The call is coming from inside the house: researching race after Yugoslavia in ‘post-post-racial’ times

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Abstract This chapter sets efforts to research race in the (post-)Yugoslav region in the context of what Kimberlé Crenshaw has termed today’s ‘post-post-racial’ times, in which progressives who might have believed that global society was on an inevitable course towards overcoming racism have now had to confront its open resurgence. From the perspectives of Crenshaw and other critical race scholars whose work has opened up new possibilities to understand south-east Europe within the global politics of race, however, the persistence of structural racism as a historical legacy of colonialism and the enslavement of Africans means that the ‘post-racial’ moment was already an illusion. Movements to ‘decolonise the university’ and its knowledge production, which have significantly influenced my own working environment as a white anglophone scholar of south-east Europe in the UK, share this structural perspective. The chapter explains the significance of these movements, and struggles in related disciplines to confront sympathies with white supremacism, for researching race after Yugoslavia in a moment where Islamophobic narratives justifying violence against Muslims in the region have become points of identification for the far right worldwide.

When young men bearing lit torches and medieval symbols to assert an imagined heritage of white European descent have marched through a US university town, the UK government has fulfilled 1970s repatriation fantasies by deporting more than 150 members of the symbolic ‘Windrush Generation’ of black Britons to the Caribbean, and violent pushbacks by Croatian border police have trapped thousands of black and Asian migrants in underequipped refugee camps in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), no-one can sustain the fallacy we still live in what were once called ‘postracial’ times (Goldberg 2015). This comforting fantasy that global society had learned from history to overcome the racism of the past was encapsulated, during the 1990s and 2000s, in cathartic moments such as post-apartheid South Africa’s transformation into the Rainbow Nation (Evans 2010), the election of Barack Obama in 2008 as the first black US president (Bonilla-Silva 2015), the racial diversity of ‘Team GB’s’ athletics gold medallists at the London 2012 Olympic Games (Winter 2013), and perhaps even the Brazilian-born Eduardo da Silva starting to represent the Croatian national men’s football team. Their iconic status belied the structures of racist oppression that continued to operate beneath their euphoric atmospheres.

The rhetorical construction of a ‘post-racial’ society, exemplified in the then Croatian president Ivo Sanader’s appeal that ‘[w]e are living in a century in which tolerance should be cultivated’ when he condemned Croatian fans’ racist chants against Eduardo and other Brazilian and Cameroonian players in 2006 (FARE 2006), was already widely criticised in the

critical race scholarship through which I now understand nationalism in the post-Yugoslav region and elsewhere even when it appeared to have become a new norm in public discourse. The 'post-racial' imagination's strategy of fixing racism as a sin of the past and displacing responsibility for it on to less enlightened Others not only occludes the structural racial discrimination still suffered by most people who are not considered 'white' in the societies where they live, but also fuels right-wing claims that it is now white majorities who are discriminated against in racist terms (Lentin 2014). The persistence of systemic racism and the transnational re-entry of unabashed white supremacism into public life reveal that this is instead what Kimberlé Crenshaw (2017: 2319, emphasis original) has called a '*post*-post-racial' moment: one defined by acknowledgement that 'post-racial' society was the illusion it was. The contestations this has created in social, intimate, working and digital spaces both places race undeniably on the research agenda even in fields which have largely avoided it, like postsocialist studies (Imre 2014), and increases the risks of studying it at all.

The lenses through which researchers study race, perhaps even more than with any other topic, are deeply shaped by how we are each racialised (which racial categories we identify with and/or have projected on to us) in the communities we belong to, the 'ways of *seeing* difference' (Held 2009: 206, emphasis original) that we have learned, and the specific contestations of race and coloniality we encounter with this subjectivity in the places where we live, work and research. The 'historical, geographical, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries' constituting what Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1995: 68) termed researchers' 'politics of location' are the starting points through which we each research race, or indeed fail to notice processes of racialisation at work. My own relationship towards researching race after Yugoslavia is the product of my gendered and racialised subjectivity as a white British woman, the specific contentions of race and belonging that have shaped collective narratives of identity in the contexts I am closest to, and the consequences of these national and transnational developments for academic labour and activism. A juxtaposition of two digital artefacts I encountered the day before beginning to write this introduction – one from UK popular culture and another from south-east European research – illustrates the confluence of researching race in the post-Yugoslav region with a subjectivity shaped in the UK, setting the scene for the account of this historical moment which follows.

