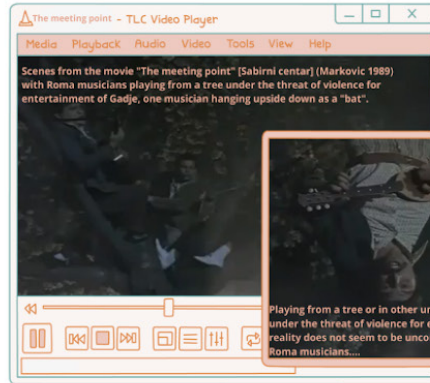
"Bat singing"

Animalistic
dehumanization
+
Terrorizing
≈

**"Strength
through
joy" for
Nazi
soldiers**

kafana-like settings
socializing, bonding
and entertainment,
drinking sessions,
orgies and other
feasts

patriotic moral
entertainment

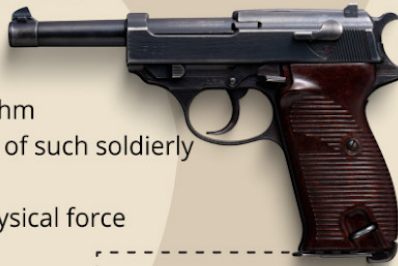


Music as terror

Music on command

Singing on Command

military tradition
develop discipline
encourage marching rhythm
symbolize the acquisition of such soldierly
virtues as "proper order"
exercising mental and physical force
intimidate
frighten
humiliate
degrade



Playing on command

Lagerkapellen, camp orchestras
instrumental background to the
prisoner's singing;
tortures and executions,
confusing prisoners about
severity of their situation, their
close death, masking the sound
of shots and screams (Fackler
2007, 7).

Nazi history

"Gipsy orchestras"

- Buchenwald, a Lagersmusikkapelle or prisoners' band in 1938 (Moller 1980, 43)
- Falkensee camp (Moller 1980, 15)
- Auschwitz (Fackler 2007, 12)



In this way musicians and singers with musical gifts or with a musical training were turned into a sort of personal **"musical slaves,"** available at all times (Fackler 2007, 12)

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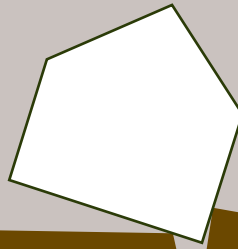
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Emina Bužinkić

LIVED SOLIDARITIES

I start this meditation from a place of acute vulnerability as the literal tectonic movements have been striking central Croatia causing displacement, devastation and discomfort. A 6.4-magnitude earthquake at the end of 2020, preceded by three other forceful ones, struck and left debris, dislocation, and death. Thousands of aftershocks have been occurring in the aftermath, releasing waves of energy travelling through the Earth's crust. According to Science for a Changing World (USGS, 2021), an earthquake happens when the tectonic plates get unstuck at their edges; when the friction releases, a tremendous amount of energy causes a sudden slip on the fault. A sudden slip, numerous ones as a matter of fact, unsettled the sense of home and safety, gnawing on the already fragile social tissue frayed by the Covid-19 pandemic— defying the 'stay at home order' in the most literal sense as homes became unsolidified. Situated within the floating danger of the Covid-19 virus, the post-earthquake crisis imposed the impossibility of physical distancing and hygiene protocols to remain healthy in the collective shelters for weeks after the mainshock. Compelled into the proximity of each other, surrounded by the crumbling facades, suddenly the layers of social assemblage came through. Refugees, ethnic minorities, the elderly, people with disabilities, and others structurally deprived met in the long queues while waiting for aid packages with the tectonic plates constantly moving underneath our feet. Some thirty years ago when the war in the Balkans tumbled our lives sending strikes from land, sea, and air, many of us became refugees overnight— temporarily or/and for life. Here I stand again in the same place, exiled from home, holding transgenerational memories of suffering and my baby, with the community of Iranian and Syrian refugees, holding each other, shivering in each other's arms and facing the unexpected anxiety of another stage of survival. Again and always in the shoes of perpet-

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ual refugees, I wander into the world of imagining the labor of reconstruction as more than fixing the broken, in which we all take part, vulnerable and resilient as we are. Committing ourselves to the reconstruction and restoration urges us to catch our breath and get good sleep while preparing the grounds for new ways of thinking, breathing, knowing, creating, sustaining. Ever since the first shock, this question occupies my mind: in what ways is the movement of the Earth intimately and collectively setting us on the journey into the unknown, with all its uncertainties, nonetheless in profound excitement and a new clarity about the politics of the possible?

Author's diary entry, March 2021



Image 1,2,3 This graffiti represents solidarity with the people of Palestine tirelessly pursuing the liberation of Palestine from Israeli occupation and settler colonialism. This artistic stamp was left during the Re:Think Sisak festival by a Croatian artist Polite BastART. The building where the graffiti has stood since July of 2021 is located in the neighborhood of *Željezara*, a new home for refugee youth and families who took part in my inquiry and collaborative writing projects. Copyright: Vedran Štimac



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I ruminate in this piece about my research with young refugees from Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) that started with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, and was interrupted by the devastating earthquakes in central Croatia, as the most unusual year of our lives was coming to a close. The journey with seven refugees who had been establishing a new home in Croatia ever since the 2015 “long summer of migration” (Kasperek & Speer, 2015) was the labor of documenting refugee youth life stories. I started conver-



sations with young refugees enrolled in elementary and high schools in Sisak and Zagreb when schools shut their doors and switched to online schooling in the Croatian language. This was an act of casting out the refugee youth who did not speak Croatian from schooling, an act that stands as an ordinary affair in the Croatian state politics of education of migrant and refugee youth.

During the 18-month stretch, I conducted critical ethnographic study and documented seven youth narratives as a prelude to the collaborative autoethnographies and a collective memory writing session with the refugee youth. As we embarked on our autoethnographic and collective memory writing journeys on a shaky ground, I pondered what labor we must undertake, intimately and collectively, to imagine creating new possibilities.

Budging from our places in the brief moments between lockdowns and new surges of the virus that brought a never-ending state of emergency, we muddled through the meanings of social distancing now that the Covid-19 pandemic propelled the normalization of racialized violence against

refugees and migrants. In the spirit of dissipating social distance, my research with refugee youth attended to cultivating methodologies of collaborative storytelling to counteract the inscribed grammars of the multiple pandemics: Islamophobia and anti-Muslim violence, anti-Black racism, and anti-migration politics (ITSRC, 2020). In this sense, I regard decolonizing research as a political project that refuses all forms of violence, while at the same time radicalizes the praxis of care and solidarity. As Tuhiwai Smith (2012: 12) writes, “the intellectual project of decolonizing has to set out ways to proceed through a colonizing world. It needs radical compassion that reaches out, that seeks collaboration, and that is open to possibilities that can only be imagined as other things fall into place”.

Narrative inquiry, collaborative autoethnographies, and collective memory writing became a medium for imagining and performing counteraction to the normalized violence perpetrated by the European border regime that rests on the power of the militarization-industrial complex, and to a type of extractive research that imposes subjugation and the erasure of refugees searching for safety and meaning. In this sense, my research and specifically our collective memory writing endeavors have been part of long-lasting struggles for the freedom of movement, supporting claims for epistemic justice on behalf of refugees, precarious migrants, people forced to move, and those acting with them in solidarity.

Collaborative autoethnographies and particularly collective memory writing with refugee youth was a way of map-making that weaves in memories of wars, refuge, childhood struggles, deportations, and racialized schooling. Memories and stories became ways of disclosing pain and struggles. They also became points of envisioning different futures and critical junctures calling for the rebuilding of social closeness and intimacies, in stark opposition to the regimes of social distancing caused by the Covid-19 and ongoing social pandemics.

Our labor of writing, recording, and sharing stories in multiple languages brought about creativity, messiness, questions, confusions, liberations, trust, relationships, and new life energies. We have not only occupied the space of writers with different styles and listeners with our eyes open and closed,



but locations of friendships and kinship as we celebrated birthdays and weddings, practiced fasting, mothering, and community care, and mourned the losses of our community members. Deeply involved in the telling and writing of our refugee journeys, the life in camps, perilous crossings of borders, new life amid the pandemic, exile from schooling, and displacement by the earthquake, and our fears, desires, sexualities, shames and joys, the autoethnographies and collective memory writing sessions instantiated liberation, empowerment, and healing.

