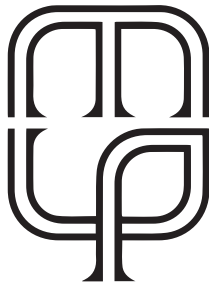
RACISM, RESISTANCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

OFF WHITE

Central and Eastern Europe and the global history of race

Edited by
CATHERINE BAKER
BOGDAN C. IACOB
ANIKÓ IMRE
JAMES MARK

Off white



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Racism, Resistance and Social Change

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Catherine Baker, Bogdan C. Iacob, Anikó Imre and James Mark

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Contents

List of figures — *page* vii
Notes on contributors — ix
Acknowledgements — xiii
Note on the cover image — xv

Introduction: racial disavowals – historicising whiteness in Central and Eastern Europe – James Mark, Anikó Imre, Bogdan C. Iacob and Catherine Baker — 1
1 Wilson's white world: the foundation of Central-Eastern European nation-states after World War I – James Mark — 31
2 The 'racial contract', 'whiteness contract', and Central Europe – Bolaji Balogun — 54
3 Not quite white: Russians as Turanians in nineteenth-century Polish thought – Maciej Górny — 73
4 Racial thinking among Czech anthropologists: the case of Vojtěch Suk – Victoria Shmidt — 91
5 'Hungarian Indians': race and colonialism in Hungarian 'Indian play' – Zoltán Ginelli — 113
6 Peripheral whiteness and racial belonging and non-belonging: accounts from Albania – Chelsi West Ohueri — 138
7 The aesthetics of alternation and the returns of race: Poland and the Jewish Question – Sudeep Dasgupta — 156
8 Retailored for a Soviet spectator: racial difference and whiteness in the films of the 1930s to the early 1950s – Irina Novikova — 177
9 'With the help of the great Russian people': the (invisible) whiteness of Soviet anti-colonialism and gender emancipation from Central Asia to Khartoum – Yulia Gradskova — 198
10 The whiteness of 'Christian Europe': the case of Hungary – Paul Hanebrink — 215

11 Alien at home, white overseas: the Polish interwar Maritime and Colonial League and the 'Jewish Question' – Marta Grzechnik 236
12 *Midsommar* and the production of white fantasy – Anikó Imre 252
13 In pursuit of Western modernity: Russian-speaking migrants claiming whiteness in Helsinki – Daria Krivonos 275
14 The 'perpetual foreigner' in Serbia: on being marked and unmarked in a 'raceless' state – Sunnie Rucker-Chang 293
15 Re-routing Eastern European whiteness: relational racialisation and historical proximity – Špela Drnovšek Zorko 311
16 Through the Balkans to Christchurch: Southeast Europe and global white nationalist historical mythology – Catherine Baker 328

Index 348

List of figures

1.1: 'Citizens of the U.S.A. – Would You Accept This Peace?' (1920), Cornell University – P. J. Mode Collection of Persuasive Cartography, #8548. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library. *page* 42

1.2: Woodrow Wilson statue in Poznań, with Gutzon Borglum (1931), from the personal collection of Larry Wolff. 45

4.1: 'Sara Dancing Girl, Chad, Africa' by Malvina Hoffman (1933), used in *Nauka o člověku*, Box 9, inv. n 424. Personal Collection of V. Suk, National Museums Archives (Prague). 98

4.2: Figure 4.2: Clay female figurine, made by a girl from the Zulu tribe, used in *Nauka o člověku*, Box 9, inv. n 424. Personal Collection of V. Suk, National Museums Archives (Prague). 98

4.3: Image of a 'Bohemian' man from *Man, Past and Present* by Augustus Henry Keane (1899) (Signatur 396 r-4, by permission of Bavarian State Library). 102

4.4: Jewish boy, photograph by V. Suk, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI). 103

4.5: Young adult 'cretin' pictured together with Suk, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI). 105

4.6: Child and dog, Labrador, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI). 106

4.7: Suk's wife and the dog, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI). 106
4.8: The map of Czechoslovakia aimed at demonstrating the corruption of Rusyns by Jews, made by Suk for his international presentations, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI). 107
5.1: Kossuth meets the 'Indians' in 'The Great Calendar of Kossuth Lajos' (1906). 116
5.2: Pál Teleki with an 'Indian' headdress on the cover of *Magyar Cserkész* (1933). 120
5.3: The Hopi march 'For Hungary Justice!' 122
5.4: Sioux activist L. P. Hawk reading the revisionist album *Justice for Hungary!* 123
5.5: Ervin Baktay as 'Chief Lazy Buffalo' (1931). By permission of the Hopp Ferenc Museum of Asiatic Arts. 125
5.6: Sándor Borvendég Deszkáss as 'White Deer'. Author's private collection. 126
5.7: The 'Scout–Indian network' of 'Blackfoot', 'Dakota', 'Shoshone' and 'Belovan' 'tribes' infiltrated in 1963 by the secret police. The centre is occupied by the Nagy Erdei Testvériség (Great Forest Brotherhood) led by Borvendég, and connects to the Association of American Indian Affairs (est. 1922). By permission of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, HU – ÁBTL – 3.1.9. – V-147492/7. 129
12.1: Jake Angeli (the 'QAnon Shaman'), pictured in Peoria, Arizona, 25 October 2020. Photographer: TheUnseen01101 (public domain). www.flickr.com/photos/191776019@N08/50818536171/. 253
12.2: Still from *Midsommar* (dir. Ari Aster, 2019). Copyright: A24. 254
12.3: Image from *Telex*. Photographer: Mate Filler. 257
12.4: The biannual three-day-long *Kurultáj* festival. 259

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opportunity to work with such an exemplary editorial team and learn so much in the course of this collaboration about the history of race in Eastern Europe. Bogdan acknowledges the Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies (Denmark), where he was a fellow during the first year of work on this volume. He is also thankful to the 'Nicolae Iorga' Institute of History for supporting his commitment to this project, as well as to the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research and Innovation, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-1337. James would like to express his appreciation to the Leverhulme Trust for a Research Fellowship (RF-2022–248) which provided time to complete his contributions to the volume.

Note on the cover image

The cover of this volume depicts white European migrants disembarking the passenger ferry *Thomas C. Millard* at Ellis Island and entering the United States in 1920. The millions of Central and Eastern Europeans who made this journey in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were initially denigrated as 'lesser whites' by American nativists, but were offered the possibility of 'becoming white' in return for cultural and political separation from more unambiguously racialised sections of the US working class.

Before choosing this photograph, we considered many other images in available free-to-use collections and the ethics of using them as representations of our volume and our contributors' collective scholarship. Most tended either to illustrate something about how people(s) discussed in the volume have been racialised as 'off white' or 'not quite white' in the same way as people of north-west European descent were, and/or how people and movements from Central and Eastern Europe have made claims to be recognised as that same kind of white.

Often, the images which were most 'evocative' to the eye were also those with the most potential to be viewed as racially insensitive because of the racialised tropes that gave them their striking character. This itself speaks to how deeply race is embedded in regimes of visuality. Many historic photographs and illustrations in archival collections, for instance, date back to late nineteenth and early twentieth century ethnographic gazes, which are critiqued in our book. We avoided these for several reasons. Firstly, to use an ethnographic photograph as the cover of a commercially published volume would harness the exoticisation of their subjects' images in order to sell the book. Secondly, since their subjects were anonymous, we could not articulate what our ethical relationships might be towards those photographed or the communities they came from. Thirdly, each ethnographic photograph would only connote a very narrow part of our volume's region and would force that distinctive place to stand for the whole.

We were also mindful that images that could be suitable for critical analysis within the pages of a scholarly book do not bring that contextualisation with them when used on book covers and marketing material. Most people who see a book cover in a library, bookstore, or online will never read the book. They encounter any historic image that the cover may use without foreknowledge of the book's approach towards the context in which the image was created, or of any sensitivities that commentary on the image could explain. In certain cases, the interpretive strategies necessary to link an image to 'offwhiteness' seemed inappropriate, extractive, or voyeuristic. We also decided against certain images after starting to explore their critical reception.

There is no one perfect image to represent complex processes of racialisation across more than two hundred years, half a continent, and all the global nodes it is connected to. Perhaps only an abstract illustration, or an image from an empty built environment, could have avoided dealing with the politics of human representation altogether. In the face of limited budgets and print schedules, the image we selected still contains anonymous subjects, but does not dwell on any one person's image or depict exoticised or abject conditions: indeed, it shows its subjects as they wished to appear to the officers of a racialised immigration system that emphasised whiteness, respectability, and health. We do not know the names or origins of the people who disembarked the *Thomas C. Millard* that day, but we do know that they passed through Ellis Island in a time and place where Central and Eastern Europe's associations with whiteness were in particular flux. It is the historicity and contingency of those associations that we explore in this volume, and we are grateful to our colleagues at Manchester University Press for the ethical care that they too invested in considering how our volume will appear in the world.

Introduction: racial disavowals – historicising whiteness in Central and Eastern Europe

James Mark, Anikó Imre, Bogdan C. Iacob, and Catherine Baker

Since the 2008 economic crisis, postsocialist Eastern Europe has become a new hub of white nationalist organising. Hungary's Viktor Orbán, for instance, has consolidated his illiberal regime by cultivating a network of regional and global far-right allies, from the alt-right publishing house Arktos Media to the World Congress of Families – a focal point of the anti-gender movement. In August 2021, FOX News' Tucker Carlson took his cable show to Budapest for an entire week, interviewing Orbán and presenting his regime as a success story of populism from which the United States had much to learn. Tacitly or not, 'whiteness' is a main pillar of Eastern European populists' unapologetic nativist agenda, which idealises the heteronormative, white, Christian family and relentlessly demonises migrants.[1] The power of such a position lies in part in the claim that the region is racially innocent, untainted historically by complicity with Western Europe's imperialism overseas. Thus unburdened from a 'white guilt' supposedly found in a multicultural West, the region's nativists can become the true defenders of a white Europe, or white West. Often unmarked, but deeply powerful, this 'innocent' whiteness in Eastern Europe inspires today's global Right, and urgently demands attention from scholars of race and racism elsewhere.

Having not been involved in colonialism or transatlantic enslavement on the same terms, Eastern Europe has conventionally been viewed as 'beyond' the racial dynamics of the West or black Atlantic in scholarship too. Some of this absence is a consequence of how commonly racism is still perceived as consisting only of a black–white binary or a binary between 'white' and 'not white' – a system which is confounded by Eastern Europe and other global semi-peripheries.[2] Systems of racial classification in the global 'core' have racialised Eastern Europe's territories and people in ambiguous, contradictory and unstable ways, recently summed up by Ivan Kalmar as being a position of 'white but not quite'.[3] It has also been described as

conditional whiteness, liminal whiteness, peripheral whiteness, or the phrase lending its title to the volume, 'off white'.[4]

Yet Eastern Europe is not simply a racially denigrated victim of ideological projects developed elsewhere: claims to whiteness – only conditionally accepted in the West – were essential in the development of the region's nation-states. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, national movements identified with, and worked towards, a Europe increasingly defined by white imperialism. Scientists and anthropologists in Eastern Europe employed race science to pseudo-scientifically justify symbolic boundaries of racial difference between their own white European nations and darker neighbours, usually to the East or South; to legitimise antisemitism and anti-Romani eugenic policy; and to offer unifying myths of homogenisation for white Christian national communities.[5]

Eastern European state socialisms after 1945 employed a very different logic in their relationships with the newly decolonised Global South, producing numerous encounters across what W. E. B. Du Bois called in 1900 the 'global colour line'.[6] Presenting themselves as 'different' Europeans who were successfully industrialising but were not hidebound by colonial pasts, they claimed to offer alternative modernities that transcended racial difference.[7] Miglena Todorova describes Eastern European racial imaginations during the Cold War as 'socialist racialism', based not on Western visions of 'colonial and capitalist' separation between human groups, but on recruiting subordinated groups into a distinct – and very violent – redistributive project.[8] Even then, however, pre-1945 racial tropes not only survived but were also remade and even strengthened, in much socialist-era science, travel writing, and elite and popular thinking, to privilege white members of the titular nation over internal minorities, and white European socialists over their Third World contemporaries.[9] Following the Sino–Soviet split in 1960, Beijing's Communists accused their Eastern European counterparts of revealing a deeper attachment to a 'white West' through the policy of 'peaceful co-existence'.

As state socialism withered in the 1980s, new modes of connecting the region into global imaginations of race emerged. Eastern European intellectual and political elites arguably 'discovered' that identifying with whiteness could help persuade the West that their peoples too belonged within European modernity.[10] Roma were racialised as a barrier to the region's re-entry into a white developed Europe – and became an ever-greater target for prejudice and violence. Abuse chanted by Eastern European spectators at footballers of African descent suggested a transnational subculture of racist extremism.[11]

Large-scale migrations often produce new popular understandings of place in a racial order. Eastern European workers settling in Western Europe

after the 2004–13 eastward enlargement of the European Union (EU) often found themselves racialised as not quite fully white Europeans.[12] After 2015, meanwhile, Eastern Europe became a centre of the global 'refugee crisis', as more than a million people from the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia traversed the region, only to be treated as a mass racialised threat to European security and social cohesion. In the following years, with these rising fears of non-white migration, Ukrainian labour was admitted to the European Union in ever greater numbers: 1,390,978 Ukrainians were registered in Poland alone by 2020.[13] The crisis on the so-called 'Balkan Route', and later also on the EU–Belarus border, gave rise to new expressions of state racism but also fresh anti-racist solidarities.[14] After Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the issue of race again came to the fore: migration regimes established to enable the exodus of mainly women and children speedily began to racialise the normative Ukrainian refugee as fully white – itself a novel development – while restricting mobility to those racialised as other, namely Afro-Ukrainians born in Ukraine, Global South nationals living in Ukraine, and Ukrainian Roma.[15]

Scholars seeking to understand Eastern Europe's place in the 'world-system' of capital, coloniality, and race view it as what Immanuel Wallerstein termed a 'semi-periphery'.[16] In this conception, semi-peripheries sit between the world-system's true core and the furthest periphery, producing numerous racialised identities which sit ambiguously between the imagined hierarchical poles of white and black. Accepting this multidimensional geography of race enables recognition of what Anca Parvulescu calls 'racial triangulation', that is, the 'multidirectional … racial field' where Eastern Europeans can be 'both … victims and agents of racism'.[17] Similarly, Kalmar explores the simultaneous 'illiberal racism *of*' and 'racism *against*' Central, and other Eastern, Europeans, not to *equate* their racial othering with anti-black racism but to show how the racial system that fundamentally subordinates blackness to whiteness also produces 'ambiguous positions' like these.[18]

Nevertheless, these dynamics concern a wider region. Following Parvulescu and Boatcă, we see Eastern Europe's semi-peripherality as the consequence of 'inter-imperiality', or having been historically controlled and contested by *different* empires.[19] The identity discourses and policies produced within Eastern Europe have been circumscribed by histories of interacting empires, and by the 'multiple subject positions' of individuals living 'within, between, and against' them.[20] With a broader spatial lens, and by placing in-depth historical examinations in dialogue with contemporary examples, we argue that sentiments of racialised belonging/exclusion mediated through attachments to whiteness were already being mobilised from the mid-nineteenth century.

Whiteness and disavowal in Eastern Europe

Despite the evidence that many Eastern European political movements have long worked towards belonging in a white Europe, the region's nationalists have denied the relevance of race.[21] Critical approaches to eruptions of racialised thinking are frequently declined – by omission, when ethnicity and nationalism are isolated from race, and sometimes by open dismissal.[22] Historicising whiteness in Eastern Europe thus requires confronting a powerful politics of disavowal – a phenomenon found not only in this region.

Scholars of race have long claimed that 'whiteness' as an unmarked racial category and a structure of knowledge – *not* an inherent characteristic of people with pale skin colour – gains its power from granting its beneficiaries ignorance of its effects.[23] The philosopher Charles W. Mills termed such a relationship to global structures 'white ignorance'.[24] His phrase is challenging: nobody likes to be seen as ignorant. Yet he did not mean wilful choices to be ignorant, despite how racialised structures of power incentivise such an attitude. Rather, he suggested those same structures of knowledge, culture, education, and capital have produced a social reality where the people racialised into the category of 'white' do not perceive racism's effects or nature unless they specially strive to.[25] Mills proposed that this process had encompassed the whole world, '[i]nsofar as the modern world has been created by European colonialism and imperialism, and insofar as racist assumptions/frameworks/norms were central to' that process.[26] Scholars have interrogated how racism can be disavowed in many regions beyond the Global North which were subject to European colonial rule for centuries. Such is the case in Latin America, where a 'colorblind post-raciality' props up a white elite, or actors can fear losing whiteness during economic crises. Similarly in Ghana, where citizens customarily perceive their country as a non-racialised space yet everyday social practices (from beauty regimes to hospitality towards foreigners) reveal a status hierarchy linked to proximity to whiteness.[27]

Mills' 'ignorance' might take the form of professing racial 'innocence', as Gloria Wekker argues frequently occurs in Dutch society through 'stubborn' claims that the Netherlands 'is and always has been color-blind and antiracist'.[28] Those critical of ways in which commemoration of slavery in the UK or France privileges Westerners' role in abolition over their centuries-long maintenance of bondage might concur.[29] Claims of racial 'innocence' for Europe's East rest on its *disconnection* from Western European colonialism and from the transatlantic slave trade. This was a compelling alibi even for the empires ruling Eastern Europe in the later nineteenth century.[30] It was all the more so for the region's nationalist movements and then nation-states between the Soviet Union and Germany, which could argue

they themselves had then been under foreign imperial rule, sometimes to the point of being colonised: as such, they claimed, they were not fundamentally complicit in creating a world-system with racialised hierarchies at its core. Even those nationalists who fantasised or pursued colonial-type projects, such as the Maritime and Colonial League in interwar Poland, could claim these were fundamentally different from those undertaken in the West.[31]

Both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, meanwhile, developed strikingly similar expiatory discourses to justify their own expansionism and imperial practices – which have been increasingly critiqued in light of debates about ‘Russian colonialism’ following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.[32] The Tsarist Empire professed its civilisation’s spiritual superiority and rejected Western concepts of race: its advocates often arguing its capacity for a harmony between its peoples that eluded the German, French, and especially English, imperialist.[33] After the 1917 revolution, the Soviets publicly claimed class and nationality, based on sociohistorical consciousness rather than biologised race, as their overarching principles to make sense of and transform their extraordinary diverse new society.[34] Moscow claimed to be leading nationalities at its peripheries towards cultural uplift through a development programme that Terry Martin likened to ‘affirmative action’.[35] Its anti-colonial internationalism fuelled the hope that Communism would end global racism. Communist states in Eastern Europe from the late 1940s similarly claimed that racism was always elsewhere, reproducible only under the conditions of capitalism.[36]

Prominent intellectuals in the African diaspora often fed this image of Communist states as belonging to a space beyond race as they sought the region’s support in the anti-colonial struggle. During the 1930s and 1940s, George Padmore argued that the Soviet Union had overcome racial discrimination through an exemplary socialist experiment uniting an imperial core with its former colonies in a common project.[37] Black American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois went even further, linking the fate of African Americans and of people fighting against colonial oppression to ‘the white slaves of modern capitalist society’, among whom he counted the now ‘liberated’ peoples in the Balkans.[38] By the 1980s, more critical attitudes emerged, especially among African elites, as the Bloc’s anti-colonial and anti-racist commitments declined and violence against extra-European migrants increased.[39] Anti-racism was drowned out by a growing nationalist sentiment in European Communist states which fought to break from the Soviet Empire and return to western market civilisation.[40] An unexpected continuity between Communist regimes and twenty-first-century right-wing populist states in Eastern Europe is that both offered national visions unburdened from guilt for colonialism and racism.

Tracing the ideological work of 'whiteness' in Eastern Europe back to its roots in nation-building and global colonialism, this volume uncovers discourses that have rendered racialised hierarchies transparent and natural in the international state system; in national self-determination struggles; in cultural representation; in intellectual and academic discourses; and in Western imaginations projected on to the region which interact with local ideas. It understands 'Europe' as a collective space where the production of race and the construction of nationhood are inextricably linked, and into which Eastern Europe is fully integrated, as Bolaji Balogun argues in his chapter for this volume. Its novel demonstration of Eastern Europe's place within the global history of race expands perspectives on global white nationalism, the literature on which still remains predominantly Anglophone.[41] The full contexts of globalised networks of white supremacy extend beyond the West, towards what Andrzej Nowak and Marta Grzechnik term the 'racism of the semi-periphery'[42] – that is, racisms that manifest in regions where claims to whiteness are fragile – and act as intermediate racialised zones between the white core and postcolonial spaces.[43] With resonances across spaces such as Latin America, the Middle East, and North Africa, this history of Eastern Europe contributes to discussions over the complexities of racialisation and formation of racial regimes in regions defined by such inbetweenness.[44] Their liminality pushes them to work towards whiteness, while their nationalisms simultaneously deny its relevance – a pattern that then becomes a resource for sustaining and justifying white supremacy around the world.[45]

Eastern Europe and global racial orders

This volume's contributors each employ their own theoretical, methodological, and embodied standpoints, and make their own choices in naming their regions of study. Several shared principles nevertheless unite their questions about Eastern Europe and the global history of race. A first premise is that race is not an actual biological, genetic, or physiological characteristic but, following Stuart Hall, 'the centerpiece of a hierarchical system that produces differences … a *system of meaning*, a way of organizing and meaningfully classifying the world'.[46] Race in this sense is 'elastic', with its own 'mutability, adaptability and motility' reflecting the fact that 'racial meanings, arrangements, and orderings' have insinuated themselves across social, cultural, gender, and economic circumstances since colonialism began.[47] In Western and transatlantic spaces at least, they also insinuated themselves into emerging class structures, in the phenomenon Cedric Robinson termed 'racial capitalism' – which for him dated back to medieval, *infra*-European rationales for

slavery.[48] A second premise is that the notion of race embedded by Europeans' colonialism and transatlantic enslavement of Africans forges a nexus between bodies, territory, and time. It demarcates certain spaces of the globe as 'civil' or 'wild', fixes certain bodily signifiers as marks of origin from each space, and attaches supposedly enduring physical, mental, and social characteristics to each racial origin.[49] In racial logic, these still determine each people's civilisational status and readiness for modernity wherever their descendants live, polarising human societies into zones of civilization and barbarism.[50] These tropes take race well beyond biology and skin colour into fundamental questions about society, culture, and international order.

A third premise for a global history of race is that the legacies of colonialism and enslavement are themselves global, and the idea of racialised civilisational hierarchies has spread far beyond the spaces directly ruled by past or present colonial and settler-colonial regimes. Some studies of Europe's northern periphery (where Denmark and Sweden were colonial powers, but Norway, Iceland, and Finland were not yet independent) already suggest national cultures could absorb ideologies of white supremacy without territories colonised in their own name.[51] Daria Krivonos' chapter bridges the study of Nordic coloniality and Eastern Europe in noting that the production of whiteness among Finns occurred through racialising the indigenous Sámi people while struggling not to be classified as a 'Mongol' people by the West.

Yet Eurocentric histories still tend to present the development of Eastern European nations between Russia and Germany as a series of continental and local entanglements with little global interconnection.[52] Postsocialist politicians and intellectuals, particularly in Poland and the Baltic states, instrumentalised postcolonial thought in so far as it provided a language of empire and apartheid to demonise Communism as Soviet imperial oppression, but generally refused any real sense of solidarity beyond Europe. Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery's encouragement to think 'across the posts', to view the aftermath of state socialism's collapse in Europe and post-1945 decolonisation in the Global South as mutually constitutive of the contemporary world, however, opened up new ways to think about the relationship between Eastern Europe and the global politics of race.[53] Rejecting the idea of separate postsocialist and postcolonial spaces around the globe sweeps away the fallacy that Eastern Europe has 'ethnicity' whereas the West and its postcolonies have 'race'. Rather, global racial hierarchies, and ideas about the positions of peoples and places within them, become visible *within* the production of ethnic and national identities. The expansion, decline, and end of empires and formation of Eastern European nation-states exist together in entangled histories which link the region's development with a wider world.[54]

We can usefully consider Eastern European actors' own contributions to the growth of racialised thinking too. Eastern European peoples did not have significant overseas empires of their own, and were ruled over at the time by other imperial powers, but traces of aspirations and attachment to ideas of empire still connected the region into the history from which race was born. Indeed, it is a mistake to think that the region was free from extra-European colonial encounters, ambitions, or practices. It was indirectly entangled with the 'transatlantic colonial economy', in, for example, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's supply of timber and grain to the colonial powers, or the mass demand for colonial sugar which entered the region through Habsburg and Baltic ports.[55] Short-lived colonial ventures even originated from Eastern Europe, such as the two eighteenth-century Habsburg colonial trading companies which sought a presence in the Indian Ocean, nineteenth-century Habsburg proposals to colonise the Nicobar Islands, or Duke Jacob of Courland's seventeenth-century aspirations to enter the transatlantic slave trade by purchasing Tobago and a trading station on the River Gambia.[56] Proceeds from these ventures flowed to each polity's ruling elites, but not into a base of intergenerational wealth that fed through to elites in today's nation-states.

The notion of colonial activity as the mark of being a free and prestigious European power animated nationalist visions in the region. Advocates of colonial projects in interwar Poland, as chapters by Balogun and Grzechnik demonstrate in this volume, believed they would show their country catching up within Europe and overcoming backwardness.[57] Austria-Hungary's rule over Bosnia-Herzegovina after being granted it as a protectorate in 1878 (and annexing it in 1908), inspired Hungarians to imagine a new trade-based maritime colonialism emanating from their potential control over the Adriatic.[58] Habsburg officials themselves viewed Bosnia-Herzegovina as a model European protectorate, claiming that their supposedly humane rule could provide a blueprint for Western Europeans' civilising missions in Africa or Asia.

Even if Eastern Europe was not at the centre of the continent's expansion and the concomitant production of ideas of white supremacy, racial ideologies could still become part of its intellectual landscapes through the region's identification with Europe as an imperial formation. Recently, historians have turned to 'transimperial history': they demonstrate many nationalities from eighteenth century 'pre-national and pre-imperial' European regions served in other states' Empires as merchants, explorers, mercenaries, or even officials.[59] In so doing, they contributed to the growth of an imperial idea of Europeanness that extended well beyond France, the Netherlands, or Britain.[60] By the late nineteenth century, a growing Central European urban bourgeoisie identified with pan-European colonialism and consumed

its culture, including those 'ethnic shows' which helped to naturalise the region's identification with an increasingly racialised vision of Europe or a broader white West.[61] By the first decades of the twentieth century, adventure novels began imagining Poles and Hungarians on colonial expeditions or fighting for Western European colonial projects.[62]

Moreover, the region did not exist apart from the slave trade; beyond the black Atlantic, Eastern Europe's southeast in particular was connected to the enslavement of both Africans and Roma.[63] Between 1500 and 1650, about ten thousand people annually were trafficked across the Black Sea, most of them from sub-Saharan Africa, Ethiopia, and Sudan. As the Ottoman Empire became ever more integrated into the growing world capitalist economy through international commerce, slave markets in the Balkans and the Caucasus thrived, especially after European powers agreed to combat the transatlantic slave trade from the early nineteenth century.[64] In the Romanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, meanwhile, Roma had been subject to enslavement since migrating there in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the practice worsened once grain from these lands became sought-after on Western markets.[65] Late eighteenth-century Habsburg 'gypsey' studies were already using the language of colour: Roma were African and black, and Europeans were white.[66] Even after their formal liberation from slavery in 1855–56, the Roma remained on the periphery of the modern Romanian state, an ethnic group constantly considered a 'biological threat' to the emerging nation.[67] Victoria Shmidt's contribution shows how Communist-era Czech anthropology used colonially inspired comparisons to brand Roma as 'non-white' and 'primitives' who stood out through their 'self-isolation' from national, white society. Chelsi West Ohueri's chapter too explores how, to this day, Albanians use terminology about Roma that indicates their racialisation as 'black', their origins externalised to a space outside the nation.

Eastern Europeans claims on whiteness were always ambiguous. On one hand, as white Europeans, they could move: the United States permitted emigration from Austria-Hungary in 1876, and 3.5 million migrants left between then and 1910, sending significant remittances home.[68] Many were purposefully invited to Latin America to help whiten and Europeanise nations too – and some returned, bringing racialised ideologies of the New World back with them.[69] However, they participated in this settler colonialism from weaker positions. Some of the 120,000 Poles who relocated to southern Brazil between the 1880s and 1918, many from territories then in the German Empire, moved to seek space for Polish culture and language free from the assimilatory pressures of German rule.[70] In the United States, Slavic migrants, just like the Irish, Italians, Jews, and Syrians, were initially denigrated as lesser whites – often to the alarm of intellectuals back home. Nevertheless,

settler-colonial countries still offered the possibility of becoming white through actively aligning oneself with local structures of white supremacy, and separating themselves culturally and politically from racialised others.[71]

Eastern European nationalist movements had long had to battle Western perceptions that they were 'lesser whites'. The founding father of Aryanism, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, stated in the mid-1850s that 'the Russians, Poles, and Serbians, even though they are far nearer to us than the negroes, are only civilized on the surface'.[72] Such characterisations became ever more numerous during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as racial imperialism gripped the world.[73] With Eastern European nationalist movements resisting imperial rule and later building nation-states, many Western observers equated their economic marginality, absence of experience in the exercise of power, lack of extra-European colonies, or continued political fragility with not being fully white.[74] James Mark's chapter addresses how nationalists in Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia responded to their racialised denigration at the peace negotiations after World War I, exploring the importance of their development of white racial solidarity and distancing from extra-European claims for independence.

Gradations in whiteness also fractured the region: who was more and less white, and hence supposedly had a greater claim to civilisation and power? These boundaries were renegotiated across time and space, as nationalist movements sought to mark themselves out as whiter than their neighbours. Maciej Górny's chapter explores how Polish ethnographers in the mid-nineteenth century 'blackened' their Russian overlords to cement the image of their own superior democratically minded Europeanness. Along the way, Polish intellectuals created racialising theories which were later plagiarised in France where they were turned against Prussians.[75] With a weakening Ottoman Empire, and an accelerating Scramble for Africa, Austrians and Hungarians developed their own imperial designs over the Balkans from the 1870s. Experts drew on wider colonial discourses to frame their expansion in Europe: a 'Balkan Columbus' would advance into the 'terra incognita' of 'darkest Europe'.[76] Mark's chapter details how, in a race to prove one's Europeanness, and hence right to sovereignty and territory, Slovak, Czech, and Romanian nationalists sought to orientalise Magyars as barbaric Mongols after World War I.

Despite frequent denigration both from the West and their neighbours, Eastern European nationalists often presented themselves as morally superior European whites. Such discourses were particularly prominent in response to the increasing violence of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Western imperialism. Grzechnik outlines the Polish nationalist claims to a morally superior colonialism informed by the sensitivities engendered by their own histories of subjugation. Zoltán Ginelli's chapter addresses the

two-century long Hungarian appropriation of Native American culture in 'Indian play'. He shows how a 'semi-peripheral' nation might incorporate the exotic, natural, or anti-colonial to portray themselves as being the better kind of white: such positions were mobilised as claims to European belonging rather than as challenges to global racial hierarchy.[77]

It may sound odd to claim that this sense of a morally superior whiteness was further developed during the Communist period. After all, Communist states' declarations of their own incapability to reproduce racism might be presented as an important exception to the story of a peripheralised Eastern Europe working to become part of a white West. Whatever was publicly stated, Communist cultures still bore the marks of earlier national longings for recognition as equal or even superior whites.[78] Madina Tlostanova has argued, in a different context, that Russians accepted a Western frame in self-definition, even under Communism: 'even when claiming a global spiritual and transcendental superiority', Moscow's 'subaltern empire … has always been looking for approval/envy and love/hatred from the west, never questioning the main frame of western modernity, only changing the superfluous details'.[79] Anti-colonialism gave Communists the opportunity for a short time to become morally superior and politically significant Europeans whose global reach might now rival that of the West. Yet this committed anti-colonialism was also underpinned by the cultural revival of fantasies of Western imperial power. As decolonisation accelerated in the late 1950s, anti-colonial education was accompanied in some Communist countries by the republication or adaptation of colonial adventure stories, a nostalgia for white hunters, explorers and missionaries, and a fascination with safari and big-game hunting.[80] Irina Novikova's chapter in this volume analyses how Soviet cinematic audiences in the 1930s and 1940s were socialised into a white modernising gaze through popular adaptations of Western literary classics, which critiqued Western racism and imperialism but did so from the viewpoint of the ethically and politically superior white European liberator, who the Soviets believed themselves to be.

From the 1970s, with the seeming degradation of the anti-colonial project, and détente in Europe, the attraction to a culture of superior anti-colonial white Europeanness declined; a 'coloured' socialist internationalism needed to be thrown off in the name of a return to Europe.[81] As a *Pravda* headline criticising the economic turmoil of the late 1980s declared: 'We are Africans in a European home'.[82] Many former anti-colonial allies saw in this moment the affirmation of an essentially white continent allied to the neoliberal Washington Consensus, built around hard civilisational and racialised boundaries.[83]

This rapprochement did not eliminate the sense that the region's claim on whiteness remained fragile. Despite the embrace of Eastern Europe as

an organic part of Europe, such acceptance remained conditional, with notable gradations: 'Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic sprint[ed] into the future of democracy and market economics', while the Balkans were, as Ernest Gellner put it in 1994, 'the third time zone of Europe', that is, the continent's own 'Third World'.[84] The fall of the Berlin Wall, and the real prospect of mass East-to-West movement within Europe, revived and remade older forms of racialised othering, exacerbated by the mass displacement of the Yugoslav Wars.

Migrants from Eastern Europe were conditionally accepted in the West, but only along a gradient of whiteness, mostly coded in the language of Europeanness. In 1994, less than three years after the end of the Cold War and during the conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, the right-wing British *Spectator* magazine proclaimed that the UK, as 'English-speaking, Christian, and white', should advocate for Poles, and Hungarians, and Russians to be brought 'slowly into the EEC … we should try to open our doors to their people'; such hesitant acceptance would not be applied to 'Muslims and blacks, [who] … should be kept out strictly as at present'.[85] However, the East's integration into European whiteness would only be possible if former socialist countries discarded their Easternness and proved their will to Westernise (arguably very similar to the compact that had been asked of East European settlers 'working toward whiteness' in North America a century before). Eastern European countries would have to show they belonged on the right side of Samuel Huntington's 'Velvet Curtain of culture', which separated white Christianity from 'abnormal' civilisations – particularly from Islam, seen as allegedly inimical to Eurocentric modernity.[86] As Balogun and West Ohueri note in their chapters, hope for and membership in the EU was often seen across the region as a confirmation of racial belonging intrinsic to what was then being called 'Europeanisation': a political, economic, juridical alignment undergirded by civilisational codes of whiteness.

Once the citizens of new EU member states gained freedom of movement after the EU's 2004–13 expansion into Eastern Europe, the phenomenon that scholars have variously called 'contingent', 'liminal', 'ambivalent', or 'ambiguous' whiteness became a mass lived experience for numerous Eastern Europeans.[87] Markers of language, accent, and appearance all contributed to Eastern European workers in Western Europe being racialised as 'not quite white'.[88] Suddenly confronted with Westerners' curiosity about where they belonged within the global racial hierarchy, Eastern Europeans became subjected to 'the will to power and the regime of truth' that, according to Stuart Hall, give racialised signifiers of difference their material force.[89] Some migrants, from both within and outside the EU, sought to protect their fragile whiteness by racialising in turn people of African and Asian

descent. They learned the codes of Western racism as a form of integration, as their counterparts migrating to the US in the late nineteenth century had done.[90] Špela Drnovšek Zorko's chapter underlines that Eastern European migrants' own interpretations of whiteness should be read against longer-term histories of emigration from the region, postcolonial migration flows, and the geopolitics of coevalness that have shaped postsocialist racial subjectivities in purportedly multicultural societies. Krivonos' contribution addresses how Russian-speaking migrants in Finland struggle to distinguish themselves from the image of the 'less modern' postsocialist subject, while simultaneously distancing themselves from non-white 'asylum-seekers' and 'refugees' who threaten to darken them by association. In her turn, Sunnie Rucker-Chang explores how both the Chinese and people of African descent in Serbia are collapsed into the category of migrant or 'perpetual foreigner'. She traces racialised ideas of whiteness within a national tradition where such conceptions of race are often denied, or ignored.

The prominence of populist Islamophobia often hides the fact that liberal politicians in Eastern Europe have long produced Islamophobic discourses too. As Monika Bobako puts it in her work on Polish political culture, Islamophobia was 'a way to confirm symbolically … belonging to "the West" and commitment to the normative project of European modernity, with its affirmation of individualism, human rights, sexual freedom and secularism'.[91] Social categories that stubbornly failed to embrace the transitological teleology of capitalist liberal democracy were orientalised. Mental maps morphed into social spaces, and the 'losers' of the transition were marginalised along axes of internal orientalism that ran within postsocialist societies.[92] Sometimes this went as far as full-blown racialisation. Those deemed inimical to this civilising mission from within and without were racialised as non-white. During protests in Bulgaria and Romania in the 2010s, for instance, people who did not show solidarity with liberal anti-governmental movements were labelled 'black' or 'dirty', sometimes with directly discriminatory remarks regarding the Roma and other minorities.[93]

Twenty-first-century Eastern European populists build on exclusionary *liberal* discourses of the early transition period – but are nevertheless quite distinct. Whereas the racism of liberalism was forged in an alignment with the West, populists cast themselves as committed to a white Christian Europe and thus as superior Europeans, untainted by colonialism – confronting a Western Europe which, after the fall of empire, had become 'too open' to non-European immigration and multiracial society.[94] This racialised myth of redeeming a continent undermined by the West has, we should emphasise, a much longer lineage. Since the late nineteenth century, nationalists in Eastern Europe have claimed to be 'better' whites in the sense of being more humane or more civilised, a result of them not having been barbarised by

the exercise of imperial violence as Western Europeans had. Such visions have nevertheless often generated their own regional version of a racialised supremacy. Paul Hanebrink's chapter in this volume, for instance, details how Christian nationalism in post-World War I Hungary began as an ideology of counter-revolution: here conservatives considered themselves Europe's bulwark against Jewish Asiatic Bolshevism. This ideology was used domestically to purify the nation of Jews as carriers of Communist 'barbarism'.[95] Contemporary populist fantasies of whiteness, Hanebrink argues, share much with these older paranoid fears of Jewish conspiracy. Today's populists are thus only the latest political movement to claim that Eastern Europeans embody a superior whiteness, he argues. Yet this is not in the name of a progressive internationalism, as it was under Communism, but in defence of a white heterosexual Christian Europe – a struggle that the multicultural West is accused of abandoning.[96]

Populist politicians claimed that Eastern Europe would be a more effective guardian of Europe's heritage than the West: it did not commit the sin of imperialism and thus had no obligation to address its legacies. After the so-called 'migrant crisis' of 2015 began, populist leaders insisted their nations' non-imperial Christian heritage should exempt them from having to host resettled refugees like the rest of the EU. As a result, Orbán and others have been able to cast their opposition to EU refugee quotas into a novel anti-colonial disavowal of race which in fact supports a colonial white supremacist vision of Europe.[97] Hungary was nevertheless faced with labour shortages in the late 2010s. Looking for an alternative to what they claimed were culturally and racially debilitating effects of the Western liberal multicultural migration regime, the Hungarian authorities turned back to an imaginary white world that had linked Eastern Europe and Latin America through population flows from the late nineteenth century onwards. He invited South Americans of Hungarian descent – particularly anti-communist Venezuelans wanting to escape Nicolás Maduro's regime – to return to the 'motherland'.[98]

Such fantasies were not only homegrown. For Western conservatives and latterly right-wing populists, Eastern Europe has slowly become a centre for the production or fantasy of the defence of a whiteness increasingly embattled since the era of postwar decolonisation. At the height of the Cold War, those struggling against an alien 'Asiatic' Bolshevism in Hungary or Poland in 1956 were integrated by Western conservatives into the idea of a white Western anti-communist struggle – and often contrasted with the supposedly rowdy black anti-colonial radicals disrupting Western European imperialism. This framing in part explains why those who fled westward to escape 'Communist oppression' during the Cold War were by and large not considered 'lesser whites' but rather heroic

defenders of the West.[99] In these conservatives' minds, Eastern European dissidents fighting to return 'stolen lands' to Europe further confirmed that narrative.

While the region's mobile workers became 'not quite white' in the Western imagination after 1989, Western white nationalists developed their admiration for Eastern Europe from afar – for having, in their view, protected a space of racial purity abandoned in a now multicultural West. In the mid-2010s, populists in the Americas such as Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump became the latest to venerate strongmen like Putin or Orbán, who for them helped 'to confirm white logics and to reassure anxieties concerning White vitality and universality'.[100] They have looked to a 'semi-peripheral' masculine potency both unsoftened by the excessive trappings of a modern civilised West and unreconciled to a post-imperial multiculturalism, which would now be mobilised to defend the idea of a white West.[101] Hanebrink's chapter addresses such transnational links, examining contemporary mutual affinities between Orbán and the French writer Renaud Camus, notorious for his conspiracy theory of the so-called 'Great Replacement' of white Europeans by immigrants from Europe's former colonies.

Further dimensions of affinity and exchange between Eastern Europe and Western cultural conservatives and white supremacists are explored in Anikó Imre's chapter. She analyses how a transnational media industry uses Eastern European locations and people as raw material for visualising settings which are imagined as bastions of whiteness in other parts of Europe or in fantastical alternative worlds. Catherine Baker's chapter addresses how far-right movements invent a version of Eastern European history as a struggle for white Christian supremacy that is intended to inspire militant far-right political networks around the world. She explores how the historical mythology of warfare against the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans, which was already used as a legitimising myth for perpetrators of the Bosnian Genocide, has enabled participants in contemporary global white nationalist digital networks, including the perpetrator of the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand, to position themselves within a fantasy of defending white European Christendom from Islam.

Yet whereas Western right-wing populists essentialise and idealise Eastern European whiteness, populists in the region often locate the strength of their projects in a civilisational liminality or racial inbetweenness. As Imre points out, connections to traditions more primordial than white Christianity, whether pre-Christian paganism or supposed solidarity with Native Americans, are today most often invoked to reinforce cultures of 'authentic' white masculinity undiluted by the supposed weakening effects of Western multiculturalism. This move away from the West's 'feminine' whiteness has been reinforced in Hungary by massive state investment into

DNA analysis of samples from early Hungarian graves meant to prove Turanian descent – a whiteness that increases its virility through claiming attachment to 'authentic' pre-Christian traditions. Such appeals to a fantasy of a heteropatriarchal gender regime have been constitutive of a transnational community of white supremacy stretching from the US to southern Africa to postsocialist Eastern Europe. Whiteness in Eastern Europe has, therefore, become visible both to scholars of far-right imaginaries and scholars of migration. Where the literature has been slowest to acknowledge whiteness, however, is in the history of nation-building within the region itself.

Global whiteness and Eastern European nation-building

The history of nation-building in Eastern Europe is customarily understood as a matter of strengthening and defending collective identities based on ethnicity, often in tandem with religion. Until recently, direct articulations of how racial frameworks functioned in these nation-building processes have been rare outside the specialist literature on eugenics and race science. As Dušan Bjelić remarks, the study of nationalism has largely conceptualised it 'as a "unified tradition" rather than a history of racialized conflicts', rendering Europe's East raceless while also disentangling its peoples from the global history of Eurocentric colonialism.[102] Yet the cultural 'renaissance' pursued by modern nationalists to 'awaken' their communities from the mid-nineteenth century was fundamentally entangled with practices of biological identification: as Marius Turda and Maria Sophia Quine argue, the co-determination of culture, geography, economy, and biology placed race 'within the interstices of collective and individual identities' as they crystallised and evolved in modern Eastern Europe.[103]

This volume demonstrates that national identities in Eastern Europe were maturing in the context of the so-called 'global reach of whiteness', amid imperial expansion, the growth of race science, and an idea of Europe that was ever more tightly connected to civilisational and racial superiority.[104] The proponents of nation-building and state-building projects in the region were thinking and acting within racialised world hierarchies structured according to the self-proclaimed universal standards of a white European imperial civilisation.[105] They were also aware their nations and homelands occupied an intermediate and contingent place in relation to those standards. The engineering of ethnic 'revivals' by local elites, who merged confessional belonging with visions of cultural and economic modernity, projected their nations back into the past as historical defenders of Christianity. This

phenomenon began as early as the late eighteenth century in certain places, and was widespread by the mid-nineteenth.

Even before independence, nationalist movements in the Balkans inscribed ideas about race onto their struggle for independence. Their fight was for a Christian Europe against the Ottoman Empire's 'political yoke', whose 'Turkish character' made it 'fatally incapable of civilisation'.[106] This trope was rooted in European imperial triumphalism, perceptions of the Ottoman administration's incomplete or failed modernisation, and the 'alien' nature Europeans projected onto its Islamic character.[107] Importantly, it was also formulated in the broader, inter-imperial context of Western and Russian competition over influence and territory in the Ottoman Empire (deemed in European politics 'the sick man of Europe'). This European consensus legitimised views such as those of the prominent Bulgarian nationalist Hristo Botev, who concluded that the 'Turks' and the 'Bulgarians' were incompatible races.[108] No nation-building project in Eastern Europe developed independently of the racialised premises of Great Power diplomacy.[109]

In the 1870s, Western powers supported the establishment and consolidation of Christian states in the Balkans, seen to mark out 'new European racial frontiers' which 'naturalized a binary differentiation of non-European and non-Christian outsiders and European and Christian insiders'.[110] Fears that the diversity of such new nations would undermine racial aspirations to belong to a Christian Europe were already embedded in the outlook of their elites. Islamic, Roma, and Jewish populations potentially became 'racial dangers' for nationalisms that combined Christianity with visions of racially homogeneous states.[111] In 1878, for instance, the Congress of Berlin recognised Romania's independence, but requested the modification of article 7 of the Romanian Constitution of 1866, which provided that non-Christians could not be citizens, specifically targeting the Jewish population.[112] Two years later, a flurry of publications warned against the weakening of the dominant Romanian ethnic element and the perceived proliferation of the urban Jewish population.[113] These publications in fact translated the debate over racial degeneration in France, which had been ignited by the Franco–Prussian War of 1870.[114] In Paris, elites feared that the French nation's racial demise would dislodge its standing as the white, imperial civiliser of the globe. In Bucharest, racialised demographic anxieties targeted 'aliens' within the state, particularly the Roma and the Jews, who threatened Romanians' Europeanisation. Attempts to 'de-Ottomanise' the Balkans led to further campaigns of violence against national minorities elsewhere, most notably against South Slavic and Albanian Muslims. By the interwar period, racialised discourses against 'oriental' Muslim communities facilitated projects of eugenic purification in Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.[115]

The foundation of new Central and Eastern European states such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary after World War I occurred at a moment when racialised fears for the future of Western imperialism – the so-called 'White Crisis' – were at their peak. Much more explicit languages of whiteness had been developing in international politics since the 1890s, and these developing racial vocabularies would be turned inwards.[116] Echoing the West's othering of Eastern Europeans as poorer whites who potentially threatened this fragile racial order, the governments of some states sought in turn to 'civilise' their own 'darker' peripheries to confirm their nations' full membership of a white European civilisation. Nation-building projects mixed questions of race with class: elites imbued their peasantries with the stigma of belonging to other races requiring improvement.[117] As successive projects of modernisation failed to improve the lot of the peasantry, states and elites sought to expand their reach into the countryside in order to stave off racial degeneration.[118] Peripheries in particular were deemed to be populated not only by racially 'dangerous' minorities, but also by members of the dominant ethnic group who were mired in 'backwardness', lacking hygienic education, struggling with poverty, and culturally inferior. In Poland, primitivism was associated with its rural eastern lands close to the Soviet Union, a space where nationals could be particularly vulnerable to Bolshevik 'infection' and Asiatic barbarism.[119]

Recent scholarship has emphasised that the violence of nation-building in Eastern Europe from the late nineteenth century should be understood as part of a process linked to settler colonialism and imperialism globally.[120] Attempts at homogenisation drew on racial scientific trends tied to colonial expansion into Africa, Asia, and the Americas, and were premised on imagined human geographies that erased ethnic diversity by physical elimination, assimilation, or expulsion.[121] Working to construct new nations, experts, notably in the emerging disciplines of anthropology and ethnography, drew on racialised international scientific practices and discourses.[122] The Institute for Balkan Studies in Belgrade, for instance, used European anthropology to construct racial hierarchy within the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.[123] Shmidt's chapter here explores how an internationally well-connected Czech anthropologist drew in the interwar period on ideas of race and primitivism from British colonial thinking and studies of African and Indigenous peoples in North America, in seeking to 'improve' 'backward', 'white primitive' populations in Carpathian Ruthenia – the so-called 'Czech Palestine'. She notes these views on the interconnection between primitivism, non-whiteness, and pathology influenced several generations of anthropologists during state socialism and beyond.[124]

Interwar states also targeted minorities through emigration policies that were designed to clear out poor, rural, dependent, and less nationalised

communities, whose removal would 'improve' the health and homogeneity of the nation. The new Kingdom of Yugoslavia pursued ethnically differentiated policies with a view to hastening the departure of 'anational' non-Slavic Muslims to Turkey, while restricting 'national' Slavic emigration to the Americas.[125] Grzechnik here explores how Polish elites' ambiguous attitudes towards the large Jewish minority were shaped by their own fragile grip on a racial Europeanness; at home, Jews were seen to threaten the idea of the white nation; if forced to emigrate abroad, however, they could be racialised as defenders of a white colonial world on behalf of Poland.[126] Once World War II began, this political biology would be used by Nazis to justify genocide against Jews and Roma.[127]

Eastern European elites also challenged Western theories – particularly those embedded in German racial science – that had labelled Eastern European peoples inferior because of their 'mongrel' racial background. Indeed, interwar scholars at times argued that their peoples' strength derived from an absence of racial purity, which was regarded as a positive mark of distinctiveness. In the mid-1930s, the Czechoslovak government funded the publication of *The Races of Central Europe: Outputs of Anthropological Surveys*, which emphasised the value of racial mixing in the region.[128] Nevertheless, even for these advocates, as Shmidt's and Balogun's chapters indicate, some groups could only be partially assimilated in such healthy mixing – if at all: the Roma, the Jews, and other ethnic minorities remained 'Asiatic' because of their 'blood' and/or their civilisational 'backwardness'. Yugoslav anthropologist Vladimir Dvorniković, for instance, was repulsed by Romani singing, while praising the lyricism and masculine heroism of songs from the mixed South Slav tribes.[129] Vocal opposition to Nazi racial science, Shmidt concludes, often served to conceal a more complex relationship to whiteness, ethnic hierarchy, and violence.

Nor did the establishment of Communism in the Soviet Union after 1917 do away with race in nation-building processes. It inherited ideas of nationality from a collapsed empire in which ethnic difference had become ever more threatening. As Vera Tolz has argued, culture and biology had been invoked to construct threats at Russia's expanding imperial borders in central Asia and the Caucasus in the nineteenth century – even if the language of race did not feature in imperial Russian legislation as it did in the West. The empire invoked 'the concept of nationality, often perceived as heritable identity'; this, she suggested, 'was also racialized and utilized to draw boundaries, create hierarchies, and justify colonial policies'.[130] Nationality groups in turn started to utilise race to assert group identity, to challenge imperial discrimination, and develop ethnonationalist projects.[131] After the revolution, the Soviets claimed that differing levels of development found across an extraordinarily diverse human population were not the result of

unalterable biological characteristics. Nevertheless, the category of nationality, which territorialised ethnic groups and assigned to them levels of progress, could be read as racial hierarchy; and in eras of extreme politics, as during the period 1937–53, entire groups could be purged and deported on the basis of an immutable racial identity.[132] 'Rhetorics of sibling unity' afforded Ukrainians and Belarussians conditional assimilation into the Russocentric Soviet centre, but at the cost of leaving ethnic and linguistic tradition behind.[133] Arguing that Ukraine is 'among the most flagrantly neglected cases of Soviet colonialism', Maria Malksöo quotes Mykola Riabchuk in explaining how 'colonial relations were ethnicized: "local language and culture became a stigma, a sign of backwardness, 'blackness', and inferiority vis-à-vis the superior Russophones who represented both wealth and power"'.[134]

Yulia Gradskova's chapter in this volume suggests that the debate over whether the Soviets thought racially can be helpfully extended through the prism of whiteness. 'Invisible rules' of racial hierarchy, she argues, cut across a system that officially classified by nationality – an approach that Piro Rexhepi extends to postwar socialist Yugoslavia.[135] The 'look and appearance' that granted privilege in the Soviet Union were linked to proximity to European whiteness. Darker skin, non-Orthodox names, the absence of modern European clothing or etiquette, or less developed facility with the Russian language became the basis for racial othering. She analyses how even those who came from the southern periphery and were utilised on the international stage to represent Soviet ethnic uplift as part of anti-colonial internationalism had to conform to white European norms of Soviet officialdom. Central Asian and Transcaucasian nationalities – alongside the Roma – constituted the core platform for racially inscribing state socialism, and making this illiberal modernity white.

Many theoretical tools applied to reveal the globalised dynamics of whiteness in Eastern Europe were, we must acknowledge, produced in the Anglophone world to explain social and material relations in societies where the fruits of extractive colonialism and plantation slavery were systemically channelled into institutional and generational wealth. A major objection to translations of US-centric concepts such as 'racial formation' into explaining the politics of race in Eastern Europe, voiced in Miglena Todorova's path-breaking work on racialisation under state socialism, is that imperial collapses, fascist expropriation, and socialist revolution put Eastern Europe through such radical transformations of class structures and capital that race did not become the same 'foundational code' of nation-building or material accumulation there.[136] These historical differences are irrefutable. Nevertheless, as Rucker-Chang's chapter in this volume suggests, the idea of whiteness as an unmarked category against which the difference of 'perpetual foreigners' is constructed still has value in explaining why, for instance, African or

Chinese migrants in Serbia are understood as presenting a *different* otherness to the otherness of ethnic neighbours. It also shows starkly what is at stake in eliminationist versions of nationalism that force certain minorities and neighbours into the category of an 'enemy race'.[137]

More studies contextualising ideas of Europeanness, modernity, and civilisation in Eastern Europe within a global politics of race and whiteness, especially in the present moment, are now emerging and finding readers. What our volume distinctively contends, however, is that notions of whiteness and their links with Europeanness, modernity, and civilisation were already circulating in Eastern Europe well before the state socialist revolutions and even further back into the nineteenth century – not least as a result of the very system of international relations within which Eastern European national movements had to pursue self-determination. At the same time, the potential for resistance to global white supremacy in Eastern Europe through theorising the region's own marginality should not be minimised. Eastern European capacities to build transversal solidarities with racialised minorities and the Global South were both celebrated and instrumentalised under state socialism. In the postsocialist transformation they were largely silenced before starting to be recovered since the late 2000s by intellectuals and artists, and the many Eastern European theorists whose work informs ours. Indeed, Sudeep Dasgupta's chapter for this volume explores how the artist Yael Bartana has used the fantasy of Polish Jews' return to Poland to critique both the idealisation of a white Europe by contemporary Polish populists *and* the Israeli state's exclusive and expansionist nationalism.

Bringing together literature on Eastern European migration and whiteness, on Eastern Europe and the far right, and on nation-building, our volume historicises and globalises Eastern Europe's ambiguities of race. In so doing, we suggest these very ambiguities in fact make the region a place from which the simplifications of racism can be exposed – that is, in Hall's words, a place from which to show 'how deeply our histories and cultures have always intertwined and interpenetrated'.

Notes

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15 Victoria Shmidt and Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky, 'The Ukrainian Refugee "Crisis" and the (Re)Production of Whiteness in Austrian and Czech Public Politics', *Journal of Nationalism, Memory and Language Politics*, 16:2 (2022), 104–30, 125.

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1

Wilson's white world: the foundation of Central-Eastern European nation-states after World War I

James Mark

The Little Peoples

The little peoples of the troubled earth,
The little nations that are weak and white:
For them the glory of another birth,
For them the lifting of the veil of night.
The big men of the world in concert met,
Have sent forth in their power a new decree:
Upon the old harsh wrongs the sun must set,
Henceforth the little peoples must be free!

But we, the blacks, less than the trampled dust,
Who walk the new ways with the old dim eyes,—
We to the ancient gods of greed and lust
Must still be offered up as sacrifice:
Oh, we who deign to live but will not dare,
The white world's burden must forever bear!

For the Harlem Renaissance poet and novelist Claude McKay, writing in 1919, it was obvious that the postwar settlement that had brought the 'white and weak' Eastern European nations into being – Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Yugoslavia, alongside an expanded Romania and Bulgaria – had been determined upon racial lines. They had been liberated in aid of the defence of a white world now felt to be under threat. Black claims on sovereignty, by contrast, were still sacrificed to the 'gods of greed and lust'. Such complaints would continue across the interwar period. According to a 1930 article in New York's *Negro World*:

> Self-determination for smaller peoples was a password during the days of the Great World War, happily now closed; and it was exercised in the case of the smaller white nations of the world, like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Bulgaria and others; but when it came to the case of the Negro, composing

> a race of more than four hundred millions of the sons and daughters of Ham … we find the great, wise and powerful deny the exercise of this same privilege.[1]

The self-determination of Eastern Europe's nations could also be more positively employed as an argument for the eventual emancipation of African and Asian peoples. A 1929 article from *Negro World* encouraged its readership to write to Ramsay MacDonald, 'Labor Premier of the British Empire', to make the case that 'if the rule of self-determination can hold good for small white nations, then it can hold good for the larger race of black peoples'.[2]

Across the twentieth century, in 1919, 1945, 1956, or 1989, many Africans and Black Americans expressed support for liberation struggles in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, such declarations were often marked by an ambivalence rooted in Eastern Europeans' perceived advantages as whites.[3] By contrast, race-based interpretations of this history have played little role in Eastern European self-understandings of their own self-determination.[4] The central narrative of modern Eastern European history, that is, of collapsed empires, nationhood attained, quashed, and then again redeemed – is usually related within its own regional context. It might address conflict between ethnicities, but pays very little regard to the region's relationship to global racial orders. It is often suggested that this is because such a language of race has been alien to a region which stood outside the struggles of the 'Black Atlantic' and did not hold colonies.[5] Hence the hierarchies of race necessary to underpin overseas European imperialism did not mark the region deeply, and remained a key difference between the West and East of the continent. From this perspective, the introduction of questions of race and whiteness becomes a form of intellectual colonisation, primarily undertaken by those outside the region, who use such terms in anachronistic ways to describe complex identities better understood through concepts such as ethnicity, religion, culture, or class.[6]

Although a variety of languages were used to make the case for self-determination in the early twentieth century, the advocates of independence in Eastern Europe did not leave questions of race or whiteness unmarked. References to such ideas need not only be teased out through establishing careful analogies between race on one hand and ethnicity or class on the other. Eastern Europeans, like others on the continent who did not hold extra-European colonies, *had* identified with, and ambiguously participated in, Western Europe's territorial expansion – whether through mass emigration, service under other empires, or consumption of colonial culture.[7] The white world and white race *were* part of the European nationalist languages of the age across the continent. This chapter will concentrate on *Central-Eastern* Europe, namely on Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, none of which,

unlike the Balkans to the south, had the cores of their own independent states already formed prior to World War I. Their nationalist leaders made their case for a taste of sovereignty in a world in which African, Asian, and Middle Eastern emancipation threatened the Western imperial order, and commonly chose to distinguish their own claims from those of the extra-European world through languages of civilisation and race.

Entering the 'white citadel'

Over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, two powerful shifts, connected with European imperialism overseas, redefined the relationship of Europe's East to whiteness. On the one hand, the very concept of Europe was increasingly defined racially: colonised peoples outside the continent, once considered white, notably in North Africa and the Middle East, lost this designation.[8] By the late nineteenth century, the region's national movements increasingly looked to whiten themselves to identify with this imperialist conception of Europe. On the other, Western European imperialists understood themselves as the only Europeans to be fully white. The post-Enlightenment idea that Europe was divided between a civilised West and less developed East[9] was increasingly racialised. The equivalence between whiteness and European imperial power left Eastern Europeans with an ambiguous racial status: those who did not hold colonies, and were, in many cases, colonised themselves, could not be considered fully white. By the late nineteenth century, Germans saw the 'wild' eastern fringes of their European Empire as a space not fully tamed by Bismarck. 'Dark-skinned' Poles on this colonial frontier were equated with Native Americans in fiction, or with colonial subjects under former German rule in Africa who were likewise supposedly incapable of governing themselves.[10] German sociologist Max Weber famously claimed that German colonisation was turning 'Poles into human beings'.[11] Looking southwards, Edwin Grosvenor in his 1918 *The Races of Europe* called the 'enfranchised races' of the Balkans 'dark whites', which he attributed to racial intermixing.[12] Eastern Europeans had to work in a world in which their claims to full membership of a European club based on racial hierarchy were uncertain.

Eastern European experiences of transatlantic mobility from the late nineteenth century also captured this tension. On the one hand, the region's migrants profited from their status as Europeans. Three and a half million left from Austro-Hungary alone for passage to the US between 1876 and 1910.[13] On the other, they would on their arrival be denigrated, like the Irish and southern Europeans, as lesser whites. Anglo-Saxon writers feared the dilution of their race with Slavic admixture: Poles were noted in 1903

in the *New England Magazine* for their 'expressionless Slavic faces' and 'stunted figures'.[14] Yet Slavs were not wholly other: a biological essentialism based on phenotype was not common.[15] Features that today revealed backwardness could be overcome tomorrow: thus Eastern European migrants to the US could be referred to as 'our temporary Negroes'.[16] Assimilating to the norms of American civilisation, those from Europe's peripheries could expect eventually to throw off such racial stigma.

Whiteness was also associated with the capacity for self-governance – an attribute which many Central and Eastern European peoples, due to their history of being colonised, were not deemed by Western imperial elites to fully possess. The late nineteenth-century Scramble for Africa had opened up opportunities in imperial service for Polish, Czech, and Hungarian medical and scientific specialists.[17] Their experiences were ambiguous, however. For all their expertise, the British in East Africa often designated Poles as 'poor' or 'mean whites', who failed to fully embody a form of colonial whiteness that expressed the uncontestable exercise of power. Hence their presence risked undermining the image of the European that undergirded imperial rule.[18] Faced with strengthening African and Asian claims to self-determination beyond Europe after World War I, Cambridge professor William Ralph Inge, in his *Outspoken Essays*, argued that 'short-lived Slavs', whose birth rate exceeded even that of the 'Negro', should have their access to imperial territory severely limited. Fearing the degradation of the white race, which was grist to the mill of anti-imperialists, he called for the establishment of communities of 'superior whites' – which would exclude Slavs – in western Canada, Rhodesia, or southern Chile.[19] Such a racialised denigration of Eastern European peoples would also be used by those who opposed their full self-determination. Encountering their delegations at the postwar treaty discussions, South African statesman Jan Smuts used the racist derogatory term for Black Africans, 'kaffir', to describe Eastern Europeans, while Lord Robert Cecil referred to the Poles as 'orientalised Irish'.[20] Smuts considered the region filled with 'embryo states and derelict territories' led by elites 'untrained … deficient in power'. He thus called for Mandates to be used for the successor states of the Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian empires.[21] Slavs' supposed racial inferiority became part of an argument to consign them to a world still not wholly deserving of liberation from colonial oversight.

Yet in the aftermath of war, other Anglo-American writers and politicians reclaimed Slavs from a world of lesser whiteness. In a world in which Europe had crippled itself through internecine warfare, and now faced anti-colonial movements, Bolshevism, and an economically rising Far East, Eastern Europeans needed to be welcomed in. Racialised gradations between whites needed to be put aside. The prominent, prolific, and versatile postwar populariser of the concept of 'white crisis', Lothrop Stoddard, argued that

Europe's Teutons, Latins, Anglo-Saxons, and Slavs were not different blood races, and thus World War I had not been a race war but a fight between blood relatives.[22] From his American vantage point, Slavs had to be included to protect the 'white citadel' from a 'rising tide of colour'.[23] The Democratic US Senator from Missouri James A. Reed argued that a plethora of white Eastern European states would help defend the values of a white Western order at the new League of Nations, where 'there were only 15 white nations represented – and 17 nations for "other races"'. 'Why should Liberia (a "joke nation"), Haiti or other semi-negro nations cast votes equal to that of the US?', he declared.[24] Black American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois critiqued the United States' novel acceptance of the sovereignty of what he called 'new whites'; this, he argued, was a result of immigrants from the European periphery learning to despise Blacks in the US. Having now mastered the boundaries of American whiteness, and having 'sent the news back' to the 'submerged classes of their fatherlands', their emergent or expanding nations could be considered racially trustworthy.[25]

In Britain, Leo Chiozza Money, in *The Peril of the White*, attacked his countrymen who overplayed the racial differences between Europeans; it amounted, he argued, to 'race suicide'. In his vision, Europe, conceived as a bastion of Christianity, needed to be federated, and include Slavic nations, to protect a white race under siege. The *Daily Telegraph*, influenced by the Polish Information Committee in London, acted as cultural booster for the idea of the Polish nation during the war,[26] casting it as a lost member of the family of European nations who had bravely resisted 'the dogma of the divine right of Prussia to remould all other tribes and races'. Emerging from a British culture in which racial hierarchy as a basis for imperial rule was being ever more widely questioned, Poland's denigration was commonly characterised as an out-of-date remnant of a now collapsed German imperialism:[27] '[o]nly popular rhetoricians and German professors now pretend to know all the secrets of the origin of … nations. The old catchwords about the decadence of the Latin, the hysteria of the Celt and the incompetence of the Slav have long been exploded.'[28]

As in Ireland, where Eamon de Valera argued for independence as the 'last white nation deprived of its liberty', Central-Eastern European nationalists had to decide whether to align to the 'white citadel' – or, as more radical Irish republicans did, to conceptualise their struggle for independence alongside Asian and African movements.[29] There were voices on the Left who argued against a colonial alignment, and rather called for the dissolution of the very idea of Europe as a racist venture. Some Hungarian Social Democrats, for instance, criticised Europeanism in the 1920s as an already outdated colonial mind-set, a product of panic created by understanding the awakening of the Asian peoples as a racial threat. Long before Communist rule, they embraced the idea of Eurasia, and called for sovereign Eastern European

states to express solidarity with others across the colour line seeking their own liberation from empire.[30]

Independence movements had previously expressed a sense of connection with the cause of Black emancipation in the Americas and the plight of African peoples under European empire. Since the partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century, nationalists equated the situation of 'Negro slaves' with that of Polish serfs held under Russian domination, and celebrated the role that Polish troops had played in support of the Haitian Revolution.[31] In the early 1900s, the Polish press compared the forced dispossession of Poles under Prussian rule with the similar experiences of the populations of German Cameroon. However, they did this not because they supported the cause of African independence, but rather to internationalise the struggle against the German Empire and to shock Western audiences that a civilised European nation was being treated like African 'Negroes'.[32]

During World War I, as prospects for self-determination became more realistic, nationalists drew on such racialised language only to make their distance from extra-European claims clearer: the journey to statehood was narrated as the process of turning Black slaves into free whites. As with those Eastern Europeans who emigrated to North America, their national projects 'worked toward whiteness'.[33] Such arguments were directed at US President Woodrow Wilson, who viewed himself as the successor to Lincoln, freeing Slavs where his predecessor had liberated Southern slaves.[34] Wilson himself did not explicitly racialise the question of Eastern European self-determination;[35] nevertheless, in other contexts, he had connected race and rule. He was influenced by neo-Lamarckian theories, popular among American anthropologists, that the exercise of self-control and discipline, central to effective patrician government, was most effectively passed down through the Aryan and Teutonic races.[36] And as whiteness was not merely an attribute of skin colour, but equally the capacity to freely determine one's political future and effectively exercise power,[37] nationalist arguments often employed racial analogies to vivify accounts of their country's inbetweenness. Despite being less industrialised societies, weak in traditions of self-rule, with no colonies or claim to great power status, they performed confidently their capacity to throw off the marks of impotent colour through the inevitability of their eventual achievement of stable and productive self-determination.

Sometimes such claims were developed to undermine regional rivals: which nations had the greater capacity to become white Europeans, and hence worthy? Such performances were particularly common in appeals to North American audiences.[38] From 1916, Slovak nationalists paraded their suppression by 'semi-Asiatic Magyars' in the American press to argue for their inclusion in the family of European nations.[39] Analogies with Black

slaves in America were not invoked to undermine the global colour line but rather to demonstrate their worthiness to be on the white side of it. Their nation, it was argued, still lived in slavery, the Slovaks toiling on the lands of 'vile Magyar counts' whose behaviour was 'worse than what occurred on American plantations, with their black slaves, who were freed by the sainted honored martyr, President Lincoln'.[40] Through gaining independence, the nation would be relieved of its association with colour and subjugation. Such appeals included complex intellectual acrobatics to inscribe racial hierarchies within Central and Eastern Europe: Slovaks' essential Europeanness would only be realised by their liberation, while Hungarians' claim to superiority were undercut by their associations with oriental authoritarianism and brutality.[41]

It is thus not surprising that some of the most strident rejections of hierarchies of whiteness came from Hungary. Anatomist Mihály Lenhossék in his 1918 article 'Ethnicities and Eugenics' complained that exaggerated and spurious arguments about 'differences in value … within the white race' were being unjustifiably employed by the Great Powers to distinguish between the 'tendencies to talent' of the 'races of Europe' and thus determine who 'deserves to gain world dominion at the expense of the others'.[42] Yet it was not enough: Hungary's weaker traditions in anthropology – unlike its better developed historical and geographical expertise – left it undefended from racial arguments made by surrounding states at the postwar peace negotiations.[43] Czech-American intellectuals published in the American *Journal of Race Development* to assert that they were more European than Hungarians; Romanians promoted arguments that Hungarians were barbaric Mongols to French audiences.[44] Following the loss of two-thirds of Hungary's prewar territory at the Treaty of Trianon to Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, a radical nationalist newspaper feared their 'mutilation' had turned them into one of the 'vassal and semi-sovereign states, colonies, dependent territories, and savage peoples'; their initial exclusion from the League of Nations placed them lower in the international pecking order than 'Negro states such as Haiti', or Siam.[45] Disgusted and disoriented by a struggle over whiteness which they had lost, parts of the Hungarian middle class, according to Indologist Ervin Baktay, turned away from a 'white race … moved by nothing else but self-interest, property, material advantages, and to reign' towards the country's supposed Asian, Turkic, or even Native American roots.[46] Revisionist writings presented the country's 'mutilation' as a racist 'merciless punishment' of what Westerners had been seduced to believe was a 'yellow peril' within Europe.[47] Over the course of the 1920s, Hungarian Turanists, rather than rejecting accusations of Asiatic barbarism, developed fantasies about awakening the patriotic and violent spirit of Genghis Khan to overturn Trianon.[48]

Just as Central-Eastern Europeans experienced the partial removal of racial stigma by Western thinkers, many of their elites redoubled their commitment to a colonial vision of European civilisation. Approaching the threshold of the 'white citadel', they reproduced ideas of race and civilisation to exclude the extension of self-determination beyond the borders of Europe. Stanisław Posner, the socialist lawyer and internationally mobile promotor of Polish independence, argued in Paris lectures in 1916 that his country could recover its status as a 'Great Power'. It should become a 'bulwark of civilisation' against the threats of both Bolshevism and a rising Asia: 'Situated on the borders of the East', he elucidated, 'Poland defends Western Europe: she is like the Wall of China or the rampart of Trajan.'[49] The worldviews of conservative-national elites in Poland and Hungary were in part forged in the foundation of their nations in the struggle against Communism – whether in the Polish–Soviet War (1919–21), or in resistance to the Hungarian Communist Republic under Béla Kun (1919). Reviving antemurale myths, they quickly came to understand their new nation-states as the protector of Christian civilisation against a Bolshevik ideology racially coded as Asiatic and alien to Europe.[50] Thus Warsaw advocated extending the promise of self-determination through an 'Intermarium Confederation' of Christian and anti-communist nations stretching between the Mediterranean and Baltic seas – a concept that included parts of Ukrainian and Belarusian lands that would eventually be incorporated into the Soviet Union.[51] The struggle for self-determination beyond Europe, by contrast, became associated with Bolshevism in the light of Moscow's support for African and Asian liberation movements.[52] Criticism of colonial repression outside Europe could be batted away as giving succour to the Comintern and Soviet power, and hence likely to undermine Eastern European independence from the East.[53]

In 1920, the British explorer and colonial administrator Harry H. Johnston wrote: 'If we are to say, what we do sentimentally, but rightly, about restoring Polish nationality, about giving reparation to Ireland's separatist aspirations, about what should be done for the oppressed peoples of Europe, we cannot possibly exclude the African countries from that consideration.'[54] In a world in which Eastern Europe's liberation could be construed as a pathway for anti-colonial movements outside Europe, the very possibility of Afro-Asian independence was a potential threat to the West's acceptance of the region's fragile self-determination. President Wilson had himself declared that the process should end at the borders of a Christian Europe on the Bosphorus, where, he unsuccessfully argued, an American Mandate-type authority should be established.[55] Thus nationalists sought to disconnect their own independence from the prospect of colonial collapse outside Europe. Some emphasised their status as historic nations, with rights to such claims embedded within

the constitutions of the imperial polities from which they were escaping: their new countries had a legal-historical basis for existence that extra-European nationalisms, or competitor nationalisms in Eastern Europe, did not.[56] Possibilities for solidarity that had emerged in wartime encounters subsided: troops from Austria-Hungary and the Balkans had fought alongside African and Asian soldiers in foreign legions during World War I and were well-aware of their parallel demands for independence – but on coming home distanced themselves from these non-European causes.[57] Indeed, Polish troops would fight alongside the Spanish and French to suppress Berber uprisings in the early 1920s, while the most widely read interwar Hungarian pulp fiction author fantasised about his countrymen battling in foreign legions to hold back the anti-colonial tide.[58]

Some Czechoslovak and Polish elites even petitioned to be awarded colonies.[59] Jan Havlasa, one of the architects of an independent Czechoslovakia, and later its ambassador to Brazil, argued in 1919 that unless Europe was stabilised by distributing colonies more equitably, the continent would eventually be crushed by both the 'yellow race' and Bolshevism. At stake, he argued, was 'the protection against not just external but also internal influences that cause disintegration of the development of white civilisation and culture.'[60] Lobbies in both Czechoslovakia and Poland argued that Western powers were undermining the white race by refusing their new nations opportunities for settler colonialism: this unjust denial would encourage continental conflict, as overpopulation without extra-European outlets would drive national expansionism within Europe.[61]

Such desires often rested on the fantasy that Central-Eastern Europeans might be superior colonial whites. Already in 1870s and 1880s, Czech traveller Emil Holub encouraged his compatriots to form settlements in Africa to 'catch up' with the British and French.[62] In the early 1900s, following the Boer War and Herero and Nama genocide, Polish nationalists argued that the violence of Western European colonialism had diminished the status of the white man. Their nation, by contrast, as successor to the Enlightenment, and yet formed in the experience of subjugation and 'slavery', could bring a more humane and enlightened development to Africa.[63] At moments of highest-flying fantasy, self-determination in Eastern Europe became the redemption of a whiteness besmirched by violent practices overseas, with the potential to save the European colonial project from itself. By the mid-1930s, Polish colonial advocates' enthusiasm was reactivated by Mussolini's imperial conquests in East Africa,[64] and such arguments resurfaced. Writers for the Maritime and Colonial League claimed that Poland had no desire for colonies that entailed direct political control, but merely sought to offer economic opportunities by using their expertise to develop backward coastal

areas, around which the ‘Polish sea’ might be built. They thought themselves different to other white men:

> These [Black] races, subjugated for centuries, regard a white man, that is, primarily, an Englishman, a German, a Frenchman, as an oppressor … ‘We have great confidence in Poland’ – said an authorised representative of African races – ‘that because Poland itself has experienced the bitterness of slavery, she knows what a foreign yoke is. A coloured person would see a protector, a great friend in a Pole, and not a hated oppressor. Here lies, it seems, the great moral force of Poland … Poles have a high degree of aptitude for the economic management of uninhabited areas.’[65]

Some African anti-colonial leaders who had looked kindly at Eastern European self-determination – in part because they viewed it as marking a pathway for their own independence – were shocked. Nnamdi Azikiwe, who would later become republican Nigeria’s first president, wrote:

> And so Poland, which until 1914 was a colonial territory of three different countries and which has been allowed to exercise the Wilsonian right of self-determination, now needs colonies, and not in Europe but in Africa. … The former servant of the Austrian empress Maria Theresa, the Russian empress Catherine II and the Prussian king Frederick the Great now wants to be a master in an African country.[66]

These colonial demands were generally not realistic claims on territory – although Poland would later be granted a Mandate in Liberia in the 1930s.[67] In March 1919, the Foreign Commission of the Polish *Sejm* assessed its Mandate policy as impractical. Poland’s de facto leader Marshal Piłsudski dismissed, for much of the 1920s, such fantastical expansionism as a distraction from the urgent task of securing the fragile new state within Europe. Nevertheless, it was a fantasy of political utility. On the one hand, it sharply distinguished Slavic claims to self-determination from those of African or Asian nationalists by connecting their own independence to the strengthening of a wider colonial world. On the other, imagining themselves as superior white rulers of Mandates, Poles articulated the idea that they were effective in the exercise of power, and hence worthy of being constituted as a nation-state whose own territory should no longer be considered colonisable by Western powers.[68]

Whitening the nation

Elites in the new Central-Eastern European states, namely Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, saw their cultures as a key transmission belt to expand European civilisation eastwards.[69] As Hungarians (unsuccessfully) resisted

the loss of territory, they presented their country as bearers of this European gospel, invoking the experience they had gained through their earlier 'civilising missions' in the Balkans.[70] In 1920, the leader of the Hungarian delegation, Count Apponyi, argued that 'the neighbouring nations, due to unfortunate events in their histories, joined the family of civilized nations later than us … at a lower cultural stage'. Thus, he argued, the setting of new boundaries in the future should 'not be indifferent to the great cultural values of humankind'.[71] Interwar Hungarian elites no longer fantasised, as their counterparts in Czechoslovakia and Poland did, about gaining colonies abroad; rather, colonial thinking was channelled into repossessing these lost lands. Their visions fused class with national mission: bourgeois Magyar culture was a key carrier of European civilisation to 'less developed' Orthodox Romanian and Slavic peasant cultures.[72] Count Pál Teleki, twice interwar Hungarian Prime Minister, imagined Hungary's missions as a kind of manifest destiny in the Carpathian Basin; just as Americans had colonised land between the Appalachians and Rockies, so Hungary needed to re-establish its role on the Great Plain between the Alps and Carpathians.[73] The idea of a supposedly superior nation forced to cede land was made plain in racist revisionist propaganda aimed at shocking an American audience (Figure 1.1).

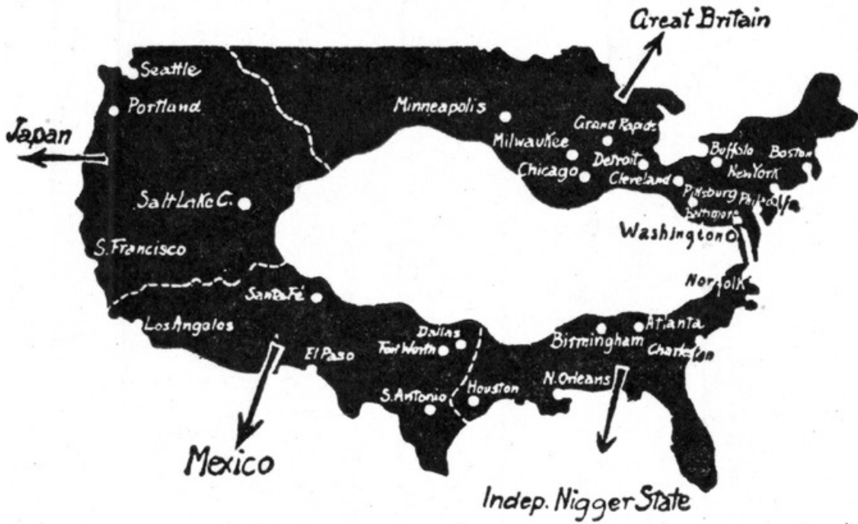
Did these elites draw on ideas of racial hierarchy, as they sought to raise the civilisational level of the continent's peripheries? Kathryn Ciancia points out in her study of Poland's newly acquired eastern territories that minority groups, although subject to what British Prime Minister Lloyd George complained was a worse policy of imperialist assimilation than that of Britain or France, nevertheless:

> remained distinct from non-European populations in far-off colonial territories. [They were] nationally assimilable in ways that differed dramatically from … ways in which racist French republicans struggled to imagine Africans as truly French … [occupying] a lower rung of the intra-European civilizational gradient.[74]

Anxieties about being fully identified with a white colonial vision of Europe were played out in these new projects of 'internal colonisation': if civilisation was racially graded, then it was not difficult to see marginal minorities – often in new states' own poorer Easts or Souths – as less than fully white too. While new elites, by dint of achieving sovereignty, were no longer the 'negroes of Europe', the hierarchy that this transformation narrated did not disappear, but was transferred to their own Orients or 'darkest Africas' in need of modernisation within. Often racial categories forged in extra-European empire were brought back by anthropologists and medical specialists to target backward elements within the new state.[75] In this volume, Shmidt explores the work of Vojtěch Suk, a distinguished Czech anthropologist,

Ha a trianoni békét a győzőkre szabták volna.

A megcsonkított Amerika.



Citizens of the U. S. A.!

Would you accept this peace?

It would be the same which was forced upon Hungary!

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA

AUSTRIA

ROMANIA

JUGOSLAVIA

Figure 1.1 'Citizens of the U.S.A. – Would You Accept This Peace?' (1920), Cornell University – P. J. Mode Collection of Persuasive Cartography, #8548. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

whose research on primitives both inside and outside Europe informed his work on the peripheries of the newly founded Czechoslovak state. He saw in his work colonial parallels: the Czechs such as himself were the British civilisers, and Jews the rich Indians of eastern Africa, who blocked 'less developed' minorities such as Rusyns – equated with Black Africans – from accumulation and development.[76]

The idea of whitening minorities was more explicit when extra-European migration was discussed. Given the later Communist restrictions on mobility to retain labour, and twenty-first century fears of demographic crisis, it is odd to recall that interwar Eastern European states encouraged migration in the name of strengthening the nation. Jan Havlasa had already argued in 1919 that emigration would enable minorities to recognise themselves as a 'wider base for the white race'.[77] From 1924, US immigration restrictions meant the advantages of Africa and Latin America for poor and minority groups were increasingly discussed in Poland and Czechoslovakia.[78] Such communities, surrounded by a more unfamiliar environment, would have both their new national identities and sense of racial belonging reinforced.[79] Others were less sure: a journal close to the Polish National Democratic Party, *Myśl Narodowa*, frequently published articles on the dangers of potential racial intermixing.

The idea that emigration could usefully clear out unwanted 'unhealthy' populations of Europe helped to render the expulsion of Jews conceivable. Poland had the largest, and rapidly growing, Jewish population in the region – over three million by the late 1930s. The Polish Maritime and Colonial League organised a declaration in favour of the 'liquidation of Jewish overpopulation': 'finding a solution that would relieve Europe of its ancient infirmities', as its journal *The Sea* put it in January 1939.[80] By the late 1930s, all of Poland's major political parties came to advocate Jewish emigration.[81]

Discussing the whiteness or otherwise of Jews played a key role. Since the early twentieth century, nationalist movements in the region had drawn on the figure of the 'eastern Jew', whom they caricatured as less assimilated and more backward than their counterparts in Western Europe.[82] This figure was presented as culturally alien: in a series of articles in the mid-1930s entitled 'Warsaw's Black Continent', for example, the Polish weekly *Literary News* presented visits to traditional Polish Jewish *cheder* as unsettlingly similar to exploration in the African jungle. Communities with a physiology rooted outside the continent, it was argued, would take to agricultural labour in the tropics more easily than those who were fully European.[83] Nevertheless, Jews could become white through emigration: settled in Palestine or Australia they would in the long run help the defence of a white world against Arabs or the 'yellow race'.[84] In late 1938, the Polish Prime Minister Felicjan Sławoj Składkowski proposed that the acquisition of land for the migration of Jews

with connections back to Poland would benefit the country's maritime free trade – a clinching factor, he thought, that could garner the proposal wide social support.[85]

Following the closure of Palestine to Jewish emigration in the late 1930s, Poland's Maritime and Colonial League called on Jews to propose territories which were 'underpopulated', such as Rhodesia, Angola, and the Belgian Congo. Some Polish Zionist Jews who had served in Western Europe's colonial territories saw in this proposed expulsion the opportunity to found a Jewish state.[86] In this sense, Eastern European Jews could simultaneously be victims of marginalisation and violence at home while also inspired by the region's continuing colonial fantasies.[87] Following the Évian Conference (July 1938), the British government promised land for Jewish settlement in East Africa, and the Hungarian Jewish press sold the benefits of Kenya.[88] It failed, however, in some part because European settlers in East Africa protested vociferously against Jewish settlement.[89] Other Jewish leaders sought a Zionism that did not reproduce Eurocentric frames in which Jews were regarded as inferior – and rather sought in Pan-Asianism solidarities that would ally their project with a strengthening anti-colonial world.[90]

Conclusion

States forged out of the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian empires were born at a moment in which the devastating legacies of World War I were gathered into racialised fears about 'white crisis'. Nationalist elites often sought to distance themselves from the self-determination of the 'darker nations', narrating a journey from enslavement to full membership of a Western world where whiteness was associated with the effective exercise of power. Some critics notwithstanding, nationalists often performed this commitment to a white colonial Europe – as protectors of the continent's eastern borders from 'Asiatic barbarism', as potential colonists in Africa, or as bringers of white bourgeois European culture to their own 'darker' minorities within.