On one side of this juxtaposition is Dave's performance of 'Black' at the 2020 Brit Awards ceremony (uploaded to YouTube where it had immediately become a talking point on UK social media before I watched it in my office the next day), where the 21-year-old rapper had won Album of the Year. The studio version of the song already narrated the racist persecution of young black men by police and the criminal justice system, his everyday experiences in south London's Nigerian diaspora, the psychic and familial effects of internalised racism, and the history of Britain extracting wealth and enslaving millions of humans from West Africa; on stage, Dave rose from his piano to freestyle further lines about British racial exceptionalism, the racism of Boris Johnson, the British press's differential treatment of Kate Middleton and Meghan Markle, the prison reformer Jack Merritt (killed by a fellow delegate at a prison reform conference in London in November 2019) and what his work had meant to incarcerated young black men in need of second chances, the scandal of victims of the Grenfell Tower fire still waiting for accommodation, the Windrush deportations, and 'reparations for the time our people spent on plantations – I'm done' (Dave 2020). The historian Kehinde Andrews (2020) would hail it a few hours later as giving 'undeniable voice to the politics of black Britain' and the connections drawn in black British thought between the historic violence of empire and racism today.

The second artefact, appearing on the same computer screen, was a new article by Anca Parvulescu and Manuela Boatcă on the enslavement of Romani populations in Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania: this, they argue, has been erased from labour histories of south-east Europe even as historians have been striving to foreground the labour of enslaved Africans and other forms of indentured and unfree labour in the transatlantic world (Parvulescu and Boatcă 2020: 1). Their article argues for the Wallachian and Moldovan institution of *robia*, to which Roma in the Danubian principalities were subject until 1855–6, to be viewed as enslavement rather than serfdom, and uses Toni Morrison's strategies for reading representations of enslaved labour on US plantations to illustrate how the classic Romanian nation-building novel they analyse (Liviu Rebreanu's 1920 novel *Ion*) built that nation by constructing the political agency of white Romanians against the historyless cultural labour of Roma. Their observations about a campaigner for Romani emancipation and a colonialist Habsburg reformer both putting Romani enslavement 'in a world-historical framework, where it indeed belongs' (Parvulescu and Boatcă 2020: 7) push beyond analogy to connect south-east Europe into a global system of 'racial capitalism' (Robinson 1983: 9), and their discussions of musicians establish racialised enslavement as part of the labour history of music in this part of south-east Europe.

Neither of these artefacts refer to the post-Yugoslav region, but both explain frameworks of race in spaces which have an effect on my researching race there. The first, confronting British racial exceptionalism with a historically and transnationally connected account of blackness, theorises the dynamics of race in the country where I was born, was educated, live and work. The second is a contribution to a field of literature on folk music, ethno-nationalism and identity in south-east Europe which ethnomusicologists have made pan-regional (see, e.g. Buchanan (Ed.) 2007), so that my research on post-Yugoslav popular music has always been in dialogue with studies of music in Romania, Bulgaria and other Balkan countries. Indeed, pursuing this field's themes through the global politics of race as well as the regional politics of ethnicity was one of my conceptual goals in writing *Race and the Yugoslav Region* (Baker 2018), and the nexus between the spaces denoted by each artefact above has produced the subjectivity though which I research it. This chapter explains the most immediate contexts in which I do so.

The perspectives on researching race after Yugoslavia that I offer in this chapter are not universal: they are derived from, and apply most directly to, the spaces where my putting theory into practice has its most material and everyday effects (UK academic workplaces, international academic networks, and a digital sphere where I participate in more limited ways than I used to do), though they may well resonate with researchers in other similar settings. Readers who have participated in organisations or campaigns I describe from outside will also have knowledge I do not. In exploring struggles to 'decolonise the university' since 2014 and the efforts of scholars in other disciplines to take firm stands against white nationalist and identitarian uses of their subject area, this chapter connects the rethinking of my own teaching, reading and research practices to be able to express the post-Yugoslav region's position in global formations of race with the wider context of research in 'post-post-racial' times.

That rethinking began as a personal commitment to accounting for how racism and whiteness operated in my own social contexts, which I formed after encountering the writing of feminists of colour such as Flavia Dzodan (2012), who was then exposing the structural racism of the EU border security regime, in the digital feminist and queer spaces of the early 2010s. Publishing research about race in the region was an outcome of this

process, but not the original goal, which was to meet what seemed like the urgent need to integrate 'race', as a global legacy of European colonialism, into how and what I taught about the region. It took shape amid the first radical swell of a movement to redress racial injustice in higher education which has since been taken up, though arguably also diluted (Saini and Begum 2020: 2), as an institutional imperative at a number of universities including my own. In particular, it reacted to a campaign by students of colour at UCL, where I had studied and taught, who posed the question: 'Why is my curriculum white?'

1 'Why is my curriculum white?'