Translation, Solidarity, and Hope

Our writing and story-telling grappled with the questions of representations, language and translation, and the self. I find these to be the core questions in the labor of decolonial research that became the tapestry of the close co-travelers (Nagar, 2015) committed to making sense of a today that is interwoven with memories of the past and hopes for the future. The discussion of these interwoven questions is generative, albeit fractured and fragmented just as our memories and story-telling have been.

What does it mean to practice decoloniality while grappling with the questions of voice, language, and translation? The writing experience unfolded in multiple languages: the language of home, the language of the refugee camp, the language of the new place, in Arabic, in Croatian, and in English. We also communicated using hands, gestures, facial expressions, drawing visuals, using dictionaries and cell applications, and so we translated. Facing the fears of what might be lost with the labor of translation recalled Richa Nagar's concept of hungry translations which

recognizes that the meanings of justice, ethics, or politics can emerge only in the shifting specifics of a given moment in an ongoing struggle—a particular convergence of subjectivities and articulations that is itself located at a unique confluence of time and place. This impossibility of arriving at perfect translation [...] The political potential of such engagement lies in this yearning to keep retellings, as well as the relationships that energize and authorize those retellings, open and flowing. (Nagar, 2019: 30)

Such an honest act of sitting in a place of fragmented memories and imperfect translations, yet in epistemic wholeness (Connolly-Shaffer, 2012), speaks to the praxis of lived or situated solidarity (Nagar, 2015). Situated solidarities are reflected in the writing and publishing of the work, in which stories shared by each group member were not individualized and reduced to a singular view, but rather went on the journey of embroidering a collective voice, in which a single story gathers more power as it becomes part of the collective story. In that sense, telling and writing memories was a process of interweaving stories as a collective political mode of lived solidarities, while living in multiple languages, radical vulnerability, and hungry translations.

My meditation is embedded in my commitment to nourish a praxis of decolonizing research: braiding ethics and political empowerment of the collective, pedagogies of blurring the boundaries between the researcher and the researched, and critical sensibilities to the new and emerging ways of knowing. While pondering the labor and praxis of collective memory writing and their potential to help us overcome pain and suffering, we are determined to seek the truth(s) about who we are through the entangled narratives, countering the popular tropes of Muslim terrorists, Muslim women as oppressed, and migrants and refugees as cultural aliens. We also create justice on our terms, perhaps a poetic justice (Nagar, 2015) emerging from the writing process and actions grounded in solidarity.

The methods of collective memory writing encompass a process, a time and a space. They produce a quilt of emotional, spiritual, and political labor aimed at regaining hope and imagining critical differences against the perpetual ideological displacements of refugee youth from social and educational interactions. The impact of the shifting power of the earthquake was twofold: it surfaced fragilities and triggered our earlier displacement experiences, and it was a much needed metaphorical tremor setting us on collaborative and collective journeys of storytelling and memory writing. These have urged us to release refreshed energies of hope and imagination into and beyond refusal.



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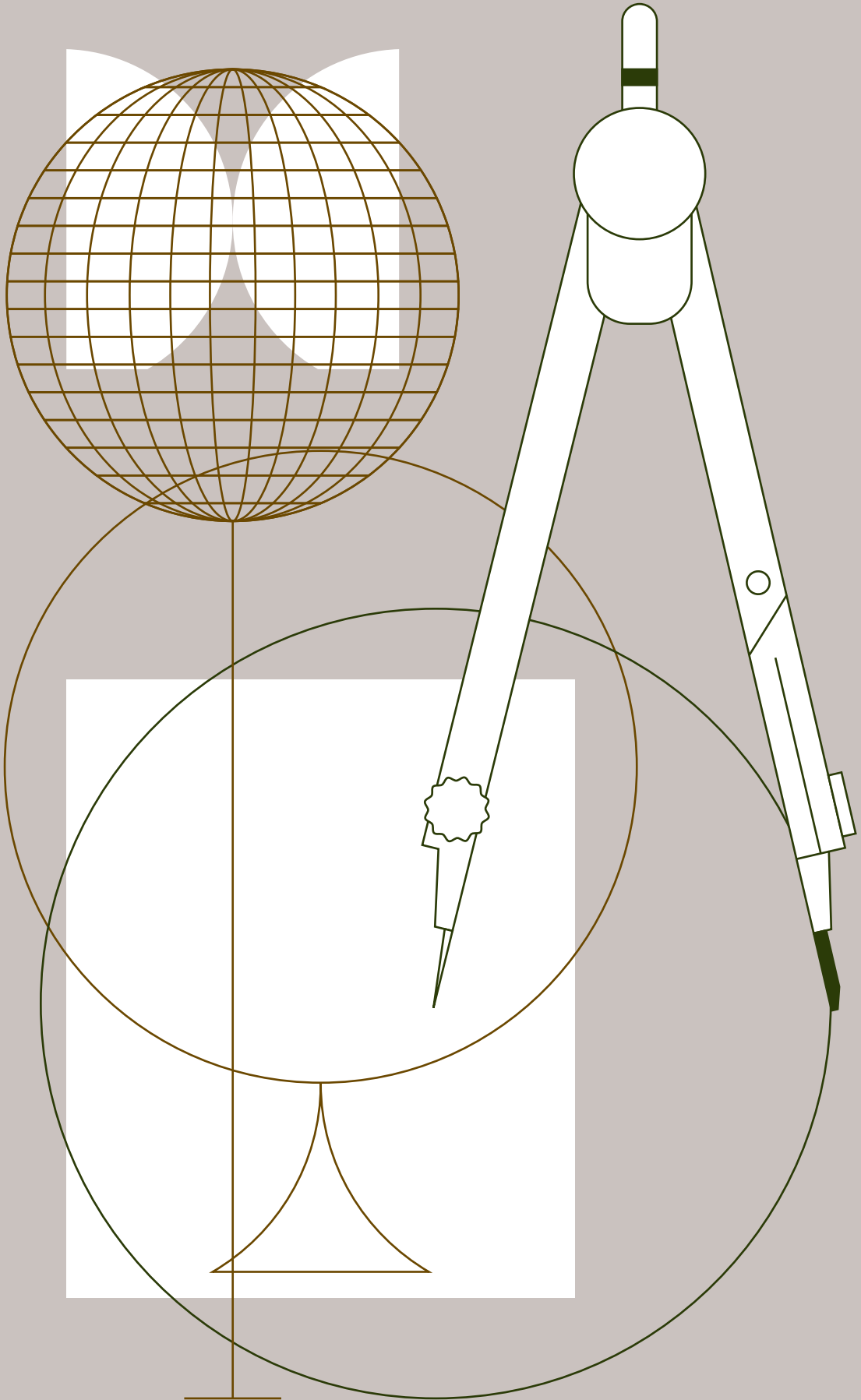
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Socialist worldmaking

My work with the concept of socialist worldmaking began with a question: how to understand the global dimension of architectural exchanges between the socialist states and the newly independent states during the Cold War? While these exchanges were informed by specific concepts and imaginations of the 'global' (Stanek, 2020), the dominant uses of this term in architectural history and urban studies today cannot capture its understanding by architects, planners, and managers of construction companies from socialist Eastern Europe and their counterparts in the decolonizing of Africa and Asia.

Until recently, worldwide mobilities of architecture and their impact on urbanization processes during the second half on the twentieth century have been addressed mainly from two perspectives. The first among them can be called 'world cities' or 'global cities' research (Robinson, 2016), largely based on world-systems theory. By dividing the capitalist world economy into centers, semi-peripheries, and peripheries, this research classified cities according to 'their mode of integration with the world economy' (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982: 329).

In response to this restrictive framework, scholars pointed to other ways in which cities, in particular those in the Global South, become nodes of global connections (Ong and Roy, 2011). They found allies in various strands of postcolonial urbanism, or studies of the consequences of the colonial encounter for the production, representation, and lived experiences of spaces (Jazeel, 2019; Simone, 2001). Further impulses came from studies of racialized capitalism and feminist or queer geographies, in particular in subaltern contexts (Blunt and Rose, 1994; Peake, 2016).