Yet histories of whiteness have featured little in the collective memory of self-determination. A Wilsonian myth developed without concern for race, particularly popular in those countries which benefited from his intervention. In interwar Czechoslovakia, mass-produced portraits of Wilson circulated widely,[91] and there were memorial services when he died.[92] At moments, the racial aspects of the independence struggle, and its links to the broader expansion of the white West, became faintly visible. Jan Paderewski, the pianist and indefatigable promoter of Polish independence, commissioned a statue of Wilson from Gutzon Borglum, known for his (never realised)

Figure 1.2 Woodrow Wilson statue in Poznań, with Gutzon Borglum (1931), from the personal collection of Larry Wolff.

designs of Confederate monuments in the 1920s, and for celebrating the colonisation of the American West in his Mount Rushmore project soon after. Wilson was unveiled in Poznań on American Independence Day in 1931 (Figure 1.2), accompanied by a celebration of Polish contributions to the American Revolution, and a restatement of the United States' continued commitment to Poland's borders in face of German revisionist claims.[93]

Following the Communist takeovers in the late 1940s, new elites sidelined Wilson's role in the region's self-determination. Wilson monuments destroyed under Nazi occupation were not rebuilt. The 'hypocritical bourgeois legend' of Wilson which had been 'drummed into the minds and feelings of our people' was attacked by Czech Jiří Hájek in his *Legend of Wilson* (1953): Wilson had resisted self-determination through his initial support for the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a bastion against Bolshevism. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938 had further confirmed the West's lack

of commitment to Central-Eastern European nations.[94] Lenin and Stalin were, according to him, the real liberators of the region.

Despite Eastern European Communist states' commitments to African and Asian self-determination from the 1950s, there was only a very limited re-examination of the racialised inequalities of the postwar peace treaties and the rejection of extra-European nations' claims to sovereignty after World War I.[95] 'White hegemony' was sometimes mentioned, but only to reinforce a Eurocentric Marxist developmental timeline in which the Russian Revolution, not Wilson, provided the true model for anti-colonial liberation which extra-European states would later be in a position to follow.[96] Those few postwar Eastern European historians who did construct more entangled histories of decolonisation – connecting their countries' gradual loss of sovereignty in the late 1930s to the contemporaneous reinvigoration of colonialism in Africa – skipped over questions of racial difference.

By the late 1960s, with nationalist turns inside many of the region's Communist parties, and less antagonistic relations with the US, Wilson's legacy was partly recuperated.[97] After 1989, with the collapse of Communism, his legend returned at full blast – Warsaw gained a Wilson Square, Prague a statue and railway station,[98] Plzeň a bridge – and Sarajevo regained a Wilson Promenade. Within the region, Wilson's integration into post-1989 heroic twentieth-century histories of sovereignty gained, lost, and regained did not require any interrogation of race. It was rather Black African and Black diasporic voices who interpreted the distancing of Eastern Europe from the Global South after 1989 racially, as the reconstitution of a white Europe – just as similar voices in the 1920s had understood Eastern European independence after World War I as evidence of the strengthening of the 'white citadel'.[99]

A generation later, in the summer of 2020, in the context of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, Woodrow Wilson's past as a segregationist led to a public reassessment of his legacy in the US. These debates crossed the Atlantic. Movements for Roma rights in Eastern Europe recognised the potential of BLM, connecting the region's under-examined relationship to colonial and racist thought and contemporary racism towards minorities.[100] In Warsaw and Poznań, leftist politicians argued that, given his racism, Wilson's name be removed from a square and park respectively.[101] There was strong mainstream pushback – and certainly little appetite for a public re-assessment of Wilson: 'hysterical' Westerners, populist politicians argued, were now devouring their own heroes in the name of an excessive racial politics. Wilson could remain an untainted beneficent father figure for many Poles, Czechs, and Slovaks precisely because the very foundation of their nations was not linked either in the academic or popular mind with questions of white supremacy.[102] In this view, the region's self-determination self-evidently

stood at a great distance from Wilson's or America's domestic racism.[103] Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, Central-Eastern Europe's self-determination and nation-building was conceptualised, enacted, and contested as part of a broader world of colonial and racial thought – a history that had been long hidden, both under Communism and after, by appeals to an anti-colonial racial innocence.

Notes

1 'Africa, Self-Determination and the Negro', *Negro World*, 4 January 1930, 4.
2 'Shoulder Arms', *Negro World*, 22 June 1929.
3 On African racialisations of the 'return to Europe', see James Mark, Bogdan C. Iacob, Tobias Rupprecht, and Ljubica Spaskovska, *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), chapter 3; on the Hungarian '1956 revolt' racialised as a *white* uprising in Africa and the US, see Paul Betts, James Mark, Idesbald Goddeeris, and Kim Christiaens, 'Race, Socialism and Solidarity: Anti-Apartheid in Eastern Europe', in Robert Skinner and Anna Konieczna (eds), *Global History of Anti-Apartheid: Forward to Freedom in South Africa* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2019), 155–8.
4 For otherwise important works which leave the question of race unaddressed, see John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020); Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020). On racial exceptionalism: Catherine Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 1–16; Catherine Baker, 'Postcoloniality Without Race? Racial Exceptionalism and Southeast European Cultural Studies', *Interventions*, 20:6 (2018), 759–84; Katarina Kušić, Philipp Lottholz, and Polina Manolova, 'From Dialogue to Practice: Pathways Towards Decoloniality in Southeast Europe', in Katarina Kušić, Philipp Lottholz, and Polina Manolova (eds), *Decolonial Theory and Practice in Southeast Europe* (Sofia: dVERSIA, 2019), 25.
5 For the term, see Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
6 On this critique, see Donald Clelland and Wilma Dunaway, 'Toward Theoretical Liberation: Challenging the Intellectual Imperialism of the Western Race Paradigm', *Journal of Labor and Society*, 24:4 (2021), 487–524, 10.
7 On non-colonial Europeans' 'colonial mind', as applied to the Nordic region, see Suvi Keskinen, Salla Tuori, Sara Irni, and Diana Mulinari (eds), *Complying with Colonialism: Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Nordic Region* (London: Routledge, 2016); on Eastern Europe, Zoltán Ginelli, 'Decolonizing the Non-Colonizers?: Historicizing Eastern Europe in Global Colonialism', blog, 18 October 2020, https://zoltanginelli.com/2020/10/18/

decolonizing-the-non-colonizers-historicizing-eastern-europe-in-global-colonialism/ (accessed 1 January 2023).

8 Alastair Bonnett, 'Who Was White?: The Disappearance of Non-European White Identities and the Formation of European Racial Whiteness', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21:6 (1998), 1029–55, 1030.

9 Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

10 Kristin Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 21–2.

11 Manuela Boatcă, '"From the Standpoint of Germanism": A Postcolonial Critique of Weber's Theory of Race and Ethnicity', *Political Power and Social Theory*, 24 (2013), 55–80, 69.

12 Miglena S. Todorova, 'Imagining "In-Between" Peoples across the Atlantic', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 19:4 (2006), 397–418, 407.

13 Ulf Brunnbauer, *Globalizing Southeastern Europe: Emigrants, America, and the State since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 28, 45.

14 Tereza Humpolíková, 'Aleš Hrdlička and the American Racial Hierarchy, 1890–1940' (BA dissertation, Tomas Bata University, 2018), 27; on this racialisation, see also David Roediger and James R. Barrett, 'Inbetween Peoples: Race, Nationality and the "New Immigrant" Working Class', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 16:3 (1997), 3–44; Robert M. Zecker, *Race and America's Immigrant Press: How the Slovaks Were Taught to Think Like White People* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

15 Zecker, *Race*, 407.

16 Roediger and Barrett, 'Inbetween Peoples', 143.

17 Lenny A. Ureña Valerio, *Colonial Fantasies, Imperial Realities: Race Science and the Making of Polishness on the Fringes of the German Empire, 1840–1920* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2019), chapter 3.

18 For this usage, see Elspeth Huxley, *White Man's Country and the Making of Kenya* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1935), 121. This survived after 1945: Katarzyna Nowak, '"We Would Rather Drown Ourselves in Lake Victoria": Refugee Women, Protest, and Polish Displacement in Colonial East Africa, 1948–49', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 37:1–2 (2019), 92–117, 96; Jochen Lingelbach, *On the Edges of Whiteness: Polish Refugees in British Colonial Africa During and After the Second World War* (New York: Berghahn, 2020).

19 William Ralph Inge, *Outspoken Essays* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1919), 69, 71.

20 Jan Christiaan Smuts, *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), especially 10–13. On Slavs as the 'Negroes of Europe', see also Yvan Goll, 'Introduction', in Yvan Goll (ed.), *Les Cinq continents: Anthologie mondiale de la poésie contemporaine* (Paris: La Renaissance du Livre, 1922).

21 'From Our Political Correspondents', *The Times*, 30 January 1919; Robert Vitalis, *White World Order, Black Power Politics: The Birth of American International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 76.

22 Quoted in Vitalis, *White World Order*, 63.
23 See also Baker, this volume.
24 'Senator Reed on the League of Nations', *New York Age*, 21 June 1919, 4. On white supremacy and the League, see Aden Knaap, 'White Internationalism and the League of Nations Movement in Interwar Australia', *Journal of Global History* 18 (2023), 1–21.
25 W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, 'Of the Culture of White Folk', *Journal of Race Development*, 7:4 (1917), 434–47, 446.
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28 'Kingdom of Poland', *Daily Telegraph*, 6 August 1915, 12.
29 Patrick Mannion and Fearghal McGarry, 'Introduction', in Patrick Mannion and Fearghal McGarry (eds), *The Irish Revolution: A Global History* (New York: New York University Press, 2022), 19–22; on the importance of Central European nations for Irish independence, see Lili Zách, '"The First of the Small Nations": The Significance of Central European Small States in Irish Nationalist Political Rhetoric, 1918–22', *Irish Historical Studies*, 44:165 (2020), 25–40.
30 Katalin Egresi, 'Területi revízió vagy egységes Európa? A magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt külpolitikai nézetei az 1920-as években', *Kutatási füzetek*, 12 (2005), 119–31, 119, 124.
31 Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson*, 83; Paweł Zajas, 'Polskie "Postcolonial studies"?: Przypadek południowoafrykański', Materiały z konferencji 'Słowa ponad granicami. Literackie świadectwa kontaktów kulturowych', *Napis*, 11 (2005), 203–20, 218.
32 Jawad Daheur, '"They Handle Negroes Just Like Us": German Colonialism in Cameroon in the Eyes of Poles (1885–1914)', *European Review*, 26:3 (2018), 492–502.
33 For the phrase, see David R. Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: The Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). On the increasing number of returnees, see Bálint Varga, 'From the United States to Rural Europe: The New Immigration, Homecoming Migrants, and Social Remittances in Hungary', *Itinerario*, 45:2 (2021), 1–25.
34 Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson*, 30.
35 Ibid., 17. For a mainstream account that explores the racism of Wilson's America, see Adam Hochschild, *American Midnight: The Great War, a Violent Peace, and Democracy's Forgotten Crisis* (New York: Mariner Books, 2022). On the tension between Wilson's proclamations of equality and reluctance to address race: Henry Blumenthal, 'Woodrow Wilson and The Race Question', *Journal of Negro History*, 48:1 (1963), 1–21.
36 John M. Hobson, *The Eurocentric Conception of World Politics: Western International Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 172; Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*

(New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 242–3; Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and John M. Hobson, 'The Big Bangs of IR: The Myths that Your Teachers Still Tell You about 1648 and 1919', *Millennium*, 39:3 (2011), 735–58, 750–1.

37 Todorova, 'Imagining "In-Between" Peoples', 404.

38 On racialised pleas to Wilson from the Albanian diaspora, see Piro Rexhepi, *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality Along the Balkan Route* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2023), 96–7. On the growing importance of national image-making through cultural diplomacy in this period, see Bartosz Dziewanowski-Stefańczyk, 'To "Acquire the Right Place Among the Nations": Cultural Diplomacy and the New Order in East Central Europe', in Bartosz Dziewanowski-Stefańczyk and Jay Winter (eds), *A New Europe, 1918–1923: Instability, Innovation, Recovery* (London: Routledge, 2022), 91–113.

39 Zecker, *Race*, 159.

40 Ján Smolnicky of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, wrote to *Jednota*, quoted in Zecker, *Race*, 173.

41 The idea that peacemakers had seen Hungarians as an 'evil Turk and Mongol race … unfit people for Europe' was part of the populist revival of race in the 2010s: Péter Tamáska, 'Kis magyar gyarmat', *Magyar Hírlap*, 7 June 2016, 7.

42 Mihály Lenhossék, 'A népfajok és az eugenika', *Természettudományi Közlöny*, 1–15 April 1918, 230.

43 Tibor Frank, 'Anthropology and Politics. Craniology and Racism in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy', *Hungarian Studies*, 3:1–2 (1987), 177–88, 185.

44 See, e.g., the characterisation of Hungarians as Tartars in J. F. Smetanka, 'The Demands of the Bohemian People', *Journal of Race Development*, 8:2 (1917), 157–70, 168; Aurel C. Popovici, *La question roumaine en Transylvanie et en Hongrie* (Lausanne and Paris: Librairie Payot, 1918), 66. The Parisian daily *Le Miroir* published articles in 1919 explaining that Magyars' iniquitous violent colonisation of territory was a result of their Mongolian origin.

45 'Hogy csonkították meg Magyarországot Trianonban?', *Csonkamagyarország*, 5 June 1921, 1.

46 Ervin Baktay in Béla Kelényi (ed.), *Az indológus indián: Baktay Ervin emlékezete* (Budapest: Hopp Ferenc Kelet-ázsiai Művészeti Múzeum, 2014), 273, quoted in Holly Case, 'Hungary's Real Indians', *Eurozine*, 3 April 2018, www.eurozine.com/hungarys-real-indians/ (accessed 31 January 2023). See Ginelli, this volume.

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48 E.g. 'A rákosi hősi síremlék', *Magyar Katonai Közlöny*, 13 (1925), 491–2.

49 Stanisław Posner, *Poland as an Independent Economic Unit* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916), 10.

50 See also Baker, this volume.

51 Piotr Puchalski, 'The Polish Mission to Liberia, 1934–1938: Constructing Poland's Colonial Identity', *Historical Journal*, 60:4 (2017), 1071–96, 1079.

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54 Sir Harry Johnston, *The Backward Peoples and our Relations with Them* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), 8.
55 Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson*, 17. The US Senate rejected this proposal and much of the Wilsonian vision.
56 Natasha Wheatley, 'Central Europe as Ground Zero of the New International Order', *Slavic Review*, 78:4 (2019), 900–11, 910.
57 Zecker, *Race*, 160.
58 Józef Białoskórski, *Hiszpańska Legia Cudzoziemska* (Warsaw: J. Kubicki, 1939). See the stories of Hungarian Jenő Rejtő (P. Howard), 1905–43.
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60 Jan Havlasa, *Ceské kolonie zámořské* (Prague: Nakladatelství spisů, 1919).
61 Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: Norton, 2016), 129–30.
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67 Puchalski, 'The Polish Mission', 1071–96.
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2

The 'racial contract', 'whiteness contract', and Central Europe

Bolaji Balogun

Charles Mills' *The Racial Contract* (1997), as a conceptual framework, offers an understanding of the mutually constitutive nature of contractual agreements and provides an account of white supremacy that is partly rooted in economic arrangements based on consensual agreements. The framework took different forms, including the 'colonial contract' that paved the way for the subordination of particular groups. Despite its familiarity, Mills' racial contract theory has so far centred on the United States and Western Europe. The concept has never been considered in the theorisation of populism that brought the questions of the 'whiteness contract' into the lexicon of Central Europe. As I will use the term, racial contract concerns those different ways in which power relations between white and non-white people are shaped by their representations and historical actuality.

Following Mills' logic, I deploy the terms racial contract and 'whiteness contract' through the experiences of people who are often racialised, socially and biologically, as non-Europeans. In doing so, first, I acknowledge the racial contract as the creation of the modern world, 'a racially hierarchical polity, globally dominated by Europeans',[1] hence, the racial contract is a global one, between people racialised as white or non-white. Second, I recognise the racial contract as an arrangement that cannot be reduced to Western European hegemony, but is better understood by exploring the broader boundaries between Europeanness and non-Europeanness as part of a global history. These conditions are evident in the perception of race that are shared between Central and Western Europe, a legacy of a common history that runs through the Renaissance, Reformation, and the continent's 'overseas discoveries'.[2]

The intended scope of my argument is that the effect of the racial contract is global, especially in relation to the darker and lighter 'races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea'.[3] European expansionism brought into existence a white-dominated world from which less powerful

European states have benefited. Following the racial contract logic allows me to highlight the benefits of European colonialism to the development and the expansion of economies in Central Europe specifically.

The 'racial contract' as a global contract

From the position of a scholar interested in the study of race as a historical idea with global implications, I argue that there is a distinctive interpretation that is particularly worth redirecting: Mills' *The Racial Contract* (1997). Racial contract theory has been especially useful for scholars addressing questions of white supremacy and domination in a world system that is constructed through racial hierarchies. Several scholars have illustrated this neatly as a world that is racially and hierarchically constructed. Philip Curtin sees it as self-identification and the identification of 'the other people'.[4] Gurminder Bhambra reads the same exploration through *Lebensraum*: the demand for colonial settlement pioneered by Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, and Germany, later followed by nations in Scandinavia and in Central Europe.[5] Emerging globalised scholarship has shown deep entanglements of Central Europe with a wide network of transregional interactions and connections.[6] The peripheral or partial participation of Scandinavian and Eastern European nations in Europe's global expansion and colonial settlement projects, Anikó Imre observes, have always signalled the desire to join in '"Western" imperial master narratives'.[7] Studying such global interconnections highlights not only the desire of 'peripheral Europeans' for colonialism, but also their entanglement with the construction a world of racial hierarchies. For example, the Lutheran Norwegian Missionary Society that ran between 1880 and 1910 in southern Africa and Madagascar was not a mere humanitarian enterprise. As Line Nyhagen Predelli argues, 'Among Norwegian missionaries, as among those from other European and North American countries, a white, racial hegemony governed the sexual and marital relationships between women and men.'[8]

Unlike the common assumption that Europe was advanced and more progressive than all other regions prior to the beginning of the period of colonialism, James Blaut contends that it was the loot of colonialism that led to the rise and the superiority of European nations, most notably the control of resources in non-European countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.[9] The argument here is not whether nations in Central Europe possessed overseas colonies in non-European countries. What is rather worth emphasising is that it is almost impossible to leave any region of Europe out of the manifestations of race and colonialism.[10] As Anthony Marx has

observed, Europe is one collective place where the political production of race and the political production of nationhood are connected.[11] The result of such production of nationhood has been the encoding of the category of Black people based on their skin colour in order to exploit the labourers of Africa.[12]

Nonetheless, the exploitation of non-Europeans cannot be reduced to the West. As James Mark and Quinn Slobodian have shown, the broader relationship between Central Europe and countries outside Europe can be seen through a colonial lens.[13] For example, they draw attention to the ways in which the interwar economic crisis in Central Europe underpinned the calls for an attainment of colonies, as politicians in Czechoslovakia started lobbying for an allocation of colonial settlement in Togo.[14] This was coupled with the actions of leaders of the Polish Maritime and Colonial League demanding the attainment of colonies for Poland, as part of the processes of becoming a 'proper' European state.[15] Owning colonies would allow these emerging Central European states to avoid tariffs that may have been put up by the leading colonising powers, and access to the raw materials needed for industrial production and technological advances that all of the West shared due to European colonialism.

All this makes European exploitation more explicit, especially where colonialism is seen as global, coercive, and racial. Even when many contemporary European societies claim to be postracial, there is a sense in which their moral codes have been racialised based on the planetary advantage and disadvantage established by the racialised system that leaves Black populations 'grappling with the institutions of a Euro-dominated world'.[16] This particular aspect of the racial contract continues to be relevant not only in the West, but globally, from which Central Europe cannot be an exemption. Seen as such, Mills' work cannot be reduced to Western colonialism, voyages of discovery, and their management of non-European and non-white peoples. Mills' theories can thus be further developed, having seldom before been considered from the standpoint of a modernity that also underpins the self-conceptions and racial formations in Central Europe too. To be clear, the racial contract is not exactly Western, as a pact of historical fact and post-Enlightenment political thought. It is broadly a European contract through which Europeans define and manage non-Europeans. In fact, it is all related to how:

> globally and *within* particular nations, then, white people, Europeans and their descendants, continue to benefit from the Racial Contract, which creates a world in their cultural image, political states differentially favouring their interests, an economy structured around the racial exploitation of others, and a moral psychology (not just in whites sometimes in nonwhites also) skewed consciously and unconsciously toward privileging them, taking the status quo

> of differential racial entitlement as normatively legitimate, and not to be investigated further.[17]

In essence, the racial contract needs to be conceived from the standpoint of modernity created as a racial hierarchy that is dominated by whites/ Europeans. It aimed at privileging whites as a group in relation to non-whites, and the exploitation of the non-white bodies, who were denied equal socio-economic opportunities.

Central Europe and the 'racial contract'

How is Central Europe connected to the racial contract? To examine this question, it is important to point to Mills' remark – 'we the white people'. The contract was based on and guided by Christian faith, European exploration, self-identification, and the identification of the other. As Mills argues, race gradually became the formal marker of these explorations and states' experimentations.[18] With this context in mind, in redirecting the racial contract, I argue that this theory goes beyond Western hegemony. The understanding of the racial contract that is rerouted here is evident within the histories of many Central European states that acquired modernity through the adoption of global racial/colonial rules.

To illustrate this, I discuss the ways in which the racial contract serves as a proxy for the whiteness contract through three manifestations – colonial association, eugenics, and economics – that are often peripheral within national discourses in Central Europe. Drawing on the Polish and the Czech examples, I identify a close relationship between Central European nations and the benefits of global white supremacy in order to reveal their association with the racial contract through attempts at national self-determination.

Colonial association

The histories of colonialism differ depending on the context and location, but the global implications of such histories, especially in Central Europe, are linked to whiteness and Europeanness:

> The trajectory that connects central European and other colonialisms is whiteness. Seeing themselves as Whites or rather, applying the racial category to others but not to themselves, central Europeans were able to basically imagine themselves into any colonial narrative that was not explicitly defined in ethno-linguistic terms. In narratives, white central Europeans could travel the same ways as the powerful British and Frenchmen and use black local porters as their servants.[19]

Self-imagination and participation within the imperial order meant the exploitation of global colonial resources and the forceful or voluntary management of those who were branded *not quite human*, *not quite European*, and *not quite Christian*.

Although many countries in Central Europe often present themselves as nations with 'colonial exceptionalism',[20] historically, most nations in Europe shared similar colonial aspirations that might bring trade, resources, and production benefits to Europe.[21] For example, while Poland as a sovereign nation did not exist until 1918, there was no shortage of Polish individuals in the German colonial dominations and the acquisition of overseas territories. Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński's account of exploration in Africa between 1880 and 1883 exemplifies such individual endeavours. Szolc-Rogoziński, a Polish explorer, started a campaign to raise funds for his attempt to create a Polish colony in Cameroon.[22] His journey cannot be read in isolation; it was the first Polish attempt at colonial policy and knowledge production about Africa.[23] This early initiative sets the ground for the broader framing of Poland's participation in colonial projects initiated by the Polish Maritime and Colonial League in the 1930s.[24] To this end, Poland as a sovereign state was actively involved in some sort of peripheral economic activities, most notably with Liberia, which involved 'a series of diplomatic, commercial, and scientific initiatives'[25] while presenting an anti-imperial stance during the peak of European imperialism.[26]

Contrary to the mainstream assumption that Poland was never involved in the European colonial project, the Polish Maritime and Colonial League spent the large part of the post-1918 period lobbying for colonial acquisitions.[27] Poland actively sought trade outlets and settlements in Africa or Latin America to achieve a steady stream of raw materials for national economic development. As Lenny Ureña Valerio has demonstrated, Polish professionals and intelligentsia, despite being the victims of traumatic partitions, developed their own 'colonial fantasies' reflecting their experiences in East Africa and through connections to Polish migration in Latin America.[28]

Similarly, in neighbouring Czechoslovakia, Michael Dean has pointed out that colonial demands were very much present in Czechoslovak nation-building. Such claims were meant to facilitate the processes of bringing inexpensive raw materials from Africa into the Czechoslovak metropole. Therefore, narratives about 'Czech Overseas Colonies', 'Our Colonies', 'Czech West Africa', 'Czech New Guinea', and 'Czech Togo' were not uncommon in Czechoslovak self-representations about national development.[29] All this confirms the ways in which Czechoslovakia, like Poland, had been connected to the wider European colonial projects through the processes

of 'nation-building that posited the Czech national body firmly within the coordinates of the "white" colonial civilisation'.[30] Such a colonial move as a process of advancement emerged as part of the Czechs' and Slovaks' racialised imaginaries of non-European peoples and cultures.[31]

Eugenics

The concept of the racial contract can also be very usefully applied to the pseudo-scientific conceptualisation of blood relations as the foundation for an extended kin network often presented through primordial attachment.[32] The purpose of such attachment, as Sam Lucy argues, was partly to make the boundaries of ethnic groups visible to outsiders in order to acknowledge the existence of the dominant group.[33] It was a marking of a 'sense of one's place' in the racial contract and also an indication of a 'sense of the place of others'.[34] Eugenics offered a practical approach to such primordial attachment and seemed most stark in the context of 'Blut und Boden' ('blood and soil').[35] However, critical engagement with primordial attachment via eugenics tends to focus on the inner working of power over diverse populations assumed to belong to different 'races' in the West.[36] In doing so, it overlooks the important accounts of eugenics in Central Europe.[37]

Eugenics took shape within the nation-building processes across the 'other' Europe. It was evident, for example, in the development of the interwar Belarusian state that was modelled on the eugenics activities already established in Germany and Soviet Russia.[38] Following the establishment of the Czechoslovak state in 1918, the Czech Eugenics Society quickly requested the creation of a national institute of eugenic research and a museum of comparative genetics, among other eugenic demands.[39] Such institutes and study would help to define the distinctiveness of the new state. Among Ukrainian nationalists, ethnic belonging was modelled on eugenic ideology in the 1930s. By the end of the decade, the leading Ukrainian far-right organisation, the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), affirmed the separation between 'master races' and 'plebeian races', between 'nation-carrying' and 'provincial peoples', in order for 'the new man' to emerge.[40] In Bulgaria, from the early twentieth century to World War II, eugenics programmes played a significant role in the heterogeneous strategies constructed around modern Bulgarian state formation. For example, blood purification was perceived within Bulgarian eugenics as a project for 'national redemption' and served both scientific and political purposes that were channelled towards the preservation of the Bulgarian people.[41] In Hungary, a widely shared belief existed that eugenics would add 'a new dimension to general discussions on social and political transformation which characterised the evolution of

political thinking in early twentieth-century Hungary'.[42] A similar manifestation was evident in Romania, where Marius Turda has demonstrated how eugenic sterilisation programmes were 'geared towards the political engineering of a biologically defined community' as part of the processes of eliminating inferior elements from Romanian society.[43]

It is almost impossible to discuss the development of eugenics in Poland without their connections to the medical developments in the German Empire, as a major influence.[44] Not only the fact that early generations of Polish physicians were trained at research institutions in Germany, but by the 1880s 'Polish physicians were up-to-date with the new ideas and approaches that were coming from experimental science'.[45] This was evident in major Polish scientific journals in the Prussian-Polish provinces and the Polish-speaking lands of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[46] Many of these scientific experiments were concerned with pressing questions concerning Polish national identity and its place within the hierarchy of European nations. Yet these concerns were not completely devoid of colonial policies and of interest in linking Poland's future to that of German colonies. For example, in Volhynia, 'Poles drew on imperial language about degeneracy, race, gender, and environmental degradation in what they saw as a foreign and often threatening region, while adapting concepts to fit with their simultaneous assumption that this was a historically Polish borderland.'[47] This eventually manifested in not only the condemnation of particular individuals, but also the prohibition of race mixing. This was particularly evident in the works and discussions initiated by some members of the Polish Eugenics Society, who looked kindly upon eugenic and racial ideologies that were already established in Western Europe and North America.[48]

Originally developed as a concern over unhygienic conditions, eugenics in Central Europe quickly shifted from concerns about public health to the craniological and body measurement based on biological determinism and problems of impurity.[49] As Dušan Bjelić aptly puts it, 'eugenics provided a rational template for the state to imagine its nation as a race'.[50] It is through this imagination that some individuals were included or excluded from the body politic. The ways in which eugenics manifested itself was not only within the realm of scientific enquiry, but also within a systemic bio-power that confirmed the political dominance of one group over another.[51] The development of eugenics in Central Europe was strongly connected to racial identities within which the racial contract and 'whiteness contract' offer an insight into the perception and elimination of bodies that are perceived to be impure. Similar to trends of nation-building in the West, eugenics in Central Europe 'deepens the understanding of the emergence of nationalist movements by stressing biological and ethnic/racial identities in national state systems'.[52]

Economics

The discussion about Central Europe's participation in colonialism and engagement with eugenics has already signalled that there is a significant economic dimension to the racial contract. In this section, I draw attention to the final manifestation: the capital benefits of the racial contract, and its connection to racial capitalism. My deployment of racial capitalism here stays close to Cedric Robinson's meaning of the term: 'The development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology.'[53] The argument I make, especially about whiteness, travels in two directions, and it is important to set out both before choosing a path to follow. Choosing one of them to follow does not necessarily negate the other; it is only for the purpose of the overarching argument in this chapter.

The first direction is the designation of white and non-white people that reveals the economic aspect of the racial contract from the point of view of the rise of white people as a group. Both David Roediger and Theodore Allen have underscored the importance of whiteness to economic, social, and cultural capital in the United States.[54] American immigration laws and the labour market have been, for them, the key places to explore how white privilege has been attained.[55] Although they originated within Black peoples' experience in the United States, studies on whiteness and racial privilege have also taken intersectional approaches with radical elements.[56] As this body of research suggests, it would be an oversight to reduce such structure to the United States, as 'whiteness [remains] a relevant paradigm for European social worlds'.[57]

However, it is equally important to recognise that there are many shades of whiteness that create a hierarchy within the concept itself. Indeed, whiteness cannot be reduced to just colourism, it could be 'disassociated from physicality',[58] and is often much more related to superiority or inferiority of an identity. In other words, the boundary of whiteness is never fixed, it expands and contracts in certain situations.[59] This very fluidity – that there can be fuller or lesser forms of whiteness – has meant that people from Central Europe are not necessarily shielded from experiences of racism and exclusion in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in Western Europe. Ivan Kalmar highlights this powerfully when he identifies such racism as 'Eastern Europeanism' – a form of prejudice found in the West that focuses on the treatment of 'Central Europeans and others in or from post-communist Europe as a different and inferior breed'.[60] Whiteness, in this instance, is constantly evolving, negotiated and renegotiated at different times, in different places, and utilised for different purposes. Given this changeability of whiteness, the concept cannot be reduced to a single form.

While I take seriously the racialised implications of the unfixed boundaries of whiteness, the second direction that I wish to follow through is the component of whiteness that conveys power, resources, and rewards as a mechanism available to the dominant White group. This interpretative direction requires opening up the boundaries of whiteness further in order to demonstrate the ways in which they are connected to the racial contract and racial capitalism. Regardless of the conditional status of anyone's whiteness, racial positions are much more powerfully viewed through the White/non-White dichotomy due to the long maintenance of the global 'colour line'.[61]

Viewed through the lens of the 'colour line', I contend that the racial contract is not just an individualised process, but the formation of social groups organised around material interests.[62] Again, this does not mean that the boundaries of whiteness are not constantly under negotiation. Because of its fluidity, the functions of whiteness have shifted and expanded in new ways and at different locations. But for the most part, the shift rests on racial structure with material implications. As Barbara Reskin notes, 'Whiteness is a potential resource for all whites … Even whites who abdicate racial privilege can readily reclaim it at the moment they cease to actively reject it.'[63] Despite the fact that many whites have never been signatory to the agreements of the racial contract as a collective social group, race has nevertheless fundamentally shaped the lived experiences and life chances of people racialised as such. A number of historians have located such an understanding of whiteness within 'the history of racialization, material (economic, social, and political resources) and ideological elements of race', therefore 'in any examination of whiteness it is crucial then that the two [race and whiteness] not be discussed in isolation from one another'.[64]

Whiteness, in this regard, is a privileged position. 'To be white is to have greater access to rewards and valued resources simply because of one's group membership.'[65] This implies that whiteness, as a privilege, has economic value attached to it and such value is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to.[66] In this view, whiteness is given supreme symbolic and political meanings when the subjects are non-white, and such imagination shaped the way white people are represented and protected. In thinking about whiteness as a resource, it becomes impossible to ignore 'whiteness as a property'.[67] In such an understanding whiteness can be viewed as a power that provides more than basic protection, liberties, opportunities, and immunities. It allows the owner to take advantage of a whole host of advantages and privileges. In this instance, it is important not to lose sight of 'the pool of material wealth' through which all Europeans 'shared in a heightened sense of power engendered by the successes of any

of them'.[68] Whiteness is linked to the benefit derived by contemporary nations in Central Europe as an aspect of racial capitalism and an inclusion in the racial contract.

In 2004, the expansion of the European Union (EU) eastwards allowed the peoples from Central Europe to become EU nationals. This membership 'provides them at least nominally equal rights to travel, work, study, relocate to, and live anywhere within that shared space'. However, such status has been also premised on the 'sense of economic, political, and cultural dependency (including direct economic dependence on worker remittances from the western EU, not to mention an almost total dependence on the EU for infrastructural development funds)'.[69] The expansion changed, for example, Poland from a country with strictly limited outflows to one where 'Poles in the EU turned from so-called "third-country nationals", whose movement is controlled, to freely moving EU citizens'.[70] It was also a substantial shift for Poland economically, through alignment with well-established institutions in the West and as a source of immigrant labour.[71] Consequently, with a large exodus of citizens moving abroad, Poles assumed a privileged and leading position as a mobile labour force across western Europe, in some cases becoming the largest ethnic minority in the countries to which they moved.[72]

The inclusion of Central European nations, as 'new Europeans' in the EU family, facilitated the expansion of whiteness as a benefit of the racial contract:

> On paper they would be equal with all West Europeans before international law, and free to choose to move as individuals, to travel, study, live and work in all other member states of the European Union. In other words, they would be free of the restrictions of immigration legislation and categories – as have been West Europeans for many years. As international migrants they would thus become co-citizens and 'free movers'.[73]

Although not an empirical claim, the above condition is an indication of how Central European nations benefited from free movement following their membership of the EU. While the above arrangement was also a boon for the whole EU economically and culturally, there are ways in which it legally reduced the chances of non-EU nationals (mainly non-whites) accessing resources such as job opportunities.[74] This protective position is evident in the EU's immigration/employment laws and the enforcement of such laws that creates a sharp distinction between EU nationals (mainly whites) and non-EU nationals (non-whites).

For example, job opportunities must be offered to EU nationals first; for non-EU nationals to enjoy the same right would depend on whether

they are family members of EU nationals. This form of restriction allows EU member states, especially in Western Europe, to move away from non-European labour. This has resulted in the creation of different immigration tiers which largely serve to restrict the mobility of non-EU nationals, while leaving EU nationals free from such constraints.[75] Even with the new strict immigration regime brought about by Brexit in the UK, EU citizens from Eastern Europe would not need to squeeze onto inflatable dinghies in an attempt to cross from Calais to Dover, or fight deportation from the UK to Rwanda. Such an ordeal seems assignable only to Black and Brown bodies. This unique position of Eastern European membership of the EU allows 'many inhabitants of the region [to] perceive the European Union, rightly or wrongly, as a resource that offers them an opportunity to boost their "racial" credentials, that is, a chance to proceed "upward" on the scale of privilege in an obviously unequal, oppressive and discriminatory system'.[76]

In making the above claim, again, I am aware of the limitations 'that being white, even with all the privilege it does confer, can sometimes offer only limited protection against anti-immigrant agitation and migration regime insecurity',[77] especially after Brexit in the UK. However, the understanding of whiteness that I am signalling here is constitutive of the world economically, culturally, and socially. These arrangements are not natural; they are the consequences of racial capitalism – the conjunction between race and capital and their connection to the peripheral locations in Central Europe. The ways in which whiteness and Europeanness interact with the development of racial capitalism, especially outside its Western origins, have been through '*densely interconnected political geographies*' (my emphasis).[78] This aspect of racial capitalism is crucial to the economic argument deployed by white Europeans in reconfiguring their social boundaries to exclude non-European others from the resources available within those nations.[79]

Conclusion: the implications of the racial contract in Central Europe

The racial contract is a compelling idea that not only has relevance globally but also has important implications for Central Europe. As Mills sees it, the racial contract is an attempt to bring race and white supremacy into a dialogue with mainstream political theory. In doing so, he suggests that 'White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today.'[80] In making this claim, he argues that the racial contract is relatively familiar because of its root in the social contract theory based on the consent of individuals who are seen as equals or almost equal.

This implies that the social contract tradition is 'not a contract between everybody, but an agreement between just the people who count, the people who really are people'. Such agreement, Mills maintains, stems from contract between 'white people'.[81]

Mills argues that colonialism 'lies at the heart' of the rise of Europe, based on the exploitation of the non-European world underwritten by race.[82] Central to his argument is the European colonisation of the Americas between 1492 and 1830s, and the story of the occupation of Asia, Africa, and the Pacific from the 1730s up to after World War II.[83] These interlinked histories, Mills contends, are crucial to the understanding of race and racism because in both race has served as 'the common conceptual denominator that gradually came to signify the respective global statuses of superiority and inferiority, privilege and subordination'.[84] Rather than the common assumption that racism, fundamentally, is an individual act of bigotry against another individual based on the supremacy of race, Mills proposes a rethink of race and racism through the racial contract, necessarily considered from the interconnectedness that underpins the ways in which white and non-white 'races' come to exist.[85]

The chapter has shown the centrality of three manifestations (colonial association, eugenics, and economics) in the integration of Central European countries within the terms and conditions of the racial contract. For example, Polish and the Czechoslovak participation in various colonial empires, and the post-1918 colonial projects, can be understood as Central Europe's entanglement with a racial capitalism that is often reduced to the West.[86] As Markéta Křížová and Jitka Malečková put it, Central Europe benefitted from the systems of knowledge that emerged from the colonial relations and their economic advantages, 'based on "races" as supposed innate biological differences among peoples, organized in hierarchical order'.[87] The Polish and Czechoslovak demands for colonies, as an important aspect of the racial contract, would mean a form of leverage which could only occur through the transferring of German colonies. Such demands were formulated as an act of reparation for the historical injustice suffered by the two nations under Germanic domination. These complex and entangled forms of colonisation have often been missed by theorists of capitalism as part of their accounts of global development and its links to broader forms of exploitation.[88] Such ambitions may appear as fantasies to many, but Poland's and Czechoslovakia's involvement in the 'Pan European colonial project' was understood at the time as a way of 'catching up' with other European powers.[89] Importantly, it is the implication of whiteness and the accumulation of wealth as an essential aspect of racial capitalism that is most telling here.[90]

The colonial histories of capitalism require an active consideration of cases beyond the West. Colonialism may appear only as a Western European

project, but in time it was also implicated in the unification of the continent defined through a racial order that rested on the differences between Europeanness and non-Europeanness. Indeed, I want to suggest that many aspects of Polish and Czechoslovak involvement in the 'Pan European colonial project' formed part of Europeanisation with the racial contract at its heart. This does not necessarily mean the collapse of all forms of colonisation and various paths of Europeanisation into a single form. Colonisation takes shape through several different configurations, but it must be read in a broader context as part of the wider European/white projects that cannot be reduced to a particular geography in Europe.

The above European colonial logic is not sufficient on its own; the role of eugenics in the development of colonial thought is equally important. The circulation of eugenic activities in Central Europe, similar to the West, had a racial undertone that was embedded within the formation of nations across the region. The uses of eugenics in this sense had been to identify the people that really belonged to the 'blood and soil' of the nation. In practical terms, eugenics created a new bio-power, purposefully for the identification of 'the "chosen race" … at the expense of others'.[91]

While recognising whiteness as a form of hierarchy within the racial contract that has failed to shield all its members to the same degree, this chapter has emphasised that the conditions created by the racial contract not only led to significant economic advantages for nations in Central Europe, but it also put them in a 'privileged pot' of white-skinned people. It is a membership that offers an important lens into various (in)visibilities and performativities of whiteness, based on a common identity and, for the most part, legally privileged through EU national status.[92] The sudden transformation of countries in Central Europe from Communist economies to the capitalist path took shape within colonial framings of Europe and was discharged through racialised capital. A benefit for Central Europeans, it has also often meant racialised exclusion for non-white people. I therefore argue that a racialised economy cannot solely be the remit of powerful European states. It also comprises financial exchanges from which less powerful Eastern European nations have massively profited. While undoubtedly occupying an intermediary, semi-peripheral position within the hierarchies of racial capitalism, Central Europe is undeniably entrenched within the conditions and privileges dictated by the racial contract.

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3

Not quite white: Russians as Turanians in nineteenth-century Polish thought

Maciej Górny

'Asiatic despotism' is a concept that has been repeatedly associated with Russia since at least the sixteenth century.[1] Adam Olearius' classic work, based on his 1633–34 travels to Russia, offered a rather stern view of the inhabitants of the country. Loathing science and art, repulsive, and feeble-minded, Russians were said to derive the greatest enjoyment from sodomy, debauchery, and binge drinking. Nor did they shirk from recourse to trickery and theft. Their despotic and cruel rulers ruthlessly oppressed their subjects, exploiting the fact that the latter's lowliness rendered them incapable of recognising their own confinement.[2] Russian barbarism, slavery, and Asiatic despotism were repeatedly employed to demonise the country. These traits were said to derive initially from a history of Tatar rule, but it was only a matter of time before Russians themselves came to be viewed as Asians, excluded from the category of the impeccably Aryan white.[3]

The emerging mid-nineteenth-century democratic movements in East-Central Europe play a hitherto little studied, but key role, in the rise of racialised conceptions of Europe – visions whose contours become starkly clear in their confrontation with Russian autocracy.[4] This chapter focuses on the role of those political émigrés from East-Central Europe who often shared common experiences of aborted uprisings and failed political reform, and who formed a particularly vibrant milieu in which these ideas grew.[5] Notions of liberty and equality, ranged against imperialist and monarchical tyranny and enslavement and exploitation of peasantry by their lords, were central to the language of the national movements following their failures in the 1848 revolutions. To them Russia, the 'gendarme of Europe', was the main enemy, against whom a variety of political and discursive strategies was utilised – including the rhetoric of racial superiority.

One of the major figures in this milieu was Franciszek Duchiński, whose Turanism – that is, a racial reading of the Polish–Russian divide – was more than a regional footnote in the history of racism. This highly original thinker

and skilful propagandist set the tone, albeit for a short period, of racial theorising among European elites, most notably in France, and among the Polish and Ukrainian intelligentsia – although it never did proliferate among the wider lower classes of Polish society. His work and its influence also illustrates the role of the nascent discipline of physical anthropology – instrumentalised in anti-Russian propaganda – in forming racial hierarchies.[6] His thought faded into oblivion in the latter half of the nineteenth century both internationally and among the Polish and Ukrainian intelligentsia. This had to do with many factors, Duchiński's perceived peripheral origin being not least among them. Racialised Russophobia lost its appeal after the Franco–Prussian War, while racist discourses in general moved to the Right of the political spectrum, away from the democratic ideology of the 1848 generation, to which Duchiński belonged.

In contrast to the ever-expanding history of 'People's Poland',[7] a postcolonial approach to the Polish nineteenth century is much more limited.[8] Nevertheless, some histories of Polish colonial geography and anthropology have explored the complex perspectives of authors who unquestionably identified themselves as white and European, while, at the same time, through their ethnic and cultural status as quasi-colonial subjects, distanced themselves from complicity in the continent's imperialism.[9] This has been traced in studies of Polish travellers to Africa and Siberia, and through the self-perception of Polish subjects in imperial Germany.[10]

Franciszek Duchiński's racial theory

This chapter sheds light on a transitory moment in nineteenth-century racism and democratic reform. Polish émigré and amateur scientist Franciszek Duchiński was a key figure in developing an anthropological theory of Russia's specifically *racial* distinctiveness – an idea that has been latently present in Polish and Ukrainian political discourse ever since.[11] Duchiński was born in the south-western part of the Russian Empire into petty nobility. After his mother's death in 1829, he attended a Basilian school and later moved to Kyiv where – by his own account – he entered the Historico-Philological Faculty of the local university. This had been established in 1834, drawing on the staff and resources of the Polish-language university in Vilnius and lycée in Kremenets (both closed down due to Russian repressions after the Polish November Uprising of 1830–31). Duchiński luckily avoided persecution after the series of arrests of young Polish conspirators that followed, and he remained in Kyiv until the mid-1840s. In 1846, though, he decided to escape to Turkey via Odessa and then moved to Paris, where he cooperated with the Polish conservative émigré press.

In 1848, he participated in propaganda activities for the Polish Legion in Italy. Following the defeat of the Hungarian War of Independence, he became Prince Adam Czartoryski's diplomatic agent in the Balkans, while publishing early amateur studies in the ethnography and anthropology of Russia and Ukraine. Relieved from duty on the eve of the Crimean War, Duchiński remained in the Balkans, publishing on the same subject in the *Journal de Constantinople*. From then on, he consistently developed and, above all, preached, on this topic. On his return to Paris in 1856, he found employment in the Polish School for Higher Learning. Here he also gave public lectures for French audiences and published profusely. Invited to join the French Ethnographic Society, he rose to the position of vice-chairman in 1871. He also co-edited *Actes de la Société d'Ethnographie* and, in 1865, joined the Parisian Geographical Society. There are, however, no signs of him attempting to make his way within French academia. Nor did he ever enter into a dialogue with French colonial anthropology; his interests remained bound to Eastern Europe. Early in the 1870s, after a short stay in Galicia, Germany, and Austria, he became the curator at the Polish National Museum in Rapperswil, Switzerland. Several attempts to obtain a chair at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków came to naught, but Duchiński continued to publish his anthropological theories in Polish and Ukrainian journals.

In political terms he belonged to those circles of liberal nationalists who carefully defined their position between, for them, an equally menacing socialism and conservatism. He was close to critics of the pro-Habsburg elites governing autonomous Galicia, such as Agaton Giller and Stefan Buszczyński, both of whom contributed to the popularisation of Duchiński's oeuvre. In 1878, he was involved in the organisation of the Polish stand at the Universal Exposition in Paris, again presenting the cartographical representation of his racial theory. In 1885 he celebrated the twenty-five years of his career as a scholar in Lviv. He died in Paris in 1893.[12]

Franciszek Duchiński's oeuvre centres upon one single issue: the racial distinctiveness of Russia. The belief that Russians were of non-Slavic origin was his *idée fixe*; he claimed that 'it is a grave and sadly very common error to perceive relations between Slavic nations from a linguistic standpoint'.[13] Anthropology, or ethnography, as Duchiński preferred to call it, was a far more suitable method of investigation. The terminology he employed while putting his programme into practice was far from being consistent. According to Duchiński, there was a racial divide between Aryans and Turanians. The former, comprising Slavs, Germans, and Latins, inhabited Europe as far as the Dnieper (Dnipro) River, and were settled, farming, and culture-making peoples, seen as white. The latter, being closely akin to (perhaps even identical with) the yellow, Mongoloid race in accordance to the racist categorisations of the time,[14] were made up of Turks, Finns, and Mongols, inhabited territories

east and south of Ukraine, and were still nomadic peoples or had retained nomadic characteristics under a thin veneer of civilisation. These Uralian 'tribes' were non-European: 'closer to the nations inhabiting Asia along the famous Chinese Wall' than to the Slavs.[15] Drawing on Friedrich Max Müller's understanding that Aryans physically corresponded to the inhabitants of the north and northeast of Europe,[16] Duchiński explained:

> The features of the Aryan people reflect … their main pursuit: freedom. Bound to their fatherland, they love agriculture for its own sake and not for the trading opportunities it provides. Their provincial life is highly developed; their sense of individual self-reliance deeply inculcated; property rights are respected and family names greatly venerated. A deep love for their country leads them to make the greatest sacrifices. Their emotional attitude is in harmony with their level-headedness, as they are blessed with perseverance and enormous creative powers, which they exhibit in a myriad of ways. … Women are held in great regard in their societies.[17]

Turanians, by contrast:

> [are] psychologically disposed … to passivity, and have displayed no originality of mind; their ability to imitate compensates for this shortcoming, blind fanaticism replacing religious fervour. … In Turanian society, which is based on military discipline, the woman ranks low, something that can be seen very clearly among the Turks, for example. … Centuries have passed. With the advance of civilisation, the last vestiges of nomadism have disappeared in Europe, and yet the descendants of the old nomads still exhibit the proclivities of their forefathers.[18]

Driven by his political agenda, Duchiński was interested in one branch of the Turanian race in particular: the Russians – and, more precisely, what he termed 'the Muscovites'. He rejected their claims of a Slavic origin. While 'Ruthenian' forces, that is, Kyivan Rus', had attempted to civilise these peoples, they were unable to transform the essential character of Finno-Mongol nomads. Duchiński thus formulated his views on Russia's history and geography. He disputed the Ural Mountains as a boundary between Europe and Asia, claiming that both sides of the range were populated by the same people. The identical ethnic composition of the inhabitants outweighed any other factors. He also held that, from the perspective of Muscovite history, the Tatar invasion should be treated as a blessing:

> The invasions of Mongols and Tatars did not lead to the separation of Moscow from Rus', as there had never been a bond of moral unity between the two … on the contrary, the invasions did a great service to the laws of race of the Muscovites by merging the peoples of Suzdal, Ves', Merya, Murom, and Chuvash-Vietke (Viatka Tatars) with the Muscovites who settled beyond the Oka River as well as in Kazan, and were ruled by national khans. … Thus,

> the conquest of the Suzdal Muscovites by Genghis Khan was beneficial rather than harmful to them … since it served to engender laws of tribal purity which is craved even more forcefully by tribes of shepherds and tradesmen than by Indo-European nations.[19]

In Duchiński's opinion, racial differences were permanent. While he claimed that he wished to see Moscow free and Catholic, he added that 'even free and Catholic Russians differ from Indo-Europeans in the mission they have been entrusted to fulfil here on earth, and they will be different forever'.[20] The Europeanisation of Russia for him was a pipe dream.

Claims of racial distinctiveness were justified with the supposedly obvious differences in physical features between Muscovites on the one hand, and Europeans and especially 'true' Ruthenians (that is, Ukrainians) on the other. According to Duchiński this differentiation could not be more obvious, yet he typically avoided calling Muscovites 'yellow' directly. Instead, he placed them within a continuum of Asian peoples stretching from China to Ukraine and displaying specific Turanian physical traits. Indo-European peoples, as Duchiński claimed in one of his works:

> are physically more refined, while the Turanian people constitute an unformed mass, raw, undeveloped meat. The head of a Turanian is indistinct from his neck, it has not yet fully set itself apart from the torso, and his legs barely sprout out from the loins … The most striking feature of the Muscovite, the *katsap* [Ruskie], is neither his face nor head, but his neck! The neck is simply the essence of the Muscovite. … With the neck out of proportion to the head, and generally to the entire physiognomy, their noses are as upturned as to render the hair inside clearly visible.[21] Therefore, it should not be surprising that "these two human types, the Muscovite and the Ruthenian, need only to cast a glance at each other to know that they have nothing in common.[22]

It was not only the physiognomy of the Muscovites, but also their society, that was repulsive. The term 'morality' was foreign to them: 'Generally in Moscow, and especially in relation to women, there is no other morality than that engendered by the criminal code, with police officers as its custodians.'[23] The Kyiv-bred scholar compared Russian women to 'emancipated Muslim women', doubting their intellectual and legal autonomy and deploring their supposed 'indifference to ownership of land, [and] lack of any uplifting fables from the history of their own sex'.[24] Moscow differed from Europe in much else too: the density and type of population, the landscape, the climate.

From the late 1840s until the 1870s, he repeatedly preached this 'truth' without any significant alteration. Yet the reception of his ideas tells a more differentiated story: that of a slow but steady growth in the mid-nineteenth century, a climax in the early 1860s and demise after 1871. These shifts correspond with two major political crises: the Polish Uprising in 1863–64

and the Franco–Prussian War of 1870–71. It was in the first context that Duchiński's theory experienced its peak, and it was the aftermath of the French defeat that put an end to his international popularity.

The January Uprising: domestic propaganda

In 1861, a wave of demonstrations hit the western part of the Russian Empire, predominantly in the so-called Congress Kingdom: this had been created by the Vienna Congress (1814–15) as an autonomous entity under the Tsar, but deprived of its autonomy after the fall of the armed Polish November Uprising of 1830–31. In February, the Polish protesters in Warsaw, the capital of the province, were shot at. Cossacks and the Russian military were deployed to keep order. Nevertheless, the determination of the protesters grew. Faced with indiscriminate violence, they drew on religious symbols of martyrdom and mourning: to their eyes, the Polish–Russian conflict was a Biblical fight between David and Goliath. Additionally, they developed a civilisational rhetoric: the struggle was between the barbarism of Moscow and culture of Europe. During one of the many marches of the Poles, in April 1861, Russian soldiers massacred the crowd. This time there were hundreds of casualties, and street protest was reduced to a smaller underground movement. In January 1863, in response to the Russian conscription of urban youth into the imperial army according to lists of 'dangerous elements', this clandestine organisation transformed into an uprising that lasted for more than a year.[25]

Nikolay Pavlishchev, a Russian historian serving as a higher police official in the Kingdom of Poland, wrote probably the most accurate reports of the 'Polish riot', as it was officially termed. In his weekly summaries of political events presented to Tsar Alexander II, he made reference to the rising popularity of Duchiński among educated Varsovians:

> They have never enough of the writings by Duchiński from Paris who declares that only Little Russians (i.e. Ukrainians), Novogrodians, Pskovians and the people of Smolensk are Slavic and Indo-European; whereas all the others, Muscovites and Cossacks, are Turanians with an admixture of Kirgizian blood.[26]

The January Uprising was both a military and a discursive phenomenon. Underground press publications were widely available in Polish towns while the National Government, the supreme underground authority during the uprising, invested money and resources in international propaganda too. Both channelled anti-Russian narratives of various types, their character dependent largely on audiences they planned to target. Common folk tales and short leaflets were directed at the peasantry, Yiddish and Ruthenian (Ukrainian)

publications addressed national minorities, while the more intellectually sophisticated press titles more frequently referred to racial ideas. Reaching beyond basic references to 'Asiatic despotism' and barbarism, they often arrived at Franciszek Duchiński's research field: racial anthropology.

Their dependence on his oeuvre grew with time. *Strażnica*, one of the major illegal Warsaw newspapers, reported as early as February 1862 on 'Muscovy, which bares on its history's banner the hateful words of slavery, and spreads them throughout the world.'[27] Against Muscovy stood 'Polish patriotism' that 'leads the Polish pilgrim through the world determined to fight for freedom and to sacrifice for the peoples living in America and in Europe'.[28] In late 1862, the same newspaper further refined the Manichean metaphor of slavery versus liberty through a history of race: 'The centuries-long fight against the tsarist Muscovy is not just a border conflict between neighbours or a conventional fight for political supremacy, but the struggle of the principle of freedom against despotism, light with darkness, Slavs against the vicious incursion of the Mongols.'[29]

With the beginning of military clashes between the Russian army and Polish insurgents, Duchiński, though in Paris, felt that his time had come. Shortly before the outbreak of the January Uprising, he advocated the launching of a '*Revue*, published in French and devoted to the dissemination of my principles.'[30] Even without such a platform his racial theory informed Polish propaganda both in and outside the Russian Empire: his racialised language almost immediately chimed with the radicalisation of the conflict. In April 1863, an elaborate article in *Strażnica* presented the struggle as defined by the divide between 'Indo-European Slavs' and 'Finnish and Uralian' Muscovites, before eventually arriving in the extra-terrestrial realm: 'On every step you see the insurmountable gap of God Almighty's making who, in His impenetrable wisdom, divided mankind into so many separate races.'[31]

The primary goal of domestic propaganda was, however, not to deliver anti-Russian arguments to the already mobilised urban and gentry classes, but to reach the Polish and Ruthenian peasantry. To explain such anthropological theories to the masses was an ambitious task that some underground publications took on. An interesting example of such efforts appeared in print in Kraków in early 1864 under the carefully chosen title 'Thy Kingdom Come':

> Meanwhile there is nothing in common between Muscovy and Ruthenia, just as between Muscovite and a Ruthenian: these are two separate lands and two separate nations. The Ruthenian people inhabit the lands adjacent to Poland on the Dnieper, Sluch, Prypjat' up to the River San. The Muscovite people live much further towards the direction where the Sun rises, in the realm called Asia. The Ruthenian people have their own language utterly different from the language of the Muscovites – but fairly similar to the Polish tongue. They

> have their purely Ruthenian ceremonies, their songs, their customs utterly dissimilar to the Muscovian. ... Long years of Mongolian slavery resulted in mixing of barbarians' blood with the blood of the Muscovites while the cruel customs of the Mongols were adapted by the Muscovites. That is why the Muscovite still remains cruel and why he enjoys slavery as much as the Pole and a Ruthenian enjoy freedom.[32]

It is difficult to judge how such appeals were received by rural dwellers, unprepared as they were for this kind of political mobilisation. In general terms their attitude towards the uprising was mostly reserved, occasionally hostile, irrespective of efforts put into popularising Duchiński. An appeal to racial unity remained unanswered – as indeed did any other attempt at winning over the peasants for a fight alongside the gentry.

The January Uprising: propaganda abroad

The task of educating illiterate peasants in modern racial anthropology was perhaps too ambitious. Duchiński's influence on Western intellectual elites was another matter, even if his success was a short-lived one. It is striking that, for approximately a year, the Polish Uprising – rather than the American Civil War, which had started in 1861 – had much more impact on European debates over the struggle for freedom against enslavement, thus providing writers such as Duchiński with receptive international audiences.[33] It was particularly in France that his impact was visible before 1863. Among French intellectuals who subscribed to his racial theory were Henri Martin, Albert Réville, August Vicquesnel, Charles de Steinbach, Casimir Delamarre, Edouard Talbot, Emmanuel Henri Victurnien Marquise de Noailles, and Elias Regnault. Some of them acted on direct requests (and upon unofficial payments) from the Polish diplomatic service.[34] Such was the case of the editor of *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Victor de Mars, whose calm and balanced opinions in this influential journal held some weight.[35] To others, Duchiński's theory was yet another argument in support of their Russophobia, a sentiment shared widely among 1848ers.[36]

But to measure Duchiński's impact on French discourse demands more than simply tracing the references to his writings. Take perhaps the most distinguished of the French advocates of Duchiński's theories, the prominent politician and historian Henri Martin. In spite of his pro-Polish leanings illustrated in numerous publications from the period of the January Uprising, Martin initially treated Duchiński's theories with reserve.[37] However, affected by the Pole's public lectures, he changed his mind, informing him of that fact by mail. Duchiński did not fail to publish fragments of the letter: 'Muscovites, Turanian by race and spirit, are not a part of the European

community; they sow confusion and disorder; they will never become an element of harmony.'[38] Two years later, Martin published *La Russie et l'Europe*, in which he reprised Duchiński's claims almost in full (without, however, giving the Pole due credit).[39] In the conclusion to that work, he wrote: 'The Muscovite [is] alien to the European family.'[40] Other French advocates of Duchiński's theory repeated his ideas without attribution, including in the production of maps based on his understanding of the limits of Indo-European settlement.[41] The only exception to this rule was Elias Regnault, who skilfully systematised Duchiński's arguments around geology, hydrography, ethnography, the character of the soil, and customs and social norms, often responding to critiques levelled at Duchiński by scholars from Russia or Russian academic institutions.[42]

The idea of Russian racial distinctiveness was not restricted to Poland and France. Duchiński's theories also evoked a rather strong response in German-speaking countries, sometimes through third-hand transfers. Casimir Delamarre's pamphlet was published in German (in a translation by another of Duchiński's acquaintances, Charlier de Steinbach).[43] In his pamphlet, Delamarre expressed his amazement at the ease with which scholars as solid as the Germans allowed themselves to be deceived by Russian propaganda claiming their belonging to Europe. The French author allocated part of the blame to non-scientific factors: 'However, we owe these reforms to a Slavic scholar, Mr. Duchiński of Kyiv, which may be one reason why some German historians view them with distrust.'[44] Nevertheless, Duchiński's ideas did meet with the approval of several German scholars who, unlike some of their French colleagues, gave full credit to his role in proving Russia's true Turanian identity. Interestingly, radical thinkers were among the most enthusiastic international believers. Karl Marx, a committed supporter of the Polish Uprising, saw in Duchiński's theories a way to distance Slavs from Russia in the cause of liberty.[45] Gottfried Kinkel, an archaeologist and historian, and revolutionary democrat who had earlier inspired many American abolitionists, devoted two extensive texts to his theories,[46] and wrote enthusiastic reviews of Duchiński's Swiss lectures.[47] His Turanian theory was also positively received by Austrian ethnographers, more for its utility in the analysis of the ethnogenesis of Ruthenians inhabiting the Austrian monarchy than due to any animosity towards Russia.[48]

On a hostile shore

Many of Duchiński's critics saw his racial (and racist) dividing lines as part of a geopolitical struggle. At the centre of Duchiński's thinking was the biological divide between Ruthenia (Ukraine and Belarus) and Muscovy

(Russia). Russian and pro-Russian authors quickly came to view his racialised division of Europe and Asia on the Dnieper River as a way of including Poles and Ruthenians in the same civilisational space – uniting nationalities that had been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic. In 1863, Mikhail Pogodin wrote a lengthy polemic to counter Duchiński's theses.[49] Characteristically, it was addressed to the Editor-in-Chief of *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Victor de Mars, rather than to Duchiński himself. Mars summed up the Polish–Russian dispute over the Slavic origin of the Russians, tending towards Duchiński's view that Muscovites were clearly anthropologically distinct from Ruthenians.[50] Meanwhile, Pogodin decided that there was no point in debating the Pole's claims, since they merely expressed a disposition typical of his nation. However, he did voice his outrage that such claims could find favour with serious scholarly journals in the West.[51] Duchiński was also criticised by French experts and supporters of Russia such as the French geographer Jean-Henri Schnitzler.[52] For him, 'Duszinski's' [*sic*] views were summed up in a single rhetorical question (and thus reduced to geopolitics): What was he trying to prove? 'That the true Ruthenia should belong to Poland?'[53]

Duchiński's theory was not universally acclaimed by revolutionary Poles either. Though discussed by the educated public and in underground media, it failed to dominate the propaganda of the Uprising. Some of the radical leaders of the Uprising, notably Bronisław Szwarce, criticised Duchiński for immorality.[54] The modern language of racial difference often remained submerged. Conservative writings, for instance, reproduced a traditional recourse to 'eastern despotism', while representatives of democratism – often expressed through the Christian socialist doctrine of Felicité Lamennais – denounced the 'conspiracy' of kings against the people and social inequalities.[55] Both approaches invoked the language of the New Testament rather than that of modern racial science. The rhetoric of martyrdom, present in the Polish illegal writings at least from the period of the Warsaw demonstrations in 1861, contributed to both by sharpening the contrasts between the defenceless demonstrators and the brutality of the Russian intervention. Within such an ideological construct, the question of who was the villain of the piece was not uncontested, though. Whereas Russia held the sword, moral responsibility for Poland's execution was, perhaps surprisingly, frequently attached to the governments and peoples of Europe. Racial imagery could appear in these discourses of Polish Romanticism. A clandestine journal in 1863 employed a racialised image from antiquity: an Aryan Polish gladiator struggling for Europe:

> Poland of today is a fair-haired, blue-eyed gladiator who fights for his life in a giant circus, while the peoples of Europe, like drunk and cold-blooded Romans, adorned with laurels, crowd into an amphitheatre with a glass of

> falernum in their hands, and, applauding with satisfaction and laughter, cry out in wide-eyed excitement: Look at this gladiator, how marvellous a fighter he is! How nice it will be to watch him dying when the tiger bites his head off.[56]

Duchiński's insistence on the racial exclusivity of Poles and Ruthenians did not always chime with the needs of the January Uprising either. For one, its leaders were no strangers to Russian culture, many of them being in active military or bureaucratic service at the outbreak of the Uprising. Moreover, their propaganda needed to suit a variety of audiences, including a peasantry of various ethnic backgrounds, and Russian soldiers who – it was hoped – would join the 'noble cause'. And it was definitely at odds with the democratism of Polish irredentism. One could hardly claim that the Poles were fighting against the corrupt government 'for our freedom and yours' (a slogan in use already during the 1830–31 November Uprising) while simultaneously denying Russians the potential to live as a free nation for reasons of their racial descent. Besides, strict racial differentiation between the Indo-European Poles (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians) and Turanian Russians contradicted imperial realities. All nationalities of the Russian Empire were represented in those armed forces which the insurrectionists struggled to overcome. Indeed, in 1863, the Russian authorities in Warsaw grew nervous about the high percentage of ethnic Poles among the soldiers transferred to the kingdom from deep Russia.[57] One was more likely to find a Pole within Russian ranks than a 'Turanian'.

Although not immune to racial theories, democrats of this generation would later be critical of Polish colonial dreams. Remembering the Polish role in the Haitian Revolution, liberty, it was argued, could not be easily denied to anybody, white or not. In the early 1870s a Polish émigré to Sweden, Piotr Aleksander Wereszczyński, sought to establish a colony for the non-existent Polish state. There Polish immigrants would find a substitute for their still occupied fatherland. Wereszczyński, who lobbied for New Caledonia due to its climate and 'friendly locals', entered into long and lively debates with other Poles who preferred to settle down in California, Mexico, or Nicaragua.[58] Veterans of the January Uprising, who were the primary target of Wereszczyński's project, were deeply critical: Bronisław Szwarce, for instance, argued that it would lead, quite contrary to Wereszczyński's declaration, to the formation of a white Polish aristocracy and a predominantly black working class. This, he warned, was a path back to the most infamous elements of the deceased Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, including 'slavery of the people'. Szwarce, as many others, saw racism as an enemy of liberty, a wrong akin to peasant enslavement.[59]

With time, Polish scientific criticism of Duchiński grew stronger. Seventeen years after the Uprising, the geographer Wacław Nałkowski published the

pamphlet *On the geographical errors that serve as a basis for Professor Duchiński's opinions*, in which he attacked one of the pillars of what he contemptuously referred to as 'duchiniczność' ('Duchinity'): the geographical and anthropological boundary of the Dnieper River.[60] During Duchiński's Galician 1885 jubilee, linguist Jan Baudouin de Courtenay criticised the use of science for political purposes, whether by Russian Slavophiles or by Duchiński.[61] To Baudouin, a civic radical, racial equality was self-evident.

The plagiarist

The greatest triumph of Duchiński's theory came unexpectedly and remained unrecognised for a long time. In 1871, France suffered the most painful defeat in a war that immediately acquired meaning far beyond the battle itself. As Karine Varley noted, the Franco–Prussian War was viewed as a final 'test of the strength, advancement, and destinies' of the belligerents: 'To observers in Germany and Britain the defeat proved not only the ruin of the French people but that racial differences were the decisive factor in determining the fate of nation.'[62] The French answer appeared in *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Its author, Armand de Quatrefages, a French anthropologist and zoologist, was the co-founder of the Paris Anthropological Society.[63] His 1871 work argued for the exclusion of Prussians from among the Aryan nations and their inclusion among the Finno-Turanian peoples (and thus – in accordance with the beliefs of the period – Mongolians).[64] It was this publication that ensured Quatrefages a place in the history of racism in Europe.

Quatrefages' lengthy article 'La race prussienne' included references to Duchiński's works, particularly concerning the anthropological similarities between the Baltic nations and other 'primordial' inhabitants of Europe. Quatrefages quoted Duchiński's opinion about the physical likeness between the Lithuanians and the Bretons: this observation proved that they both descended from a common ancient Finnish component – then combined with the Aryan traits of the Slavs in the case of Lithuanians, and with the Aryan traits of Celts in the case of Bretons.[65] Other fragments borrowed without being cited were far more numerous. Both authors drew on a theory popular in the nineteenth century that, based on certain remarks found in Tacitus' *Germania*, the Finns ('Fenni') were the primordial, savage population of northern Europe antedating the arrival of the Aryan people.[66] In describing the physical traits of the Turanian race, both authors drew attention to the fact that Turanians were not built proportionally. Clear similarities can also be found in their psychological characterisations. Both Turanian tribes, whether in the forms of Russians or Prussians, were said to be guided by

a reverence for power and a desire for conquest. There were some differences, based on interpretations of the popular belief that humankind was divided into 'active' and 'passive' races.[67] Duchiński emphasised the resilience of the Turanian psyche and culture, in spite of the ease with which the race opened itself to foreign (typically more developed) influences. His French colleague, in turn, observed in the Prussians an active tendency to embrace foreign models.[68]

However, the most important shared feature of both scholars' works was their mechanism to exclude groups from the European family of nations. Both Quatrefages and Duchiński took the same approach of separating racially foreign elements from those they consider racially related, and transposing these insights into the geopolitical arena. Duchiński's purpose was to maintain the separation of Ruthenia from Moscow. Quatrefages was extending a hand to the Aryan Germans of the west and south while distancing the Prussians racially from the core of European civilisation. The career paths of both racial treatises were as different as their biographies. Although Quatrefages continued his successful academic life with little reference back to his wartime pamphlet, the work found a sizeable group of followers who proved, like Louis Figuier, that the primordial Finnish cruelty had come back to life in contemporary Prussians.[69] Meanwhile Duchiński never achieved the academic honours he was so passionately seeking, while his racial theory only ever found a home on the margins of Polish and Ukrainian nationalism.[70]

In the end, Duchiński's racial othering of Russia was incompatible with the democratic ideology of the national movement. Modern racism would enter Poland much later with the generation of the 1880s, including young Roman Dmowski and other integral nationalists. The story presented here is thus the failed birth of a native racist ideology, ultimately lacking a Polish audience ready to exchange the principles of 1848 for social Darwinism. This attitude was, interestingly enough, characteristic of Duchiński's closest allies too. In 1873, Agaton Giller, who never tired of popularising his oeuvre, visited the North American exhibition at the World's Fair in Vienna. Seeing 'Negroes' singing slave melodies, he connected Poland's own freedom struggles to US emancipation:

> These were the Negroes and Mulattos dressed as 'waiters' and singing. Their sharp voices brought some joy to the audience. Everyone wanted to see them and listen to the melodies of these erstwhile slaves. My memory, invigorated by melodies I had never heard before, immediately prompted pictures of both slaveowners whipping Negroes to force them to collect cotton, and [Tadeusz] Kościuszko [the Polish noble famed for his role in the American Revolution] freeing Negroes offered to him by the Republic for fighting for her freedom and independence. How lucky we are that in our time the Americans finally decided to free Negroes and that they have not been afraid to fight a four-year

> war to secure the triumph of human rights; without this war, they would have been worthy of contempt despite their great culture. Negroes are now citizens of the United States and even though their earlier inferior status still echoes in their contacts with the whites – even at this very exhibition – a road towards a real equality has been paved.[71]

Even as Giller and other Polish readers of Duchiński's publications considered despotism as an inborn character of 'Asiatic' Russia, they did not reproduce this racial ideology elsewhere: Poland was the emanation of liberty equal to all other 'liberty-loving' nations regardless of race. The era of Polish racism was yet to come.

Notes

1 Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism: Liberal Ideology and the Image of Russia in France (c.1740–1880)* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2006), 115.
2 Astrid Blome and Volker Depkat, *Von der 'Civilisirung' Russlands und dem 'Aufblühen' Nordamerikas im 18. Jahrhundert: Leitmotive der Aufklärung am Beispiel deutschen Russland- und Amerikabilder* (Bremen: Edition Lumiere, 2002), 16–17.
3 Maria Lammich, *Das deutsche Osteuropabild in der Zeit der Reichsgründung* (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt, 1978), 87–9.
4 See, e.g., Wolfram Siemann, 'Public Meeting Democracy in 1848', in Dieter Dowe, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, Dieter Langewiesche and Jonathan Sperber (eds), *Europe in 1848: Revolution and Reform* (New York: Berghahn, 2000), 767–77.
5 See Piotr Kuligowski, 'Sword of Christ: Christian Inspirations of Polish Socialism Before the January Uprising', *Journal of Education, Culture, and Society*, 3:1 (2012), 115–26.
6 See Shmidt, this volume.
7 The traditional nobility-centred narrative still informs new histories reinterpreting Poland's past through the experiences of the lower classes: Adam Leszczyński, *Ludowa historia Polski* (Warsaw: G. W. Foksal, 2020); Kacper Pobłocki, *Chamstwo* (Wołowiec: Czarne, 2021); Michał Rauszer, *Bękarty pańszczyzny: historia buntów chłopskich* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo RM, 2020).
8 See 'Postcolonial or Postdependence Studies?', special issue of *Teksty Drugie*, 1 (2014). See especially Izabela Surynt, *Postęp, kultura i kolonializm: Polska a niemiecki projekt europejskiego Wschodu w dyskursach publicznych XIX wieku* (Wrocław: Atut, 2006) on the German colonial perspective on their Polish-inhabited borderlands.
9 See, e.g., Paweł Zajas, 'Polskie "Postcolonial studies"? Przypadek południowoafrykański', *Napis: pismo poświęcone literaturze okolicznościowej i użytkowej*, 11 (2005), 203–20; Maria Rhode, 'A Matter of Place, Space, and People: Cracow Anthropology, 1870–1920', in Richard McMahon (ed.), *National Races: Transnational Power Struggles in the Sciences and Politics of*

Human Diversity, 1840–1945 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2019), 105–39; Lenny A. Ureña Valerio, *Colonial Fantasies, Imperial Realities: Race Science and the Making of Polishness on the Fringes of the German Empire, 1840–1920* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2019).

10 Jawad Daheur, '"They Handle Negroes Just Like Us": German Colonialism in Cameroon in the Eyes of Poles (1885–1914)', *European Review*, 26:3 (2018), 492–502.

11 Maciej Górny, '"Five Great Armies Against Our Enemies": A Comparative Study in the History of Racism', *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 121 (2014), 95–121; Ivan L. Rudnytsky, 'Franciszek Duchiński and his Impact on Ukrainian Political Thought', in Ivan L. Rudnytsky, *Essays in Modern Ukrainian history*, ed. Peter L. Rudnytsky (Edmonton: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 187–202.

12 G. Barclay, 'Rapport annuel fait à la Société d'Ethnographie sur ses travaux et sur les progrès des sciences ethnographiques pendant l'année 1893', *Bulletin de la Société d'Ethnographie*, 35:76 (1893), 123–4.

13 Franciszek H. Duchiński, 'O stosunkach Rusi z Polską i z Moskwą zwaną dzisiaj Rosją: o potrzebie dopełnień i zmian w naukowym wykładzie dziejów polskich: przy otwarciu roku szkolnego Szkoły Wyższej Polskiej w Paryżu, przy bulwarze Mont Parnasse w dniu 7 XI 1857', in Franciszek H. Duchiński, *Pisma*, vol. 1 (Rapperswil: Muzeum Narodowe Polskie, 1902), 64.

14 See, e.g., Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915), 146–50.

15 Franciszek H. Duchiński, *Zasady dziejów Polski i innych krajów słowiańskich i Moskwy*, część I (Paryż: Renon & Maulde, 1858), 30.

16 Maria Sophia Quine, 'The Destiny of Races "Not Yet Called to Civilization": Giustiniano Nicolucci's Critique of American Polygenism and Defense of Liberal Racism', in McMahon (ed.), *National Races*, 92–5.

17 Franciszek H. Duchiński, 'Pierwotne dzieje Polski', in Duchiński, *Pisma*, vol. 3 (Rapperswil: Muzeum Narodowe Polskie, 1904), 15–16.

18 Ibid., 17–18.

19 Franciszek H. Duchiński, 'Zasady dziejów Polski i innych krajów słowiańskich i Moskwy', part 3, in Duchiński, *Pisma*, vol. 2 (Rapperswil: Muzeum Narodowe Polskie, 1902), 243.

20 Franciszek H. Duchiński, *Odezwa do ziomków* (Paris: n.p., 1861), 3.

21 Franciszek H. Duchiński, 'Galeria obrazów polskich: oddział pierwszy: różnice ludów indoeuropejskich a turańskich pod względem fizjonomii i odzieży', in Duchiński, *Pisma*, vol. 3, 212–14.

22 Ibid., 216.

23 Franciszek H. Duchiński, *Pomnik nowogrodzki: Periodyczne wyjaśnienia projektu rządu moskiewskiego, aby uroczyście obchodzić w następnym 1862 r., jakoby tysiąc–letnią rocznicę założenia dzisiejszego państwa moskiewskiego w Nowogrodzie, miewane publicznie (obecnie w Paryżu)* (Paris: n.p., 1861), 15.

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4

Racial thinking among Czech anthropologists: the case of Vojtěch Suk

Victoria Shmidt

The challenges of historicising the colonial gaze in Central Europe

> During the peace talks, [Czechoslovak politicians] should table a proposal for the establishment of overseas trading stations … This will be a form of war compensation for the ruination of our country. We demand this compensation from Germany who, as the main culprit behind the misery of the Czech–Slovak lands, should be forced to give up part of its former colonial settlements. Due to our geographical location, we are to act as a bulwark to the East for future times. Our Western neighbours, defeated today, may soon become dangerous and tough competition … part of the former German East Africa would be best suited for us … – because it would provide overseas trade with India, the Far East, and Australia … [I]t is not just a matter of importing missing raw materials, but also of expanding exports and ensuring a reasonable market for our goods, because we are not only an agrarian state, but we also have a considerable capacity for trade and industry which we can take into the territory of primitive natives.[1]

This memorandum was written at the end of 1918 by Vojtěch Suk (1879–1967), an internationally recognised Czech anthropologist who had secured exceptional positions and public recognition due to his long-term involvement in international academic networks aimed at serving 'Western' colonial interests. He had seen himself a successor of Emil Holub, one of the most famous Czech travellers, and a pioneer of the idea of African colonies for Czechs – conceived as an alternative to the mass migration to the United States in the last third of the nineteenth century.[2] Holub's supposedly benevolent paternalism, opposed to the overtly violent colonising policy of Germany and Britain, shaped Suk's view on Czechs as those 'better whites' who are able to bring civilisation and Western norms to the 'non-white' world. Yet after World War I, Suk also turned to questions of whitening the newly formed Czechoslovak nation-state within. He had conducted

several expeditions to collect data about 'primitives' on different continents – and used these understandings as he made sense of the position of minorities in the creation of the nascent state. His research shaped not only the arguments in favour of segregating groups – notably Jews and Rusyns – on the periphery of the new nation, but also an internationally accepted method for the racialising of minorities as self-isolated 'primitives', whether considered white or not.

Central European anthropologists such as Suk, or the Pole Jan Czekanowski, have long been hero-worshipped as opponents of Nazi racial anthropology, and hence as stalwarts against racism.[3] These claims, propagated during the Communist period and ever since, need a thorough critique. Demonstrating the interconnections between race science in the region and global currents through mobile experts such as Suk highlights that the region's anthropology did have a role in the development of scientific racism in both the interwar period and after 1945. Indeed, Suk's conceptualisation of primitives as racially self-isolated groups directly contributed to the surveillance over Roma and other ethnic minorities in Czechoslovakia after 1945. Centrally, I focus on Suk's theorisation concerning the origin of humans and the role of races in human progress. In addressing the interrelationship of the international and the national, the Western chauvinism experienced by Eastern European scholars,[4] the multiple international origins of the institutionalisation of physical anthropology in the Czech lands,[5] and the adaptation of racial theories by Central European anthropologists as they advanced their international careers,[6] this chapter gives the lie to the idea that Central Europe was a space apart from global racial hierarchy.

Suk's professional development between 1905 and 1939 illustrates the ways in which his international and domestic anthropological work intersected, and came to inform his role as an agent of Czech nation-building. In the initial stage, between 1905 and 1913, Suk brought together Darwinian and Lamarckian approaches to the progress of humanity, drawing on the work of his main instructors, Rudolf Martin and Aleš Hrdlička. Then, from 1913–21, after obtaining a medical degree and travelling to Africa, he started to work through the contradictions between ethnographic and medical models in anthropological surveys regarding different races. He recognised ethnic groups' self-isolation and lack of racial intermixing as one of the main sources of their pathologisation and inevitable physical and cultural degradation – thus determining their lower position on a racial hierarchy. This he applied not only on a global scale but also to the population of the new Czechoslovak nation-state. In the 1920s, Suk grappled with the prevailing belief that 'primitives' were a deviant form that stood in contrast to 'civilised' and healthy 'white' humans who represented universal human progress. During his Labrador and Carpathian expeditions between 1921 and 1928,

he focused on the pathologies of 'primitives', whether Inuit or Ruthenes, to explore the interconnection between race and health – a concern that remained central until the end of his academic career. Suk was also a populariser. Viewing himself as a servant of the new Czechoslovak nation, he gave public science lectures, published in the mass media, and wrote memoirs and books for youth. He was one of the most consistent propagandists for physical culture and established one of the first teachers' colleges for physical education in Brno. The materials for this analytical reconstruction were collected in the Archives of the National Museum in Prague (ANM), the Archive of Masaryk University (RMU), and the Archive of the Institute of Anthropology at the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Masaryk University (AUA).

The evolutionary argument for the exclusion of 'primitives' (1905–1912)

Vojtěch Suk was born as Adalbert Schück in Prague, into a 'mixed' family, with a Czech mother and a German father. In his autobiography, Suk admitted that he 'always want[ed] to collect – plants, animals, minerals and observe humans', and had an early fascination with taxidermy.[7] Between 1905 and 1910, like many other anthropologists from Central Europe, Suk completed his education at the University of Zürich. From the beginning of his academic career, Suk found himself situated between divergent epistemologies aimed at connecting the issue of the origin of humanity and human races. He soon learned to use this academic inbetweenness to his advantage, eventually gaining both international and national acceptance of his approaches to racialising various population groups.

His Swiss instructors, Martin and Otto Stoll, who shared a belief in the hypothesis of hominid evolution, mostly focused on so-called 'dead-end development' options. Their focus on extinct species not supported by evolution, as well as the dead-end lines of the transfer from primates to humans, was aligned with the Darwinian view on evolution as a selective process. Finding the traces of these former species and exploring why they were 'unfit' might help to exclude false explanations for the origin of humanity.

Suk successfully defended his dissertation, *Beiträge zur Myologie der Primaten* (*The Myology of Primates*, 1913), written under the supervision of George Ruge, a director of the Institute of Anatomy whose research explored bipedalism as a specific characteristic of humans.[8] Suk's task had been to compare the conversion of spinal muscles among different groups of primates to clarify the optimal predispositions for developing bipedalism among humans. In his dissertation, Suk had adapted the method of the 'deviation curve' (*Abweichungskurve*) by Theodor Mollison, an older

student of Martin and Ruge[9] and later one of the most prominent Nazi anthropologists – who supervised the research conducted by Bruno Kurt Schulz and Josef Mengele. Mollison offered a method for profiling affinity to a particular group and/or comparing two different groups through constructing a scale built around the minimum and maximum values of measurements that defined the features decisive for belonging to a group. This model became a method widely used to substantiate racial hierarchies. In his later writing, Suk described this method as 'a reliable choice' for exploring 'the existence of population groups whose biological profile does not correspond with the racial types whose predominance was historically determined for the territory'.[10]

Suk also drew on the work of Aleš Hrdlička, a famous US anthropologist obsessed with the idea of proving that Central Europe was a 'cradle of humanity'. One of the central assumptions of Hrdlička's theory – which Suk took up – concerned the 'history' of each of the three main races: 'white', 'yellow', and 'black'. According to Hrdlička, each had its own trajectory of civilisational development and showed the presence of both 'civilised' and 'primitive' groups. Suk could draw on Mollison's idea of 'deviation' to find 'primitives' and explore their pathologies. In his first publication, he analysed the anomalies in the skulls of two Italian children to demonstrate atypical morphological features that had not survived the evolutionary process.[11]

Following a short trip to the Italian colonies in Africa in 1912, Suk shared with Hrdlička his plan to prove that the presence of 'primitives' in each of the three races was evidence of a common origin for humanity – before their later differences became determined by environmental factors. Hrdlička embraced the Lamarckian approach, explaining the supposed 'slow' progress of the 'black' race through historically and geographically determined negative factors such as poor climate, multiple diseases, especially malaria, and limited options for healthy nutrition in Africa. 'This is a great aim, yet one entirely feasible and one that the results of which will place you at once in the front rank of European anthropology', Hrdlička replied.