'Why is my curriculum white?', and its parallel campaign 'Why isn't my professor black?' (reacting to the severe lack of scholars of colour in senior academic positions), were both led by a group of UCL students and researchers who organised under a title referencing the work of Audre Lorde, 'Dismantling the Master's House' (DTMH). Lorde's much-quoted statement that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' originated from a 1979 conference organised by white feminists at NYU where she had had to protest against the almost complete erasure of black, lesbian and 'Third World' participants: 'when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy', she warned, there could be 'only the most narrow parameters of change' (Lorde 2018: 17). This now-widespread activist slogan relates, in other words, to the structures of racism, colonialism and homophobia within academic knowledge production: to unmake these structures, Lorde implied, white theorists and educators would have to accept that non-white, non-Western perspectives belonged equally at the centre of knowledge.

DTMH at UCL quickly became part of a transnational movement to 'decolonise' the university, which in 2014–15 spread from South Africa to cross-fertilise with ongoing campaigns at universities in the UK and USA. At Cape Town and Oxford, the movements were known as 'Rhodes Must Fall' (using the symbol of their universities' memorialisation of the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes), in the USA they focused on Confederate statues and campuses' connections to the enslavement of Africans, and in the UK they often took up UCL's name of 'Why is my curriculum white?'. They all linked together issues that stemmed from the global history of racism as a legacy of coloniality: the erasure of knowledge from black, non-Western, indigenous and Global South sources in university curricula, to Eurocentric effect; universities' unexamined histories of complicity in colonial violence and enslavement, and indeed the intellectual authority that eminent figures honoured by certain institutions (like Francis Galton and Karl Pearson at UCL) had given the concept of 'race' itself; the structural barriers to access and success that prevented students of colour achieving on average as highly as their white peers; the endemic under-representation of scholars of colour in permanent posts and senior leadership positions; and the institutional disbelief and dismissal that students of colour encountered when reporting racist discrimination and harassment. These all occur behind contemporary universities' welcoming and inclusive façades (Ahmed 2012).

The campaign at UCL, where I had been an MA and PhD student at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in 2003–8 and a part-time, fixed-term tutor specialising in nationalism and ethnic conflict in 2011–12, reached wider audiences through posting videos online, including a recording of the 'Why isn't my professor black?' roundtable organised by Nathaniel Adam Tobias ~~Coleman~~ (Tate and Bagguley 2017: 291) and, later in 2014, a twenty-minute film, 'Why is my curriculum white?'. This video, re-shared on UCL's official YouTube

channel in November 2014, was my first in-depth encounter with the campaign. Its participants, predominantly of black and Asian descent, recounted observations from their learning and teaching experiences at UCL such as a seminar passing over a white author's racist descriptions of indigenous peoples of the Amazon in order to discuss how they had inspired him creatively; histories of medicine centred on Europe while dismissing medical interventions from Africa and the Middle East; and the invisibility of the colonial logics behind the will to knowledge that motivated the foundation and expansion of universities like UCL (DTMH 2014).

More than just ethnocentric or Eurocentric exclusions, these were also examples of structural racism, which goes ignored when it is not named as such (Rutazibwa 2016). To see these as racialised phenomena requires insisting, as critical race theory does, that racism consists of much more than personal belief and prejudice: well-meaning individuals acting on unexamined assumptions grounded in racialised hierarchies are equally capable of enacting racism as a system, whatever their intentions or self-belief (Bonilla-Silva 1997). A structural understanding of racism means accepting that the construction of different groups of people as more or less rational, cultured and capable of advanced knowledge and thought, depending on which part of the world their embodied appearance seems to ascribe their heritage to, is deeply embedded into society, culture, academia, and other contexts in which knowledge is produced and communicated to others – including spaces that define themselves as anti-racist, progressive and liberal (Lentin 2004).

Race in this sense is not a characteristic that one *has* within a pre-ordained set of human races, but what the black British cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall (2017: 32–3, emphasis original) described as a 'classificatory order' and 'a *system of meaning*', 'the centrepiece of a hierarchical system that produces differences' through the same hegemonic systems of domination that Gramsci had argued inscribe and naturalise class. For Hall and other black Marxists, race is not just analogous *to* class but already entangled together *with* class in industrial capitalism, since the structures of this world order were being built coterminously with European empires exercising their colonial power; it is equally entangled, black feminists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Gloria Wekker (2016) show, with gender and sexuality, since our ideas of desire, respectability and disgust emerged through systems of imperial and colonial social control which made them racialised as much as sexualised. The grand ambiguity for central and south-east Europe in the global geopolitics of race is thus how far, since its nations did not have their own overseas colonial history and indeed during the high colonial era were ruled by other empires themselves, these structures of race, racism and whiteness permeated there.