Socialist Eastern Europe has been largely absent from either perspective. During the Cold War, world-systems scholars did not conclusively agree on the position of the socialist countries in their theoretical framework (Navarro, 1982; cf. Müller, 2020), and by the 1990s most world-systems urbanists interested in Eastern Europe moved on to study the capitalist expansion in the region (Bradshaw, 2001). In turn, Eastern Europe has appeared on the radar of postcolonial urbanists only during the last decade, with scholars seeking to deterritorialize concepts derived from socialist and postsocialist urbanism (Tuvikene, 2016) so as to bring them into wider conversations, including those about urbanization in the Global South (Hirt et al., 2016; Ferenčuhová, 2016). Global cities research and postcolonial urbanism have only slowly begun to absorb scholarship by political, economic, and cultural historians who showed how socialist Eastern Europe had engaged with the decolonizing countries in Africa and Asia (Ginelli, 2018; Sanches-Sibony, 2014; Dragostinova, 2021), and how actors from the region had participated, albeit in an uneven and liminal manner, in globalization processes since the 1970s (Gutman, 2011; Mark et al., 2020).

The concept of *socialist worldmaking* helps to advance these debates. My work on this concept begins with the historical materialist writings about *mondialisation* by the French sociologist Henri Lefebvre. Neither a simple translation of the English ‘globalization,’ nor an alternative to it, Lefebvre’s *mondialisation* pointed at the world as a historically specific dimension of social practices, of which the Anglo-American term ‘globalization’ captured just some. Lefebvre (2009) discussed *mondialisation* as central to urbanization processes around the planet, and argued that practices of producing space were informed by alternative imaginations of the world, which were often contradictory and competing. The concept of *mondialisation* tunes into recent debates on the ‘worlding’ of cities (Ong and Roy, 2012; Simone 2001) by drawing attention to the multiple visions, imaginations, and experiences of the world, and to the ways in which negotiations, conflicts, and sometimes synergies between them informed urbanization processes in specific locations.

Lefebvre’s comments may be usefully juxtaposed with the concept of *mondialité* introduced by the Martinican writ-

er and scholar Édouard Glissant. Writing during and after the Cold War, Glissant theorized the world beyond its expansionist concepts inherited from the colonial period to reconceptualize a historical condition when ‘the thrust of the world and its desire no longer embolden you onward in a fever of discovery: they multiply you all around’ (1997: 195). From the vantage point of Antillean literature, Glissant theorized the assembling of worlds within and against political and economic regimes, starting with colonialism and the plantation system.

Thinking with Lefebvre, Glissant and others (Getachew, 2019; Mbembe, 2021), I understand *worldmaking* as a dimension of social practices that refer to various, competing, and normative visions of worldwide exchange and collaboration. They are worldwide in the sense that they encompass the whole planet, or that their potential for deterritorialization and reterritorialization is not restricted to any specific place. *Worldmaking* may be practiced in incommensurable and yet intertwined ways. In Glissant’s analysis, some global visions come with claims to universality, conveyed by antagonistic Cold War era discourses about the ‘worldwide commercial market,’ ‘universal defense of freedom,’ ‘the proletariat’s final role,’ and ‘permanent revolution’ (Glissant 1997: 152, 178). Glissant contrasted them with subaltern practices of conceiving and assembling the world, notably in colonial and postcolonial contexts: by fragmentation rather than by claims to coherence, by a constant reinvention and renewal rather than by accumulation, by strategic opaqueness rather than by transparency.

Within the framework offered by Glissant, *socialist worldmaking* need not be seen as a uniform, master-minded project. I use this concept instead to study the historically specific, multiple, evolving, and often antagonistic ways in which the world was practiced by institutions and individuals from socialist countries and their counterparts in Africa, Asia, and South America during the Cold War. Their study requires scholars to pay attention to the official discourse of socialist internationalism, which the Soviets and Eastern Europeans often contrasted with other competing practices of *worldmaking*, notably with the Western-dominated globalization. But the concept of *socialist worldmaking* also accounts for every-



day encounters between Eastern Europeans, Africans, and Asians in the course of which the official narrative of socialist internationalism was negotiated, confirmed, refuted, or transgressed (Stanek, 2020; 2021).

Socialist worldmaking was established and sustained by a variety of institutions, political discourses, systems of foreign trade, modes of technology transfer, and situated everyday experiences of collaboration and competition among actors on the ground. Between the 1950s and the end of the Cold War, *socialist worldmaking* was differentiated by ruptures between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (1948), then China (1960s), as well as by evolving geopolitical interests and economic priorities of particular socialist countries and their counterparts in Africa and Asia. Under Khrushchev, the Soviets and their satellites offered free or subsidized assistance to decolonizing countries as part of the 'competitive coexistence' with the United States and their Western allies. During the later decades, many socialist countries emphasized their mercantile aims. In particular, in the wake of the 1973 oil embargo and the debt crisis that followed, many Eastern European governments signed preferential trade agreements with several countries in the 'Third' world in the hope of acquiring convertible currency.

The motivations of the newly independent countries to enter such collaborations were equally varied, reflecting the uneven and unequal positions of the countries involved. They ranged from southern Comecon members (Mongolia, Vietnam, Cuba) dependent on Soviet resources, to countries pursuing independent variants of socialist development, such as Ghana under Nkrumah, Iraq under the Baath party, or Chile under Salvador Allende. Even the governments of countries whose elites were hostile to socialism, such as Nigeria and the Gulf states, used resources supplied by socialist countries for state building and economic development, while guarding their sovereignty in domestic and foreign policy. Straddling gift diplomacy, technical assistance, and preferential trade agreements, *socialist worldmaking* often reflected opportunistic responses to geopolitical openings and economic expediencies.



Image 1 Friendship Monument, Zaisan Mount, and the view of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. A. Khishigt and others (1971-1979). Photo by Ł. Stanek, 2018.



Image 2 National Theatre, Lagos, Nigeria. S. Kolchev (design architect) for Technoexportstroy (Bulgaria), 1977, photo Ł. Stanek, 2015



Socialist worldmaking remained between the descriptive and the normative. But between the 1950s and the 1980s, it produced frameworks of interaction and exchange of very real things, among them architectural designs, construction materials and technologies, urban standards, academic curricula, and research methodologies. While these exchanges rarely fulfilled the socialist promise of a new type of space, they did make a difference. They made a difference in the sense of having a huge impact on people's everyday lives, by providing economic opportunities, training, housing, social facilities, and infrastructure. But they also made a difference in a more literal sense: that of differentiating urbanization processes beyond the consequences of the colonial encounter and the hegemony of global capitalism. From Accra to Baghdad, from Lagos to Abu Dhabi, from Algiers to Ulaanbaatar, these differences continue to be reproduced today, beyond their original association with 20th century socialism, and often in unexpected ways.