Yet it was research within Europe in 1912 that marked Suk's first in-depth research into 'primitives'. In 1912, he collected anthropological measurements among Cičens, an ethnic group living on the Istrian coast (contemporary Croatia). It was his first expedition targeted at exploring the presence of 'primitives' among Europeans and classifying them as either 'white', having a common racial origin with other 'whites', or as 'non-white'. This research can be interpreted as one of the earliest attempts by Suk to bring together the 'selective' method for studying deviance and Hrdlička's view on 'primitives' as a source of evidence for his hypothesis concerning the origin of humanity. Pigmentation, height, weight, head size, and other characteristics typical

for profiling racial groups were measured by Suk and compared with the data collected by anthropologists from other groups. However, Suk emphasised that the deviations in terms of Mollison's biological model were not significant except for the frontoparietal index; rather, it was language, cultural habits, and social order that were the primary determinants of differences in development. Thus Suk was deeply critical of those anthropologists who 'confirmed their "exact" metric diagnosis by means of photos'.[12] Such images, he claimed, could not be used to prove various racial hierarchies among Europeans because such images did not generate a 'sharp-edged generalised alikeness' ('neostrá "generalizovaná podobenka"') within groups. Instead, he proposed to rely on 'emotional perception' ('citový vjem'), by which he meant the capacity of the anthropologist to recognise the feelings, and thus judge the civilisational level, of photographed subjects.

Suk aimed to use these methods to present Cičens as a group whose development had deviated from the historic, 'white', and 'civilised' population of the region, Croats and Slovenians.[13] Essentially, Suk wanted to prove that Cičens were Romanians, not 'white' Slavs. With this argument he not only included non-Slavic population groups in the racial history of Eastern Europe but approached his central idea of self-isolated groups as a potential problem for 'civilised Europe'. Nevertheless, racial boundaries between Cičens and Croats were also shown as blurred because of the intensive intermixture of Croats with Greeks and Turks, who were seen as not entirely belonging to the 'white' race but to the 'oriental' type, who would 'share' their 'non-white' pigmentation and other anthropological characteristics not typical of 'white' Slavic groups. Thus, some Croats resembled Cičens.

Suk used such comparisons to synthesise a specific 'habitus' for Europeanness, a specific cultural milieu, in which visual tropes would operate as an effective social force for spectators to differentiate binary oppositions such as European versus non-European, 'white' versus 'non-white', 'civilised' versus 'savage'.[14] The African expeditions which followed would only reinforce for Suk these binaries between white and non-white which he had first developed within Europe on the Istrian coast – and which he would later bring to his anthropological work with minority groups on the peripheries of the new Czechoslovak state.

The African expedition and its public aftermath in 1913 and 1918: approximating whiteness

Suk's African expedition in 1913 was commissioned by Hrdlička and aimed at collecting as much information as possible about the population in Natal and the Kalahari Desert for the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.[15]

Whereas in his writings on Istria, Suk had emphasised the necessity of going beyond biology – in Africa he returned straight to it. Hrdlička, his mentor, had underscored the necessity of a medical degree: 'True anthropology is only an extension and application of the various sciences that form the body of "Medicine"'.[16] Two articles based on his African expeditions[17] were published in the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, established and edited by Hrdlička, after multiple revisions intended to make the texts as medically oriented as possible. Both publications aimed to confirm the different driving forces behind the health and disease status of 'whites' and 'non-whites'. By comparing the condition of teeth among young Africans and the students of schools in Prague, Suk concluded that the obviously worse conditions among young Czechs could be explained by unhealthy habits while the better conditions among Africans had to be connected to hereditary factors. For exploring the higher death rate of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases among 'blacks', he turned to the conception of 'herd immunity', seen by him as atypical among Africans but widespread among whites. This medicalised differentiation was fixed by the description of several types of pathologies that Suk observed during his expedition. In the 1970s, Jindřich Valšík, a nephew of Suk, who was also an anthropologist, applied this approach for comparing the sexual development of African girls, Romani girls in Slovakia and Romania, and Czech girls as part of the research on deviations in sexual behaviour among population groups 'less adapted' to the new norms of reproductive behaviour.[18]

Notwithstanding his use of *medicalised* anthropology, Suk could not ignore the tradition of complex ethnographic research with which he was familiar because of his relatively close relations with Otto Stoll, whose book Suk took with him on his African expedition. Suk followed Stoll's division between 'race' as an entirely biological concept that defines 'the belonging of the single human as a zoological individual to one of the basic types'[19] and the concepts of 'people' or 'ethnic groups', determined by their social connections such as religion, language, culture, or citizenship. However, for Stoll, the biological or racial view remained decisive for explaining the history of humanity: races initially played a special role in bringing together several originally different human 'racial types' to form an ethnic unit, that is, a 'tribe' or a 'people'.[20]

Resolving the binary opposition between race and ethnicity in this way only reinforced the explanatory possibilities of racial hierarchy: 'That in a completely and harmoniously worked out "ethnology", the "European" civilised peoples of the various historical epochs must find their place just as well as the "primitive peoples" and the "non-European civilised peoples".'[21] Suk transformed this approach concerning the indigenous population in

Africa by focusing on the limits of being 'civilised' or assimilated by white, progressive, culture.

Suk made multiple mentions of 'backward' prejudices, 'uncivilised' behaviour unaligned with Western morality, and promiscuity among indigenous populations. He also developed the idea of 'beauty' as an indispensable part of human progress, which was lacking among Africans whose utilitarianism disbarred them from developing it. For Suk, Africans were incapable of constructing a refined emotional palate that could compete with Europeans. He described the moment when he did not shoot an antelope, so as not to disturb the harmony of the morning in the savannah, and the extremely emotional reaction from his African escort: 'How was I supposed to explain to a savage who actually knows from civilisation only two things, the repeating rifle and the English word "shoot", that I liked the view before me and therefore didn't want to shoot?'[22]

Concerning art, Suk admitted Africans were good observers, and hence had developed proportion in their pictures; nevertheless, he still always opposed their 'primitive' art to the authentic art of Western civilisation. He found his thoughts confirmed when he became acquainted with the sculptures, 'The Races of Mankind', by the famous American artist Malvina Hoffman, created for the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Suk personally asked Hoffman to permit him to use a photograph of one of her sculptures, 'Sara Dancing Girl, Chad, Africa', in his publications and presentations. Suk often combined this image with another figure a nine-year-old African girl had made at his request. While Hoffman's pieces were extolled as 'the triumph of science and art in solving the task [of presenting] human races', the work by the girl was interpreted as evidence of the limited opportunity for Africans to catch up, given their lag in 'progress' (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

By heavily relying on Western patterns of depicting non-white bodies, Suk practiced the 'white gaze', a habit of seeing bodies as either sharing whiteness or not.[23] Feeling himself to be incredibly white, and European in look, he related how uncomfortable this sense of racial self made him in Africa: one of the most repeated refrains in his memoirs stressed that he was the only blue-eyed person in the town, on board a ship, or on the entire savannah.[24]

The end of World War I saw the further entrenchment of his identity as a white colonially minded European. He published his short stories about the African expedition in 1917 and 1918 in the Czech-language newspaper *Deník*, and soon after came to make regular 'patriotic' calls for colonies for the newly founded state of Czechoslovakia. In a feuilleton entitled 'Blacks and Whites', Suk attacked those who thought that Africans could rule as white Europeans did. He rejected 'benevolent altruism for the

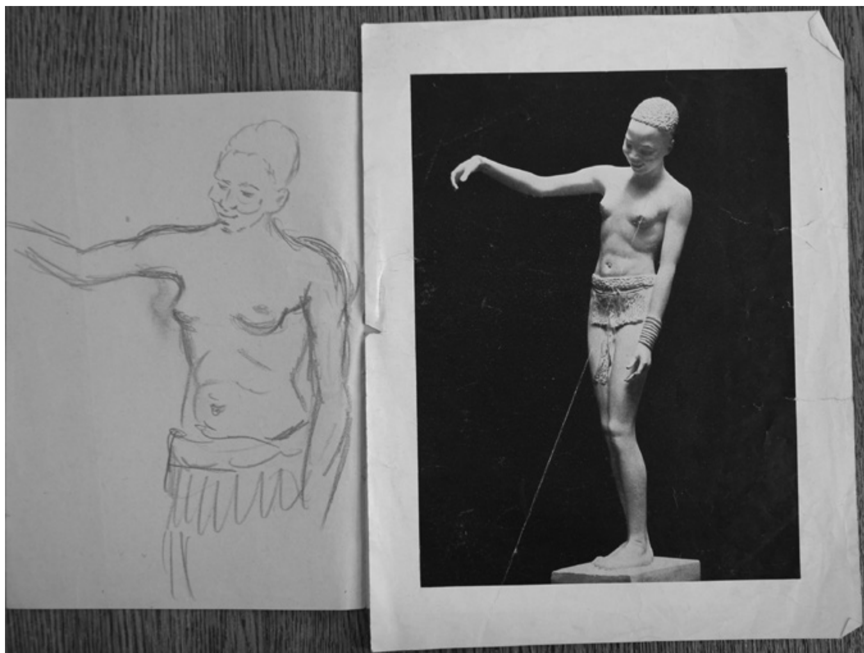


Figure 4.1 'Sara Dancing Girl, Chad, Africa' by Malvina Hoffman (1933), used in *Nauka o člověku*, Box 9, inv. n 424. Personal Collection of V. Suk, National Museums Archives (Prague).

Figure 4.2 Clay female figurine, made by a girl from the Zulu tribe, used in *Nauka o člověku*, Box 9, inv. n 424. Personal Collection of V. Suk, National Museums Archives (Prague).

wretches with the brains of a prehistoric human' ['bláhový altruismus pro ubožáky s mozkem pračlověka'] and dismissed those who believed that blacks could become like whites: 'Why this packing of the "black" soul into a "white" coat, bringing only unrest, dissatisfaction, ill-will? To make people unhappy.'[25]

He had become a fully fledged patriot. Following one of his idols, Vojtěch Náprstek,[26] who had been born Adalbert Fingerhut, but had changed his name in the 1840s to stress his commitment to the Czechoslovak nation, Suk too abandoned his German birth name. He could be said to have completed his formal Czechification in 1925 with his abandonment of Catholicism. However, being a committed patriot did not prevent Suk from continuing his alignment with German racial anthropology and focusing on one of its main concerns: the status of 'primitives' in racial hierarchies. Following the foundation of Czechoslovakia, Suk brought this perspective to his study of the 'less developed' minority 'primitives' of the country's mountainous East. As a 'civilised Czech', he certainly felt discomfort at having to co-habit with 'primitives' in his new state. Wallachs, who lived in the eastern part of Slovakia and in Moravia, were classified by Suk according to the degree of physical difference they exhibited when compared to the majority Czech and Slovak populations. While 'pure' Wallachs were presented as completely different to Slav groups in terms of their physical characteristics, racially intermixed Wallachs, whose physical features were aligned with the Slav 'profile', had adopted some of the cultural habits of Slovaks and Moravians.[27] The Rusyns of the Carpathian mountains were divided by Suk into those who, through cultural and biological assimilation with Slovaks, shared the Dinaric racial profile typical of the majority of Slavs, and those who remained Lappanoids, more compatible with 'Eskimos' and other self-isolated groups. Both groups were for him nevertheless associated with primitivism and non-Europeanness: 'Though we accept that Subcarpathian Ruthenia belongs to Central Europe – in geographical terms, in terms of ethnic origin and the culture of Rusyns, we have gained much evidence emphasising their oriental nature.'[28]

Due to their geographical proximity, 'white primitives' living among Europeans were seen by Suk as more threatening than those Africans or Inuits, whose capability to become 'civilised' was considered 'historically' limited. While in his notes about 'non-white' primitives, Suk maintained a condescending and patronising tone, his writings about the self-isolated groups living in the eastern part of Czechoslovakia reflected a position on the verge of overt racism. This left profound legacies. During the socialist period, the comparison between Wallachian and Romani children based on the supposed shared inferiority of their physical development compared to other ethnic groups in the nation effectively reproduced this tradition.[29]

In contrast to Rusyns and Wallachs, consistently presented as ‘alien to Slavs’, Sorbs (Lusatian Serbs), who lived on the north-western edge of the country, were positively characterised in Suk’s research, in line with a longer-term Czech tradition of establishing proximity with Sorbs as a brother nationality.[30] Through conducting anthropological measurement of young Sorbs, Suk worked to prove that they belonged to the Dinaric race,[31] who, in such racialised histories, were seen as a positive force of Slav progress. After 1945, this research would be used to present Slavs as ‘white civilised Europeans’ by racially minded Central and Eastern European scholars frustrated by the revived racial prejudice against Slavs from American and British experts in the context of Cold War conflict.[32]

Pathological primitives: the intersectionality of race, disability, gender, and class

> A primitive, a savage, who is he? Where is he, where are all the primitives? They are everywhere. I found them here and there and I have made a nice collection of them. They are in the cities as well as in the villages, in the bush and in the desert, among the tall and among the short, among the aged and among the young.[33]

The issue of ‘primitive’ pathologies had been central in Suk’s writings since the late 1920s, when he started to generalise from the outputs of his expeditions, including two trips to Subcarpathian Ruthenia, in 1921 and 1928, one to Labrador, between 1926 and 1927, alongside repeated excursions to conduct anthropological measurements of various local population groups in Bohemia and Moravia. Suk’s consistent interest in ‘primitives’ partly owed to his uncertain academic status at both the international and national levels after his return to Czechoslovakia. Before his African expedition, Suk had started his work at the Department of Anthropology at Charles University – where he continued as an unpaid research assistant until 1923. Becoming the leader in research on Czechoslovakia’s eastern periphery would potentially improve his position, and Suk made the decision to spend the fellowship offered for the Labrador expedition on his first trip to Subcarpathian Ruthenia.

By the end of the 1920s, Suk had attained a reputation as one of the leading experts on ‘primitives’. Between 1928 and 1931, he visited anthropological institutions in Great Britain three times and cooperated with Arthur Keith, one of the most influential Western anthropologists of that period, who assisted Suk with planning his expeditions. He helped Suk to gain access to the remote settlements of the Inuit, through his friendship with Charles Vincent Sale, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company. Keith asked

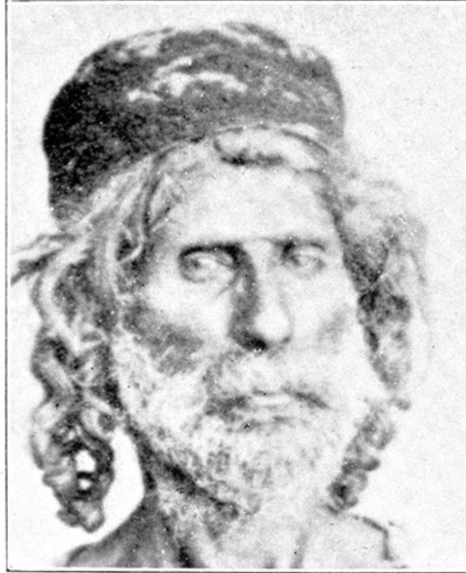
Sale to help Suk 'to reach the new places and peoples opened by your company'.[34] In 1931, Keith organised a public lecture for Suk, entitled 'The pathologies of primitive tribes in relation to the research conducted in Subcarpathian Ruthenia', at the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, attended by the Czechoslovak consul Bujnak and representatives from the Czechoslovak embassy.

Subcarpathian Ruthenia attracted much attention among those anthropologists who, like Suk, were obsessed by the mission to study 'primitives' in Europe. He feared that the region would become a source of data for such misleading 'foreign' theories, and used such arguments in 1928 to try to persuade the Ministry of Education to support his next expedition:

> Subcarpathian Ruthenia hides extremely important scientific problems in its population, which rightly arouse great interest among foreign researchers, especially energetic Poles, and even distant Sweden has recently sent an experienced worker.[35] It would be a real pity, then, if these territories, which, I would say, should be a legitimate area of our scientific business, would be exploited by foreign researchers.[36]

Following his older German instructors and fellow Czech experts, Suk ignored important challenges such as Franz Boas' rejection of a clear opposition between the civilised and primitives. Instead, he wavered between ascribing to primitives' advancement universal patterns of global human development,[37] and setting firm limits on the extent to which they could become 'civilised'. In contrast to those German anthropologists who divided the European population into superior or 'civilised' and inferior or 'primitive' races, Suk in some ways seemed to reject such hierarchies. He refuted the idea of the superiority of the Nordic race as an unscientific product of Nazi propaganda, a tendency he named 'nordicophily and anordicophoby'[38] or 'nordicomonomania'.[39] He also emphasised that the division into European 'races' was not based upon 'true variations of the species Homo'.[40] This stance earned Suk a reputation as a die-hard anti-racist.

Nevertheless, writing in 1933, Suk used the ideas offered by overtly racially minded German and Swedish scholars such as Otto Aichel, Eugen Fischer, Theodor Mollison, and Herman Bernhard Lundborg who accepted race itself as a 'reproductive community group of people who possess the same physical and mental hereditary characteristics that distinguishes and forms a link in the chain of phylogenetic drifts'.[41] Additionally, he consistently sought to prove that mountain-dwelling Rusyns, despite their belonging to the 'white' race,[42] were not really civilised Europeans: they were sentenced to remain 'primitives' because of 'the overall health of the highlanders and their different physiology, which was owed to the particularities of their ways of living, and the spread of certain diseases.'[43]



1. Bohemian.
(West Slav Type.)

Figure 4.3 Image of a 'Bohemian' man from *Man, Past and Present* by Augustus Henry Keane (1899) (Signatur 396 r-4, by permission of Bavarian State Library).

He also extended this exclusion to Jews. This position can be partly explained by Suk's defensive reaction to the systematic comparison of Slavs and Jews as inferior racial groups by Western anthropologists. Suk attacked the way in which the image of the Eastern Jew was conflated with the 'typical Bohemian or West Slav' in the famous and overtly racist book, *Man, Past and Present*, by Augustus Henry Keane (1899): 'For us Czechs, this is the most terrible, and also the saddest, example of inaccuracy: every expert, even an amateur layman, will recognise at first sight that a typical Galician Jew with a well-known Orthodox hairstyle is depicted here, with long hair rolls generally combed sideways.'[44] In his multiple presentations in Britain concerning Subcarpathian Ruthenia, Suk would include several photographs of young Jewish men alongside Keane's images to demonstrate the falsity of this equivalence (see Figures 4.3 and 4.4).

For Suk, the photographic method in anthropology was key in demonstrating the role of 'primitives' in human evolution. He was a gifted photographer, influenced by his Swiss teachers, especially Martin, who together with Mollison established and refined the standards for creating high-quality photographs.[45]

Figure 4.4 Jewish boy, photograph by V. Suk, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI).

He commonly used photographs to illustrate racial difference both in scientific publications and performances for the public. Photography could preserve the 'copious evidence of the fact that people's lives still are not infiltrated by cosmopolitan "pseudo-culture" but are nevertheless in danger of extinction today to the highest degree'.[46] Photographic methods established in the late nineteenth century in physical anthropology, in their exploration of race and the origins of humanity, often functioned to fix the predominance of 'white' scholars as those who have power to choose the objects, angles, and methods for visualising 'others'.[47] Suk himself reflected on this power: in his own guidance, prepared for the students of Masaryk University, he wrote: 'For scientific tasks, the person "behind the apparatus" is often more important than those who are "before" it, especially in the subject of ethnological study ['studium národozpytný'].'[48] Despite such awareness, he was frequently dismissive of his subjects:

> It was also a job for us to persuade those weak-minded cretins to cast their faces, but it wasn't any easier to persuade the others, healthy, indigenous

> people, because they are very backward and terribly superstitious. Despite this, we obtained almost fifty castings, not only adult men and women, but also children, Jews, and gypsies,[49] as well as several Germans. That is why we have many types, which you would certainly call Dinaric, as well as other, rough, and even very ugly, types.[50]

Such photographic coloniality emphasised the otherness of 'primitives' through specific lenses that 'chose very small people and ignored taller ones; chose undressed rather than dressed; chose people with wild animals rather than people with domesticated ones'.[51] One of the common patterns for photographing 'primitives', especially those who were diagnosed as having various pathologies, was the direct visual opposition to the perfect healthy 'white' man – in this case, it turned out to be Suk himself. He took photographs of Jewish 'cretins', whom he found in Ruthenia, people with 'retarded physical and mental development', looking like toddlers to demonstrate the difference in the growth and general look between these 'cretins' and himself (see Figure 4.5). Suk also took photographs of both the Indigenous population of Labrador with their dogs, and his wife or himself with the same dogs, to accentuate the difference between the inferior 'savages' and the superior 'whites'. In the photographs with 'Eskimos', the dogs look like they are independent or equal to people, but in the photographs with 'whites' they appeared in the submissive position of domesticated animals (see Figures 4.6 and 4.7).

Suk's determination to establish racialised oppositions can also be seen in the characterisation of Jews in Subcarpathian Ruthenia as a corrupting influence on the local Slavic population. This was especially the case for Rusyns, who, according to Suk, remained totally dependent on Jews (see Figure 4.8). By contrast, Germans in the region, by dint of their higher position in the civilisational hierarchy, could be independent from Jews:

> A terribly significant phenomenon in this village is that, entirely without Jews, here the Germans in *Německá Mokrá* are self-sufficient; they can do everything, repair everything. All crafts are in the hands of the Germans, also all shops, unlike the villages of Ruthenians, where there is always a large number of Jews, and all shops and all crafts are in the hands of Jewish workers. All my way from east to west, village by village, in the Highlands, for four whole months, I bought everything from Jewish merchants.[52]

Suk also drew on a motif from British colonial thinking: this Rusyn dependence on Jews was often compared to the negative role of Indians, who were seen as blocking the progress of the indigenous black African population in East Africa. Underscoring the role of Jews in maintaining the inferiority of self-isolated ethnic groups only reinforced their differences to Slavs – who were seen as 'civilised' Europeans, contrasted to these 'white primitives', who

Figure 4.5 Young adult 'cretin' pictured together with Suk, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI).

were defined by Suk as having 'oriental' origin.[53] His argument was accepted by the wide range of eugenically minded Czech experts, and came to be used to promote negative eugenic measures among the populations of the Eastern periphery, often labelled 'Czechoslovak Palestine'.[54]

Suk sometimes crafted forced but telling analogies between black Africa and the Eastern European Jew to reinforce the supposed primitivism of the latter. In his work 'Races and Racism', he brought together descriptions of

Figure 4.6 Child and dog, Labrador, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI).

Figure 4.7 Suk's wife and the dog, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI).

an older, uneducated Kikuyu woman and an old Jewish man whose 'long white hair, his long white beard, his long black caftan, and his deportment gave him the air of a prophet from the Holy Land'.[55] Suk described the identical reaction of both to the extraction of a tooth, and their shared intention to keep it, as evidence of their common primitive behaviour. After the extraction of her tooth, the Kikuyu woman was unhappy because Suk threw it into the bush, but after finding it, 'she covered the hole with plenty of soil, stamped it with her palm nicely flat, and stood up. Now, she looked really triumphant, the evil spirits and the White man were defeated.' But the 'old Jewish cantor of the Orthodox synagogue and a fair representative of the ancient Hebrew culture, who spoke six languages, Yiddish for his everyday use, ancient Hebrew for his sacred books, and, besides this, Czech,

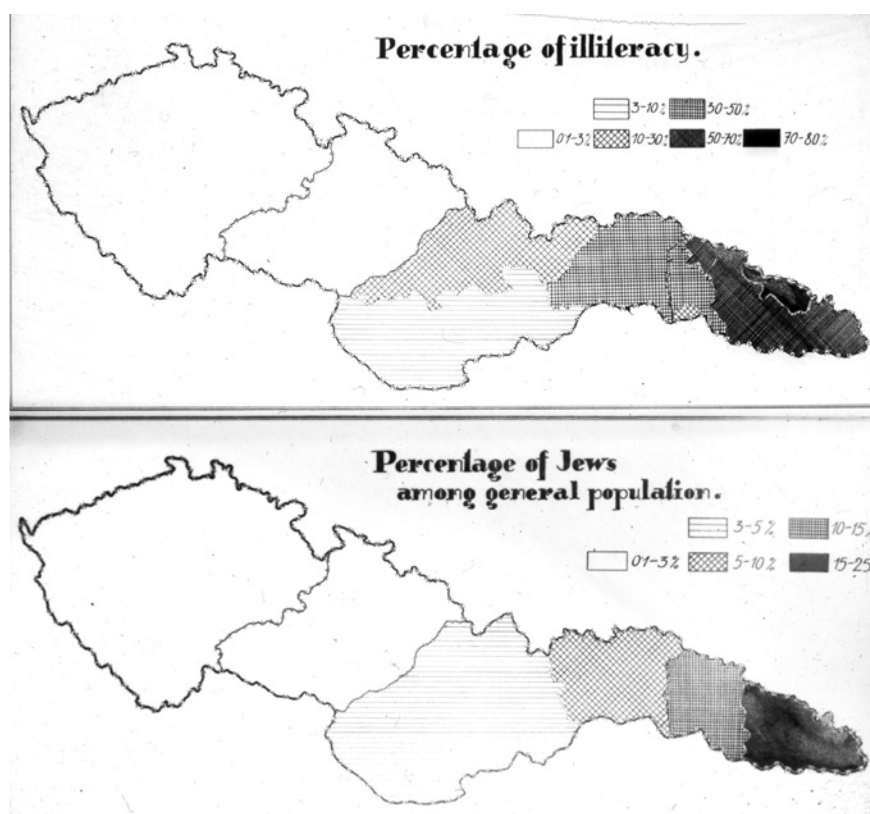


Figure 4.8 The map of Czechoslovakia aimed at demonstrating the corruption of Rusyns by Jews, made by Suk for his international presentations, Archive of the Institute of Anthropology, Brno. By permission of the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (MUNI).

Ukrainian, German, and Hungarian for his trade … knelt down in front of the bucket and dipped his hand right into the waste to get his tooth'.[56] Suk used such manipulated comparisons to demonstrate the universality of primitive habits among humans: an African woman and an older Jewish man became for him those common 'non-white' primitives living on the periphery of human progress. Like many other racially minded scholars, Suk divided the world into civilised and primitive races and thought it best to limit intermixing between them: Jews, to whom Suk attributed a racial status as outsiders to Europe, might threaten the superior white 'civilised' Slavs. In turn, his approach once again proves the very thin line between racism based on racial purity or the degree of healthy racial intermixture.

Conclusion

Race science is often seen as an irrational turn of biological science or a kind of anomaly that can be defeated by progress in the production of knowledge concerning the origin of humans. Yet Suk's career proves that this strategy of negating racism as a pillar of pseudoscience was insufficient to build historically informed arguments that would be able to challenge whiteness as the higher civilised norm. The main research question in Suk's anthropological intervention, namely, the intersectionality of race and health, was formed as a reply to multiple rival racial theories that he did not in fact refute. He toyed with multiple explanatory schemes for proving his methodology for standardising pathologies and generalising a healthy state as the absence of pathology. Despite attempts to emancipate the concept of health from categorisations in terms of 'natural' norms, the position of Suk and his successors continues to be accepted in the region. Although anthropologists under state socialism and after rhetorically rejected arguments based around racial purity and claimed Suk as an anti-racist hero, they still drew on the concepts of self-isolation that Suk had propagated, and which effectively reinscribed racial hierarchy within populations on the European continent and beyond.

Suk's views on the interconnection between primitivism, non-whiteness, and pathology resonated in the formation of several generations of anthropologists. From the 1950s, Eastern European experts aligned with this view obtained leading positions in international projects that argued for the limited capacity of those who were seen as racially self-isolated for proper socialisation. Comparing the 'primitive tribes' of Africa and Latin America with the Roma population of Slovenia, Anton Pogačnik (1934–74) not only heavily relied on the epistemologies introduced by Suk, but like Suk earned recognition as a scholar sensitive to the issues of racism.[57]

The project 'Rassengeschichte der Menschen' ('History of the Human Races'), started by Karl Saller in the early 1960s and completed by Ilse Schwidetzky in 1993, reinforced international acceptance of racial hierarchies grounded in the degree of self-isolation.[58] It included Czech anthropologist Jaroslav Suchý, who contributed to the first volume, aimed at shedding light on tribes and indigenous populations, including Roma. Right up until the present, the concept of self-isolation remains central in proving not only the supposed racial inferiority of Roma – and has been extensively used to justify the politics of their social segregation. Such views have a history embedded in the region: they cannot be explained away exclusively as the result of 'alien' external factors.

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Notes

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3 On the official web page of Masaryk University, Brno, the biography of Suk is titled 'Vojtěch Suk: muž odmítající rasistické teorie': www.em.muni.cz/z-historie-mu/1718-vojtech-suk-muz-odmitajici-rasisticke-teorie (accessed 16 April 2023).
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14 Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004), 6–13.

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16 Ibid. Immediately after the end of the Great War, Suk attended the medical faculty of Charles University and graduated in 1920. He worked as a physician at the hospital in Kladno and later, after the transfer to Brno, he continued his practical education as a surgeon.

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5

'Hungarian Indians': race and colonialism in Hungarian 'Indian play'

Zoltán Ginelli

'[t]here is a similarity between Indian destiny and Hungarian destiny'

Viktor Orbán, 2016[1]

On 23 June 2016, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán gave his annual political lecture at the Tusványos festival in the Transylvanian town of Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő) in Romania. When critically commenting on multiculturalism and pro-migration policy in the USA, he drew a parallel between Hungarian and Native American demographic fates to argue against migration.[2] It had a special echo in Transylvania: the 'reservation' metaphor has long been used by Hungarian Székely minority writers to make sense of their oppression by Romanian authorities following Hungary's loss of the region in the Treaty of Trianon (1920). This included Géza Szőcs (1953–2020), who was the Orbán government's state secretary of culture in 2010–12, and later the prime minister's chief advisor on culture. In recent years, Hungarian political, intellectual, and cultural institutions have revived a two-centuries-old fascination with the 'Indian' in Hungarian culture.[3] The idea of the 'Hungarian Indian' on the 'reservation' of a shrinking 'small nation' whose sovereignty has been continually contested re-emerged in the Petőfi Literary Museum's exhibition *Rézbőrű volt az alkony: A Magyar indiánozás nyomában* (*In the Copper-Skinned Twilight: In the Footsteps of Hungarian Indianism*, 2021). This was accompanied by a published collection of essays and poems on childhood memories related to 'Indian play'.[4] Former interwar-era enthusiasts' works, such as Ervin Baktay's 'Indian play' or Sándor Borvendég Deszkáss' 'Indian novel' entitled *A Szikláshegyek varázslója* (*The Magician of the Rocky Mountains*), have been rediscovered, repackaged, and republished by state-funded cultural institutions.[5] Films such as *Apacsok* (*Apaches*, 2015) or *Indián* (*Indian*, 2016) cultivated socialist-era identifications with the 'Indian' as an anti-communist resistance hero. To this day, 'Indian camping' remains a popular recreational activity for children.

This 'Indian' renaissance was also elevated to the level of 'anti-colonial' state propaganda from 2012 in the context of an anti-Western 'culture war'. Partly as a reaction to the effects of the 2008 financial crisis, the conservative populist government of Fidesz urged Hungarians not to become 'a colony of the West'. The image of the 'Indian' could join other historical characters resurrected for conservative populism, as seen in the government's nativist and neo-traditionalist revival of Turanic fantasies of horse-riding, nomadic Magyars who originated from Central Asia.[6] The figure of the 'Hungarian Indian' drawn from anti-communist resistance culture, or even a pre-socialist era romanticism, was resurrected too. The 'old warrior pals' ('régi harcostársak', in Orbán's words) of the 'system change' in 1989 could be enjoined to continue a struggle for 'classical' Central European, Christian, and conservative values against 'colonising' EU bureaucrats and 'comprador' left-liberals, who are cast as a continuing Communist–globalist threat to be resisted by defending national sovereignty, demography, and indigenous Magyar culture.[7]

This appropriation of Native American identity and culture to undergird the nativist anti-colonial struggle might appear a mere curiosity; yet to understand how this image is mobilised now, and why it might be so powerful, it is necessary to explore a now two-century-old history. Here I argue that the 'Hungarian Indian' trope, then as now, articulates a *semi-peripheral* mode of integration into the capitalist world-system, representing in-between racial and colonial identifications with non-white positions, while seeking to maintain white privilege. *Semi-peripheral whiteness* is thus an unhappy marriage of relentless Westcentrism and bitter anti-Western protest, which the 'Indian' has long perfectly encapsulated. This appropriation embodied a *structurally specific* 'white innocence' of 'peripheral' or 'frustrated' whites, who tried to demonstrate that they are 'good whites' by performing a more just and moral solidarity towards the colonised, or whose identification with subjugated non-whites could express the moral superiority of the dependent, marginalised, and traumatised position of a shrunken European 'small nation'.[8]

'From over the great water': 1848 and nationalist colonial victimhood

It was a broader fascination with America in the nineteenth century – as a symbol of development and sovereignty that offered a counter-model to Habsburg dependency – that paved the way for the development of the long-term Hungarian fascination with Native Americans.[9] The climax of American republican influence came during the 1848 Hungarian freedom struggle, inspired by ideals of liberty, republicanism, and 'capitalist freedom' for reformist elites. Count István Széchenyi, famous statesman and leading

advocate of export-oriented agricultural modernisation in the Age of Reform (1820s–1840s), idealised Benjamin Franklin, which earned him the nickname 'der Americane'.[10] On 19 April 1849, the Hungarian Declaration of Independence, partly based on the American, briefly marked the dethroning of the Habsburgs.[11]

A cultural fascination with Native Americans had already taken off in the 1830s, cultivated in 'Indian novels' like James Fenimore Cooper's, but Hungary's defeat in its War of Independence marked the crucial starting point for the Native American in the Hungarian nationalist political imaginary. The almost two-decade-long political suppression by Vienna after this loss led to the increasing equation in nationalist myth-making between Hungarian colonial victimhood and the fate of 'Indians'. Lajos Kossuth, the leader of the failed revolt, was a key figure in this mythology. Forced into exile, he made a round trip of the US in 1851–52, giving around six hundred speeches to collect donations in support of the Hungarian freedom fight.[12] His meetings with Native Americans would be repeatedly mythologised over the following centuries as Hungarians sought to make sense of their 'semi-colonial' position in Europe. A popular account featured Kossuth's meeting with an Iroquois Tuscarora tribe near Niagara Falls in May 1852: a Native woman refused to sell him beads, but upon returning to their hotel she sought the Hungarians out to offer gifts, after realising that Kossuth had formerly led a faraway people's independence war.[13] The long-lasting popularity of the solidary image of 'Kossuth and the Indians' can be seen in the 1906 'Kossuth Calendar', an object which conveyed canonised political messages and was annually hung in many homes (Figure 5.1).

Nevertheless, Kossuth's own writings made little note of Native Americans. This marked the start of an asymmetric relationship: 'Indians' were of interest only to authenticate Hungarian appeals against their own subjugation. Nor did Kossuth, the supposed 'Champion of Liberty', the 'Washington of Hungary' who fought against 'Hungarian slavery', support abolition in the US. This was despite a nationalist cult around Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which invoked Black slavery as a parallel to the subjugation of Hungarians.[15] Moreover, the defeats of the independence struggle produced a band of émigrés to the New World whose activities were often part and parcel of European settler colonialism and its dispossession of Native Americans. New Buda, a colony established in Iowa to preserve the values of the Hungarian Republic that failed at home, lay – as many other Hungarian colonies in the USA – on lands acquired from Native Americans.[16] Some '1848ers' even partook in military operations to quash rebelling Native American tribes.[17] In novels, travelogues, and the press, the 'Indian' was predominantly seen through colonial narratives as a 'Vanishing Race', a passive natural obstacle to the 'manifest destiny' of white American economic progress and modernisation.[18] Certainly some exiles fought on the Union

Figure 5.1 Kossuth meets the 'Indians' in 'The Great Calendar of Kossuth Lajos' (1906).[14]

side in the Civil War, or drew parallels between the oppression of Hungarians and Native Americans. Others, however, even if they condemned slavery, accused radical abolitionists of 'robbing' Southerners of their property.[19] Some even saw the struggle for Southern states' rights as the real parallel to their '1848'.[20] Freedom was mostly imagined for whites.

The evolving contours of the 'Indian solidarity' trope were powerfully illustrated in the life of the 1848 independence fighter and political refugee János Xántus. His sympathetic and authentic descriptions of 'Indians' made him a leading figure in shaping their image in Hungary as romanticised 'noble savages'.[21] He had arrived in the USA as a marginal, impoverished figure undertaking survey work in the US military for railroad construction, before finally returning to Hungary in 1864 as a scientist, explorer, adventurer, and national hero. Due to his ethnographic exploits, he became director of the first Hungarian zoo in Budapest (1866–68), director ('guardian') of the Ethnographic Division of the National Museum (a predecessor of the Ethnography Museum), and a celebrated participant of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's first East Asian expedition in 1869–71.[22] His most popular encounter with Native Americans concerned his land negotiations with a Seminole tribe, who were resettled from Florida to Oklahoma in 1842 after

eight years of war. According to a letter of Xántus, when the suspicious chieftain was told that the Hungarian was a refugee 'from over the great water', he supposedly replied, 'you are a true *nekám* [good friend], because you, like us, were driven from your homeland' – and offered his friendship.[23] Wielding the guiding light of enlightened humanism, the anti-Habsburg patriot Xántus performatively proved his anti-colonialism upon meeting the Native Americans – unlike white colonisers, he could supposedly mediate between the 'Indian' and other whites due to his Hungarian semi-peripheral identity. Later, Xántus and the 'Indian' would feature in interwar-era tales, and early 1950s socialist propaganda cultivated 1848ers' nationalist myths of 'Habsburg colonialism' in the context of Afro-Asian decolonisation to prove that Hungarians – exemplified by Xántus – were anti-colonial 'good whites'.[24] In the 1970s, Xántus would be celebrated as the main inspiration for Old Shatterhand, the white ranger hero who befriended the noble native Winnetou in Karl May's best-selling 'Indian' adventure novels.

Xántus' biographers, the literary historian, ethnographer, and head associate of the Museum of Ethnography István Sándor (1907–94), and the historical ethnographer, and chief museologist of the same institution, János Gyarmati (1959–), praised their hero as a humanist contributor to national greatness and science.[25] Yet there was a darker colonial reality lurking behind these rose-tinted accounts of anti-colonial friendship, in an unresolved tension between destructive colonial expansion and paternalist saviourism. Xántus assisted in mapping and surveying for land-grabbing at the colonial frontier, part of a mission to consolidate 'Bleeding Kansas' for white settlement in the 1850s. The Smithsonian Institution for which he collected and sold specimens grew based on the looting of Native Americans on the frontier by travellers, explorers, scientists, and agents of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Hungarian Museum of Natural History also profited from these 'curiosities', propelling Xántus' fame and academic career at home. Xántus himself even acquired land in New Buda colony originally taken away from Native Americans by the US government, and fathered children to Native American women.[26] The Budapest Zoo, in imperial competition with Vienna's Schönbrunn, exhibited 'Indian shows' featuring tribes as part of the 'Sioux European Tour' in 1886. White colonial spectacle, racial science, and Christian missionarism loomed large at the 'authentic' exhibition site: the Anthropology Museum director Aurél Török measured and made plaster copies of Native Americans' heads, while a newborn was baptised.[27] Xántus promoted the spectacle by recalling his 'first-hand' American experiences.[28] In 1895, the 'American Prairie Life Show' by 'chieftain' Texas Jack featured '6 Sioux Indians', '6 Plantation Negros', and '8 cowboys and Prairie girls'.[29] Such 'Indian shows' were still performed in the 1920s. Xántus ultimately believed in the liberal bourgeois capitalism of

the practical entrepreneur, and embodied Hungary's semi-peripheral nationalist competition with the Habsburgs within the dualist Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1867–1918) in the context of its integration into a global colonial system. He praised the capacities for governance of the white Anglo-Saxon race and idealised American progress. He supported the enlightened 'civilising mission' of the British Empire against 'inefficient' Dutch colonialism, the US annexation of Mexico while consul there (1862–64), as well as British gains during the Scramble for Africa.

'Copper-skinned soldiers of Hungarian revision': Trianon trauma and revanchism

The end of World War I propelled the rearrangement of the global colonial-imperial order, including in Central and Eastern Europe. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had been defeated and disintegrated; Hungary's humiliating loss of two-thirds of its prewar territory at Trianon in 1920 delivered a fatal blow to expansive ethnic assimilationist visions. Stuck between hostile 'Little Entente' nationalisms, with a post-Trianon urge to reorganise global alliances and solidarity networks, and to reinvent the racial and cultural basis of national 'vitality', various strategies were developed. These included visions of agrarian revitalisation and 'third way' development by folk writers; bitter critiques of Wilsonian sovereignty; revanchist searches for Eastern alliances against the Atlantic West (as in Turanism); and radical versions of expansive revisionist imperialism by politicians aligned to Italian and German fascism, based on defensive and traumatised victimisation intertwined with a sense of cultural superiority.[30]

Against these multiple crises, the imaginary 'pioneer white frontier' played a major role. An exoticised 'Wild West' – an uncertain but promising 'free world' in which masculine virtues of survival and combat inspired lonely heroes surrounded by moral turpitude – seemed a perfect setting for a call to action to revive Hungary from her sunken state. The frontier cowboy figure was idolised, even locally re-crafted through the folklorist traditions of Hungarian 'kuruc' bandits of the early eighteenth century, and of the 'huszár' cavalry soldiers who, as renegade wanderers, had fought against injustice under the Habsburg yoke. Alongside this, solidarity with the 'Indian' 'noble savage' reinforced a colonial subaltern identity built around lost homelands, traumatised subalternity, and revanchist anti-Westernism. The North American prairie or the South American Pampas of the 'Indian' were conjoined in the national imagination with the mid-nineteenth century romantic idealisation of the Hungarian national landscape of the Alföld, a 'sea-flat' wasteland ('puszta') that provided a free-spirited existence for the

horse-riding, nomadic Magyar people. Here 'Indians' transgressed racial categories and became connected to the supposed Eastern nomadic identity and Asian racial origins of the Magyar people – the East became the West through the 'Indian'. In the romantic nationalist imagination, Hungarians had to be 'Indians' or Turanic people for their nation to survive amid the threats of Western imperialism.

The increasingly state-subsidised Boy Scout movement drew on the 'Indian' in its paramilitary training to produce the 'Hungarian patriot'. They translated the culture of 'Indian play' in Boy Scout camping from Ernest Thompson Seton's Woodcraft and Indiancraft tradition in the USA and Lord Baden-Powell's reform pedagogy in Britain.[31] Although 'Indian romance' ('indiánromantika') was not an officially accepted educational method, and competed with Christian nationalist pedagogy, it strongly influenced the Hungarian Boy Scouts, as evidenced in the magazines *Zászlónk* (*Our Flag*) and *Magyar Cserkész* (*Hungarian Scout*). A prime proponent of 'Indian play' in Hungary was the geographer and Chief Scout Győző Temesi (1887–1977), who studied 'Indian' performances during his American trip and at international Scout events, such as British and French jamborees.[32] Temesi's own 'Indian' novel, *A csejennek romlása* (*Decay of the Cheyenne*), enjoyed immense popularity.[33] At the end of the novel, Temesi drew parallels: 'I have often found that I feel our human and Hungarian national destiny more vividly as I contemplate the heroes of the Cheyenne who fought to the end for mere existence against the valiant, child-spirited, fierce enemy.'[34] Reviewers were hooked. Even the 'regös' movement founder Sándor Karácsony (1891–1952), who otherwise believed that 'Indian romanticism' was an 'alien' diversion from national patriotism, hoped that its parallels between the fate of the Cheyenne and Hungarians would in the longer term turn the novel into a Hungarian *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[35]

'Indian play' could also mediate relationships of solidarity with a 'white West' in the name of irredentism. Hungarians' high-spirited 'Indian' virtues might convince Americans that Hungary deserved 'justice'. Such a fantasy drove Temesi's popular Boy Scout novel *Győzni!* (*To Win!*): here four Hungarian boys patriotically stand up to Romanian atrocities in Temesvár (Timișoara), and on a summer camp in the USA demonstrate their courage and 'Indian' scouting virtues, which instil the idea of Hungarian justice in American hearts.[36] More practically, the World Scouting Jamboree, held in Gödöllő in Hungary in 1933, mobilised a huge propaganda effort, including posters, postcards, souvenirs, and a castle site, to 'perform the nation' at home and advance Hungary's cultural diplomacy abroad. The official host, the Regent of Hungary Admiral Miklós Horthy, opened the jamboree by parading on his white horse.[37] Various nations showcased their own versions of 'Indian' culture as part of a colonial setting, which was reflected in the spatiality of

the camp. Just as Scouts from India participated under the British Empire, the Native American 'Indian' figure was subsumed under US nationalism, with canonised performances of costumed 'Indian' dances, songs, and rituals.[38] Yet only whites 'played Indians'. The Hungarian Jamboree album featured drawings of 'Indian play' in which camp chief Count Pál Teleki, twice Prime Minister of Hungary, was caricatured as 'Indian'. As a diplomatic gesture, the US Scouts made him 'honorary Indian Chief' by giving an 'Indian' headdress with feathers painted in the Hungarian national colours of red, white, and green (Figure 5.2). Whites were playing with non-white culture in the name

Figure 5.2 Pál Teleki with an 'Indian' headdress on the cover of *Magyar Cserkész* (*Hungarian Scout*) (1933).[39]

of imperial supremacy and colonial governance. In this context, 'Indian play' provided important opportunities for Hungarians to ally themselves culturally with a Western world whose support they needed to regain.

Despite the trauma of Trianon, fantasies of colonisation in the Americas had not gone away. Jesuit and Franciscan missionary histories and pulp novels showcased the country's spiritual revitalisation in 'civilising' converted Native Americans.[40] Béla Bangha, the prominent Christian preacher, Jesuit monk, and author of the book *Világhódító kereszténység* (*World-Conquering Christianity*), fantasised in his North American journeys (1921–22) and South America missionary round trip to the Hungarian diaspora (1934, with Zoltán Nyisztor) about civilising Native Americans through Christianity within a utopian vision of resurrecting the spirit of once-thriving Hungarian Jesuit missions.[41] This was posited against the Protestant mode of 'spiritless' North American (Western) modern capitalist colonisation. In this vision, the decadent 'Indian' race would be rescued by an influx of Catholic 'civilising' whites open to racial mixing, supported by a local Hungarian diaspora.

Other Hungarians reached out to Native Americans to garner support for the revision of Hungary's borders. In 1920, the Catholic organisation Regnum Marianum published a letter by a Native American priest, 'Dibishkogizik' ('Hole in Heaven'), which addressed Hungarian youth.[42] In it, he lamented the broken promises made to Native American soldiers after World War I, claiming that 'their return is very much similar to the return of the sons of Hungary'. The author added that what Trianon had brought about as 'self-determination' was 'a twisting of Wilson's words' – yet if irredentism succeeded, he promised, he would 'dance csárdás happily and eat wonderful gulyás again'.[43] A key figure in developing solidarity for Hungary amongst Native Americans was Sándor Borvendég Deszkáss (1913–88), or 'White Deer', whom the Nevada Shoshone Native Americans in 1934 elected as honorary 'Indian chief', and who in 1937 became an honorary member of a Canadian Iroquois tribe.[44] His fascination with 'Indians' had arisen from a relationship with the Shoshone-Hopi journalist Charles Uldenett, who stayed in Budapest from March 1928 to May 1929, during which time he taught the teenage Borvendég English and connected him with Native Americans. In turn, Borvendég persuaded Uldenett to study the Hungarian cause of irredentism. Upon his return home, Uldenett translated the English-language Hungarian revisionist propaganda album *Justice for Hungary!* (1931) into Hopi, and won the support of Native American councils.[45] On 12 June 1932, allegedly, six hundred drum-beating Hopis marched through Arizona across many cities for hundreds of miles, carrying a banner with the Hopi sun symbol and the inscription 'For Hungary Justice!' As a Hungarian newspaper article entitled 'The copper-skinned soldiers of Hungarian revision' reported, Shoshone, Seneca, and Sioux people joined the cause later on, raising similar banners in Nevada. Widely covered in the

American press, letters started bombarding Idaho senator William Edgar Borah, then President of the US Senate Committee of Foreign Relations (1924–33), who opposed the predominantly non-interventionist American policy and supported Hungarian revisionism, a position that made him 'the best read and most cited American' in Europe.[46]

Borvendég also drew on Native American culture to revive Hungarian patriotism at home. In his popular novel *A Sziklás hegyek varázslója* (*The Magician of the Rocky Mountains*, 1940), 'Indians' and Hungarians fought in racial brotherhood against capitalist modernity, connected by their instinctual love for nature and their ancient lands and their relentless nomadic spirit that arose from Turanic racial kinship with Central Asians and even the Japanese.[47] In his third book, *Hét fekete hold: Beszélő levél a Magyar idjúsághoz* (*Seven Black Moons: A Talking Letter to the Hungarian Youth*, 1944), he called upon the 'Indian' to educate patriotic Hungarians. He proposed holding annual 'Indian days' (the first was organised in the Buda Hills in summer 1946), and envisioned a 'Great Hungarian – Indian Wheel' ('Nagy Magyar Indián Abroncs') encompassing a nationwide network of united 'Hungarian Indian tribes'.[48] Borvendég tried (unsuccessfully) to persuade Count László Teleki (1912–62), the Hungarian Scout Union's head of foreign affairs, to fulfil this plan within the movement.

While Boy Scouts engaged in patriotic public display, other 'Indian players' from the 1920s preferred playing the solitary, nature-loving, and primitive 'noble savage' in small communities on their own 'Indian reservations'. The

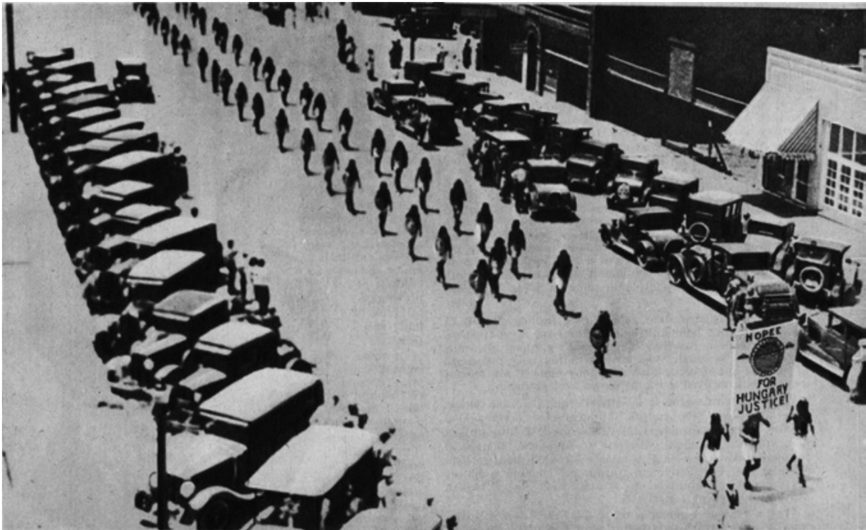

Figure 5.3 The Hopi march 'For Hungary Justice!'[49]

Figure 5.4 Sioux activist L. P. Hawk reading the revisionist album *Justice for Hungary!*[50]

orientalist scholar, writer, and translator Ervin Baktay (1890–1963) became the authoritative, charismatic leader of a bohemian, liberal bourgeois group of intellectuals, who pursued an anti-modernist and spiritualist hobbyist lifestyle through spontaneously creative artistic and theatrical 'Indian play'. Their rural, tribal utopia was the expression of an escape from spiritless modern capitalist society, alienated urban life, the hardships of the Great Depression (1929–39), and an increasingly racist state authoritarianism. By

the 1920s, their multifarious roleplaying games found the ultimate character in the 'Indian', which they performed during annual summer camps on the shores and islands of the Danube River on the picturesque 'Danube Bend' ('Dunakanyar'). Having had an actor father, Baktay started off as a painter, and was inspired by 'Indian novels', the costumed performers of millennial celebrations in 1896, the Buffalo Bill show in 1906, and 1920s 'Wild West' films. His uncle Raoul, who worked as a tourist guide in a Native American reservation, supplied him with books, native artefacts, and American music.[51]

The 'Danubian Indians' – as they were called – founded a hedonist refuge in their Western-styled 'Loaferstown' equipped with a saloon, a nearby 'Indian camp' with tepee tents, a chieftain and a sheriff (Baktay played both), while the costumed group practised canoeing, archery, horse-riding, 'Indian' rituals, and drinking 'grog' (alcohol). Dressed in meticulously detailed costumes, they posed with Colts and Winchesters, quoted from their 'bible', Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, and sang old 'Indian' and new American songs.[52] For Baktay, the nature-born 'North American Indian is … the truest sportsman … perfect gentleman … a truly cultured man in the spiritual sense, without the defects and sins of culture and civilisation in the material sense'.[53] Although this aestheticisation of the perfect racial body in a pristine natural environment was driven by his liberal, spiritual, anti-authoritarian, and anti-racist escapism, it controversially shared the essentialised racial aesthetic of the fascistic, nationalist 'Indian play' of German 'tribes'.[54] Nevertheless, their own 'newspaper', written only for internal use, ridiculed the Hungarian far right and eugenics. Their heyday in the 1930s came to an end with the dark realities of war and dictatorship.

While Baktay's 'Indian play' has long captured the imagination of Hungarians, his racial and colonial geographical ideas have been overlooked. His attempts to cultivate a positive image of the 'noble' Indian still reproduced a caricatured figure situated in common white myths of the colonial frontier. One of his academic accounts of European 'discoveries' in North America, published for a popular audience by the Hungarian Geographical Society, resembled a novelistic 'Wild West' adventure.[55] Although focusing on the colonial injustices done to Native Americans, Baktay also hero-worshipped white colonists and 'restless adventurers'. He concluded that 'the advance of the West was indeed a heroic epic for the American people, even if that epic had its dark and sad moments'. He thus reproduced the white nationalist myths of Thomas Jefferson and Frederick Jackson Turner about agrarian settler utopias and the breeding of the 'great men of America' on the colonial frontier.[56] Baktay merely shifted this narrative in imitation of Winnetou: those 'good whites' prevailed, who developed solidarity with 'Indians'. His

Figure 5.5 Ervin Baktay as 'Chief Lazy Buffalo' (1931). By permission of the Hopp Ferenc Museum of Asiatic Arts.

geographical determinism foresaw an inevitable racial acclimatisation that would cure 'the many ills of civilisation': the white man would pay for his colonial sins by dispersing into the American natural environment and would inevitably transform, even without 'blood-mixing', into the 'Indian'.[57] Yet, quite strikingly, Baktay's narrative completely downplayed Afro-American history, which he mentioned only passingly in relation to the Civil War. Such racial hierarchy was quite typical of orientalists: Hungarian whiteness could be projected back onto a 'noble' Asian origin, and be reinvigorated through the gentlemanly authentic primitivism of the 'wise' Native American. Hungarian orientalists showed little interest in what they considered the more 'backward primitivism' of African Black culture.

'White-skinned Indians' and 'red-faced' Communists

After the Communist takeover, the Horthy regime's Christian-conservative and state-subsidised Scout movement became illegal. Scout publications were banned, Scout leaders and regime propagandists such as Győző Temesi were prosecuted, and the Scout Union – under pressure from Communists

Figure 5.6 Sándor Borvendég Deszkáss as 'White Deer'. Author's private collection.

since 1946 – was merged into the Hungarian Pioneers' Association in 1948. The last 'Indian Day' was held in September of that year, and the 'Indian movement' was disbanded.[58] In August 1954, the government declared that all 'reactionary' books be purged from children's libraries, including *Grimms' Fairy Tales* and Karl May's novels of the 'Old West'. *Winnetou* was republished only in 1966, but in a censored and shortened form, with politically 'problematic' parts, such as its essentially Christian narrative, even sometimes rewritten. Yet the 'Indian' persisted as an important part of colonial consumer culture, alongside 'hunting novels', which continued to be published.[59] 'Indian novels', especially pulp fiction, became scarce and were in high popular demand.[60] Children could still appear in 'Indian' costumes on 1 May parades in the 1950s. The professional 'Indian researcher' appeared, pioneered by the almost worshipped figures of cultural anthropologists Lajos Boglár and László Borsányi. Although the 'Indian' sometimes featured in Communist critiques of colonialism, racism, and capitalism, its connection to America made its invocation politically highly suspicious. Cultural elites were especially reluctant to introduce Western films, which they regarded as romanticised, violent, and individualist, and thus not in line with Communist morals. These appeared much later than in other Eastern Bloc countries. The GDR 'Indianerfilme', starring the Yugoslav actor Gojko

Mitić as Winnetou, were already being produced in the 1960s, and presented the 'Indian' as a Communist resistance figure against Western capitalist imperialists.[61]

In response to Communist state repression, a new resistance figure of the 'Christian Indian' emerged. 'Indian' skills and identities were employed by so-called 'Catacomb Scouts' or, more poetically, 'Underground Stream Scouts' ('búvópatakos cserkészet'), to camouflage their Christian Boy Scout activities under 'playing Indians'.[62] 'Clerical Indian play' ('klerikus indiánosdi'), secretly organised by Christian communities and priests, tried to reconcile Christian faith with 'Indian' identities. This was one of the most popular among other culturally subversive 'romances' ('romantika'), such as 'rogue romance' ('csibész romantika') or 'ancient Hungarian romance' ('ősmagyar romantika'), where members took up ancient Hungarian names (e.g. Almos, Tas, Huba) and founded 'Hunor' and 'Magor' tribes.[63] In the 'Indian tribes' of Mohicans, Dakotas, or Shoshones, everyone had 'Indian' names, they learned 'Indian' languages, and there were 'Indian' trials, such as walking in the sun-scorching 'desert' without a drink, which were rewarded with feathers.[64] 'Indian' names provided a secret language where 'tribes' or 'chiefs' substituted for Christian Scout terminology. Jesus was referred to as 'Fiery Heart Brother', the Holy Spirit as 'Thunderbird', and the holy priest – the movement's founder, Father Pál László Bolváry – as 'Big Spirit', while crosses were replaced with Native American motifs.[65] Authenticity necessitated secrecy, as reflected in their new Scout law: 'The Indian does not boast and knows how to remain silent!'[66] Sometimes these strategies captured the evolution of 'Indian' racialisation in the Cold War: one participant recalled that at the cultic 'Crag camp' ('Sziklatábor') near Pécs, there was a 'battle between red-faced *ávósok* [Communist secret police] against white-skinned Indians.'[67]

The 'Indian' was transformed into an underground freedom fighter under Soviet subjugation. Borvendég had a key role in the development of 'Catacomb Scouting', and also resurrected 'Indian play' within the Communist Pioneer Movement. In 1948, he introduced himself as an associate of the official Pioneer magazine *Pajtás* (*Pal*) and as the official Hungarian representative of the Indian Association of America.[68] The 1956 revolution offered a political opportunity to restart Scouts' 'Indian play'. In February 1957, he founded the youth magazine *Tábortűz* (*Council Fire*), which built strongly on Boy Scout tropes, and was a more colourful alternative to *Pajtás*, filled with drawings and comics. Borvendég wrote articles as 'Spotted Deer' ('Foltos Szarvas'), perhaps to mask his ancient Hungarian and Turanic affinities. In 1957, he even tried to persuade ethnographer Gyula Ortutay to start an ethnographic journal, which would have focused on all oppressed peoples.

In *Tábortűz*, Borvendég launched the countrywide environmentalist movement of the *Nagy Erdei Testvériség* (*Great Forest Brotherhood*), a 'camouflage' for his previous concept of 'Indian–Hungarian' racial brotherhood, which in practice organised a network of anti-communist 'Hungarian Indian tribes' (Figure 5.7). Borvendég was dismissed from work on 23 December 1957 for his activities in the Hungarian Revolution, and many other 'Hungarian Indians' emigrated.[69] Unsurprisingly, 'Hungarian Indians' were spied on, had their houses searched, and were prosecuted for keeping contacts with or providing information to the Indian Association of America.[70] Quite controversially, the 'Indian' enthusiast and cultural anthropologist László Borsányi used his ethnographic skills to spy on 'Hungarian Indian' communities when camping with them. In autumn 1958, some 'Indians' were documented collecting weapons and holding shooting practices to prepare 'for the liberation of the oppressed Hungarian people'.[71] This new turn alarmed the Communist leadership: Borvendég and some of his fellow 'tribesmen' were tried in 1961 for conspiring against the state. It was clear from the trial report that earlier 'Indian' traditions still frightened the authorities:

> the fascination with mysticism and the fabulous, wonderful Indian world can still be found today … The books of Sándor Borvendég Deszkáss present historical facts in a way distorted by literary fantasy … and give a conscious impulse … to the practical pursuit of romanticism … In 1948, our state abolished the Scout organisations based on nationalist–chauvinist ideology, which were the cradle of romanticism. However, the romantic tendency has not disappeared, and there are still sources that nourish it. Practical Indianism ['indiánozás'] has the same content as Scouting. The militaristic exterior is replaced by militant Indian motifs, and nationalist ideology is inherent in the legend of Indian reservations … The Scouting and clerical influence on Indian youth is aimed at putting their romantic inclinations at the service of hostile political concepts.[72]

The official Hungarian Pioneers' Association condemned the movement – and Borvendég's 'Scout-pioneer' venture ended. Nevertheless, the prosecuted 'Indians' received amnesty in 1963.[73]

Despite this persecution, a new generation of 'Indians' emerged. In 1961, in the hilly woods of Bakony, a new tribe was founded, led by the ambitious yet melancholic art teacher Tamás Cseh (1943–2009), known as 'Smoke in His Eyes'. Their masculine rituals of a spiritually courageous, patriotic, wargaming 'Indian play' sought an escape from the suffocating realities of socialist modernity into a supposedly morally pure and nature-loving life of authenticity. Although Cseh's fantasies revolved around Hungarian folklore, nationalist patriotism, and a melancholic yet liberal nomadic identity, these were not marked by earlier Asian or Turanic motifs, but instead resembled

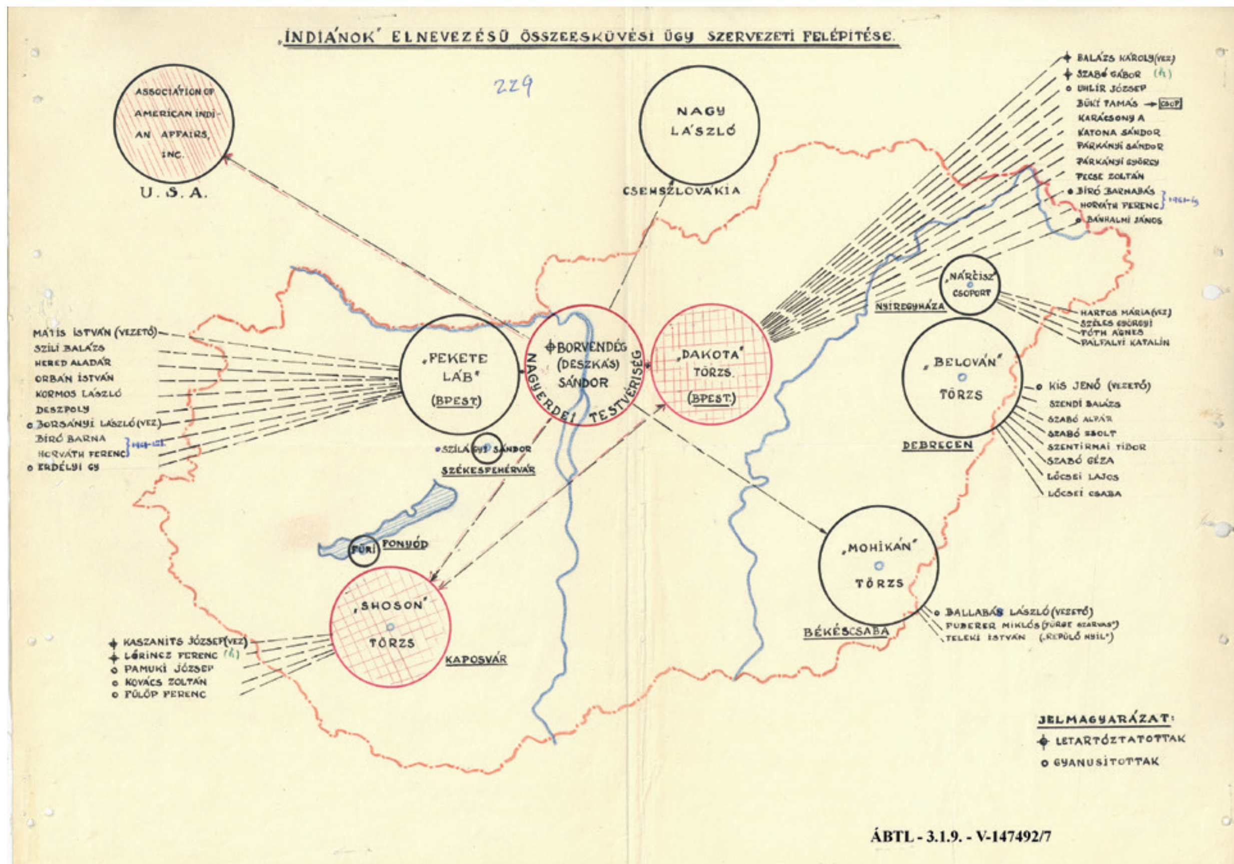

Figure 5.7 The 'Scout–Indian network' of 'Blackfoot', 'Dakota', 'Shoshone' and 'Belovan' 'tribes' infiltrated in 1963 by the secret police. The centre is occupied by the Nagy Erdei Testvériség (Great Forest Brotherhood) led by Borvendég, and connects to the Association of American Indian Affairs (est. 1922). By permission of the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security, HU – ÁBTL – 3.1.9. – V-147492/7.[74]

American hippie movements. Cseh pursued a storytelling pedagogy for youth based on tales and legends. Often accompanying theatre plays and ethnographic performances, Cseh worked the 'Indian' aesthetic into his music style of balladic storytelling and lyrical singing with rhythm guitar, sometimes with Native American drums, as featured on his album *Mélyrepülés* (*Low Flying*), and songs *Dallam a szabadságról* (*Melody on Freedom*) or *Indián népdal* (*Indian Folk Song*).

The younger 'Bakony Indians' tried to develop contacts with the older 'Danube Indians', but were rejected as unfamiliar faces who might be 'spy Indians'. Although the 'Indian' camps of Cseh's group caught the attention of state officials, they evaded persecution – despite their wargaming habits – by keeping up good relationships with locals and by engaging with only 'neutral' cultural institutions.[75] This allowed them to continue a cultural passive resistance as freedom-loving 'Indians' against Soviet occupiers on their own land. Engaging in Native American arts and craft, their hobbyist movement also produced practical guides on camping and Native American culture.[76] Cseh's only novel, *Hadiösvény* (*Warpath*), recounts his alter ego 'Smoke in His Eyes' from the Húŋkpapȟa community of the Lakota, and follows the genre of 'ethnographically authentic' adventure novels.[77]

'Indian' youth novels also returned, and could be read as offering freedom within – or even resistance to – an authoritarian present.[78] Imre Kőszegi's *Tollas konty* (*Feathered Bun*, 1971) was the first such novel with a female hero, an agrarian cooperative president's teenage daughter who founded an 'Indian tribe'.[79] Miklós Rónaszegi (1930–2022) was one of the most successful adventure novelists in the socialist era, writing nostalgic and romanticised historical adventure and pirate novels set in the early colonial era. His *A Sánta Bölény* (*The Lame Buffalo,* 1958) was a historical 'Indian novel' about Blackfoot natives, when they still had freedom during their first encounters with whites, and who were 'characterised above all by the tough upbringing of young warriors and strict morals'.[80] His novel *Indián hercegnő* (*Indian Princess*, 1966) was a rendition of the well-known Virginian story of Pocahontas, which he continued as a series in *Indián halál* (*Indian Death*, 1968) and *Az indián királyfi* (*The Indian Prince*, 1970).[81] Such genres, which mimicked and reproduced Western literature featuring aristocratic figures, continued to be treated with suspicion and censorship by state officials.[82]

The resurgence of writing on the North American 'Indian' remained historical, romanticised, abstract, and ultimately provincial. It paid little attention to the growing politicisation and internationalism of Indigenous movements in the Americas and elsewhere. Stories such as Miklós Szabó's only adventure novel *Erdélytől Floridáig* (*From Transylvania to Florida*) were typical: this revived once again the themes of 1848 colonial victimhood

and historical fantasies of solidarity in a form that did not link to any contemporary issues or responsibilities.[83] It covered the legendary story of 1848 freedom fighter Ferenc Birta, who fled the Habsburgs from his home in Transylvania to North America, and after many adventures befriended the Seminole tribes and established a colony in Florida, 'the home of peace, where man can be human among humankind', named after his home village, Palatka.[84] The 'Indians' saw him as white, but gave him the telling name 'Truth-Seeking Wanderer White Warrior', after he clarified that 'the ones hunting you are called English, the ones hunting us are called Austrians'.[85] Szabó's story features an anti-racist solidarity that is in fact subsumed by a longing for the West, which manifests in a form of colonial escapism, while reinforcing a provincialized, nationalist semi-peripherality.

Meanwhile, the international politics of Native Americans, and Indigenous peoples more broadly, were changing. Following the World Peace Council conference held on 20–23 September 1977 in Geneva, which included the first congress on Native Americans' rights with a public appeal by 257 tribes, a small delegation led by the Oglala Lakota activist Russell Means (1939–2012) visited socialist countries, including Hungary, between 8 and 12 October. Representing the International Indian Treaty Council, they provided Hungarians with a document on 'Legal Questions Concerning American Indians in the United States'. Their Hungarian host, the Communist reporter and propaganda journalist György Makai – who had earlier reported on Means' leading role in the Wounded Knee occupation (1973) – showed them the anti-racist successes of socialism: providing equal rights to minorities, having a planned economy in agriculture, and supporting students from 'developing countries'.[86] The Native Americans were disappointed by the socialists' reluctance to support their claims for a sovereign homeland, while the socialists considered their goals clearly naive, yet urged future acts of solidarity.[87]

Instead, the socialist state's anti-colonial solidarity focused on the newly decolonised Afro-Asian world, to which a dependent semi-peripheral economy looked for investment projects to gain foreign currency and a market for exports and education. The 'pure' northern 'Plains Indians', who were still too closely connected to an ambivalent image of the West, carried less appeal than the mostly mixed, partly Black, 'races' of South America. These Indigenous groups attracted greater political solidarity given their criticism of US imperialism. As a result, Latin American 'Indian' poetry and literature, such as romantic *indianismo* and later a more anti-colonially progressive *indigenismo*, was published in the 1960s and 1970s.[88] Even these solidarities, still often marked by white exoticisation and sexualisation, died out by the early 1980s as a 'return to Europe' became the dominant discourse.[89]

Conclusion

In an interview for the 2021 museum exhibition mentioned in the introduction, the curator Imre Wirth noted:

> there is a deep and hidden resonance to the kind of annihilation that came through the Indian novel in its Hungarian reception … which tunes into our traumas, such as the loss of land, because Indians were also deprived of their territories, forced into reservations. This especially intensified after 1945, when political repression was added to all of this.[90]

The museum's exhibition and accompanying edited volume on Hungarian 'Indian play' clung to a memory politics of one-sided anti-communist victimisation, and nostalgically relegated the 'Indian' to childhood memory: an individualised mental experience of infantilised subjectivity to reproduce white innocence. The highly aestheticised, essentialised, and canonised figure of the 'Indian' remained a provincialised trope for internal consumption, sustained to uphold a narrative of the struggle for the victimised nation. Hungarians commonly look back at their national heroes' 'honest', 'curious', and 'sympathetic' exploration of 'Indian' culture without a racial and colonial critique of appropriations which are used to undergird a semi-peripheral white mythology of victimhood and trauma. Nor is there any concern at the absence of public dialogue with Native American communities. Unfortunately, even adept scholars reproduce this Hungarian apologetic exceptionalism. Cultural historian and anthropologist Ildikó Sz. Kristóf remains 'convinced that *indiánosdi* ["Indian play"] had a different and perhaps complex meaning in socialist Hungary … than just another form of "hobbyism", as it did in western Europe … or in the United States … *indiánosdi* was a *dream* and a *game of freedom*'.[91]

The 'Indian' remains a highly aestheticised and essentialised abstraction that continues to express local white projections and desires for the 'exotic', 'anti-modern', 'anti-authoritarian', or 'natural', and makes claims for moral and aesthetic authenticity. 'Indian' anti-colonialism has long enabled Hungarians to pose as 'good whites'. Yet 'Indian play' or solidarity became caught up in white racial fantasies of colonial settlerism, Christian nationalism, the nationalist pedagogy and paramilitarism of the Boy Scout movement, irredentism and anti-communist resistance, as well as a desire for returning to a white Europe. Even today, the nationalist *re-politicisation* of the 'Indian' once again is used to provide a racially authentic alibi for a semi-peripheral white victimhood, or 'frustrated whiteness', which in fact seeks white privilege. Claims of solidarity stand in stark contrast with the local *depoliticisation* and ignorance of Native Americans' contemporary culture and political struggles. Today, locked between an anti-Westernist conservative nationalist

identity politics and a Westcentric progressivist liberalism, the 'Indian' provides a powerful aesthetic platform from which to perform nativist myths of national victimhood, Eastern European peripherality, and exceptionalism, as well as anti-communist political culture.

Notes

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2 Holly Case, 'Hungary's Real Indians', *Eurozine*, 3 April 2018, www.eurozine.com/hungarys-real-indians/ (accessed 22 February 2023).
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4 The exhibition title was taken from the famous Jewish-Hungarian poet Miklós Radnóti's poem *Gyerekkor* (*Childhood*, 1944): Gábor Gyukics, Attila Jász, and Imre Wirth (eds), *Az utolsó indiánkönyv* (Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2021).
5 Béla Kelényi (ed.), *Az indológus indián: Baktay Ervin emlékezete* (Budapest: Hopp Ferenc Kelet-ázsiai Művészeti Múzeum, 2014); Vilma Főzy and Béla Kelényi (eds), *Indiánok a Duna partján: Baktay Ervin indián könyve* (Budapest: Hopp Ferenc Azsiai Művészeti Múzeum, 2019); Fehér Szarvas (Sándor Borvendég Deszkáss), *A Sziklás Hegyek varázslója: Magyar ifjúból indiánfőnök* (Budapest: Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum, 2005; facsimile of edition published by Athenaeum in Budapest, 1940).
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7 See Hanebrink, this volume.
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14 *Kossuth Lajos nagy naptára az 1906. évre* (Budapest: Rózsa Kálmán és Neje, 1905); Gábor I. Kovács, '"Kossuth Lajos küzdelme a farkasokkal"', *História*, 8:1 (1986), 33–5.
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6

Peripheral whiteness and racial belonging and non-belonging: accounts from Albania

Chelsi West Ohueri

Over my fifteen years of conducting ethnographic research on race and belonging in Albania, many questions have arisen about the applicability of race theory frameworks for understanding marginalisation and the construction of difference in this region. This is especially the case with the topics of whiteness and racism, which are often largely understood as issues of the United States and the 'West' broadly defined. While elsewhere I have written about processes of racialisation and the racial logics present in daily life in Albania, the primary goal of this chapter is to historically and ethnographically explore the subjects of whiteness and racial belonging.[1] In doing so, it also illustrates how the ethnographic study of race can shape our historical inquiry into aspects of whiteness and belonging in Central and Eastern Europe that may not have otherwise been considered.

My research draws attention to the complexities of Albania's proximity to European whiteness. Whether during formal interviews or coffee conversations, many of my interlocutors frustratedly shared sentiments of Albania's current sociopolitical landscape, often blaming both past and present-day politicians for their inability to change the country, thus preventing Albania from being fully European. It is not uncommon for interlocutors to passionately express anti-Ottoman sentiments, and invoke a distancing from a Communist past and what people consider to be social, economic, and political backwardness. Both the Ottomans and Hoxha, many of my interlocutors assert, have ruined or destroyed Albania ('Shqipëria, tani, është e prishur' ('Albania is now ruined'). These constructions are particularly acute during discussions of Albania's prospects for joining the European Union, as people may express their desire for what they frame as *true* European belonging. I argue that these sentiments provide an entry point into the exploration of how European belonging has been constructed historically, and how it is intimately tied to race and whiteness in the contemporary moment.

Albanians have often had to navigate what Isa Blumi refers to as 'an anxious self-definition as Europeans'.[2] This anxious self-definition shapes the space of the periphery and what I refer to as peripheral whiteness. This term calls attention to the ways that global racial orders shape paradoxical local landscapes, such that white European racial belonging is not fully conferred to Albanians, and that at the same time, Albanians enact whiteness in relationship to those racialised as 'black', particularly Roma and Balkan Egyptians.[3] This concept takes into consideration what it means to long for whiteness following Albania's particular histories of imperialism and state socialism, and contemporary aspirations for European Union membership. It also highlights the angst produced by the longing for what people consider to be full inclusion within Europe, revealing what it means to *feel* and *not feel* white.[4]

My use of the concept of racial belonging is shaped by understandings of racialisation as the processes that give race its meaning, i.e., the ways that race is categorised, understood, and deployed, and belonging that is marked by emotional investment and attachment.[5] This analytic of racial belonging is further informed by Cedric Robsinon's notion of racial capitalism, which calls attention to the genesis of racism and racialisation *within* Europe, whereby those othered as Eastern/Muslim/Slavic/Roma were the first to be racialised outside of whiteness.[6] The expansion of Western capitalism, Robinson argues, was itself racialised, and social hierarchisation of so-called racial groups was thought to be natural. Albania, along with the rest of Southeast Europe, has historically been constructed as sociopolitically and economically inferior to Western Europe, particularly as shaped by its Ottoman and Communist histories. I argue that Albania's position within racial capitalism must be nuanced, as Albania occupies a place of peripheral whiteness in relationship to Western Europe, yet contemporary understandings of racial capitalism produce local racial logics that demarcate the value of humanity as shaped by capitalist structures.[7] Such structures shape Albanians, Roma, and Egyptians, and their varying proximities to whiteness and blackness. In the case of Albanians, peripheral whiteness speaks to the paradoxes of the space of the margin, where Albanians are both racialised outside of some boundaries of 'the white world' and simultaneously have historically performed being 'white' for Western audiences, as well as performing being 'white' locally against Roma and Egyptians who are racialised as 'black'. The country's unique positioning further illustrates how 'dehumanization seems to be an unavoidable outcome of the processes of capitalist development'.[8] I employ these frameworks of race to historically and ethnographically examine racial belonging in Albania as shaped by global racial orders, that is by the geographies of racial capitalism, that configure variegated forms of inequality.[9]

In the first section of the chapter, I briefly analyse race in a regional context, including an exploration of racialised constructions of Albanians as perpetual racial outsiders in Europe. In the second section I examine constructions of peripheral whiteness, and how Albanians have been othered as non-white but at the same time have strived to become 'white' through various nation-building projects and promoting claims of authentic Europeanness. I interrogate how national narratives serve as a tool for Albanians to craft a white European racial belonging. In the third section I explore more recent local manifestations of whiteness as it pertains to the relationships between Albanians, Roma, and Egyptians, whereby Albanians are racialised as 'white' while Roma and Egyptians are racialised as 'black'.

On race and place in Southeast Europe

Like every region, Europe has its particular racial arrangements, and an exploration of whiteness must be analytically situated within them.[10] We know from Edward Said's theory of orientalism and Maria Todorova's concept of Balkanism about historical divides between East and West, and how understandings of place have shaped forms of belonging, marginalisation, and human hierarchy.[11] Todorova in particular notes that while the division was initially spatial, it began 'gradually to acquire different overtones, borrowed and adapted from the belief in evolution and progress flourishing during the Enlightenment'.[12] At the same time, Todorova's analysis of marginalisation fails to address how racialisation and whiteness were organising principles of this peripheralisation.[13] While common frameworks of the Balkans only emphasise nationality and ethnicity, there is an intertwined relationship between racialisation and Balkan peripheralisation that yields further insight into Europe's racial arrangements.

In their work on post-Soviet racialisations, Nikolay Zakharov and Ian Law note that 'the scholar of race needs to address the question why people employ certain categories (race/blackness/whiteness), under which historical situations these categories are relevant, and under which institutional circumstances ideas of race generate social effects'.[14] As many chapters in this book indicate, Central and Eastern Europe, and in this case Southeast Europe, often occupies a space of racelessness in the scholarly and social imaginary. My ethnographic research has illustrated how such ideas of exceptionalism are additionally present in Albanian discourse.[15] Interlocutors frequently assert that Albania is inherently raceless because of its demographic homogeneity, demonstrated by recent national data shows that between 90 and 95 per cent of the country identifies as ethnically Albanian. Further, many believe that the high levels of religious tolerance in the country demonstrate a universal

acceptance that precludes any racial division. As the famed Albanian poet Vaso Pasha declared during Albania's national awakening, 'Feja e Shqyptarit asht Shqyptaria' ('The religion of Albania is Albanianism').

Such relics from the late nineteenth century have continually emerged and re-emerged in Albania's history and present day, shaping not only ideas about religion but also about tolerance broadly. Many of my interlocutors express that this tolerance is inherently woven into the fabric of social life in Albania, and that as a result race and racism are not relevant to them. Yet I maintain that the language of race and practices of racialisation have been prevalent in Albania for a significant period of time, and everyday racial logics, whether named as such, generate social effects. Recent work by Piro Rexhepi illuminates the forms of global raciality and racial capitalism that have marked and continue to shape Balkan landscapes, even when race is denied or dismissed.[16] When we turn attention away from a singular focus of measuring degrees of racism and notions of racial division, and towards a consideration of processes of racialisation and whiteness, we can see that even these claims to racelessness are actually shaped by racial logics that continually shape who is white, not quite white, and how East Europeans become more or less white over time.[17] As part of globalised racial structures, whiteness carries a myriad of meanings as it manifests across various local settings. While analyses of it in the West do not map neatly onto the Balkans, processes of racial belonging and marginalisation in this region draw attention to the ways that difference and structural advantage are racialised. These developments emphasise whiteness as a particular standpoint through which those who are racialised as white, including those who are peripherally white, view others.[18]

Albanians as historically racialised outsiders

Though regional scholarship on the Balkans does not often attend to them, there are particular racial logics that have historically marginalised Albania outside of whiteness. These racial logics have emanated from race theories common to Europe during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, shaped by practices of both explicit and silent ordering of peoples.[19] The Balkans are Europe's periphery, what Dušan Bjelić characterises as Europe's 'abnormals'.[20] I use the idea of peripheral whiteness to analyse how Albanians have been excluded historically and also as an attempt to capture the attachments to white racial belonging. In this way, the case of Albania sheds light on the shifting nature of and fluidity of whiteness and its limits.[21]

Writing about Albania in the early twentieth century, the British anthropologist and writer Edith Durham wrote:

> Such backwaters of life exist in many corners of Europe – but most of all in the Near East. For folk in such lands time has almost stood still. The wanderer from the West stands awestruck amongst them, filled with vague memories of the cradle of his race, saying, 'This did I do some thousands of years ago; thus did I lie in wait for mine enemy; so thought I and so acted I in the beginning of Time.'[22]

Statements such as Durham's demonstrate the widely held anachronistic and scientifically racist notions of this time period. Her ideas further draw attention to the temporal nature of whiteness, highlighting how Western Europeans understood whiteness and Europeanness to symbolise civilisation and arrival. The boundaries of European belonging rendered backward and uncivilised Albanians as racial outsiders, shaping cultural markers that continue to manifest in the contemporary moment in what are still framed as Europe's backwaters. These constructions of Albania were not limited to Western Europe, as writers from Central Europe articulated similar beliefs. Johann Georg von Hahn was an Austrian imperial-royal consul in Southeast Europe during the early to mid-nineteenth century, and was regarded by Western Europeans as one of the leading experts on Albania. Among his many writings about the nation, his publications included dehumanising depictions of two so-called types of Albanian men with tails, those with goat tails and those with horse's tails.[23] Such ideas are derived from eighteenth-century thinkers like Carl Linnaeus, who wrote about the so-called satyr species of hairy, tailed men, not thought to be fully human.[24]

Travel writings by such figures as von Hahn reinforced racist and dehumanising perceptions that lasted well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They also shaped intra-Balkan attitudes and beliefs about Albanians. An example comes from the Serbian Academy of Sciences during the late nineteenth century, in which one member characterised Albanians as 'bloodthirsty, stunted, animal-like … modern Troglodytes who slept in trees, to which they were fastened by their tails'.[25] Examples such as this one illustrate the Western and Eastern European racial ideas produced by Europe's social-political structures, whereby Albanians were considered uncivilised, non-human, and not 'white'. Whiteness in this case replicates a type of temporal logic, such that those deemed backward and undeveloped are external to European whiteness. The timing of these mid- to late nineteenth-century observations provide insight into Albanian nation-building projects. During this time period of the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire was in decline, and other Balkan countries had either gained independence or were in the process of seeking it. As part of their nation-building efforts, Albanian leaders had to construct a singular national identity, one that was closely aligned with Europe and the West. These experiences of racial outsiderness, I argue,

shaped the notion of what it meant to be Albanian, illustrating a particular duality that animates the realm of peripheral whiteness and its complexities: Albanians at this time were striving for white racial belonging while being situated outside of it.