Whiteness, a term that may imply an uncomfortable amount of privilege when applied to identities in regions as marginalised as south-east Europe, also relates in critical race studies to a structure of thought, feeling and power rather than an inherent personal characteristic or even a category within which individuals claim membership. It is ascribed in 'degrees of whiteness' – a term the sociologist Senka Božić-Vrbančić (2006) adopted in explaining migrant Croat labourers' position in the racialised hierarchies of colonial New Zealand[1] – leave those whose ethnic heritage denotes a periphery more conditionally part of the category than those at the unquestioned centre. The less 'conditional' (Maghbouleh 2017:

[1] I thank Susan Cooper, one of the SSEES postgraduates I taught in 2011–12, for asking the question that led me to find this article and wonder why it did not seem to fit into prevailing conceptual frameworks for studying ethnicity and nationalism in south-east Europe – another early step towards researching the global politics of race.

172) an individual's whiteness, the more they are enabled to share what Raka Shome (2000: 368) describes as 'that sense of material and cultural entitlement that is enabled, and the sense of social agency that is produced, when we see the world constantly constructed in our image, through our needs, and through our frame of reference.' That sense is all the stronger when one's nationality and first language also match the hegemonic 'we' in whose image the world is constructed when seen from the place one is situated in: hence the additional 'Anglophone privilege' (Lunny 2019: 120) gained by first-language speakers of English from the Global North). Conversely, as Joanna Mizielińska and Robert Kułpa (2012: 20–4) observe, grammar and accents associated with Englishes beyond the Global North and rich West signal to those at the centre of whiteness that speakers/writers belong to what they consider the periphery, revealing that whiteness is a 'not just phenotypic, but malleable' concept (Rzepnikowska 2018: 192), and that the power to define it is asymmetrically distributed along lines shaped by the histories of British and then US empire above all (Phillipson 2008).

The reproduction of whiteness as a 'process' (Frankenberg 2004: 105) occurs throughout social institutions, as transnational as the media, as intimate as the family, and as powerful as the state: it is in this system's interests, the philosopher Charles Mills suggests, that those admitted to whiteness do not even perceive it, a condition Mills (2017: 57) calls 'white ignorance' and the anti-racist educator Peggy McIntosh (2005 [1988]) described with the metaphor of the 'invisible knapsack' (in which white people are able to keep all the advantages that let them navigate the world more easily than black people and others racialised as non-white). So deeply are white people socialised to treat investments in whiteness as part of our sense of self that we are liable to react defensively when they are injured because our implication in structural racism has been made explicit – the situation Robin DiAngelo (2018) calls 'white fragility', which undermines so many efforts at feminist coalition-building across difference (Srivastava 2006) and so many attempts to teach critically about race in the classroom (Thapar-Björkert and Farahani 2019), let alone to address institutional racialised inequalities behind the scenes (Ahmed 2012). Those who cannot escape being placed into a racialised category other than 'white', meanwhile, deal with continual material and psychic reminders that their skin colour and other embodied markers of identity signal they do not belong in prestigious social spaces on the same terms as those who are unquestionably white do (Puwar 2004).

When UCL students asked 'Why is my curriculum white?', therefore, they meant something much more profound than what the skin colour of the authors on their syllabi might be (the parochialism to which right-wing media often reduce such campaigns); they meant why their curriculum was infused with structures of knowledge which, at a deep philosophical level, reproduce the dynamics that continue to naturalise racism. As Azeezat Johnson and Remi Joseph-Salisbury (2018: 148) write, '[l]ittle is done to understand how racist discourses inform the way in which academia, as a central site of knowledge production, constructs […] everyday spaces, and which bodies are seen as knowledge-able in the first place.' Whiteness in education and research is thus a matter of which knowledges are elevated to the centre of thought as the essential canon, and which others are marginalised – primarily the knowledges of colonised peoples and traditions, and knowledges produced in resistance to colonialism, as well as knowledges grounded in experiences of gender and sexuality that transgressed colonial sexual norms. The last speakers in the 'Why is my curriculum white?' video, indeed, historicised the whiteness of their curriculum and teaching through the material traces of racism and coloniality

surrounding them at UCL. Seeing this campaign spread from the institution I had left two and a half years previously to universities around the UK made me conscious that I could not yet adequately respond in teaching without further research.