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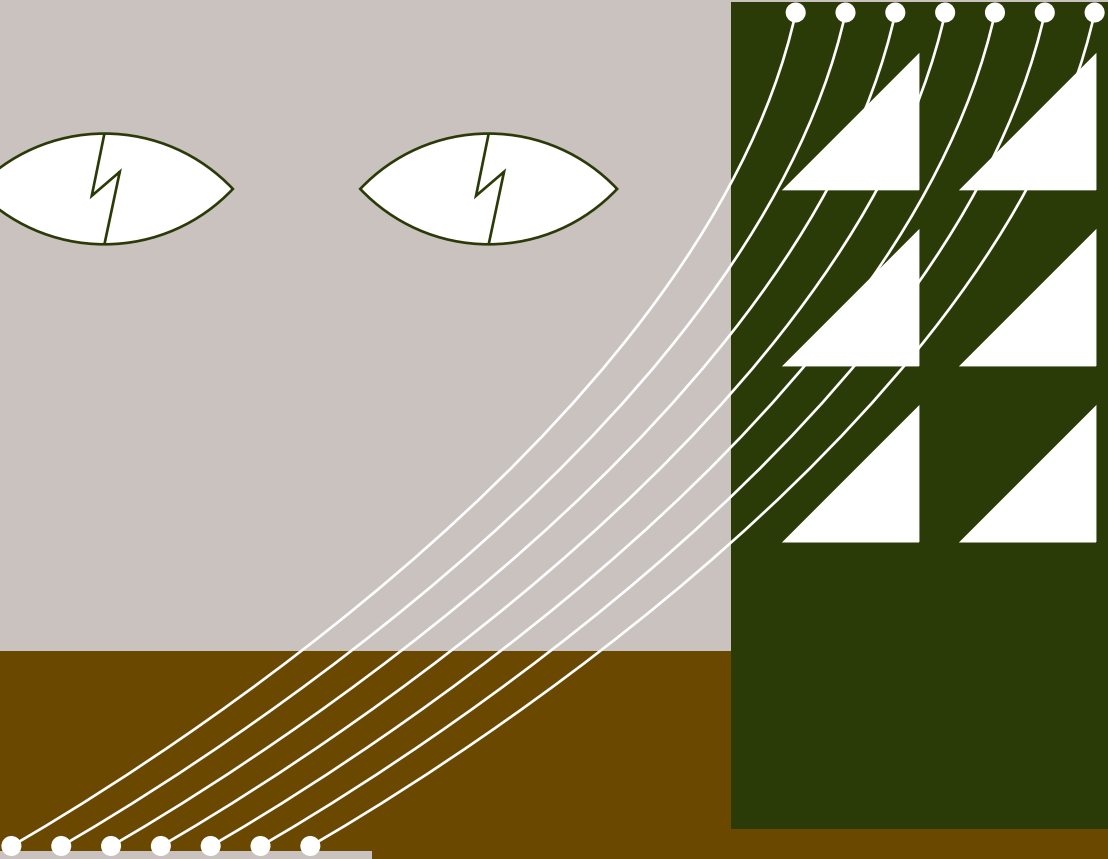
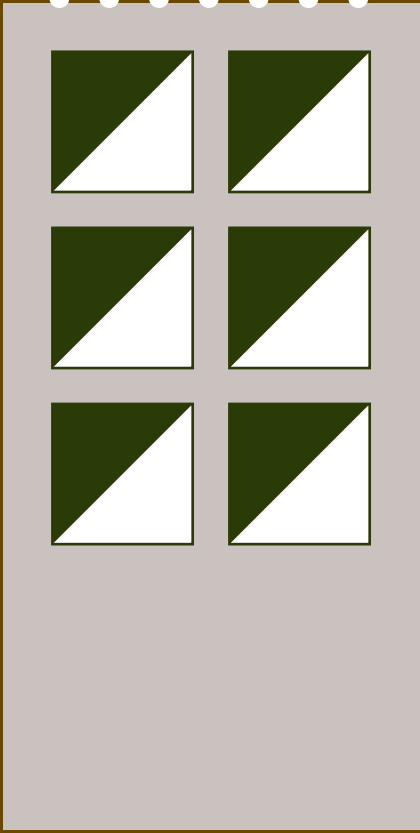
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TECHNO-IMPERIALISM

In 2018, the mayor of Cluj in Romania announced the introduction of a ‘public robot’ named Antonia as part of the city’s newfound status as ‘the Silicon Valley of Europe’. Although Antonia proved only to be a computer program, lacking the robotic stock image body displayed in the press and never amounting to the ‘beautiful hologram’ that she was envisioned to become (Preda, 2019), as the first public robot ‘mayoral servant’, she was nevertheless conjured as part of a widespread techno-futurist ‘smart city’ vision reflected in new Romanian infrastructure and imaginaries alike. Indeed, over the course of the last decade, the city has heralded new fantasies of Western recognition, all the while concretizing tech-induced gentrification. I remember, right at the moment of Antonia’s announcement, sitting in the front yard of the anarchist, feminist social center *A-casă*, surrounded by old fruit trees and a bountiful garden, feeling like the property itself was out-of-joint against the newly erected development closing in on the ‘Siliconizing’ urban horizon.

Across the city, rents have risen, and evictions too. Numerous poor and working-class people, especially Roma residents, have been squeezed out. Sometimes people end up homeless; sometimes banished from the city altogether. Much of this is entangled in the transformation of property in postsocialist contexts, in which pre-socialist private property regimes are restituted to the descendants of former owners (Chelcea, 2003). This also restores pre-socialist understandings of private property — ones heavily marked by anti-Roma racism and eugenic technoscience — all the while casting state socialism as a dark aberration upon post-Enlightenment quests of ‘becoming Western’. In this way, restitution coalesces with ‘Siliconization,’ amassing a conjoined anticommunist fetish of pre- and postsocialist property relations. By Siliconi-



zation, I reference the fantasies and materialities caught up in processes of trying to become Silicon Valley.

Keeping this in mind, I want to consider postsocialist processes of racialized expulsion and private property restitution through the lens of *techno-imperialism*. By this, I refer to the modes through which Silicon Valley materialities, but also imaginaries, transform postsocialist spatiality, desires, and futures. Just as Antonia was never the actual astrofuturist sci-fi robot displayed in the press, but rather a piece of software, fantasies of ‘Siliconization’ bear material effects. *Techno-imperialism* is thus both a concrete and affective process, one that gentrifies urban space, but also memories, dreams, and fantasies.

Socialist Techno-Worlds

From the ‘Wizard of Oz’ nursery to the ‘Oxygen Mall’, which rests upon a former butchery known as ‘The Red Flag’ that opened back in 1947, the toponymy of new development projects is overtly colonial in nature. Yet by only reading ‘Siliconization’ through this lens, other histories of techno-urbanism in Romania are elided. Silicon Valley freedom fantasies after all transpire upon the ruins of socialist-era factories. During socialism, the state excelled at hardware development and manufacturing (Baltac, 2015; Vincze, 2017; McElroy, 2020). Today, the German iQuest building sits upon the ruins of the Flacara textile factory, adjacent to where another German multinational, Bosch, is developing a new campus. Meanwhile, outsourcing branches of two U.S. landlord technology companies, Yardi and Property Radar, sit upon a former beer plant now known as ‘The Office’. Thus, unlike dominant understandings that Cluj’s new turn towards becoming a so-called ‘smart city’ sits upon a blank slate, ‘smart city’ urbanization is built upon the very infrastructure of socialist technological modernity along with the exploitation of newly outsourced labor (Căși sociale ACUM!, 2022; Mateescu, 2022; McElroy, 2019; Vince and Zamfir, 2019; Zamfir, 2022). Indeed, across the east and west, scholars have noted underlying politics and infrastructure corrupting fictions of ‘smart city’ and Siliconized novelty (Hu, 2015; Irani, 2019; Johnson, 2018; Mattern, 2017).

While I could discuss the socialist state's projects of producing communist futurity through technology, what I find more interesting here is that some of the most ingenious technological developments of the era occurred underground, in apartment buildings, or in university computer labs (Fiscutean, 2017). Cyber development was indeed deeply entrenched within the socialist project, with the country producing tons of third-generation computers (1960s and 1970s machines with integrated circuits and miniaturized transistors), while also fostering deviant practices of cloning Western fourth-generation microprocessors for personal computers (PCs), such as the ZX Spectrum. Significantly, cloning Spectrums was not unique to Romania during socialism; it was a phenomenon that took root across the former socialist world, from Poland to former Yugoslavia, from Ukraine to Bulgaria (Alberts and Oldenziel, 2015; Kennedy and Alfonso, 2022; Petrov, 2021).

Transition

After 1989, the land that state socialist factories (computer and otherwise) sat upon had been largely bought by real estate speculators, divided into joint stock trades, and re-sold. Companies such as IBM, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft, and Oracle swept in to absorb former IT workers, embracing Cold War grammars of socialist backwardness (falsely equated with totalitarianism) to justify salvation. For instance, in 1989, as the Cold War was coming to a close, Ronald Reagan proclaimed that “the Goliath of totalitarianism will be brought down by the David of the microchip” (quoted in Turner, 2019). *Techno-imperialism*, in other words, was co-constitutive of the post-Cold War project.

Despite the violent process of co-opting socialist computer factories, other clandestine technological practices persisted. Influenced by DIY (do it yourself) socialist practices, internet cabling, software and media piracy, and media bootlegging thrived. Many of these embraced an ethos of *șmecherie*—a Romanian word with Romani roots inferring cunningness, or a sort of street-smart cleverness (McElroy, 2020). This was mostly because Western software and hardware alike were unaffordable on the ruins of devastating capitalist transition, which led to a profusion of decentralized com-



putational knowledge fostered in internet cafes, apartment blocks, and internet forums. Homespun intranet cabling was strung between buildings to create localized internet connectivity, for instance. Yet eventually, these too were coopted and bought up by larger internet companies (though some still do persist). Techno-imperialism has thus meant the cooptation of both state computing and hardware production, factories, and infrastructure, but also techno-deviant practices, not to mention the cheap surrogate labor that outsourcing provides.