Racial belonging and nation-building projects

The above examples demonstrate the ways that Albanians have occupied a subaltern position external to notions of European racial belonging. I argue that there are historical instances that illustrate how some conceptualisations of Albanian national identity were shaped by this exclusion and also by desires of European white inclusivity. The study of race itself in Albania is complex, and there is little in the historical record that includes the explicit language of 'white' or 'whiteness'. Yet I argue that racial ideologies of whiteness, underpinned by notions of modernity and civility, shaped Albania's early twentieth-century nation-building projects.[26] Facets of this racial imaginary are especially salient when examining how Albania was constructed by those nationalist leaders who were located outside of Albania. Albania was the last country to declare independence from the Ottoman Empire, and like other Balkan countries, its national leaders sought to obtain formal statehood recognition from the Great Powers in the early twentieth century. One method that Albanian leaders used to influence the Great Powers was the adoption of the Pelasgian theory within nationalist discourse. In particular for those Albanian nationalists who resided in Western Europe and the United States in the 1910s, the theory that Albanians were direct descendants of the Pelasgians, and therefore, the earliest inhabitants of the Balkan region predating Slavs and Greeks, became a means to affirm the status of Albanians as the 'lawful owners of Albania'.[27] This was an attempt to proclaim authentic and original European whiteness, contrasted with an uncivilised and barbaric Ottomanness which they vested in their Turkish imperial rulers. Albanian writers like Konstandin Cekrezi, who resided in the US in the early twentieth century, wrote at length about Albanians' perpetual struggle to protect their land and identity against foreign oppressors.[28] I do not draw attention to this Pelasgian theory of descent to enter a debate about its legitimacy, but rather to highlight how such theories were employed by nationalist leaders to fight against expansionism from nearby countries and to assert an Albanian identity that was distinct from the Ottomans, the Greeks, and the Slavs.

The Albanian identity shaped by the latter period of the country's 'Rilindja' ('Rebirth') illuminates facets of the early twentieth-century racial imaginary, in which both Albania and Europe were constructed against Islam. One of

the best illustrations of this lies in the figure of Albania's national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu, more commonly known as Skanderbeg. The story of Skanderbeg dates back to the fifteenth century, when it is believed that he led a series of battles against the Ottoman Empire.[29] Nationalist leaders, particularly those who were Orthodox and from southern Albania, celebrated Skanderbeg as the valiant defender of Christian Europe, the hero who had vigorously fought against Muslim invasion, defending Europe from 'vile Asiatic hordes'.[30] These constructions of Skanderbeg as Albania's and Europe's saviour gained significant currency as a means to appeal to the Great Powers during the nationalist period. Writers, both inside and outside the country, produced material trumpeting Skanderbeg's story. Political leaders further employed Skanderbeg's story to cement authority. King Zog I, for example, who would lead Albania in the 1920s and the 1930s both as President and later as King, was heralded as the direct descendant of Skanderbeg. Some even referred to him as Skanderbeg's grandson and the country's saviour who could defend Albania against invasions.[31] As such, the story of Skanderbeg was used to position Albania as the protector and preserver of Western identity, as a mechanism for sealing Albanian national identity as anti-Ottoman and authentically European.

Early twentieth-century attempts to modernise the nation further reveal connections between Albania's nationalism and whiteness. Towards the end of the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, the New England region of the United States played host to a burgeoning community of Albanian nationalists, primarily those who had relocated from southern Albania. Groups such as the Pan-Albanian organisation Vatra, led by such figures as Bishop Fan Noli and Faik Konica, believed that they possessed a duty to reform the Albanian nation-state and develop a more cohesive national citizenry.[32] The stances taken by Vatra contrasted with those of Albanian leaders in Albania, and provide insight into the ways that certain Albanian migrants in the West tried to align with Western whiteness.[33] Speaking on behalf of the national assembly in 1912, Ismail Qemali, the country's first Prime Minister, gave a speech about the newly developed nation-state. He argued that the path towards progress was a more diverse national identity that transcended religious distinctions. These statements were not eagerly received by Albanian leaders in the US.[34] Acting on behalf of Vatra, Faik Konica wrote a telegram urging the national assembly to take a different approach when choosing a path for Albania's future:

> Vatra begs the Assembly to avoid accepting a Mohammedan Prince. Do not make the Albanian state like Khiva, Bokhara, Afghanistan, and Tunis. Our ideal is a European Albania like Norway, Denmark, Holland, or Belgium:

> therefore, we strongly advise the selection of a decent European prince from a royal house, who will bring into Albania western culture and traditions.[35]

Konica's statement depicts the ways that some Albanian leaders and thinkers wanted to distance themselves from the Ottoman Empire and to align Albania with understandings of Western culture and traditions, i.e., elements of whiteness. Their fears of Albania becoming like Afghanistan or being led by a Mohammedan Prince further highlight how Europeanness was configured in opposition to Muslimness.

One method used by these nationalists to further westernise Albania was through the importation of classical music and dance as a means of transforming the souls of Albanians. The Vatra band organised concerts and performances in southern Albania, in the city of Korça, to introduce European melodies as means to civilise the Albanian population. An editorialist from a local newspaper went as far as to implore Albanians to demonstrate a closer proximity to the 'civilized world', to show the world that Albania '[has] given up the Turkish airs'.[36] Vatra as an organisation 'signaled the general will of "the Albanians" to become modern', once again reiterating the notion of whiteness as arrival.[37] Researcher Nicholas Tochka is quick to acknowledge that there is no explicit evidence that these performances had a direct influence on the political decisions of the Great Powers, but this analysis provides examples of how Albanian nation-building projects and efforts to secure territory and autonomy may have been shaped by forms of whiteness.

At the same time that groups like Vatra were using music as a vehicle for introducing Western culture to Albania, Bishop Fan Noli used the arts, specifically theatre, as a means of explicitly engaging the subject of race. In 1916, Noli translated and directed Shakespeare's *Othello*, which was the first of his plays to be translated into and performed in Albanian.[38] Noli was among those Albanian nationalists who resided in the US and was influenced by racial discourse there. It is believed that he was motivated to translate *Othello* after witnessing anti-black racism in the US.[39] While Noli believed there was a connection between the experiences of black Americans and prejudice experienced by Albanians who had migrated to other countries, he was also prompted to translate and perform *Othello* to address racial discrimination in Albania. In Noli's version of the play, the character of Othello represents processes of othering; his alienation in Venice was intended to resemble the marginalisation and discrimination experienced by the Turkish, Muslim, as well as the Albanian other.[40] At the same time, Marinela Golemi argues that Noli desired to confront racial discrimination in Albania, as experienced by groups such as Roma and Egyptians. While the Albanian translation does not include explicit language naming Roma and Egyptians,

Noli's configuration of blackness is one that speaks to racial, ethnic, geographical, and religious alienation and marginalisation. I argue that Noli's version of *Othello* illustrates the complexities of peripheral racialisation, in that Albanians were positioned outside of European whiteness, a whiteness that was yearned for, as demonstrated by early nation-building projects. At the same time, we are able to see how Albanians were also at times positioned as white in contrast to those outside of white racial belonging. An examination of the country's socialist period further elucidates these paradoxes of the white periphery, as we consider how outwardly anti-colonial and anti-racist sentiments emerged alongside attempts to embed forms of European white belonging within national identity.

National narratives and racialisation in the socialist period

Between 1946 and 1991 Albania was under the control of the socialist Labour Party of Albania (Partia e Punës e Shqipërisë (PPSh)), led by Enver Hoxha from its inception until 1985. This period of Albania's history featured endeavours to solidify Albania's antique foundation within Europe in an effort to build a sociocultural and national coherence that had been unknown during the Ottoman and the interwar periods.[41] Similarly to Albanian nationalists of the early twentieth century, Hoxha crafted a narrative in which Albanians had fought to preserve their identity for centuries, against the Ottomans, the Italians, and the Germans, evoking both anti-colonial and anti-Ottoman discourses.[42] As a result of these occupations, there was a national obligation for Albanians to continually fight for and maintain their Albanianness under the party's guidance.[43] Such narratives lasted well into the 1980s and 1990s, as illustrated by primary school textbooks that framed such groups as Ottomans and Greeks as 'saboteurs of the Albanian national identity construction'.[44]

Hoxha initially began his tenure by rejecting the past, but quickly realised that a particular version of history could be advantageous for party rule.[45] He emphasised Albanians' primordial presence in Europe, but, unlike the leaders of the early twentieth century, Hoxha depicted Albanians as the direct descendants of the Illyrians, an ancient Indo-European speaking group that inhabited the Balkan peninsula around 1000 BCE. This Illyrian–Albanian ethnogenesis was employed to lay claim to antiquity, as a means of asserting a belonging that framed Albanians as the original or first Europeans. The work of ethnologists during this era was used to illustrate that Albanians were a *pure* race of people who had fought and persisted to survive and preserve the Albanian race in the face of oppression.[46] And, similarly to the early twentieth century, the story of Skanderbeg was used to assert Albania's

role in safeguarding Europe from enemy expansion. Hoxha, like Zog, perpetuated the idea that he was a distant descendant of Skanderbeg, the only one capable of defending Albania.[47]

Hoxha's efforts to civilise and modernise Albanians are further demonstrated by the internal relationship between northern and southern Albanians. Recent years have witnessed an increase in scholarship on the historical study of eugenics and racial nationalism in Southeast Europe.[48] At the moment, historical research has not uncovered a similar history in Albania, though there remains a need to more fully interrogate the subject as it pertains to Roma and Egyptian populations during the Communist era, since despite Hoxha's policies these groups have largely been considered culturally and biologically inferior to ethnic Albanians.[49] The historical record does however highlight how throughout Hoxha's reign, the party leader targeted northern Albanians, those often referred to as 'Gheg', for their supposed backwardness.[50] One of Hoxha's challenges included rectifying how Albanians were seen, not just through the Western gaze but the Soviet one too; rather, he wanted Albanians to be seen as 'civilised' Europeans as opposed to Muslims with connections to the Arab world.[51] Hoxha's attempts to craft a new identity included efforts to bring the Ghegs of the North out of what was considered 'feudal isolation' through coercive labour that could cleanse Albania and develop within it a modern society; such endeavours included public ridicule of northerners, or mandating Catholic priests to clean toilets or don signs that they had 'sinned against the people'.[52] In many ways, these forms of violence perpetuated by the regime 'reinforced a *Tosk* [southerner][53] sense of power and later superiority which still permeates Albanian society today'. Such practices illustrate how the hankering for modernisation was bolstered by a desire for Albania to be seen as more European. Hoxha crafted an anti-capitalist Albania, accentuating a distance from the West. In fact, for many, the emergence of the PPSh, in the aftermath of fascist occupation, represented optimism for a liberated, anti-colonial, and anti-racist Albania. Yet tracing the ways that dominant national narratives and quests to liberate the country from backwardness provide an opportunity to consider whiteness as civilisational arrival. Though Hoxha clung tightly to notions of anti-coloniality and anti-racism, his quests to solidify Albanian purity, and the efforts to eradicate backwardness, may reveal a more complex and nuanced reality involving desires of a more European racial belonging.

Becoming white: performing whiteness in the contemporary moment

Peripheral whiteness has often been a shifting whiteness, one that captures the complexities of racial imaginaries that have excluded and included

Albanians within the borders of European racial belonging. Terms such as 'post-Ottoman' (which in Albania's case is often read as 'Muslim'), 'Balkan', and 'post-Communist' become cultural markers that further underscore the boundaries of authentic white European belonging. Returning to Blumi's framing of Albanians' anxious self-definition as European, contemporary aspirations for European belonging are shaped by intense desires to transcend these cultural markers determined by Albania's past; to shed baggage that precludes full inclusion.

Today, the figure of Skanderbeg could be viewed as a type of talisman for European belonging. He is a fixture in everyday life, ranging from monuments and squares in his honour to his face on the country's currency. Skanderbeg's narrative is used by politicians and leaders to reinstate Albania's position in Europe, and to sever its relationship with the 'alien' Ottoman Empire and Islam.[54] Skanderbeg demonstrates that Albania has always been European, and, for many Albanians, European Union membership would signify a more legitimate European belonging.[55] There are of course significant socioeconomic and political gains that would come from membership in the EU, particularly regarding travel, common trade policies, and standardised systems of laws; but membership in the EU carries meaning beyond these material benefits. In his inaugural speech as Prime Minister in 1992, after the first Albanian elections following state socialism, Sali Berisha proclaimed, 'The greatest dream of every Albanian is the integration of Albania into Europe.'[56] This type of hope and anticipation of EU membership is intimately tied to multiple processes of racialisation. Europe, to reference Rexhepi, is invoked as a 'post-national pan-European geopolitical entity tied by common history and geography and defined through race and religion'.[57] As the EU itself has fortified the boundaries of European belonging along racialised and immigrant lines,[58] Albanians have sought EU membership that could confer that same racial belonging. Peripheral whiteness, then, speaks to the ways that Albania is marginalised and that its status as European and racially white is made ambiguous. At the same time, this framework elucidates how this liminality is due to the shifting nature of whiteness itself. As the history of Albanian national movements illustrates, this European white racial belonging is both conditional (Europeanness must be authenticated) as well as necessary for Albanians to secure formal recognition of their country and their own survival.[59] This European whiteness, however, also necessitates the (re)production of an other, which whiteness is constructed against.[60]

Many Albanians, indeed, believe that they are the *true* victims of racism, as illustrated by their outsider status within the Balkans and Europe as a whole. Racism is often framed as hate or as personal animus that a person holds in their heart. This is why many of my Albanian interlocutors adamantly express that Albanians are incapable of expressing racism, as illustrated

both by Albania's aforementioned marginalisation and what are often deemed sincere and widely shared practices of hospitality and welcoming of guests. This refusal of racism is fuelled by a deep longing to be included in white Europe, a longing that I argue intimately shapes local forms of racialisation and racism. One of the ways that we can locate the manifestation of whiteness in the contemporary Albanian context is by examining interrelations between Albanian, Romani, and Egyptian communities. Consider the following statements from my ethnographic fieldwork:

> *There was a time once when I was a younger girl. I used to live in a neighbourhood in Tirana where many of them stay, you know, the Jevgjit. One day while walking home I passed some of my neighbours who were seated outside. One person said, 'je bere si jevg' ('you have become like the jevgjit'), regarding my tanned skin from being outside. You know I went home and I cried and cried until my grandmother came into my room and said, 'do not cry, you are not dark, you are beautiful.'*

> *We have spent all of our money now; we have become the jevgjit because they spend all of their money and they do not know how to save it.*

> *Do not walk close to the house where those jevgjit live. You will not be able to breathe. You can smell them from one hundred meters away.*

The term 'jevg' or 'jevgjit' in Albanian comes from 'evgjit', which is derived from 'Egjipt' ('Egypt'). In present-day Albania, this term is often used to refer to Balkan Egyptians, a group of people who are often considered Romani but in fact do not identify as Romani, and trace their heritage through Egypt rather than India.[61] The well-known Albanian translator Pavli Qeshku translates 'evgjit' as a 'dark-skinned person' and 'jevg' as 'darkie'.[62] There is little historical documentation about the first uses of this term, but as my previous research has shown, recent years have witnessed a discursive shift in which the term has increasingly become a racial marker.[63] It designates not just socioeconomic status but also a slur imbued with racist meaning. As illustrated with the ethnographic statements above, it is not uncommon to receive cautions about those considered 'jevg'; warnings about getting too dark from sun exposure, or about spending all of one's money and not saving it. The above statements elucidate how phenotypic markers, along with class inequality, the practice of waste collection, and a type of olfactory racism racialise Egyptian and Roma bodies in particular ways.[64]

The formal socioracial categories of 'white' and 'black' are not used in official discourse from the Albanian government. The many common means of naming difference often include nation, language, religion, and ethnicity. Nevertheless, notions of whiteness and blackness do index forms of racial belonging in Albania. Particularly in central Albania, the language of 'dorë e bardhë' and 'dorë e zezë' is used to denote those who are of the 'white

hands' or 'white side' ('dorë e bardhë'), and those who are of the 'black hands' or 'black side' ('dorë e zezë'). Albanians are referred to as 'dorë e bardhë' while Roma and Egyptians are considered 'dorë e zezë'. Such racialisation practices provide insight into how race operates in Albania, and not simply as a means of phenotypic differentiation but as ways of marking social difference. These distinctions are linked to cultural practices, the boundaries of marriage, and the racialisation of space and housing. The Albanian terms 'zezë' and 'bardhë' directly translate as 'black' and 'white', respectively. It would however be simplistic to assume that they carry the same meaning of whiteness and blackness in a transatlantic context. Similar to many other lexicons, terms such as 'white' and 'black' are used to describe morality, luck, and superstition, with white being associated with goodness and purity, and black meaning accursed or stigmatised; blackness, in the Albanian language, often carries with it notions of misfortune or disgrace.[65] The presence of this linguistic white/black binary does not completely inform us about race, but as Stuart Hall articulated, race is a floating signifier, and these discursive practices do call attention to racial imaginaries in the Albanian context.[66] The language of 'dorë e bardhë' and 'dorë e zezë' illuminate racialised meanings of appearance and colour, and also what it means to be a black, stigmatised, or othered person. This is further illustrated by the Albanian term 'gabel', a pejorative term used for Roma, which can be translated as 'stranger'. Terminology used to describe Roma and Egyptians draws attention to the ways that those racialised as 'black' are considered of another place, rendered to spaces of non-belonging.

White Albanians use the language of 'dorë e zezë' ('black') to denote the actions of those who are othered and marginalised along residential, socio-economic, linguistic, and hygienic lines, ultimately those that do not demonstrate the cultural markers of whiteness. Roma and Egyptians in Tirana often employ the language and position of blackness as well, to distinguish themselves from white Albanians, and to draw attention to the everyday racism experienced by racially marginalised groups. These examples include the ways that blackness is articulated during collective protests or on social media. At times blackness is employed as a means to communicate a position of resistance, as Roma and Egyptians combat forms of racial injustice, such as was the case when Roma communities responded to an incident of police brutality in the Yzbërisht neighbourhood in Tirana in the spring of 2020.[67] Often though the language of blackness is most salient when interlocutors discuss what it means to be feel black, demonstrating the ways that Roma and Egyptians are racialised outside of whiteness, but also how anti-blackness shapes the social landscape in particular and localised ways. I examine these social relations in the context of whiteness, not as a means of equating the experiences of Roma and Egyptians with black

Americans or black-descended persons, but rather, to offer insight into local manifestations of the broader racial arrangements of Europe. I also point to how the Balkan region, despite claims to racelessness, is shaped by global racial structures. Such interpretation creates opportunities for analysing race, whiteness, and social differentiation from a relational rather than comparative perspective,[68] one in which we can move beyond questions of differentiation and examine the overlapping processes that shape parallel experiences of racialisation.

Concluding thoughts

Racial categories are not and never have been stable. Albania, and the Balkan region as a whole, is often considered a space of racelessness, yet my exploration of racialisation in Albania illustrates how racial hierarchies, and whiteness in particular, have historically shaped and continue to influence what it means to be Albanian. By historicising race in this region, scholars are able to chart forms of whiteness, particularly those that need to be nuanced given the ways that Central and Eastern Europe's sociopolitical and historical landscapes differ from the West's.

I offer the concept of peripheral whiteness as a tool for examining the shifting duality of whiteness in the context of Albania and Central and Eastern Europe. Albanians are racialised as external to European whiteness while locally performing whiteness against those racialised as black. As an analytic, peripheral whiteness attends to the complexities of Albania's history, highlighting how legacies of imperial rule, as well as the history of the country's nation-building projects and Communist past, have influenced understandings of whiteness and Albania's proximity to it. Peripheral whiteness offers an opening to critically interrogate how interwoven global processes of racial exclusion impact belonging and marginalisation in local contexts, thus highlighting the racial logics shaping livelihoods even in spaces thought to be raceless.

Notes

1 Chelsi West Ohueri, 'On Living and Moving with Zor: Exploring Racism, Embodiment, and Health in Albania', *Medical Anthropology*, 40:3 (2021), 241–53.

2 Isa Blumi, 'Battles of Nostalgic Proportion: The Transformations of Islam-as-Historical-Force in Western Balkan Reconstitutions of the Past', in Catharina Raudvere (ed.), *Nostalgia, Loss and Creativity in South-East Europe: Political*

and Cultural Representations of the Past (Cham: Springer International, 2018), 40.

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14 Nikolay Zakharov and Ian Law, 'The Logics and Legacy of Soviet Racialization', in Nikolay Zakharov and Ian Law (eds), *Post-Soviet Racisms* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

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23 Božidar Jezernik, *Wild Europe: The Balkans in the Gaze of Western Travellers* (London: Saqi, 2004).
24 Carl von Linné, *Systema Naturae*, 10th ed. (Weinheim: J. Kramer, 1964 [1759]).
25 Jezernik, *Wild Europe*.
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27 Noel Malcolm, 'Myths of Albanian National Identity: Some Key Elements, as Expressed in the Works of Albanian Writers in America in the Early Twentieth Century', in Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers and Bernd Jürgen Fischer (eds), *Albanian Identities: Myth and History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002). It is possible that nationalist Albanian leaders in Western Europe and the United States were influenced by prevalent racial discourses in those regions.
28 Malcolm, 'Myths'.
29 On mythologies of warfare against the Ottomans, see also Baker, this volume.
30 Piro Misha, 'Invention of a Nationalism: Myth and Amnesia', in Schwandner-Sievers and Fischer (eds), *Albanian Identities*.
31 Iljazz Fishta and Michael Schmidt-Neke, 'Nationalism and National Myth: Skanderbeg and the Twentieth-Century Albanian Regimes', *European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, 2:1 (1997), 1–7.
32 Nicholas Tochka, 'To "Enlighten and Beautify": Western Music and the Modern Project of Personhood in Albania, *c.*1906–1924', *Ethnomusicology*, 59:3 (2015), 398–420.
33 Because processes of nation-building and identity formation involve various complexities, scholarly examinations must nuance analyses of nationalism. As such, this example of contrasting viewpoints does not necessarily illustrate a clear dichotomy between those Albanian nationalist leaders in New England with those based in Albania.
34 Tochka, '"Enlighten and Beautify"'.
35 Federal Writers' Project, *The Albanian Struggle in the Old World and New* (Boston, MA: The Writer, 1939). See also Tochka, '"Enlighten and Beautify"'.
36 Tochka, '"Enlighten and Beautify"'.
37 Ibid.
38 Marinela Golemi, 'Othello in the Balkans: Performing Race Rhetoric on the Albanian Stage', *Multicultural Shakespeare: Translation, Appropriation and Performance*, 22:37 (2020), 125–38.
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ideas have been debated by numerous scholars, but according to Golemi it was this interpretation of Othello's character which prompted Noli to translate the play into Albanian.

40 Golemi, 'Othello in the Balkans'.

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42 Genta Nishku, 'The Wretched on the Walls: A Fanonian Reading of a Revolutionary Albanian Orphanage', *Feminist Critique*, 3 (2020), 39–63.

43 Galaty, *Memory*; Elidor Mëhilli, *From Stalin to Mao: Albania and the Socialist World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).

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45 Misha, 'Invention'.

46 Armanda Hysa, 'Ethnography in Communist Albania: Nationalist Discourse and Relations with History', in Katarina Keber and Luka Vidmar (eds), *Historični seminar 8* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2010).

47 Blumi, 'Battles'.

48 Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (eds), *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007); Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Maria Bucur, 'Eugenics in Eastern Europe, 1870s–1945', in Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

49 See my forthcoming work, *Albania in Red, Black, and White* (manuscript in progress).

50 Isa Blumi. 'The Politics of Culture and Power: The Roots of Hoxha's Postwar State', *East European Quarterly*, 31:3 (1997), 379–98, 379.

51 Mëhilli, *Stalin to Mao*.

52 Blumi, 'Politics'.

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54 Blumi, 'Battles'.

55 Nicola Nixon, 'Always Already European: The Figure of Skënderbeg in Contemporary Albanian Nationalism', *National Identities*, 12:1 (2010), 1–20; Merje Kuus, 'Europe's Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East-Central Europe', *Progress in Human Geography*, 28:4 (2004), 472–89.

56 Blendi Kajsiu, *Albanian Democratization Between Europeanization and Neo-liberalism* (Tirana: Albanian Institute for International Studies, 2011).
57 Rexhepi, *White Enclosures*, 5.
58 Garner, Steve. 'The European Union and the Racialization of Immigration, 1985–2006', *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 1:1 (2007), 61–87.
59 Rexhepi, *White Enclosures*.
60 Frankenberg, *White Women*; Essed and Trienekens, '"Who Wants to Feel White?"'.
61 In my previous scholarship I have provided longer analyses of Romani and Egyptian socioracial identities in Albania (West Ohueri, 'Mapping Race'), but for this particular chapter I focus less on these distinctions and instead highlight how these ethnographic examples illustrate the ways that racialisation and forms of whiteness operate. It is also important to note that while there are distinctions between Roma and Egyptians in Albania, both groups are often racialised collectively.
62 Pavli Qesku, *Fjalor Shqip-Anglisht*, ed. Fatmir Xhaferi (Tirana: Botime EDFA, 2004).
63 See West Ohueri, 'Mapping Race'; West Ohueri, 'Zor'.
64 Andrew Kettler, *The Smell of Slavery: Olfactory Racism and the Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
65 Golemi, 'Othello in the Balkans'.
66 See Stuart Hall and Sut Jhally, *Race the Floating Signifier: Stuart Hall in Lecture* (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2002).
67 Gjergj Erebara, 'Organizatat dënojnë dhunën e policisë bashkiake ndaj ricikluesit', *Reporter.al*, 26 May 2020, www.reporter.al/organizatat-denojne-dhunen-e-policise-bashkiake-ndaj-ricikluesit/ (accessed 5 December 2022).
68 João Helion Costa Vargas, *The Denial of Antiblackness: Multiracial Redemption and Black Suffering* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

7

The aesthetics of alternation and the returns of race: Poland and the Jewish Question

Sudeep Dasgupta

The visibility of whiteness emerges through a reversed temporality. On the one hand, whiteness as a concept becomes discernible only *after* the effects of racialisation have first produced a racial other attributed visible and cultural difference. Whiteness absents itself from the field of racial alterity it produces.[1] From the historical perspective of political power, however, the category of 'race' emerges *from* whiteness. When the historical and conceptual are thought together, this reversed temporality of the emergence of whiteness can be better understood. The contemporary political salience of a belated conceptual engagement with whiteness can be productively discerned only in the specificities of its actualisation. Where does whiteness emerge and what are the contours of the field it produces? 'Eastern Europe', like 'whiteness', can only be understood when their conceptual power is grounded in the specificities of their particular articulation. Through an analysis of Yael Bartana's *And Europe will be Stunned: The Polish Trilogy* (heareafter, *AES*), this chapter both situates and reconfigures the specific location of Poland, and the racial contours of its national consolidation, in relation to the Jews. Whiteness emerges through the complexity of Polish-Jewish history and its reformulation in the present.

Bartana's own multiple belongings colour the frames through which *AES* can be approached. An Israeli artist, who was based in Amsterdam and now works from Berlin, Bartana had her recent work, *The Book of Malka Germania* (2021), commissioned by the Jewish Museum in Berlin. Her artistic work is often located in places whose resonances for contemporary Jewish identity in the context of European nations directly confront diasporic identity with national histories. *AES*, first staged in 2011 in Venice, focuses on the relation between nation and race. Her three-film and multi-event artwork gives shape to a call for the return of the Jews to Poland, concretised through the formation of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP). This call is addressed to those 3.3 million Jews who were either killed or left Poland after World War II. This is both a call to those who cannot

return as the living, and those who could return from elsewhere, including Israel where they migrated to, including Bartana's own grandparents. The 'call to return' is of course a political act whose history conjures up the return of the formerly enslaved to Africa from the Americas, as well as the highly charged demand to allow the return of Palestinians expelled from what is now Israel. What would be the returns, as in gains, profits, and yields, from such a specific call in relation to Poland and the Jews, made by an Israeli artist? This chapter will deploy this other meaning of 'return' to argue that the 'call to return' releases an interventionary and politically profitable surplus by firstly, reconfiguring the meaning of the Polish nation through the return of the racial other; secondly, by distributing the profits yielded by this call to interrogate Zionism's continuing logic of occupation and expulsion in Israel; and lastly, redirecting the call towards Europe's own history of antisemitism and contemporary xenophobia. The return of the racial other reconfigures the sensorial and conceptual understanding of community through the racially hybrid nation within and beyond Eastern Europe.

Why the hybrid *nation*? In postcolonial studies, colonialism as the practice, and empire as the globe-girdling location of different articulations of race, identify whiteness as a response to the presence of racialised others in the metropolis. *Western* racial nations are formed by the histories of postcolonial immigration and the fraught politics of national multiculturalism. The discourse of hybridity, canonically articulated in Homi Bhabha's notion of 'cultural difference' and later reconfigured in Paul Gilroy's notion of 'convivial culture', shift the focus from race to culture.[2] Hybridity names culture rather than nation. The Jewish history of/in Poland produces a very different response to the race–nation relation when compared to this culturally hybrid postcolonial reformulation of metropolitan whiteness. Nation-space in Poland is marked by the presence, and often a ghostly one as we shall see, of Poland's *own* others, its Jews. Whiteness emerges in Polish nationalism as the effect of a shifting response to the *historical* presence of Jews long settled in it. This settlement has little to do with modern colonialism, and especially *not* the form of colonialism inflicted on the rest of the world from the modern Western nation-state. The racial other, the Jew, was never elsewhere.

'Never elsewhere' – these words configure a temporal/spatial configuration for thinking 'whiteness' from a broadly Eastern European, and more specific Polish, context. If 'never elsewhere' describes the Jewish diaspora's provocative perspective on the Polish nation, it centralises race *within* the nation in a very different way than the postcolonial provocation 'we are here because you were there'.[3] Firstly, the 'never elsewhere' formulation situates the Jewish racial other *within* the history and territory of the nation. The (pre-)formation

of the modern nation-state of Poland, from the twentieth century going further back, emerges from its relation to the historically very distant formations of Jewish diaspora *across* Eastern Europe. *AES*, I argue, deploys an aesthetics of alternation by remembering, and reconfiguring, this spatio-temporal presence of race within the nation. Alternation names two things at once: an *alter*nation, an other nation-form; and a practice of alternating, shuttling between different stagings of race and nation to reconfigure their time, scale, and consequences. Racial alter*nations* seek less to transcend the place of race in imagining the nation than to think of whiteness as a copresence with its multiple putative others *within* the nation.

Thus, the theoretically different function of race in Eastern Europe derives precisely because national discourses of whiteness emerge from non-colonial migration. Consequently, postcolonial hybridity as *cultural* identity is less important than *national* hybridity precisely because of the long history of noncolonial migrations.[4] Further, the massive extermination of European Jews on occupied Polish territory structures in complex ways the meaning of whiteness in Polish nationalism today. That is why what is at issue in Bartana's work is less the acknowledgement of the presence of the Jews, than the provocative demand in the present to acknowledge the past and actively engage with a remaking of the Polish nation from the perspective of historically eliminated and presently displaced Jews. Moving *beyond* Eastern Europe, the figuration of Poland as a hybrid nation through the politics of return extends the criticality of the returns of race by considering how antisemitism in Europe generated a specific form of semitic exclusion in the formation of the Zionist state of Israel. Through the politics of 'return', the reformulation of race and nation becomes less an exclusively Polish affair. Moving through the European betrayal of Palestinian Arabs in responding to centuries of European antisemitism, *AES* offers a simultaneous critique of *another* nation, Israel. The ghostly and actual returns of race work powerfully to connect with existing struggles to project a futurity for counter-figurations of the place of racial difference *in* two nations and Europe's destruction of peaceful historical forms of Zionism and Jewish–Arab coexistence. The reflection on whiteness in Eastern Europe through a focus on race reveals something specific *beyond* Europe yet outside the dominant postcolonial frame. That something is pithily captured in the question Bartana posed to herself at the start of the project: 'What is the responsibility of Europe, and Poland specifically, in the creation of Israel?'[5]

Race and the aesthetics of alter-nation

Alana Lentin convincingly argues that '[W]hat constitutes the other as black (or as corporeally oppositional) is the European Enlightenment obsession

with the aesthetics of its own whiteness.'[6] The scope of Lentin's broad argument, however, requires nuancing. Whiteness takes on differential specificities within particular nations in Eastern Europe. Bolaji Balogun, for example, situates this 'Enlightenment aesthetics of race' by historically and conceptually tracing contemporary Polish discourses of blackness within the particularity of Eastern Europe.[7] From another angle, Monique Roelofs carefully points out the ideological dimensions of a colourblind theory of aesthetics whose ideological power relies on the disavowal of the racial demarcations founding both the philosophy of art and the more everyday (and therefore more powerful) judgements on taste.[8] It is crucial then to address the pertinence of this necessary critique as I propose to understand the disruptive force of Bartana's call for the 'returns of race' through what I call an 'aesthetics of alternation'.

Firstly, the term 'aesthetics' designates 'sensory experience', the bodily capacity through sensual perception for grasping particulars as they are arranged in specific *configurations*.[9] Aesthetics can be understood through the destabilising potential it harbours since aesthetic judgement introduces a gap between sensory *perception* of the material world and the *knowledge* of the empirical world, including the human subject itself.[10] Expanding on this threatening dimension, Jacques Rancière argues that '[a]esthetic experience … is that of an unprecedented sensorium in which the hierarchies are abolished that structured sensory experience'.[11] Aesthetic experience is 'an experience of disconnection … there is something that escapes the normal conditions of sensory experience. That is what was at stake in emancipation: getting out of the ordinary ways of sensory experience.'[12]

The aesthetics of alternation 'deals with time and space as forms of configuration of our "place" in society, forms of distribution of the common and the private, and of assignation to everybody of his or her own part'.[13] 'The sense of politics', I argue through Rancière, is 'dissensus … [as] the production, within a determined, sensible world, of a given that is heterogeneous to it … Politics is aesthetic in that it makes visible what had been excluded from a perceptual field, and in that it makes audible what used to be inaudible.'[14] Art provokes a sensory experience not by inventing *ex nihilo* but by producing *within* an existing world, a 'given', what is already historically present, and presencing this heterogenous figuration by reconfiguring the Polish nation through the 'returns of race'.

The returns of (a) race in Poland also transforms the discourse of victimhood deployed both by it and by Israel. By exposing their reliance on the spurious basis of victimhood, Bartana counters both Polish right-wing nationalism's deflection of its antisemitism and Israel's victim-discourse as basis for vengeful violence against *its* own others beyond Poland. Bartana provocatively suggests that even if the Jewish Renaissance Movement does not succeed in Poland, perhaps it will spark 'resistance' in Israel to the

Zionist state's exclusionary and occupying strategy of territorial expansion.[15] In 2004, Rabbis for Peace protesting the expulsion of Palestinians by Israel claimed 'Zion will only be redeemed through justice and those who *return* to her through acts of righteousness.'[16] Redemption through return, in the rabbis' words, names no existing nation as its destination. Zion is the effect of *acts* of righteousness. Between one return (Zionist settlement in Israel) and another (the three million Jews to Poland), *AES* projects a cohabitating multiracial nationalism in both Poland and Israel as an alternative to victimhood as alibi for extermination (Korwin-Mukke) and expulsion (Israel).

Whiteness: alternating poles between race and nation

In his Du Bois lectures, the late Stuart Hall reminded his audience that the move away from race was both necessary and necessarily unsuccessful.[17] Despite the poststructuralist dismantling of the discursive legitimacy of the concept of race, Hall insists, 'we still have to account for why race is so tenacious in human history, so impossible to dislodge'.[18] Developing this argument, David Theo Goldberg's distinction, which is also an overlap between 'naturalist racism' and 'historicist racism', captures the intrinsic instability of racial thinking.[19] The new racisms produce what Étienne Balibar calls 'racism without race', displacing naturalist racism while importing its transformed phobic social differentiations through distinctions based on sound (language, accents), smells (food), and behaviour.[20]

The 'Jew' is exemplary of this powerful, flexible object of racism. Antisemitism, Balibar argues, is the 'prototype' of racial discourse precisely because even the 'pseudo-biological concept of race' is derived from the 'secondary theoretical elaborations' of "culturalist" racism'.[21] The destabilising dynamic between the certainties of visual identification and the doubts of its conclusiveness constitute the 'phantasmatics' of antisemitism in which 'bodily stigmata' hide within 'biological heredity' the 'signs of a spiritual inheritance'. Balibar's argument also helps understand why Jews also possess a proximity to, and indeed are seen to coincide at times with whiteness, since the substantive identity of the Jews is marked by a fundamental lack of specificity. This 'phantasmatic' Jew of antisemitic discourse therefore can also 'lose its colour', as it were, becoming white, when other groups appear on the historical borders of a nation.[22] Antisemitism cannot establish certain grounds for identifying the 'true' Jew because between bodily and 'spiritual' signs, the visual identification of the Jew becomes a problem rather than a racist strategy. The shifting form in which the Jew appears in antisemitism derives from this situation in which 'the Jew is more "truly" a Jew the more indiscernible he is'.[23] The shifting figure of the Jew is of course the basis

for the resonant power of antisemitism which says nothing of actual Jewish peoples but speaks volumes on the shiftiness of antisemitic discourse itself. Treacherous Communist, greedy capitalist, effete homosexual, rapaciously libidinal, cosmopolitan elite, grubby peddler – these contradictory products of antisemitic discourse, produced separately and often simultaneously, accrue value precisely as strategic responses within the changing politico-economic and socially libidinal contours of nationalism. The historical analyses of the race–nation relation in Poland which follow are guided by two considerations: firstly, identifying how Polish nationalism constructed its shifting relation to the Jews; secondly, how the returns of race in an aesthetics of alternation reconfigure the history of this specific race–nation relation.

The race-form of the Polish nation

The (pre-)history of twentieth-century Poland was marked by Prussia, Russia, Austria, and later Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Already in the eighteenth century, Poland disappears often and reappears through three partitions.[24] Eastern Europe was the larger geographical area of this dynamic process generated both from the West and the East. The long political and cultural history of the Jewish diaspora in Eastern Europe too must be situated within this same history of alliances, invasions, displacements, and occupations. This continual transformation of the Polish nation in Eastern Europe and of the Jewish diaspora within it is the metamorphic ground from which the changing relation of race to nation must be reconstructed.

At least from the seventeenth century onwards, the overlap between Catholicism and Poland, then instantiated in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, produced a form of religion-based Polish nationalism whose effects are still felt approximately three hundred years later.[25] The Independence of Poland in 1918 framed the Jew as the racial other through religion, partly through the close cooperation between the National Democratic Party and the Catholic Church. Race as 'whiteness' emerges from a religious discourse against Jewish racial difference while accommodating non-Catholic Slavs such as Orthodox Ukrainians in the nation. During the interwar years, 'the nascent nation as a homogeneous ethno-religious body' was consolidated while 'Jews … were singled out as threatening to the vulnerable Polish nation and stigmatised as anti-Polish foreign agents'.[26] The *Polak–Katolik* (Pole–Catholic) came to embody the legitimate citizen of Poland.

The *racial* stabilisation of the nation based on religion starts to shift, registering the flexibility of racism of which antisemitism is the 'prototype'. Broadening the meaning of 'whiteness' on which the nation defined itself against the Jew, Balogun argues, 'in Poland, the concept of race is understood

through blood relations and often used in different contexts. For many, "race" means "nation", "society".'[27] The flexibility in the racial self-configuration of the nation takes on yet another dimension, where the presence of alterity must now be formulated in its absence, or miniscule presence. The racial figuration of the 'Jew' contracts, dilates, and transforms according to historical exigencies continually shifting the meaning of 'whiteness'. Echoing Balibar's 'racism without race', Jan Piotr Żuk asks how 'the social reproduction of "anti-Semitism without Jews"' continues in 'a country of 38 million … [where] Jewish people comprise a tiny group (estimated at 10,000–25,000 people)'.[28]

While Jewish emigration out of Eastern Europe preceded the Nazi occupation of Poland, the latter had specific resonances across Eastern Europe, and the Holocaust which followed had very particular consequences for Poland. Given the physical location of many death camps in Poland, and the conversion of the village of Oświęcim into 'Auschwitz', the symbol of the Holocaust, contemporary Polish nationalism has sought to delink its relation to the Holocaust in different ways. Now, the complex history of occupation, extermination, collaboration, and migration situates not just the *absence* of the Jews but how the 'returns of race' will respond to that actual and discursive erasure. But how is this absence responded to by Polish nationalism over time?

Firstly, Poland's victim status derives from the Nazi *occupation* rather than genocidal racial *extermination*.[29] The Holocaust is framed as a genocide by the German occupiers committed on Polish soil while downplaying, if not ignoring, the murder of Polish Jews. The mass murder of Polish Jews does not figure in the dominant nationalist figuration of Polish victimhood.[30] The revelation in 2000 of the massacre of Jews at Jedwabne by their fellow Poles during World War II undermined the Polish victimhood narrative, itself limited to the occupation.[31] A virulent antisemitic nationalist discourse targeted all international responses, including those emerging from Israel, by playing Polish suffering off against the Holocaust, once again opposing the nation to its own Jewish others through erasure.[32] For example, the 2018 'Holocaust Law' made it illegal to hold Poland responsible for any involvement in the Holocaust. The pre-Holocaust religious framing of the presence of Jews as outsiders *in* Poland was reproduced to explain their absence in Poland's post-Holocaust discourse.[33]

The period of nationalist anti-Communism after 1989 brought back to life the figure of the Jew as an international, anti-religious political subversive.[34] The absence of Jews *as* Poles after the Holocaust was replaced by their threatening presence in the Communist oppression of Poland in this later version of Polish nationalism. 'Judeo-Communism' was the racial discourse which framed the broader oppression of Poland's authentic national culture.[35]

Further, Andrew Keir Wise has convincingly shown how both Communist Poland and its 'postcolonial' national form deployed the language of anticolonialism to screen pervasive antisemitism.[36]

The transition period from the rise of Solidarność in 1980 to the dominance since 2015 of the right-wing Catholic nationalism of the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice) party reproduced the complex dialectic of historicist and naturalist racism, and the phantasmatic visibility of the shifting Jew. Research conducted during the 1990 presidential campaign revealed a widespread opinion 'that the way Jews obtained and/or implemented influence was connected with their Jewishness, and not with their political opinions, professional status'.[37] This essentialist racial construction of Jewishness then takes on a political indiscernibility by tying it to post-Communist state structures.

The proto-typical racial discourse of antisemitism in Poland alternates between biological and cultural racism; a *national* whiteness frames the Jew's unproblematic visibility or questions the meaning of visibility through suspicion. Firstly, Polish nationalism from the seventeenth to the early twentieth century constructed whiteness through religion, turning the presence of the Jews into a question of cultural legitimacy within modern nation-state formation since 1918. Secondly, nationalist histories produce the absence of Jews as legitimate Poles in framing the Holocaust to later emphatically invoke their presence as a national threat during and after the fall of Communism.

Lastly, the discourse of legitimate Poles (as non-Jews) frames Poland as the victim of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Four intersecting frames construct the presence and absence of Jews in Poland: religious homogeneity, racial extermination, ideological domination and victimhood. 'The Polish Trilogy' reconfigures these four frames by alluding to and then displacing their sensible meaning by alternating between Poland, Israel and Europe. It is to this aesthetics of alternation that I will now turn.

The aesthetics of alter-nation in and beyond Europe

Poland's choice of Bartana, an Israeli artist based then in Amsterdam and Berlin, to represent the Polish pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011 functioned as a provocation in multiple ways. A non-Polish citizen representing the Polish nation loosened the link between citizenship and national culture while linking Poland with the problematic history of the Jews in Poland to then move beyond Europe to Israel and back. *And Europe Will Be Stunned: The Polish Trilogy* comprised three films, *Mary Koszmary* (*Nightmares*, 2007), *Wall and Tower* (*Mur i Wieża*, 2009), and *Assassination* (*Zamach*, 2011), and is held in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw,

the van Abbe museum in the Netherlands, and the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark. The first two films of the trilogy, completed before the Venice exhibition, were already intervening in the rising populism in Poland. These interventions were produced collaboratively with Sławomir Sierakowski, the Polish New Left activist and co-founder of the journal *Krytyka Polityczna*. The trilogy begins with a speech by Sierakowski, calling for the return of the Jews to Poland. The second film documents the launching of the Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP) through the building of a camp in Warsaw, while the final film stages the funeral of the now-murdered activist.

The JRMiP is a 'fictional' movement. 'Fiction' does not designate the opposite of the real. 'A fiction is not an imaginary tale', according to Jacques Rancière, but 'the construction of a set of relations between … things that are said to be perceptible and the sense that can be made of those things'.[38] It is in this sense that the *aesthetics of alternation* needs to be understood – as the putting into play the shifting relation between what is *said* to be perceptible, and of the particular sense made of what is registered through sensory perception. The JRMiP is a fiction precisely in this aesthetic sense of staging scenes, as we shall see below, in which the *mise en scène* of words, images and bodies produces a sensorial indeterminacy whose effects infiltrate the certainty through which sense can be made of them.

The *aesthetics* of 'alternation' designates this double play: the production of variations in the relationship between the sensed and its meaning; and the intrinsic indeterminacy of appearances registered through the particular temporalities of the *acknowledgement or denial* of their signifying presence. This double play is located in the gap between the possible forms of the appearance of the nation's whiteness and the configuration of words, times, spaces and bodies which give form to this appearance. As argued earlier, antisemitism as a prototype of racism is predicated precisely on this game of hide-and-seek, where visible signifiers can be either ignored or acknowledged as the nation reads racial difference to construct its whiteness. Other ('alter') figurations of the nation exploit the 'undetermined' character of 'social reality' by specific configurations of words, times, spaces and bodies.[39]

The JRMiP is actually produced through the artwork, but also moves outside exhibition space as it transforms into a political movement in society. The trilogy viewed in Venice at the Polish Pavilion spilled over to the actual launch of the JRMiP in Berlin in 2012 during the First Congress of the JRMiP addressed by Polish and Palestinian activists, Israeli writers, and artists at the Hebbel am Ufer. Locating the launch in the highly charged political space of Berlin staged a triangulation of race, the Polish nation, and the continent of Europe across which the Holocaust played itself out. Bartana's politics of aesthetics explores 'the possibility of maintaining spaces

of play' by 'exploring forms for the presentation of objects' and disposing them in arrangements to stage an alter*nation* of social reality.[40] The aesthetics of alternation is thematised through the frames of dispositions, constructions, and transpositions in the three sections that follow.

Dispositions – in space

During the formulation of the project (2006–11), Bartana visited places in Poland which had substantial Jewish presences, including the hometown of one of her grandparents, Białystok, only to encounter profound 'disappointment'. The affective 'voids', as she terms them, became the point of departure for experimenting with making the absence present to the senses. Like Claude Lanzmann, she does not seek to replace absence with archival presence, but unlike *Shoah* the films arrange objects, make constructions, and dispose bodies in the affective and physical void. Her 'disappointment', however, is not limited to Poland but also connects to another absence, the void produced by 'a huge crack' in Israeli culture which continues to erase Yiddish culture, and the European pasts lived in the present by those who migrated and their offspring. That is why she also sees her films as a 'mirror' to reflect and refract two national histories and Europe itself.

The first film, *Mary Koszmary* (*Nightmares*), is sited at the empty Decennial Stadium in Warsaw. Built in 1955 to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the Polish Communist state, this binationally framed location was also the site of popular protests *against* the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland's role in it. The site spatially conjoins Poland with the Soviet Union (1955) and splits it by exposing the internal protest against that conjunction (1968). Crucially, 1968 was also the year 'when an orchestrated antisemitic campaign overshadowed the springtime struggle for emancipation'.[41] Sławomir Sierakowski opens the trilogy and fills the void of the stadium with a speech co-written with fellow activist Kinga Dunin. 'Return to Poland, to your/our country! … We want three million Jews to return to Poland, we want you to live with us again.'[42] Echoing through the stadium, initially these words produce an Us/You, Our/Your construction of Poland. As the speech continues, a perplexing alternation between Us and You begins to emerge.

> We need the other, and there's no closer other for us than you! Come! … We will be us at last, and you will be you. We will become you, and you will become us

The initial 'Us/You' separation is slowly undone by repeating the same words and reformulating their relation with each repetition. The 'us' of Poland can 'at last' be itself only when 'you' (the Jews) return. This is the paradoxical status of the 'stranger', the return of which returns ('at last')

the Poles to who they were meant to be, *and* were in the past. A past proximity ('closer') destroyed by extermination is a necessary step for the present Poland to become what it was. In other words, the same word, 'us', undergoes an alteration in meaning by insisting on the 'you' as *intrinsically* formative of the 'us'. By deploying what Ernesto Laclau called the 'adventures of equivalences' between an other marked by 'irreducible difference' and the same ('us'/citizens), the absence of the Jews in Polish post-Holocaust discourse is countered by insisting on their enduring presence and urgent need for return.[43] Sierakowski's urgently declaimed 'Peeeeeople!' emerges later in the speech as the aural figuration of a counter-intuitive community splitting open a homogenously consolidated Catholic, white Poland. Configuring a racially hybrid common Poland which exploits the gap and alters the relation between equivalence (citizenship) and difference (race), the transformation of the Polish nation through the strategy of aesthetic alternation, as we will see, also transforms another nation, Israel.

The spoken words echoing in the void of the stadium are literally grounded on the surface of the football pitch. Scrawled in white powder, the slogan '3.3 million Jews can change the life of 40 million Poles' inscribes into the space of the void a surface with a claim: 3.3 million is the number of Jews living in Poland before the Nazi occupation. Not the Poles killed during the occupation, but the Jews killed by the occupiers/collaborators can make Poland be what it truly is. The complex histories sited in the stadium's void convert 'the place(s) of sedimentation' into 'places of inscription of the democratic signifiers that can open, and do open, new spaces of dissensus'.[44] The slogan on the football pitch literally *writes* a 'complex field of meaning' into being through the 'film's production'.[45]

The disposition of sound, image, and text, or words, bodies, and surfaces, also disposes *of* the language of victimhood common to both Poland and Israel. 'Return, and both you and us will finally cease, To be the chosen people. Chosen for suffering, Chosen for taking wounds, and chosen for Inflicting wounds'. Both 'the Chosen people' of Zionist discourse and the discourse of 'the suffering Pole' are rejected.[46] The words 'chosen for inflicting wounds' powerfully equate *in their difference* two histories. They register Poland's antisemitic response to critics of its role in the Holocaust. The words *also* invoke the historical violence against Palestinians by Zionism and the Israeli state.

Constructions – from the void and the past

The second film in the trilogy records the building of a tower and fence and the process of construction sets a provocative aesthetics of alternation in motion. The provocation resides in the fact that the tower being constructed

in a 1:1 scale is modelled on one built in a kibbutz in 1930s Palestine. The construction of the camp, in Poland, or rather its displacement from a past site in Palestine takes place, literally, in a charged historical location. Muranów was the prewar Jewish quarter in Warsaw, converted later into the infamous Warsaw ghetto by the Nazis. That site is now the location of *Polin*, Museum of the History of the Polish Jews. 'Polin' is the Hebrew name for Poland and also means 'rest here', referring to a legend of the arrival of the first Jews to Poland. Reconstructing a kibbutz built in historical Palestine rather than absent Jewish homes in Poland, the 'never elsewhere' configuration of space and time is constructed now in the film's citation of the destruction of the Jewish ghetto in Poland.

Both the bodies and the constructions they are building are given form through a visual aesthetics that is deliberately disturbing. The upward-tilted faces gaze rhapsodically at the flag of the JRMiP, which flies on top of the erected tower, but the eye–flag shot–countershot construction is internally disrupted by the object of their gaze. The overlapping figures of the Polish rooster and the Star of David combine critique of both racial homogeneity in Poland and the violence of settler colonialism in Israel.

The critique of Polish whiteness located in the nation implicitly connects to a chequered Zionist history. Further exploiting the symbolic resonances of image and word, *Wall and Tower* does not just name a cinematic construction in the now-empty Jewish ghetto of Muranów. Bartana reuses these two Hebrew words deployed historically to describe a *method*, 'Homa u'migdal', used by Jewish settlers in the illegal annexation of Palestinian land between 1936–39 under the British Mandate when kibbutzes were built by expulsion and occupation of the land of others.[47] The literal and symbolic conjunctions of two words configure together (though, rightly, do not equalise) the histories of the death camps in Poland and the settlements in Palestine. The soured socialist ideals of the kibbutz are later explicitly registered in the manifesto of the movement, which observes, 'The promised paradise has been privatized. The Kibbutz apples and watermelons are no longer as ripe.'[48] The memory of expulsion/settlement in Palestine is deployed as a reason for returning from the land of return, *Eretz Israel*, to another land, Poland.

The return of race configured by the aesthetics of alternation constructs the associative and historical dimensions of objects – flag, wall, tower – to expose what Rancière calls the 'double life' of objects, producing a polemical conjunction between racial multiplicity and national singularity through cohabitation (the Star and the Rooster). Bartana exploits the 'potential for historicity that is at the very heart of its [the object's] nature as an ordinary perceptual object' setting the actual fence and tower into motion along a trajectory linking two histories by countering the hegemonic racial figurations of both Poland as a Catholic nation and Israel as an exclusively Jewish

one.[49] The critique is not just negative but offers new 'forms of subjectivation' by deconstructing the Us/You distinction dividing both nations and races through the construction of common associations between objects on screen.

Transpositions – between images, words and bodies

'Transpositions' names a third form through which the returns of race produce an aesthetics of alternation. Moving bodies, wandering words, and familiar images destabilise the contours of race and nation to provoke apprehensions of overlapping histories. The title of the first film, *Mary Koszmary*, gives voice to an old Polish woman plagued by nightmares precipitated by the abandoned quilt of a Jewish escapee, Rifke, under which she sleeps. Sierakowski calls for Jews to return to Poland because 'Since the night you were gone … she has had nightmares. Bad dreams. Only you can chase them away. Let the three million Jews that Poland has missed stand by her bed and finally chase away the demons.'[50] By ventriloquising Mary's words, the old woman and young man connect a past history of forced migration and a call in the present for a new migration. The verbal transposition between differentially aged and gendered bodies also transforms the haunting addressee Rifke, multiplying her absent presence to the three million Jews. The scalar expansion/transposition from Rifke to three million Jews and from Koszmary to Poland, and the temporal conjunction from a past of escape and a present of reconstruction through words embodied in displacement configure another time–space of the 'never elsewhere'. This fictional nation–race relation sensed through words, images, and bodies begin a process of transposition which marks the entire trilogy.

Sierakowski's speech, which is addressed to Rifke/three million Jews, is a call that opens a new form of relationality. Roelofs argues, 'Address orchestrates relational life. It shapes the meanings that phenomena carry for us. It props up webs of interpretation we spin. It marks our ways of valuing people and things.'[51] The *value* of the return of the Jews is a re-evaluation not just of their importance *for* the Polish nation but a transformed appreciation of a future Poland depreciated by antisemitism and nationalism today. In the last film, Rifke will return, to attend the funeral of the now-assassinated Sierakowski whose call for her return opened the trilogy. Her cinematic appearance concretises the imagined return now made visible in the image of the old woman to help produce another truth, the truth of past coexistence whose history has been erased. Rifke's uncertain reappearance (is she a ghost, or still living?) reorients what it would mean and whether one could live after the disaster. Primo Levi's words 'Nothing was true outside the Lager' are reframed through other 'cinematic projections of people who have died'.[52] By making a living image out of a past marked

by death, *Assassination* transposes the outside of the Lager (survival, Israel) into the inside of the Polish nation through the returns of race.

The form given to the conjunction of words, images, and sounds is itself redolent of problematic transpositions by provocatively recalling the propaganda aesthetics of different, opposing, political movements. The 'pioneers' who build the Wall and Tower, and solemnly remember the murdered Sierakowski, sport uniforms which play with the history of problematic and unreconcilable political position-takings. In their uniforms, and through their martial formations, the moving and still youth of the JRMiP recall the socialist Young Pioneers of Poland's Communist period, the Nazi Hitlerjugend as well as the past Zionist Pioneer movement now transposed from Palestine to Poland.[53] Boris Groys, for example, observes that both the uniforms of the JRMiP and the style of the rallies are visually captured through both the monumentalising aesthetics of Leni Riefenstahl's films and the estranging, off-perspectival aesthetics of the Russian avant-garde.[54] But the latter's aesthetics of estrangement did not *look* that different from the propagandist form of Riefenstahl's films. By transposing aesthetic forms for different political ends, *AES* poses questions about the relation of art to politics.

Can the politically charged terms 'Renaissance' and 'Return' be given form without escaping the aestheticisation of politics identified with fascism and later in Communist and Zionist state-formations? Or rather, is it not that precisely by reusing the propaganda aesthetics of these compromised political movements, the violence inherent to Nazism, state Communism and Zionism can be exposed and refunctioned? Rancière argues that 'there is no subversive form of art in and of itself; there is a sort of permanent guerrilla war being waged to define the potentialities of forms of art and the political potentialities of anyone at all'.[55]

Conclusion

The Zionist renaissance in the first decades of the twentieth century was predicated on a return to the Holy Land. The conjunction of Renaissance and Return in the trilogy transpose their conjunction to another land, Poland. By altering the destination of return from Palestine to Poland, the movement reorients the historical trajectory of Zionist Renaissance to a nation, an *alter*nation in which settlement will help reconstruct the history of extermination into the geography of literal connection – 'It is Poland we long for, the land of our father and forefathers … Next to the cemeteries we will build schools and clinics. We will plant trees and build new roads and bridges.'[56] The certainties of the meaning of place are undermined while new journeys

marked by return transform the maps of both Poland and Israel, and do so by accessing and transforming historical realities.

Bridging the racial divide by populating the ancestral nation of Poland forces into view a chasm in the other ancestral land, where settlement and expulsion went hand in hand. The dynamic of nation-state formation *there* 'purified' the nation by building walls not bridges. The words of the manifesto explicitly register that Zionist history by transposing the *form* of return into a process of gathering multiplicities rather than expansionist occupation and expulsion:

> we leave behind our safe, familiar, and one-dimensional world. We direct our appeal not only to Jews. We accept into our ranks all those for whom there is no place in their homelands – the expelled and the persecuted …We shall not ask about your life stories, check your residence cards or question your refugee status.

The spatial transposition of Palestine to Poland is also an anti-identitarian filling-out of the meaning of 'Jewish' in the JRMiP. The language of return mobilises the term 'Jewish' while simultaneously expanding its potential members to *everyone* and *anyone*. Settlement and bridge-building turn out to be the projected construction in the land of 'fathers and forefathers' by anyone expelled from their homelands. Jews and non-Jews are configured into a national community in Poland, by linking filiation and settlement to *af*filiation between settlers and builders. Life stories, residence cards, and refugee status will not figure in the membership of this movement as it does in the charged politics of return in Israel linked to the Palestinians expelled both within and beyond Israel (1948, 1967–) into the diaspora. The trajectory of *this* return 'veers off the beaten track of dominant constructions of [both Polish and Israeli] history' by 'proceeding laterally' through a series of declamations which extend, transpose, and transform the meanings of belonging, homeland, nation, and race.[57]

In March 2020, the far-right member of the Polish Parliament, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, made the perverse argument in a television interview that the pogroms in which Jews were killed furthered 'natural selection' since only the stronger among them survived.[58] By his 'reasoning', the Polish pogroms have produced a far more powerful kind of Jew in the present – he meant this as a warning. The rightly felt revulsion at this grotesque historical re-reading, widely reported in Israel and beyond, is shadowed, however, by the problematic Zionist discourse of healthy, labouring, fighting bodies building a nation. Todd Samuel Presner's *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* tracks how the renaissance of Jews *in* Palestine was framed through a discourse of active bodies working the

land and defending it with arms.[59] Countering this conjunction between aggressive masculinity and national construction, Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin posit diaspora rather than the occupation of land as the generative ground of Jewish identity.[60] Rejecting blood as the grounds of (national) identity, James Clifford reads Boyarin's argument for framing 'kinship … as the matrix for dispersed Jewish populations' rather than through 'race in its modern definitions'.[61]

'We are not identical, we are one', states the manifesto of the JRMiP.[62] The negation 'not identical' only makes sense when coupled with the affirmation 'we are one'. The same word, 'one', produces a conjunction, a community without erasing difference. At Sierakowski's funeral, members of the JRMiP hold aloft a banner which states, 'With one colour, we cannot see.' 'One' becomes two things: a community of difference, and a racially blinding vision of homogeneity. The term 'colour' and its associations with race make visible what one cannot see, that is the possibility, indeed the presence, of a community formed by the non-identical, by the presence of racial others. By alternating positions between 'one' as it repeats itself, the blindness of a nation's monochromatic vision is undone by the aesthetic construction of a new hybrid national community.

Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir deploy Polish-Jewish history and its aftermath to call 'Europe to remember and assume responsibility' for both the Holocaust and the conflicts produced in the wake of the formation of Israel.[63] Writing explicitly as 'the residents of Israel–Palestine', they offer 'Europe a new model of citizenry and citizenship' within Europe itself with a 'call upon you citizens of Europe to let us return'.[64] Echoing the expansive constituency of the JRMiP beyond non-Jews, they pose the question of a non-national conception of the citizen. Can one belong to Europe, rather than to a nation in Europe? This question is not a fanciful artistic formulation. It captures the book-length engagement, itself posed as a question by political philosopher Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*.[65] Azoulay and Ophir assert, 'we could become citizens of Europe. In fact, we will be the *only* citizens of Europe.'[66]

In the scalar expansion of both national histories and continental geographies, whiteness *in* Eastern Europe returns to transform Europe itself from beyond it. Firstly, the fraught history of Europe's antisemitic response to displaced people after 1945 situated the Jews as outsiders within a complex geopolitical conflict structured by racism. Simply put, Jewish displaced people were unwanted.[67] Secondly, the formation of Israel was closely connected to the postwar European handling of the 'Jewish question'.[68] *AES* reconfigures Polish nationalism and Jewish belonging in it as a way to relate race to both the continent of Europe and the two nations, Israel and Poland. The

aesthetics of alternation moves through two nations to address an urgent, contemporary issue – the (historical) place of the outsider in Europe itself. This is what the perspective from Eastern Europe on the returns of race offers. The breadth of this mobile gaze as it scans and reorients Poland to move beyond Europe and into Israel only to return back to Europe as *Israel–Palestine* would mean 'Europe could not only be stunned; it could be transformed'.[69] The history of whiteness is a history of Poland's relation to its racial other. The returns of race remake the nation precisely through this return. And this return provides an opportunity to rethink *Europe* itself from its 'Eastern' margins.

Notes

1 Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997), esp. 2–4.
2 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994); Paul Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* (London: Routledge, 2004).
3 Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1994), 7.
4 While Poles, for example, were involved in the colonial ventures of European countries (see Grzechnik, this volume), Poland was not a colonising *nation-state* and its history is not marked by the presence of formerly colonised others within its national borders, such as in the case of Britain or France.
5 See Louisiana Channel, 'Yael Bartana Interview: Returning 3.3 Million Jews to Poland', 17 February 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=bO9IHA7K4lU (accessed 15 June 2023).
6 Alana Lentin, 'Europe and the Silence About Race', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 11:4 (2008), 487–503, 494.
7 Bolaji Balogun, 'Race and Racism in Poland: Theorising and Contextualising "Polish-Centrism"', *Sociological Review*, 68:6 (2020), 1196–211, 1197–200.
8 Monique Roelofs, 'Racialization as an Aesthetic Production: What Does the Aesthetics Do For Whiteness and Blackness and Vice Versa?', in George Yancy (ed.), *White on White/Black on Black* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 83–124.
9 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Aesthetica* (Hildesheim and New York: Georg Olms, 1970 [1750–8]).
10 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).
11 Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 176.
12 Sudeep Dasgupta, 'Art Is Going Elsewhere. And Politics Has To Catch It: An Interview with Jacques Rancière', *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, 1:1 (2008), 70–6, 73.

13 Jacques Rancière, 'From Politics to Aesthetics?', *Paragraph*, 28:1 (2005), 13–25, 13.
14 Jacques Rancière, *The Philosopher and his Poor* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 226.
15 Louisiana Channel, 'Yael Bartana'.
16 Jacqueline Rose, 'Mass Psychology', in Jacqueline Rose, *The Last Resistance* (London: Verso, 2013), 83; 'Dear Prime Minister Sharon', *Ha'aretz*, 19 March 2004.
17 Hall tracks W. E. B. Du Bois' continual, and instructively unsuccessful, reformulation of a biological understanding of race, and emphasises the continuing importance of race as a category: Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).
18 Hall, *Triangle*, 43.
19 David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 74.
20 Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991), 23.
21 Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 23–4.
22 See Leon Rogoff, 'Is the Jew White?: The Racial Place of the Southern Jew', *American Jewish History*, 85:3 (1997), 195–230. The article analyses the symptomatic uncertainty with which Jewish identity is approached in the context of shifting and mixed racial compositions of the US nation. See also Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: Norton, 2016).
23 Balibar and Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, 24.
24 The three partitions of 1772, 1793, and 1795 ended the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. Adam Mickiewicz's poem *Pan Tadeusz: The Last Foray into Lithuania*, trans. Bill Johnston (New York: Archipelago, 2018), first published in Paris in 1834, is considered the national epic of Poland, and captures the nostalgic feel of this complex history.
25 Joanna Beata Michlic, *Obcy jako zagrożenie: obraz Zyda w Polsce od roku 1880 do czasów obecnych* (Warsaw: Zydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2015). See Jan Piotr Zuk's 'Anti-Semitism in Poland, Yesterday and Today', *Race and Class*, 58:3 (2017), 81–6 for a review of Michlic's book.
26 Kinga Polynczuk-Alenius, 'At the Intersection of Racism and Nationalism: Theorising and Contextualising the "Antiimmigration" Discourse in Poland', *Nations and Nationalism*, 27:3 (2021), 766–81, 769–70.
27 Bolaji Balogun, 'Race and Racism', 1199–200.
28 Zuk, 'Anti-Semitism', 86.
29 See Michael C. Steinlauf, *Bondage to the Dead: Poland and the Memory of the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997) for a historical analysis of the use of memory in Polish national discourse.
30 See Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006). Jan T. Gross argued 'apparently, fifty years after the war, over half of the Polish society does not know that Polish Jews were wiped out during the

Holocaust': Jan T. Gross, 'A Tangled Web: Confronting Stereotypes Concerning Relations between Poles, Germans, Jews and Communists', in István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (eds), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 75.

31 Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

32 Antony Polonsky and Joanna B. Michlic, *The Neighbors Respond: The Controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

33 See Jan Piotr Żuk's detailed engagement with this complex history through a reading of Ireneusz Krzemiński (ed.), *Żydzi: problem prawdziwego Polaka* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2015).

34 André Gerrits, 'Antisemitism and Anti-Communism: The Myth of "Judeo-Communism" in Eastern Europe', *East European Jewish Affairs*, 25:1 (1995), 49–72.

35 Gerrits, 'Antisemitism'.

36 Andrew Kier Wise, 'Postcolonial Anxiety in Polish Nationalist Rhetoric', *Polish Review*, 55:3 (2010), 285–304.

37 Konstanty Gerbert, 'Anti-Semitism in the 1990 Polish Presidential Election', *Social Research*, 58:4 (1991), 723–55, 726–7.

38 Jacques Rancière, 'In What Times Do We Live?', in Maria Kuzma, Pablo Lafuente, and Peter Osborne (eds), *The State of Things* (London: Office for Contemporary Art (OCA) Norway / Koenig Books), 8–38, 11.

39 Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 17.

40 'Art of the Possible: Fulvea Carnevale and John Kelsey in Conversation with Jacques Rancière', *ArtForum* (March 2007), 261–9, 263.

41 Joanna Mytkowska, 'The Return of the Stranger', in Yael Bartana, *And Europe Will be Stunned* (Birmingham: Artangel, Ikon; Humlebæk: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art; Eindhoven: van Abbe Museum, 2011).

42 '*Mary Koszmary* (*Nightmares*): speech by Sławomir Sierakowski', in Bartana, *And Europe*, 120.

43 Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 77.

44 Max Blechman, Anita Chari, and Rafeeq Hasan, 'Democracy, Dissensus and the Aesthetics of Class Struggle: An Interview with Jacques Ranciere', *Historical Materialism*, 13:4 (2005), 285–301, 298.

45 Mytkowska, 'Return', 130.

46 Ireneusz Krzemiński, 'Polish–Jewish Relations, Anti-Semitism and National Identity', *Polish Sociological Review*, 137:1 (2002), 25–51, 43.

47 See details on website of the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw: https://artmuseum.pl/en/kolekcja/praca/bartana-yael-wall-and-tower (accessed 15 June 2023).

48 Yael Bartana, 'The Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland: A Manifesto', in Bartana, *And Europe*, 126–7, 126.

49 Jacques Rancière, *Figures of History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 80–1.
50 '*Mary Koszmary* (*Nightmares*)', 120.
51 Monique Roelofs, *Arts of Address: Being Alive to Language and the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 3.
52 Victor Brombert, *Musings on Mortality*: *From Tolstoy to Primo Levi* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 153. Brombert quotes Levi's justification for his suicide. In his reading of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, Brombert argues that Count Gustav von Aschenbach's fatal obsession with the young Polish boy, Tadzio, exemplifies succumbing to 'the lures of the abyss' (Brombert, *Musings on Mortality*, 25) of erotic obsession. Aschenbach's failure to sublimate desire into aesthetic pleasure plunges him into sickness and death. Bartana's work emerges precisely out of the abyss of absence provoked by death to aesthetically reconfigure the dead as vehicles for the return of others to make a hybrid nation.
53 See Gerschom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976) for a pithy articulation of the many strands of Zionism that went into, but also opposed, the formation of Israel as a nation-state, including the *halutz*, 'the pioneer who undertook the founding and establishment of a new life on the old earth' (Scholem, *On Jews*, 252).
54 Boris Groys, 'Answering a Call', in Bartana, *And Europe*, 134–9.
55 Rancière, 'Art of the Possible', 266.
56 Bartana, 'Manifesto', 126.
57 Svetlana Boym, *The Off-Modern* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 5.
58 Jeremy Sharon, 'Polish MP Says Pogroms Were Good For Jews, Assisted Natural Selection', *Jerusalem Post*, 4 March 2020, www.jpost.com/International/Polish-MP-says-Pogroms-were-good-for-Jews-assisted-natural-selection-619640 (accessed 5 May 2021).
59 Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007).
60 Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, 'Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity', *Critical Inquiry*, 19:4 (1993), 693–725.
61 James Clifford, 'Diasporas', *Cultural Anthropology*, 9:3 (1994), 302–38, 322.
62 Bartana, 'Manifesto', 126.
63 Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir, 'This is Not a Call to the Dead', in Bartana, *And Europe*, 146–51, 150. They explicitly call up 'Europe's responsibility for annihilating the Jews of Europe … but also for distorting the collective consciousness of the surviving Jews, and for the civil catastrophe, begun in 1947 [the declaration of the foundation of the State of Israel], that first and foremost brutalized the Palestinians and led to the decimation of North African or Arab Jewry, and in many ways continues still' (150–1).
64 Azoulay and Ophir, 'Call'.
65 Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).
66 Azoulay and Ophir, 'Call', 150.

67 For a detailed analysis of the politics of resettling displaced persons, and the antisemitic discourses structuring them, see David Nasaw, *The Last Million: Europe's Displaced Persons from World War to Cold War* (London: Penguin, 2020).

68 Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

69 Zertal, *Catastrophe*, 151.

8

Retailored for a Soviet spectator: racial difference and whiteness in the films of the 1930s to the early 1950s

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The modern ontology of race developed a system and logic of equivalences and correspondences, both textual and visual, between representations and the world.[1] Whiteness as a master signifier of this system, which 'promises a totality, an overcoming of difference itself', has its history of representations, entangled with particular historical ideologies of race, discursive practices, and social relations.[2] I grew up in the Soviet Union, where the race concept was rejected as a biological criterion and a legal marker of social and ethnic difference, and we were trained to internalise the idea of socialist anti-racism and the friendship of peoples worldwide, irrespective of race and skin colour. In my view, whiteness, not as a formal racial category but a self-perception and collective consciousness from which one learned how to identify georacially, continued to be (re)coded and communicated in *cultural* stereotypes and assumptions, as well as in *social* experiences of ethnically diverse Soviet peoples. For example, Russian (socio)linguistic practices[3] of the late Soviet period generated a number of racially dichotomising references to skin colour, blood, or geography that orchestrated the implications of whiteness as a georacial privilege, lost in the deteriorating social and economic context.[4] Some well-known examples are 'to live like a white man', 'to live like white people', 'I am travelling to America, so, I will live like a white human at least for a month' (*пожитъ как белый человек; пожитъ как белые люди*,[5] or *Еду в Америку, хотъ месяц поживу как белый человек*). Associated with middle-class life in the West ('to live like in the best homes of London and Paris'/*как в лучших домах Лондона и Парижа*), in the USA, on the other side of the Iron Curtain ('over the hill'/*за бугром*), whiteness connoted good and decent conditions of life (*приличные, хорошие условия*). On the contrary, the expression 'toils hard like a Negro' (*pashet kak negr*[6]), fused the connotations of racial bondage into the dichotomisation of Us/Them as good life/hard labour. The ironic expressions of Russian slang 'All our folks except for a Comrade Negro' (somebody whose presence or participation in an activity is highly unwelcome) and 'Sweaty Negro is your

comrade' ('you don't belong here') measured exclusion and Otherness by a welcomed absence of a black figure, inferring the racial connotation of whiteness in the meaning of 'us'.

More explicit in the late Soviet era, this self-racialisation as 'whites', which privileged the symbolic geography of the West and a proximity to whiteness – which Russians feared they were losing – was coded in the Russian language via the racial opposition to blackness ('sweaty Negro', 'Comrade Negro', 'toiling like a Negro'). It was reflected in the gradual evaluative shift in the lexicographic coding of Russian imperial *social* differentiation – 'white bone', or aristocracy (*Белая кость, барская, дворянская порода*), versus 'black bone', or 'undeveloped common people'. 'A Russian Soviet, Russian-Jewish, Russian-Georgian (I don't know about Tartars, Uzbeks and Nentsy), particularly when belonging to the intelligentsia, is an aristocrat in his soul, and in his nature – *raznochinets*,[7] pushing a *sovok*[8] out of himself', wrote a nostalgic Aleksandr Zholkovskii.

These are examples of default assumption, language, and discourse in the epistemological production of whiteness versus blackness, and wider non-whiteness, naturalised and camouflaged with the 'absence of race' in the USSR. The dichotomy was persistently structured through the stock of knowledge and feelings,[9] of *cultural* attitudes and historical references about race (re)created and stabilised in the Soviet meaning-making systems such as literature and cinema. From this perspective, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the ways of (re)signifying whiteness, its racial meanings and racialised connotations, in Soviet films of the 1930s to early 1950s that included black characters. The chapter examines a selection of the Stalinist adaptations of literary classics *Tom Sawyer* (1936), *The Mysterious Island* (1941), *Captain at Fifteen* (1945), *Robinson Crusoe* (1947), *Maksimka* (1953), and the biopic *Mikloukho-Maclai* (1947). A premise of my argument is that the historical and discursive constructions of race are embedded in the use of the cinematic apparatus.[10] Also, I align with Judith Butler's position on the visual field, never neutral to the question of race, being 'itself a racial formation, an episteme, hegemonic and forceful'.[11]

The films, while seen by their makers as the cinematic projections of humanist modernity, visualised their deep structure of inequality in thought and affect based on race[12] on the Soviet screen. Modern racial ontology and its patterns in these films surfaced in the ways in which Soviet filmmakers 'corrected' the original representations of race difference, whether in narrative and character transformations or in visual framing. I examine how these films demonstrated their makers' loyalty to the principle of racial polarity and the idea of racial progress in connection with the transformative value of whiteness.

Whiteness in the films discussed below evolved into a materiality of characters and spaces, linking the spectatorial affective sensibilities with race by branding 'white' and 'black' characters into epidermal signifiers. The spaces in which white and non-white characters are born, live, communicate, travel, and act were represented in the logic of an ontological connection between race as surface existence of a visual object (epidermal signifier) and as 'the historical depth – the "reality" – from which it was seized'.[13] Whiteness, thus, becomes a transformative practice with historical depth, from which it can be grasped as a potentially organising discourse of its own progressive, anti-racist meanings and behavioural models, adapted to the Soviet imperatives of class and race equality. In this pedagogical value and 'evidential force' of adaptations and biopics,[14] the films contained the specific connotative codes to tie the filmic racial 'histories' and 'geographies' of whiteness and non-whiteness to social and discursive practices of Soviet identity-making and modernisation.

While referring to the literature and history of Western and Russian modernity, the filmmakers attempted to retailor original literary texts and biographies, 'enriching' the contents with the 'anti-racist' perspective and foregrounding the good whites' anti-racist mind-set, the blacks' racial 'upgrade', and interracial harmonies. In fact, these films, celebrating white paternalism and racially charged saviourism, projected the filmmakers' own, allegedly anti-racist, views on human difference, whiteness and blackness in racial terms, though it is not my intent to label them as racists. I argue that their ideologically motivated 'corrections' of the literary and historical material resulted from their cultural and social presumptions about racial matters. Their views on whiteness, non-whiteness, and race difference, which informed their choice of narrative, character, plot 'corrections' as well as the visual work, never challenged but intensified the dichotomous racial logic of the literary and historical subject matter.

The representational map of anti-racist and progressive whiteness balances in these films between the characters of Mark Twain, Jules Verne, and Daniel Defoe, in their transformative value for the non-white world on one hand; and figures and stories that focus on Russian civilisational exceptionalism from Western racist whiteness on the other. The final section of the chapter discusses representations of whiteness in the adaptation of Russian writer Konstantin Stanyukovich's short story 'Maksimka' and a biopic about the Russian anthropologist Mikloukho-Maclai. Among other films of these genres, activated in postwar ideological geopolitics,[15] these adapted the legacy of Russian imperial literature and anthropology for the Soviet screen. Whiteness becomes a racial marker of Russianness, imagined ideologically as a historically and morally superior 'oceanic' or global master-position,

offering an alternative to capitalist white supremacy in the age of Cold War polarisation and the rise of multiple decolonising transitions worldwide.

The 1919 *Decree to Nationalise Cinema and Photo Activities*[16] indicated three major directions of Soviet cinema – artistic, documentary, and educational – with the corresponding generic forms, such as historical (biopics and historical-revolutionary films), adaptations of literary classics, fairy tales, adventure films, and films about Soviet life. In 1923, Ivan Perestiani's *Little Red Devils*, made after Pavel Bl'akhin's revolutionary novelettes, combined the features of adaptation and revolutionary film, and following the film director's decision, a black street acrobat Tom (Kador Ben-Salim) replaced a Chinese circus artist from the literary original. With the legendary musical *Circus* (1936), Grigorii Aleksandrov demonstrated the power of the director-centred mode of production[17] when his corrections, along with the instructions of other studio directors, changed the main theme and screenplay of Il'f and Petrov's play *Under the Big Top*.[18] In contrast to black male characters, though very few and marginal, in other films about 'the lack of racial prejudice'[19] in the USSR, Aleksandrov foregrounded a white American woman as a victim of racism and prejudice.[20]

The Stalinist filmmakers of the adaptations followed the principle which Perestiani and Aleksandrov demonstrated in their adaptations of contemporaneous Soviet texts – it is the director who acts as the film's author, who treats literary scenarios as raw, auxiliary material. In the early 1920s it could be Perestiani's random choice of a black circus artist for the plot about his revolutionary conversion with a touch of interracial romance. A decade later *Circus*, on the contrary, connects the vision of Soviet anti-racism with the romance of the white characters. Aleksandrov recycled the textual source so that anti-racist sensibility could be popularised and mobilised by connecting 'visceral emotions'[21] of white-centred romance and of white–black parent–child bonding with the ideological quest for a totality, for an overcoming of difference itself in the creation of the 'new Soviet human' (*новый советский человек*): 'Give birth in full health to as many as you want, black little ones, white little ones, red little ones, even blue, even pink-striped, even gray in little apples, please.'[22] For the Soviet reproductive task, these differences are to be in the inclusive 'new race' model of adopting paternalism, evolving towards the white physical perfection of the romantic couple during the circus attraction and the concluding Red Square march.

Aleksandrov's *Circus* was made after the filming of *White and Black*, about racial segregation and the black proletariat in the USA (G. Grebner's script), had been aborted (1932), allegedly because of the quality of the script, casting problems and a lack of technological capacities. However,

participants of an African-American delegation criticised the Soviet authorities for stopping the project following pressures exerted by Americans invited to work for the industrialisation of the USSR, and the prospect of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries.[23] It was only following *Circus* that several adaptations of nineteenth-century Western novels with black characters were shown. Their release moved Soviet spectators away from up-to-date anti-racist thematics and the critique of contemporary American racism in earlier films with Soviet settings, as it had been attempted in *Black Skin* (1930) and *The Return of Nathan Becker* (1932). These new films, mainly placed in the category of children's cinema, demonstrated the tremendous effort of their makers to align the fundamentally racial representational logic of imperial literatures and histories on the Stalinist screen with the Marxist vision of historical development and with the processes of modernisation in the country 'on the ground'.

In the 1930s the thematic list of film production plans included 'growth and the evolution of human consciousness' and 'socialist upbringing of youth',[24] later replaced with 'international themes', 'literary classics',[25] travelogues, science-fiction films, and children's films.[26] Stalinist cinema, responsible for Communist character-education,[27] treated children as adults of small stature.[28] In this vein, adaptations of literary classics for children's cinema were adjusted to the *Bildung* themes of 'socialist upbringing of the young' and 'growth of human consciousness'. Thus, the filmmakers, while retailoring the adventure-centric texts for the children viewers' character-education in anti-racist consciousness, focused on aligning the spectatorial 'visceral emotions' with the race-related 'adjustments'. Let me discuss these 'adjustments' of the script, direction, and translation in the adaptations of American, French, and British authors, as a form of 'edutainment' for Soviet children in anti-racism and human evolution, and as models for the development of character.

Twain, Verne, and Defoe were very popular among Russian readers, due to their translations in both the Soviet and imperial eras. As Kornei Chukovskii writes about Twain's novels, 'Tom Sawyer, and Finn, and Negro Jim, and Aunt Polly have long been and become so close to the Russian people, as if they are Russians themselves.'[29] The new Soviet translation was used in the campaign against illiteracy. With their popularity, Twain's novels, in their cinematic 'revisitation'[30] were texts 'in which the harsh conditions and social injustices of the West such as racism and poverty could be highlighted.'[31]

Together with Mark Twain, Jules Verne's novels were included in the recommended reading lists, as part of the national cultural treasury.[32] His novels, the 'universal' literary supplement to global geography,[33] were popularised in the times of the Soviet 'daring imaginative leap into the future'.[34] They possessed, in Macherey's words, an immediate historical significance for the

Soviet people when 'in compensation for the citizens' reduced mobility and more circumscribed world, dramatic and exotic travel became a particular feature of Soviet culture'.[35] Verne's inspirational geography was offered to spectators in 1936 when the film *Captain Grant's Children* (Vl. Vainshtok) was released to break all records of film distribution in the USSR. The 1941 adaptation of *The Mysterious Island* (E. Pentslin and B. Shelontsev) turned Verne into one of the most revered Western authors of adventure literature.