In the last several years, ‘smart city’ projects have continued to recode Cold War fantasies. And as we have seen throughout colonial history, empire works through the intimate colonization of minds, desires, and memories (Țichindeleanu, 2022). Anti-capitalist understandings of technology get wiped out, rebooted, and reprogrammed. Yet in underground cracks and crevices, some remain. As a retro-computing expert in Cluj once told me, the city’s tech boom is not led by firms, but rather by a particular generation of people who grew up engaging in *smecherie*. It is these people who hold the knowledge that outsourcing Western firms are trying to exploit and build upon today, while it is their parents’ industrial work that the firms themselves rest upon. The West may absorb existent infrastructure, computer factories, wires, knowledge, and more, but it wasn’t the west that created these. Thus, while *techno-imperialism* co-opts underground cyber worlds and instantiates new forms of gentrification, it remains materially corrupted by, and dependent upon, underground technological knowledge.

Futures Past and Present

Unfortunately, given the powers of coloniality, not many people today consider the role of socialist and transitional technological prowess as a site of potential resistance or decoloniality. Instead, we see populist anti-corruption movements, such as the Light Revolution in Romania, galvanize contemporary Western technologies to prove proximity to and possibilities of becoming Western (Atanasoski and McElroy, 2018; Popovici, 2020). That said, there are ‘undercommunal’ spaces, where artists and technology workers are searching for new ways to reimagine and envision anti-capitalist and an-



New tech development being built upon the ruins of a socialist-era factory in Cluj. Photo by author.

ti-imperial technological futures, many of which build upon a *longue durée* of resistance, refusal, and deviancy.

Meanwhile, the work against tech gentrification is ongoing, led by an array of housing and racial justice collectives such as *Căși sociale ACUM!* (Social Housing Now!) in Cluj as well as the nationwide Bloc for Housing. There are also groups in Bucharest such as *Ceata* who develop open-source hardware in order to provide anticorporate and anti-surveillance alternatives to capitalist technology. Perhaps what is yet to be determined is how the worlds of technological, housing, and racial justice could better come together to forge futures against the impulses of *techno-imperialism*. By crafting new spaces of against Siliconization, the fantasy of employing the first public mayoral servant would crumble back into the bedrock of its palimpsestic city. In its absence, new space would be opened up to manifest futures antithetical to and against techno-imperialism. What these de-siliconized futures will look like remains to be seen. Yet blueprints are already being crafted. If you squint hard enough, you can see them float-

ing beyond the horizon of new tech office development and its rhythms of racialized expulsions, offering exit doors through the increasingly cramped space of global capital.

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Transcoloniality

Transcoloniality is a concept that spatializes global colonialism(s) by going beyond static typologies and fixed geographical units or scales, to argue for interconnectivity. The concept aims to grasp what Barbara Arneil (2017: 217) calls, following Byrd (2011: 53), a ‘cacophony’ or ‘a confluence of intersecting colonialisms and colonial practices,’ to re-adjust chronologies and remap influences. For art historian Laura Doyle, such geographical histories reveal *interpositionality* within ‘a long-historical, dialectical theory of relationality and power that integrates feminist-intersectional, economic, materialist, literary, and geopolitical thought’ to elucidate a ‘horizon of multiple simultaneous interactions shaping places and communities’ (Doyle, 2020: 1). Doyle’s concept of *inter-imperiality* looks at how imperial projects interacted and were relationally co-conditioned (Doyle, 2012; 2014; 2018a; 2018b; 2020). Contrary to the essentialist colonial histories that fixate on specific empires or national units, inter-imperiality postulates no pure origin or prior independence, but *co-origination*. Manuela Boatça and Anca Parvulescu (2020; 2022) build on this concept to study Transylvania across empires.

Colonial histories are often narrated separately in time and space. Drawing on the above, *transcoloniality* offers a transformative geographical epistemology that connects and re-embeds colonial experiences on various scales in a *decentered* narrative by *distributing agency* through interconnected geographical overlaps, circulations, and translations. Tracing *transcoloniality* connects seemingly separate colonial projects into shared histories by looking at coloniality in transit: how geographically different positions and knowledge are translated, and how interconnective relations become *transformative*. Intersecting and networked colonialisms include not only the material networks of migration or the ‘colonial body’, but also the conceptual networks of exported and spa-



tially interacting colonial models. In addition, *transcoloniality* critically destabilizes constructivist concepts widely used in postcolonial studies and by now well-developed in postcolonial literature in the region and on the Balkans and Balkanism specifically (e.g., *Orientalism*, *nested Orientalisms*, and *Othering*), because they often reproduce the colonizer/colonized dichotomy, even if nuanced by allowing for hybridity, and have been less conceptualized through global interconnectivity.

Swabian Hungarian Settlers in Latin America

My case study introduces *transcoloniality* as a way to account for how the Central and Eastern European region became an arena of overlapping and historically layered colonial projects, which globally connected the region to geographically distant colonialisms. During the Habsburg colonization of the Americas starting in the 16th century, the Hungarian Kingdom's southern and central basin region became underpopulated due to 140 years of Ottoman imperial rule, often deemed by Hungarians to have been a form of colonialism. Between the 18th and the 19th centuries, the planned resettlement schemes of *internal colonization* resulted in an increasingly multi-ethnic composition of the population. During the 'Great Swabian Trek' (1722–1787), skilled German workers and artisans from West and South German areas settled in the Transdanubian Mountains, in southern Hungary (Tolna, Baranya and Bács-Kiskun counties), and in the southern Carpathians (Bánát and Bácska counties). The inflow of the *Donauschwaben* (Danubian Swabians) was fostered by the Habsburgs, and the Germans became less assimilated as a result of German hegemony, and they in fact often supported Habsburg imperial politics curbing Hungarian independence. These ventures ran parallel to the European settler colonialist expansion on a global scale, most notably in the frontiers of the Russian East and the American West, from where racial ideas and practices, patterns of settler technology and colonial practices circulated to inform the internal colonization of Hungary.

By the 19th century, Swabians had become subjectivated to German visions of colonialism eastwards. German unification (1871) strengthened nationalist and imperialist desires to unite Germandom: the geopolitical concepts of *Mitteleuropa*

(Central Europe), *Lebensraum* (expansive life-space), *Grossraum* (great space) and *Grosswirtschaft* (great economy) all ideologized a German colonization of the East, which tragically materialized in the Nazi Third Reich's genocidal *Generalplan Ost* (General Plan of the East) involving the Holocaust and the racial extermination of 'non-Germanic' peoples. Yet, as Barbara Arneil (2017: 69) noted, 'German internal colonization was nationalist, but like other forms of European domestic colonization, it engaged in transnational colonialism, meaning that it borrowed its colonial system from other countries.' The vivid German colonial and racial-eugenic imaginaries, theories and practices were strongly intertwined with American and British colonialism (Kühl, 1994; Whitman, 2017). In fact, Eastern Europe was envisioned analogically by many, including Hitler, as the 'Wild East' in a German 'Indianthusiasm': a deadly obsession with Native Americans and the brutally effective U.S. campaign against them (Kakel, 2011; Usbeck, 2015). Swabians were seen as German colonists and were approached by the *Volksbund* movement to support the Third Reich, and were included in wider Nazi geopolitical imaginaries about 'Germanic colonies' on a global scale (Fig. 1).

Geography, demography, and racial or ethnic composition were key factors in the political claims over national territory, which drove cartographic and geopolitical anxieties. Hungarian populist 'folk writers' and village researchers, such as Gyula Illyés or Imre Kovács, reported with alarm about German geographers taking Hungarian field trips with their students in the 1930s to map the Germanic diaspora with the geopolitical aim of making claims to territory and imperial influence. Fears of German imperialism urged 'folk writers' to center on 'race' and 'indigenoussness' in order to preserve the Hungarian nation and culture. Supported by revisionism and irredentism, such resistance was often embedded in the Orientalist, imperial-racial discourse of fears of being 'washed up by the Slavic Sea' (i.e., the Bolshevik threat from 1917), infused with memories of Habsburg and German imperial subjugation. In a bitter reversal, national and racial convictions ultimately legitimated a further wave of ethnic cleansing after the war by assigning collective guilt to Germans, whose forced resettlement was accelerated by international support (including by Stalin) and a curious political consensus in Hungary. From



1944 to 1950, around 12–15 million Germans had ‘resettled’ from Eastern Europe to (mostly West) Germany.

This Central and Eastern European arena of contested colonialisms was connected with overseas colonial contexts. After the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy’s dualist compromise (1867), out-migration increased to the Americas: in around three decades at the turn of the century, 1.5 million people from the Hungarian Kingdom left for the USA alone. Immigration agents sought regions of high unemployment to attract workers to mines, industrial centers, and expanding colonial frontiers. Settlers, especially those of the ‘lesser races’, were ‘cheaper’ than it was to fund the military against the Indigenous populations, and could be exploited by being racialized. After the racist immigration quota restrictions in the USA between 1921 and 1924 – in a racial panic of preserving the ‘white Anglo-Saxon’ populations – primarily targeted the Eastern Eu-

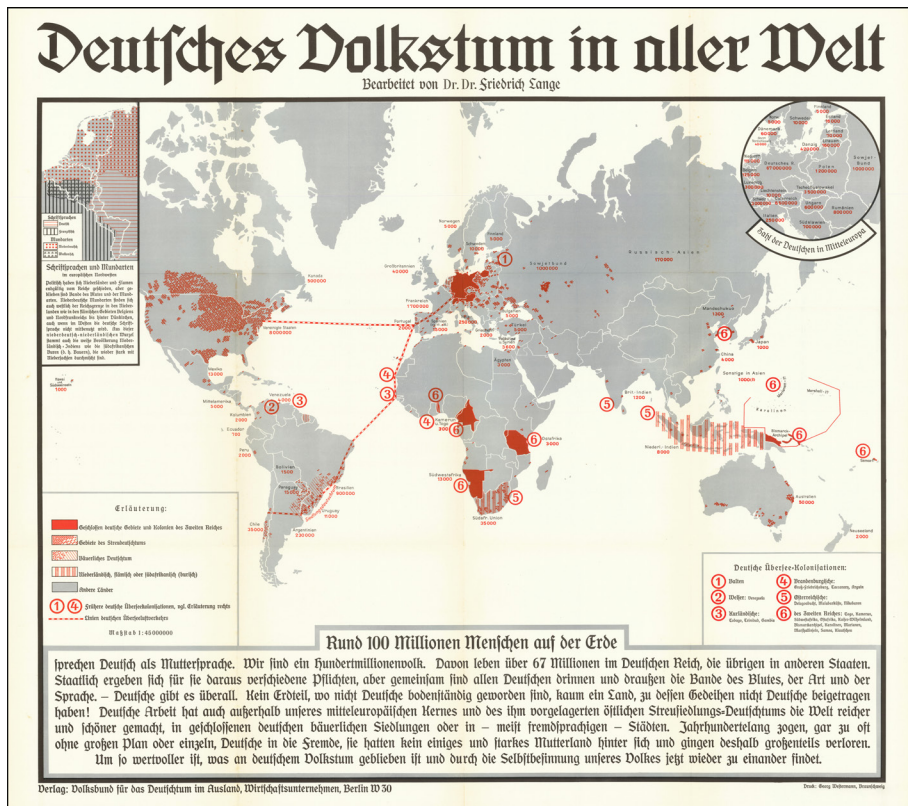


Fig. 1. German Folkdom in the Entire World, 1938. This Nazi map, based on an older map by Friedrich Lange (1852–1917), promoted the need for the global unity of German-speaking peoples by connecting the German Reich with the global diaspora and the colonies.

ropean ‘non-quite-white’ (‘semi-Asian’) ‘new immigrants’, and many migrants tried to bypass restrictions through the Caribbean, Cuba, and Mexico, or turned towards South America.

When the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was dismantled based on the principle of Wilsonian ‘national self-determination’, a concept that also facilitated Afro-Asian decolonization, the Treaty of Trianon (1920) took away two-thirds of the Hungarian Kingdom’s territory. The Hungarian state became too weak to handle the out-migration spurred by growing nationalist revanchism, political atrocities, and anti-Semitism. Romania was allegedly exporting ‘unwanted’ Hungarians to Honduras. In the interwar era, 80% of migrants arrived in South America from the detached territories, fleeing from the racial policies of surrounding nationalist states. Such circumstances made the region a key resource for Latin American colonial states to use in populating their cities and colonial frontiers. ‘Americaing’ (amerikázás) seeped into Hungarian culture, folk songs transformed into ‘America songs’ (amerikás dalok), ‘America crosses’ were erected in villages by returning workers, and remittances stabilized the economy and intensified local bourgeoisification. Swabian Hungarians were important participants of this settler colonialism: for example, those from Veszprém county in the Transdanubian Mountains founded Jaraguá do Sul in South Brazil in 1891.

Hungarian intellectuals sought to organize their (post) colonial diaspora in various imaginaries of a *Colonia Húngara* (‘Hungarian colony’ in Spanish and Portuguese). They regarded such Swabians as Hungarians (those with Hungarian citizenship), although many of them still preferred to speak German. The ‘folk writer’ Ferenc Kordás, who spent six years (1936–42) in South Brazil as a ‘Julian teacher’, wrote poems and sociographies on the Hungarian colonies, and aestheticized the ‘Hungarian colonist’ as capable of ‘rooting the nation’ in colonial soil.¹ Jesuit missionaries Béla Bangha and

¹ The teachers of the Julian School Association (1904–44) were Hungarian state-supported pedagogues commissioned after 1920 (after the Treaty of Trianon and the failed 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic) to educate the diaspora during the interwar era, which marked a shift towards a more proactive and nationalist diaspora politics. Their name came from Friar Julianus, a Hungarian Dominican monk who ventured in 1235–36 to find the historic Hungarian homeland (*Magna Hungaria*) to the south of the Urals along the Volga River, from where Hungarians migrated to the Carpathian Basin during the 9th century.



Jaragua do Sul in the 1930s. Collection of the Historical Archive of Jaraguá do Sul (Acervo do Arquivo Histórico de Jaraguá do Sul). Courtesy of Sidnei Lopes.

Zoltán Nyisztor, who in 1934 took a missionary round-trip in South America to 'strengthen the spirit' of the colonial diaspora, fantasized about the similarities between the local 'pampa' and Hungarian national landscape of the open, wasteland-like 'puszta', and fantasized about a Catholic colonial alternative against the Northern, Protestant, or 'spiritless' modern capitalism.

Others followed capital interests: the aristocrat Habsburg Archduke Albrecht sought investments and deals with South American immigration agencies to attract Hungarian settlers. The declassed post-Trianon aristocracy sought moral refuge in the colonies: György Dadányi, a gentry settler who wrote about his adventures in the Chaco region, became a *gaucho* and pursued horsemanship and 'Indian moral purity' as a way to retrieve his lost nobility. The importance of Hungarian colonies is highlighted by the fact that Miklós Horthy Jr., son of the Governor of Hungary, was appointed as ambassador in São Paulo. However, with the Second World War the Brazilian racial-colonial state, including many others South American states, sided with the Allies (Argentina and Uruguay, which re-

mained neutral for a long time, also supported the Allies). Diplomatic relations were broken, minority rights were restricted, Hungarian and German language use was prohibited, and all this propelled the assimilation process.

Transcolonial Art

How do these *transcolonial* histories inform contemporary decolonial art projects? In our art and research exhibition *Transperiphery Movement: Global Eastern Europe and Global South* (2021) for the OFF-Biennale Budapest (also featured in Kyiv, Ukraine), which we curated with Eszter Szakács, one episode focused on the above *transcolonial* history of Hungarian settlers in the colonial frontiers of South America which explored how Swabian Hungarians became subjects of German, Hungarian, and South American colonial projects and imaginaries. We used our concept of *transperipheral movement* to trace *interperipheral* relations and interactions between what world-system theorists call *semiperipheries* and *peripheries*, with the aim to collapse the colonizer/colonized dichotomy and to focus on historicizing shared structural relations. The hierarchical capitalist world-system, driven and dominated by the hegemonic core, has maintained a geopolitics of knowledge that reproduces the dominant epistemic focus on Western colonies and empires; meanwhile, Eastern European contributions and entanglements have been marginalized, silenced or written off from the global histories of colonialism. Therefore, our main question was: can we imagine a global history of Hungary and Eastern Europe by not focusing on, or by decentering, the West? We have found that the interconnective, decentered, and horizontal geographical histories shared by Eastern Europe and the Global South can potentially contest such West-centric global histories.