As for Daniel Defoe's novel, it was available to Soviet readers through a popular translation by Kornei Chukovskii, published in the early 1920s and 'emancipated' from a number of its themes and aspects, particularly, with regard to religion. Instead of telling the prodigal son's drama, Chukovskii tried to bring the plot as close as possible to the class-tinged conflict between fathers and sons. The postwar adaptation, based on this translation, was very popular among children, led by a hero who 'adequately represents a human in front of nature as a sane, moral and reasonable being, as a completely successful product of European civilisation'.[36]

In 1936, *Tom Sawyer* (Lazar' Frenkel) aimed at fostering children's empathetic engagement with the struggle of American white teenagers Tom and Huck for the liberty of the black slave Jim. The introductory subtitles, 'according to Twain's motives', inform the audience that the filmmakers left the sanctity of authorial intentions[37] behind and composed a new narrative, with little semblance to Twain's works.[38]

The script moves Dr Robinson (Evgenii Samoilov), a very minor character in both novels, into the cinematic limelight and transforms him into a well-intentioned abolitionist, enacting racial paternalist benevolence towards black slaves George and Jim. The active abolitionist position of the white American citizen Robinson turns him into the only legitimate figure on the Soviet screen to achieve and represent the general emancipation of black slaves. George's flight from Judge Pipkins, with which the film begins, fails, and is thus deprived by the filmmakers of its value of self-emancipatory struggle, while Dr Robinson grants freedom to his black slave Jim. His abolitionist credo inspires Tom and Huck to rescue Jim from racists at the end of the film.

The theme of good whites' benevolent thinking and actions in Frenkel's adaptation owes its genealogy to the state of mind that once inspired Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Her novel, 'an antislavery ensign'[39] in imperial Russia, was included in world literary classics and in recommended reading lists in foreign literature for Soviet schools. Frenkel recycled the themes of pleading slave and white saviour and shaped the character of Jim into an 'Uncle Tom', luckily rescued by the truth-seeking white boys, in contrast to the fate of the elderly slave, beaten to death in Beecher Stowe's novel.

The script eliminates the Indian Joe, and it is Jim who accompanies Dr Robinson to the cemetery. The reason for this change was Stalinist censors' recommendation to avoid showing negative Native American characters on the screen. The role of the main villain is allocated to Huck's father, who kills Dr Robinson in the cemetery scene. Jim turns into the victim of local racists, who accuse him of murdering the doctor and arrest the black man for a trial court. Tom's timely intervention during the court session saves innocent Jim from the gallows.

If the Indian Joe is eliminated from the script, Jim on the Soviet screen is subsumed by the stereotype of a happy-go-lucky 'darky', who remains a loyal servant to Dr Robinson, plays a banjo, and tries to mimic his master in manners and clothes. Unable to sign a vow of friendship with the white boys and deprived of his name in the document, Jim uses his fingerprint for a signature – 'Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, Joe Harper, the Negro'. Illiterate and lonely, he remains happy to be under Robinson's paternalistic patronage and the friendly care of white teenagers. The film, unlike Twain's satire of romantic novels, accentuates Tom's reading of great adventure stories, from which he draws a Robin Hood-esque inspiration for his 'white saviour' crusade and the chivalric dream of becoming another Ivanhoe. The romantic adventure-seeking kids turn into active seekers of racial justice, whose juvenile conscious discipline[40] and desire for justice and truth prevent Jim's unfair trial. Tom initiates Jim's rescue from the unjust court decision and from the slaveowners' conspiracy against Jim's freedom, granted by Dr Robinson. With their racial privilege of emancipatory whiteness, both characters demonstrate the model of behaviour with regard to race difference, well-adapted by the filmmakers to the imperative of Stalinist children's cinema to represent children behaving like small adults, bringing changes into a still imperfect world, in their case, of anti-racist America.

Rewriting the characters and adding plotlines enhances the Soviet adaptation's ideological dissonance with Twain's picaresque plot and its racial meanings, rendered in the relationship between Jim and Huck. Frenkel's explicit alteration of the narrative content and character system eliminates Jim's subject position and agency, central to the buddy relations and Huck's maturation in the literary original.[41] Twain's discourse on race relations, racism, and slavery disappeared behind the filmmakers' representations of race difference and their ideas about the evolutionary privilege of progressive whiteness.

The film was widely shown in Soviet movie-theatres and later, on TV, slotted into 'Children's Film Time', but critics attacked it for the script and direction, making it Lazar' Frenkel's last film. By contrast, the adaptations of Verne's novels *The Mysterious Island* (1941) and *Captain at Fifteen* (1946) were among the most popular and revered films among

Soviet children and played a role in the literary canonisation of the French writer.

Verne's *The Mysterious Island* (1874) describes the adventures of Americans from the northern states, saving the black ex-slave Neb and escaping a Civil War prison camp in a hot-air balloon. After crashlanding on a mysterious island, they wish to turn this distant place into a model community of social and racial equality and free labour. The filmmakers did not intend to show interracial relations in a consciously racist way; however, some scenes absent from the literary original, intensify what Noël Carroll calls the 'residual racism' of Verne's work, who 'may not have intended to write "racistically", but in intentionally writing in the way he did, he produced something that was racist'.[42] The visual emphasis on the cultural habits of the characters and the mental/manual labour divide as 'natural' racial taxonomies in the added scenes enhance the epistemic and civilisational difference of white characters from Neb. Positioned in the centre of quite a few *mise en scènes*, white characters enjoy either their project of applying science and professional skills to the 'raw material' of an island, or civilised leisure time through reading or writing down their interesting thoughts. Meanwhile, Neb's life story is excluded from the adaptation, and after the focus on his rescue by white Americans at the beginning of the film, he turns into a decorative figure, with no space in the plot to become even a marginal character. Instead of demonstrating skills and knowledge, reading and writing, he is shown either as present at the margins of the whites' collective reason, or strumming a self-made banjo in a dreamlike manner on the windowsill.

The adaptation of *Captain at Fifteen* was released immediately after the end of the war, when Soviet children and young people, in particular, needed films about friendship, love, heroism, and adventures. Anatolii Pristavkin remembers: 'We watched the film *Captain at Fifteen*, sitting on the high fence of an open-air movie-theatre. He [Dick Sand] was just about our age. In those years all of us were dreaming about the sea.'[43] In its loyalty to the colonial adventure novel and maritime travel writing, the film introduced romantic protagonist Dick Sand as an inspirational model of (implicitly white) masculine duty, courage, skills and work, while familiarising Soviet children in the postwar movie-theatres with racial meaning, inherent in the visual lure of horizons to dream about, continents to imagine:

> it is not age that plays a big role, but resourcefulness, energy, intelligence, those properties that can be possessed by adults and a teenage boy. Dick Sand, as played by Vsevolod Larionov, is endowed with these qualities, essential for a sailor, and we believe in him and follow his decisive actions with admiration. We are fascinated not only with adventures, but also with the representation of real people's lives, the struggle of Dick Sand and his comrades with slave traffickers, trading people as a living commodity. Jules Verne's humanism, his

> aversion to oppressors and his love for brave people of pure souls is expressed in this film, and this is one of its greatest rewards.[44]

The film became a favourite with about 18 million spectators immediately after its release; the young actor who played Dick Sand woke up a celebrity the next morning,[45] and 'all the girls of the country fell in love with him'.[46] Generations of Soviet children learned lines from the film: 'Africa. Angola. The country of slave traffickers and slaves. The country of chains', 'Negroes – valuable product!'.

The forties were the time of fascination with Africa: 'For Moscow schoolchildren, it was then a fabulous and mysterious continent. They knew about it only from books, movies and stamps that were sold in and around the store on Kuznetsky Most.'[47] The film showed 'Africa' on the screen: 'critics found the African scenes of the film naive and clumsy, and African dances drawn-out and monotonous. However, the boys did not think so. "Gangu-tamanga" was loved by everyone.'[48] The visually striking images of 'Africa' and its cannibals were the first ones in Soviet cinema, perceived as if taken from a documentary about unknown Africa:

> Even some teachers believed in the reality of the picture. At the teachers' conference of Moscow's Kominternovsky, a young, pretty teacher quite sincerely said: 'We went with the class to watch the film *Captain at Fifteen*. We learned the nature of Africa. The fact that the film was shot near Batumi, and the Negroes were played by two hundred and fifty local residents, no one even thought. Yes, the students did not need to know about it. None of them could have imagined that they would ever be able to go to Africa. Only North and East were open to them then.'[49]

The episodes in 'Africa' horrified spectators with the close-up of cut-off, chained black hands. No less spine-chilling was the visualisation of savage cannibals and their village where Mrs Weldon, following the original, expresses a new and racially specific emotion of indignation for a heroine on the Soviet screen, in response to a violation of her universal privilege as a white woman: 'Who would dare to buy a white woman even in this country?'

The adaptation faithfully reproduces Verne's idea of Africa's anachronisms and the positive effects of racial progress provided by white civilisation, experienced in the novel by black American characters working in Australia as free citizens and coming back home to Pennsylvania. Verne provides names and biographies for all of them, and this is totally excluded from the adaptation, turning them into an anonymous group of rescued black Americans. Except for Hercules, played by Wayland Rudd in a recognizable Jim-like manner, their presence is peripheral and reduced to essential servitude, from sailor and dinner service to nanny work, while spectatorial attention

is centred on the Weldons' adventures worldwide and Dick's heroic *Bildung* in Africa.

After Verne's adaptations, the first Soviet stereofilm *Robinson Crusoe* (Aleksandr Andrievskii) offered another model character from European literary classics to Soviet children spectators. In the film, Robinson's mentorship of Friday's adaptation and servitude to civilised masterdom is based on the Marxian evolutionist credo of instrumental rationality to overcome the savage condition of the 'deficit of reason'.[50] The translator Chukovskii saw the value of Defoe's narrative about the technological management of nature, delivered in the form of exploration, expansion, and domination. The film emphasises the theme of instrumental rationality, valued and emphasised by the translator, too, and concludes with a dialogue about the city, implying the civilisational supremacy of its builders' instrumental rationality. Friedrich Engels' famous *Labour created a human* and Maksim Gorkii's *Man is great in labour and only in labour* loom behind Crusoe's 'this city was made by clever human hands. That's who did it. – Hands' – so that Friday could repeat after his master: 'Hands. Many human hands.' After 'You do not even know what a city is', Robinson remembers Friday's 'evolutionary delay' and replaces 'city' with 'big village' – 'When we get to the big village…'.

Both the translation and the script replace Defoe's credo of modern individualism with Crusoe's appeal to collective labour as the most effective instrument of human evolution. The final scene turns into a Marxist veneration of collective work as the productive force that primarily determines human development. The scene suggests a link between Crusoe's rhetoric of labour, humanity, and city with nation-building and modernisation – from the countryside to the city, from rural stasis to urban progress (Lenin's 'industrialised and civilised' versus 'uncivilised and patriarchal'), from 'backward' nationalities and ethnic groups into Soviet citizens.[51] In this discourse, the village, as 'a small, technologically backward, traditional peasant organization',[52] would be eliminated due to the technology of 'many hands', and this proletarianisation into the collective farm brigade[53] would lead to a modernising 'transition from old to new, in other words, the 'rapprochement with the city'.[54]

This final scene contains a close-up of the title for Crusoe's frontispiece of the shipwreck narrative, 'written by himself', about transcending a wreckage by industrious labour and about restarting the power of civilisation at the edges of unexplored geographies. Text and authorship are inferred on the screen as the prime racial authority in generating the whole of history, in its developmental 'stages' and their 'successive logic', spatialised globally between savagery and civilisation, and contextually, between village and city. Crusoe's position as the author of his own life-writing redirects Soviet viewers to the aesthetic doctrines of modernity, formed on the basis of racial

metaphysics. After all, Defoe's *homo economicus* survives due to his Reason in both text and film, and, furthermore, the Soviet adaptation accentuates the 'intelligent hands' of Crusoe–Author. Their civilisational function includes the incorporation of 'savage' territories into the white model of global space, inspired by the British author, and 'the common cultural horizon' reached by Soviet spectators.

Such cine-ideological adaptation involved the ways in which spectators were conditioned to 'see' racial difference on the screen and to identify themselves in relation to the white protagonists, morally responsible for non-whites' 'improvements' and interracial relations. For example, in *Tom Sawyer*, when Robinson mentors Tom and Huck in the scientific principles of classification, from insects to humans, Jim shares the frame with the white characters. He also listens to the doctor's explanations but is positioned at a polite distance from the white characters by deep focus, thus, simultaneously in and out of the white space. The trial scene is another spectacular example of his visual framing in a marginal and dependent position. When Tom gives testimony to the jury, standing between the judge and Jim, the camera shows the boy as he addresses his passionate speech to the intradiegetic audience as well to the audience of a Soviet movie-theatre. A high camera angle secures Jim's perspectival placement below Tom's position in the centre of the frame and in front of the racist judge, so that he is shown as if under the patronage of the white teenager. Additionally, this high angle situates a Soviet child spectator in the position of an 'objective' judge with an 'omniscient' view of American racists in the courtroom scene, revealing their hatred towards the falsely accused black man.

The cinematography of the adaptations also elaborated on the visual alignment of the Soviet spectatorial gaze with the racial meanings of the cinematic gaze. In *Robinson Crusoe*, looking at the cannibals from Robinson's point of view, through his binoculars, the spectators, together with the white protagonist, are horrified, similarly to encountering savagery and cannibalism in the earlier *The Captain at Fifteen*. A binocularised alignment of the spectatorial gaze injects horror and fear through a wide shot and close-up, and visually delineates a foundational racial dichotomy for Crusoe's and the audience's worlds alike. The black 'colour of savagery' is contrasted with Crusoe-spectator's awareness of his racial 'white' identification. This suture technique is then sustained in further episodes of the adaptation, particularly, when Crusoe rescues a native and shoots down all the 'coloured devils' one by one.

While recycling Twain's picaresque tales, Verne's inspiring heroics, and Defoe's model of *homo economicus*, the adaptations of Western texts ushered into Soviet spectatorship 'humanist' ways of relating to racial difference

with a sense of unequal relations between whites and blacks in thought and emotion. This racialised bonding of the spectatorial gaze and emotion with adventure as a rescue mission from either slavery or savagery is linked to a romantic impulse and heroic white masculinity, interpellating, in Lilya Kaganovsky's formulation, our desire for 'identification with the extraordinary individual and our belief in ourselves as the unfettered, transcendental subject.'[55]

A turn to Verne's and Defoe's 'humanist' projections of imperial civilisational geopolitics resurfaced in the backward versus modern polarity in the context of postwar decolonisation when the competing ideologies of a future geopolitical order presented a global challenge to the former imperial world, with its geographical and environmentalist determinism.[56] Structured through racial taxonomies and cartographies, the theme and discourse of backward/modern was reappropriated by Cold War ideological agendas[57] as competing projects of 'improvement'[58] instead of an evolutionary movement from a lower to higher level of organisation.[59] This equivalence nurtured the emotional connection of a Soviet child reader–spectator, striving for heroics and education, with the specifically masculine qualities of the protagonists in their spatial mastery over distant landscapes. The meanings of whiteness in Western literary imagination were particularly difficult to shift, revise, and question in Soviet cinema as a cultural meaning-making system in which the racial meanings of 'progressive' white agency, from Defoe's *homo economicus* to Verne's *homo techno-nomadicus* as well as the representations of racial Otherness, were subtly coordinated with postwar ideological investments in progressivist economism, agricultural industrialisation and urbanisation. 'Improvements' of the literary original treatments of the modern/backward and its white master-signifier on the Soviet screens of the 1940s were invariably tied to racialising connotations of the modern/backward polarity in the domestic (urban/rural) discourse of socialist development. By either rewriting Twain or 'improving' Verne's and Defoe's discourses of backward/modern, these films taught generations of children spectators (and their parents) about interracial relations and 'anti-racist' emotions and about the models of progressive whiteness with a moral responsibility for black (or non-white) characters' racial uplift.

The end of the war meant the control of history. A number of postwar films represented Russian history as the legacy of the missionary principle without coercion, contrary to Western colonialism. The films *Maksimka* (1953) and *Mikloukho-Maclai* (1947) used literary and biographical sources of the late imperial period to draw analogies with the global shift in the mid-century conflict from 'hot' to 'cold'. In both films the Western white *mission civilisatrice* becomes a crisis to overcome through an alternative white Russian civilisational agency, now to be reclaimed by the Soviet project

of mastering global political geography. It is embodied in the idealised protagonists, representing the military discipline, moral responsibility, and intellectual strength of the Russian Empire, inherent in missions of paternalist saviourism in distant geographies of the globe.

Overwhelmingly popular among Soviet children and loved among post-Soviet spectators to the present day, *Maksimka* was adapted from the short story 'Maksimka' from *Sea Stories* (*Morskie rasskazy*, 1896) by Russian maritime writer Konstantin Stanyukovich (1843–1903). The collection reflected changes in imperial Russia's geopolitical interests and its claim to participate in the colonial division of the world. Stanyukovich saw internal moral renewal and social modernisation as the potentialities of the Russian national order, which could be realised simultaneously with a new international order which protected the victims of colonialism and the slave trade and integrated them into this civilisational project, as an alternative to Western practices of colonisation.

The adaptation drifts towards the 'universal meaning' of whiteness, exercised through the erasure of 'ontological depth'[60] in black figures, stuck between the tropes of Africanisation (distance/savagery) and infantilisation (child/slave/domestic servant). The film follows the original plot about military sailors of a Russian imperial warship and their participation in rescuing an African boy (Tolia Bavykin) from the post-storm wreckage of an American slave trafficking ship. The sailors name the boy to honour a Russian Orthodox saint and teach him the Russian language. He joins them as a naval cadet in the final scene of the film, next to the St Andrew's flag of the imperial fleet. The sailor Luchkin, a former serf, becomes the boy's mentor and caretaker ('Forget that American. Remember that a Russian sailor would never offend you', says Luchkin in the film, not in the short story). Maksimka's adoption by the Russian crew is at the same time his separation from his African origins and memories. The literary original allows the boy to remember his mother's eyes, while the adaptation eliminates any extra-textual traces of his origins, even in dreams, to complete his bonding with the new 'family' on board the Russian corvette. The final scene shows him in the uniform of a naval intern as he becomes a member of these white men's community.

Additionally, the camerawork shows the process of Maksimka's emotional healing as his identitarian 'birth' in the protective milieu of the corvette, in particular, in the episode when he is introduced to the sailors. A close-up shows his face in fear and despair as he is surrounded by white strangers in uniforms. The shot alternates between smiling faces of sailors, expressing their empathy, support, and care, with the close-up of Maksimka's face in an emotional change from deep despair to a wide smile of joy. He realises that he has survived, he is free, and he is among friends.

The adaptation intensifies the original's grounding of the maritime adventure story into the emotional visual narrative of Russian masculinity. The episodes related to class divisions and cruelties on board, are either eliminated or rescripted, replacing Stanyukovich's critique of the post-serfdom tsarist fleet with an idyllic image of the mutually supportive and friendly crew of the imperial corvette. There is a strong emphasis on the onboard formations of collective masculinity from the traditional units (*artel'*) of lay sailors to the officers' corps. Ultimately, the film empowers the masculine 'nation' with the anti-racist 'adoptive' mind-set, opposed to Western ideas of biological racism. The crew, demonstrating inner unity, discipline, and order, acts with legitimate authority as the international moral guarantor to protect civilisation from the destructive slave trade and exploitation.

Stanyukovich's idea of socially integrated masculine Russianness shifts on the Soviet screen to Russianness as the alternative – liberating and empathetic – white subject of history, aligning Stanyukovich's criticism of Western coloniality with the contemporaneous geopolitical context.[61] The cinematic retro-idealisation of late imperial Russianness is pitted against Western dehumanisation and enslavement, as for example in an added episode that features the abduction of Luchkin and Maksimka. While on the shore, in a local pub, drunk Luchkin is tricked into putting his fingerprint on a contract, and, along with Maksimka, he finds himself on a slave trafficker's schooner. According to Luchkin, 'Russians do not abandon their own', and in the end both are rescued from slavery. The boy escapes from the slave traffickers' ship and swims towards the rescuers' boat, loudly crying the Russian word 'brothers'.

The film had an enormous emotional impact upon child spectators:

> I was deeply impressed by *Maksimka* to the depths of my soul of a child. Such love for the black boy took hold of the entire movie-theatre that everyone in it was ready to adopt a Negro. … It seemed that the hatred of private property and the love of black Africa, along with black America, forever settled in our hearts.[62]

In fact, *Maksimka* shored up the racial modality of the imperial anthropological discourse of Russian exceptionalism[63], a project repeated[64] in the biopic *Mikloukho-Maclai* (1947, A. Razumnyi). The film about the life and achievements of a Russian scholar and traveller suggests historical analogies with the realities of Europe after the Potsdam conference in 1945 while appealing to the Russian Empire's achievements worldwide during the nineteenth-century scramble for colonies.

The film engaged Soviet spectators in the story about the distant, exotic 'paradise' of Northeastern Papua, never visited by Europeans before the Russian scholar stepped on its shore. The plot concentrates on Maclai's life

'among the natives' with the purpose of collecting ethnographic evidence for his theory of race. The arrival of the scholar is compared and contrasted with the first-contact landing of Columbus. The theme of white saviour was not singular for Soviet film. As James Mark argues, it was deployed in each European socialist nation from the early 1950s to resignify the racial myth of normalised white paternalism and anticipate 'the enlightened political and moral values of socialist internationalism.'[65]

Maclai preaches an anti-supremacist and anti-racist whiteness in his encounters with the non-white race and demonstrates his non-interventionist intentions, while he settles next to the natives' village, studies their culture, and mentors the natives in the basic principles of rationalised labour. While living near the indigenous village, and due to his humane policy of non-interference, Maclai is invited to become a peacemaker between the two warring tribes. Maclai's academic opponent and hidden adversary in the film is his German colleague Brandler, a cruel coloniser and a pseudo-scholar, 'the forerunner of the barbaric racial theories of Fascism'.[66] Brandler compares Bismarckian Germany to the eagle, ready to 'embrace all seas and oceans with his wings, and Germany will possess all treasures on earth and beneath', an explicit reference to the theme of historical continuity between the colonialist practice of Bismarck's Germany and the racist expansionism of the Third Reich.[67] In contrast to Brandler's racial evolutionism, Maclai preaches Russia's civilisational mission of anti-conquest[68] and moral obligation to protect natives from future colonial destruction.[69] (*The war began, and they came to me to seek protection. Enter with goodness and truth, not with guns and vodka.*)[70]

While referring to Russianness as defining for his civilisational position of non-interference and protection among non-whites, Maclai identifies with 'us, white people' and references 'a white man's point of view' as the common racial framework of Russians and Europeans. Maclai's Russianness evolves in the narrative as humane and caring whiteness, both aligned with European identity, but opposed to Western biological racism. The film includes episodes referring to the history of 'human zoos', but represents these as an exclusively 'Western' practice and erases the history of similar 'entertaining' shows in the Russian Empire of the nineteenth century.[71]

Instead, the film elaborates on a connection between Maclai's Russian racial missionarism and his futurist project of the colony-commune among Papuan natives, based on Lev Tolstoy's idea of the Russian peasant commune. Tolstoy's letter to Mikloukho-Maclai is quoted, and the writer's photo appears in several episodes. In one, the scholar dictates a telegram to German Chancellor Bismarck with a demand to stop Papuan communities' destruction by West European racist colonisation and the ruinous ideology of individualism. Tolstoy's indexical presence in the film, thus, frames the archaic communalism

of Papuan people into the evolutionary form of the social ideal, enacted in a productive peasant commune. The connotative link extends to the social core of Soviet modernity, which Johan Arnason defines as the hidden traditionalism of Communist society.[72] Thus, the biopic racialises the idea of the Russian commune and its anti-individualism as 'historical capital'[73] antecedent to Soviet modernisation, 'without the conflictual dynamics that accompanies development in the Western world.'[74]

The films discussed in this chapter participated culturally in what Francine Hirsch defines as state-sponsored evolutionism, or 'a Soviet version of the civilising mission, grounded in the Marxist conception of development through historical stages',[75] with a teleological view of the communist totality. The films foregrounded the racial discourses of imperial literature and anthropology, contributing to the cultural production of what can be called Soviet 'socialist racialism'.[76] They helped structure collective memories of reference and feeling regarding race difference and whiteness, which were influential well into the last Soviet decades when citizens dreamed about a beautiful middle-class life 'like a white man'.

By the mid-1950s, the USSR was asserting a more active role as an ally to anti-colonial movements, 'un-chaining' countries from (post)colonial 'backwardness' and thrusting them into the orbit of socialist development. With the collapse of colonial systems and after the 1957 International Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow, Soviet cinema of the 1960s to the early 1970s made an effort to self-decolonise the imagery of Stalinist adaptations, which had lingered in the racial logic of modernity. The film-makers of the 'thaw period' attempted to invent genres, characters, themes, and visual styles that would provide Soviet spectators with a sense of emotional proximity and political engagement with global decolonisation. However, these films of different genres, based on contemporaneous decolonial themes, though trying to critically reflect on 'whiteness' in Soviet consciousness, did not succeed in going beyond the frames and meanings of whiteness as a racial self-perception and agency proposed in Aleksandrov's *Circus* and the Stalinist retro-genres.

Notes

1 Alessandra Raengo, *On the Sleeve of the Visual: Race as Face Value* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2013), 21.

2 Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race* (London: Routledge, 2000), 7.

3 The meanings and connotations of race and whiteness in different linguistic practices, sociolinguistic domains, and loyalties (e.g., Slavs vs non-Slavs; Baltic

nations versus non-Baltic others) in different periods of Soviet history are still an open research area. This article is limited to the cultural production and communicative domain in the Russian language.

4 Alaina Lemon, 'Without a "Concept"? Race as Discursive Practice', *Slavic Review*, 61:1 (2002), 54–61, 56.

5 In Russian: O zhizni, rabote: dostoino uiutno, komfortno, bez problem i zatrudnenii (О жизни, работе: достойно, уютно, комфортно, без проблем и за труднений).

6 Negr 1. Chelovek, kotoryi ochen' mnogo rabotaet na drugih. Sam negrov ischi. Ia tebe ne negr. Chto ia, negr, chto li? (Негр 1. Человек, который очень много работает на других. Сам негров ищи. Я тебе не негр. Что я, негр, что ли?), https://gufo.me/ (accessed 15 October 2022).

7 Used in the nineteenth century for an educated commoner of non-aristocratic origin.

8 Derogatory word for 'Soviet human'.

9 Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 2, following Edward Said's concept of 'cultural archive' in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

10 Keith Harris, *Boys, Boyz, Bois: An Ethics of Black Masculinity in Film and Popular Media* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 36.

11 Judith Butler, 'Endangered/Endangering: Schematic Racism and White Paranoia', in Robert Gooding-Williams (ed.), *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 17.

12 Wekker, *White Innocence*, 2.

13 Raengo, *On the Sleeve*, 3.

14 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*: *Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

15 John A. Agnew, *Reinventing Geopolitics: Geographies of Modern Statehood* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, 2001), 47.

16 Dekret Soveta Narodnyh Komissarov o nacionalizacii kinodela, 27 avgusta 1919 g.

17 Maria Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to the Plan: Film-Making Under Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017), 10.

18 See Rimgaila Salys, *Musical Comedy Films of Grigorii Aleksandrov: Laughing Matters* (Bristol: Intellect, 2009).

19 Quoted from ibid., 129.

20 Meredith L. Roman, *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of US Racism, 1928–1937* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 198.

21 See Stephen Hutchings' discussion of Veinstock's adaptation of *Treasure Island* in 'Ada/opting the Son: War and the Authentication of Power in Soviet Screen Versions of Children's Literature', in Stephen Hutchings and Anat Vernitskaia (eds), *Russian and Soviet Film Adaptations of Literature, 1900–2001: Screening the Word* (London: Routledge, 2005), 59–73.

22 In Russian: 'Rozhaite sebe na zdorovie skol'ko khotite, chernen'kih, belen'kih, krasnen'kih, khot' golubyh, hot' rozovyh v polosochku, khot' seryh v iablochkah,

pohaluista!' ('Рожайте себе на здоровье сколько хотите, черненьких, беленьких, красненьких, хоть голубых, хоть розовых в полосочку, хоть серых в яблочках, пожалуйста!').

23 Galina Lapina, '"Chernye i belye": istoriia neudavshegos'a kinoproekta', *Antropologicheskii forum*. Arkhiv russkih vypuskov, no. 30, 83–118.
24 Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to the Plan*, 66.
25 Ibid., 68.
26 Ibid., 68–84.
27 Julia L. Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 63.
28 Natalya Nusinova, '"Teper' ty nasha": reb'onok v sovetskom kino. 20–30 gody', *Iskusstvo kino*, 12 (2003), 81–7, https://old.kinoart.ru/archive/2003/12/n12-article12 (accessed 14 January 2024).
29 Mark Tven, *Prikl'ucheniia Toma Soiera* (Petrograd: n.p., 1919), 7.
30 Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
31 Stephen Hutchings, *Russia and its Other(s) on Film: Screening Intercultural Dialogue* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 11.
32 James von Geldern, 'Epic Revisionism and the Crafting of a Soviet Public', in Kevin M. F. Platt and David Brandenberger (eds), *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 325–41.
33 Yi FuTuan, 'Literature and Geography: Implications for Geographical Research', in David Ley and Marmyn Samuels (eds), *Humanistic Geography: Prospects and Problems* (Chicago, IL: Maroufa Press, 1978), 194.
34 Timothy Unwin, 'Technology and Progress in Jules Verne, or Anticipation in Reverse', *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association*, 93:1 (2000), 17–35, 19.
35 Pierre Macherey, *Pour une théorie de la production littéraire* (Paris: La Découverte, 1966), 159.
36 Aleksandr Genis, *Vavilonskaia bashn'a: Iskusstvo nastoiaschego vremeni* (Moskva: Nezavisimaia gazeta, 1997), 4.
37 Stephen Hutchings and Anat Vernitskaia (eds), *Russian and Soviet Film Adaptations of Literature, 1900–2001: Screening the Word* (London: Routledge, 2005).
38 In his 500-page script, Nikolai Shestakov made an awkward attempt to compile both novels about Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and at the stage of script approval there existed three variants – about a treasure search, about the rescue of innocent Jim from death, and about Jim's flight from slavery. Frenkel chose the fourth option by fusing all three scripts into the seventy-nine-minute film, with all storylines around the central theme of slavery and race.
39 John MacKay, *True Songs of Freedom: Uncle Tom's Cabin in Russian Culture and Society* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 22.
40 Nadezhda Krupskaia, *Detskoe kommunisticheskoe dvizhenie: pionerskaia i komsomol'skaia rabota: Vneshkol'naia rabota s det'mi* (Moscow: Direkt-Media, 2014), 252. (in English: Children's communist movement: extracurricular activities of pioneers and young Communists with children).

41 The text that looms behind this 1936 adaptation of Twain's works is Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. With its notorious theme of racial benevolence, on the must-read list for Soviet children and very popular in its theatre versions, it was praised as the literary manifesto of anti-racism and a true representation of racial identities and experiences. Instead, modified after 'a heroic slave', George Harris from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* becomes a rebellious slave George, captured and punished as he acts on his own, with no attempts to seek help from white abolitionists.
42 Noël Carroll, *Beyond Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 187.
43 Anatolii Pristavkin, *Pervyi den' – poslednii den' tvoren'a* (Moscow: Ripol-Klassik, 2015), 134.
44 Gennadii Nemchinov, '1945 god. P'atnadtsatiletnii kapitan'. *Sovetskaia molodezh'*, 84:2002 (1946), https://periodika.lndb.lv/periodika2-viewer/#panel:pp|issue:595869|page:4 (accessed 14 January 2024).
45 F'odor Razzakov, *Svet pogasshih zvezd: l'udi, kotorye vsegda s nami* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2007), chapter on Vsevolod Larionov, www.litres.ru/book/fedor-razzakov/svet-pogasshih-zvezd-ludi-kotorye-vsegda-s-nami-179516/chitat-onlayn/ (accessed 14 January 2024).
46 Edvard Radzinskii, *Moia teatral'naia zhizn'* (Moskva: ACT, 2007). Chapter 'Lenkom v shestides'atyh', https://litportal.ru/avtory/edvard-radzinskiy/read/page/1/kniga-moya-teatralnaya-zhizn-497560.html (accessed 14 January 2024).
47 Georgii Andreevskii, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' Moskvy v stalinskuiu epohu: 1930–1940-e gody*, Glava 9, 'V sovetskoi shkole' (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiia, 2018), https://4italka.su/nauka_obrazovanie/istoriya/223681/fulltext.htm (accessed 14 January 2024).
48 Andreevskii, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' Moskvy*, Glava 9.
49 Ibid.
50 Simon Gikandi, 'Race and the Idea of the Aesthetic', *Michigan Quarterly Review*, 40:2 (2001), 318–50.
51 Brigid O'Keefe, 'The Racialization of Soviet Gypsies: Roma, Nationality Politics, and Socialist Transformation in Stalin's Soviet Union', in David Rainbow (ed.), *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context* (Montreal: McGill–Queen's University Press, 2019), 132–59.
52 Sheila Fitspatrik, *Stalinskie krest'ane: social'naia istoriia Sovetskoi Rossii v 30-e gody: derevnia* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia politicheskaia enciklopediia, 2001), 121.
53 Jean Lévesque, '"Part-Time Peasants": Labour Discipline, Collective Farm Life, and the Fate of Soviet Socialized Agriculture after the Second World War, 1945–1953' (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2003).
54 Serguei Alymov, 'Nesluchainoe selo: sovetskie etnografy i kolhozniki na puti ot starogo k novomu i obratno', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 1:101 (2010), S109–29, Неслучайное село: советские этнографы и колхозники на пути «от старого к новому» и обратно – Журнальный зал (gorky.media) (accessed 10 January 2024).

55 Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 115.
56 John Agnew, *Geopolitics: Re-visioning World Politics* (London: Routledge, 1998), 104.
57 Agnew, *Geopolitics*, 103.
58 Ranajit Guha, *A Rule of Property in Bengal: An Essay on the Idea of the Permanent Settlement* (Paris: Moulton and Co., 1963), 11.
59 John Agnew, *Place and Politics in Modern Italy* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 69.
60 Paul Gilroy, *Darker Than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 122.
61 E.g., a spectator's commentary 'I remember … how we cried feeling sorry for Maksimka and how proud we were for our sailors when they rescued him', in *Tol'a Bovykin: Chernokozhii Maksimka i ego sud'ba*, www.amarok-man.livejournal.com/5818808.html (accessed October 2022).
62 Vitalii Melik-Karamov, 'Chelovek u televizora', *Ogon'ok*, 18:4645 (2000), 15.
63 See Vera Tolz, 'Constructing Race, Ethnicity, and Nationhood in Imperial Russia: Issues and Misconceptions', in Rainbow (ed.), *Ideologies of Race*, 29–58.
64 Vera Tolz, 'Discourses of Race in Imperial Russia, 1830s–1914', in Nicolas Bancel, Thomas David, and Dominic Thomas (eds), *The Invention of Race: Scientific and Popular Representations* (London: Routledge, 2014), 133–44.
65 James Mark, 'Race', in James Mark and Paul Betts (eds), *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 233–4.
66 *Miklukho-Maklai. Reklama.* Sovexport fil'm 'Moscow'. Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1948.
67 The figure of Brandler, with his 'instinct of colonial masters', has a historical prototype – the anthropologist Otto Finsch, known for preparing German colonial seizures in New Guinea.
68 See Mary L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).
69 Peter Barta, 'Degenerate Europe: Africans, the French Quadrille and Russian Identity', in Véronique Jobert (ed.), *La Russie et l'Europe: autres et semblables* (Lyon: Site Ecole Normale Superieure-LSH, 2008), 130.
70 See, for example, Aleksandr D. El'kind, 'K antropologii negrov: dagomeitsy', *Russkii antropologicheskii zhurnal* (Moskva), 1 (1912). The text is available from A. D. El'kind, 'K antropologii negrov' (1912), *Russka'a rasova'a teori'a do 1917 g*. Sbornik original'nyh rabot russkih klassikov, red. V. B. Avdeev, V 2-h vyp (Moskva: FERI-B, 2004), Vyp. 2, S.435–46. (A. D. El'kind, 'Towards Anthropology of Negroes' (1912), *Russian Race Theory Before 1917*. Collection of original works of Russian classics, ed. V. B. Avdeev, 2 volumes (Moscow: FERI-B, 2004), Vol. 2, 435–46.)
71 Irina Novikova, 'Russian Blackamoors: From Grand-Manner Portraiture to *Alphabet in Pictures*', in Heike Raphael-Hernandez and Leigh Reiford (eds),

Migrating the Black Body: The African Diaspora and Visual Culture (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2017), 30–51.

72 Yohan Arnason, 'Sovetskaia model' kak forma globalizacii', *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, 4:90 (2013), 53–76.

73 Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Re-Staging the Past* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1980).

74 Arnason, 'Sovetskaia model".

75 Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 8.

76 I refer to Miglena S. Todorova's argument about distinguishing between race thinking and racism, conceived within Euro-American experiences, and socialist racialism operated within the socialist nations: Miglena S. Todorova, *Unequal Under Socialism: Race, Women, and Transnationalism in Bulgaria* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 16. The proposed dichotomy calls for 'novel paradigms that could capture the relationship between socialism, racialized and gendered thinking, and forced inclusion in-depth'. In my view, the proposed dichotomy allows us to eliminate the fact that socialist, and specifically Soviet, racialism had more complex historical-cultural genealogies of race thinking, generated in/across the racial (trans)national formations of colonial modernity, from the Americas to Asia. Sedimented and fluctuated in the cultural archives (e.g., literary canons and genres), knowledge production, popular imaginations, and communicative domains of socialist societies, these genealogies, while modified by ideological postulates and modes of representation, inflected socialist and Soviet racialist discourses and representations of race difference, whiteness, and non-whiteness.

9

‘With the help of the great Russian people’: the (invisible) whiteness of Soviet anti-colonialism and gender emancipation from Central Asia to Khartoum

Yulia Gradskova

In contrast to the racist theories produced in the ‘West’ that explicitly addressed differences in skin colour, Russian imperial politics did not speak the language of whiteness,[1] but differentiated the population along the lines of religion (‘inovertsy’) and ethnicity. Indeed, many non-Slavic people, particularly those in the Eastern part of the empire, were called ‘inorodtsy’.[2] This was an imperial term for people who did not belong to the Russian/Slavic majority, and were usually assumed to be non-Christian/Orthodox Christian. The unspoken but existing connections between Slavicness, Russianness, and the Orthodox Christianity evoked by ‘inorodtsy’ influenced Soviet thinking about racial divisions within a future socialist society. This happened despite the fact that the word ‘inorodtsy’, clearly indicating ‘Otherness’, was taken out of the lexicon of the ‘builders of socialism’.

Tsarist imperial politics had assumed that the multireligious and multilingual population of the empire could be at least partly Russified by spreading the Orthodox religion and Russian language.[3] Russified representatives of colonised and minority peoples could expect to receive some privileges of (white) Russianness – for example, being able to occupy administrative, military, and educational posts. Using Homi Bhabha’s discussion on colonial mimicry, it is possible to say that it was a Russian imperial version of ‘appropriating’ the Other and visualising power and discipline.[4] At the same time, Russian imperial managers aspired for Russia to become a modern empire.[5] The people in its Eastern provinces were expected to be civilised through modern schooling and hygienic education – practices that could be comparable to the civilising mission that white Western Europeans claimed to pioneer. This made the ‘inorodtsy’ of the Russian Empire comparable with the colonised people in other parts of the world: all of them had to learn a more modern way of life through communication with the (white) coloniser.[6]

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 outlawed the social and national hierarchies of the Tsarist Empire and vigorously condemned Russian colonialism and the politics of Russification. On the surface, this could be read as a challenge to the privileges of white imperial Russianness. Not least, the derogatory terms indicating inequality with respect to people belonging to different ethnic and religious groups were expected to disappear in the new socialist society. For example, the term 'inorodtsy' was already eliminated from public use in 1917, deemed incompatible with the new status of 'citizen of the Soviet republic'. The principle of equality and solidarity of the representatives of all the nations (internationalism) was declared to be one of the fundamental principles of the new state.

Nevertheless, Soviet affirmative politics towards national minorities were short-lived and quite contradictory in practice.[7] The hierarchies constructed around ethnic and religious differences continued to exist throughout the Soviet period. Despite the fact that representatives of different ethnic groups were encouraged to participate in governing institutions on different levels, the USSR was rife with inequalities between regions and inside various administrative, economic, political, and cultural structures.[8] Moreover, research on Soviet anti-colonialism, and its solidarities with both the civil rights movement in the United States and anti-colonial movements, has shown its lack of attention to race, a phenomenon that Maxim Matusevich defined as a 'colorblind internationalism'.[9] According to Holger Weiss, this blindness concerning race had generated, early on, conflicts with the Black workers' trade unions[10] in the Comintern debates of the 1920s; it was there that the 'class-before-race' approach was forcefully challenged – but ultimately retained by Moscow.[11]

It is the contention of this chapter that an examination of such inequalities and blind spots in the history of the Soviet Union can be enriched through the concept of white privilege. The pioneers of whiteness studies, such as Ruth Frankenberg and Richard Dyer, have already shown that this category often works through its invisibility and needs a special optics for detection.[12] According to Frankenberg, one of the effects of race privileges and the dominance of whiteness on white people themselves is the seeming normativity and structural invisibility of such privileges.[13] Steve Garner also suggested that the detection of whiteness and the exposition of its privileges can be 'a huge source of anxiety for individuals who consider themselves white',[14] and this anxiety makes whiteness particularly difficult to study.

The invisibility of whiteness poses central challenges for Soviet research too. The self-presentation of such politics as being based on principles of equality and progress does not easily allow researchers to expose these politics as fostering white privilege. Such a situation likely explains why, in spite of the growing number of publications about anti-Black racism in the

Soviet Union in different periods of its history,[15] whiteness still does not seem to have become a focus of special interest for researchers.[16] However, the revision of Soviet history from this perspective seems important, in particular, in view of the growth of racism in the post-Soviet space after 1991. As in other places, the privileges of whiteness were hidden behind claims and identities articulating humanity and civilisation. According to Dyer, 'there is no more powerful position than that of being "just" human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity.'[17] Because the Bolshevik modernisers set out to build a society for all working people, at least according to their ideology, it is possible to suppose that those who were expected to build such a society spoke for the 'commonality of humanity'. Thus, although the Soviets remained wedded to European ideas regarding economic and cultural modernisation, the connections between European culture and modernity, and colonial and racialised imaginaries or practice, were seldom interrogated.

In spite of obvious differences between the early Bolshevik rhetoric of class struggle and Western discourse on humanity, it is possible to find certain common points of departure for the discussion of Soviet whiteness. Ethnic belonging was not only fixed in citizens' passports; Soviet institutions, including those of the Communist Party, also followed certain 'invisible' rules with respect to ethnicity. To explore this, I will address how Soviet constructions and practice around look and appearance were a source of hierarchical privileges, and linked to the boundaries of European whiteness/non-whiteness. These distinctions would in turn map onto the belief in a certain 'European white male (and female) burden' to bring culture and civilisation to formerly colonised territories.

The chapter explores how and why race was commonly 'not seen' in Soviet society, alongside those international encounters where it more explicitly manifested itself.[18] Drawing on Ruth Frankenberg's work, I pay particular attention to 'locations, discourses and material relations to which the term whiteness applies'.[19] In particular, the contribution examines the interaction between the Soviet modernisation of its own peripheries after 1917 and the USSR's growing relationship with Africa and Asia from the 1950s onward. While Soviet relationships with the 'Third World' in general are already well studied,[20] the chapter takes a novel approach analysing the intersections between the national and the global in the context of gender and whiteness.

I discuss the changing patterns of the work against racism and colonialism of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), and in particular the role played by a civil servant from Soviet Uzbekistan, Zuhra Rahimbabaeva, who was nominated as the Soviet representative at the WIDF Secretariat in 1969. This history enables us to think across boundaries. As the second part of my title indicates, it is important to connect the whiteness in the local contexts with the global. The contribution links up the policies of

bringing culture to the 'backward' peripheries and peoples ('kulturnost') in Central Asia, Caucasus, and other non-Russian parts of the Soviet Union during the post-revolutionary period[21] to the Eastern Bloc's anti-colonial solidarity and assistance to African countries during the 1960s and 1970s – the latter interaction taking place in a world of racial struggle, in which the whiteness of the Soviet project was often made visible.

Gender as a racialising factor: whiteness in Soviet policies towards ethnic minority women

Soviet leaders attributed the construction of the novel communist society not only to industrialisation and to the development of Marxism–Leninism, but also to the transformation of everyday life.[22] Catriona Kelly has shown that the Soviet people were expected to learn new, more scientifically grounded, and progressive ways of working, cooking, and caring for their houses, bodies, and clothes.[23] During later periods, Soviet advice literature paid a lot of attention to the importance of the well-trained and healthy body of Soviet men and women, stressing among other things that clothes should follow hygiene recommendations and principles of good taste.

However, these seemingly universal principles of hygiene, beauty, and taste were overwhelmingly based on examples of European modernity and tied to a white Russian/Slavic appearance. Following the demand for ensuring that one's clothing and appearance were in line with modern proletarian culture, some publications openly criticised and attacked those fashions that did not correspond to the new ideas of culture and modernity. While the clothes of Russian peasants received some criticism, the bulk of the disparagement during the 1920s and the 1930s was reserved for the non-Russian and non-Slavic ways of dressing – in particular for garments that were seen as a part of the 'old' cultures of the native populations of the borderlands. Such garments were labelled as dangerous to health, non-sanitary, or simply useless. In many cases the representatives of the non-Russian people, especially women of national minorities, were described as not being used to hygiene and cleanliness, which allowed Russian majority women to be framed as more cultured and modern.[24]

The modern urban city style aspired to by the Bolsheviks corresponded to the fashion produced in white Europe, not in its colonies. For example, a pamphlet dedicated to the emancipation of Turkmen women stated that untidiness in clothing and appearance, and lack of hygiene, were negative qualities of Turkmen women.[25] Thus, while fighting 'backwardness' (attributed first of all to people living in former imperial borderlands) was presented as an important condition for the building of socialism everywhere, the white Russian and Slavic people were portrayed as less backward. This gave

them the privilege of becoming the avant-garde of the revolutionary transformation. However, Soviet reformers and educators were blind to the fact that new 'modern' looks and clothes were seen by both Russian and ethnic minority women not only as more in line with the city style, but also as part of the culture of those inhabiting the cities, the majority of whom in the 1920s and the 1930s were Russian and white Europeans.[26]

Women in the Muslim parts of the Soviet Union had to undergo particularly extensive transformations of their everyday lives and appearance, not least with respect to the fight against practices of seclusion and the use of the veil.[27] These politics were quite similar to the civilising politics realised by the Western countries, while feminist criticism of these policies has been comprehensive.[28] However, due to the difficulties of making such governing practices visible, Madina Tlostanova insisted on the need for using decolonial, feminist epistemology when studying the former colonial borderlands.[29] As research on Central Asia shows, the campaign there, at its peak – the mass unveiling of 1927 – was particularly violent and perceived locally as a continuation of Russian colonial politics.[30] During those years many women lost their lives. Still, even the women who started a 'new life' and changed their traditional clothes into 'modern' ones, corresponding to the ideal of whiteness, often continued to be looked upon as not fully white.

Women not belonging to the Slavic or European peoples were referred to by special titles like 'natsionalka', 'natsmenka',[31] or 'vostochnitsa' ('Oriental woman'[32]). Their lack of a full command of the Russian language made them easy to identify as 'different'.[33] With their non-Orthodox Christian names and some phenotypic characteristics like darker skin and hair colour, or eye shape, they were perceived as belonging to a diffuse and broad category of the Soviet 'Others', those who were distinct from the 'ordinary' (white) builders of Communism. Still, different from the scientific racist constructions of the theoreticians of the Western empires, skin colour itself was never made explicit in these invisible hierarchies – it was rather morals, habits, and religious laws (like Sharia) that defined difference, particularly when concerning women. However, the Bolsheviks mainly followed the Russian imperial tradition in prescribing low morals and backward habits to those with darker skin and Asian eye shapes.[34]

Anti-colonialism and anti-racism in the transnational advancement of women's rights (1940s–1950s)

'Race' and racial discrimination were never 'seen' or discussed in the context of the Soviet politics of 'kulturnost' ('making cultured'/'cultivation') and during the emancipation of minority women in Central Asia. It was left to

outsiders such as the Black Harlem intellectual Langston Hughes to imagine difference among the Soviet people in the terms of race; he referred to Uzbekistan as the place 'where the majority of coloured citizens lived'.[35] Indeed, race and racism were always elsewhere for the Soviets: the USSR's foreign policy condemned it as typical of the colonial and capitalist system, and the Soviets declared themselves the best friend of all people discriminated against on racial grounds.[36] In particular, the USSR supported the struggle of Black Americans[37] and condemned racial segregation in the United States. These policies continued during the Cold War. According to John Skrentny,[38] the firm Soviet position on the defence of the rights of African Americans in the Cold War context contributed to the success of the civil rights movement in the US.

The anti-racist and anti-colonialist stance also shaped the Soviet support of women's rights – as seen through the global activities of the WIDF. The Federation was created in November 1945 in Paris with the aim of protecting peace, mothers and children, and defending women's rights. However, researchers do not fully agree on the extent of its relationship with the Communist world. Francisca de Haan showed it to be an important organisation for women's rights and peace activism in general.[39] Others emphasise the strength of its ties to the Soviet Union as well as its importance for representing the interests of the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War.[40]

From the Federation's early days, the Soviet Union and the WIDF paid particular attention to the situation of women of colour. A special report describing the members of the American delegation to the WIDF's constitutive congress in Paris in 1945 related in depth the activism of several Black American female intellectuals who were expected to take part in the Congress.[41] In 1947, the WIDF wrote reports that were sent to the Soviet Central Committee, on racial discrimination in the United States and the promotion of the rights of Black women.[42] Another report contained a detailed description of the principles of the work of the WIDF commission on the situation of women in the colonial countries.[43]

The representation of Black women's experiences underlined the importance of race to the Soviets in so far as a commitment to anti-racism abroad demonstrated the superiority of the USSR over the United States or Western European imperial powers. The Federation's main periodical, *Women of the Whole World* (*Zhenshchiny mira*),[44] frequently focused on racial issues: in 1958, the journal issued a lengthy article about the Black South African women's march on Pretoria in 1956, and explained to its readers why apartheid was a dangerous social system for women.[45] Federation bulletins on human rights criticised apartheid too.[46] At the same time, the main focus of the work of the Federation, even at the height of the anti-colonial struggle, continued to be on the rights of women as mothers and workers: the Soviets

criticised those who focused on race ‘excessively’. The Federation itself continuously emphasised the importance of peace for women and insisted on the solidarity of all women and mothers regardless of their skin colour.[47]

Soviet representatives in the WIDF Secretariat tried (not always successfully) to influence the WIDF’s priorities, seeking to use it as an instrument for achieving foreign policy goals. They did it through the means of cadre politics at congresses and bureau meetings. Soviet delegates also cooperated with their allies from other state socialist countries and female representatives of the European and non-European communist parties in the WIDF leadership.[48] Furthermore, the Federation’s publications were often used to disseminate propaganda about the achievements of Soviet socialism and, in particular, the Soviet emancipation of women. Pieces on professional successes and happy motherhood included numerous images of women from the former imperial borderlands, in particular from Central Asia. Developing the Soviet domestic propaganda of the interwar era, Uzbek, Tajik, and other Central Asian women, and Muslim women more generally, were taken up as examples of the greatest change between the colonial ‘backward past’ and socialist modernity for an international audience. Images of the woman of the past, oppressed by religion, illiterate, and covered from head to toe, were contrasted with the presumably secular, well-educated women of Soviet Central Asian cities clothed in modern European styles.

In the 1960s and 1970s some African, Asian, Latin American, and Black American women had the opportunity to visit the former imperial borderlands of the USSR, particularly the Central Asian republics, as guests on trips organised by the WIDF’s Soviet member organisation. Here female anti-colonial activists could learn about new possibilities for education, work, and political participation of the emancipated Soviet women, including in the former ‘colonial periphery’. In 1959, the WIDF journal published an article by the French journalist Maria Theresa Gallo: ‘Today, a Woman is President of the Republic of Uzbekistan’.[49] The text compared the situation of women before the October Revolution with their present-day social roles and rights. A female minister in Uzbekistan’s government, Savekova, remembered the ‘old time’ when she was ‘married as millions of other young girls on the decision of her parents, and seeing her husband for the first time on the wedding day’.[50] Thus, together with the new universities and well-appointed streets, visitors to Soviet Central Asia could meet prominent political women, such as Savekova or Yadgar Nasriddinova, head of the Uzbekistan parliament,[51] who were well educated, active, and lacking any elements of ‘backward’ Muslim clothes. In practice, however, the role of such women was circumscribed by their peripheral and racial status. On the one hand, these women were part of the Soviet ‘nomenklatura’, the hierarchically organised political class that profited from the system and

made important decisions for the Soviet people. On the other, they continued to be seen as representatives of the Soviet 'national cadres' – the non-Russian part of the Soviet elite. They were not on fully equal grounds with their Russian counterparts, not least due to their presumed non-whiteness.

The WIDF, decolonisation, and the challenge to Soviet whiteness

Already in the late 1950s women's active participation in the anti-colonial struggle in Africa and Asia pressured the WIDF's leaders and its Soviet member organisation, the Committee of Soviet Women, to expand their internationalism. The WIDF and its Soviet representatives attempted to visit women's organisations in newly independent countries and to attend all of the important gatherings of the newly established non-European organisations dealing directly or indirectly with the rights of women. The latter included the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) and the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO). In spite of the interest in the WIDF from the newly founded women's organisations representing recently decolonised countries, these encounters did not always have the effect the WIDF expected. African and Asian women's demands often did not fit within the frames of the WIDF's ideological programmes based on the defence of peace and motherhood.

Moreover, the white Europeanness of the WIDF's top leaders started to constitute a problem for the Federation's continued anti-colonial struggle. Non-European anti-colonial activists associated whiteness not only with colonisers but also used it to explain the inequality they had experienced in previous contacts with white European feminists. For example, in 1959, the Soviet representative in the WIDF Secretariat noted that the members of the delegation of the Argentinian Communist Party attending the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Chinese Revolution in Beijing conveyed to the Argentinian representative in the WIDF that the Federation's leadership was too European (implying white): it should include more representatives from Asia and Africa in its governing bodies. According to them, such participation would improve the WIDF's international performance and image, which was too Eurocentric in its present form. In particular, the Argentinians stressed that 'the speech by Vaillant-Couturier[52] for the WIDF anniversary in China was the speech of a French woman, not one by the vice-president of the WIDF'.[53]

The problem of whiteness elicited more attention from the Soviet and WIDF's leaders in the context of the China–Soviet split of the early 1960s. It was during this period that the Chinese Communists situated the concept of 'proletarian world revolution' within an anti-racist and anti-imperialist

framework that went beyond its common Soviet-centred meaning of global class struggle.[54] The Chinese internationalist vision placed solidarity of non-European people at the centre and explicitly used racialised propaganda in their struggle with Moscow. It presented the Soviets as white and hence unable to lead a global coloured anti-colonial revolution.[55] According to the report of the Soviet representative at the WIDF Secretariat, at the AAPSO conference in Tanganyika (Tanzania) in 1963, the WIDF delegation and its Soviet representatives did not receive the attention they expected. With reference to the hostile activity of the Chinese delegation, the report indicated that some participants at this event could become convinced that 'the Russians could not understand and truly support the struggle of African people, because they are "white" and the Whites were always exploiting Africa and Asia'.[56] Many other leaders of newly decolonised countries, such as Algeria's Ahmed Ben Bella, did not agree with this simplified racialisation of the 'Soviets' as 'whites'.[57] Nevertheless, such accusations forced the Soviets and Eastern Europeans to think racially: how to defend the Eastern Bloc against such attacks?[58]

Decolonisation forced the WIDF to revise its politics of representation. Indian and other Asian women were sent to represent the WIDF at events in Africa. For example, a document from September 1963 shows that the WIDF Bureau decided to dispatch Naziha Dulami, a representative of Iraqi women, to the conference of African women that would take place in Liberia in 1964.[59] Likewise, the Soviets rethought their own representation in the WIDF. In the late 1960s, they turned to Zuhra Rahimbabaeva, an Uzbek woman, to be the Soviet representative at the WIDF headquarters in Berlin.

The Moscow Women's Congress organised by the WIDF in 1963 was an important arena in the confrontation between Chinese and Soviet delegations over decolonisation, peaceful coexistence, imperialism, and the work of women's organisations.[60] It was here that Zuhra Rahimbabaeva's position as a non-Slavic citizen was used to forge anti-colonial solidarity and to strengthen the Soviets' reputation in Africa and Asia. She greeted the Congress participants in the name of both Soviet women and women from Uzbekistan. She extended her greetings to the peoples of India, Ghana, Algeria, Indonesia, and other countries that had shaken off the 'shameful imperialist colonial system' and were building an independent future.[61] Compared to other white and Slavic Soviet women, Rahimbabaeva was able to convincingly join those women in the audience who had experienced suppression: 'We, women of Uzbekistan, with the example of our mothers, know very well how women live in the situation of colonial oppression.' Yet Rahimbabaeva also stressed the emancipatory role of those who once represented the Russian coloniser – it was 'with the help of the great Russian people' that 'the people of Uzbekistan could escape colonial exploitation and, together with people of the Soviet Union, build a new, free, and happy life'. The people of the

Soviet Union and of Uzbekistan continued to be presented in her speech as separate, but, at the same time, close to each other and acting together in the name of the future and of women's rights.

Rahimbabaeva followed a Soviet pattern established in the 1920s: she showcased for her international audience the achievements of Soviet Central Asia, which had overcome, through socialism, the 'backwardness' inflicted upon its peoples because of the status of former colony of the Russian Empire.[62] Generally speaking, the Soviet leadership was keen to advertise socialist progress in the region to support the USSR's leadership claim in a decolonising world.[63]

Similarly, Rahimbabaeva emphasised the liberating potential of Soviet modernity for the women participating in the WIDF Congress. The situation for women in Uzbekistan, according to Rahimbabaeva, had been transformed; before the Bolshevik revolution Uzbekistan had been a 'colony of tsarist Russia, economically backward, totally illiterate and where people did not have any rights'.[64] Formerly 'backward women' had been liberated thanks to the help from the Soviet centre. Additionally, she demonstrated not only that Uzbekistan had significantly industrialised and modernised, but also that it came to be actively involved outside Europe engaging in the developmental work that was usually seen as white people's mission. She noted that the 'industrial production of Uzbekistan's factories and plants is coming now to a number of states in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. More and more often it is possible to meet male and female specialists from our republic and other Soviet republics in these countries.'[65] It should be noted here that such belief that modernisation alone could eliminate all racial and civilisational hierarchies was typical in many newly independent countries during the 1960s.[66]

Rahimbabaeva's race was particularly effective as a selling point because she embraced the Soviet conception of anti-colonial liberation. Between 1969 and 1972, she worked at the WIDF headquarters in Berlin. As a Soviet representative, she often met African and Asian women, both in Europe and in their home countries. Addressing the participants at the seminar on education for African women organised by the WIDF in Khartoum, Sudan, in 1970, Rahimbabaeva praised the Soviet achievements of bringing culture and education to the native women of Central Asia. Uzbek women, she claimed, would soon overcome those civilisation hierarchies that had held them back, as a far greater percentage of them were now obtaining a higher level of education than in the West: 'It is interesting to note here that in the Uzbek Republic there are many times more students for every 10,000 of the population than in France, Italy and West Germany.'[67]

Rahimbabaeva fully endorsed the Bolshevik politics of attacking 'backward' traditions of secluding women, including veiling and fully covering their bodies in religious garb: 'Freed from the veil, the women showed an urgent

striving for knowledge and education.'[68] Rahimbabaeva's non-whiteness played a crucial role for an audience of African and Asian women in that it provided an authentic seal of approval to what was otherwise a frequently racially hierarchical Soviet modernisation project. Her visible non-Europeanness was no less important to her audience than the content of her talk: she herself embodied the revision of racial economic and social hierarchies. She was not alone in this: other Central Asian intellectuals, such as the Tajik Bobojan Gafurov, who became director of the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow, effectively demonstrated the possibility of minority uplift.

However, Rahimbabaeva's Asian distinctiveness had to be conjoined to a watertight commitment to the elite Soviet project. In the context of foreign policy, a person such as Rahimbabaeva could obtain the visibility she got only on the condition of her close conformity to Soviet norms and regulations. Not only did she have to become part of the Committee of Soviet Women and to use Russian for all her work-related communication, but she also 'had to learn to be Soviet'. She had to immerse herself in Soviet ideology, mastering the official discourse being a crucial condition for her success. A brief entry in the Soviet biographical dictionary stated that she was born in 1923 in Andizhan to the family of a civil servant. Since 1946, she had been a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After graduating from the Pedagogical University in Tashkent, Rahimbabaeva was dispatched to perform Soviet and party assignments by working with the Communist youth organisation and acting as the first deputy minister of culture of the Uzbek Republic (1950–51). Rahimbabaeva defended her dissertation in history that focused on the emancipation of women in Uzbekistan, and published in Russian a pamphlet dedicated to a similar topic in 1949. Between 1956 and 1963 (the year of the WIDF congress in Moscow), Rahimbabaeva worked as a secretary of the Central Committee of Uzbekistan's Communist Party.[69]

In order to undertake such a political career, Rahimbabaeva commonly publicly elevated the role of the European part of the Soviet Union as civiliser. She would criticise Islam and praise the Soviet efforts at emancipating the 'backward' Central Asian women with the help of the 'great Russian people'. Her speeches and publications in Russian and English did not leave space for a serious postcolonial discussion of the problematic nature of the Soviet emancipation of women in Central Asia[70] and, in particular, the tragic consequences of the anti-veil campaign of 1927. Rahimbabaeva had also to fit the standardised image of the 'Soviet female official'. As we can see in images from the WIDF's publications, she was clothed in a suit of neutral colours inspired by the contemporary norms of white European dress, and did not cover her hair or body with a scarf. Rahimbabaeva refrained from wearing colourful Uzbek clothes or any item that could suggest an Islamic

look. As was the case across Central Asia, Rahimbabaeva's name was partly Russified through the suffix 'eva'. It was only through conforming with the norms of the Soviet centre that Rahimbabaeva could obtain her privileged position. At the same time, dispatching her to work in Berlin during the period of decolonisation improved the Soviet Union's and WIDF's image before African and Asian women.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the politics of race and whiteness became more salient in the early 1960s with the second wave of decolonisation, Cold War competition with China, and the expansion of the USSR's interactions with African and Asian peoples. It was in that moment when the hybrid subjects resulting from the Soviet modernisation of Central Asia and other colonial borderlands became mobilised for solidarity work abroad. Zuhra Rahimbabaeva, a Soviet Uzbek woman dispatched to present Soviet achievements to women from Asia and Africa in the 1960s and the early 1970s, was emblematic of that change. She was the first non-white Soviet representative at the WIDF headquarters and her nomination can be seen as an indicator of the Soviet leadership's growing awareness that it needed to project an image that went beyond European whiteness.

Yet such a shift had its clear limitations. Rahimbabaeva faced the legacies of the Soviet approach to 'overcoming cultural backwardness' and the emancipation of women in the Soviet borderlands. The campaign for *kulturnost* was often connected to a blindness to race that can be detected, not least, in the image of the new Soviet woman whose look and attitude still reflected a Eurocentric white ideal. Rahimbabaeva had to work within this world, defending unambiguously the role of European Russia in developing the periphery, criticising Islam and its dress codes, and clothing herself in European styles.

It would only be two decades later that the differences between European and Asian Soviet republics with respect to the issues of race and gender were acknowledged and discussed publicly. Both lower living standards for women in Uzbekistan and 'cultural differences' among Soviet populations could not be openly brought up in the Soviet Union due to ideological censorship; these themes became the subject of scrutiny only during perestroika. For example, according to a publication of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences from 1987, the republic was lagging behind many other Soviet republics with respect to women's level of education and child welfare provision in the kindergartens,[71] as well as with respect to reproductive health.[72] The same publication also suggested that Uzbekistan's problems

with education and the involvement of women in productive labour were at least partly connected to 'family traditions'[73] and 'cultural specifics of the national traditions'.[74] According to Sergei Abashin, the Central Asian citizens of the Soviet Union could now be semi-officially addressed as 'Asians'. Their customs, habits, or practices different from those living in the European part of the Soviet Union were usually explained through their alleged lower level of social organisation (i.e., the legacy of feudalism) and culture.[75]

All of this indicated the growing visibility of whiteness and racialisation that would reach its heights with the works of Russian nationalists after the fall of the Soviet Union.[76] But, as this piece has demonstrated, ideologies of whiteness were operational even during the era of high decolonisation and anti-racist solidarity. However, Moscow's acknowledgement of the importance of race in the appointment of Central Asians to international positions was not accompanied by a wider critique of the racialised assumptions behind their projects of modernisation and *kulturnost*. In particular, a lack of understanding, and in some cases even open hostility to, the Black Lives Matter movement in the US and Europe during the spring of 2020 in Russia can be explained not least with the help of some historical aspects of the (underacknowledged) whiteness of this Soviet discourse of emancipation, aid, and modernisation.

Notes

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3 Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia, People and Empire* (London: HarperCollins, 1997), 367–97.
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7 Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).
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10 The union included workers from Africa, the Caribbean and the Americas.
11 See Holger Weiss, 'Negro Workers, Defend the Soviet Union and the Chinese Revolution!', *Viewpoint Magazine*, 1 February 2018, https://viewpointmag.com/2018/02/01/negro-workers-defend-soviet-union-chinese-revolution-international-trade-union-committee-negro-workers-political-rhetoric-negro-worker/ (accessed 16 April 2023); Holger Weiss, *Framing a Radical African Atlantic: African American Agency, West African Intellectuals, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 10.
12 Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (London: Routledge, 1993); Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (London: Routledge, 1997).
13 Frankenberg, *White Women*, 6.
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10

The whiteness of 'Christian Europe': the case of Hungary

Paul Hanebrink

In the summer of 2018, Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, spoke at a nationalist retreat in the central Romanian town of Băile Tuşnad (Hungarian: Tusnádfürdő) about Christianity and its place in European culture. Europe, he lamented, was in decline. Once upon a time, he said, ideals of family and nation had defined the life of Christian Europeans. But Europe had abandoned these traditions and become weak and rudderless. Across the continent, he said, families had become optional. Cosmopolitan fantasies about open borders and open societies were eroding national security. While Europeans professed their faith in the ideals of multiculturalism and tolerance, newcomers flooded into the continent, bringing with them religious and cultural values incompatible with Europe's Christian traditions. Soon, these migrants would replace Christian Europeans. Europe, Orbán warned, had to return to its traditions or be destroyed: 'Every European country has the right to defend its Christian culture and the right to reject the ideology of multiculturalism.'[1]

At first glance, Hungary seems an unlikely place for such a full-throated defence of 'Christian Europe'. By any social scientific measure, Hungarian society is thoroughly secularised. According to surveys done by the Pew Research Center, only 17 per cent of Hungarians attend worship services at least once a month.[2] And two-thirds of the country agreed that 'belief in God is not necessary to be moral and have good values'.[3] Despite these discouraging statistics, Orbán and the government that he leads insist that moral relativism is a cancer spread by their liberal enemies to destroy the nation and that an independent and sovereign Hungary can only rest on a bedrock of shared values derived from Christianity. They have even enshrined these ideas in the country's constitution, the 2011 Fundamental Law, which begins with a preamble that recognises 'the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood' and that declares the nation's pride in belonging to 'Christian Europe'.[4]

Orbán's views have not gone unchallenged. In 2019, a group of Methodist pastors led by the dissident pastor Gábor Iványi issued an 'Advent Statement' that declared Orbán's vision of nationalist 'Christian liberty' to be an 'exclusionary, hate-filled, and corrosive policy' that 'destroys the social fabric'.[5] Most recently, Pope Francis spoke in Slovakia after visiting Budapest for the 2021 Eucharistic Congress, saying that the cross was not a 'political symbol' nor a 'flag to wave, but the pure source of a new way of living' – words widely interpreted as criticism of Prime Minister Orbán and his aggressively vocal Christian politics. Nevertheless, Orbán's position remains popular, especially among older Hungarian voters in rural areas, who are also most likely to agree that a belief in God is 'morally necessary'.[6] Even more significant, it has attracted the attention of the international Right. Broadcasting from Budapest in August 2021, the xenophobic US television host Tucker Carlson lavished praise on Orbán for closing Hungary's borders in order to defend the nation's culture and pronounced Hungary to be 'a small country with a lot of lessons for the rest of us'.[7] Similarly, Steve Bannon, one-time advisor to President Donald Trump and now an informal advisor to different European nationalist parties, described Orbán as 'Trump before Trump' and 'the most significant guy on the scene right now'.[8]

Viktor Orbán's paeans to Christian Europe are indeed part of a wider trend. Across the continent, a spectrum of right-wing parties and movements call for a return to the Christian principles which they say have defined European civilisation. And, like Orbán, they understand this renewal of Christianity primarily in cultural or ideological terms, rather than as the signal for a new evangelising mission. In Slovenia, Prime Minister Janez Janša, a close Orbán ally until he was voted out of office in 2022, celebrated the Christian origins of the West, and believes that they are threatened by migrants coming from Africa and Asia. He also warned against the insidious power of vaguely defined anti-Christian ideologies like 'cultural Marxism', which he believed would eat away at national solidarity in his country and elsewhere.[9] In Poland, Jarosław Kaczyński, chairman of the ethnonationalist Law and Justice Party, justified his party's opposition in 2017 to European Union refugee resettlement policy by arguing that this would mean the 'liquidation of the civilization that grew out of Christianity'.[10] And in Germany, the far-right Alternative for Germany party insists that Germany's culture is manifested in the thousands of churches that dot the country's landscape, and has vowed to protect this inheritance 'in the culture war against the Islamisation of the West (*Abendland*), against the further Islamisation of Germany'.[11]

Europe's ethnonationalists use Christianity in each of these cases as a discursive weapon to define identities (European and national) and to police their boundaries. In the language of the European Right, 'Christian

Europe' stands for a society in which Muslims remain marginalised. It also conceals an obsession with race: imagining Christian Europe walled off against migrants from Asia and Africa suggests that 'native' Europeans can only ever be white. But Christian Europe is racially marked in another way as well. During the interwar era, calls in East-Central Europe for a vigorous Christian nationalism were directed not against Muslims, but against Jews. In Romania, an organisation called the National-Christian Defence League was a forerunner of the fascist Iron Guard movement. In Poland, the association of Jews with a host of secular evils – 'It is a fact', declared Cardinal August Hlond in 1936, 'that Jews are fighting with the Catholic Church' – helped to cement an alliance between the Polish Catholic Church and ethnonationalists that shaped the country's nationalist and antisemitic politics throughout the interwar years.[12] And in Slovakia, where Pope Francis recently condemned 'every form of anti-Semitism', the interwar Right also defined their nation as Christian and saw the country's Jews as outsiders.[13]

By describing migrants to Europe as a threat to Christian civilisation, Orbán recalls the long history of Christian nationalism in Hungary. At the end of World War I, when a defeated Hungary was rocked by revolution and forcibly partitioned, nationalists blamed Jewish revolutionaries for fomenting unrest and undermining national unity at a moment when neighbouring states were occupying historic Hungarian land. Hungary, they insisted, must return to the Christian national values on which the country had been founded. This uniquely Hungarian spin on the 'stab-in-the-back' myth was a recurring feature of the irredentism that dominated interwar Hungarian politics. It also fuelled legal and physical assaults against Hungary's Jews, from the violent White Terror of the early 1920s to the raft of anti-Jewish laws passed in the late 1930s and early 1940s, and inspired extremist fantasies of a racially pure 'Christian Hungary' that became deadly in 1944.[14] Of course, Orbán and his allies vociferously deny that twenty-first-century calls for 'the national-Christian order of ideas – this way of thinking, this approach – [to] regain its dominance not only in Hungary, but in all of Europe'[15] have anything to do with mid-twentieth-century genocide. They embrace conservative Jewish allies in Hungary and in Israel and insist that Jews and European Christians now have the same enemies. In 2020, Hungary's state secretary explained: 'If you see what Israel is doing with its borders vis-à-vis the Arab countries and the African migrants … they are defending their inhabitants from possible security threats. We are doing the same thing.'[16] This has not been much comfort to Hungary's beleaguered democratic activists, who see echoes of historic racism in the government's propaganda campaign against George Soros and 'his' international network of human rights NGOs.

The racial marking of Christian Europe as white and anti-Muslim in the imagination of the contemporary far right is strikingly similar to earlier and explicitly antisemitic conceptions of Christian Europe from the 1930s and 1940s. Is there a deep continuity between fears about a Jewish threat to Christian Europe in the last century and fears about the arrival of Muslim migrants from the Middle East and Africa in the present one? Or have changes in global politics – the collapse of Communism, the end of European empires, and debates about the future of the European project – scrambled the categories of religion and race in Europe, transforming the recurrent trope of Christian Europe into something new?

Christianity and race in Eastern Europe

Eastern Europe seems an unlikely place to look for linkages between Christianity and racialised ideas of whiteness. Debates about the 'possessive investment in whiteness', a notion devised by American scholar George Lipsitz to mean the economic and social advantages that racial hierarchies bestow on those identified as 'white', have been most salient in North America and Western Europe, societies profoundly shaped by legacies of – and, most crucially, the wealth accumulated through – the transatlantic slave trade or European overseas imperialism.[17] Among all the statues toppled by Eastern Europeans before and after 1989, there have been none of slave traders like the Bristol merchant Edward Colston. And the manor houses that still dot the Eastern European countryside are relics of the region's feudal past, built on the backs of the region's peasants and not from wealth produced by plundering India or creating plantation economies in the New World. Indeed, economic historians have described Eastern Europe's place in the world economy as semi-peripheral precisely because these patterns of global, transatlantic, and racialised wealth accumulation did not extend to the region. Moreover, nationalists across Eastern Europe have historically celebrated the emergence of their own nation-states from the rubble of the Habsburg, Ottoman, or Russian Empires as triumphs of anti-imperialist politics. Today, the region's Rightists ridicule Western liberals for being 'too sensitive' about questions of race. Their scorn is a product of their xenophobia. But it also reflects a sincere conviction that the burdens of an historical investment in whiteness lie somewhere else.

But 'whiteness' and its antithesis 'blackness', as discourses of difference with real effects in the world, both derive from systems of racial classification and concepts of racial hierarchy circulating globally since the Enlightenment.[18] The histories of race and freedom were intertwined in both France and the United States, two reference points for philosophical and

political reflections on liberty across Europe, and not only in the western half of the continent.[19] Indeed, historians of philosophy have uncovered a recurring preoccupation with notions of race and racial hierarchies in some of the Enlightenment-era thinkers whose writings on human freedom most influenced movements for political sovereignty and national independence in Eastern Europe and elsewhere.[20] By the twentieth century, well-developed transnational scientific discourses about race and eugenics connected experts in a network that spanned from California to Sweden to Romania.[21] Models of race-based policies abounded: Hitler admired anti-miscegenation laws in the United States;[22] Eastern European fascists wanted to copy Germany's Nuremberg Laws.

Eastern Europe may have occupied a peripheral place in the global economy, without the same social and economic investment in institutions of white supremacy visible either in European states with overseas empires or in the United States. But the region was in no way isolated from the advent and impact of racial thinking. Indeed, Ivan Kalmar has argued that the illiberal turn to racial politics in states like Hungary today can be understood as a resentment-filled response to Eastern Europe's semi-peripheral and semi-privileged position inside the exclusive club of European nations but consistently disadvantaged by Europe's neoliberal economic and cultural politics – a political 'mood' that Kalmar describes as one of feeling European and white, 'but not quite'.[23]

Unfortunately, histories of Christianity in Eastern Europe have ignored these insights. Within different national historiographies, scholars have reconstructed the role that Christian churches have played in forming ethnonational identities and dissected the rhetorical uses to which nationalist activists have put forms of Christian faith.[24] They have even found spaces in contested borderlands where Christian churches allowed their followers to remain nationally indifferent, at least for a time.[25] In addition, critical studies have shown how Christianity – its institutions, its leaders, and its believers – contributed to the rise of exclusionary politics across the region, whether against Jews everywhere or against Christian neighbours in places where nationalists mapped competing nationalising projects onto older confessional divides (e.g. between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism).[26] Much of this work has been explicitly transnational, replacing essentialising narratives of national identity with a perspective that highlights the intersection and interaction between religious nationalisms across the region. But it has largely remained isolated from attempts to write a global history of Eastern Europe, let alone one that tracks the circulation of globalised racial discourses.

When attempts were made to put Eastern European Christianity in a global comparative framework – in order to draw conclusions after 1989 about the power of religion to sustain civil societies and animate democratic

transition – the results left little room for the study of race or racial politics.[27] Nor can historians of religion in Eastern Europe agree whether or not the category of race is relevant to studying the role of Christianity in modern anti-Jewish politics. When antisemitism turned genocidal in the mid-twentieth century, many anti-fascist Christians insisted that secular racism (which they often called 'neo-paganism') was in fact a threat to their faith as well, and not a byproduct of it.[28] Ever since, efforts to draw distinctions between religion and race have been a central feature of debates about the history of modern antisemitism.

As a result, Eastern Europe has been largely absent from recent debates about the entanglement of Christianity with race and racial ideologies in global contexts. Historians of Europe's overseas empires have shown how Christian institutions and missionaries helped to sustain systems of racialised rule in the colonies even as they criticised so many other features of secular colonial administration.[29] The task of 'decolonizing Christianity' – critically confronting the complicity of European Christians in the brutality of empire and then actively allying with formerly colonised peoples in their struggles for sovereignty – was difficult work done in the face of opposition from many believers who remained committed to Europe's global hegemony.[30] Across the Atlantic, overwhelming support from white evangelical Christians in the United States for Donald Trump has reignited discussion of the historic role that Christians and their institutions played in building and sustaining systems of white supremacy in the United States.[31] To the north in Canada, new revelations about the forcible conversion and mistreatment of Indigenous children in religious-run residential schools have triggered painful conversations about Christian responsibility for cultural genocide in the New World.[32] On a more conceptual plane, the fundamental and wide-ranging reconsideration of secularism and its limits by scholars working in many different disciplines of the humanities have shown that modern religions, as forms of human interaction and sources of cultural meaning, have themselves been produced and shaped through interaction with secular politics – an insight with enormous implications for the study of Christianity within global systems of racial hierarchy.[33]

New global histories of Eastern Europe, inspired by the insights of postcolonial studies, offer opportunities to rethink the relationship between religion, nation, and race in the region. For example, scholars of the Habsburg monarchy increasingly understand the advent of Austro-Hungarian power in Bosnia after 1878 as a form of colonial rule shaped by orientalist ideas of the Muslim as backward Other and driven by the belief that imperialist practice was the hallmark of Europe's Great Powers.[34] After 1918, successor states across Southeast Europe adopted this understanding of statehood, casting Muslims as a disturbing relic of Ottoman occupation whose continued

presence challenged their sovereignty as nation-states.[35] During this period, local Muslims and secular authorities negotiated to define the boundaries of religion in matters such as the status of minorities, the permissible extent of religious law, and the possibilities for religious freedom.[36] At the same time, nationalists across the region acted as imperialists themselves, imagining a raft of colonising policies directed inwards and designed to manage ethnic and religious differences. Many of their efforts incorporated scientific knowledge about race, health and eugenics and translated them into new institutions that regulated social welfare and public hygiene along ethnic and religious lines.[37] In this way, transnational formations of race mediated the production of ethnonational identities in the region.[38]

Two themes in this growing body of literature can be starting points for situating the contemporary turn towards Christian Europe in Eastern Europe within a longer history of racial discourse in the region. First, critical histories of nationalisation in the region have highlighted how clearly nationalist activists understood the work of nation-state building as a form of internal colonisation, a 'civilising mission' designed to rule 'backward' ethnic minorities and border regions and to erect barriers against the influx of peoples and ideas deemed inferior or subversive.[39] In practice and in spirit, these efforts borrowed heavily from techniques of imperial rule pioneered in Europe's overseas empires and from the forms of classifying peoples that underpinned them. Second, recurring panics across the region over declining birth rates and levels of out-migration reveal how profoundly dreams of national sovereignty have depended on notions of demographic strength.[40] These anxieties have consistently led policymakers to look for solutions to the problems of population politics in theories of racial health and hygiene.

The persistence of these two themes across different historical eras from the late nineteenth century to the present offers an opportunity to track the transformation over time of ideas about race and racial hierarchy in the region and to specify the relationship between present-day fantasies of a 'white Europe' to older histories of racial politics in the region directed against Jews and other groups. In the final sections of this chapter, I consider these themes in the case of Hungary, in order to develop two interpretive threads that connect Orbán's vision of 'Christian democracy' to the Christian nationalist politics of the interwar years: the imagination of Christian Europe as a racialised space; and Christian nationalism as a form of biopolitics.

Christian Europe as racialised space

Literary historians consider *The Siege of Sziget* by the Hungarian-Croatian statesman, poet, and military leader Miklós Zrinyi to be the first epic poem

in the Hungarian language.[41] Published in 1651, the poem commemorates the bravery and Christian piety of Hungarian soldiers who had fought and died a century earlier defending the fortress at Szigetvár against overwhelming Ottoman force.[42] This work, along with Zrinyi's other writings, helped to shape a powerful and enduring trope in Hungarian political thought: Hungary was a bulwark of Christian Europe, charged by God with a special role in defending civilisation from the infidel 'Turk' even when the rest of Europe stood idly by. Over the centuries that followed, Hungarians nurtured the myth of their nation as European bulwark, imagining Hungary at the eastern edge of a cultural border between a 'civilised' Europe and a 'barbaric' Orient.[43] In this way, the history of Hungarian Christianity became proof of the country's historic place within the family of European nations.[44]

Zrinyi's poem suggested one way to position Hungary in a global cultural geography. Turanism, an orientalist ideology that proposed a common origin in Central Asia for the Magyars (Hungarians) and other ethnolinguistic groups including the Finns and Turks, offered another.[45] Beginning in the eighteenth century, Hungarian linguists and archaeologists tried to map the historic migration of the Magyars and their ethnic cousins from the Asian steppes westward towards Europe. Explorers like Sándor Kőrösi Csoma searched Tibet and Mongolia for traces of the first Hungarians. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the vision of Hungary's place within a larger family of Turkic peoples that spanned continents even inspired dreams for Hungarian expansion into Southeast Europe. Turanism acquired clear racial overtones by the turn of the twentieth century, since it endorsed visions of Magyars as a people essentially distinct from other European peoples and resistant to Western cultural influences. Nevertheless, some Jewish Hungarians tried to interpret Turanism as an argument for 'Magyar–Jewish symbiosis', finding meaningful parallels between the 'Eastern' origins of the Hungarians and the earliest historical accounts of the Jewish people in the Near East.[46] Indeed, many of late nineteenth-century Hungary's most prominent orientalists were Jewish Hungarians.

World War I and its aftermath fundamentally transformed these cultural geographies. In 1919, a defeated Hungary was convulsed first by a Bolshevik regime that ruled for three and a half months and then by an anti-Bolshevik White Terror that brutally targeted Leftists, workers, and Jews as national enemies. At the same time, the country lost some two-thirds of its historic territory to neighbouring states and found itself without allies in the new Wilsonian order of nation-states taking shape in the region.[47] In response to these new realities, Hungarian nationalists transformed older narratives of Christian Hungary to serve a new anti-Bolshevik and antisemitic politics.[48] Looking to the East, they declared the Soviet Union to be a breeding ground of subversive forces directed by Jewish revolutionaries and compared

Hungary's fierce battle against Bolshevism to the nation's earlier struggles against the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According to this analogy, an Islamic power (the Ottomans) had dealt Hungary its greatest historical defeat at Mohács in 1526; now, in the twentieth century, Bolshevism (a supposedly Jewish power) had nearly destroyed the country again. An especially forceful version of this argument came from Roman Catholic Bishop Ottokár Prohászka. He described Bolshevism as a 'Russian–Jewish invasion' similar to earlier invasions of Hungary. During the counter-revolution, he said, Hungarians had recognised the 'madness of racial imperialism' and stood fast against it.[49] By this logic, Christian Hungary was once again the bulwark of Europe. It stood at the border between the West and barbarism, charged across the centuries with the hard fate of defending European civilisation against vast forces intent on its destruction.

The ubiquity of Christian nationalist and 'Christian Europe' discourse during the interwar period did not erase Turanist fantasies about Hungarian origins in the East. Interwar Hungarian nationalists easily detached the ethnic designation 'Turk' from the religion of Islam, which they interpreted as a political ideology much like Communism. As a result, Turanism could still inspire visions of cultural exchange between Hungarians, Turks, and other ethnolinguistically related peoples in Asia. It also provided the symbols and origin myths to a host of extreme rightist and virulently antisemitic political organisations that called during the decades between the World Wars for the purification of Hungary from Jewish influence. But embracing Turanian symbolism did not give these groups a monopoly on racist discourse. After 1919, Hungary's Christian nationalists increasingly imagined the border between (Christian) European civilisation and (Judeo-Bolshevik) barbarism in racial terms. Indeed, the discourse of Christian nationalism was so powerful in Hungary in these years precisely because it resonated so strongly with conceptions of Europe as a space with racialised borders that were circulating in other countries.

The French writers Jérôme and Jean Tharaud provide an especially vivid example of this transnational exchange. The two visited Hungary in 1920 to learn why Bolshevik revolution had happened there and who was responsible. When they returned to France, they wrote a book called *Quand Israël est roi* (*When Israel is King*). They said that Jewish radicals in Hungary had risen from obscurity to the heights of power as the catastrophic result of immigration. Migrant Jews from the East, they argued, had invaded the country. They had taken advantage of the country's liberal political system in order to secure a foothold. Then they had conspired to replace Hungarians and Hungary's national culture with their own perverted system of anti-national and anti-Christian values. Their work had culminated in Hungary's

1919 Bolshevik revolution: 'On the banks of the Danube a new Jerusalem arose, sprung from the mind of Karl Marx and built by Jewish hands on ancient messianic thoughts.' The Tharauds gave the last word of their fictionalised travelogue to a nameless and imaginary Christian Hungarian, who summarised the argument of the book with a final, telling comparison. The Muslim Turks who had invaded Hungary in the 1500s, he declared, had been far less dangerous than Jews. In the final sentence of the book, the Hungarian witness concluded: 'The last onslaught of Asiatic peoples has crushed us!'[50]

War against the Soviet Union gave new urgency to this theme. When Hungary went to war with the Soviet Union alongside Germany in 1941, the far right immediately adapted their vision of Christian Hungary to the new circumstances. German and Hungarian propagandists collaborated on an exhibition designed to inspire popular support for an anti-Bolshevik crusade, grafting images of Hitler's war against the Judeo-Bolshevik colossus to the East on to an account of Hungary's own battle to defeat 'Jewish revolution' in 1919.[51] Hungary's far-right ideologues expanded on this idea in their own media. István Milotay, a leading pro-Nazi journalist, explained to his readers that the Soviet Union was a barbarous enemy poised to unleash a horde of savages across Europe's eastern borderlands. War in the East would determine the fate of 'Europe, human civilisation, Christianity, and the freedom of Christian nations'.[52] Defeat at the hands of the Jewish Bolshevik enemy would bring devastation more horrible in its 'apocalyptic foreign-ness and brutality' than the Mongol invasions of Europe in the thirteenth century. For the next three years, Milotay constantly described the racial danger that threatened to flood into Christian Hungary if the Soviet Union won the war. In his telling, an army of subhuman Asians commanded by Jewish Bolsheviks would lay waste to Europe and exterminate European civilisation. When the Red Army finally broke through the eastern Hungarian border in late 1944, he wrote simply: 'They are here.'[53] Before the war was even over, nightmares of 'Jewish revenge' shaped the way that Soviet occupation would be understood and remembered.

When Communists came to power after the war, they transformed the spatial imagination of Hungary in the world yet again. They banished the idea of Christian Hungary to the recesses of private life and reversed the valuation of East and West on which it was based. To the East after 1945 was the Soviet Union, the historically progressive power that had defeated fascism. To the West lay the forces of capitalist reaction. Communist activists also supplanted this East–West orientation with a new geographical orientation. Embracing the ideals of socialist internationalism, they imagined themselves in a global struggle for justice in solidarity with anti-colonial movements across the Global South. As they did, Europe receded in importance, becoming

just one place among many where the struggle for a socialist future would be fought.

By the 1970s, however, the idea of European civilisation had returned, as the authors of the path-breaking *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe* have argued.[54] Across Eastern Europe, dissidents and Party leaders turned their attentions back 'towards Europe'. As they looked for economic or moral support in the West, they distanced themselves from their former partners across the Global South. In the process, they revived old discourses of the continent as a bordered civilisational space, even as the threats that lurked across those cultural borders had changed in the years after 1945. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 sparked anxieties about political Islam across Western Europe and North America. Soon, they circulated in Eastern Europe as well. Throughout the Soviet bloc, 'the 1980s saw a revival of the idea of the struggle for a Christian Europe', positioned rhetorically against the spectre of Islamism in Iran and in the Balkans.[55]

After 1989, the political project of returning to Europe also brought new racialised regimes of mobility built on fantasies of unchecked movement within Europe along an East–West axis combined with greater controls of migration coming from the South. When Hungarians move from East to West seeking work, Orbán insists they are not migrants: 'For us, it is very important that we are not considered as migrants … We are the citizens of a state that belongs to the European Union who can take jobs anywhere freely within the European Union.'[56] But when tens of thousands of people fleeing political upheaval and poverty in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan journeyed north through the Balkans in 2015, Orbán condemned them as a migrant invasion that endangered Christian Europe and built a fence on the country's southern border to keep them out.

This contrast makes it plain that the Hungarian Right imagines Christian Europe as first and foremost a racialised space, and that Hungary is once again its bulwark. But the geographic orientation has changed. Orbán and his followers are obsessed today with the spectre of migrants from North Africa and the Middle East and not – as in 1919 – Jewish Bolsheviks bringing revolution from the ruins of the Russian Empire. Their vision of Christian Europe reflects a general abandonment of internationalist solidarity with the Global South that began during the late socialist period and that continues in today's fantasies of a new fortress Europe. Even if the echoes from the interwar era are vivid and striking, the most recent version of Christian nationalism came into being during the long transformation of 1989.

It is revealing that the late intellectual and former dissident György Konrád, celebrated in the West in the 1980s as a champion of liberal democracy and Western values and often an outspoken critic of Hungary's Fidesz government in his last years, wrote in 2016 about migration in terms completely identical

to those used by Viktor Orbán and his followers: as a flood 'growing like an epidemic' that would soon 'out-reproduce and subordinate Europeans to their culture'. So too did Imre Kertész, the Nobel Prize-winning author of *Fatelessness*, who announced in his last collection of essays: 'I'd like to talk about how Muslims are flooding, invading, and destroying Europe.'[57] Both writers were Holocaust survivors who had written powerfully about Hungary's Jewish past and about the Holocaust as a crime against Europe's humanistic values. For both, however, the ideal of European civilisation which they cherished and defended proved entirely compatible with fear-mongering about the dangers that migrants from other continents posed to that very idea of Europe. Their comments suggest how widespread a racialised vision of Europe and its borders has become and how easily even the liberal and humanistic injunction to remember the Holocaust can be assimilated into it.[58] They also reflect another feature of the politics driving the new twenty-first-century Christian nationalism – fears about immigration are closely connected to anxieties about declining birth rates.

Christian nationalism as biopolitics

Present-day concerns about the Hungarian nation's health and numerical size have their origins in late nineteenth-century debates about the role that eugenic thinking could play in national policy. As social reformers and national activists contemplated the modernisation of the country, they worried that widespread poverty in cities and in the countryside might result in the physical and mental degeneration of the national community. They also dreamed of the economic and military power that Hungary might exercise if its people were physically healthy and growing in numbers. By turning their attention to issues as diverse as protection of the family, child welfare, public health, and the living conditions of workers and peasants, they imagined new and expanding ways for state authorities to intervene in once-private matters like birth, marriage, and child-rearing. Hungary's eugenic experts also connected their domestic concerns to debates that their counterparts in other countries were having about the very same issues, looking abroad for inspiration and for models that might be adapted to fit local Hungarian needs. Indeed, the most internationally renowned Hungarian eugenicist, Géza Hoffmann, devoted a book-length study to eugenic practice in the United States, surveying the policies devised in states like California and Indiana to prevent race mixing, sterilise the unfit, and contain the circulation of undesirable genetic traits. 'America', Hoffmann concluded, 'is in no way radical'.[59]

World War I and its aftermath transformed demographic thinking in Hungary. When the Paris peace settlement reduced Hungary from a regional power to a small Central European country, 'the eugenic dream of a healthy and numerically strong Hungarian nation turned into a nightmare'.[60] During the interwar era, Hungarian eugenicists searched for ways to forestall further catastrophic decline. To hasten the restoration of Greater Hungary, they proposed new policies on issues ranging from population development to social welfare to disease prevention – all motivated by an overarching desire to increase the biological quantity and quality of ethnically 'pure' Hungarians. Their work fit easily into the era's Christian nationalist politics and its ubiquitous calls for the resurrection of Hungary. In some ways, this affinity was purely rhetorical: many of Hungary's eugenic experts had nothing but contempt for organised religion but were happy to affix the label 'Christian national' to their proposals if it furthered their goals. However, schemes to expand public oversight of family and natality matters inevitably relied on the cooperation of state and religious health and welfare professionals. This reality made Hungary's Christian churches crucial partners in any plan to improve the social and biological health of the 'Christian' Hungarian nation.

By the 1930s, racial antisemitism had also become a significant element in the vision of Hungary's biopolitical experts, who reasoned that preventing racial mixing between Christian Hungarians and Jews was just as important to the national future as promoting higher birth rates or fighting venereal disease. During the war, bodies like the Hungarian Institute of National Biology supported these initiatives with mountains of research on the biological health of the Hungarian nation. One member of the institute described the ideals that drove their work: 'The foundation of our rebirth and our future is not a population policy based on the chimera of assimilation but one based on the demographic growth of racially pure Hungarians.'[61] Pronatalist policies to promote more and bigger families of racially healthy Hungarians served this goal; so too did a 1941 racial hygiene law that forbade marriage between Christians and Jews on the grounds that it was miscegenation. Medical professionals also favoured using this law to prohibit intermarriage between individuals identified as racially Hungarian and those identified as 'Gypsy' or Roma, a group long understood in Hungarian cultural discourse as an inferior ethnic outsider. Some even wanted to protect Hungarian racial health by physically separating Hungarians and Roma on the grounds that the Roma were biologically inferior, work-shy, and prone to spread diseases, especially venereal disease.[62]

After they came to power, Hungary's Communists recast fears of demographic decline on different ideological lines. At first, they emphasised women's

duties as workers in the new socialist society. But they soon abandoned this in the 1960s, as evidence mounted of low fertility rates, in favour of promoting motherhood. During the last decades of socialism, the Hungarian government instituted generous maternity leaves, offered incentives to large families, and placed new restrictions on abortion. The Communist regime also refashioned policy towards the Roma, abandoning wartime rhetoric calling for their segregation in favour of new child protection schemes designed to put Roma children in the care of state institutions if case workers decided their mothers were sexually promiscuous or morally unfit. Welfare professionals maintained that this approach would help to assimilate Hungary's Roma into a society of productive workers; it also reinforced long-standing prejudices that the Roma were work-shy, that Roma women were sexually and morally deviant, and that higher birth rates were only desirable when they occurred among better-off and better-educated (and thus 'non-Roma') Hungarians.[63]

Of course, none of this stopped the Hungarian Right from condemning Communism as anti-family after 1989 and vowing to restore traditional 'Christian' (i.e., pro-family) values in society.[64] But even the most zealous nationalist propaganda has done little to halt downward demographic trends. Today, Hungary ranks in the bottom 10 per cent in global birth rates.[65] European Union population studies predict that the Hungarian population will decline 11 per cent by 2080. Economic dislocation has also had profound effects. Since 2008, some 1 million Hungarians have emigrated.[66]

Faced with statistics like these, Orbán has taken up the legacy of Christian national biopolitics and made it central to his government's policies. Hungary's future, he insists, must rest on timeless Christian values of family and nation. Without them, Hungarians face a bleak and inevitable demographic winter. With great fanfare, his government has produced a number of (largely unrealised) plans to increase Hungary's population by encouraging large families, idealising Hungarian mothers, and increasing fertility. But the rationale behind them intentionally blurs the line between cultural and biological or racial difference. Speaking at a 2019 national demographic summit, Orbán argued that Hungary's demographic question cannot be solved through migration. Welcoming migrants from the Global South into Christian Europe can only end in the suicide of 'population replacement'. He went on: 'A national community can disappear if there are no families and children … it's not hard for a nation like the Hungarian or the Czech or the Serb to see that if bad demographic trends persist, sooner or later the last person will have to turn out the lights'.[67] Hungary would not become great again by welcoming others. Assimilation was once again a chimera, just as it had been in the 1930s. The nation must produce more Hungarians, or else it would die.

These views are not Viktor Orbán's alone. His categorical rejection of immigration as national suicide, even as out-migration by Hungarians to Western Europe continues unabated, reflects a racialised vision of European identity shared by far-right intellectuals and activists across the continent, from the French writer Renaud Camus, notorious for his theories about the ongoing 'Great Replacement' of white Europeans by immigrants from Europe's former colonies, to self-styled identitarians, who dream of a 'Fortress Europe' able to defend itself against a rising tide of non-white newcomers.[68] It is telling that Camus wrote an open letter to Orbán in 2018 thanking him for using the phrase 'great replacement' and praising him for saying everything that Western Europeans 'exposed to invasion, foreign colonization, and ethnic flooding' would have wanted to hear.[69] Camus, in turn, has been praised in the right-wing Hungarian media as one of the most important thinkers in contemporary Europe.[70] When Orbán asks, 'Will Europe remain the continent of Europeans? Will Hungary remain the country of Hungarians?', his questions have a subtext.[71] Allies close to him speak more clearly. Zsolt Bayer, a far-right media personality and long-time Orbán associate, has argued that Western leaders and the mainstream liberal media favour migrants so completely that 'the self-defence of the European Christian white man has become impossible'.[72]

Hungarian officials have also found ideological allies in the institutional network of the global Right. At the 2019 meeting of the World Congress of Families (WCF) in Verona, Hungary's State Secretary for Family and Youth Affairs echoed her prime minister in casting Christianity as a defence against demographic extinction: 'Europe will slowly commit suicide if it renounces Christian culture and the support of young people.'[73] The choice of venue is revealing. Born in the 1990s from contacts between conservative white American evangelical Christians and Russian sociologists concerned about demographic decline in their country after the end of Communism, the WCF has become an umbrella organisation for the Christian Right around the world. The group promotes the idea of the 'natural family' – large; defined by strictly adhered-to traditional gender roles; and opposed to homosexuality, abortion, feminism, or women in the workplace – as a bulwark against the apocalypse of humanity.[74] The global ethos of the WCF reflects an idea common on the European far right: humanity consists of discrete nations which must be kept distinct and apart for all to thrive. This vision allows the Congress to reach conservative African Christians, while also functioning as a gathering place for European Rightists concerned about the threat that migration poses to the future of the West as an imagined 'white' space. As journalist Masha Gessen writes, the Europeans who regularly attend Congress events share a fear of 'humanity's impending death [that] is fueled by racial panic'.[75] Hungary sent its first representative to the World

Congress of Families in 2014 and has attended every year since. In 2017, it hosted the event in Budapest.

Hopes for the rebirth of Christian Hungary have always concealed racial anxieties. Just like their ideological forebears in the 1930s, Orbán-era Rightists see population growth as a sign of national greatness and demographic decline as a harbinger of the nation's death. And Hungarian nationalists today are just as wary of assimilation as the original Christian nationalists were after World War I. Only the birth of more 'indigenous' or ethnically pure Hungarians can ensure the survival of the nation's essential identity. However, Hungary's current demographic crisis does not stem from the interwar decades. It began in the late socialist era and accelerated because of the economic dislocations of the 1990s and 2000s.

The face of Christian Hungary's enemy has also changed. During the interwar period, Jews played a double role in the ideology of Christian-national biopolitics: their 'Jewish spirit' ('zsidószellem') inspired the social and cultural trends undermining the nation's fertility while Jews as a people threatened to dilute national health and strength through intermixing. Today, dangerous (non-white) immigrants can come from many places and peoples south and east of Europe, while the forces accused of driving Hungary's falling birth rates have other and more abstract names, like globalism, liberal cosmopolitanism, cultural Marxism, and increasingly 'gender ideology' or 'LGBT ideology'. These new phantasms share more with older paranoid fears of Jewish conspiracy than meets the eye.[76] But the full weight of the legal persecution and physical violence they inspire falls squarely on Hungary's LGBT community, and not on Jewish Hungarians.

Conclusion

The Hungarian Right uses the language of Christian identity today in the same way that their ideological forerunners did between the two wars: to define Europe (and Hungary within it) as a racially bounded space and to express their anxieties that assimilation, cultural mixing, and immigration would bring about the nation's death. Invoking the symbols and rhetoric of an earlier age allows the Orbán regime to pass off its present-day hostility to democratic norms as historically rooted tradition that must be protected from the overbearing interventions of liberal elites in Brussels. But the racial anxieties that fuel Christian national xenophobia today arise from very different sources than those on which interwar Christian Hungary was imagined. Amid the welter of apocalyptic fears that circulate across the global Right today, the language of Christian nationalism has a protean

quality, always adapting to the racial politics of the moment. Once it was exclusively an antisemitic discourse. Now, it has become something else as well. For the Hungarian Right today, Christian Europe and the Christian nation are, above all, white.

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11

Alien at home, white overseas: the Polish interwar Maritime and Colonial League and the 'Jewish Question'

Marta Grzechnik

> It is in such circumstances that the question must be resolved of the resettlement of some 6,000,000 Jews from countries where undesirable antisemitism grows out of an excess of Jewish population, to such areas where the Jews could become a useful element instead of a disruptive one.[1]

The aim of this chapter is to discuss how a Polish interwar organisation called the Maritime and Colonial League (Liga Morska i Kolonialna (LMiK)) racialised and othered the Polish Jews, especially in relation to ethnic Poles and the LMiK's own colonial programme – the dynamics which the quote above, printed in one of the League's journals, encapsulates. It is impossible to tackle the broad issues of Polish interwar antisemitism, policies towards the Jewish minority, or the Polish government's colonial projects – in general and with regard to the Jews in particular[2] – in such a short chapter. Nevertheless, by focusing specifically on the LMiK's rhetoric, I hope to contribute to the entangled history of antisemitism, and to a more nuanced understanding of its relation to emigration and colonial projects in interwar Eastern Europe.[3]

Interwar Poland was a country of newly regained statehood and numerous problems. One was tensions between ethnic Poles and the numerous ethnic minorities, Jews being the second largest.[4] Alongside other Eastern European countries, Poland had been obliged to sign the so-called Minority Treaties, which granted international bodies the right to interfere in domestic minority politics – creating resentment and fear that it constituted a precedent for further intervention. It was also not lost on anyone that none of the Western states, not even Germany, were expected to sign equivalent treaties.[5] This was but one – albeit quite telling – sign that Eastern Europeans' 'Europeanness' was fragile and conditional. Far from being enthusiastically welcomed into the 'club' of European nations, the region's newly independent states were often met with suspicion and lack of faith in their ability to survive in the long run.[6] New Eastern Europe elites were quick to see connections to the Mandate system of oversight applied after World War I to the non-white

peoples in Western Europe's colonies in Africa and Asia. In fact, South African statesman Jan Smuts, who deemed Slavs racially inferior to the Germanic peoples and unfit to govern themselves, had suggested that Mandates, not independent states, should be established in Eastern Europe as well.[7] This increased sensitivity to the inequality: Eastern Europeans were not seen as fully white Europeans. If 'Europeanness', and thus whiteness, were conditional, they were eager to fulfil what they perceived as the required conditions.

The LMiK was established in 1930 in place of an earlier Maritime and River League. It was interwar Poland's second largest mass organisation, reaching 992,780 members on 1 June 1939.[8] The LMiK's official programme from 1933 mentioned three aims: making full use of Poland's access to the Baltic Sea; connecting the whole of Poland with the sea via waterways; and 'acquiring territories for the free expansion of thousands of Polish citizens leaving the country every year, binding them to the State with economic ties, obliging them to further productive work for the Nation, and not, like today, for foreign nations and countries'.[9] This last aim was already apparent in the 1920s, before the League started explicitly calling itself 'colonial'. It was seen as an answer to Poland's high population growth – comparable only to Italy's and the USSR's in Europe at that time – and the massive overpopulation in the countryside, resulting in high numbers of landless peasants, who, in turn, migrated to towns and cities. Colonies were thus to be 'natural' outlets for the country's surplus population. In February 1925, Julian Rummel, promotor of Polish maritime policy and president of the LMiK's Warsaw division, wrote in the LMiK journal *Morze* (*Sea*) about emigration as a 'necessary evil': since it could not be stopped, it should be used in the interests of the nation, by directing emigrants to territories where Poland had economic connections.[10]

'Human dumping', as Tara Zahra called it, had been used already in the nineteenth century. The British and French Empires had exported 'undesirable' or 'surplus' citizens, e.g. convicts sent to penal colonies, and later orphans and single women.[11] After World War I, with the rise of nationalisms and nation-states, the focus of this process shifted from issues of class, gender, and occupation to ethnicity. In countries such as Poland and Hungary, emigration came to be seen as a 'weapon in a nationalist demographic struggle.'[12] Roman Dmowski's National Democracy/National Party, interwar Poland's main right-wing party, had never hesitated to use anti-Jewish rhetoric and political antisemitism in its programme since its foundation before World War I.[13] After 1937, this rhetoric was also openly embraced by the Camp of National Unity (Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego (OZON)), a new political formation of the ruling Sanacja regime.[14] Polish governments up until the mid-1930s did not pursue colonial policies, but afterwards

started actively working for ethnically driven emigration in the international arena. On 5 and 6 October 1936, two Polish representatives at the League of Nations – Adam Rode, the deputy minister of industry and trade, and Tytus Komarnicki, Poland's delegate to the League of Nations – for the first time presented the matter during the General Assembly. They framed it in the context of the discussion of freedom of trade and emigration, and the problem of overpopulation in Poland in general. The Polish authorities tried to put particular pressure on the British government to enable Palestine to receive as many Polish Jews as possible.[15]

The LMiK came to play a major role promoting the emigration of Polish Jews domestically. It had enjoyed close ties with the ruling circles: its director, General Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, had been one of Józef Piłsudski's collaborators; many other prominent members were officers in the army and members of both chambers of the parliament. Thus, it was easy for LMiK's rhetoric to inform discussions at the highest levels, and it appeared in parliamentary discussions. The League also had means of appealing to the public, for example through its journals, especially *Morze/Morze i kolonie* (*Sea/Sea and Colonies*). But it was not until the mid-1930s that their arguments over emigration moved from questions of class – concentrating on landless peasants and the unemployed – to ethnicity.

Alien at home

In 1936, the LMiK first explicitly identified Jews as 'surplus population' in its publications.[16] According to statistical data published in the LMiK's *Informator morski i kolonialny* (*Sea and Colonial Factbook*) in 1934, the number of Jews in Poland was 3,898,431, making them the country's third largest ethnic group (after Poles and Ukrainians) and 7.8 per cent of the population.[17] Three years later, in a lengthy article in *Sprawy morskie i kolonialne* (*Maritime and colonial matters*), LMiK's quarterly with scientific ambitions, the eminent geographer Stanisław Pawłowski analysed the 'Jews' distribution on Earth', using extensive numerical data, tables and maps. In absolute numbers, he wrote, the countries with the biggest population of Jews were the United States (4.2 million), the USSR (3.5 million), and Poland (3.2 million); in relative numbers to the 'native' population – Palestine, Tangier (around 30 per cent each), Yemen, and Poland (around 10 per cent each).[18] Pawłowski commented that these numbers meant that Poland had an especially high relative number of Jews, and for that reason the 'Jewish Question' was so important. In countries and territories of much greater geographical area and with populations of other ethnic origins (such as the US, the USSR, Australia, and territories in Africa and South America), the

'question' was far less pronounced, he argued.[19] Pawłowski concluded that 'Poland [was] the only country on Earth from which the necessity of Jewish emigration is obvious.'[20] He advocated for 75,000–80,000 Jewish emigrants from Poland per year, more than double the country's projected annual Jewish population growth.[21]

However, the 'problem' of the Jewish population was not only its size. It was also its 'faulty employment structure'.[22] Jews dominated certain types of occupations, which were usually connected with town and city, especially trade. Senator Jan Dębski, one of the leaders of the LMiK, and editor of *Sprawy morskie i kolonialne*, argued during a parliamentary discussion in February 1939:

> The Jews must understand that they need to prepare themselves for the role of settlers. An emigrant who is a merchant, pedlar, even craftsman – and this is the occupational structure of Jews today – will not be welcomed by anyone. Jews must prepare for the type of work for which Polish farmer is the model, who in hard toil reclaimed the Brazilian and Argentinian forests.[23]

Yet were Jews even capable of such transformation? Assuming a racial determinism typical of contemporaneous anthropology, different population groups were perceived as possessing certain biologically determined features, which dictated their characters and talents, and made them suited (or not) for certain environments and occupations.[24] In the case of Jews, it was doubtful whether their racially determined features made them capable of farming life in the countryside, or hard physical labour in general. This was a problem since territories of potential Jewish immigration, including Palestine, but also Africa, were not urbanised, and they needed to first be cultivated. Therefore, the settling of Jews in the colonies required 'abandoning the towns, in which [Jewish society] had concentrated for hundreds of years – and returning to the deepest source of each nation's life: the land',[25] and 'the formation of the Jewish farming stratum', which, allegedly, was 'especially difficult in places where the Jew is forced to undertake great physical effort, that is where he has to become a real farmer'.[26]

Understanding that Jewish emigration could only happen in rural or uncultivated territories, the League's publicists generally argued that the Jewish population's urban character was not impossible to overcome. Pawłowski, for example, discussed extensively Jews' racial features, providing various examples of Jewish settlement in non-urban areas in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.[27] An author writing under the pseudonym Lemanus – who dealt with the 'Jewish Question' in *Morze* in the 1930s – argued that it was actually easier to transform Jews into farmers/settlers in the colonies than in Europe, as the basic physical labour was performed by locals in the colonies anyway. Interestingly, he also added that it was the Polish Jews

who were especially capable of this transformation, 'for only Polish Jews have the sufficient physical and psychological resilience. Only Polish Jews have a working class, and only in Poland do they learn to farm'[28] (this of course contradicted the arguments about the 'faulty' urban occupational structure of Jews). Therefore, the settlement of Palestine or any other major centre of Jewish immigration could not succeed without Polish Jews.[29]

The Polish Jews' 'faulty' occupational structure was also seen as the reason why they should emigrate: to make space for ethnic Poles. To quote General Stanisław Kwaśniewski, the director of the LMiK in 1936–39: Poland was the country 'more than any other suffering from an excess of Jewish population, the nation living in our country in great part off industry and trade, and therefore – to the detriment of the Polish nation'.[30] The argument was this: because of the overpopulation in the countryside, more and more Poles were moving to towns and cities, seeking employment in typically urban occupations, such as trade, and therefore pushing Jews out of them. This was framed in terms of a force of nature, a natural evolution that should not – and could not – be stopped. It was a consequence of a 'deep transformation, occurring with the unrelenting force of a historical process, in the structure of population and economy, and the psyche of the Polish Nation', as Lemanus put it.[31] Such arguments were also used in parliamentary discussions. The deputy speaker of the Sejm (the lower chamber of the Polish parliament) and a member of the LMiK's Board, Leon Surzyński, declared during a discussion on the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that 'the actual and only source of the [Jewish] problem is the historical process consisting of the Polish peasant from the overpopulated countryside striving, by natural evolution, to take his place in trade and crafts in small towns and cities'.[32]

For the LMiK and other actors, this 'natural evolution' was also connected to their vision of Poles evolving from a land-based, passive nation of peasants into an active nation of seafarers: a social base for 'Polska mocarstwowa' – Poland as a (colonial) power. This evolution might enable Poles to throw off the seeming conditionality of their Europeanness. They were on their way to becoming the most developed kinds of Europeans: proactive and progressive explorers and colonisers of every continent, and pursuers of scientific and technological progress. Lemanus continued:

> Deep transformations are taking shape in our society before our very eyes: within one generation a nation of farmers has been able to give birth to sailors, and the Polish flag has reached every continent; within one generation the Polish peasant, bound – it seemed – for ever only with the land, began migration from overpopulated countryside, not to the Brazilian forest any more, but to Polish towns, in order to become craftsman, trader, inhabitant of towns hitherto dominated by the Jewish element.[33]

Jews in this vision were swept aside in the development of the Polish nation towards its rightful place: their striving to be recognised as fully white Europeans. Underlining the 'natural' dimension of this process made it appear as if no ill will was involved, and no one could be blamed. How could the Polish state be accused of antisemitism in its Jewish emigration policy, one of the authors asked, when it was not even able to secure work for Poles?[34]

This othered the Jews as a separate group: the project to transform the Polish society into a truly European nation did not include them – they were in fact an obstacle in realising this project. This idea of the Jews' otherness – even non-Europeanness – was of course not an invention of the LMiK, but had had a long tradition in European, including Polish, societies. In some cases it even allowed them to be quite explicitly painted in the same light as 'primitives' of colonised lands; for example, in 1934–35, the writer, poet, and activist Wanda Melcer (1896–1972) wrote a six-article series about the Warsaw Jewish community in the popular weekly *Wiadomości Literackie*, which she called 'Czarny Ląd – Warszawa' ('The Black Continent – Warsaw'). The phrase 'Black Continent' was used as a synonym for backwardness and lack of civilisation, so implicitly understood that the author did not even elaborate on it. As such, it served to reinforce the criticism of poverty, backwardness, social and gender inequality that Melcer perceived in the Warsaw Jewish community and described in her reportage: it was a sort of Africa inside Warsaw, a shameful spot on the capital. But the title also marked Warsaw Jews as alien, non-white, and non-European. She described Jewish customs (such as circumcision, ritual slaughter, and women's ritual immersion in mikveh after menstruation[35]) as alien, sometimes with horror and disgust, deeming them 'customs brought from the darkness of antiquity', 'ossified, fossilised in their forms'.[36] Similarly, in the LMiK rhetoric, the Jews' exclusion from the Polish modernising project implicitly meant that they did not fulfil the conditions which could make them European.

White overseas

According to the LMiK, the Jews' route to 'whiteness' lay elsewhere: overseas. In the colonies they might become competitors with other European nationalities, but equally, in a world in which Western dominance was being threatened by Japanese expansion and the 'rise of the East', they could become defenders of a white world order.[37] For that reason, when commenting on some countries' restrictive policies and quotas regarding Jewish immigration, Lemanus deemed them short-sighted. Australia, for example, faced in his view a grave threat from the expansion of the 'yellow race', and it could

not hope to fight it by means of settlement from English-speaking countries alone: 'As long as Australia keeps up these illusions that it could be populated with Anglo-Saxons, the continent will remain closed to the Jews – against the vital interests of Australia itself.'[38] Another example discussed in *Morze* and *Sprawy morskie i kolonialne* was the Soviet plan to settle Jews in Siberia, especially in the region of Birobidzhan, on the border with Mongolia. There, they would become a buffer against the Japanese expansion, and, as such, would also become members of the white race.[39]

Other contexts in which this could happen included territories under the control of colonial empires, mostly in Africa: Kenya, Rhodesia, parts of Angola and the Belgian Congo, as well as French, British, and Dutch Guyana. Lemanus envisaged a long-term, ten- to fifteen-year plan of Jewish settlement in those areas. This would require some investment but would ultimately be advantageous to all sides and lead to economic growth in the colonies.[40] In one of his articles, called 'The question of Jewish emigration as a colonial problem', Lemanus discussed the possible benefits of Jewish immigration to the African colonies in ways that made his positioning of Jews in a global racial hierarchy quite explicit. Jews were certainly not equal to other white European settlers, but since the white population in Africa was comparatively small, there was no risk of conflict of interest. Indeed, the mass settlement of Jews would improve colonies' economic situation, so that they could 'within one or two generations raise themselves up to the economic and social level of the Union of South Africa, considerably strengthening the British Empire's position in Africa'.[41] Nor was there potential for conflict with local black African populations, who were clearly at a lower level of development; indeed, Africans' manual labour would undergird the transformation of Polish Jews into an efficient stratum of farmers – a shift which many contemporaries had doubted possible. This difference was used to argue the advantages of settlement in East and Central Africa over Palestine, where racial and developmental similarities between Jews and Arabs raised the risk of conflict. Conceived in this way, Jewish emigration from Poland to Africa was of benefit to Jews themselves, profited both the sending and receiving countries, helped develop a colonial world economy, and stabilised international political relations.

Jews were incorporated into the colonial plans as potential intermediaries overseas and agents of colonial expansion.[42] This went first and foremost for trade, but Jews participated in the colonial projects also as experts (e.g., Ludwik Anigstein, a sanitary inspector in Liberia in 1935–36, and members of the expedition to Madagascar described below), and diplomats (e.g. Rudolf Rathaus in Liberia). At the beginning of 1934 a Pro-Palestine Committee was launched in the Polish parliament, in agreement with the World Zionist Congress, whose President, Nahum Sokolov, was present at the

inauguration and became its honorary member.[43] Some Jews also chose to join the LMiK. For example, in 1934 in Lublin the local Jewish LMiK activists launched efforts 'to incorporate Jewish society into the LMiK'.[44] The year before, also in Lublin, during the annual Holidays of the Sea, one of the important LMiK events, celebrations were held not only in churches but also the city synagogue, where the rabbi Szapiro 'gave a beautiful speech to the several thousand people gathered, who then recited a specially printed prayer "for the Polish sea"'.[45] This connection to the LMiK's maritime programme, as well as the Jews' role as agents of colonial expansion, appears also in Michał Pankiewicz's comment on the launching of the Pro-Palestine Committee. In Palestine, he wrote, Jews could become a part of the transformation into a maritime, colonising nation, as the Poles 'consciously begin to harness the Jewish element, influential and capable in the field of commerce, to the chariot of our colonial policy'.[46] Here they also would have a civilising influence on the Arabs, who had allegedly made the 'once flowing with milk and honey' land barren with their long rule.[47]

Still, Jewish organisations' responses to the ideas of Jewish emigration were mixed. Their cooperation with the Polish government in this regard was limited to Palestine, while most opposed the idea of singling out Jews for migration to other overseas territories in, for example, South America.[48] A Warsaw Jewish moderately Zionist daily *Nasz Przegląd* (*Our Review*) deemed the idea of sending Polish Jews to African colonies as unviable, and singling out Jews in particular as antisemitic and unconstructive.[49]

Nevertheless, the French African colony of Madagascar was considered. The idea was not a new one: it had been contemplated in Germany in the nineteenth century.[50] But it gained momentum after Marius Moutet, the French minister of the colonies, declared in a statement for the daily *Petit Parisien* in January 1937 that the Jews could constitute 'a serious colonising element' in the French colonies.[51] Polish–French talks about the possibilities of settlement from Poland followed, including that of Polish Jews. A special commission travelled to Madagascar in 1937 to examine conditions for such settlement. It was led by Major Mieczysław Lepecki, formerly adjutant to Piłsudski, traveller and travel writer. Its other members were Leon Alter, director of the organisation called Jewish Emigration Aid Society (part of the international Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society), and the engineer Salomon Dyk, an expert on agricultural settlement. As Piotr Puchalski points out, the Jewish community in Poland was mildly favourable to the idea of settlement in Madagascar, and the Jewish experts' involvement in the project helped attract their interest.[52]

The idea, as well as the works of the commission, were discussed in the press in Poland, France, Germany, and Madagascar itself,[53] and the LMiK's journals were no exception. Their reporting reveals the blurred, conditional

lines of racial distinction. Jews were again singled out as an alien element that had to leave Poland. Yet the discussions about Madagascar's suitability were the same as the ones referring to any group of Europeans who considered an overseas territory for settlement: the questions of climate, soils, tropical disease, and relations with the locals.[54] As Puchalski shows, the opponents of the project, including the Jewish members of the Lepecki commission, used racial arguments about the Jews' urban character and their inability to adapt to rural life in order to reject the plan as unfeasible.[55] Race was thus used instrumentally, and depending on the changing contexts, to support or reject projects and policies – on the Polish, French, and Jewish sides. Eventually, the project was abandoned, first in favour of sending Polish instead of Jewish settlers, and then completely. This was due to both changes in the French policies and resistance in Madagascar itself – which had a significant antisemitic dimension.[56]

The 'Jewish Question' as an international problem

The perceived necessity of Jewish emigration from Europe reveals an entanglement with colonialism, as it rested on the idea of solving problems by moving populations around the globe according to the needs of the European powers.[57] People and territory alike were turned into resources that should be used and managed in the most optimal way. Following this logic Jews were singled out as a misplaced resource: while their presence was disruptive in Europe, they could be constructively placed elsewhere, especially in the 'sparsely populated', therefore supposedly wasted overseas territories. This turned the Polish 'Jewish Question' into a global problem, the root of political and economic crises beyond the nation, and one that could only be solved by international cooperation. Adding the global context to the problem shifted responsibility from Poland to Western countries, who, despite their declarations about protecting the Jews, failed to find a satisfactory solution.

Throughout the 1930s both *Morze* and *Sprawy morskie i kolonialne* called for international solutions, and they reported when Polish representatives pursued the colonial issue internationally, as happened in 1936 and 1938. The Polish delegate Komarnicki's address to the League of Nations on 6 October 1936, *Morze*'s publicist claimed, had made Western Europeans aware, for the first time, how dire Poland's overpopulation problem was, and how this translated into current economic problems – not only for Poland, but also the world. 'For we have reached such an absurd situation in the matter of Jewish emigration', he argued,

> that Poland, with one of the greatest Jewish concentrations in the world, was afforded more limited rights to emigration to Palestine than countries in which a small percentage of Jewish population lives, but which pursue a ruthless policy of emigration pressure [on the international community]. The protectors of Jews should finally understand that the question of Jewish emigration is an international question, and it requires cooperation of international institutions.[58]

It is not difficult to guess who was meant as a country pursuing a 'ruthless policy': Germany, with its increasing persecution of Jews. Germany was perceived by the LMiK as on one hand a main competitor of the Polish maritime and colonial policies;[59] and, on the other, as a state which shared similar challenges, particularly in terms of its dynamically growing population which needed an outlet overseas. Germany's strategies towards regaining its former colonies were viewed with a mixture of anxiety (that they would succeed, blocking Poland's claim to them) and appreciation (as an example of a consistent strategy Poland should emulate). In the case of the 'Jewish Question', there was the additional anxiety prompted by the stream of Jewish refugees from Germany, which was adding to the already high numbers of Jews in Poland.

Seeing both Germany's policies towards its Jewish population – which was in fact much smaller than in Poland, comprising only 1 per cent of the population – and the Western countries' reaction to them, the LMiK's publicists expressed their bitterness. It is visible, for example, in the sarcastic reference to 'protectors of Jews' in the quote above. These protectors were happy to protect Jews as long as they were somebody else's problem, but refused to open their own borders to them, or offer a constructive solution of finding an appropriate place for them. Similar conclusions were reached after the conference in Évian-les-Bains, which took place in July 1938, at the USA's initiative, and was supposed to solve the problem of the emigration crisis caused by German policies.[60] The very fact of organising such a conference was, according to Lemanus, proof that the international community was willing to accommodate Germany's wish to get rid of its unwanted citizens. At the same time, the same international community remained deaf to the needs of countries which attempted to solve their own – more pressing, in their view – 'Jewish Question' by negotiations and international cooperation. 'The intergovernmental committee', Lemanus commented, 'operating in the world of technical, real matters, did not play around with preaching "human rights," apparently leaving the noncommittal propaganda catchphrases to the League of Nations.'[61] Western powers were thus seen to be hypocrites: they employed human rights instrumentally, and expected of others actions which they were themselves not willing to undertake. This

view echoed Polish sentiments on the question of the Minority Treaties almost twenty years earlier. In February 1939, *Morze* quoted Surzyński, who argued that the attitude of the Western powers nurtured in the Polish public 'an impression that creating refugees is in practice rewarded, while seeking a solution to the problem of Jewish emigration … by constructive international cooperation put our country and the Polish Jews in an less privileged situation'. He concluded that if no coordinated international solution was found, 'we will be forced to undertake the solution of the Jewish problem on our own.'[62]

Such advocates rejected the charge of Polish antisemitism. In a discussion in the Senate the following month, Senator Jan Dębski reversed the blame, accusing Western countries: 'it is them, who close their borders against Jewish emigration, who are antisemitic'. He likened this to the situation of 'centuries ago', when the Kingdom of Poland gave shelter to Jews fleeing from persecution in Western Europe in the fourteenth century. Demanding 'land, space for Jews', Poland was acting not only in its own, but also in wider Jewish interests, Dębski claimed. He added that some Jews already understood that they must emigrate, forced by 'unrelenting conditions of life, stronger than any theories.'[63] Elsewhere, Dębski, interviewed by *Morze*, expressed his exasperation with the 'didactic tone' of foreign delegates when the matter was raised in international fora.[64] His exasperation hints at the fact that, despite their ambitions, he and his colleagues did not act or speak from an equal position to their Western counterparts. Poles, in Dębski's view, remained dependent on Western Europe and the US in the international sphere, and felt keenly the desire to overcome their status as lesser Europeans whose policies and discursive interpretations carried less weight.

What made it even more difficult to accept was the dissonance that became apparent in Western attitudes. While the Western European/American position aimed, at least in theory, at 'defending the rights of others', as Carole Fink put it, declarations about defence of minorities did not translate into concrete actions, whether in direct condemnation of anti-Jewish policies[65] or increasing the quota on immigration of Jews fleeing persecution.[66] Several factors contributed: antisemitism in Western countries themselves; fear of Bolshevism, with which Eastern European Jews were associated; racial prejudices against Eastern Europeans in general[67] and Eastern European Jews in particular, to the extent that even Western European and American Jews were reluctant to welcome them.[68] The Western powers did not reject the rhetoric of the necessity of the Jewish emigration in principle.[69] Nevertheless, arguments that taking in Jewish immigrants would increase antisemitism at home undermined their moral high ground, and lent credence to the idea that it was the high numbers of Jews in Poland that were to blame for

antisemitism. For Germany, the unwillingness of Western states to take constructive action created a sense of impunity, and their antisemitic policies escalated. For countries such as Poland, it created an impression that German-style policies were in fact rewarded, and a growing perception of Western hypocrisy.

Conclusion

Since independence, the questioning of Poles' capability to govern and maintain independent statehood was sometimes racialised by Western politicians. Slavs' supposed inferiority positioned them in a lesser Europe where colonial oversight, as embodied in the Minority Treaties, might still be justified. The failure of the West to take seriously Poles' colonial policies, settlement projects and solutions to the European 'Jewish Question' further reinforced this sense of exclusion. Indeed, this discourse on the 'Jewish Question' was, in part, a way to accentuate the sense of Polish agency. Ethnic Poles thus turned into Europeans able to freely decide who had the right to stay, who was 'at home', and who – Jews – had to go and seek their fortunes overseas. But this narrative also established the conditions on which the Jews could win their whiteness: as a civilising influence on Palestinian Arabs, agents of colonial and economic expansion whose presence increased the numbers of whites in other colonies, and as 'soldiers' against the 'yellow peril'. While not sufficiently 'like Poles' to be allowed to stay in Europe, Jews could become 'white enough' when serving in a colonial world beyond.

Notes

1 Lemanus, 'Emigracja żydowska', *Morze i kolonie: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 16:1 (1939), 3–5, 3.
2 For the discussion on this topic, see Zofia Trębacz, *Nie tylko Palestyna: polskie plany emigracyjne wobec Żydów 1935–1939* (Warsaw: Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, 2018); Piotr Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order: Adjustments and Aspirations, 1918–1939* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 188–226.
3 Calls for the entangled history of antisemitism have been made for instance in Jonathan Judaken, 'Introduction', *American Historical Review*, 123:4 (2018), 1122–38. On the relation between antisemitism and colonial projects, see Tara Zahra, 'Zionism, Emigration, and East European Colonialism', in Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud S. Mandel (eds), *Colonialism and the Jews* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017), 166–92; Scott Ury, 'Strange Bedfellows? Anti-Semitism, Zionism, and the Fate of "the Jews"', *American*

Historical Review, 123:4 (2018), 1151–71; Mariusz Kałczewiak, *Polacos in Argentina: Polish Jews, Interwar Migration, and the Emergence of Transatlantic Jewish Culture* (Tuscaloosa, AL: Alabama University Press, 2020).

4 Around one-third of the population of Poland was not ethnically Polish; the biggest minority groups were Ukrainians, Jews, Belarussians, and Germans.

5 Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 233–5.

6 Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 291.

7 James Mark and Steffi Marung, 'Origins', in James Mark and Paul Betts (eds), *Socialism Goes Global: The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 24–74, 26. See also discussion in the Introduction to this volume.

8 Tadeusz Białas, *Liga Morska i Kolonialna 1930–1939* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Morskie, 1983), 38–41.

9 Gustaw Orlicz-Dreszer, *Program Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 3rd ed. (Warsaw: Instytut Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej, 1933), 6.

10 Julian Rummel, 'Zagadnienia polityki gospodarczej państwa polskiego: przyczynek do programu gospodarczego rozwoju kraju', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Rzecznej*, 2:2 (1925), 18–24, 21.

11 Tara Zahra, *The Great Departure: Mass Migration from Eastern Europe and the Making of the Free World* (New York: Norton, 2016), 10–11.

12 Zahra, *Departure*, 16.

13 For an overview of the Polish parties' positions on the 'Jewish question' in the 1930s, see Joshua D. Zimmerman, *The Polish Underground and the Jews, 1939–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 13–35 (on National Democracy in particular, 23–7).

14 Zimmerman, *Polish Underground*, 17. In the second half of the 1930s, the rhetoric of Sanacja politicians and publicists drew closer to the nationalistic rhetoric of the National Party, the state as frame of reference for identification was replaced by the ethnic nation, and slogans of national unity became the order of the day.

15 Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 71.

16 E.g. Henryk Suchecki, 'Nowa Palestyna a Polska', *Morze*, 13:4 (1936), 12–13; K. J., 'Ku rozwiązaniu problemu kolonialnego', *Sprawy morskie i kolonialne*, 3:3 (1936), 43–54, 50–1.

17 Czesław Zagórski and Rafał Czeczott (eds), *Informator Morski i Kolonialny* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej, 1934), 51.

18 Stanisław Pawłowski, 'O emigracji Żydów z Polski i o ich kolonizacji', *Sprawy morskie i kolonialne*, 4:1–2 (1937), 5–64, 25–9.

19 Pawłowski, 'O emigracji', 29.

20 Ibid., 58.

21 Ibid., 62.

22 K. J., 'Ku rozwiązaniu', 50–1.
23 'Kronika morska i kolonialna', *Sprawy morskie i kolonialne*, 6:1 (1939), 175–193, 188; 'Problem kolonialny w Sejmie i Senacie', *Morze i kolonie: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 16:3 (1939), 7–10, 8–9. Dębski was quoted in both these journals.
24 See also Shmidt, this volume.
25 Lemanus, 'Evian – i co dalej?', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 15:9 (1938), 2–3, 3.
26 Lemanus, 'Sprawa emigracji żydowskiej jako problem kolonialny', *Morze i kolonie: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 16:2 (1939), 12–14, 13.
27 Pawłowski, 'O emigracji', 7–8, 30–1.
28 Lemanus, 'Sprawa emigracji', 13.
29 Lemanus, 'Emigracja żydowska', 3.
30 'Po dwudziestej rocznicy', *Morze i kolonie: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 16:1 (1939), 14–17, 16.
31 Lemanus, 'Emigracja żydowska', 3.
32 This was quoted in *Morze i kolonie*: 'Sprawy kolonialne w Sejmie', *Morze i kolonie: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 16:2 (1939), 8–9, 8.
33 Lemanus, 'Emigracja żydowska', 3.
34 'Jeszcze o emigracji żydowskiej', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 13:11 (1936), 9–11, 11.
35 Wanda Melcer, 'Czarny ląd – Warszawa (cz. 1) Dziecko żydowskie rozpoczyna ziemską wędrówkę', *Wiadomości Literackie*, 11:14 (1934), 1; Wanda Melcer, 'Czarny ląd – Warszawa (cz. 3) W mykwie i pod baldachimem', *Wiadomości Literackie*, 11:40 (1934), 1; Wanda Melcer, 'Czarny ląd – Warszawa (cz. 6) Religia i befsztyk', *Wiadomości Literackie*, 12:15 (1935), 2.
36 Melcer, 'Czarny ląd (cz. 1)', 1.
37 E.g. Jan Rozwadowski, 'Sprawy kolonialne na Zachodzie', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 11:2 (1934), 25–6, 25; Lemanus, 'Sprawa emigracji', 12.
38 Lemanus, 'Sprawa emigracji', 12.
39 Rozwadowski, 'Sprawy kolonialne', 25; Jan Rozwadowski, 'Ekspansja kolonialna u obcych', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 11:6 (1934), 20; Pawłowski, 'O emigracji', 41–3.
40 Lemanus, 'Emigracja żydowska', 5.
41 Lemanus, 'Sprawa emigracji', 13.
42 Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order*, 188–89.
43 'Polski Komitet Propalestyński', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 11:2 (1934), 28–9.
44 *Sprawozdanie Okręgu Lubelskiego Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej w Lublinie za rok 1934* (Lublin: Okręg Lubelski Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej, 1935), 19.
45 *Sprawozdanie Okręgu Lubelskiego Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej w Lublinie za rok 1933* (Lublin: Okręg Lubelski Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej, 1934), 27.
46 Michał Pankiewicz, 'Dostęp do morza a polityka kolonialna', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 11:2 (1934), 21–2.

47 X. W. Kneblewski, 'Kolonizacja żydowska w Palestynie', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 9:9 (1932), 26–7.
48 Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order*, 197–8.
49 S. H., 'Kolonie, mandaty, a … żydzi', *Nasz Przegląd: organ niezależny*, 14:280 (1936): 3; S. H., 'Kolonizacja i emigracja', *Nasz Przegląd: organ niezależny*, 15:14 (1937), 3.
50 Magnus Brechtken, *Madagaskar für die Juden: antisemitische Idee und politische Praxis 1885–1945* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1997).
51 'A propos d'un projet d'établissement d'israélites dans les colonies françaises', *Le Petit Parisien*, 16 January 1937, 2.
52 Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order*, 202–3.
53 Brechtken, *Madagaskar*, 113–16; Michał Jarnecki, 'Madagaskar w polskich koncepcjach i planach kolonialnych', *Sprawy narodowościowe: seria nowa*, 28 (2006), 89–101, 93–4.
54 For example, *Morze* reported that the commission concluded that 'central Madagascar, above 800 metres over sea level, was suitable for White settlement, provided some investments were made': 'Sprawy kolonialne', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 15:2 (1938), 31–2, 32. Moreover, Madagascar had a somewhat special place in Polish colonial discourse. The eighteenth-century Polish-Hungarian adventurer Count Maurycy Beniowski had once attempted to establish rule over Madagascar. In the interwar period, it was almost impossible to write about the island without referencing his name, and any regular reader of *Morze* would have probably made the association.
55 Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order*, 205.
56 Brechtken, *Madagaskar*, 113–16.
57 In the colonial view of the world, non-European territory is seen as uncultivated territory, unused and therefore wasted – 'terra nullius'. See, e.g., James M. Blaut, *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993), 15; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 153.
58 J. D., 'Genewskie wystąpienia', *Morze: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 13:11 (1936), 2–3, 3.
59 See: Marta Grzechnik, *Aspirations of Imperial Space: The Colonial Project of the Maritime and Colonial League in Interwar Poland*, CES Open Forum Series 2019–2020, 36 (Cambridge, MA: Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University, 2019), 12–13; Marta Grzechnik, *Regional Histories and Historical Regions: The Concept of the Baltic Sea Region in Polish and Swedish Historiographies* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2012), 53–9.
60 Fink, *Rights of Others*, 349.
61 Lemanus, 'Evian – i co dalej?', 2.
62 'Sprawy kolonialne w Sejmie', 8.
63 'Problem kolonialny w Sejmie i Senacie', 8.
64 'Kropla drąży kamień (rozmowa z sen. J. Dębskim)', *Morze i kolonie: organ Ligi Morskiej i Kolonialnej*, 16:4 (1939), 9–10, 10.

65 Fink, *Rights of Others*, 349–50.
66 Zahra, *Departure*, 171.
67 The US immigration quota after World War I, for example, limited not only numbers of Jews, but also Eastern European immigrants on racial grounds. Zahra, *Departure*, 127.
68 Fink, *Rights of Others*, 219, 348–9.
69 Zahra, 'Zionism', 185; Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order*, 194.

12

Midsommar and the production of white fantasy

Anikó Imre

One of the ubiquitous features of white nationalisms today is how much they rely on the work of fantasy to lend them coherence. It requires a leap of fantasy to present white nationalism as an antidote to globalisation, especially given that it is the very circulation of images and ideas that enables the imagination of closed communities allegedly protected from the contaminations of the outside world to emerge; and it is global communication networks and platforms that permit the coordination of the global right across its many local versions. White nationalisms tap into viral networks and archives of fantasy to perform their own versions of a long-lost community by adopting its trappings, costumes, and rituals. My argument is framed by some key images that derive from this global archive and help me examine the paradoxes around nationalist fantasies.

The first image (Figure 12.1) features self-anointed 'QAnon Shaman' Jake Angeli, one of the most recognisable figures in the mob that attacked the US Capitol building in the 6 January 2021 right-wing insurrection incited by Donald Trump. Angeli, an eccentric fixture at QAnon rallies and anti-Black Lives Matter protests, received a lot of media attention, not least for his tattoos and headdress, which reference Nordic mythology in a form reappropriated by the Nazis and embraced by far-right and neo-Nazi conspiracy theorists.[1] The second one (Figure 12.2) is a still from Ari Aster's 2019 folk-horror movie *Midsommar*. It depicts the cult-like Hårga community, which the film places in the actual region of Hålsingland, Sweden. The community lives in organic harmony with their secluded land, which only opens up to outside visitors once every ninety years, during the midsummer festivities referenced in the title.

Both images visually foreground the gestures, costumes, accessories, and markings that are supposed to validate the fantasies of white nationalism and render those so cartoonishly performative at the same time. There is an additional thematic link between the two images: they both draw on

Figure 12.1 Jake Angeli (the 'QAnon Shaman'), pictured in Peoria, Arizona, 25 October 2020. Photographer: TheUnseen01101 (public domain). https://www.flickr.com/photos/191776019@N08/50818536171/.

Norse mythology and Scandinavian folk tradition as a resource. *Midsommar* has been interpreted as an allegory of white supremacy's ascendance and Nazism's return within contemporary global capitalism, projecting the United States' political turn towards alt right extremism onto a blindingly white, idealised Swedish backdrop. As a critic sums it up:

> Watching the movie today, amid international protests over systemic racism and police violence …, one finds striking parallels between the United States,

Figure 12.2 Still from *Midsommar* (dir. Ari Aster, 2019). Copyright: A24.

> where many still celebrate or defend the Confederacy and its associated symbols, and the Sweden portrayed in the film, with its own mythic, pseudo-Norse history.[2]

There is yet another, hidden component to what appears to be a link of mutual references between the United States and Scandinavia. *Midsommar* is set in Sweden, where the xenophobic right is, indeed on the rise, as it is in much of Europe. But the actual filming location is in Hungary, where the shooting took place to save on costs and avoid the eight-hour workday imposed by Swedish labour unions.[3] Most of the employees who created and populate the all-white, all-bright environment of the Hårga are Hungarian. The Hungarian production company Proton provided local production services, including many of the below-the-line staff. With the exception of the American stars and a handful of others with speaking parts, the actors and extras are Hungarians playing Swedes. The place that we take for granted to be an authentic Scandinavian setting is in fact a location outside of Budapest, where the entire 'Swedish' set was built. Hungary plays a shadow role here as a destination for Western, mostly American, mobile service productions, one of the states in the region that offer high tax rebates (currently 30 per cent in Hungary), extensive production and post-production facilities built to create the illusion of other places, whether real or fantasy-based, and a skilled below-the-line workforce readily exploitable in the

absence of labour unions or other significant regulations. Eastern European capitals such as Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Sofia, and Bucharest have become hubs of such global outsourcing in the past two decades, enthusiastically embraced by investment-hungry, semi-peripheral East European states. The operation of these service industries is mostly neutralised as pure business rationality, a win-win all around.

I wish to disrupt this neutralisation as a way of turning a critical eye towards the 'business' side of global white nationalism's engagement with popular media. I argue that substituting other white places for unrecognisable Eastern European locations and outsourcing costs and labour to the white periphery is emblematic of the region's historical role as a resource for racial capitalism in Europe and globally, which regional white nationalisms are both symptomatic of and responses to. I draw the line that connects white nationalist cult-turned-folk-horror content in *Midsommar* and the real-life state of 'folk-horror' that Hungary's illiberal far-right leader Viktor Orbán and his ruling Fidesz party have normalised in Hungary, the most extreme manifestation of white nationalism in the postsocialist region. What sustains this connection between filmic and real-life enactments of white nationalism is the particular condition and operation of whiteness in Eastern Europe, as I explain in the next section before returning to *Midsommar* as a case study. I argue that whiteness as an aspirational, transactional category that keeps the region in a state of peripheral limbo is also what attracts fantasy projection, whether as compensation in the form of domestic white nationalisms or as exploitative exoticisation and mythification from the outside. It is also what makes the region an excellent investment target for the big business of mobile media production, which replicates longstanding historical patterns of economic hierarchy and dependency between the central and peripheral regions of Europe.

Laundering whiteness

In Western Europe and the United States, the fantasy work that is required to reattach power, rights, and privilege to whiteness is constantly challenged by the historical facts and visible legacies of colonisation and slavery. By contrast, Eastern European nationalisms have long languished in a fantasy of racial innocence, justified with reference to their overwhelmingly white populations and lack of large-scale involvement in historical imperialism. They have embraced and internalised the notion of 'white innocence', a term Gloria Wekker uses in her book of the same title to capture the systemic denial of colonial violence and racism in postcolonial Dutch culture's insistence on racial exceptionalism.[4] 'White innocence' is closely related to other terms

that depict wilful postcolonial Western European amnesia about racism, such as 'white ignorance'[5] and 'colour blindness'.[6] Dušan Bjelić talks about 'a shocking absence of global colonial awareness' in all of Europe, where the postsocialist reunification of the two Europes 'overpowers the significance of Europe's colonial past and obligations'.[7] This amnesia has enabled a 'rebirth of mythical thinking' in Europe, with a powerful force in the eastern peripheries, in 'a reaction to anxieties created by political, cultural, or economic conditions of neoliberal capitalism'.[8]

Arguments for 'white innocence' are indefensible and have been abundantly refuted by emerging literature on Eastern Europe's racial histories, including this very book.[9] East European white innocence is ultimately an opportunistic cover for adopting what is a white nationalist platform while taking none of the responsibility for colonial violence.

However, the unsustainable proposition of white innocence is not simply the result and proof of defensive and stubborn East European backwardness and tribalism but, rather, of a mutually dependent relationship with Western Europe and the West in general. It hinges on mutual projections between East and West, and is confirmed in images and narratives that have sustained ambivalent national self-definitions in the semi-peripheral eastern region. These have, in turn, continually helped to stabilise national self-definitions within the Western centre. This symbiotic relationship has come into full view during the eastward expansion of the European Union, crystallised during the 2008 financial crisis, the 2015 refugee crisis, and the Brexit process. Each event has shown how the unapologetic eastern embrace of white innocence serves a purifying purpose for the core Western nations, distancing white nationalism from the West by outsourcing it to the East. As Ivan Kalmar puts it, 'the projection of racism eastward by the West … is the symmetrical opposite of the East's westward projection of responsibility for the historical sins of white privilege'.[10]

On the eastern side of the equation, racial exceptionalism contributes to neutralising the construction of whiteness, which in turn helps to disavow the historical gap between full and partial membership in Europeanness, along with the region's status of structural inferiority. In the symbiotic European context, the intensity of xenophobia and white nationalism in the east can be seen as a self-justifying performance to offset the instability of peripheral East European whiteness, which repeatedly falls short of granting full inclusion into Europe. This self-justifying overperformance of whiteness propels Putin's historical fantasy of incorporating Ukraine and Orbán's efforts to institutionalise Christian heteronormativity and xenophobia and turn Budapest into a centre for far-right institutions and conservative lobbying activity.[11] It compels populist governments in the region to pursue 'authoritarian neoliberalism', a hybrid formation where

conservative, illiberal cultural policies coexist with and support neoliberal economic policies – along with selective welfare protections for institutions that support white, heteronormative reproduction, propaganda, and voting.[12] Conversely, in the Western centres, the hierarchical symbiosis with the East allows power holders to pick and choose from the fruits of semi-peripheral white nationalism with impunity: whether it is right-wing demagogues such as Tucker Carlson and Steve Bannon; or the European Union, whose leaders turn a blind eye to much of the anti-Brussels posturing and sharp decline of democratic safeguards in Hungary and Poland in favour of outsourcing car manufacturing, tech, and pharmaceutical industries owned by Western European companies to eastern labour and consumer markets; or Silicon Valley technology firms, who have migrated into western Romanian cities, where they drive up real estate prices and dislocate large Roma populations;[13] or Hollywood-based mobile media industries, who endlessly promote themselves as agents of diversity and democracy but willingly collaborate with illiberal states and exploit permanent economic peripherality.

The malleable, fantasy-based, neutralising quality of Eastern European white nationalism as a global resource has recently been captured by *Telex*, one of the last remaining independent news platforms in Hungary, which featured this mash-up in one of their 2022 issues (Figure 12.3):

Figure 12.3 Image from *Telex*. Photographer: Fillér, Máté.

The article, entitled 'America is Really Here', explains how Orbán's illiberal 'democracy' has become a coveted utopia, a model for right-wing, pro-Christian conservative lobbyists and conservative cultural warriors since 2008.[14] The image itself places a cartoon cutout version of QAnon Shaman in front of the iconic Hungarian parliament building, holding the Hungarian flag, with his Nordic tattoos replaced with ornamental Hungarian folk art and shamanic animal figures from Hungarian mythology. The 'shaman's' arms are decked out in a brick pattern referencing the wall that literally 'protects' the national territory from undesirable 'migrants' and symbolically demarcates the place of national sovereignty. The image perfectly expresses how bits and pieces of mythology and fantasy are lifted and combined from the global archive to curate localised fantasies of white nationalist sovereignty.

This curation might be more visible in the twenty-first century but, in fact, has long been instrumental to the game of sustaining white innocence in Eastern Europe. This process has resulted in national identities suspended in a state of instability, also expressed in metaphors such as 'ferry', 'bridge', and other images that convey inbetweenness, ambivalence, fluidity, and permeability.[15] It is no surprise that major historical studies have used 'invention', 'imagination', and 'mythology' in their titles to describe national formations in the region.[16] To compensate for their incomplete whiteness, nations of the region have long cast themselves as superior whites, the true defenders of Western European civilisation and rightful heirs to a white Christian heritage, as signalled in the periodic revival of the medieval *antemurale* myth.[17] This overcompensation towards the West also implies the assertion of superiority and the assumption of leadership over those to the East. Nations and individuals of the region can shift along a range of identifications: be naturally white and thus culturally superior and a victim of Western exploitation; be a civilised European Christian as well as a supremely tough and naturally masculine Eastern warrior.

The Eastern warrior identity is evoked in Figure 12.4, taken in Hungary, not far from where *Midsommar*'s Hårga village was built. It documents the biannual three-day-long *Kurultáj* festival, the largest of the many events and celebrations dedicated to the idea of neo-Turanism in contemporary Hungary and in Europe as a whole. Turanism, revived by the far right and embraced by Viktor Orbán's majority party Fidesz, reaffirms Hungary's affiliation with Eurasia, an orientation aligned with the anti-Western and anti-European Union sentiment common among the region's postsocialist, right-of-centre governments. This geopolitical reorientation is supported by well-funded anthropological and archaeological research intent on proving the Hungarian nation's Eurasian genetic roots, and is affirmed by the many different pseudo-historical reenactments of life in the tenth century among Hun-Turkic tribes traversing Eurasia on horseback and eventually settling in

Figure 12.4 The biannual three-day-long *Kurultáj* festival.

the Carpathian Basin. Kurultáj, organised since 2008 by the Hungarian Turan Fund in Bugac, the westernmost part of the Eurasian Steppe, is dedicated to celebrating and reviving ancient traditions of a nomadic lifestyle, including archery, falconry, shamanic music, ancient martial arts, and equestrianism.[18]

Turanism, or Eurasianism, itself a hodgepodge of geopolitical ideas and affiliations, is a point of cyclical return to the Hungarian nation's dual origin story. This story stages a showdown between the nomadic, pagan chieftain Koppány, the embodiment of the Turani past, and his relative István (Stephen), who embraced Christianity and became the first Hungarian king, sanctioned by a crown received from the Pope, in 896 CE. The dual pagan–Christian legacy is inscribed not only into the kinship between the two figures but also into King Stephen's very body as a shaman king: according to legend, he was born with a magical sixth finger and thus relied on his psychic power to lead his pagan people to Christian statehood.[19]

Turanism first became popular around the *fin de siècle* as a part of European orientalism, which emulated Western European interest in exoticising Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. Western European orientalism of the time was propelled by a mix of curiosity and a search for wholesome organic alternatives to decadent bourgeois capitalism. In Hungary, however, then the weaker part of the declining Austro-Hungarian Empire, orientalism functioned as a strategy to gain a foothold in the losing economic and cultural competition against Western Europe, a response to falling permanently short of being Western and thus fully European. In the early 1900s, Hungarian

governments turned to the East in their capacity as white Christian leaders who are inherently superior to their Turani 'brothers'.

The Habsburg Empire, which encompassed much of the region, was not technically a coloniser but adopted colonialist discourses since the late eighteenth century from French and British colonialism, resulting in what Wladimir Fischer calls 'continental imperialism'.[20] Austria-Hungary was involved in the expanding world market; the trade of colonial commodities also impacted regional economies, everyday consumption and the imagination of exotic cultures.[21] But the colonial division was also enacted within the Austro-Hungarian monarchy itself, where Austria was economically dominant over Hungary, Bohemia, and the other lands, the latter serving as a destination for Austrian investment. Mining and banking remained in Austrian hands and the centre of economic power remained Vienna.[22] Race functioned as a tool of exclusion among predominantly white groups, implicitly used to racialise the Jews and the Roma and to secure the boundaries of membership within the nation, in a process Fischer calls 'internal colonialism'.[23] Whiteness provided the connection between this East-Central European version of colonialism and other forms; and it is the malleability of whiteness that resulted from the region's 'cultural colonialism by proxy' that allowed East-Central European nations to participate in whiteness' colonial benefits and disavow the guilt and responsibility for the damages caused by it.[24]

Freezing whiteness in this contradictory state of simultaneous accessibility and deniability and insulating it from colonial critique was also enabled by the region's isolating partition into white nation-states after World War I after the collapse of the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire – an isolation that was perpetuated under socialism after World War II.[25]

James Mark in this volume explains how, since in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when Europe's division into East and West solidified, the region has been shuttled by imperial powers alternately between exclusion from full whiteness and opportunistic inclusion to shore up white domination when claims for black, postcolonial sovereignty and self-determination threatened the Western European 'white citadel'. The strategic ambiguity that Western powers sustained towards Eastern Europe's racial status was also bound up with struggles for national self-determination. This came to the fore most consequentially during the negotiations that followed World War I, where Czechoslovak and Polish state representatives argued that Eastern Europeans, having been subjugated to imperial domination themselves, make for superior, more humane, and enlightened white Christian Europeans and overseas colonisers: '[A]t moments of highest-flying fantasy, self-determination in Eastern Europe could be imagined as redeeming a whiteness besmirched by the violent practices of westerners overseas, thus saving the European colonial project from itself.'[26]

In a similar manner, Orbán, former Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, and other present-day white nationalist leaders in the region are eager to distinguish their parties from the dominant Western European ethos, which they accuse of promoting the 'United States of Europe' at the expense of national autonomy and self-protection. They once again balance on the fence between East and West, claiming to be the best white Christians and the best pagan warriors at the same time, stemming the tide of non-white, non-Christian migrants and reasserting the rules of normalcy embodied by the white, Christian heteronormative family that decadent Western liberals have strayed from.[27]

Whiteness is expansive; it affords all the freedoms without imposing any of the consequences. It is this quality of 'having it both ways' afforded by East European whiteness that allows the Orbán government to pursue its 'authoritarian neoliberalism'. This involves repudiating Brussels' 'encroachment' on national sovereignty in political and cultural affairs while accepting EU funds and courting corporate investment, while also cultivating economic and cultural relationships with authoritarian states such as Poland, Turkey, China, and Russia.

And while neoliberal institutions such as the IMF and the EU have strongly criticised these authoritarian and xenophobic measures, they have taken no concrete action to curb them because they provide ground for those institutions to pursue their own expansionist neoliberal economic activities. Hungary, along with the other neoliberal authoritarian states, remains an essential labour and consumer market for Audi, Coca-Cola, General Electric, Microsoft, Samsung, Suzuki, and other companies. Liz Fekete points out that the EU has turned a blind eye to Hungary's harsh crackdown on non-white refugees, the blatant corruption with which an kleptocratic oligarchy led by Orbán runs the country, and the government's hypocritical embrace of foreign investment and EU development funds coupled with its anti-globalisation, anti-Brussels, anti-neoliberal rhetoric, because the same hypocritical measures are also replicated in other EU countries.[28] Aleksandra Lewicki discusses the structural inequalities that the EU has perpetuated, which 'reinforce the peripheralization of the region: they render it a reservoir of cheap labour, relocate the cost of this labour to Europe's East, generate a perpetually mobile disposable workforce and reinforce racialisation'.[29]

None of this is incidental, let alone irrelevant, to *Midsommar*. Even though the film appears critical of white nationalism, the lack of any importance attributed to the place where these representations were made, beyond self-explanatory economic rationality, begs the question of the cultural industries', and specifically multinational media production companies', contribution to the moral laundering of East European whiteness, which indirectly takes advantage of the white European semi-periphery's status as

an 'innocent' resource for racial capitalism. Peeling back the enfolding layers of economic and cultural history around a production like *Midsommar* reveals a relationship of interdependence between the transnational film industry and global white nationalism; and this interdependence hinges on the alleged moral transparency of whiteness in the region.

In the following section, I first explain how *Midsommar* serves as a flashpoint that gives us a unique view of interconnected economic and cultural practices that continue to make Eastern Europe an unacknowledged, key resource for global white nationalism. Second, I situate *Midsommar*'s relationship to its shooting location in Hungary/Eastern Europe in light of the horror genre's and the folk-horror subgenre's traditions of linking thematic othering with particular places and landscapes. I conclude with returning to the question of how the global media industries use and perpetuate fantasies of East European whiteness.

Midsommar and the horror of whiteness

To make the most of *Midsommar* as a case study for this argument requires charting an unconventional methodological path at the juncture of approaches that do not typically inform one another: historical studies of whiteness and coloniality, theories of populism, critical race studies, cultural and media studies, studies of the horror genre, studies of place and space, and critical media industry studies. A further challenge is to place Eastern Europe as a geopolitical and imaginary location in the centre of the analysis, given the scarcity of the region's presence within all of the areas of inquiry concerned.

In a global view, East European media industries are 'digital peripheries', relegated to exporting film and TV production services rather than content. Despite the euphoric projections of streaming platforms, digital access, and the success of some smaller production hubs in Scandinavia, Israel, or South Korea, the global production market's hierarchies and borders remain pronounced. Much of the world consists of 'peripheries that seem to slow down, be disconnected from, or even block digital flows across borders; peripheries that look toward the center but do not connect with one another through audiovisual exchange unless they are part of the same region or target diasporas'.[30] Periphery does not necessarily correspond to size but, rather, to historical lag, including the political legacies of state socialism.[31]

Rather than reading *Midsommar* narrowly as a self-contained text and object of criticism, I reinsert it in this broader methodological context. Its aesthetic merit, representational politics, and overt ideological messaging are relevant in relation to its more general status as a particularly rich

exemplar of an entire set of runaway media practices and products in Eastern Europe. East European places have served well as locations for high-budget films and TV series that take place elsewhere or are removed from contemporary reality in space and time. These often fall into the genres of alternative history, fantasy, adventure, spy stories, and horror.[32] What most of these films and TV series have in common is that their plots are set against an imagined or imaginary historical background that can stand in for a variety of other places that are inhabited by generalised markers of European whiteness in terms of characters, landscape, architecture, history, and culture, all of which embody and normalise 'habits of whiteness'.

Purely 'culturalist', text-based approaches have been rightly criticised for being disconnected from sociological and political-economic questions. But there is a growing consensus among media scholars that, rather than throwing out the baby with the bathwater, we should strive to integrate culturalist approaches with a critical attention to the media industries.[33] I am inspired here by Anamik Saha's call to shift the focus from merely criticising representations onto asking 'how representations of race are made'. This means 'looking closely at the experience of industrial cultural production, its mechanics and processes and the creative workers involved, but also a broader consideration of how the cultural industries are shaped by capitalism and legacies of empire.'[34]

It is even more crucial to deploy such an integrated method when approaching places that have barely registered in either field of study, such as Eastern Europe. The lack of well-conceptualised and institutionalised attention to the politics of representation enables local nationalist far-right parties and groups to instrumentalise their own standards of representation in a vacuum, continuing to dismiss the relevance of racism, colonialism, sexism, and homophobia and proudly embracing mythic histories of nationalism grounded in the 'natural' orders of race and sex. A film like *Midsommar*, which gives us a funhouse-mirror image of this kind of fictionalisation, is also a platform to consider whiteness, race-based politics, and gender-based reproductive politics in its localised versions, not simply as an outgrowth of American notions.

Aster's follow-up to *Hereditary* (2018), *Midsommar* expands the previous film's preoccupation with inherited family horror. It starts out in New York City, where the protagonist, Dani Ardor (Florence Pugh), suffers inconceivable loss when her mentally ill sister kills their parents and herself. In an attempt to escape her grief, she accepts her reluctant boyfriend Christian's (Jack Raynor) half-hearted offer to tag along with him and his fellow anthropology doctoral students to attend the Midsommar festival at the invitation of their Swedish colleague Pelle (Vilhelm Blomgren), who is from the Hårga

community. Following the generic script, folk festivities rapidly turn to ritual murder, picking off the clueless outsiders one by one. The only survivor in the group, Dani, emerges at the end as the May Queen in a gigantic dress made of flowers, implying her acceptance of and integration into her newfound Hårga family as a way to reckon with her trauma and to exact revenge on disloyal Christian by choosing him for a ritual sacrifice over another candidate.

Midsommar weaves several interpretive themes together within its overarching concern with whiteness. Aster himself has commented that the film is the anatomy of a personal breakup.[35] Some critics argue that the movie might issue a critique of environmentalism's excesses.[36] Yet other interpretations see the film as an allegory of cults, or of Nazism, or of Trump's populist regime.[37] Some of the film's dominant aspects return us to whiteness, however, starting with the brightness of its Midsummer sun and the white-clad, fair-skinned, blond community of people who constitute the inbred, dysfunctional folk-nation family at the film's centre.

Whiteness stands out in relation to the movie's generic status as a horror film, which calls up the racialised history of the genre. The single most important reference point for horror's relationship to race and whiteness is *Night of the Living Dead* (henceforth *Night*), George Romero's cult classic. Credited as the first horror film that revived and popularised the zombie figure ('ghouls' in the film's parlance), it was made in 1968, in the wake of the decade's ghetto uprisings. Richard Dyer's foundational article 'White', first published in *Screen* in 1988, singles out Romero's trilogy, and analyses the first part, *Night*, as a film that helps us capture whiteness as a representational category. Whiteness is difficult to discuss because, unlike other racial and ethnic categories, it 'secures its dominance by seeming not to be anything in particular, but also because, when whiteness qua whiteness does come into focus, it is often revealed as emptiness, absence, denial or even a kind of death', writes Dyer in the opening paragraph.[38] *Night*, as well as the other two parts of the trilogy, *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) and *Day of the Dead* (1985), are relentlessly unsentimental about demystifying whiteness as the norm; they expose it as a construction that can only be propped up as a normative system of values when set against blackness, on which it feeds to gain its semblance of vitality.

But while in Haitian slave mythology, from where it derives, the zombie is a slave bound to serve the master even after death, Romero's ghouls are servants to capitalist consumption. This comes into focus in *Dawn of the Dead*, where the zombies invade the local mall because they 'remember that they want to be in here', as the character Peter famously explains. This image of the cannibalistic undead highlights an entire set of connections among capitalism, colonisation, and consumption, which can be traced back

to Marx's own reliance on cannibalistic figures such as the vampire and the zombie, to describe capitalist exploitation.[39]

Taking *Night* as a turning point in the history of horror film, which puts the allegorical white zombie at the heart of racial capitalism, opens a comparative path to unlocking *Midsommar*'s relationship to white nationalism. Quite the opposite of *Night*, *Midsommar*'s horrors play out in full sunlight. This exaggerated brightness, coupled with the locals' whiteness, makes the film perhaps 'the whitest horror movie ever made'.[40] 'The near constant brightness on screen makes the viewer's eyes burn from the Aryan blond uniformity of the commune clad in pure white', Xine Yao comments. '*Midsommar* presents us with the spectacle of the horrors of white supremacy – in all its gendered, psychological complexity – in literal broad daylight.'[41]

While the racialised connotations of this unnatural brightness are not explicitly spelled out, the locals' strange tribal behaviour, seen through the racially diverse visitors' eyes, appears robotic and 'brainwashed', and places the film within the horror tradition that associates whiteness with death. The Hårga can be compared to *Night*'s robotic zombies, or the respectable white folks in Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017), who need to consume Black life to reanimate themselves.

There are significant differences between *Night* and *Midsommar*, however. Most obviously, *Night* is a low-budget independent film with unknown actors and an army of local volunteer extras, which only retroactively took on cult status and became a touchstone.[42] *Midsommar* is a high-production-values, multimillion-dollar movie made by A24, starring A-list British and American actors. It is part of the recent elevated horror, or post-horror, cycle, often independently produced but potentially profitable and critically acclaimed, which 'merge art-cinema style with decentred genre tropes, privileging lingering dread and visual restraint over audiovisual shocks and monstrous disgust'.[43]

Furthermore, whiteness in *Night* and across Romero's trilogy is conceived as fairly specific to US nationalism and imperialism, in the context of the economic decline of the Rust Belt in the Pittsburgh area, manifest as an outbreak of monstrous consumption that takes over the entire country.[44] Unlike *Night*'s relationship to a specific place and time, *Midsommar* stages a more philosophical encounter between insiders and outsiders in a way that is more closely reminiscent of the folk-horror subgenre. As in other folk-horror films, such as *Midsommar*'s most frequently cited inspirations *The Wicker Man* (Robin Hardy, 1973) and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (Tobe Hooper, 1974), the location and landscape are crucial elements of the tradition, less as a specific geographical place and more by virtue of the inhabitants' social and moral values imbued in it. It is an isolated place cut off from the rest of the world that produces habits that would be considered

abnormal, dangerous, and deadly by common civilisational standards. This clash between the morals of the closed community and the outside world then leads to a violent outcome.[45]

Media industry studies has produced a great deal of work on the logistics, economics, and labour relations of runaway production. A more theoretical approach in film studies has also been preoccupied with ontological and ideological questions of space, place, and location.[46] My approach is informed by both of these directions, harnessing them towards uncovering the functions of race and whiteness in cultural production, infused with the more specific inflections that the horror genre introduces. Following Elena Gorfinkel and John David Rhodes' call in their collection *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image*, I wish to wrest the place, Hungary/Eastern Europe, 'from its status as mere setting and narrative "support"', and focus instead on 'the generative structures, aesthetic conditions, and political implications of the profilmic, drawing background to foreground, periphery to center'.[47]

This formulation is especially helpful for conceptualising the relay that *Midsommar* establishes among different places, signified in the images I opened with. Gorfinkel and Rhodes want to shift away from place as 'an essence, truth or pure matter than needs to be properly preserved, rescued, or excavated' towards thinking of place as an interface of 'agonistic relations' between coexisting registers: the place's own distinct world, which exists beyond the borders of the film; and the world provided to viewers by the film.[48] As archives of specific places, films can give us historical knowledge about how they have been inhabited and used, in (often unconscious) interaction with our own memories and knowledge of places.[49] Gorfinkel and Rhodes' questions about place as filmic location are directly applicable to my project here, which superimposes the place of production onto the place of the narrative:

> How does a specific location allow itself to be subsumed as background, and how can it resist such subsumption? How can a political and politicized practice of attention to the place of the moving image serve to reanimate the practice of politicized image making more generally?[50]

Following the narrative pattern set by its folk-horror predecessors, outsiders are lured to join the Hårga commune's pagan ritual in *Midsommar*. Ominous signals, such as an upside-down shot of the road on which the guests are driven to Hälsingland, and the psychedelic mushrooms they are given upon arrival in a sprawling meadow, suggest early on that we should brace ourselves for stepping into an alternate reality. Premonitions prove correct. Our heroes, Dani, her hapless boyfriend Christian, and his fellow-anthropology-student friends Josh and Mark, along with a British non-white couple invited by another Hårga family member, are experiencing unexplained strange things

that signal 'we are entering a white nationalist's Nordic neomedievalist wet dream'.[51] It begins with two older members' ritual suicide by jumping from a cliff, turning the 'ättestupat', a prehistoric Nordic senicide, into a grotesque spectacle. And it continues with the visitors disappearing, dying, or, as we later find out, becoming integrated into rituals that keep them in an undead state, such as the 'blood eagle' pose in which one is suspended with lungs breathing outside one's body, evoking a form of alleged Viking torture. Christian is coerced into impregnating the chosen virgin before being sown alive into a bear's skin, and Dani is crowned the May Queen as the last one woman standing concluding a whirling, psychedelic endurance dance around the May Pole.

Consuming outsiders to harvest benefits for fecundity and regeneration is a metaphor operative in most cults, including nativist nationalisms. It evokes, once again, the figure of the zombie, whose whiteness is locked in its undead brain, which can only be sustained by consuming living bodies. For white supremacist ideologies, which have been resurging in both the United States and Sweden, white survival is much more than a mere metaphor. In contemporary Hungary, it translates into a full-blown government programme, manifest in extensive media propaganda as well as policies aimed to sanction the country's nativist self-identification as a place circumscribed by the white, genetically and linguistically pure, heteronormative, Christian family – a vision of the closed, folk-horror family commune come to life.

The folk-horror subgenre often freely appropriates folkloric traditions and melds them to stage a disruptive encounter with extreme otherness. Along the same lines, what transpires from *Midsommar* is precisely that contemporary white nationalism does not actually require authentic historical roots, events, or a real place to spring up. It can spread by gathering scraps of fantasy material and take on a zombie life of its own. The film has been described as a mix of cultural references that, according to one critic, still possesses some 'deranged integrity'.[52] The costumes, which are also supposed to lend authenticity to what we assume to be an ancient Nordic folk community, were designed by Hungarian costume designer Andrea Flesch and blend motifs from all over Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe as well as Scandinavia. 'It's a stew', as Aster himself characterises the set and costume design that give the community its cultural character.[53] David Edelstein describes the set this way: 'Aster and the production designer, Henrik Svensson, have designed the "Hårga" village from scratch. It's like a child's rendering of a happy, bucolic place, a mixture of circles, squares, and triangles that's so elemental it's otherworldly.'[54] Another review calls the set 'a hodgepodge of European tradition, folklore, and mythology'.[55] Robert Spadoni writes that the Swedishness of the Hårgas is 'a chimera

made up to fool the non-Swedish'.[56] He calls the Hårga world 'a phantasmagoria', a projection of foreignness replete with ambivalence:

> Aster's net sweeps up a wide swath of history and many countries. Reluctant to expand much further, he leaves it for us to decide whether his film mounts a critique of xenophobia or if it espouses it, and whether the real locus of this ideology in the film is the commune (and by extension Sweden) or the United States.[57]

From a US or Western vantage point, whiteness has come full circle, into full visibility, since Dyer first elevated it into a problem for representation. Whiteness now dominates through visibility, rather than transparency. It has become omnipresent as a problem, drawing attention to itself and thus confirming its position in the centre of power. Making a movie such as *Midsommar* set in America would have been caught up in this overwhelming obsession with whiteness, which would have made the film too didactic, too circumscribed by the divisions and debates whiteness automatically evokes. The film's more universal criticism of whiteness and white supremacy can come into focus again when removed from the US and the Western tradition of racialised horror, against a different narrative setting and filmed in a different location. Sweden is distant enough to provide a symbolic backdrop to put whiteness into new relief without indicting Sweden itself as the source of white supremacy. But Hungary and Eastern Europe play an even more important background role, in their two interconnected capacities as a peripheral place of capitalist extraction and a place where the power of whiteness still benefits from complete unawareness, transparency, and invisibility.

Conclusion

The first three images with which I opened represent three intersecting vectors in the global Right's narrative and image-based network, to be united in the fourth image: *Midsommar* issues a representational critique of US-based and Western European white nationalisms but is uncritical of the political-economic implications of the place and practice of making the film. This silencing of the politics of production actually amplifies the film's critical voice by ethically neutralising both the political economy of runaway production and its underlying reliance on white innocence.[58] Bringing together the discourses that inform *Midsommar*, such as horror's racialised history, Hollywood service production in Eastern Europe, racial capitalism, and Hungary's semi-peripheral condition, however, reignites the political significance of whiteness and power in Eastern Europe. It is a place where whiteness

lives in ambivalence: it has no apparent historical weight or presence, and therefore can be disregarded, rendered a fantasy. At the same time, it is the heart of whiteness, its last resource, where its historical power is still *enacted* seriously – precisely because it is unfettered by historical reflection and thus mitigation and criticism.[59] This transparency of whiteness not only sustains retrograde white supremacist convictions among the East European factions of the global right but also allows media production companies to hang their US-based or Western diversity politics at the door when they enter semi-peripheral East European locations.