In racial and epistemic terms, *transcoloniality* offers to *creolize* national histories and the Eurocentric concept of the 'nation,' increasingly portrayed by Eastern European governments as 'ethnically homogenous' and 'white,' standing in opposition to the 'postcolonial, multiculturalist West.' In this vision, Central and Eastern Europe are portrayed to be free from the moral burdens of being entangled in global colonial history, since they are said to have 'never had colonies'. Today,



to cultivate Hungarian relations to Latin America, Viktor Orbán's conservative government has been developing since the 2010s state scholarships, repatriation programs, new consulates for community building and protecting minority rights, heritage conservation to return private collections, and even a state television series on the diaspora. Ironically, as post-socialist Eastern European 'countries without colonies' have been reaching out to their postcolonial diasporas, they have also revealed their complicated settler colonial legacies. Such processes may point decolonial criticism to the wider Eastern European entanglements as/with 'other Europes', including postcolonial areas still part of the European Union, such as *Caribbean Europe* (Boatcă, 2018).

A *transcolonial* approach to nationalist memory politics *creolizes* art and culture by engaging with the erasure of Hungarians from colonial history, and by dispositioning and re-situating national knowledge, cultural, and artistic canons through and within the global geographies of colonialism. 'Creolizing Europe' contests a racially coherent Europe by 'retrieving subaltern histories and experiences both in colonial and imperial situations, and by reinscribing them into literary and social theory'. (Boatcă, 2014: 19) *Transcoloniality* similarly thinks 'through and with invisibilized, peripheral, or subaltern formations' to embed 'minor formations' globally. It think about, for example, about how Hungarian villagers were transformed into colonists on the global frontiers of colonialism, or how colonialism transformed Hungarian knowledge, literature, and art, as in the poetry of the 'folk writer' and village researcher Ferenc Kordás, in the adventure novels of György Dadányi, or in the travelogues and the colonial-racial aesthetic of Catholic missionaries Béla Bangha and Zoltán Nyisztor.

Artistic projects hold great decolonizing potential in blending histories with fiction and affectual sensibilities to grasp the colonial entanglements and 'in-betweenness' of Eastern European desires and anxieties. *Transcolonial* projects explore gendered, class, racial, and colonial positions not simply through embracing regional positions and the historical heterogeneity of colonial experiences, or 'injecting' Eastern European coloniality into West-dominated postcolonial studies. They both resist Westcentric epistemic frame-

works and seek global interconnectivity and translatability. They explore how different de/colonial contexts, forms, styles can inform each other in order to connect segregated decolonial struggles or to counter provincial and essentialized colonial victimization. The latter has been increasingly captured by nationalist, illiberal, far-right, and neo-fascist geopolitics and identity politics, and forcefully mobilized in the recent surge of an understandable yet often-provincialized rhetoric of ‘Russian colonialism’ in Ukraine. *Transcolonial* histories also inform art projects in ways of organizing and networking, calling for the building of connections, solidarities, and alliances outside Westcentric frameworks and geographies, countering the self-colonizing mimicry of the Western hegemonic core, and thinking outside of the political units of nation-states or empires. Such projects may help elucidate the controversial, complicated, and entangled position of Eastern Europe within global colonialism.



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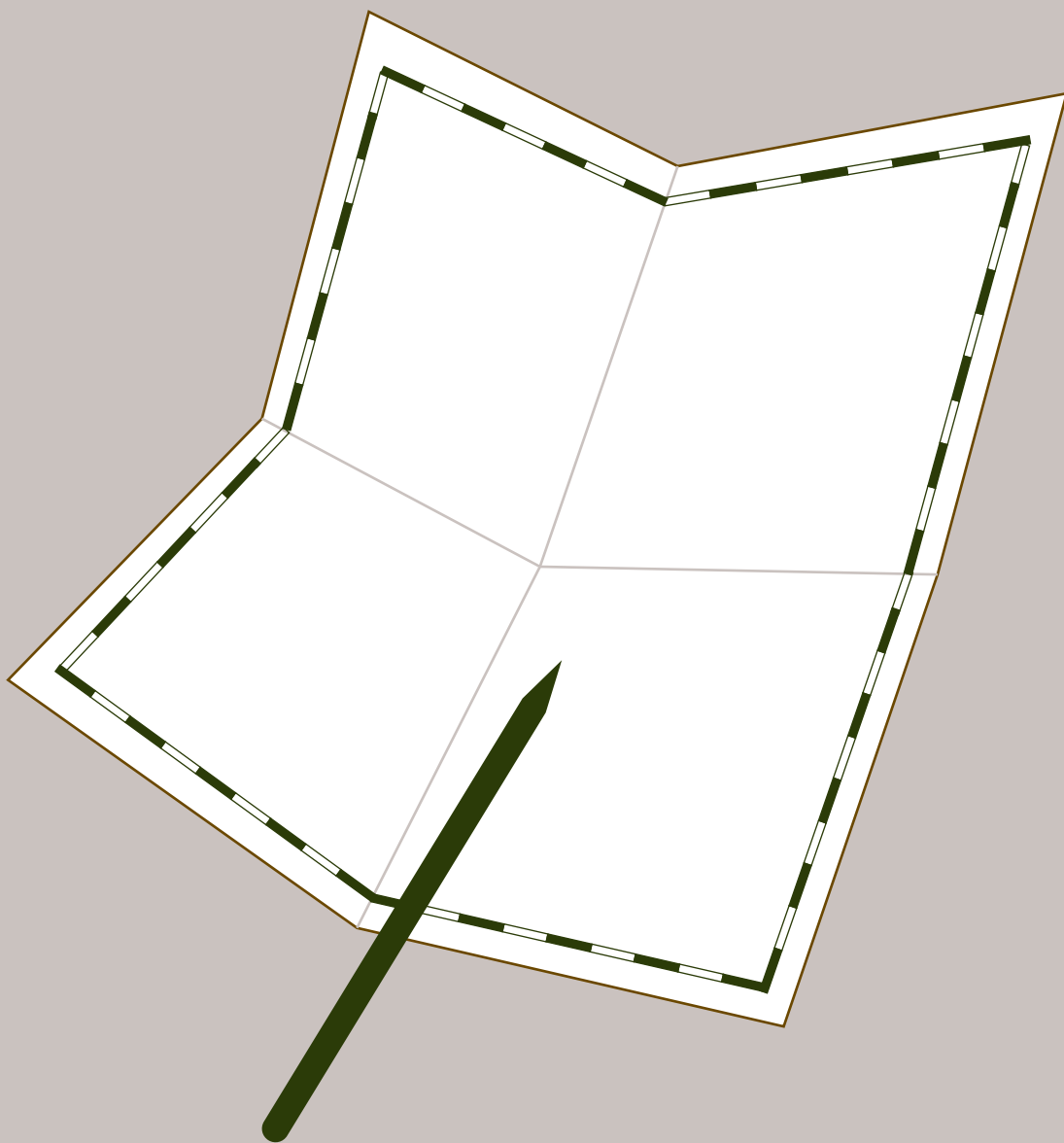
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A Note on the Language of Decoloniality

Who is to say anything about ‘decoloniality’ when speaking about ‘Eastern Europe’? This vocabulary synthesizes the effort of nearly five decades to re-organize knowledge in one of the languages of empire about the making and unmaking of the world. We now live in the world thoroughly re-described, populated by those who had rarely been seen in historical tableaux: those previously unrecorded and unrepresented, who did not record or represent themselves, the dispossessed, the marginal, the feminized, the racialized, the colonized.

The project of rewriting the world has always been a project of learning how to read anew, ‘against the grain’ of available narratives and records (a suggestion taken from Walter Benjamin), and then inevitably along the same grain, to recognizing in the reading material the logic (and an aesthetic) of colonial rule. The re-reading changes what counts as knowledge and makes visible new historical and social processes and agents. We now see movements of capital, nation states and colonial expansion, and racial and other categories of difference they produce and cultivate. Then we see the observers and recorders of these processes who capture just a fraction of their historical and geographical specificity. This redescription has changed the face of intellectual and political work: in the language of historians who wanted to show how peasant and other insurgencies shaped the career of British colonialism in South Asia, the new kind of accounting made it possible to imagine that the agency of change was ‘located in the subaltern’ (Spivak: 199). The ‘subaltern’ (the term borrowed from Antonio Gramsci) is the name for a character that would have been left out of elite historical narratives and records, ‘a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest’ (Spivak: 204). The name reduces many possible forms of visibility to conjure up the figure of a previously unimaginable subject-agent.