East European whiteness provides a shifting, malleable resource to pick from: for East European states and identities, it provides a proof of Europeanness, but also a victim status that justifies illiberal white nationalism; for the European Union's political centre, a waste disposal for expelling 'bad' Europeanness and guilt over continuing to treat Eastern Europe as a backwater place of industrial and market expansion while using East Europeans as scapegoats for xenophobic fearmongering at home. For the mobile media industries, the lack of a stable identity provides substitutable white 'European' places, people, and stories at lower cost and free of guilt. Whiteness is the invisible, inutterable, yet omnipresent condition and exchange value of such negotiations.

Richard Dyer wrote that only non-whiteness can give whiteness substance. But what happens when another shade of whiteness gives whiteness cover, a place to launder its own ongoing implication in racial capitalism? And, does this peripheral whiteness – potent and unstable at the same time – foreground the fundamental fantasy of whiteness, or whiteness as fantasy?

Notes

1 Tom Birkett, 'US Capitol Riot: The Myths Behind the Tattoos Worn by "QAnon Shaman" Jake Angeli', *The Conversation*, 11 January 2021, https://theconversation.com/us-capitol-riot-the-myths-behind-the-tattoos-worn-by-qanon-shaman-jake-angeli-152996 (accessed 15 June 2023).

2 Eugene 'Joey' Albin and Julie A. Ward, '*Midsommar*'s Nordic Nationalism and Neo-Confederate Nostalgia', *Film Quarterly*, 30 October 2020, https://filmquarterly.org/2020/10/30/midsommars-nordic-nationalism-and-neo-confederate-nostalgia/ (accessed 15 June 2023).

3 The production companies are A24, B-Reel Films, Nordisk Film, and Square Peg. See also Alissa Wilkinson, 'Ari Aster on his New Film *Midsommar*: "I Keep Telling People I Want it to be Confusing"', *Vox*, 2 July 2019, www.vox.com/culture/2019/7/2/18744431/ari-aster-midsommar-interview-spoilers (accessed 15 June 2023). Aster doesn't mention the shooting location even once in this interview. See also Emily Yoshida, '"I Really Don't Know What I've Done". Director Ari

Aster Attempts to Explain How He Got from *Hereditary* to *Midsommar* in Two and a Half Years', *Vulture*, 1 July 2019, www.vulture.com/2019/07/ari-aster-midsommar-interview.html (accessed 15 June 2023) ('I realized we couldn't afford to make this film in Sweden, so we decided to shoot in Hungary,' Aster explains).

4 Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

5 Charles W. Mills, 'White Ignorance', in Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (eds), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), 13–38.

6 Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, 'Racism without Racists: "Killing me Softly" with Color Blindness', in César Augusto Rossatto, Tickie Lee Alleen, and Marc Pruyn (eds), *Reinventing Critical Pedagogy: Widening the Circle of Anti-Oppressive Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 21–34.

7 Dušan I. Bjelić, 'Toward a Genealogy of the Balkan Discourses on Race', *Interventions*, 20:6 (2018), 906–29.

8 Jan Kubik, 'Rightward Populist Rebellion in East-Central Europe: Anxieties, Proselytization and the Rebirth of Mythical Thinking', *Newsnet: News of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies*, 61:1 (2021), 1–6. www.aseees.org/sites/default/files/downloads/january%202021%20final.pdf (accessed 12 January 2024).

9 See Catherine Baker, 'Postcoloniality Without Race? Racial Exceptionalism and Southeast European Cultural Studies', *Interventions*, 20:6 (2018), 759–84; Bjelić, 'Genealogy'; Manuela Boatcă, 'No Race to the Swift: Negotiating Racial Identity in Past and Present Eastern Europe', *Human Architecture: Journal of Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 5:1 (2006), 91–104; Joy Gleason Carew and Christina Kiaer, 'Critical Discussion Forum on Race and Bias', *Slavic Review*, 80:2 (2021), 203–6; Anikó Imre, 'Whiteness in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe: The Time of the Gypsies, the End of Race', in Alfred J. López (ed.), *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005), 79–102; Anikó Imre and Sudeep Dasgupta (eds), *VIEW: Journal of European Television History and Culture*, themed issue on 'Race and Europe's TV Histories', November 2021; Angéla Kóczé, 'Transgressing Borders: Challenging Racist and Sexist Epistemology', in Sam Beck and Ana Ivasiuc (eds), *Roma Activism: Reimagining Power and Knowledge* (New York: Berghahn, 2018); Anca Parvulescu, 'European Racial Triangulation', in Sandra Ponzanesi and Gianmaria Colpani (eds), *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe: Contexts, Practices and Politics* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015); Sunnie Rucker-Chang, 'African-American and Romani Filmic Representation and the "Posts" of Post-Civil Rights and Post-EU Expansion', *Critical Romani Studies*, 1:1 (2018), 132–48.

10 Ivan Kalmar, 'Race, Racialization and the East of the European Union: An Introduction', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49:6 (2023), 1465–80.

11 See Eszter Zimanyi, 'Unsettled Media: Documenting Refugees and Europe's Shifting Borders Along the Balkan Route' (PhD dissertation, University of Southern California, 2021); Kenneth P. Vogel and Benjamin Novak, 'Hungary's Leader

Fights Criticism in US via Vast Influence Campaign', *New York Times*, 4 October 2021; Hanebrink, this volume.

12 See Ivan Krastev, 'Paradoxes of the New Authoritarianism', *Journal of Democracy*, 22:2 (2011), 5–16; Adam Fabry, 'Neoliberalism, Crisis, and Authoritarian–Ethnicist Reaction: The Ascendancy of the Orban Regime', *Competition and Change*, 23:2 (2018), 165–91.

13 See Erin McElroy, 'Mediating the Tech Boom: Temporalities of Displacement and Resistance', *Journal of the New Media Caucus*, 13:1 (2017), 38–57.

14 Gergely Tóth, 'Tényleg itt van Amerika', *Telex*, 16 June 2022, https://telex.hu/kulfold/2022/06/16/orban-ner-trumpizmus-amerikai-politika (accessed 15 June 2023).

15 Peter Balogh, 'Clashing Geopolitical Self-Images?: The Strange Coexistence of Christian Bulwark and Eurasianism (Turanism) in Hungary', *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 63:6 (2022), 726–52; Linda McDowell, 'Old and New European Economic Migrants: Whiteness and Managed Migration Policies', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35:1 (2009), 19–36; Kasia Narkowicz, 'White Enough, Not White Enough: Racism and Racialisation among Poles in the UK', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49:6 (2023), 1534–51.

16 See Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Barnor Hesse, 'Racialized Modernity: An Analytics of White Mythologies', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30:4 (2007), 643–63; Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

17 Balogh, 'Clashing Geopolitical Self-Images?'; see Baker, this volume.

18 Balogh, 'Clashing Geopolitical Self-Images?'.

19 Unlike most of its neighbours and Poland, whose majority populations indeed identify as Christians, in Hungary this figure was only 52 per cent in 1989 and religiosity has not really grown ever since: Balogh, 'Clashing Geopolitical Self-Images?', 5.

20 Wladimir Fischer, 'Of Crescents and Essence, or Why Migrants' History Matters to the Question of "Central European Colonialism"', in Andrew Colin Gow (ed.), *Hyphenated Histories: Articulations of Central European Bildung and Slavic Studies in the Contemporary Academy* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 78.

21 Fischer, 'Crescents', 79–80.

22 Ibid., 75.

23 Ibid., 83.

24 Ibid., 84.

25 Ibid., 86.

26 Mark, this volume.

27 On Poland's periodic embrace of the *antemurale* position, see Mark, this volume.

28 Liz L. Fekete, 'Hungary: Power, Punishment and the "Christian-National Idea"', *Race and Class*, 57:4 (2016), 39–53.

29 Aleksandra Lewicki, ‘East–West Inequalities and the Ambiguous Racialisation of “Eastern Europeans”’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49:6 (2023), 1481–99.
30 Petr Szczepanik, Pavel Zahradka, Jakub Macek, and Paul Stepan, ‘Introduction: Theorizing Digital Peripheries’, in Petr Szczepanik, Pavel Zahradka, Jakub Macek, and Paul Stepan (eds), *Digital Peripheries: The Online Circulation of Audiovisual Content from a Small Market Perspective* (Cham: Springer Open, 2020).
31 Lewicki, ‘East–West Inequalities’; Catalina Iordache, ‘Netflix in Europe: Four Markets, Four Platforms?: A Comparative Analysis of Audio-Visual Offerings and Investment Strategies in Four EU States’, *Television and New Media*, 23:7 (2021), 721–42, 738.
32 They may take place in the past, from the Middle Ages through the Cold War, or in an imagined future. Recently, Budapest alone has doubled as a location for film and TV productions that include *The Last Kingdom*, *Black Widow, Shadow and Bone*, *Midsommar*, *The Witcher*, *Dune, Blade Runner 2049*, *The Martian*, *Terminator: Dark Fate*, *The Alienist*, *The Terror*, *Red Sparrow*, *World War Z*, *Hanna*, *Atomic Blonde*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Spy*, *The Spy*, and *Spy Game*. See Anikó Imre, ‘Spy from the Sky: From Big Brother to Big Data’, in Alice Lovejoy and Mari Pajala (eds), *Remapping Cold War Media: Institutions, Infrastructures, Networks, Exchanges* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2022).
33 See, for instance, a special section of the *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* on media industry studies (52:3 (2013)).
34 Anamik Saha, *Race and the Cultural Industries* (Chichester: Wiley, 2018), 16.
35 See Wilkinson, ‘Ari Aster’; Yoshida, ‘“I Really Don’t Know What I’ve Done”’.
36 Dawn Keetley, review of Adam Scovell, *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange*, *The Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, 16 (Autumn 2017), 134–8.
37 Spadoni remarks on moments in *Midsommar* that point to the film’s apparent political agenda, which include an early scene in which a book, *The Secret Nazi Language of the Uthark*, can be seen on Chris’ coffee table: Robert Spadoni, ‘*Midsommar*: Thing Theory’, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 37:3 (2020), 711–26.
38 Richard Dyer, ‘White’, *Screen*, 29:4 (1988), 44–65, 60.
39 Tyler Malone, ‘The Zombies of Karl Marx: Horror in Capitalism’s Wake’, *Literary Hub*, 31 October 2018, https://lithub.com/the-zombies-of-karl-marx-horror-in-capitalisms-wake/ (accessed 15 June 2023); see also Crystal Bartholovich, ‘Consumerism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Cannibalism’, in Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, and Margaret Iversen (eds), *Cannibalism and the Colonial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 204–37.
40 David Edelstein, ‘Ari Aster’s *Midsommar* is an Ambitious, Blurry Horror Trip’, *Vulture*, 3 July 2019, www.vulture.com/2019/07/midsommar-review-ari-asters-ambitious-blurry-horror-trip.html (accessed 15 June 2023).
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midsommar-the-horrors-of-white-sympathy (accessed 15 June 2023); see also Noor Al-Sibai, 'In *Midsommar*, Silent White Supremacy Shrieks Volumes', *Truthdig*, 2 August 2019, www.truthdig.com/articles/in-midsommar-silent-white-supremacy-shrieks-volumes/ (accessed 15 June 2023).

42 Hugh S. Manon, 'Living Dead Spaces: The Desire for the Local in the Films of George Romero', in John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel (eds), *Taking Place: Location and the Moving Image* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 332.

43 David Church, *Post-Horror: Art, Genre and Cultural Elevation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

44 See Dyer, 'White', 60–1.

45 Adam Scovell, *Folk Horror: Hours Dreadful and Things Strange* (Leighton Buzzard: Auteur, 2017), 17–18.

46 Recent works in this field include Allen's article, 'Relocating American Film History'; Amad, *Counter-Archive*; Bean, Kapse, and Horak, *Space and the Politics of Silent Cinema*; Conley, *Cartographic Cinema*; Couldry and McCarthy, *MediaSpace*; Elison, *The Neighborhood of Gods*; Elmer and Gasher, *Contracting Out Hollywood*; Fay, *Inhospitable World*; Fowler and Helfield, *Representing the Rural*; Gleich, *Hollywood in San Francisco*; Gleich and Webb, *Location Shooting*; Kirby, *Parallel Tracks*; Lamster, *Architecture and Film*; Mazumdar, *Bombay Cinema*; Mukherjee, *Cine-Ecology*; Penz and Koek, *Cinematic Urban Geographies*; Penz and Thomas, *Cinema and Architecture*; Rhodes, *Stupendous, Miserable City* and *Spectacle of Property*; Rhodes and Gorfinkel (eds), *Taking Place*; Ruoff, *Virtual Voyages*; Shiel and Fitzmaurice, *Cinema and the City*; Steimatsky, *Italian Locations*.

47 Elena Gorfinkel and John David Rhodes, 'Introduction: The Matter of Places', in Rhodes and Gorfinkel (eds), *Taking Place*, xi.

48 Gorfinkel and Rhodes, 'Introduction', xvii.

49 Ibid., xi.

50 Ibid., xii.

51 Yao, '*Midsommar*'.

52 A. A. Dowd, '*Midsommar* is a Deranged (and Funny!) Folk-Horror Nightmare from the Director of *Hereditary*', *AV Club*, 20 June 2019, https://film.avclub.com/midsommar-is-a-deranged-and-funny-folk-horror-nightm-1835707585 (accessed 20 December 2023).

53 A24 Podcasts, 'Deep Cuts with Ari Aster and Robert Eggers', 17 July 2019.

54 Edelstein, '*Midsommar*'.

55 Dowd, '*Midsommar*'.

56 Spadoni, '*Midsommar*', 713.

57 Ibid., 712.

58 There is only one review I have found that mentions this: 'The visitors' deaths reflect the first world's dependency on the extraction of resources and labor to maintain its vitality. The Nordic welfare state is often lauded as an example of a nation-state successfully prioritizing its populace's well-being. And yet this "success" relies on proximity to imperial powers, and comes at the expense of environmental destruction and violence around the world. Sweden's "neutrality"

over the past century has allowed it to benefit economically from indiscriminate global weapons sales and mining operations both at home and in former European colonies. Sweden even participated directly in the trans-Atlantic slave trade via its slave trading posts in Africa and its colonies such as Saint Barthélemy in the Caribbean. The film's production, alas, provides a contemporary example of these uneven power dynamics: To avoid Swedish labor laws that stipulate a maximum eight-hour workday in the Scandinavian country, Aster chose to film Midsommar in Hungary where the crew could legally work longer days. Even the fictional recreation of Sweden depends on workers in other countries facing fewer protections than workers in Sweden.': Albin and Ward, '*Midsommar*'s Nordic Nationalism'.

59 Catherine Baker's chapter in this volume testifies to how Southeast Europe serves as a resource of white nationalist imagination.

13

In pursuit of Western modernity: Russian-speaking migrants claiming whiteness in Helsinki

Daria Krivonos

Recent scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe has discussed a challenge to place the region across the North–South axis: it is neither accepted as a full member of Western modernity nor willing to align itself with the 'South'.[1] The east of Europe is often imagined as being in an eternal state of transition towards Western modernity and Europe proper.[2] Some scholars have argued that what holds postsocialist space together is no longer the common experience of socialism but a shared feeling of simultaneous difference from and resemblance to Europe.[3]

In this chapter, I argue that there is a need to situate East European subjects' aspirations for Western modernity in relation to coloniality, processes of racialisation, and the power structure of European whiteness. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in Helsinki in 2014–17, I analyse young post-Soviet migrants' search for more Western selves and economic mobility through migration. Young post-Soviet migrants structure their migration through the vision of Finland as a part of the West, a space where they can emancipate themselves as modern cosmopolitan subjects. I focus on the experiences of Russian and Estonian nationals living in Helsinki. The division of the world into 'the West and the rest' that structures their imaginaries in migration constructs post-Soviet space through the metaphors of stuckness and stagnation.[4] I demonstrate that young post-Soviet migrants' claims to belonging to Western modernity go hand in hand with racialising themselves as white, and devaluing other non-white subjects as undeserving and unproductive.[5]

This labour of distinction takes place in Finland – a country that has not been at the core of Western modernity. An EU member state since 1995, Finland emerged as an independent state out of the multinational Russian Empire in 1917 and has had a historically precarious relationship with whiteness and position between East and West, which, however, shifted since Finland joined NATO in 2023 in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Young Russian speakers' claims to whiteness are located in

the context of particular histories between Finland and Russia, and the subsequent racialisation of 'Russians' as Finland's Eastern Others, which intensified during Russia's war in Ukraine. Russian-speaking migrants – that is the people who are born outside of Finland and identify Russian as their mother tongue – represent the single largest migrant group in Finland, and predominantly come from Russia and Estonia.[6] The historical legacy of relations between Finland and the Russian Empire/Soviet Union, such as Finland being part of the Russian Empire until 1917, Finland's Civil War, and World War II, has led to Russian-speaking migrants and minorities being racialised as the Other to the normative whiteness of Finland.[7] As a result, Russian-speaking migrants often move to positions of a lower social status or unemployment. According to the most recent statistics, the Russian-speaking population in Finland has lower employment rates compared to the Finnish majority and many have jobs in low-paid sectors such as cleaning, construction, care, and logistics, which do not match their levels of education and work experience.[8]

The chapter is based on ethnographic research among young Russian-speaking migrants in Helsinki in 2014–17, thus, before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent limits put on EU cross-border mobility for Russian passport holders. I did observations in the context of integration, language, CV courses, as well as youth career counselling services that were part of the labour activation programme. I interviewed fifty-three young Russian-speaking migrants (20 to 32 years old), who came predominantly from Russia and Estonia, but also Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. In this chapter, I refer to the interviews conducted with migrants from Russia and Estonia. Most had already obtained vocational or higher degrees in their home countries. To my knowledge, all of them had a regular migrant status and some were naturalised Finnish citizens. All the interviews were conducted in Russian and translated into English. All the names of my research interlocutors mentioned in the chapter are pseudonyms.

In what follows, I first historicise Finland's whiteness and belonging to the West to show the inherent historical instability and porosity of whiteness, as well as circulation of racial discourses and practices in the peripheralised locations of Europe. I start my analysis by demonstrating how today's Finland embodies modernity to my interlocutors and a space where more valuable Western selves are possible as compared to post-Soviet space. I further show how these 'cosmopolitan' aspirations and pursuit for Europeanness go hand in hand with a racial grammar that excludes non-white minorities and migrants. I conclude by arguing that rather than interpreting Russian speakers' racialising discourses only through the lens of 'backward' East versus 'cosmopolitan' West, there is a need to see both Finland and post-Soviet countries as invested in whiteness and Europeanness.

Historicising Finland's whiteness and Europeanness

While the perception of fair-skinned Finns as non-white and non-European might be regarded as far-fetched for contemporary observers, the case of Finland powerfully illustrates the historical and geographical contextualisation of race and whiteness.[9] Internationally, Finland has an image of an equal country ranking high on global indexes such as freedom of the press, gender equality, PISA, happiness, and even tops the Good Country Index, which measures what each country in the world contributes to the good of humanity.[10] Bringing a critical race perspective into Finland's belonging to whiteness and Europeanness reveals the histories of oppression and violence that make belonging to whiteness and Europeanness possible in the locations that are not central to the discussion on postcoloniality and race.

Negotiations over Finnishness and whiteness, and their intersection, are not a recent phenomenon, nor are they ever fully established.[11] Although Finland is often thought of as innocent of racism and colonialism, racial thinking has played an important role in the nation-building and construction of national identities.[12] European racial theorists of the nineteenth century assigned Finns to a lower status in racial hierarchies and categorised them as non-white, non-European, and as related to the 'Eastern' or 'Mongolian race'. Race emerged as an issue in debates on Finnishness in the early 1900s among Finnish migrants in the US, with attempts to deny all Finns the right to naturalisation as US citizens on the racial grounds that Finns were 'Mongols' and thus ineligible.[13] In attempting to distance themselves from the 'Mongolian race', some Finnish scientists, including sociologists and anthropologists, became involved in forceful counter-arguments to prove that Finns were white and racially unrelated to Mongolians.[14] Producing Finns as white and belonging to Europe was based largely on racism against the indigenous Sámi people, the only indigenous people in the EU today. With the emergence of the modern state, assimilatory and repressive policies were also directed at other ethnicised and racialised minorities in the region, notably the Roma, Travellers, Jews, and the Tatars.[15] Consequently, the idea of racial order was firmly established in Finland, linking race and whiteness to nationhood.[16] And while Finnishness and whiteness have never been synonymous, they have often been presented as such.[17]

The whiteness of Finns was not taken for granted even in the postwar era.[18] Heikki Waris' 1948 study, 'The Structure of Finnish Society', underlined Finns' 'racial purity' by stating that there were three small and insignificant racial minority groups – the Sámi, Romany, and Jews – who were racially unrelated to Finns. Peter Kivisto and Johanna Leinonen have demonstrated that arguments relating to Finns belonging to the 'Caucasian race' were still ongoing in the 1950s with the publication of *Finlandia: The Racial Composition, the Language, and a Brief History of the Finnish People*, sponsored

by the Finnish American fraternal organisation.[19] The book sought to convince readers that Finns were 'Caucasians' – anthropologically, politically, and religiously. The 1952 Olympic Games and Armi Kuusela's crowning as Miss Universe were also important points in constructing Finland as part of whiteness, the 'civilised North', and belonging to Western Europe.[20] Finnish enterprises, missionary work, and individual people participated in the Swedish and broader European colonial endeavours in the Caribbean, North and South America, and Africa.[21]

Research on Finland's nation-building also emphasises Finland's geopolitical location between the East and the West. Some researchers argued that dis-identification from the barbaric 'East' represented by Russia has been one strategy through which to claim its own belonging to Western Europe.[22] The eastern border and proximity to Russia is often perceived in Finland itself as a dividing line between Europe and Asia, West and East, progress and stagnation, the good and the bad, 'if not between civilizations'.[23] Russianness has been racialised in Finland through references to eastness. Within this thinking, Russians are construed as more traditional, primitive, and less modern. Here, I understand racialisation as a process, through which dominant ideas and characteristics about certain populations are used to justify relations of power.[24] Despite coming from different countries and their own self-identifications, people from the post-Soviet space are often identified as 'Russians' in Finland not least because of their audible visibility.[25] To resist racialisation, migrants use various tactics of passing as white Finns, such as changing their surnames into those sounding more 'Finnish' or 'Swedish', working on their accents, and changing ways of dressing to approximate the norm of whiteness and improve their racial positioning.[26] Johanna Leinonen's research on the entanglement of gender and sexuality in East/West identity formation demonstrates how Finnish women marrying affluent Western men could bring Finnishness closer to the white ideal by marrying up in terms of race and class.[27] By contrast, Russian women marrying Finnish men did not get similar access to Westernness and whiteness. The discourse of gender equality is mobilised to create divisions between modern, civilised Nordic people and supposedly premodern, tradition-bound migrants.[28] In this context, migrant and minority women, such as women from Russia and other postsocialist countries, are confronted with sexualised and orientalised images of themselves vis-à-vis 'liberated' Nordic women.[29]

In the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the Russian–Finnish border and Finland's position as Russia's neighbour became one of the central topics in the Finnish public sphere. The question of 'Russian tourists' – in practice, people with Russian passports entering the EU with short-term type C visas – gained particular prominence. Once EU member states closed their airspace to Russian airlines in early spring 2022

and the Baltic countries closed their borders to the holders of Russian passports arriving with Schengen visas as a response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, for a while, the Russian–Finnish frontier remained the only open land border with the EU. Russian citizens entering Finland were deemed irresponsible holidaymakers who used Finland as a transit country to enjoy their time in Europe amid the bloody war. Another narrative constructed Russian passport holders entering Finland in 'large numbers' as a security threat, potential spies, and FSB agents infiltrating the EU member states. While the public debate mainly evolved around discourses of national security as well as moral and ethical arguments about continuing tourism during the war, the link between short-term Schengen visas – non-neutrally and misleadingly referred to as 'tourist visas' – and ability to seek asylum was hardly mentioned. When it comes to reaching European territory, short-term visas, including tourist visas, are actually the only alternative to irregular journeys for safety, which is the case not only for Russian citizens. International asylum law establishes that one should first leave a country to be able to apply for international protection, and research shows that Russian citizens already used short-term Schengen visas issued by Finland to flee the country in case of political persecution.[30] In the aftermath of the announcement of a military mobilisation in Russia in September 2022, Finland closed its border for holders of Russian passports travelling with short-term Schengen visas. In 2023, the Finnish Border Guard service started the construction of the eastern border barrier fence to 'maintain Finland's border security' and to prevent the instrumentalisation of 'illegal entry' to the country.[31] The barrier is expected to cover 200km of Finland's 1,300km-long border with Russia, and the total projected cost is estimated to reach around 380 million euros.[32]

In the following sections, drawing on the data collected before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, I discuss how young migrants from Russia and Estonia constructed Finland as part of the West, modernity, and progress they tried to align themselves with, inscribing themselves into a space of whiteness by mobilising Black/Muslim racialisation.

Finland as the global West

Despite its historically precarious relationship with whiteness and Europeanness, to young white post-Soviet migrants living in Helsinki, today's Finland embodies the West and a space that is distinctly different from what they see as the non-modern post-Soviet. My interlocutors talked extensively about their desire to live in the West, and Finland as a location that represents to them better living standards and a more Western lifestyle.[33] Marina told

me about her dreams of the West, when I asked her what had brought her to Finland:

> Since I was a child, I always wanted to move to the West ['na Zapad']. It has nothing to do with any economic or social issues, it is just that when I was a child, I used to visit our family friends living in Finland. I saw a huge difference in culture and society. The lifestyle and ways of thinking – I liked it much more here [Finland]. Obviously, at that time, I did not know the other side of the coin. I saw a life from a beautiful house, from the perspective of the people who were doing really well and did not have any economic problems. I did not know what migration would be like. I was just visiting it here and wanted to live here.

In Marina's account, Finland stands as part of the global West, which represents a 'different lifestyle' and 'ways of thinking'. These essentialised notions of difference are located on the temporal axis where the West represents the future, globality, and modernity. Here, Europeanness and/or Westernness is delinked from a purely geographical location. Helsinki used to be just 3.5 hours away from her hometown St Petersburg by fast train until the connection was cancelled in the aftermath of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Clearly, as Marina noted herself, her vision of the West and ideas of essentialised positive difference that she had assigned to Finland were an idealised picture. The conditions upon which she could gain entry to the West included precarious low-paid work and the struggles to renew a residence permit even after a few years of living in Finland. Despite her university education and language skills, she could only secure jobs in 'kebab restaurants, the cleaning sector with cash payments, translation agencies and teaching ballet'. At the time of our interview, Marina was doing a traineeship as part of the labour activation programme that specifically targeted working-class, non-white, and migrant youth. Marina's story shows a tension between young post-Soviet people's desires to be part of the global West and the condition upon which many of them become included in this contested space as precarious low-paid workers or non-workers.

I was also introduced to Ilya in the same labour activation programme where I met Marina. He talked about his family's migration to Finland from Estonia in terms of getting a 'normal life' and Finland being a 'normal Western country'. Once we went to have coffee in the food court of a shopping mall, he told me:

> When I was one year old, my parents decided that I should get a normal education and a normal life, because at that time the economic situation in Estonia was terrible. So they brought me to Finland.

Scholarly work has shown the persistence of the category of a 'normal life' across Eastern Europe.[34] Among other meanings, this notion that derives

from ethnographic material is often used to refer to the 'normal' life trajectories, which were disrupted by state socialism. Postsocialist everyday life has been theorised as failing to provide the necessary conditions for achieving 'normal European life' in the vision of postsocialist subjects.[35] Postsocialist migration has been then understood as an aspiration to live a 'normal life' that can be provided by Western Europe. Ilya's family saw 'normal life' as achievable in Finland in contrast to Estonia, which would fail to provide access to normality. Return to 'normality' is often seen in similar terms as a 'return to Europe', particularly in postsocialist countries that joined the EU like Estonia. Previous scholarly work has also demonstrated how the narrative of 'normality' or a 'return to Europe' that dominates postsocialist Eastern Europe has been centred around the affirmation of civilisational whiteness, as I show in the second part of my analysis.[36]

My interlocutors framed migration to the West as a way of aligning with cosmopolitanism and modernity. Non-migration was seen as a form of wasting one's potential, which could not be fulfilled in their hometowns, as in the case of Olga:

> Something was eating away at me in my hometown, I wanted something else. I spoke English very well, I worked in a company that had a boss from the US, this influenced me too. What would I do with my skills at home? So all these things did influence me a lot. Then, the company closed so I thought now it was a chance to go [to the West].

Olga envisioned her hometown as a place with little potential for self-realisation as it was isolated from globality embodied to her by the 'West'. Olga acknowledged that the fact that her boss had come from the US did influence her decision to migrate since the US tends to represent the 'authentic' West. Instead of going to the US, however, Olga, like some other female interlocutors of mine, used an au pair visa as an entry channel to Finland. This means that her cultural capital such as language skills and education could hardly be fully used in the context of heavy domestic and care work, for which she was paid pocket money. Au pairing is officially framed as a cultural exchange rather than gendered and racialised labour, which is why au pairs do not get proper 'salaries' but 'pocket money'. Olga's life following migration was punctuated by the struggles to renew her residence permit as a non-EU citizen and to find full-time work. One of the few jobs that were available to many people like Olga was a job in the cleaning sector. Being made into a 'migrant worker' became a condition upon which a desired life in the West could become possible.[37]

Anna, one of the very few informants who managed to get a white-collar job in an office, told me a similar story of wanting to live a 'cosmopolitan' life:

> Since I was a kid, I wanted to live abroad, I wanted to converse in foreign languages and live among foreigners. Yes, indeed, the conditions of life are also important but, honestly, all my friends in St Petersburg are not doing any worse than me, they all found good jobs and earn as much as I do.

Anna talked specifically about her friend who got a degree in economics in a major and prestigious university in St Petersburg. A city of six million people with similar career opportunities in the field of economics was still seen by Anna as less 'global' compared to one-million-strong Helsinki. She saw her migration to Finland not in terms of better career opportunities but access to a more 'cosmopolitan' way of living. However, Anna's story and her success at finding a well-paid office job in an international company is rather an exception, as most of my research participants experienced social downgrading and faced difficulties in having their skills and knowledge recognised. Anna's story illustrates how in terms of conditions of access to career opportunities, living and working in the imagined West bears a higher symbolic value.

To sum up, my research interlocutors saw Finland as a part of Europe and the global West, a distinctly different space where one can emancipate oneself as a global cosmopolitan subject living a 'European' life. Within this imaginary, post-Soviet space takes a temporal 'catching up' position in relation to the West. At the same time, it becomes visible how being in the West becomes possible to many young Russian-speaking migrants through low-paid labour, deskilling, or unemployment. In what follows, I discuss how the images of the cosmopolitan West, to which young post-Soviet people aspire, go hand in hand with policing the boundaries of European whiteness.

Claims to whiteness

In this section, I analyse young post-Soviet migrants' cosmopolitan desires from the perspective of coloniality and 'global designs' – that is, the ways their desires of the West are complicit with the reproduction of racialised hierarchies of modernity.[38] Despite young Russian speakers' own racialised position as non-white 'whites' upon arrival, many argued that they have the right to be in Europe precisely because of their 'whiteness'. Rather than interpreting this vision from the perspective of whiteness as skin pigmentation, I suggest that young post-Soviet subjects bring and translate conceptions of racialised difference that derive from global racist imaginaries the region is part of.[39] In this global context, postsocialist countries have striven to become included in Europe 'proper' and even out-west the West by inscribing themselves into European whiteness.[40] In many conversations with young

Russian speakers, whiteness and race were coded as 'culture' and a capacity to be productive. When I asked Alisa if she ever faced discrimination in Finland, she told me:

> Yes, they used to call me 'ryssä' [a pejorative term for Russians in Finland], they like to use it here. But this is not serious. Muslims face more discrimination. But honestly, I agree with the fact that they are discriminated more than us, because it is their fault that they do not learn Finnish culture. Why do they accept all these people here? So they would learn and accept Finnish culture, but Muslims keep living in their little world, they have no life goals.
>
> *Daria: Does it come from your own experience or where did you learn about this?*
>
> Yes I have a couple of acquaintances but mainly I read it in the newspapers. And in general, I saw that Muslim women are always on welfare together with their children. I get that they have few opportunities but it is rare to see them doing anything. Only one Muslim girl worked with me in [a popular retail shop]. But the rest, they all stay home and just get the services that the Finnish welfare state gives them.

Alisa admitted to her own experience of being racialised as a Russian and even being called racist names. Her talk about other racialised minorities as non-deserving and non-contributing is shaped by her own understanding of herself as a migrant, and what differentiates her from the majority population.[41] Admitting her own experience of everyday racism as a 'serious' issue would require recognising her own racialised status as not(-fully)-white. Instead, she quickly shifted the focus to those whose racialised position has been long present in Europe and became particularly visible in the years of arrival of a larger number of asylum seekers in Europe in 2015–16. By using the 'Muslim' figure as the alleged quintessential Other and a shorthand for impassable racial difference, Alisa attempted to ascend the racial hierarchy as a more deserving migrant.[42] In Finland, the cornerstone of national identity is the welfare state, and migration discourses are often constructed through the notion of deserving welfare benefits.[43] Alisa's resistance to the stigma of a welfare-dependent migrant by racialising herself as white can be understood as a form of 'racist migrant respectability', which is a strategy of dis-identification from being the migrant Other.[44] It is noteworthy that Alisa herself was unemployed, as I met her in the labour activation programme. But the imperative to be productive is shared among the non-labouring surplus population.[45] Capitalism racialises labour and imposes a regime of value that ascribes desirable traits to Europeanness and productiveness. Race provides the means to code and naturalise the distinctions between exploitable and non-exploitable, and deserving and undeserving, populations. Alisa's example makes visible how the boundaries of deservingness and

worker citizenship coincide with the boundaries of racial whiteness.[46] These processes, while converging with contemporary neoliberal discourses around productivity and employability, are in fact as old as colonialism itself and the myth of the 'lazy native'.[47]

A similar process of distancing from non-white Others took place when I interviewed Maxim:

> It is not that Finns really like us here. Especially when they are drunk, they can scream something nasty to you. But now, with all these refugees, they will start treating us better than earlier because they will see the difference. … They cannot behave, I can really see that. In my yard, there used to be only Finns. Now the Arabs, Somalis came, everything is dirty, this is horrible. You go to the courtyard and there is not a single Finn in there, not a single white face. Just last week I counted: fifteen people walking in a courtyard and all fifteen are dark ['tyomnyje'].

Similarly to Alisa's story, Maxim did recognise his own experience of everyday racism.[48] The fact that young post-Soviet migrants are largely excluded from membership in whiteness despite their phenotypical whiteness suggests that whiteness as a foundation for the whole racial system was established to reserve the privileges of the few.[49] This did not stop him from perpetuating racist discourses and distancing himself from those racialised as 'Arabs' or 'Somalis'. He equated non-white subjects with 'dirt' and disorder in the white space of his courtyard. When I asked my interlocutors why they do not see the position of other non-white minorities as somewhat similar to theirs – such as the difficulty of finding a decent job after migration – the frequent response was: 'We are different because we are white.' It is by bringing in the Muslim/Black figure racialised as illegal, criminal, and lazy that post-Soviet subjects' claims to whiteness are made. This becomes possible through the 'partial privilege' Maxim enjoys vis-à-vis other negatively racialised groups.[50] Finland's institutional and everyday racism against Muslim-identified and Black subjects was explicitly seen by Maxim as a chance to get better treatment from the white Finnish majority. 'Now they will start treating us better' is a powerful expression that reveals how structural and everyday violence against one racialised group is seen as an opportunity for the other to ascend the racial hierarchy – rather than to overthrow it. Maxim's emotional narrative makes explicit how the European racial imaginary and structures operate not only with a fixed white/non-white binary, but in a hierarchy that is contingent on reproducing racial violence against those positioned below.

Young post-Soviet people's attempts to ascend racial hierarchy are certainly not a new phenomenon. Historical studies on European migration to the US demonstrated the 'wages of whiteness' that newly arrived migrants received

by distancing themselves from Blackness and embracing anti-Black racism.[51] Vilna Bashi Treitler, in her analyses of ethnic groups and their trajectories within a racial hierarchy, argues that a successful ethnic project – that is, an ability to improve one's own racial status – is based on *not* threatening the racial status quo:

> One may become a racializer, even a racist, and be rewarded for it; but a group that both embraces human difference and equally values all human beings will likely be punished for such progressive and enlightened thinking – particularly if they broadcast these ideas while holding a position at the racial nadir.[52]

Their marginalised status notwithstanding, my research interlocutors continue to play the racial game of pledging allegiance to European whiteness. Historically, European colonial projects shifted to differently racialised groups – from Black slavery to indentured 'coolie' labour to migrant workers – depending on the political and economic demands.[53] Different forms of racism have been thus constitutive of one another as Europe's colonial imagination has always worked by grading *all* humanity in space, and putting differently racialised groups in competition with each other.

Despite young Russian speakers' attempts to ascend a hierarchy of whiteness, the Russian-speaking population of Helsinki continues to occupy low-paid labour market positions and continues to suffer discrimination and unemployment. Racism against non-white Others brings no immediate material rewards and does not make them 'white', as certain studies on the racialisation of Eastern European migration have suggested.[54] Young Russian-speaking migrants' claims to whiteness as an attempt to generate alternative value as deserving white subjects remain unrecognised by the white majority population.[55]

Some explanations for Eastern European migrants' racism against Black and Muslim-identified subjects suggested that these migrants only encounter racial difference after their migration as there is a lack of colour difference in their countries of origin,[56] or that their racism is an unusual 'pathological' modality of their integration. But these explanations ignore the fact that popular cultural imaginations are deeply racialised, and that it is possible to have racialised fantasies and views on Black subjects without Black subjects' physical presence.[57] It also constructs Eastern Europe as an exceptionally homogenous white space ignoring the histories of people racialised as non-white and the fact that the metaphors of Blackness have been used to describe its own non-white Others.[58] This is why, as Piro Rexhepi argues, decoloniality of the region should be only considered from its margins, to take complicity with racial violence seriously and not reinscribe the region into a 'white enclosure'.[59] Finally, the assumption about the lack of colour

difference ignores the fact that socialist states have a history of global and grassroots connections with decolonised states, and ‘alternative globalizations’ that sidestepped the West.[60]

I argue that these claims to whiteness derive from a positioning of post-Soviet space in the global hierarchies of whiteness and Europeanness. Individuals not only learn about the working of racial structures after migration but also *bring* transnational racialised knowledge of global hierarchies and a sense of their own place in the world.[61] The notion of ‘secondary Eurocentrism’ is helpful in capturing the position of young post-Soviet migrants as being both racialised as not-fully-white and racialising non-white Others.[62] The term refers to the derivative discourse that reproduces racialised, civilisational ideas of Europeanness. ‘Secondary Eurocentrism’ can be characterised as reproducing civilisational ideas of progress, whiteness, and Europeanness, yet never recognised as a liberal rational subject by the Western core. On the one hand, the Russian Empire/Soviet Union/Russia has constituted itself as an empire with a ‘modernizing’ mission in relation to those racialised as non-white.[63] On the other, it has been considered as a not-quite-Western and not-quite-capitalist empire of modernity, ‘a Janus-faced racialized empire’ considered as the Other to the West.[64] European post-Soviet space is deeply entangled with a Eurocentric project structured by the norm of whiteness.

Conclusion

Young post-Soviet people’s migration to Helsinki is a privileged case to analyse the policing of European whiteness in the locations that are construed as demarcating ‘civilisational’ borderlands. As I make final edits to this chapter in late 2022, the Finnish Parliament, with the support of all political parties, including the Left and the Greens, is endorsing the construction of a partial fence on the border with Russia. What was considered as a ‘Trump aberration’ just a few years ago is now a normalised reality in a Nordic country often imagined through the lens of exceptionalism. The central argument in support of the border fence is not only that Russia and Russians are a security threat, but also that the scenario of ‘hybrid attacks’ and the ‘crisis’ on the Polish–Belarusian border can be strategically manufactured by the Russian government on the Russian–Finnish border. To migration researchers it is no news that border fences fail to stop migration and do little but produce and maintain a white European identity vis-à-vis a racialised Other. In the context of my research, the symbolic border between the West and the non-West that my research interlocutors attempted to overcome

through migration to Finland is gaining a material embodiment, and the window to become 'European' has been closed. While Russian-speaking migrants tried to claim their whiteness and thus belonging to the West through racism against non-white Others, they now were moved even further from the margins of whiteness, at least, in the EU context.

This is another moment when the boundaries of European whiteness have partially shifted again. Despite their peripheral status and distance from global Western metropoles, both Finland and post-Soviet countries are part of the same globally connected world structured by racialised hierarchies of modernity, civilisation, and Europeanness, and actively attempt to write themselves into the global core. Young Russian speakers' migration to the periphery of Europe demonstrates attachments to the West and whiteness in the locations that are not typically included in the discussion on the 'postcolonial' yet are complicit with the making and maintenance of European whiteness.

I have shown in my analysis that a racialised mode of organising the world into 'the West and the rest', modern and non-modern spaces, is central to young Russian speakers' migratory imagination.[65] This construction of valuable selves that can be achieved only in the West reveals migrants' vision of post-Soviet space as not having made it into Western modernity. Their claims to a modern Western living are deeply racialised and complicit with excluding non-white subjects from belonging to Europe. The ways young Russian-speaking migrants embrace and attempt to invest in their whiteness demonstrate how 'this whole [racial] system is a trick played on all of us, to ensure that we agree to use and abuse people and support racial policies *that actually go against us*'.[66] The violent racial system remains secure as racialised minorities compete with each other for a higher racial status.

Young Russian speakers' conceptualisations of themselves as aspiring Westerners through migration should be placed within global histories and connections that enable the idea of the West as a racialised space of post-colonial whiteness. Scholarly use of a shorthand East/West distinction that positions postsocialist countries as illiberal, 'more racist', and the opposite to the 'superior moral' West fails to acknowledge the fact that the region's political practices can be situated within a Western episteme and the norm of European racial whiteness.[67] Post-Soviet subjects' insistence on their whiteness as a claim to belonging to Western modernity cannot be analytically separated from Europe's own deep embeddedness in the histories of racial violence and colonialism that made associations with whiteness possible. My research interlocutors' claims to whiteness as they attempt to reach for Western modernity are a powerful reminder that race is not a matter of the past or something that exists on the margins of political culture but central

to modernity and the idea of the West itself, even for those located on its margins.

Notes

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14

The 'perpetual foreigner' in Serbia: on being marked and unmarked in a 'raceless' state

Sunnie Rucker-Chang

> Looking at David's photograph on her desk, I think of the difference between Europe and the United States: had he been in America instead of Italy, this same little boy would have become American. In Italy neither he, nor indeed his offspring, will ever be Italian, citizens of Italy. But his white peers, whose parents come from Albania or Bosnia, will become Italian, as will their progeny.
>
> Slavenka Drakulić, *Café Europa Revisited: How to Survive Post-Communism*[1]

On 'small numbers' and being marked or unmarked in Europe

The majority population of any given society will establish the social *norm*, and, in doing so, articulate what is acceptable and what lies outside the boundaries of who or what belongs, and who has or does not have power. Such social orders are, unsurprisingly, maintained for the benefit of the majority.[2] These structures reinforce belonging and difference as well as categories – social, political, cultural, religious, and racial, among other things. The power that comes from the majorities, in former Yugoslav countries, confirms their invisibility as members of the 'unmarked' majority. Those majorities make the rules, create, and confirm structures that define how the society functions, particularly as it relates to members of majority and minority populations. These structures likewise cement who in the society are among 'small numbers' as they are cast in the shadow of the majority and threaten the complete dominance of the majority.[3] People included in the 'small numbers' of a population become marked by way of their distance from the majority population, based, in part, on how that population is defined.

In Western societies race has served as the primary way to denote who is marked and unmarked. Its origins lie in empire and are reinforced through

the ongoing processes of coloniality.[4] In traditional scholarship on postsocialist republics in Europe, meanwhile, hierarchies have traditionally been articulated using the language of ethnicity and religion undergirded by the idea that a history of empire was necessary to produce racial hierarchies. Moreover, the inveterate peripheral European position of Central and Southeast European polities rendered their populations racialised, by way of political and cultural difference from the 'West' and 'Europe'. They were/are subject to a cultural racism that for some was even akin to Blackness.[5] Ethnicity assumes a similar position among different groups, however, and the term essentially does the work of 'race'.[6] The prominence of 'ethnicity' fosters claims to a racially innocent position that belies the history and structural racisms that affect those who are marginalised in the region.[7]

As a number of scholars, including Catherine Baker, Dušan Bjelić, Bolaji Balogun, Angéla Kóczé, Martin Rovid, Piro Rexhepi, Chelsi West Ohueri, and myself have argued, social hierarchies present in postsocialist East European societies define aspects of internal racial logics.[8] The hierarchies accommodate certain categories, such as religion, nation, and some forms of ethnicity; but not others, as they are seen as incongruent with internal categories denoting sameness and difference. However, certain groups who may not conform to local categories, but are citizens and/or long-time residents of the countries, create dissonance within these socially constructed hierarchies. Understanding this dissonance is integral to perceiving how the social order of a certain society is structured and maintained, both in historic and contemporary contexts.

Against this backdrop, I analyse the racial-cultural order in Serbia as it relates to its populations with ancestral connections to non-European geographies. In other writings, I have discussed how Romani populations are positioned as coming from elsewhere and therefore marked by way of their non-European origins.[9] In this chapter, however, I turn to the non-white populations in Serbia, with a special emphasis on the Chinese and 'Black' populations with African heritage, to illustrate how their presence in the country challenges Serbia's ethno-racial composition. The position of the Chinese and Black diasporic populations as inveterate outsider(s), despite advances, highlights the fixity of the dominant racial category in Serbia, and this, I argue, confirms the idea of Serbia and Serbdom as unmarked, or 'white', in common, global, parlance. However, there is still an uneasiness around the use of the terms 'white' and 'whiteness' in Southeast Europe and in the field of Slavic and East European Studies, so I opt to use the term 'unmarked' as it aligns well with the basic premise of whiteness, as what is 'unexamined' or the 'category against which difference is constructed'.[10] Whiteness also confers daily privileges such as safe interactions with law enforcement, presumed national belonging based on phenotype, financial and

social benefits, and being the beneficiary of an entire system constructed to secure and maintain the privileges available only to a population's majority.[11] As Martha Mahoney notes, whiteness, or being 'unmarked' by the logic of this chapter, 'is as invisible as air' to those who possess it.[12] While the idea of 'whiteness' and 'white' may be terms with origins in the Western academy, it travels well as a concept to understand the unrecognised and unacknowledged privileges of majorities in societies, even if they themselves are negatively racialised outside of their cultural and geographical environs.

As such, unearthing whiteness or its meaning of being unmarked in postsocialist European societies perhaps does not require articulating what exists as an invisible norm so much as articulating what exists outside it. This includes the absence of belonging and privilege, and the simultaneity of being visible because of one's marked difference but also being invisible because one is among the 'small numbers'.[13] These features define the Chinese and Black diasporic populations in Serbia. In focusing on those who are marked, and lacking privilege in society, it is possible to understand the features and benefits of being unmarked in Serbian society and form a basis upon which to understand how whiteness, or something akin to it, functions there. As such, the notion of being marked or unmarked in Serbian society, and its implications, can offer a useful analytical tool to understand how difference in the region has been constructed over time.

The Chinese population offers scholars of the region an interesting case to illuminate the nature of being marked in Serbia. They are perceived as incompatible with the national, regional, and religious categories available in the region.[14] However, because the Chinese have been present in Europe for centuries and recognised as a community in the Balkans for decades, it is fair to state that their consistent presence should position them somewhere in the construction of European social structure. What the structure consistently shows, though, is that the Chinese lie outside those acceptable categories. The constant projection of Chinese individuals as outsiders, despite having a long history in Europe, provides an important example of how people without European origins are marked in the contemporary European setting. It can also provide insights into how these systems have worked throughout history as well, particularly in recognition of the important role that Europe played in the establishment and entrenchment of racial difference and racial hierarchies that date back to the fifteenth century but continue to shape Western systems of worth and belonging.[15]

Through this analysis, I will illustrate 'the fact of whiteness', or the idea that those defined by white racial identity, or positively racialised as white, benefit from systems of privilege and, in some cases, power.[16] This system

is not absolute. In fact, it is constantly changing and affected by class, gender, and even an individual's location.[17] It does indicate, however, that those racialised as white enjoy comparatively more social benefits globally when compared to those racialised as Black or brown.

To illustrate this point, I engage with the (Asian) American Studies concept of 'perpetual foreigner', as termed by Frank Wu, to address how such a concept can travel to European contexts and explain the persistent idea that those who are negatively racialised against the centrality of 'white' and persist as migrants or foreigners and are therefore Others, despite time in or connections to a country.[18] This reality illustrates how race and racialisation function as what Alana Lentin calls a 'technology of power' to construct and confirm negatively and positively racialised categories.[19] As Wendy Chun notes, 'understanding race and/as technology enables us to frame the discussion around ethics rather than around ontology, on modes of recognition and relation, rather than on being', which helps to explain the situatedness of race and racialisation and how it functions in different locales in relational but not entirely correlative ways.[20]

The history of Chinese migration to Europe

Small-scale Chinese migration to Europe began in the eighteenth century when 'a few Chinese scholars and servants associated with the Jesuits and other European Catholic missionaries found their way to Europe'.[21] Mobility increased in the nineteenth century, which Steven B. Miles defines as a period of 'mass migration'.[22] Chinese migrants who came to Europe came in two waves in the nineteenth century. One wave was Cantonese, connected to the British Empire and developed in the 1840s.[23] Another hailed from the two provinces that are overrepresented among contemporary Chinese migration both within China and to the Balkans today, Wenzhou Prefecture and Qing Tian County.[24] Chinese migration to Europe had a noticeable uptick following World War I, the majority of these migrants coming from Shan Dong province and working as labourers. The population of migrants hailing from Zhejiang 'boomed' briefly in the 1920s, but diminished to nearly zero when the majority of Chinese migrants travelled elsewhere to more profitable areas, such as to what was then the Japanese empire.[25] Overland migration from China to Europe increased in the 1990s, moving through the Russian Far East, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, including the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia through Slovenia and on to Western Europe. This long history of migration illustrates that Chinese people have been travelling to, and living in, Europe for centuries, so there is nothing new about their presence on the continent.

The phenomenon of Chinese migration to Europe, however, gained attention in the early 2000s owing, in part, to the increased mobility of Chinese citizens.[26] This has roots in the opening up ('gǎi gé kāi fàng'/改革開放) of China in the 1970s and beyond, and the broad issuing of passports in China in 1985 precipitated increased movement of their citizens westward to African countries, the Middle East, Hungary, and the countries that once comprised Yugoslavia.[27] The visible migration, and the resulting presence of Chinese citizens in these spaces, involved such small numbers that they initially were unnoticeable. Because of their distance from the majority populations, however, they became a small, relatively understudied, but important facet of the Eastern European postsocialist landscape.

The narrative of Chinese migration to Europe remains focused on their movement to 'the West', or spaces that conform to a particular imaginary of progress and economic stability. However, there was irregular migration throughout the continent, including to the Balkans, such as the anecdotal story of Ho Sen 'Milan' Vong (Wong), a Chinese man who according to a Croatian newspaper article from 2014 was the first person to emmigrate from China to Croatia in 1919, just after the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.[28] The story of his immigration as well as his experience in the region, first to Belgrade where he was helped by the Chinese consulate, and then to Croatia, expands the history of Chinese migration to Europe. Wong's story is an example of irregular migration, but it, together with the history of Afro-Albanians, Afro-Serbs, and even Roma in the region, further complicate and expand who is actually among the local population and who is of 'migrant origins', to use a term used in European countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.

Chinese migration to Serbia and the Balkans

The traditional narrative of Chinese migration to Serbia puts its beginning in 1996, just following the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts and at the beginning of the build-up to the war in Kosovo.[29] Since then, there have been populations of Chinese nationals hailing from various places in China and settling, temporarily and permanently, in Serbia both in urban and rural settings for at least two decades. Their initial arrival brought with it a form of disaster capitalism that arose following the collapse of the economies of the countries emerging as independent following the horrific Yugoslav Wars of the 1990s. Most new arrivals were merchants who came, at the expense of the Serbian government in the mid-1990s during Slobodan Milošević's government, to help establish Chinese-government-backed business in Serbia, but wound up staying to peddle inexpensive goods to a population lacking easy access

to most basic products because of sanctions from Western powers.[30] Serbs' limited purchasing power and minimal access to goods in the 1990s stood in great contrast to their then very recent past where capitalism and socialism blended, rendering state socialist Yugoslavia a society of comfort for those who could afford it.[31] When the Chinese shops emerged, they offered the possibility for average-income Serbs to move beyond subsistence living. Most items necessary for daily life, and even a few extravagances, could be purchased affordably at a local 'Chinese store' ('kineska prodavnica/kineska robna kuća'). In this way, China became Serbia's 'lifeline' which formed a type of symbiosis among many Serbian citizens and Chinese merchants.[32] The merchants provided Serbs with a constant flow of cheaply made goods helping Serbs to have a better quality of life and an increased quantity of household items, which was reminiscent of the recent, more prosperous and secure past.

Many early arrivals from China to Serbia became temporary residents, and their ambitions would eventually pull them elsewhere.[33] They came because of loosened visa restrictions offered by Milošević's government and stayed because of the economic opportunities available to them.[34] This connection to Milošević is important because it shapes one of the popular origin myths of the Chinese population in the country – namely that Milošević's spouse, Mira, intentionally brought them to Serbia to (illegally) vote and keep him in power.[35] Ultimately, this myth served as a basis for people in Serbia to scapegoat Chinese residents for Milošević's electoral victory in 1996.[36] They also became synonymous with the cheap goods they sold in their stores. In a generally homogeneous nation where the majority (Serbian) population was 80 per cent of the total population as of 2003, the Chinese stood out as 'foreigners', and, rather than being seen as an asset that afforded Serbs a more comfortable life, they were cast as taking opportunities away from Serbs.[37] Moreover, Serbs felt that they were being taken advantage of by Chinese merchants because they knew that they had no choice but to purchase what the Chinese offered. As such, the Chinese presence and kineska prodavnica became cast as necessary but unwanted, and the Chinese became marked as a vastly different Other.[38] Many of the Chinese merchants stayed in Serbia only while it was profitable, whereas others found the conditions in Serbia favourable for maintaining a successful business and stayed, and some even married locals.[39] Even with so much in-migration and out-migration of the population, there has been a persistent Chinese population in Serbia since the 1990s.

Although the economic outlook for Western Balkan countries has greatly improved since the postwar period of the late 1990s and early 2000s, purchasing power remains low for the average citizen, such that there is a need for

stores that sell inexpensive, but not necessarily cheap, goods. Contemporarily, however, the 'Chinese store' is no longer a feature of every Serbian street. Instead, shops with Chinese owners, such as the large department store chain Panda, with locations throughout Serbia and in the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, only obliquely hint to Chinese connections. These new stores no longer recall a post-conflict reality where goods were scarce and impossible for the average Serb to purchase elsewhere. A chain store like Panda, and other new stores, including online retailers like 'kineskarobnakuca.rs' or 'tanpopo.rs', seem now to represent the reach of Chinese economic power.

One Panda store in Belgrade, at 176 Kralja Aleksandra Boulevard, occupies a building of historical significance. This art nouveau building was built in 1908 as a store for Serbian officers and their troops, but, during the socialist period, became the state-owned department store Kluz, named after a World War II-era Yugoslav pilot.[40] Its memory is preserved by its catchy jingles and commercials, among which was one that featured Jungo Chokwe, known locally as Steve Hannington, or more affectionally in Serbia as 'Steva Sumadinac' ('Steve from Sumadija', a southern region of Serbia), for being one of the earliest Black international students from Kenya to arrive in socialist Yugoslavia in 1965.[41]

Given the history and symbolism of what is now the Panda department store, its current identity once again ties it to its original purpose; however, it now has Chinese owners, which marks it as 'foreign'. Other visible retail brands in Serbia (such as H&M, Mango, Zara, and Benetton) are also 'foreign' but distinctly European, so their presence in the country connects Serbia and the Serbian consumer to Europe by way of fashion and consumer trends. Billboards featuring these stores' wares dot the landscape of major cities throughout Europe, hinting that the general presence of brands deemed 'European' represent something desirable and aspirational even if the quality of the products are lower and the prices higher.[42] This is quite different than 'marked' stores like Panda. The European brands are unmarked and are a feature of the high street marketplace in most European cities, whereas the Chinese stores are not. There is likely a practical, political, and economic rationale for the existence of Chinese stores throughout Serbia but not in Western Europe. The Chinese electronic manufacturer Huawei is an exception, however, as various forms of advertising for the company are visible throughout Belgrade. For example, a skyscraper with the Huawei logo features prominently on the Belgrade horizon when travelling from old to New Belgrade, and there are multiple stand-alone Huawei stores that sell Huawei mobile phones in Belgrade. Given the troubled image of Huawei in 'the West', the widespread advertising and presence of Huawei products

in Serbia is indicative of a sustained Serbian distance from Europeanness, and consequently from whiteness of the European type.

Racial logics in a 'raceless' state

The consistent out-migration of people from China who have chosen to leave for a Western Balkan country since 1996, and the heightened visibility of refugees from Afghanistan and North and sub-Saharan Africa moving through and getting stuck in the Balkans since 2015, reveals the region's contemporary connection to transnational migration networks and a complicated demographic composition. Despite the small percentages of non-Serbian nationals passing through Serbia specifically, they challenge the cultural matrix and reveal unacknowledged underlying truths about the defining characteristics of the country, its people, and the dominant culture or what is unmarked in the society, a primary feature of 'whiteness'.

Scholars of European racial formation(s) including David Goldberg, Alana Lentin, and Mame Fatou-Niang, among others, have noted that being 'European' necessitates embracing colour-blindness, or the idea of not holding prejudices because of a person's colour, while unironically denying European belonging to those with visible markers of difference.[43] In Europe, individuals who cannot claim belonging in the unmarked categories are imagined as coming from elsewhere and are deemed to be outsiders if they were born and raised in a European country.[44] Similar racial hierarchies and dynamics are observable in Serbia, despite the fact that the country does not have the colonial history that is understood as a prerequisite for the production of race. To assert that racial logics *require* a colonial history, however, negates the global history of the region as well as the ties that the region has beyond itself, its actual histories, and practices. It also ignores the fact that the features of race and racialisation rely on local as well as transnational sociocultural norms to create and maintain difference. It also fails to 'tak[e] into account the imitation of Western modernity by Eastern Europe, with racism at its core'.[45] To understand power dynamics, racial hierarchies, and the fact of race in the region is to account for these three things collectively. Therein lie the local features of 'marked' and 'unmarked', which is key to revealing whiteness in its Serbian settings.

Regarding the role of transnational racial hierarches, Serbia's non-white and non-European populations help to demonstrate how transnational racial politics are embedded in the local Serbian context. This inability to imagine Serbia beyond its white citizens is not simply a factor for people of Chinese or African or African diasporic heritage; the same is true for other groups who are marked in Serbia. Like other European examples, including Germany,

the Netherlands, and the UK, difference in Serbia is coded through multiple registers of language, and through structural exclusionary practices including the denial of or unequal access to education, human rights, and citizenship.[46] While the term 'migrant' or being 'of migrant origins' is more frequently used in countries like Germany and the Netherlands, the term 'naši' ('ours') has been broadly used to denote proximity to being Serb and/or belonging.[47] Furthermore, the term 'migrant' has a parallel in the Serbian use of 'foreigner' ('stranac'/'strankinja') for non-white people in Serbia whatever their connections to or tenure in the country. The broad use of these terms for anyone who is not white helps to normalise the expectation of who is or can be Serb.

The late Serbian model Marija Curčić, for instance, was an 'Afro-Serb' who died an untimely death in 2018 at the very young age of twenty-five. She used that designation ('Afrosrb') herself and even adopted the nickname of 'Chocomuffin', presumably because of her brown skin, which came from her Congolese roots. She was actually a second-generation Afro-Serb and her story provides a specific example of how this idea of 'foreigner' is employed even for someone who was, in fact, Serb. In one interview with the Serbian television channel Mondo from 2016, the video for which is now private and unfortunately inaccessible, the woman conducting the interview stopped the flow of the conversation to say to viewers, 'You've probably noticed that Marija speaks Serbian well. It is because she is from here', to which Marija relays a story of her heritage and how people regularly spoke English to her when she was a child because they assumed that she was not Serb.[48] Clips of the video are now available in an online memorial to Curčić, where you can hear her speak about her experience growing up as an Afrosrb in Serbia.[49] The assumption that Curčić came from somewhere other than Serbia demonstrates the limits of being Serb and its connection to a particular phenotype that would be understood as white globally.

Black bodies were long present in the former Yugoslavia; despite the fact that their foreignness has been instrumentalised positively, they were still cemented as Other, even during the socialist period. This provides some context to Curčić's presumed difference. The socialist period in Yugoslavia presented a disruption in the long-constructed European negative image of African and African diasporic peoples and Africa as anti-modern, primitive, and unassimilable, as the regime professed and constructed friendships with nations of the Global South through the Non-Aligned Movement.[50] Despite a long European understanding of African difference from Europe, Yugoslav association with the African continent during the socialist period was meant to signal the possible reach of Yugoslav civility, infrastructure, and philanthropic generosity.[51]

Curčić's story and career as a model taps into a fascination with the Black female body and Black female sexuality which has deep roots dating back to the nineteenth century in Europe. These are closely associated with anthropological shows or 'human zoos' where the Black female body was put on display for onlookers to experience the exotic and foreign for themselves, an activity usually reserved for the nobility and landed classes. Displays of the Black female body were connected to sex and sexual performance as manifestations of a 'Euro-American gaze on African and Diasporic women's bodies'.[52] Desirable aspects of Blackness that emerge in music videos, print, and video modelling and music performance support the cultural imaginings of the Black female body and mark it as Other. The historical and contemporary manifestations of this phenomenon parallel the case of Steve Hannington and his appearance in the Kluz commercial mentioned above. These two examples illustrate an important feature of Blackness in Serbia (and across Yugoslavia) and its connections to Black American *cool*, which stem from associations with African-American culture, particularly fashion and music. In other words, Blackness was and remains deeply connected to a 'culture industry' tied to products, services, and a particular imaginary of cool.[53] These discussions around Black bodies and Blackness typically centre Western Europe. However, as Dejan Sretenović demonstrates, the fascination with the naked Black body, and the female body in particular, is present in early twentieth century travelogues by Dr Kosta Dinić, Rastko Petrović, and Milorad Rajčević, who were all Serbs.[54]

The principle of 'friendship' advanced during the socialist Yugoslav period through Non-Alignment allowed for the construction of new associations with Blackness and the Black body. As Sretenović notes, prior to Yugoslav association with Non-Alignment, there had been a belief that Africa was 'a land of darkness and ignorance'.[55] This revision only emerged out of political interest in the continent. In this vision, Africans could be 'little brothers' who could 'replace their leopard skins with workers' overalls'.[56] This point of view serves as a useful reminder that the solidarity of the Non-Aligned Movement was based on a particular view of race and difference that was constructed on the normalisation of the Yugoslav white body.[57]

A 2016 article from the Serbian daily *Blic* with the title 'Young Chinese Boy (7) Knows Serbian Better than Others in his Grade: He Has Progressed So Well He Helps His Mother Get Acclimatised' tells the story of a young boy of Chinese heritage who came to Serbia at four and has outpaced his classmates in learning Serbian.[58] The article emphasises this boy's difference, and also places parameters on the meaning of 'Serb' and on who is expected to speak the language well. Even though the boy is learning the language of the country where he has lived for nearly half his life, it is lauded as something special and exceptional because of his Chinese origins. The young

boy is featured as helping his mother get acclimatised to a country, which assumes that the mother cannot speak Serbian and is only there to perform the tasks of someone who would not need to have those abilities – someone who will be an inveterate 'foreigner'. Despite the obvious differences and individuals in the above examples, when considered collectively, the article about this young boy and the interview with Curčić provide examples of who is marked and therefore negatively racialised in Serbian society. As such, both examples display the same phenomenon in action whereby the differences vested in Africanness (or Blackness) and Asianness are too distant to be affiliated with 'Serb'. They also illustrate the circulation of transnational ideas of Asianness and Africanness, whereby Asianness is affiliated with productivity and success, and Africanness (Blackness) is affiliated with backwardness and only appreciated as a commodity. Together, they illustrate the limits of Serbian belonging and highlight that such belonging is one that is deeply connected to what is deemed unmarked, or simply 'Serb'. This in turn is clearly defined by a presumed universality intersecting with a European understanding of belonging, which privileges the majority and upholds the category of whiteness, rendering individuals 'marked' by way of their irreconcilable difference with 'Serb'.[59]

Mobility of the Chinese presence in Serbia

With China's increased economic importance and global significance has come a diversification of the Chinese population in Serbia and what appears to be an imprint on Southeast Europe that will inform the relationship of Serbia to China and the Chinese to Serbs and Serbia for the foreseeable future. The Chinese in Serbia continue to be defined by way of their relationship to China – or their foreignness – which will probably persist as China expands investment and influence in the region. It is undeniable that the contemporary reality of the Chinese presence in Serbia has grown in ways unimaginable since their unexpected arrival decades ago, and this relationship will presumably continue to change and develop in interesting but unforeseeable ways. What is clear, however, is that 'foreigner' or 'stranac'/'strankinja' are no longer sufficient to describe the presence of the Chinese in Serbia. Perhaps they never were.

According to data from the Serbian government, temporary residence permits were given to forty-three Chinese nationals on the basis of schooling in 2019.[60] While that number appears small, it is but a small representation of the steady flow of Chinese students studying in Serbia. As Chinese influence increases in the region, so too does the diversity of the Chinese presence of which the students are part. Chinese students in all levels of education are

studying in the country. Collectively these groups of students represent a broad swathe of young Chinese people seeking to have diverse educational experiences beyond their home country.

These students are expanding the sources of their education, but they actually follow in the footsteps of previous generations of Chinese students who came to study in Yugoslavia but stopped arriving in the 1970s.[61] In fact, there is a great deal of similarity between those previous generations of students and those currently in Serbia as their continued presence is really a recognition of the favourable relations between the countries. There are multiple opportunities for Chinese nationals to teach Chinese in Serbia, and for interested Serbs, the Confucius Institute offers multiple scholarship schemes to study Chinese in China and/or Serbia. The length of these programmes ranges from a few weeks to four years.[62] In addition to these, the Confucius Institute provides opportunities for language and culture study in Serbia in classrooms taught by Chinese or Serbian nationals. These language programmes begin in primary school, such that Chinese has become a regular offering in a number of schools in Serbia. There are now two established Confucius Institutes in Serbia: one in Belgrade, which was opened in 2006, and one in Novi Sad, which opened in 2014. Although the function and aims of Confucius centres have been regularly scrutinised, at least by Western countries, they are similar to other sites of soft power abroad offering language and cultural opportunities abroad, like the Cervantes Institute, Goethe Institut, British Council, or American Corners.

China's 'rise' has come with an increased interest in cultivating its image, similar to that which influential and prosperous nations have done in the past.[63] Confucius Institutes are advancing the study of *Chinese* language and culture. Although 'Chinese' may seem to be a neutral description of the language and culture, it has actually become shorthand for 'Mandarin', which is one of the many dialects of 'Chinese'. So the broad use of 'Chinese' (普通話/Pǔtōnghuà/'the common language') 'can be seen as something of a construct imposed on the Chinese people' which now has global implications.[64] Moreover, 'Chinese' culture has become typified by the ethnic *Han* majority that 'enjoys a powerful and hegemonic neutrality all its own' and operates 'like that of white' as an unmarked central identity in China despite the existence of fifty-six different 'Chinese' ethnicities.[65] So, the use of 'Chinese' to describe the linguistic and cultural programming at the Confucius Institutes in Serbia, and lack of emphasis on the heterogenous nature of 'China' and 'Chinese', advances a socioracial hierarchy positioning Han identity and the Mandarin language as 'Chinese', and therefore unmarked in China. Unpacking these categories provides nuance on how the Chinese in Europe, and beyond, see themselves against a Western racial order. This division beyond Black and white urges for a different category of analysis altogether.

Conclusion: on whiteness?

As a number of scholars have noted, whiteness plays an essential role in the definition of European majorities, and by extension the definition of 'small numbers'. Europe and European geography and culture are constructed against the imaginary of whiteness, and support the silences around race that have served to push the idea of those with roots outside the European continent as not European.[66] The Balkans have long been imagined as in Europe but not of it, so European belonging and the whiteness associated with it were partly denied to this region. To become European, then, was to become racially unmarked and thus assert European 'legitimacy'.[67] The arrival after 1945 of state socialism, which sought to distance itself from the capitalist West, rendered such a convergence effectively impossible. However, in the postsocialist context, once-socialist European countries could *work* to prove that they were 'unmarked', or white, similar in fashion to how European immigrants 'worked toward whiteness' in the US: by aligning themselves with what was unmarked, and distancing themselves from what did not accord with marked categories.[68] When considered in reference to the present period, it is possible to see that the anti-racist platform upon which so much socialist ideology was constructed as a mark of difference from 'the West' has become a forgotten legacy of a bygone era.

There is an idea of a fixed connection between epidermal homogeneity, whiteness, and citizenship throughout Europe, which affects who is believed to be able to claim the culture and speak the language (well).[69] Those individuals who can be defined in such a way are termed 'stranac'/'strankinja' in the Serbian case, indicating that the majority in a country do not change their perceptions of individuals' association with that country whatever their length of tenure. The consistent use of 'foreigner' to define individuals whose ancestry points to origins outside Europe is reminiscent of Wu's concept of 'perpetual foreigner syndrome', or of the notion that the majority group does not view those that exist outside of the traditional racial cultural matrix as belonging and therefore always considers them to constitute what Toni Morrison terms the 'not me'.[70]

It is necessary, of course, to articulate that there are differences between the inner workings of being a 'perpetual foreigner' in the US, a 'migrant' in Germany, and a 'stranac'/'strankinja' in Serbia. More immediately, Serbia is not an immigrant nation like the US or Germany. Serbia has been a sending rather than receiving nation of people; also, unlike both nations, Serbia does not have a history of conquest and resource extraction from other continents. However, to deny the various migratory flows of people who have contributed to the Serbian cultural landscape transhistorically is to subscribe to a unidimensional view of Yugoslav and Serbian history

as well as contribute to the erasure of the history of a number of groups in the region with origins outside of Europe. Among these were Afro-Albanians who came to the region as enslaved people during the Ottoman Empire whose descendants have resettled throughout the region, primarily in Montenegro and Albania.[71] There are also Roma who are considered 'Black' by some, yet they have a long history and important presence in the region.[72] The consistent flow of people from China since 1996, and the heightened visibility of refugees hailing primarily from North and West Africa who have been moving through and *getting stuck* in Serbia since 2015, further illustrates the heterogeneity of the nation. If the histories of Black and Chinese Europeans in the West of Europe are any example, the boundaries of what deem individuals as marked or unmarked in Serbia will remain unchanged, but those excluded from this majority will challenge them further as they claim an identity that is rightfully theirs. The mechanisms of their exclusion, meanwhile, affirm that in Serbia, and in other countries with similar relationships to European coloniality, there are inner workings of whiteness to historicise.

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15

Re-routing Eastern European whiteness: relational racialisation and historical proximity

Špela Drnovšek Zorko

Introduction: historicising Eastern European whiteness in postcolonial Britain

When I first mentioned to an acquaintance from Serbia that I was planning to research the meanings of race in the experiences of Eastern Europeans in Britain, their response was somewhat unexpected. 'Maybe you'll be able to tell me whether or not we're white', my acquaintance said. 'I've been wondering!'

I was embarking on this research in 2017, a time when the results of the Brexit referendum were still sending shockwaves through the British public. Commentators sought to come to grips with what the vote to leave the European Union (EU) had revealed about the state of the country as well as what it heralded.[1] Soon, freedom of movement solidified as a key 'red line' for a post-Brexit future.[2] Untangling the at times contradictory ways in which Brexit intersected with race, migration, and whiteness became a politically urgent concern, particularly in the face of popular interpretations that posited Brexit as the result of a disenfranchised white working class.[3] For many scholars, this meant grappling with how policies and attitudes towards EU citizens in the UK, some of whom were only very newly being discussed as 'migrants', overlapped with but also differed from the experiences of historically marginalised communities.[4] EU citizens from (Central-)Eastern Europe, and implicitly their racialisation, were at the heart of these debates.[5]

History has loomed large in these questions, particularly regarding the analytic utility of a historical lens in explaining Brexit and other forms of contemporary nativist nationalism.[6] The history that is the object of these debates – a history deemed either to have been suppressed, selectively remembered, or full-throatedly endorsed – is 'a *glorious* history, a glory that is most firmly rooted in the achievements of Empire'.[7] This history appears hand-in-hand with a 'complex, contradictory, brutal, and often deadly

nostalgia for the glory days of the White man's world'.[8] Brexit has thus been variously conceptualised as a 'confluence of empire imaginary, anti-EU sentiments, and paradoxically deep identitarian investment in European history',[9] an expression of Paul Gilroy's 'postcolonial melancholia',[10] and an expression of Britain as a 'postcolonial society' (with Robert Saunders making the important point that vestiges of empire have shaped *all* sides of the Brexit debate).[11] Yet concerns with the imperial-past-in-the-present are anything but merely academic. Research conducted over the past decade by University College London's Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, for instance, has meticulously tracked the material legacies of slave ownership on contemporary economic, cultural, and political life in Britain.[12] Even more pertinently, as Sivamohan Valluvan and Virinder Kalra put it, while the melancholia underpinning the Brexit project may be as anachronistic as it is delusional, it nevertheless has material consequences for 'the flesh and blood objects worthy of sharp rebuke'. Those objects are the EU and its citizens, 'but also, and more enduringly, the various iconic Others already in the nation's midst', whose presence has no direct correlation with the end of the EU free movement doctrine.[13]

This is the context in which my Serbian acquaintance posed their question about Eastern European whiteness, despite the fact that 'whiteness' is not at all afforded to everyone in the Eastern European region. In Serbia, as in other countries, legal and social structures have long maintained Romani minorities in positions of marginality.[14] Piro Rexhepi's recent work on the Balkan Route describes the enduring exclusion of some groups from whiteness as central to viewing the region as one of the 'peripheries of white supremacy' globally.[15] For a narrative of Eastern European whiteness to function, 'there has to be a continuous erasure of Roma and Muslim populations in both the symbolic and structural sense'.[16] The ambivalent whiteness of the pronoun 'we' in the question does nothing to unsettle these racial stratifications. Instead, it gestures towards the gaps in intelligibility that are opened up by migration, when whiteness as a '[form] of knowledge but also as [an] embodied disposition' becomes reassembled in relation to local and transnational racial formations.[17] How Eastern Europeans, EU citizens or otherwise, are discussed and represented in racial terms in the UK therefore also needs to be understood with regard to the specific schemas of British racism, immigration regimes, and histories of colonial domination and anti-colonial struggle.

Within the rapidly expanding social science scholarship on race and Eastern European migrants, the centrality of this point remains largely underdiscussed, with some exceptions.[18] For Vedrana Veličković, whose earlier work had pointed to the presence of Eastern European migrants in the UK as a potential 'intersection' between postsocialist and postcolonial

conjunctures,[19] the genre of contemporary literature known as BrexLit and its portrayal of Eastern European migrants projects Britain's 'unresolved social and historical ills' onto 'new' arrivals.[20] For Alyoxsa Tudor, existing analytical tools are insufficient for untangling these dynamics, and media reports and academic studies that unproblematically label the discrimination experienced by migrants from Eastern Europe as 'racism' risk eliding the complicity of some migrants from the region in the reproduction of white supremacy.[21] As they put it, 'what epistemological and theoretical concepts [do] we need to analyse the overlapping racist, anti-immigration and anti-European Union (EU) rhetoric that marks the pre- and post-Brexit moment in the United Kingdom?' – in ways that do not collapse the experiences of those who are positioned differently vis-à-vis 'postcolonial racism'?[22]

Tudor's answer, to distinguish between 'racism' and 'migratism', or 'ascription of migration', presents one avenue.[23] I share Tudor's unease with collapsing all experiences of discrimination and alienation into 'racism'. Drawing on the biographic narratives of migrant interlocutors who participated in two interview projects with me in 2013–15 and 2018–20, I nevertheless stay with the idea of Eastern Europeans' 'racialisation'. First, I do so precisely because race and migration are inseparable in the context of the British postcolony and the post-Brexit era. As such, discussions about 'race' figure prominently not only in the media and in academic commentaries, but also in the ways that both Eastern Europeans and members of historically marginalised communities take stock of their own relative positions, often drawing on the language of race and racism. Second, if 'postimperial thinking' in the post-Brexit moment truly is part of what Catherine Hall terms 'a history which implicates us all', then the routes that have brought different communities together are inextricable from race.[24] The puzzle can thus be posed as follows: how do we account for the ways in which differently positioned migrants 'work through the past', in Antoinette Burton's terms?[25] And how does Eastern European whiteness coalesce in this moment in which Eastern European migrants have largely figured as people who are 'here' without history?[26]

I suggest that the lens of relational racialisation, when paired with a keen interest in what Paul Gilroy refers to as 'route work', helps us link contemporary articulations of Eastern European white identities to histories of unfreedom and colonialism.[27] This chapter identifies distinct forms of whiteness which are narrated in relation to each other as well as to postcolonial blackness, including Eastern European whiteness, British/English whiteness, and (post)colonial whiteness. In this way the question of Eastern Europeans' racialisation becomes connected, in Gurminder Bhambra's sense of practicing 'connected sociologies', with the concern with postcolonial legacies that lies

at the heart of academic debates on Brexit and the rise of racist nationalisms in Britain and further afield.[28]

The 'routes' of relational racialisation

Although the terminology of 'routes' (as a play on 'roots') has been taken up more broadly to express an anti-essentialist view of migration and identity, it can most readily be traced to Gilroy's hugely influential work on the black diaspora.[29] Gilroy's work, along with the indelible contributions made to British cultural studies by the Jamaican-British scholar Stuart Hall, is situated in the transnational struggles against coloniality and racial capitalism, centring the hybrid cultural forms these struggles have given rise to. It thus provides a crucial foundation for contemporary postcolonial sociology which seeks to situate the British present within connected histories of empire, slavery, and resistance. The concept of 'routes' further offers a fruitful shorthand to express the idea that people, identities, cultural forms, dispositions, and memories – as well as attempts to make sense of them – all pass and circulate through multiple locations, both materially and figuratively. For Gilroy, this latter meaning of routes amounts to something more akin to a methodology than to an object of study, as he describes his concept of the black Atlantic as being 'rooted in and routed through the special stress that grows with the effort involved in trying to face (at least) two ways at once'.[30] I borrow this methodological sense of 'routing through' to explore how my interlocutors' narratives make sense of transnational histories of unfree labour and colonialism to organise contemporary meanings of race, in ways that are never entirely free from the tension of existing in a racially hierarchical society.

The idea that meanings of race are not fixed but circulate through embodied encounters and discursive registers is found in existing research on contemporary Eastern European migration. Based on his ethnographic research with Slovak Roma migrants in the UK, Jan Grill proposes the term 'migrating racialisations' for thinking about how 'race' migrates with people, both as a form of knowledge and as an embodied disposition.[31] Grill focuses on the 'relational knowledge' about race that is born out of migratory paths; the ways that 'Slovak Roma migrants … negotiate their identities in their migratory destinations in Great Britain where their mode of existence is not circumscribed by this specific Slovak formation of racialised Gypsyness'.[32] By illuminating the multinodal geographies of migrants' understandings of racial social positions, as well as highlighting a constituency of Eastern European migrants who are legible as non-white within the racial logics of their societies of origin but not those of the places in which they have settled,

his approach draws attention to racialisation as a malleable cross-border process. A similar move can be found in the work of Magdalena Nowicka, who highlights Polish migrants' transnational dimensions of race-making. Drawing on their '(mis)interpretations of multiracial relations through at least two frames – Poland and the UK', Nowicka emphasises the remixing of 'local forms of racism' into a 'European racism' – one which does not exempt white Eastern European migrants from reproducing racism against others.[33]

Grill and Nowicka's research on transnational relational racialisation provides a valuable basis for investigating how Eastern European migrant whiteness is 'historicised' at particular moments of encounter. Here, it may be useful to turn to Anca Parvulescu's work on 'European racial triangulation' and the relational chronotope of race in 'the former colonial West European metropolis'.[34] Drawing on the work of US political scientist Claire Jean Kim, Parvulescu discusses the opening scene of Michael Haneke's 2000 film *Code Unknown*, in which a trio of characters, including a middle-aged Romanian woman, Maria, interact briefly on a Parisian street.[35] Parvulescu notes that though the film's characters 'do not claim racial identities, [the] space of this Parisian encounter is saturated with race as an operative device', making them subject to its racial logics.[36] The encounter between the three characters is governed by a sense of unpredictability, underscoring that 'the three terms of the triangle *coproduce* each other … in multidirectional ways, with multiple, often contradictory and unstable effects'.[37] For Parvulescu, the encounter's meanings are given by the temporalities as well as the specific site of the characters' encounter, producing what she calls a 'chronotope' of racialisation. With regard to the Romanian character, this includes:

> the long history of European racialism (East Europeans as 'Slavs'), anti-Semitism (the 'Eastern European Jew' was both 'Eastern European' and 'Jew'), Europe's relation to the Balkans (Maria is styled as a Balkan woman), the history of the Roma in Europe (Maria's worry that Romanians might be mistaken for Roma), postcommunism (the Cold War orientalism attached to East Europeans), and Fortress Europe (the European divisions imposed through the Schengen Agreement).[38]

The relationships between the three characters *as well as* their spatiotemporal attachments (or detachments) from the Parisian postcolonial metropole thus result in a 'relational chronotope of European whiteness', which cannot be discerned without reference to the other points of the triangle.[39] Using less structuralist terminology emphasising movement and the cross-border circulations of migrant experiences, we might say that this chronotope is the result of the characters' 'routedness' through layered histories of racialisation, which all meet in the postcolonial city.

The film's characters are silent about the conditions of their encounter; in contrast, my interlocutors reflect on them explicitly. The remainder of this chapter analyses transcripts of audio-recorded interviews conducted as part of two distinct research projects: the first investigating intergenerational memories of former Yugoslavia among migrants from the region living in the UK (data collected 2013–15), and the second focusing on (Central-)East European migrants' articulations of race and coloniality, with a particular focus on postsocialist and postcolonial encounters (data collected 2018–20). Taking place either side of the Brexit referendum in 2016, they offer a view of both disjunctures and continuities. While my discussion is informed by the broader findings of both projects, it draws primarily on four in-depth interviews conducted with two women, one born in socialist Yugoslavia and the other in an East African country. In one case, the initial interview was conducted in 2014 and the second five years later; in the other, the two interviews were conducted approximately one month apart, in 2019. Conceived as semi-structured interviews, all four evolved into something closer to non-chronological life stories. Their methodological value lies not in their representativeness, but in illuminating insights which may otherwise go unexplored.

The following sections explore two key themes drawn from the interviews: the relative visibility (or audibility) of routes on the body and the body politic; and the contested capacity of past hurts, including slavery and colonial domination, to affect the present. The ultimate stakes of such a project are to ask whether it is ever possible for Eastern European whiteness to lean on shared histories of slavery and divergent histories of (anti-)colonialism to forge solidarity, or whether such attempts only serve to consolidate the relatively privileged position of some groups over others. Addressing this question can help us better historicise whiteness in postcolonial Britain by spotlighting the multiple routes, not just those relating to the British Empire, which shape the relationship between race and migration.

A story of three whitenesses

The first case I analyse portrays Eastern European whiteness as relative to both 'native' English whiteness and 'not-foreign' postcolonial whiteness. My initial interview with an interlocutor I call Dragica, a Yugoslav-born woman who settled in the UK in the 1980s, was conducted in London in 2014.[40] Dragica related a story about attending a friend's wedding in rural England several years previously – 'kind of… not in London', she described the location ruefully – only to find that her and her wedding date were 'the only foreigners in the village':

> Not only were we the only foreigners, I mean – we're white, of course, we are white people, yeah? There were no coloured people at all in that village.[41] … And the two of us were the only foreigners. I don't count those… there were a few people from South Africa, that's kind of the colonies. So we don't count those. … Yeah, they just have a different accent. But we were – okay, we have accents, but we kind of *look* different as well, we have high cheekbones.

Within the context of the interview, the anecdote was meant to illustrate Dragica's sense of belonging to London as opposed to a more expansive attachment to England or the UK. Her comment references tropes of the English village as an exclusively white space, a vision built on the denial of imperial conquest and the exclusion of people who are not white from English rural life.[42] What struck me most was Dragica's description of her (and her date's) whiteness in contrast to that of the white South African guests': the former is described as 'foreign' whiteness while the latter is not, even though both groups spoke 'accented' English. While Dragica's reference to 'looking different as well' (where 'cheekbones' emerged as a marker of physical difference) also implies a physiognomic form of visibility, for Dragica the crux of this difference lay in the white South African guests' postcolonial proximity to Englishness. Interestingly, her interpretation is here aligned with distinctions between white immigrants from the British dominions and from continental Europe during the time of the British Empire, when the accents of the former were labelled 'colonial' while the latter were considered 'foreign'.[43]

The second time we spoke, in early 2019, I asked Dragica whether she remembered telling me the wedding story five years earlier. She did remember, and responded to my request to expand on the difference between a white South African and herself:

> [The] United Kingdom [was] a kind of imperialist power in the past. That was the past, not now. I mean, they think they are but they're not now. … I think the fact [that] South Africans, they were the colonies… they're kind of like their domain. Whereas Yugoslavia was never that, so I always grew up somewhere where I had a sense of, we are an independent country. … And there was the Non-Aligned Movement. I grew up with a sense of being empowered.

Dragica's response emphasises the colonial connection between South Africa and Britain, which for her, much as it does for the 'postcolonial' scholars referenced in the chapter introduction, continues to play a significant role in contemporary self-perceptions of Britain as an imperialist power. She contrasted this history with the *lack* of (post)colonial dependency in the case of Yugoslavia, which gave her a powerful sense of a global identity.[44] While Dragica emphasised that everyone at the wedding had been 'very

lovely', she found it 'interesting to see that the two of us [were] the only people outside their British Empire'.

Her next comment further strengthened the association between foreignness and (not) belonging to the Empire that had figured in her narrative five years earlier. She also shifted her focus to British perceptions of the 'difference' between South Africans and Eastern Europeans. In doing so, Dragica highlighted this difference as a matter of British people's intimate knowledge – or rather, ignorance – of Yugoslavs' (and other Eastern Europeans') origins and their routedness into Britain:

> To me, somebody from South Africa is not perceived probably in the same way as somebody from Eastern Europe, who's got this funny accent and is [from] some back of beyond. They've probably never even heard of Yugoslavia. Whereas South Africa, oh, is kind of, 'There's history there, we were there.' … 'They're ours', [that] kind of thing. Whereas we are not. We are from Eastern Europe, they probably think we came from behind the Iron Curtain or something.[45] And it's a totally, totally different thing.

Across the two interviews, the distinction that Dragica draws between two forms of non-English whiteness at a village wedding rests on the radically different historical relationship between Britain and South Africa on the one hand, and Britain and socialist Yugoslavia (and Eastern Europe more generally) on the other. Furthermore, she narrates Eastern European whiteness not only in relation to postcolonial whiteness (i.e. both South African whiteness and English whiteness, enmeshed by Dragica's present-ing of the British Empire), but also to the British blackness missing from this rural setting. By the time of the second interview, Dragica's interpretation of multiple whitenesses leans more heavily on a postimperial lens than it does on issues of visible or audible difference. It may be tempting to ascribe this shift to the prevalence of historicising discourses after Brexit, and it may indeed be the case that the broader zeitgeist leant some weight to this interpretation. However, for Dragica, one particular aspect of the relational chronotope of whiteness (that of Yugoslavia as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement and not behind the Iron Curtain) is missing from British perceptions of Eastern Europeanness. Her insistence on making the alternative routes of her presence a part of the story reinforces the colonial routedness of the white South African guests, much as it bestows on Dragica a sense of worldliness denied by the dominant view of 'Eastern European migrants'.

In summation, Dragica's narration of Eastern European whiteness as a distinct formation is predicated not only on the temporal proximity of the British past to its present, with all that implies for where borders of symbolic 'foreignness' are erected, but also on the Yugoslav historical distance from that same present. In the following section, I turn to an interviewee whose

story of Eastern European whiteness further centres the relative proximity of past domination to racialised identities in the present. In puzzling through the capacity of past unfreedom to inflict injuries on the present, the narrative complicates overly simplistic attempts to establish an archive of solidarity between 'black' and 'Slav' slave experiences, while remaining sympathetic to underacknowledged histories of both postcolonial Africans and Eastern Europeans.

Eastern European whiteness as past injury: Slav/slave solidarities?

The second set of interviews was conducted in early 2019, with Gina, a black activist born in an East African Commonwealth country who had then been living in London for over a decade. Gina's perspective on whiteness is informed by 'inhabiting a white world as a non-white body', routed through the postcolonial metropolis in which she lives and the site-specific locations of her pro-migrant activism.[46] In our second interview, Gina told me a story about an argument she had had with a white friend with Eastern European heritage several years earlier, which she described as a 'racist trapdoor' opening beneath a long-standing friendship:

> [The friend] asked me why I'm more concerned about racial issues as opposed to being as passionate about environmental issues. I thought it was strange to be asked that and it annoyed me actually, it made me angry, really angry. … It's a mixture of maybe a bit of anger but more exasperation, like, 'How do I explain this to you?' But it's interesting because she was half-[Eastern European] and half-English. … But then I kind of associate this *less* with her [Eastern European] side, maybe I associate that comment more with her British side. Because that's the experience that I have. And I feel like for someone who is British and white, you have white privilege, right. Why would you think I wouldn't be concerned about slavery?

In retelling the incident, Gina attributed her friend's challenge not only to the friend's whiteness, but specifically to her *British* whiteness. Her remark goes against the grain of the widespread perception that Eastern Europeans are more racist than Brits, as evidenced by much of the media reporting of the racist abuse aimed at English football players by Bulgarian fans when the team played in Sofia in October 2019.[47] For Gina, the fact that her friend is British should have made it obvious to her why a black woman living in the UK would be concerned about racism; at the same time, the friend's lack of sensitivity was itself a potent example of British whiteness.

The conversation continued, raising the spectre of a different kind of whiteness:

> Then her comeback was, she asked me, 'Well, after all, it's not only black people who've been enslaved, and the name "slave" comes from Slavs.' To me, actually, that was interesting because I didn't know that much about the Slavs being enslaved. So, I was, like, 'Oh, okay, fine, so there were some white people who were enslaved in Europe.' I was, like, 'Okay, I need to read more about that.'

In referring to the origins of the English word 'slave', Gina's friend was far from the first to make the connection between the historical enslavement of people in what is broadly called Eastern Europe and contemporary white identities. In *The History of White People*, Nell Irvin Painter takes aim at the obsessive essentialisms of white US identity – predicated in large part on 'carving a permanent chasm of race between the free and the enslaved' – in a wide-ranging exploration of how people we today consider white became so through histories of conquest, enslavement, and migration, including on the shores of the Black Sea.[48] Dušan Bjelić, in turn, posits that the archive of Black Marxist thought, particularly Cedric J. Robinson's view on the origins of racial capitalism, represents a key resource for reassessing the Balkans in relation to Europe as a racial formation. Robinson saw the medieval trade in 'white' European slaves as the crucible of the transatlantic slave trade that followed.[49] For Bjelić, 'this historical inclusion could radically break up the Balkans scholars' habit of seeing the Balkans according to the ways in which Europe sees itself', that is, predicated on the global superiority of whiteness.[50]

In both these interventions, the inclusion of 'white' slavery into the historiography of racial identities is arguably aimed at breaking up a transnational sense of white solidarity that is based on occupying the position of the enslaver, rather than the enslaved. A slightly different take linking past enslavement to contemporary solidarity is made by Anja Jović Humphrey, in her work on the decades-long friendship between Aimé Césaire and the Dalmatian linguist Petar Guberina. Jović Humphrey suggests that the two men's sense of affinity based on their shared understanding of a 'brotherhood of suffering' reveals 'the deep and meaningful connections between black and Slavic – and *especially* Balkan Slavic – experiences'.[51] Based on this archive of affinity, she suggests that 'the discourse about blackness – without forcing a perfect overlap – may serve to inform the discourse on the Balkans'.[52]

The argument is valuable especially insofar as it reads with the grain of the two men's own understandings of their 'parallel lives', and the influence each had on the other's work.[53] It also brings into focus the possibility, as Catherine Baker puts it, for 'some Yugoslavs to identify Yugoslavia with Africa'.[54] In making the case that the Balkans might best be understood through the lens of *balkanitude* comparable to Césaire's *négritude*, however,

Jović Humphrey goes further than the two men's camaraderie, linking the etymology of the word 'slave' (which is echoed in other European languages) to her argument 'that the framework of négritude or blackness would be the most fruitful for the study of the Balkans'.[55] By drawing a direct line between the histories of enslavement of Africans and Slavs without dwelling on how this past manifests in the present, she leaves the Slav/slave dyad open to the same rhetorical move as that made by Gina's friend when she downplays the racism experienced by a black African woman. The friend's assertion of an injury comparable with the transatlantic slave trade claims for contemporary Eastern Europeans a share in 'the time of slavery', which Saidiya Hartman describes as '[being] coeval with the dead'.[56] In the relational chronotope narrated by Gina, the friend's whiteness is produced through a dismissal of racism routed through two distinct notions of proximity: whereas her British whiteness is based on a historical distancing from colonialism, the Eastern European whiteness she highlights is based on temporal proximity to a competing history of slavery.

However, Gina's response to the invocation of Slav/slave histories – the impulse to 'read more'– demonstrates that other forms of engagement are possible. My own response during the interview was to dismiss the contemporary relevance of historic 'Slavic' enslavement. Acknowledging my scepticism, Gina nevertheless reminded me not to downplay historical continuities as a matter of course, as is so often done by those who dismiss the ongoing repercussions of European colonialism. Here her argument is similar to that made by postcolonial sociologists and cultural theorists:

> I tend to think a lot of things that happen in the past do carry on to the future. … I think there's a lot in terms of their historical past that's still being played to date. … I get a lot of people who throw that back [at the] countries that have been recent colonies, and especially British or European colonies. For example, a lot of times I've been told, 'Well, you've had your independence now for at least fifty years… How come you still haven't – you don't have the colonisers there – you should have rebuilt your nations.'

Conclusion: re-routing Eastern European whiteness

This chapter has argued that migrant narratives provide crucial insights into how whiteness is experienced relationally, which go beyond the specific case of pre- and post-Brexit Britain. To 're-route' Eastern European whiteness means to pay attention to the discursive pathways that link contemporary racialised identities to the past, as differently positioned migrants strive to make sense of where they stand in relation to each other and to their sites of encounter. The relevance of the past in interpreting racial identities in

the present complicates any simple distinction between historical and contemporary approaches to studying Eastern European whiteness.

By engaging with my interlocutors' narratives about race, I have shown how particular encounters can produce situated understandings of Eastern European whiteness as a historically contingent formation in relation both to postcolonial whiteness and postcolonial blackness. I have argued for the importance of paying attention to how notions of temporal proximity and the historical routes of enslavement and colonialism shape individual understandings of how Eastern Europeans' trajectories sit alongside those of the 'iconic Others'[57] who have long been at the sharp end of immigration control and racialised ideas of the British nation. Dragica's understanding of Eastern European whiteness is shaped by the relative visibility of distinct whitenesses in an English village, inscribed not only through physiognomic or audible difference, but in relation to the imperial past and to Eastern Europe's place (or lack thereof) in the historical map that dictates meanings of foreignness. In Gina's narrative, Eastern European whiteness emerges in relation to British whiteness and postcolonial blackness through diverging interpretations of the role of the past in the present, highlighting some of the pitfalls of basing routes to solidarity solely on the marginalised proximity of the 'slave' and the 'Slav'. Together, the two demonstrate what it might look like to think relationally about race and Eastern European migrants in ways that highlight the concern with intersecting histories and their meeting points, as well as the tensions and mutual contradictions, that lies at the heart of 'route work'.

Finally, such an approach represents one intersection between studies of Eastern Europe and race, and the work done by postcolonial scholars who seek to connect contemporary manifestations of racism, white nativism, and right-wing authoritarianism in former colonial metropoles and settler colonial contexts to histories of empire.[58] As Stuart Hall already noted in 1991, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall when Cold War distinctions were widely expected to become a thing of the past, both 'Eastern Europe' and the 'Third World' are central to European identity, principally in anxieties around immigration and '"barbarians" … already inside its gate'.[59] Exploring the contemporary nuances of their relations through the narratives of those 'inside the gate' is crucial to advancing a political project capable of coalitional solidarity. The chapter thus makes an additional small move in the direction of an intellectual engagement between the black radical tradition and Eastern Europe, which Paul Stubbs has proposed as one way of formulating an explicitly anti-racist approach to the region's often contradictory position.[60] In doing so it contributes to the project of historicising whiteness in Central and Eastern Europe not as an isolated phenomenon, but in the fullness of

its global racial entanglements, not least through the possibilities for encounter provided by contemporary migratory routes.

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4 See, e.g., Akwugo Emejulu, 'On the Hideous Whiteness of Brexit: "Let Us Be Honest about Our Past and Our Present if We Truly Seek to Dismantle White Supremacy"', *Verso Blog*, 28 June 2016, www.versobooks.com/blogs/2733-on-the-hideous-whiteness-of-brexit-let-us-be-honest-about-our-past-and-our-present-if-we-truly-seek-to-dismantle-white-supremacy (accessed 14 November 2022); Katherine Botterill and Kathy Burrell, '(In)Visibility, Privilege and the Performance of Whiteness in Brexit Britain: Polish Migrants in Britain's Shifting Migration Regime', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 37:1 (2019), 23–8; Sivamohan Valluvan and Virinder S. Kalra, 'Racial Nationalisms: Brexit, Borders and Little Englander Contradictions', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42:14 (2019), 2393–412; Alyoxsa Tudor, 'Ascriptions of Migration: Racism, Migratism and Brexit', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 26:2 (2023), 230–48; Sivamohan Valluvan, *The Clamour of Nationalism: Race and Nation in Twenty-First-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

5 Since the terms 'Eastern Europe' and 'Central Europe' map principally onto historical and ideological as well as geographic constructs, maintaining any consistent distinctions between them is a Sisyphean task. I occasionally use the

term '(Central-)East Europe' to indicate that this indistinctness is reflected in the scholarship. However, this chapter primarily talks about 'Eastern Europeans', 'Eastern European migrants', and 'Eastern European whiteness', for two interrelated reasons: first, to reflect the terminology used by my interlocutors, and second, because it is the discursive construct 'Eastern Europe' that is most evocative in the British context.

6 Valluvan, *Clamour*; Valluvan and Kalra, 'Racial Nationalisms'; Caroline Koegler, Pavan Kumar Malreddy, and Marlena Tronicke, 'The Colonial Remains of Brexit: Empire Nostalgia and Narcissistic Nationalism', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 56:5 (2020), 585–92; Bhambra, 'Brexit'; Robert Saunders, 'Brexit and Empire: "Global Britain" and the Myth of Imperial Nostalgia', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 48:6 (2020), 1140–74; Antoinette Burton, 'When Was Brexit?: Reading Backward to the Present', *Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques*, 47:2 (2021), 1–8.

7 Valluvan, *Clamour*, 113, emphasis original.

8 Burton, 'When Was Brexit?', 2.

9 Koegler, Malreddy, and Tronicke, 'Colonial Remains', 586.

10 Valluvan and Kalra, 'Racial Nationalisms', 2408.

11 Saunders, 'Brexit and Empire', 1142.

12 This includes a family connection between former Prime Minister David Cameron and one of the many slaveowners paid a significant sum in compensation following the abolition of slavery in 1833: Caroline Davies, 'How Do We Know David Cameron Has Slave Owners in Family Background?', *Guardian*, 29 September 2015, www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/29/how-do-we-know-david-cameron-has-slave-owning-ancestor (accessed 14 November 2022).

13 Valluvan and Kalra, 'Racial Nationalisms', 2408.

14 Julija Sardelić, *The Fringes of Citizenship: Romani Minorities in Europe and Civic Marginalisation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 1–2.

15 Piro Rexhepi, *White Enclosures: Racial Capitalism and Coloniality along the Balkan Route* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023), 8.

16 Rexhepi, *White Enclosures*, 12–13.

17 Jan Grill, '"In England, They Don't Call You Black!": Migrating Racialisations and the Production of Roma Difference across Europe', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44:7 (2018), 1136–55, 1137.

18 See, e.g., Violetta Parutis, 'White, European, and Hardworking: East European Migrants' Relationships With Other Communities in London', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 42:2 (2011), 263–88; Linda McDowell, 'Old and New European Economic Migrants: Whiteness and Managed Migration Policies', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35:1 (2009), 19–36; Magdalena Nowicka, '"I Don't Mean to Sound Racist But …": Transforming Racism in Transnational Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41:5 (2018), 824–41; Grill, '"In England"', 1136–55; Špela Drnovšek Zorko, 'Articulations of Race and Genealogies of Encounter Among Former Yugoslav Migrants in Britain', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42:9 (2019), 1574–91; Botterill and Burrell, '(In)Visibility'; Alina Rzepnikowska, 'Racism and Xenophobia Experienced by Polish Migrants in the UK Before and After Brexit

Vote', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45:1 (2019), 61–77; Tudor, 'Ascriptions'; Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek and Irma Budginaite-Mackine, 'The Ambiguous Lives of "the Other Whites": Class and Racialisation of Eastern European Migrants in the UK', *Sociological Review*, 70:6 (2022), 1081–99; Aleksandra Lewicki, 'East–West Inequalities and the Ambiguous Racialisation of "Eastern Europeans"', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 49:6 (2023), 1481–99; Kasia Narkowicz, 'White Enough, Not White Enough: Racism and Racialisation among Poles in the UK', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 49:6 (2023), 1534–51.

19 Vedrana Veličković, 'Belated Alliances?: Tracing the Intersections between Postcolonialism and Postcommunism', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 48:2 (2012), 164–75, 170.

20 Vedrana Veličković, '"Eastern Europeans" and BrexLit', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 56:5 (2020), 648–61, 657.

21 Tudor, 'Ascriptions', 10. See also Drnovšek Zorko, 'Articulations', 1585.

22 Tudor, 'Ascriptions', 2.

23 Ibid., 10.

24 Hall quoted in Saunders, 'Brexit and Empire', 1142.

25 Burton, 'When Was Brexit?', 5.

26 It was, after all, the obscurity and unintelligibility of Eastern Europeans' 'routedness' into the UK that prompted a member of the public in 2010 to plaintively ask Prime Minister Gordon Brown, in a now-infamous pre-Brexit harbinger, 'where are they flocking from?': Veličković, '"Eastern Europeans"', 657.

27 Paul Gilroy, 'Route Work: The Black Atlantic and the Politics of Exile', in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds), *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London: Routledge, 1996), 17.

28 Gurminder K. Bhambra, *Connected Sociologies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

29 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Gilroy, 'Route Work'.

30 Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, 3.

31 Grill, '"In England"', 1136–55.

32 Ibid., 1136.

33 Nowicka, '"I Don't Mean to Sound Racist But …"', 13. Ivan Kalmar has suggested that the reproduction of racism by Central European migrants in the West stems from the unfulfilled promise of post-Communist transition, to restore what they deem to be their rightful European white privilege: Ivan Kalmar, *White But Not Quite: Central Europe's Illiberal Revolt* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2022), 4–5.

34 Anca Parvulescu, 'European Racial Triangulation', in Sandra Ponzanesi and Gianmaria Colpani (eds), *Postcolonial Transitions in Europe: Contexts, Practices and Politics* (London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2015), 25.

35 See Claire Jean Kim, 'The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans', *Politics and Society*, 27:1 (1999), 105–38.

36 Parvulescu, 'Triangulation', 36.

37 Ibid., 37, emphasis original.
38 Ibid., 38.
39 Ibid., 38.
40 All interlocutors' names are pseudonyms. I maintain a certain vagueness regarding biographical details to protect anonymity.
41 The interview was conducted in a mix of Serbo-Croatian and English, Dragica's second language. Given the broader context of our conversation, the term 'coloured people' appears to have been intended as a synonym for 'people of colour'. In our follow-up interview, Dragica used different phrasing to describe the same episode: 'there was no one there who was black, or mixed race or anything'.
42 Katharine Tyler, 'The English Village, Whiteness, Coloniality and Social Class', *Ethnicities*, 12:4 (2012), 427–44.
43 Wendy Webster, 'Home, Colonial and Foreign: Europe, Empire and the History of Migration in 20th-Century Britain', *History Compass*, 8:1 (2010), 32–50, 33.
44 For the significance of Yugoslav citizenship as a technology of worldliness, see Stef Jansen, 'After the Red Passport: Towards an Anthropology of the Everyday Geopolitics of Entrapment in the EU's "Immediate Outside"', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15:4 (2009), 815–32. For Yugoslav Non-Alignment as a reference point for an identity based on past solidarity with decolonising nations (although one that can co-exist happily with racist investments in white Europeanness), see Veličković, 'Belated Alliances?'; Catherine Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018); Drnovšek Zorko, 'Articulations'; Paul Stubbs, 'Colonialism, Racism, and Eastern Europe: Revisiting Whiteness and the Black Radical Tradition', *Sociological Forum*, 37:1 (2022), 311–19.
45 Unlike much of what is called Eastern Europe today, socialist Yugoslavia was not behind the Iron Curtain following Tito's dispute with Stalin in 1948. Dragica's reference to a tendency in the UK to equate Eastern Europe with Stalinism, and consequently with a sense of *essentialised* difference from Western Europe, was also mentioned by other interviewees.
46 Sara Ahmed, 'A Phenomenology of Whiteness', *Feminist Theory*, 8:2 (2007), 149–68, 150.
47 Marina Hyde, 'So: Bulgaria Bad, England Good? Actually This is Not as Black and White as it Seems', *Guardian*, 16 October 2019, www.theguardian.com/football/2019/oct/16/bulgaria-england-black-white-raheem-sterling-sofia (accessed 15 November 2022).
48 Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: Norton, 2010), 34. In a footnote on this page, Painter makes a direct connection between this two-thousand-year-long slave trade and 'the white slave trade in laborers and sex trade workers from eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Ukraine … [which] reappeared in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union'.
49 Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Penguin, 2021 [1983]).

50 Dušan Bjelić, 'Black Marxism, Racial Capitalism and the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean Complex: On the Abolition of Europe's Racial Supremacy' (paper presented at the Regional Studies Association Central and Eastern Europe Conference, University of Leipzig, 14–16 September 2022), 1, quoted with permission.
51 Anja Jović Humphrey, 'Aimé Césaire and "Another Face of Europe"', *MLN*, 129:5 (2014), 1117–48, 1118.
52 Jović Humphrey, 'Aimé Césaire', 1118.
53 Ibid., 1119.
54 Baker, *Race and the Yugoslav Region*, 110.
55 Jović Humphrey, 'Aimé Césaire', 1142.
56 Saidiya V. Hartman, 'The Time of Slavery', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 101:4 (2002), 757–77, 759.
57 Valluvan and Kalra, 'Racial Nationalisms', 2408.
58 Bhambra, 'Brexit'; see also Veličković, '"Eastern Europeans"'.
59 Stuart Hall, 'Europe's Other Self', *Marxism Today*, 18 (1991), 18–19, 19.
60 Stubbs, 'Colonialism', 316–17. See Dušan I. Bjelić, 'Toward a Genealogy of the Balkan Discourses on Race', *Interventions*, 20:6 (2018), 906–29; Bjelić, 'Black Marxism'.

16

Through the Balkans to Christchurch: Southeast Europe and global white nationalist historical mythology

Catherine Baker

In March 2019, a white Australian man who had settled in New Zealand plotted to commit mass shootings at three Christchurch mosques during Friday prayers, and killed fifty-one Muslim worshippers using legally purchased assault rifles before his arrest. Inspired by the 2011 Oslo/Utøya attacker, and other white nationalist lone-actor terrorists celebrated in the digital subcultures they all frequented, before setting out he had released an online manifesto steeped in the aesthetic culture of these online forums and contemporary global far-right conspiracy theories of 'white genocide', Muslim 'invasions', and a 'Great Replacement'. Aspiring to become a point of identification for other sympathisers by exploiting current digital technologies even further to try to become a point of identification for other sympathisers, he also livestreamed himself on Facebook driving to the first mosque and playing music his audience would have recognised as a well-known meme; the livestream continued as his attack began.[1] This massacre occurred half a world away from Europe, yet two details of his preparations indicated that Southeast Europe in particular played a constitutive part in his imagination of a global struggle between white Europeans and Islam: the names of warriors who fought Ottoman forces among the many slogans painted on his weapons, and the very song he livestreamed, a front-line folk-song about Radovan Karadžić created by Serb soldiers during the Yugoslav Wars.

For terrorism analysts, the Christchurch shooting marked a long-dreaded 'watershed' as the first livestreamed attack to be so widely shared and reuploaded in a crowdsourced attempt for it to enter mainstream public consciousness online.[2] The compassionate response by New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern drew widespread praise, and led to almost fifty governments and eight technology multinationals pledging to remove terrorist and violent extremist content online. Less well-known, except to specialists on political violence and Southeast Europe, is the troubling focus that the

shooting brought to how narratives of the region's history have been racialised in the global far-right imagination. These can be described as white nationalist narratives, since they assert the identity of a white people bound by ethnic ties and entitled to sovereignty and cultural superiority in territory they claim as their birthright. Both the Bosnian Genocide and the longer history of Christian–Ottoman warfare in the Balkans are reference points in contemporary Islamophobic far-right historical mythology.

This conjunction is not novel to the twenty-first century. As James Mark argues, certain early twentieth-century white supremacist authors like Lothrop Stoddard did include Slavs alongside other European peoples in the transnational 'citadel' of whiteness they imagined was under siege.[3] Whiteness, for Stoddard, represented a transnational ethnic and political identity-position in which injury to white interests anywhere harmed white interests everywhere – the same manoeuvre made when 'alt-right' communicators use (often exaggerated) examples of violence abroad to mobilise fear among sympathisers at home.[4] This active claim to a fixed, inherited white identity differs from critical race scholars' sense of 'whiteness' as the structural, intellectual, and affective sum of the legacies of European colonisation and the enslavement of Africans, yet such structures of whiteness foster the entitlements of global white nationalism. Its movements are grounded in particular nations, but exchange ideological, practical, and financial support. David Geary, Camilla Schofield, and Jennifer Sutton thus argue that, reacting to decolonisation and the transnationalised civil rights movement, white nationalism grew increasingly global after 1945.[5] Yet their 'global' concerns only the UK, the USA, Rhodesia, South Africa, and Australia, that is, the nations imagined as joined in visions of a white 'Anglosphere'.[6]

As Christchurch illustrated, white nationalism's networks, and especially its imagination, are more global. Transnational anglophone connections were, of course, pivotal to it: the Australian perpetrator, operating in New Zealand, alluded to UK and Canadian incidents on his weapons and US right-wingers in his manifesto. The very custom of releasing manifestos before mass far-right attacks indeed shows white nationalism's increasing transnationalisation:

> A manifesto issued by a Norwegian neo-Nazi inspired an Australian anti-immigrant fanatic, whose screed in turn inspired a Texan white supremacist [the August 2019 El Paso attacker] … [The perpetrator's] aforementioned weapon included names of far-right attackers from Canada, Sweden, Italy, and elsewhere.[7]

This analyst names two Western European countries and Canada, yet elides Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) into 'elsewhere'. Much other Western Christchurch coverage, too, swept over CEE's meanings to the perpetrator

and his sympathisers (despite frequent, mistaken Western tendencies to essentialise CEE as the 'most racist' part of Europe). Yet the far-right historical mythology of whiteness menaced by Muslim 'invasion' has systematically adopted historical narratives from this region, where since the mobilisation of mass national movements almost every nation has articulated a 'bulwark of Christianity' or 'antemurale Christianitatis' myth – that is, myths of the nation expressing military heroism and masculine virtue by defending Christianity against Islam.

Commenting on materials produced by the Christchurch perpetrator is ethically sensitive, especially given the consensus against circulating his content in New Zealand and Australia. Moreover, analysts including New Zealand's own investigative commission have often concluded his cultural and political references 'were just trolling exercises' within the online far-right culture of irony.[8] Nevertheless, as genocide scholar Dirk Moses contends, to explain how perpetrators' premises become thinkable, their genealogy must be traced.[9] As such, like recent scholars researching discourses on 'alt-right'-linked messageboards, the chapter reproduces no more information than necessary to explain the discursive practices it investigates.[10] These practices are the construction of a historical mythology of endless conflict between white Europeans and Islam, which does not just resemble but feeds directly on discursive strategies during the Yugoslav Wars which presented them as directly continuing past wars between national heroes and Ottoman foes.

Such interconnections break through the artificial separation between 'ethnic' and 'racial' that results from treating the Yugoslav Wars as simply an 'ethnic' reflection of patterns that manifest in the global North/West through 'race'. This chapter argues that both regions and patterns exist within one global history. Recent studies increasingly highlight the places of Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, and Russia in transnational white nationalist and far-right imaginaries, including Ivan Kalmar's diagnosis of Western illiberals' admiration for the 'Central and other East European claims to represent an unrepentant white superiority' expressed by figures such as Hungary's Viktor Orbán.[11] Journalists and extremism investigators have also begun documenting how Ukraine's numerically small and electorally unsuccessful far right has networked with European and US extreme right movements.[12] What has still however gone underappreciated outside the specialist literature on nationalism and genocide in Southeast Europe is the significance of another region, the Balkans, in white nationalist myth-making.

As Bosnian scholars such as Hariz Halilovich and Edin Hajdarpašić were able to immediately point out in providing the earliest insights into the Christchurch perpetrator's glorification of the Bosnian Genocide, the Balkans,

with their centuries-long Ottoman past, offer white nationalist movements another significant symbolic resource.[13] They are made into an example of Christian servitude under Islamic domination; a source of inspirational commanders and insurgents who resisted Ottoman rule; and 'proof' that violence in ethnically, religiously, and racially mixed populations is endemic. Within the Balkans, these discourses have themselves been themes of ethnonationalist nation-building projects and used to justify ethnic and religious persecution; since 1918 at least, Dušan Bjelić argues, these discourses of ethnicity have been wrapped around 'race'.[14] This itself may have helped such visions of ethnocentric sovereignty gain resonance on the transnational far right. Through transnational far-right digital spaces, ethnonationalist historical mythologies from Southeast Europe – up to and including Karadžić's 'legitimising' discourses for the Bosnian Genocide – fused with ultraconservative Islamophobic conspiracy theories to 'inspire' the Christchurch attack.

'Europe', whiteness, and far-right historical mythology

The overarching racialised narrative articulated by the Christchurch shooter, and adopted as a shared historical myth by global alt-right, identitarian, and white nationalist sympathisers, is the 'Great Replacement' conspiracy theory.[15] Originating in France's post-1968 'Nouvelle Droite', it takes its current name from a 2011 Renaud Camus book. In its illusory near future, Muslims will replace, outbreed, and eventually subjugate Christians and secular Europeans unless Muslim immigration stops immediately.[16] Simultaneously, the theory imagines so-called 'cultural Marxists' – especially educators – as traitors who undermine traditional values (including the traditional gender order), brainwash Westerners into accepting multiculturalism, and, in violent extremist narratives, deserve brutal reprisals.[17] Its historical myth thus contains a threatening future, a compromised present, and a 'glorious past' that must be restored, 'dominated by white, European men'.[18] Indeed, it foresees demographic catastrophe unless traditional patriarchal masculinity is defended to prevent the white Western family unit crumbling into gender nonconformity while Muslim birth rates grow.[19]

This conspiracy theory energised 'counter-jihad' bloggers after 9/11, who (pre-Camus) usually called it the 'Eurabia' myth, implying Muslims and Western traitors were conspiring to extend 'Arabia', the Muslim heartland, into Europe. Large sections of influential 'counter-jihad' blog posts and columns appeared in the Oslo/Utøya perpetrator's manifesto.[20] Sympathetic internet users subsequently blended the 'Eurabia'/'Great Replacement' ideas with (previously somewhat distinct) US white supremacist fantasies of 'white

genocide' into one single conspiracy theory.[21] 'Great Replacement' ideology meanwhile entered Global North political and intellectual life further, through polemical books like Camus' and through the networking of Donald Trump's ex-strategist Steve Bannon, who in gathering an international reactionary coalition was known to mention the 1683 Siege of Vienna alongside the 832 Battle of Tours and other Christian–Muslim clashes and ask his audience their role in the battle to come.[22] This pulled the seventeenth-century Habsburg/Ottoman frontier into one transhistorical framework with early medieval France and contemporary Islamism, anchoring the Balkans within this vision of Christian reconquest.

These conspiracy theories should be seen as not just motivated by religious/cultural antagonism, but as inherently racialised.[23] During the Global War on Terror, mainstream political debates racialised Muslims into a culture supposedly embodying an existential threat to Western values, giving credibility to far-right conspiracies about one unified Muslim enemy confronting a West defined by Christian and European descent.[24] These accelerated after the 2015 refugee crisis. With that West racialised as white, far-right sympathisers could equate defending against the 'replacement' of European culture with defending against 'white genocide' itself.[25] Both the Christchurch and Oslo/Utøya perpetrators tried to digitally and materially memorialise themselves as heroes in this myth.

Both attackers' manifestos and material preparations thus fantasised their authors as knights or crusaders, more specifically Templars, waging modern war against an ancient enemy. This served as individual psychological preparation to commit mass killing, but also, we can suggest, a conscious effort to become identification points for future perpetrators. The Christchurch shooter, indeed, harnessed contemporary online microcelebrity practices in livestreaming his attack with direct commentary, even shouting out to a star YouTube gaming streamer who shared the online right's 'ironic sensibility'.[26] These, and the aesthetics of first-person shooter games recreated by GoPro cameras, were his visual grammar.[27] Driving to the first mosque with a song honouring Karadžić tied a warped history of the Bosnian Genocide into the attack.

Amid the attack's multiplatform 'liveness', created as journalists and internet users strove to comprehend its facts and motives, was thus a rush to discover and explain the song.[28] Images are already argued to be 'powerful visual nodes' on social media 'that frame emotive public engagement with violent events'.[29] As video, they are also powerful *audio*visual nodes. As uncomfortable as it is to interrogate a song used in such violence, it is also important to question its possible meanings for a white Australian man committing a racist and Islamophobic attack, its origins, and how he might have encountered it – since the answers reveal networks connecting ideas

of nationhood, masculinity, Europeanness, and whiteness that have shaped the contemporary far right.

Christchurch and the glorification of the Bosnian Genocide

The song livestreamed before the attack is one of hundreds of newly composed folk songs produced on/near the frontline during the Yugoslav Wars. Soldiers throughout these wars engaged in semi-professional patriotic music production, with music, language, and themes typically emphasising the ethnicised symbolic boundary between singers' nations and their professed enemies.[30] First known as 'Karadžiću, vodi Srbe svoje' ('Karadžić, lead your Serbs') or by its first line of 'Od Bihaća do Petrovca sela' ('From Bihać to Petrovac village'), it praised Karadžić as a battlefield leader, and clearly supported his genocidal project of carving a separatist 'Republika Srpska' (RS) out of Bosnian territory.[31] Originally recorded on VHS, probably by a local video production house, it was likely uploaded to YouTube in the mid/late 2000s by a user sharing it with their ethnonational diaspora. Unlike many other such songs, it entered transnational digital culture when adopted as a meme by anglophone imageboards and gaming forums which called it 'Serbia Strong', or, Islamophobically and genocidally, 'Remove Kebab'.[32] These memes invited users to bond subculturally around transgressive laughter at upsetting topics, but also fulfilled a strategy of disseminating and normalising far-right talking-points in users' everyday lives.[33]

This now-digital artefact of the Yugoslav Wars thus stems from the same violent ethno-political project praised by the Oslo/Utøya manifesto. This not only copiously reposted 'Eurabia' blogs but also sympathised with Serb nationalists' Islamophobic discourses levelled against Kosovar Albanians and Bosniaks before and during the wars: it admired Karadžić, claimed Bosnia was historically Serbian land, described Kosovo's independence as another step in Europe's Islamisation, and represented the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic regime dedicated to enslaving European Christians. The Christchurch manifesto differed on certain other positions (such as sympathy for the US, and interest in ecofascism), but on Southeast Europe both manifestos stood in continuity, and the Christchurch attacker's desire to be recognised as identifying with the Oslo/Utøya perpetrator was clear.

The Christchurch shooter's livestream thus began with a song praising the RS's genocidal project against Bosniak presence in territory it viewed as 'Serb', in the RS's ideological terms. Its composer Zeljko Grmuša, who now lives in Plavno near Knin in Croatia, told a Serbian tabloid after Christchurch that he had written it in 1993 'to offer moral support to our army'.[34] Its video, where four uniformed men including Grmuša sing in a

field, has become a meme on ultra-libertarian imageboards. Especially famed is its stony-faced accordionist, often named as Novislav Đajić – a man convicted by a German court in 1997 for involvement in the April 1992 massacre of fourteen Bosniaks in Foča, who appears in a controversial 1999 Peter Handke play that attempted to exonerate Serb responsibility for the Bosnian Genocide. Handke was reportedly even a groomsman at Đajić's wedding.[35] Most users sharing the meme might not have recognised Đajić before Christchurch; his presence still connects it to transnational genocide denial, where the false narrative of Serbs defending themselves from Muslim aggression is essential to cast Serbs as wronged. Its adoption by the digital far right further embeds this discourse within global 'white genocide' myths. Many anglophone commentators on the Christchurch attack primarily interpreted it through links to far-right meme culture.[36] Yet it supported his ideology more deeply, with a call to action describing all Serb land as under attack ('srpska zemlja napadnuta cela') and hailing Karadžić as a saviour-leader who would repel the 'Croatian Ustaše' (the militia of the fascist Independent State of Croatia in 1941–45) and the 'Turks' (Ottomans) – incorporating Serb nationalist historical myths about the Bosnian Genocide into what the Christchurch shooter presented as his war.

Bosnians, once Karadžić's targets, quickly noted these resonances. The Bosnia-Herzegovina ambassador to Australia/New Zealand immediately conveyed alarm at this ideology's spread:

> What especially worries us from Bosnia is that the killer was a white male and born in Australia and that during the live recording which was posted on social media … he listened to Chetnik songs … which mention Radovan Karadžić … and it mentions that Ustashas and Turks need to be killed.[37]

The Bosnian, Australia-based anthropologist Hariz Halilovich acknowledged the song's new life as 'a popular anti-Muslim anthem among white supremacists' and others 'linked through social media', even suggesting the livestream resembled the notorious 'Scorpions' execution video recorded by Serb paramilitaries at Srebrenica in July 1995. Viewing the Yugoslav Wars and contemporary white nationalist terrorism together, Halilovich argued that Karadžić and the Christchurch shooter had both attacked societies expressing multicultural conviviality, a target for the transnational far right and for perpetrators of ethno-political violence during the Yugoslav Wars.[38] Edin Hajdarpašić thus observes a 'fusion of Serbian and white nationalist tropes' in far-right celebrations of Karadžić.[39] This very move characterised the politics of history during the Yugoslav Wars, which amalgamated recent and distant historical references into one grand narrative of each nation's recurring, existential conflict against historic enemies.[40] Most famously, perhaps, Ratko Mladić proclaimed Serb vengeance on the 'Turks' when he

entered Srebrenica in July 1995 on the eve of its genocidal sack, equating the town's Bosniaks with oppressive Muslim rulers whom Serbs in past centuries had fought against. Today's global white nationalism delineates a transnational rather than national in-group of white European heritage, in Europe and territories Europeans colonised, and makes the Balkans part of its 'Europe' on those terms, even as critics from the region resist that fantasy.

Southeast European history as symbolic resource

Besides associating himself with Serb nationalist and alt-right glorifications of Karadžić's RS, the Christchurch shooter also incorporated himself and Karadžić into a larger historical mythology. Such syncretism had also characterised the Oslo/Utøya terrorist's self-mythologisation, centred on the Crusades and Christian cooperation against Ottoman forces at Vienna in 1683: by the siege's quatercentenary, he fantasised, Muslims would first have overrun Europe, then been defeated by resistance fighters like himself.[41] Crafting a self-appointed identity as a neo-Templar 'justiciar knight', he wore confected uniforms and fictitious medals in photographs for his manifesto. On the surface, this suggested acute attention to 'the visuality of his perverse narrative', sustained after his arrest when refusing to pose for police photographers, yet when analysed more closely only demonstrates the banality and incoherence of his ideas.[42]

The Christchurch shooter employed similar, though less elaborate, self-fashioning by painting his weapons and gear with dozens of names, toponyms, and dates, plus a handful of neo-fascist symbols like the 'black sun'. Among them were at least eighteen references to medieval history and the Crusades, arguably an urgent sign that anti-racist medievalists must counter white supremacists' simplifications and appropriations of the past.[43] The decorations' 'visual litany' of continuous struggle, moreover, attempted to seamlessly connect this past with two other contexts: battles against Muslim armies in the Balkans and Caucasus, and contemporary Islamophobic far-right violence.[44] These combined into a mythological continuum of supposedly existential battle against white Europeans' subjugation by Islam.[45]

This continuum's Southeast European, anti-Ottoman historical references went well beyond the obvious, such as 'Vienna 1683' or the 1389 Battle of Kosovo. Represented also were the nineteenth-century Montenegrin general Marko Miljanov Popović; the seventeenth-century Serb hajduk Bajo Pivljanin; Novak Vujošević, who killed twenty-eight Turkish soldiers at Fundina under Miljanov Popović; the Albanian ruler Skanderbeg; the fifteenth-century Hungarian commander János Hunyadi; Bulgarian battles including Bulair

(1913) and Shipka Pass (1877–78); the Greek independence fighter Nikitaras 'Turkofagos'; Șerban Cantacuzino, Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg and Feliks Kazimierz Potocki, all present at Vienna in 1683; Venice's siege-captain at Famagusta in 1570–71; Venice's commander at Lepanto in 1571; plus Russian and British admirals at the 1827 Battle of Navarino, fought off the Peloponnese.[46] All these were swept into one epic struggle against Ottoman domination over Christians, as were two Georgians, King David IV (victor against Seljuk forces at Didgori in 1121) and David Soslan (Queen Tamar's consort, who defeated Ildegizid and Seljuqid forces in 1195 and 1202).[47]

Equal in this syncretic history were contemporary far-right terrorists and talking-points. They included the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooter; the far-right Ukrainian postgraduate who in 2013 killed an 83-year-old Muslim man in Birmingham; the shooter of six African migrants in Macerata in 2018; Ebba Akerlund, a girl killed in the 2017 Islamist truck attack in Stockholm; and the Global Compact for Migration. A reference to '14 words' tied the symbolic complex explicitly to US white-genocide mythologies (the '14 words' abbreviate a quotation from the US white supremacist David Lane), while one dedication 'For Rotherham' alluded to a Yorkshire sexual-exploitation case that UK far-right figures frequently mentioned to online followers at home and abroad.[48] These references had already converged in the 'collective imaginary' of the perpetrator's and his audience's digital lifeworld.[49] His decorated weapons similarly attempted to assemble dates and figures into what Halilovich called 'a shared ideology of hatred, conflating mythological, historical and contemporary ideas and characters'.[50] Such a rhetorical strategy had equally characterised dominant public discourse immediately before and during the Yugoslav Wars.[51]

New Zealand investigators found the perpetrator had started planning to decorate his weapons by 30 January 2019, though his initial plans did not include Southeast European references.[52] Where he learned them is not immediately traceable. In 2014–17 – when Islamist terrorism peaked in European cities – he did use his father's inheritance for extensive travel, including a month in the post-Yugoslav region in December 2016–January 2017; he contacted his future rifle club from Croatia, and booked his tickets to New Zealand the next month. Yet investigators found no evidence he met far-right extremists in post-Yugoslav countries, Russia, or anywhere else. Rather, he entered far-right spaces online, through the forums, boards, and YouTube channels he accessed as he travelled, where he demonstrably read much about migration, far-right ideology, 'and historical struggles between Christianity and Islam'.[53]

The 'affective networking of paranoia' fostered through such digital spaces has arguably radicalised numerous internet users, mostly white men, to act on a 'militarized sense of masculine duty' and commit lone-actor attacks.[54]

It may have been amplified for this perpetrator through being physically transient in 2014–17 while real Islamist terror attacks were happening. His immersion in imageboard culture is particularly significant as an example of contemporary white nationalism mythologising Southeast Europe. One study of Serbian participation on the imageboard most closely associated with the far right in 2014–18 concludes its Serbian users promoted 'inherited … patterns of extreme nationalism' by relating a glorious Serbian history of 'militant opposition to Muslims', introducing figures like Mladić and Đajić into the board's 'collective mythology', and making 'alliances with extremist discourse in other countries' by merging Serb nationalist discourses with broader extremist narratives.[55] These discourses appeared 'predominant' among users posting from Serbia.[56]

If global white nationalist and populist politicians have formed an approving image of Central and Eastern Europe patriarchal ethnonationalism, these networks match it at the grassroots.[57] Through transnational digital exchanges, international users learned far-right narratives of Southeast European nations' pasts, while Southeast European users gained validation as a vanguard of white European resistance to Islam. Christchurch fuelled validation further: one NGO researching online extremism in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2020 found Bosnian users now predominantly searched for the 'Christchurch' song under its English titles, and that searches peaked during a period coinciding with commemorations of major massacres committed by the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) in 1992–95.[58] The song's endorsement by the Christchurch perpetrator, circulating through international far-right digital networks, appeared to give it extra value within the discursive spaces of genocide 'triumphalism' where it began.[59]

From analogy to connection: white nationalist networks and Southeast Europe

Informed but not wholly led by Southeast European internet users, digital spaces where identitarian and white nationalist sympathisers congregate have adopted recent and earlier histories of war in Southeast Europe as exemplars of how to defend European civilisation against Islam. The Ottomans' conscription of Christian boys, a Serb nationalist grievance since the nineteenth century, has even been repurposed to argue that (since Europeans were also enslaved, by Muslims) the transatlantic slave trade was nothing uniquely heinous.[60] The online platforms where these historical narratives circulate as calls to action have created a 'digital feedback loop' where 'white male violence is uploaded, distributed, consumed and remixed by others'.[61] So are ideas about Southeast Europe as a place where white

European civilisation has persistently been under attack, as part of a transhistorical invasion that sympathisers believe has now reached the West.

White nationalist interpretations of the 'Balkans', moreover, also point to a longing to violently separate multicultural societies (especially the US) into separate ethno-states – including the long-fantasised whites-only 'Cascadia' in the Pacific Northwest.[62] 'Balkanisation', a usually pejorative concept, is in this ideology paradoxically welcome, as the imagined cause of 'ethnopluralism' where every ethno-racial group would inhabit its own homeland.[63] Professed indifference for where those of non-European heritage would live disguises identitarian visions of mass forced displacement and overtly extremist fantasies of outright eliminationist violence.[64] Such ideas, and the deniability strategies supporting them, come very close to the RS strategic programme, which aimed to permanently separate peoples by removing non-Serbs throughout the territory Karadžić had designated as a strategically viable Serb homeland.[65] RS propaganda, meanwhile, exploited the wartime Bosnian president's youthful interests in political Islam to spread fear that his government would enforce Islamist rule.[66]

Within contemporary white nationalism's reference points in charting existential war against Islam, the RS in particular appears to have joined Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa within the 'transcolonial racist imaginary' highlighted when the perpetrator of the 2015 Charleston attack venerated both the latter countries.[67] Boosted by the Oslo/Utøya manifesto, Jasmin Mujanović argues, the Bosnian Genocide 'has become [a] major ideological pillar among, and model for, new-age far-right extremists'.[68] Contemporary white nationalism takes up its perpetrators' historical mythology and combines it with panic about 'white genocide' into one myth of white victimhood at the hands of Islam. Yet this is not just a case of mapping Eastern European 'ethnicity' on to Western 'race', since the RS project already deployed a racialised understanding of Serbs' separation from Muslims – especially through its vice-president Biljana Plavšić, an ex-biologist who considered Bosniaks a 'genetically deformed' subgroup of South Slavs who were degenerating by the generation since conversion to Islam.[69]

Christchurch has raised Islamophobic Serb nationalism's profile in digital far-right spaces just as Oslo/Utøya introduced many more sympathisers to the fantasy of a revived Knights Templar.[70] Since 2019, users expressing the incel movement's misogynistic and racist visual rhetoric have celebrated the perpetrator through memes positively comparing him to other shooters, with a clear message that mass attacks protecting white European cultures 'are the pathway to becoming a man'; one meme even mentions his playing 'Serbian' songs among his virtues.[71] Southeast Europe might here represent an authentically masculine Europe ready to defend Western civilisation when the supposedly feminised, gender nonconforming West cannot.

This extremist subjectivity thus links masculinity, violence, and whiteness foundationally together. If contemporary far-right aesthetics appeal to marginalised men who identify with whiteness by fusing desire for male comradeship with anger at mainstream society and turning these emotions into readiness for violence towards Others, this nexus was also at work here.[72] The Christchurch shooter's manifesto, for instance, wrote that 'the men of Europe' would be 'men in name only' until Hagia Sophia had no more minarets, suggesting that cleansing Islam from Constantinople was a masculine duty.[73] Such grievances were widespread before and during the Yugoslav wars, sparked by mid-1980s nationalistic Serbian media stoking fear that Albanians were orchestrating physical and sexual violence against Serb men to force them out of Kosovo.[74]

Racialised Islamophobia has also fostered material connections between groups. In 2011, 'Knights Templar International' (KTI) was simply a fictive organisation in the Oslo/Utøya manifesto; in 2015, an organisation named KTI appeared online selling membership regalia and producing content. This KTI has fund-raised for Bulgarian 'migrant-hunting' vigilantes and unnamed Serb groups in Kosovo, where it said it had sent bullet-proof vests and communications equipment to resist 'Islamist oppression'.[75] Its British founder was based in Budapest until Hungarian authorities denied him entry in May 2017, and has recorded videos on the Bulgarian border with the anti-migrant militia BNO Shipka, whose own name references Shipka Pass.[76] Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) journalists in 2018 reported KTI was promoting the 'Great Replacement' online to microtargeted audiences via a video hub in Serbia, and a student from the small Serbian chapter of the identitarian movement Generation Identity told the BBC they had received social media training from KTI's founder.[77] A lengthy essay on 'ethos' on KTI's website contained four paragraphs praising Prince Lazar's actions before the Battle of Kosovo as a 'perfect example of sacrifice', crediting the Serbian far-right Red zmaja ('Order of the Dragon') for the text.[78] Until at least mid-2018, KTI's site was publishing videos about Christian–Muslim battles which would have been obscure to most Western audiences, including one on Shipka Pass.[79] However, much KTI material on mainstream platforms has become unavailable since the post-Christchurch reaction against far-right content online.

KTI's documentable connections with Southeast Europe nevertheless show how anglophone movements have absorbed regional history into their own historical mythology of transhistorical European struggle against Muslim invaders, and suggests increasing networking between this mythology's sympathisers in Southeast Europe and the Global North/West.[80] The Serbian Generation Identity leader who told BBC journalists '[w]e are against … mass immigration, illegal immigration … basically, we do not want to be

replaced, to be bred out of existence in our own homelands' was synthesising Serbian nationalist discourses of demographic panic dating back to the mid-1980s with US 'white genocide' rhetoric and anti-immigration panics throughout the West.[81] The spectre of Muslims taking over Kosovo, fomented by Serbian tabloids and the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1985–86, now inspires far-right French intellectuals' warnings about French cities.[82] The Christchurch shooter's manifesto, meanwhile, was translated into Croatian, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and several Western European languages; its Bulgarian translator (a user of one imageboard where the shooter posted his manifesto) explained he wanted non-anglophone readers to also access its ideological messages and be inspired to commit attacks.[83]

The digitally facilitated absorption of Southeast European 'antemurale' myths into white nationalist historical mythologies creates new space for supporters of anti-Muslim nationalist programmes to imagine membership of a global struggle, standing incontrovertibly and indispensably with(in) white Europe. The hypermasculinity of propagandistic representations of Serb soldiers within this space, meanwhile, aligns with a gendered geopolitics that imagines the Balkans (like Hungary, Poland, and Russia) as a space of white masculine heroism, defending Western civilisation when a feminised, gender nonconforming West cannot. This mythology persists even as Southeast European migrants in the West can be targeted for far-right violence, showing asymmetry in the power to ascribe and confirm whiteness.[84]

Putin's Russia, Ukraine's far right, and the anti-gender, anti-globalist politics of today's Hungarian and Polish governments are not, therefore, white nationalists' only CEE reference-points.[85] So are the Balkans, and in particularly mythologised ways. The perpetrators of the 2010s' two largest far-right terror attacks, in Oslo/Utøya and Christchurch, both propagated historico-mythic narratives incorporating Kosovo and the Bosnian Genocide, and the Christchurch shooter added numerous other Balkan episodes that had entered far-right digital culture. White nationalist fantasies of stoking US racial war model themselves on the Balkans – or rather their imagined picture of a Balkan civilisational shatter-zone.[86] This shatter-zone image is common to much other Western geopolitical thought, hinting at how interpretations of 'Balkan' conflict have fuelled racialised 'clash of civilisations' thinking since the 1990s; indeed, Karadžić and Slobodan Milošević exploited that very trope when addressing Western interlocutors during the wars. Certain late 2010s Serbian activists courted Western identitarian allies similarly.[87]

Nevertheless, most scholars treat the Yugoslav Wars and their historical mythologies separately from the global history of 'race'. Even as eminent a scholar as Stuart Hall could call the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo the

product of 'ethnicity rather than "race"'[88] – though prevailing explanations in 1990s UK media might have contributed to that. Yet ethnicised symbolic boundaries were hardest and dehumanisation processes were most bitter during these wars when leaders were using racialised dynamics to separate collective national selves from their supposed historic enemies. For this to be possible in the 1990s, majoritarian nation-building projects in the region had first had to undergo what Dušan Bjelić has termed the '[p]olitical conversion of ethnicity into race' – that is, the nationalistic adoption of race science to frame ethno-nations as more primordially favoured than their rivals and better suited to rule.[89] The projects to create an ethnically homogenous RS in Bosnia and regain Serb dominance in Kosovo, including the harnessing of historical mythologies to start legitimising them before the wars, are not just analogous enough to 'white genocide' and 'Great Replacement' myths that white nationalist sympathisers can identify with them. Those genocidal projects and white nationalism are already connected, since by the time both were formed, the reservoir of ideas about race, violence, and culture beneath them had already suffused the globe.

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Index

Abashin, Sergei 210
adventure novels 9, 117, 130
Africa 8–10, 34, 36, 91, 95–100, 185–6, 190, 200, 205–7, 209, 242–3, 300, 316–18
  Africas within Central–Eastern Europe 41–3, 106–7, 241
  colonial conquest in 10, 18, 26, 34, 39, 55–8, 118, 239, 242–3, 274n58, 278
  decolonisation of 32–3, 35, 38, 40, 46, 201, 204–9
  diaspora 5, 12, 13, 20, 46, 216–18, 294–303, 336
  East Africa 39, 43–4, 104, 316, 319, 321
  South Africa 16, 203, 237, 317–19, 338
  see also Middle East and North Africa (MENA)
African Americans 5, 32, 181, 203, 302
Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization (AAPSO) 205–6
Afro-Asianism 38
Albania 9, 138–55
Allen, Theodore 61
And Europe will be Stunned: The Polish Trilogy (*AES*) 156–60, 169–71
Andrievskii, Aleksandr 186
Angeli, Jake 252–3
antemurale myth 38, 91, 222–3, 225, 258, 330, 340
anthropology 9, 18, 37, 74, 75, 79, 80, 92–109, 117, 128, 179, 190, 192
  and photography 102–4
anti-racism 3, 5, 101, 177, 179–81, 188, 202–3, 322, 335
  myth of 92, 108, 124, 131, 146–7, 305
antisemitism 2, 157–64, 168, 217, 220, 223, 227, 236–7, 241, 246–7
apartheid 7, 203, 338
Apponyi, Count 41
Arnason, Johan 192
Aryanism/Aryans 10, 36, 75–6, 84, 85, 265
Asia 8, 18, 35, 38, 54, 76, 79, 82, 200, 205–7, 209
'Asiatic barbarism' 14, 18–19, 37, 44, 65, 73, 86, 144, 224
Assassination 163, 168–9
Aster, Ari 263–72
Austro-Hungary
  collapse 39, 259–60
  and colonialism 8, 9, 51n63, 60, 116–18, 220
  and emigration 9, 33
Azikiwe, Nnamdi 40
Azoulay, Ariella 171

Baktay, Ervin 37, 113, 123–5
Balibar, Étienne 160, 162, 171
Balkans 5, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17, 33, 39, 41, 51n59, 75, 140–3, 148,

151, 225, 295–7, 300, 305–6, 315, 320–1, 326n48, 328–47, 335, 338, 340
Balkan Egyptians 139–40, 145, 147, 149–50, 155n61
'Balkan Route' 3, 312
Baltic 7–8, 277–86
Bangha, Béla 121
Bannon, Steve 216, 257, 332
Bartana, Yael 21, 156–9, 163–7, 175n52
Bavykin, Tolia 189
Belarus 3, 20, 38, 59, 81, 276, 286
Ben Bella, Ahmed 206
Ben-Salim, Kador 180
Berbers 39
Berisha, Sali 148
Bhabha, Homi 157, 198
Bhambra, Gurminder 55, 313
biopolitics 221, 226–8, 230
Birta, Ferenc 131
von Bismarck, Otto 27n83, 33, 191
Bjelić, Dušan 16, 60, 141, 256, 320, 331, 341
Black Atlantic 1, 9, 32, 314
Black Lives Matter 46–7, 210, 252
Black Skin 181
blackness 3, 20, 36, 139–40, 145–6, 149–50, 159, 178–9, 218, 264, 284–5, 294, 302–3, 313, 318, 320–2
Blaut, James 55
Blumi, Isa 139, 148
Boas, Franz 101
Bolsonaro, Jair 15
Book of Malka Germania, The 156
Borglum, Gutzon 44–5
Borah, William Edgar 122
Borsányi, László 126, 128
Bosnia-Herzegovina 8, 12, 51n63, 220, 293, 297, 299, 328–33
  genocide, Bosnian 15, 329–41
bourgeoisie 44–5, 177, 192, 259
  Central European 8–9
  Hungarian 37, 41, 117–18, 123
boy scouts 119–20, 122, 125–6, 128, 132
Buffalo Bill Shows 124
Britain *see* United Kingdom
Brexit 64, 256, 311–14, 316, 318, 321
Buszczyński, Stefan 75
Bulgaria 13, 17, 31, 59, 319, 335–6, 339, 340
Butler, Judith 178

Cameron, David 324n12
Cameroon 36, 58
Camus, Renaud 15, 229, 331–2
Canada 34, 121, 220, 329
Captain at Fifteen 178, 183–5, 187
Carlson, Tucker 1, 216, 257
Carroll, Noël 184
Cecil, Lord Robert 34
Cekrezi, Konstandin 143
Central Asia 19–20, 114, 122, 198–210, 222
Césaire, Aimé 320–1
Chari, Sharad 7
China/Chinese 2, 21, 77, 209, 296–306
  internationalism 205–6
Chiozza Money, Leo 35
Christchurch massacre 328–47
Christianity 12, 35, 117, 121, 127, 198, 215–35, 330–2, 335–6
  Christian Europe 13–15, 17, 38, 57–8, 144, 215–31, 258–62
Chukovskii, Kornei 181–2, 186
Ciancia, Kathryn 41
Cičens 94–5
Circus 180–1, 192
civilisation 21, 92, 186–7, 200, 266, 278, 281
  American 34, 125, 184
  bulwark of 222, 337–8
  Christian 217, 223–4
  civilising mission 8, 13, 40–1, 43, 91, 118, 121, 145, 147, 192, 207, 221, 243, 247
  European 5, 18, 21, 38, 41, 85, 182, 216, 223–6, 258, 286, 337–8
  hierarchies of 104–5, 207–8, 241, 287
  imperial 17, 59, 188
  as rights/identity claim 36, 38, 82
  Russian 179, 188–9, 191, 198
  versus barbarism/primitivism 7, 15–16, 18–19, 75–6, 78, 85, 94–5, 97–100, 142–3, 186–9, 241, 322

Western 15–16, 33, 91, 97, 258, 338, 340
white 10, 11–12, 39, 59, 185, 281, 286–7
class
and whiteness xv, 6–7, 18, 20, 37, 41, 52n75, 83, 149, 177, 179, 199, 239–40, 254–5, 278, 280–2, 311
Clifford, James 171
Code Unknown 315–16
Cold War 2, 14–15, 100, 127, 180, 188, 203, 209, 213n44, 315, 322
colonialism
Eastern European participation in 1, 5, 8, 34, 39–40, 57–9, 65–6, 83, 91, 97–9, 115–16, 121, 237–50, 313
Western European 4, 8, 10, 14, 20, 46, 53n103, 55–6, 142, 157, 188–9, 191, 198, 229, 224, 287, 321–2
'internal colonisation' 41–3, 99–108, 221, 260
a superior Eastern European 10, 39–40, 121, 188–9
settler colonialism 7, 9–10, 18, 39, 115, 167
Comintern 38, 199
Communism 7, 11, 38, 125–31, 169, 177–92, 198–210, 223, 228
Communist past 138
fall of 46–7, 114, 163, 218, 225, 229
and race 2, 5, 19–20, 202, 222
resistance to 127–30
Congress of Berlin (1878) 17
Cooper, James Fenimore 115
Croatia/Croats 12, 94–5, 221–2, 297, 333–4, 336, 340, 343n34
Cseh, Tamás 128, 130
Curčić, Marija 301–3
Curtin, Philip 55
Czechoslovakia 10, 18–19, 31–2, 37, 43, 44–6, 91–3, 97–105, 165, 260
colonial fantasy 39–41, 56, 58–9, 65–6, 91, 97–9
'internal colonization' 100–5
Czekanowski, Jan 92, 110n15
Daily Telegraph 35
Darwinian theory 85, 92, 93
Dean, Michael 58
decolonisation
anti-colonial movements 11, 14, 34, 38–40, 44, 46–7, 224, 312, 326n44
era of postwar 2, 7, 11, 14, 117, 188, 192, 205–10, 329
Defoe, Daniel 179, 181, 182, 186–8
Deszkáss, Sándor Borvendég 113, 121, 122, 126, 128
demography/demographic threat 17, 43, 113, 221, 227–30, 237, 331–2
Denmark 7, 144, 164
Dibishkogizik ('Hole in Heaven') 121
Dmowski, Roman 85, 237
Drakulić, Slavenka 293
Du Bois, W. E. B. 2, 5, 35, 173n17
Duchiński, Franciszek 73–86
Dulami, Naziha 206
Durham, Edith 141
Dyer, Richard 199–200, 264, 268–9

Eastern Europe
anti-colonialism 5, 11, 14–15, 20, 47, 114, 117, 131, 146–7, 163, 199–201, 202–9, 224
as bulwark against Asia/Islam 38, 258, 332
and colonialism *see* colonialism
inbetweenness 6, 15, 36, 93, 161, 258
as semi-periphery 1, 3, 6, 255, 261
as 'Third World' 12
and heroic anti-Communist struggle 14, 38, 113–14, 128, 132–3
image in western populism 1, 15, 337
and white privilege xv, 56–7, 62–3, 66–7, 185, 198, 200
economy
transatlantic 8
and whiteness 56, 61–4, 66, 158, 219
emigration *see* migration
Engels, Friedrich 186, 89n45
Enlightenment 33, 39, 56, 111, 140, 158–9, 218–19

ethnicity v. race 4, 7, 16, 32, 60–1, 96–7, 198–202, 212n26, 237–8, 247, 264, 277, 285, 294–5, 329–31, 338, 340–1
ethnography
contemporary, as interview method 138, 276, 279–86, 313, 316–23
historical 10, 75, 81, 96, 116–17, 127–8, 130, 138, 149
Ethiopia 9, 51n53
eugenics 16, 37, 59–61, 105, 124, 226–7
Europe
concept of Central 57–64
fear of 'Eurabia' 331–2
return to a white 5, 11–12, 138–9
as a colonial concept 35–6
see also colonialism
as a racial concept 75–7, 139–40, 143, 147–8, 200
and whiteness 2–3, 146, 148, 151
European Union (EU) 3, 63–4, 138, 148, 262–3, 311–20
Évian Conference (1938) 44, 245
explorers 8, 11, 38, 58, 116, 117, 191, 222, 240

fantasy 252–5, 331
far right 1, 15–16, 21, 59, 124, 216, 218, 224, 229, 252, 256, 258, 263, 328–40
Fascism 19, 20, 118, 124, 147, 169, 191, 217, 219, 224, 252, 333–5
film
industry 252–75
and whiteness 11, 156–7, 163–9, 177–97, 252–69
Finland 7, 275–92
Fox News 1
France 4, 8, 10, 17, 41, 55, 74, 80–1, 84, 172n4, 207, 218, 223, 243, 331, 332
Frankenberg, Ruth 199–200
Franklin, Benjamin 115
Frenkel, Lazar' 182, 194n38

Gafurov, Bobojan 208
Gallo, Maria Theresa 204
Garner, Steve 199
gender, and whiteness 1, 15–16, 55, 76–7, 198–210, 228–30, 277–8, 283, 301–2, 331, 338–9, 340
Genghis Khan 37
genocide 234, 330, 337
antisemitic 217, 220
Herero and Nama genocide 39
white 328, 331–2, 336, 338, 340–1
geography (discipline) 37, 74, 76, 83–4, 124–5, 238–9
George, Lloyd 41
Germany 4, 7, 59–60, 84, 91, 216, 236, 243, 245, 297, 300–1, 305
German Empire 33, 36, 55, 74, 191
Nazi Germany 161–3, 166–7, 219, 224, 245, 247
West Germany 207
Gessen, Masha 229
Ghana 4, 206
Giller, Agaton 75
Gilroy, Paul 157, 189, 312–4
Great Replacement theory 15, 331–2
Gross, Jan T. 173n30
de Gobineau, Arthur 10
Goldberg, David Theo 160, 300
Gorkii, Maksim 186
Groys, Boris 169
Grosvenor, Edwin 33
Gyarmati, János 117

de Haan, Francisca 203
Hájek, Jiří 45–6
Haiti 35, 36, 37, 83, 264
Hall, Stuart 6, 12, 21, 150, 160, 314, 320–2, 340–1
Haneke, Michael 315–16
Havlasa, Jan 39, 43
health
and race 18, 60, 96, 150, 198, 201, 221, 227
Hirsch, Francine 192
Holocaust 162–4, 166, 171, 226
Holub, Emil 39, 91
homosexuality 161, 229
horror 252–75
Horthy, Admiral Miklós 119
Hoxha, Enver 138, 146–7, 154n53
Hrdlička, Aleš 94–6
Huckleberry Finn 124

Hughes, Langston 203
human exhibitions 117, 191, 302
Hungary 1, 10, 14, 15–16, 36–7, 38, 59–60, 215–35, 252–75
as Asiatic/Mongol 36–7, 50n41, n44
'Hungarian Indian' 113–133
Kurultáj festival 258–9
mission in Carpathian basin 41
War of Independence 114–15
1956 Revolution 127–8
see also Trianon; Turanism
Huntington, Samuel 12
von Hahn, Johann Georg 142

Iceland 7
Illyrians 146
immigration *see* migration
imperialism 1–2, 4, 10–11, 14, 18, 32–3, 58, 74, 119, 139, 218, 255, 260
German imperialism 35, 110n15, 118, 191, 196n67
US imperialism 131, 265
see also Russia/Russian Empire
India 149, 152n3, 218
'Indian shows' 117, 124
'Indian play' 11, 113, 119–20, 123, 128, 132
indigenous populations 18, 130–1, 220
Eastern Europeans as 103–4, 114, 230
in Africa 96–7, 104
see also Inuit; Native Americans; Sámi people
Inge, William Ralph 34
'inorodtsy' 198–9
Intermarium Confederation 38
Inuit 93, 99, 100, 104
Ireland 35
Islam 12, 15, 17, 77, 143, 148, 208–9, 223, 225, 328, 336–8
'Islamisation of the West' 216
see also fear of 'Eurabia'
Islamophobia 13, 226, 329–33, 335, 339
Israel 21, 157–60, 166–7, 170, 175n53, n63, 217
Israel–Palestine 171–2
Italy 75, 207, 237, 293, 329

Jacob of Courland, Duke 8
Janša, Janez 216
Jefferson, Thomas 124
Jewish Renaissance Movement in Poland (JRMiP) 156, 164–5, 167, 169–71
Jews
becoming white 29n126, 43, 241–4
as black/racial outsiders 43, 92, 104–8, 241
'eastern Jew' 43, 102
'Judeo–Bolshevism' 162–3, 223–4
migration from Europe 19, 43–4, 238–44
migration to Africa 44
migration to Palestine 43–4, 238–40, 242–3, 245
perceived as threat 14, 17, 19, 102–4, 162–3, 175n63, 217–28, 230, 236–61
and Poland 236–51
return to Poland 21, 156–72
Western European/American Jews 246
see also Antisemitism; Zionism
Johnston, Harry H. 38
Journal of Race Development 37

Kaczyński, Jarosław 216
Kalmar, Ivan 1–2, 3, 61, 219, 256, 325n33, 330
Karácsony, Sándor 119
Karadžić, Radovan 328, 332–6
Keane, Augustus Henry 102
Kelly, Catriona 201
Kertész, Imre 226
Kikuyu people 107
Kinkel, Gottfried 81
Konica, Faik 144–5
Kőrösi Csoma, Sándor 222
Korwin-Mikke, Janusz 160, 170
Kosovo 30n135, 297, 333, 335, 339–41
Kossuth, Lajos 115, 116
Kőszegi, Imre 130
Kristóf, Ildikó 132
Křížová, Markéta 65
'kulturnost' 201–3, 209–11
Kun, Béla 38

Laclau, Ernesto 166
Lamarckian race thinking 36, 92, 94
Lanzmann, Claude 165
Larionov, Vsevolod 184, 195n45
Law, Ian 140
League of Nations 35, 37, 238, 244–5
Legend of Wilson (1953) 45
Lenhossék, Mihály 37
Lentin, Alana 158–9, 296, 300
Levi, Primo 168, 175n52
Liberia 35, 40, 58, 206, 242
Lincoln, Abraham 36, 37
Linnaeus, Carl 142
Little Red Devils 180
Lukacs, John 27n83

MacDonald, Ramsay 32
Makai, György 131
Mikloukho-Maclai 178, 179, 188, 190–2
Malečková, Jitka 65
Maksimka 178, 179, 188–90, 196n61
Malksöo, Maria 20
mandate 34, 38–9
  Polish in Liberia 40
Maritime and Colonial League (Poland) 5, 39–40, 43–4, 56, 58, 236–51
de Mars, Victor 80, 82
Mary Koszmary 163, 165, 168
Marx, Anthony 55
Marx, Karl
  and racialisation of Russians 81, 89n45
masculinity and whiteness 15, 187–8, 190, 333, 339
  see also gender, and whiteness
Matusevich, Maxim 199
May, Karl 117
McKay, Claude 31
Means, Russell 131
Mengele, Josef 94
Middle East and North Africa (MENA) 3, 6, 33, 218, 225, 297, 306
Midsommar 252–74
migration
  Chinese to Serbia 21, 296–306
  and European overpopulation 39, 43, 215, 313
  and Muslims 217, 283–5, 329–30
  Eastern European to Americas 9–10, 58, 115–16
  EU ‘freedom of movement’ 12, 63–4, 311–12
  Jewish *see* Jews
  ‘refugee crisis’ (2015) 3, 14, 256, 300, 306, 332
  Russians to Finland 275–88
  From South America to Hungary 14
  Ukrainians to Poland 3, 238, 248n4
Mills, Charles W. 4
  The Racial Contract 54–7, 64–5
Milošević, Slobodan 297–8
minorities in Central-Eastern Europe 2, 13, 17–19, 79, 199, 201, 221, 236
  Jewish *see* Jews
  as lesser whites 21, 41–4, 92, 276, 283–4, 287
  Roma *see* Roma
Mitić, Gojko 127
Mollison, Theodor 93–5, 101, 102
Mongol people/race 7, 10, 75–6, 79–80, 84, 89n41, 224, 277
multiculturalism 1, 13–15, 113, 157, 215, 331, 334, 338
museums 59, 75, 93, 97, 113, 116, 117, 132, 156, 163–4, 167
Mussolini, Benito 39
Müller, Friedrich Max 76
Mysterious Island, The 178, 182, 183–4

Nasriddinova, Yadgar 204
nationalism 4, 6, 13, 16, 21, 29, 39, 85, 118, 120, 144, 153n33, 157, 159–62, 168, 171, 215–35, 237
  Christian 14, 17, 132, 163, 217–31
  and racial health 19, 147, 221
  white nationalism 252–69, 311, 314, 329–30, 335–41
nation building 6, 16–20, 47, 59, 92, 97–100, 142, 153n33, 186, 277–8, 331, 341
  and eugenics 59–60
  whitening the nation 40–4, 140

Native Americans 10–11, 15, 113–33, 183
  Sioux and Hopi support for Hungarian revisionism 121–2, 123
Near East 142, 222
Negro World (newspaper) 31–2
Netherlands 4, 8, 118, 164, 255, 297, 300–1
New England Magazine 34
New Zealand 15, 328–38
Noli, Fan 144–5
Non-Aligned Movement 301–2, 317–18
Northeastern Papua 190–2
Norway 7, 55, 144, 329
Nyhagen Predelli, Line 55

Olearius, Adam 73
Ophir, Adi 171
Orbán, Viktor 1, 14, 15, 113–14, 215–25, 255–61, 330
Orientalism 13, 37, 123, 140, 208, 220, 222, 259, 315
Orthodox Christianity 20, 41, 144, 161, 189, 198, 202, 219
Othello 145–6, 153n39
Ottoman Empire 9, 10, 15, 17, 29n111, 138, 142–5, 148, 220–3, 306, 331, 333

Paderewski, Jan 44–5
Padmore, George 5
paganism 15
Palestinians 157–8, 160, 164, 166–7, 170, 175n63, 247
  'Czech Palestine' 18, 105
Parvalescu, Anca 3
Pasha, Vaso 141
Pelasgian theory 143
peripheries 18, 263–4, 266, 277–8
  Czechoslovak 95, 100, 105
  Eastern Europe as 3, 11, 55, 57, 64, 66, 133, 218–19, 261–2, 268, 294
  economic 3, 57–8, 65–6, 131, 218, 257, 261–2, 268
  Nordic 7, 55
  Polish 92
  and Roma 9
  Soviet 5, 20, 200–1, 204, 209
  and whiteness 1–2, 34–5, 41, 108, 114, 132, 138–52, 255–7, 269, 312
Peril of the White, The 35
physiognomy 77
Piłsudski, Marshal 40
Pogačnik, Anton 108
Pogodin, Mikhail 82
Poland/Poles 3, 8, 18, 21, 36, 38, 43–5, 58, 60, 78–86, 156–73, 216–17, 236–251
  Catholic Church 161, 217
  and colonialism 39–40, 56, 58–9, 65–6, 83
  January Uprising (1863) 78–81
  Polish National Democratic Party, Myśl Narodowa 43, 161
  Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth 8, 82, 83, 161, 173n24
  Polish–Soviet War (1919–21) 38
  see also Maritime and Colonial League; emigration; Jews
PPSh (Labour Party of Albania) 146–7
populism 1, 5, 13–15, 50n41, 54, 114, 164, 256, 262, 264
postcolonialism 260
  anti–Communist 7
  and blackness 322
  as field of study 74, 220
  and gender 208
  and migration 13
  and Poland 157–8, 163
  and race 6, 157–8, 277
  and Western Europe 157, 255–6, 311–19, 321–2
  and whiteness 158, 287, 322
Presner, Todd Samuel 170
Pristavkin, Anatolii 184
Prussia/Prussians 10, 35–6, 40, 60, 84, 85, 161
pulp fiction 39, 126

QAnon 252–3, 257–8
Qemali, Ismail 144
de Quatrefages, Armand 84, 85
Quine, Maria Sophia 16

Races of Europe, The (1918) 33
racialisation xvi, 6, 13, 20, 47n3, 127, 139–41, 146–51, 155n61,

156, 206, 210, 261, 275, 278–9, 296, 300
Eastern Europeans' racialisation 276, 285, 311, 313
migrating/relational racialisation 314–15
of Roma 9
self-racialisation 178
and transition 13
racial capitalism 6–7, 61–7, 139, 141, 180, 255, 262, 265, 268–9, 283, 314, 320
racial intermixing 19, 33, 43, 92, 95, 99, 108, 125, 230
racial science 16, 19, 82, 92, 108, 117, 341
racism 1–6, 21, 46, 65, 73–4, 83–5, 92, 99, 108, 126, 138–9, 141, 150, 160–4, 171, 180, 203, 263, 277, 285–7, 300, 315, 319, 320, 322, 325
against Eastern Europeans 61, 148–9, 256, 283–4, 294, 313
'socialist racialism' 2, 192, 197n76
Western 11–13, 47, 53n103, 145, 181, 183–4, 190–1, 197n76, 199–200, 217, 220, 253, 255–6, 312
Rahimbabaeva, Zuhra 200, 206–9
Rancière, Jacques 159, 164, 167, 169
Razumnyi, Aleksandr 190
Regnault, Elias 80, 81
Regnum Marianum 121
Reskin, Barbara 62
Return of Nathan Becker, The 181
revolutions
1848 73, 75, 114–16
1956, Hungary 127–8
Russian/Bolshevik/October 5, 19, 46, 199, 204, 207, 223–4
see also Haiti
Revue des Deux Mondes 80, 84
Rexhepi, Piro 20, 141, 148, 285, 312
Riabchuk, Mykola 20
Riefenstahl, Leni 169
Robinson, Cedric 6–7, 61, 139, 320
Robinson Crusoe 178, 186–7
Roediger, David 61
Roelofs, Monique 159, 168
Roma 2, 9, 19, 46, 92, 96, 108–9, 139–40, 145, 152n3, 155n61, 227–8, 297, 306, 312–20
Romaphobia 2, 3, 9, 17, 46, 108–9, 139, 145, 147–51
Romania/Romanians 9–10, 13, 17, 31, 37, 41, 60, 95–6, 113, 119, 215, 217, 219, 257, 315
Rónaszegi, Miklós 130
Rudd, Wayland 185
Russia/Russian Empire 3, 5, 7, 10, 19–20, 36, 40, 73–90, 177–92, 198–9, 201–2, 206–10, 225, 275–92, 336, 340, 347n85
Duchiński's racial theories on 76–8
post–Soviet migration 275–88
see also Soviet Union
Ruthenia/Ruthenes 18, 83, 97–105

Said, Edward 140
Saller, Karl 109
Sámi people 7, 277
Sándor, István 117
Schwidetzky, Ilse 109
Sea, The/Morze (Polish journal) 43, 237, 239–40, 242, 244–5, 246
self-determination 6, 21, 36, 38–9, 40, 45
Eastern Europe as distinct 10, 36–7, 38–9, 40, 236–7, 260
Eastern European as globally connected 31–2, 34–6, 38–9, 46, 57, 121
Serbia 13, 294–312, 330–40
Serbian Academy of Sciences 142, 340
sexual behaviour, and race 96, 228, 278, 302, 336, 339
shamanism 252–3, 257–9
Shestakov, Nikolai 194n38
Skrentny, John 203
slavery 20, 188, 194n38, 255, 264, 285, 314, 316, 319, 324n12
African 7, 9, 115, 185, 285, 307, 329
compared with serfdom 36, 39, 52n75, 83, 189
emancipation in US 36, 85–6, 115–16, 182–3, 184
transatlantic 1, 4, 7, 189, 218, 274n58, 337

Roma 9
white 5, 36–40, 73, 79–80, 115, 190, 320–2
Sierakowski, Sławomir 164–6, 168–9, 171
Skënderbeu (Skanderbeg), Gjergj Kastrioti 144, 146–8, 335
Składkowski, Felicjan Sławoj 43–4
Slobodian, Quinn 56
Slovakia/Slovaks 36–7
Slovenia/Slovenes 95, 108, 216
Smuts, Jan 34, 237
Social Democrats
Hungarian 35–6
social media 150, 301, 332, 334, 336, 337, 339
Soros, George 217
South America 14, 121, 131, 243
Soviet Union 5, 11, 19–20, 38, 165, 177–93, 198–210, 222–4, 286–8
and paternalist saviourism 179–80, 182–91
and socialist internationalism 38, 191, 199
Spectator (British magazine) 12
Stanyukovich, Konstantin 179, 189, 190
Stoddard, Lothrop 34–5
Stoll, Otto 96
Stowe, Harriet Beecher 115, 182, 195n41
Strażnica 79
Sudan 9, 207
Suk, Vojtěch 41, 43, 91–109
Sweden 7, 83, 101, 219, 252–68, 278, 329
Szabó, Miklós 130–1
Széchenyi, Count István 114
Székely/Szekler 113
Szolc–Rogoziński, Stefan 58
Szőcs, Géza 113

Tanzania 206
Teleki, Count Pál 41, 120
Temesi, Győző 119, 125
Tlostanova, Madina 11, 202
Todorova, Maria 140
Todorova, Miglena 2, 20, 197n76
Tolstoy, Lev 191–2
Tom Sawyer 178, 181–3, 187, 194n38
transimperial history 8
Trianon, Treaty of (1919) 37, 113, 118, 121
and Hungarian revisionism 41–2, 121
Trump, Donald 15, 216, 220, 252, 264, 286, 332
Turanism 16, 37, 73, 75–7, 78, 80–1, 84–5, 114, 118, 119, 122, 222–3, 258–60
Turda, Marius 16, 60
Twain, Mark 124, 179, 181–3, 187–8, 195n41

Ukraine/Ukrainians 3, 5, 20, 38, 59, 74–5, 77–8, 81, 161, 238, 248, 255, 275–80, 330, 336, 340, 347n85
Uldenett, Charles 121
Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) 115, 119, 182, 195n41
United Kingdom 8, 35, 41, 64, 100–1, 172n4, 311–25
United States 42, 44–5, 253–4
Civil War 115–16
migration to xv–xvi, 9–10, 43, 144
myth of the Frontier 41, 118, 124–5, 126, 130
and racism 35, 61, 86, 182–3, 187, 203, 220, 226, 267–8
see also migration; slavery
Ureña Valerio, Lenny 58
Uzbekistan 200, 203–4, 206–10

Vaillant-Couturier, Marie-Claude 205, 213n52
de Valera, Eamon 35
Vatra 144–5
Venezuela 14
Verdery, Katherine 7
Verne, Jules 179, 181–2, 184–5, 187–8

Wall and Tower 163, 167, 169
Wallachs 99–100
Wallerstein, Immanuel 3
Weber, Max 33
Weiss, Holger 199
Wekker, Gloria 4, 255–7
Wereszczyński, Piotr Aleksander 83

White and Black 180
white citadel 33–8, 329
white crisis 18, 34–5
white gaze 11, 97, 302
white innocence/ignorance 1, 4, 47, 56, 114, 132, 255–6, 258, 268–9
'white primitives' 92–5, 99–109
White privilege 2, 56–7, 61–3, 66–7, 114, 132, 177, 183, 185, 198–200, 255–6, 295, 319, 325n33
whiteness
  competition over claims to 36–7, 38–9
  debased white race 37
  fragile/contingent/lesser xvi, 2, 6, 9, 10, 11–12, 33, 34, 36, 132–3, 138–43, 177, 236–7, 277–8, 282
  and gender 338–9, 340
  gradations in 10, 177–8, 184, 311–12, 316–23
  invisible/unmarked 1, 4, 20, 32, 153n26, 198–202, 209–10, 269, 293–6, 300, 305
  and nation building/nationalism 16–20, 143–7, 157–64, 163, 172, 329–39
  'new whites' 35, 191
  outside of 139, 141, 150
  semi-peripheral/peripheral 114, 139–41, 147–8, 151, 255–6, 268–9
  superior Eastern European 10–11, 13–14, 39–40, 91, 132–3, 171, 182–3, 188, 191, 258, 260–1, 330, 337
  Western as femininised 15–16, 338, 340
  'working towards' 10, 12, 57, 61–4, 66, 284–8
'whiteness contract' 54, 57, 60
Wilson, Woodrow 36–7, 38, 50n38
  Wilsonian myth 44–7
Winnetou 117, 124–5, 126
Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) 200, 203–9
Women of the Whole World 203
World Congress of Families 1, 229
World Peace Council 131
world systems theory, and race 3, 5
World War I 10, 18, 31, 34–5, 39, 46, 217, 222, 227, 230, 236–7, 251n67, 260, 296
World War II 19, 156, 224

Xántus, János 116–18

'yellow race' 37, 39, 43, 75, 77, 241, 247
Yugoslav Wars 12, 287, 328, 330, 333–4, 336, 339–40
Yugoslavia 17, 18, 20, 294, 298, 299, 301–2, 304, 316–18, 320, 326n44, 336

Zakharov, Nikolay 140
Zionism 44, 157–8, 166, 169, 175n53, 242–3
Zog I, King 144, 147
zombie 264–6
Zrinyi, Miklós 221–2
Żuk, Jan Piotr 162, 174n33