Essays in this collection take on the abstract language of anglophone postcolonial studies — theory and historiography — to work out how it can be used to say or think something about ‘Eastern Europe’ today. Collecting or gathering is crucial to their method: what we encounter here is not a well-rehearsed or coordinated effort to redeem anyone or any place, but rather a landscape of possibilities for knowing. The essays taken together are a study of the positions scholars and activists find available to them which open up new possibilities of conversation about what it is we are looking at, or why we should look at it again (read about it [here](#)) with a new set of eyes, take in the views of the scholars writing here. ‘Decoloniality’ here stands for a lexicon of re-orientation, an attempt to re-assess the conditions of knowing ‘Eastern Europe’ and positions from which such knowledge is made, knowing the place to be deeply emplotted already in a number of historical and political narratives. Defying conventional ideas about the segregation of academic fields from one another and from activist work, the essays wonder: Who can claim to know this place? Who can bring in the views that had been understudied or ignored before? To whom are these claims made, especially in English and in print in the early twenty-first century?

The space under study has had trouble delimiting itself by name: it is simultaneously the space of ‘postsocialist’ nation states (many transformed by the collapse of state socialism at the end of the twentieth century), and of ‘Western Balkans,’ ‘former Yugoslavia,’ ‘Central’ or ‘Eastern’ or even ‘New’ Europe. Piro Rexhepi avoids choosing any of these terms with great elegance and benefit: it is ‘our region’ we should be trying to conjure up, and consequently sort through questions about what kind of region that is, whose maps and eyes we want to use to look at it, and ultimately who the ‘we’ are who will be imagining the place together. The indeterminate geographic reference reminds me of the way people from former Yugoslavia who used to live with relative ease in its language of hegemony (what once was called ‘Serbo-Croatian’) now refer to it as ‘our language’ if they want to avoid association with the nationalist projects of various successor states which have since given the language its many new names (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, etc.?). This is a reminder that geographies are always imaginative rather than physical, such that

‘our region’ in the eyes of some Hungarian imperialists (whom Zoltán Ginelli restores to our memory here) may stretch as far as the pampas of South America, and we can decide what to make of that.

Critical positions are difficult to anticipate in this kind of world: across the range of essays, one can meet some of the same historical characters in various positions of power: the same state can be an agent of women’s emancipation and anticolonialism in one essay, and of oppressive police repression and racism in another; the ‘domestic sphere’ can be the empire of relentless consumerism and the refuge from disdain for the working class in the new public discourse; the museum preserves monuments to one socialist state’s supportive engagement with decolonization struggles in Asia and Africa and obscures this history before the museum industry of a liberal-democratic state. It is the roles of students, scholars, activists that are the matter of negotiation here. They are carving out their place in the historical explanations for how we ended up here and working out what the grain is against or along which they want to read now. What grand narrative are we trying to undo? Is it ‘the end of Cold War,’ ‘the end of socialism,’ ‘disintegration of Yugoslavia,’ neoliberalism and globalization, or something else yet that we are trying to re-describe? If we are dealing with post-socialism, is this because socialism has been declared dead by the same epistemic centers that define directions and modalities of colonial influence and exertion? If socialism is over, was this all we ever knew of socialism, a blip on the timeline of world history? Or does the glee at its demise suggest the episode was a significant disruption to some world system said to have been restored to its natural flows? (The title of Alexei Yurchak’s book, *Everything Was Forever until it Was No More* may still be the best summation of the impossibility of this question.) Who gets to proffer a world-historical narrative in this world, and what about those whom a temporary localized disruption to the flow of capital did not spare from the effects said to attend only to capitalist extraction and subjectification? Who are the wretched of the (post) socialist earth? (Jelena Savić can tell you much about this.)

The variety of subaltern and elite positions in these essays says something about the lack of a dominant historical



narrative for 'Eastern Europe', against whose grain one could confidently read for the greatest 'visibly political interest'. In the absence of one easily identifiable enemy with a whole-cloth explanatory narrative to resist, we can think about why some dis-orientation is a good thing — a learning experience, a re-orientation. Dis-orientation, the inability to say where one is, literally to lose the sense of where one's east is, is an experience of discomfort, loss of knowledge, or, more significantly, the loss of authority over the known world. This may be an especially useful experience in an environment in which the orient — the east — has also been the Orient, the East, the place out of time, ossified and impossible to re-describe. Galician Spanish, the language of Spanish empire and cultural domination throughout Latin — Central and South — America, offers an alternative to the East as the place that unites the vital and the despised: the word for becoming lost and confused is *desnortar* — to lose one's north; the one who has lost one's north is *desnortado*, bewildered and possibly clueless.

It seems to me extremely useful to think about the languages in which we can ask about the world and the people who live in it: Which way do we look for it? What about it is known? What about what we know is acceptable to all who are subjects? How do they come into our view? At the cost of what discomfort? These are not only languages of nations but also languages of theory and epistemological situations. If those who have been knowledgeable have been so because they were not disoriented — they had to know where their east was and how not to be of it — it makes sense to think about getting re-oriented. First, we think about the place from which we can claim to know what exactly is going on, where we stand, and why we are not clueless and bewildered. Then we can think about who we are and what we have figured out from learning which way is which.

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Ana Vilenica
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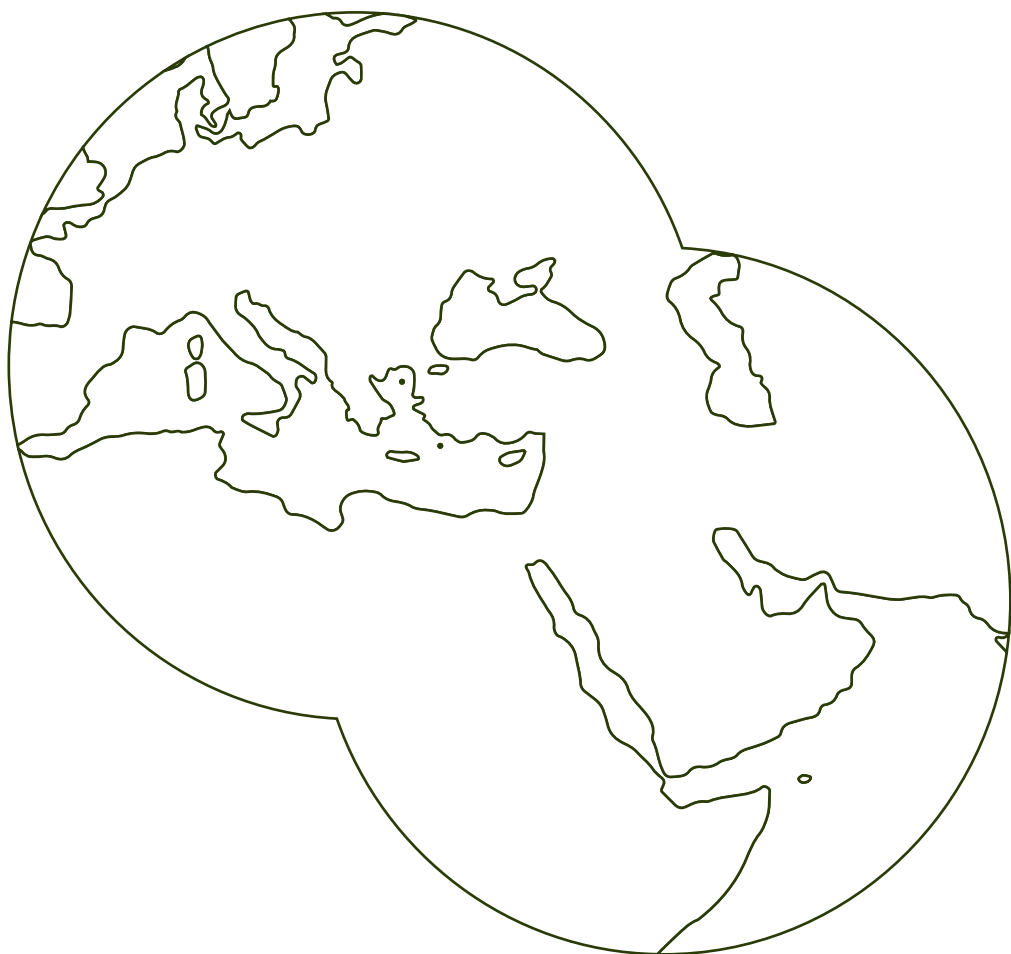
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