2 'Decolonising the university' in the UK

The DTMH campaigns by students and researchers of colour at UCL, one of the most significant in what became the struggle to 'decolonise the university' in the UK, began in 2013–14 when the critical philosopher of race Nathaniel Adam Tobias ~~Coleman~~, then a fixed-term postdoctoral researcher, started organising with students including Adam Elliott-Cooper, a geography PhD student at the time. DTMH, in Elliott-Cooper's words, stemmed from:

> the contradictions between the progressive ideas of the Enlightenment and the enslavement, genocide and exploitation which accompanied it. This contradiction was reconciled through the racist myth that Europe is, and always has been, the intellectual and moral leader of the world. Looking at the content of the teaching in contemporary educational institutions, we saw this myth being reproduced across almost every discipline, leading us to ask one simple question: why is my curriculum white? (Elliott-Cooper 2018: 292)

Further inspiration came from a parallel struggle at the University of Cape Town, where students protesting against institutional racism took Rhodes's statue on campus as a symbol of what they were fighting against and gave their protest the hashtag-length name Rhodes Must Fall in March 2015. After beginning to show their films at other universities, DTMH were invited to Oxford by students who had been using the #ITooAmOxford hashtag to campaign against the many structural and social exclusions with which Oxford obstructed students of colour and students who were working-class, disabled and/or queer (Henriques and Abushouk 2018: 293). ~~Coleman~~, and Rhodes Scholars who had been at Cape Town in the previous academic year, encouraged the Oxford group to also organise around the symbol of a Rhodes statue (outside Oriel College) as one of their campus's most visible and unquestioned legacies of colonialism and racism. Translating the language of 'decolonisation' from the South African movement into the UK, Rhodes Must Fall Oxford (RMFO) became that university's first student movement 'in recent memory' to have 'utilised and centred the term "decolonial", or considered what its implications might mean' in a city and university so replete with the spoils of colonial wealth (Henriques and Abushouk 2018: 307).

Decolonisation, in the context of universities and research, aspires to undo the colonial foundations of how we know what we know and how universities order, validate and communicate it. Gurminder Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancıoğlou (2018: 2), editors of the anthology *Decolonising the University*, define it as 'a way of thinking about the world which takes colonialism, empire and racism as its empirical and discursive objects of study; it re-situates these phenomena as key shaping forces of the contemporary world, in a context where their role has been systematically effaced from view.' For them and their contributors, moreover, decolonising universities must include questioning how universities themselves were involved in reproducing colonial power and continue to reproduce its neo-colonial afterlife. By '[t]aking colonialism as a global project', they argue, 'it becomes

difficult to turn away from the Western university as a key site through which colonialism – and colonial knowledge in particular – is produced, consecrated, institutionalised and naturalised' (Bhambra, Gebrial and Nişancıoğlou 2018: 5). In the revolutionary project of decolonisation as theorised by Frantz Fanon (2001 [1965]: 27–8), and in the radical decentring of Northern, Anglophone knowledge in the decolonial thought of Walter Mignolo (2000), these forces run much deeper than the curriculum – as today's decolonial postsocialist feminism emphasises when refuting resisting tropes of central and eastern Europe lagging behind the West (Koobak and Marling 2014). Yet they manifest in the curriculum as they do anywhere else (Gebrial 2018: 26), and indeed the DTMH campaign's invitation to imagine the curriculum differently empowered me to actively speculate how teaching about the post-Yugoslav region in the UK would differ if it treated global coloniality and race as centrally as postcolonial perspectives on representation and exoticism.

Responses to DMTH and RMFO after 2014–15 saw a 'decolonisation' agenda emerge in UK higher education, though one which arguably concentrated more on the content of learning and less on equally important material transformation as it became more institutionalised. The National Union of Students launched a nationwide 'Why is my curriculum white?' campaign with the hashtag #liberatemydegree, and many students' union officers representing students categorised in UK statistical language as 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) lobbied for their institutions to take action, with institutional sensitivities around the so-called 'attainment' gap between white and BME students (to which the Office for Students had applied sector-wide targets) often a convenient strategic lever (Owusu 2017).

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London, which combines a colonial origin with a present-day intellectual identity ostensibly dedicated to postcolonial research, offered an example of an institution implementing this 'decolonising' agenda in area studies in 2018 when a 'Decolonise SOAS' working group chaired by the postcolonial International Relations specialist Meera Sabaratnam produced a 'toolkit' of practical questions for tutors to ask when creating and updating syllabi: these included 'To what extent does our content presume a particular profile/mindset of student and their orientation to the world?' (that is, are we expecting the default student to be white and British?), 'To what extent does our syllabus allow students to understand the origins and purposes of its field in its historical context?' (that is, the context of global coloniality and race), and 'To what extent does the programme design and delivery enable, encourage or require students to study non-European languages?' (which few institutions besides SOAS could answer positively at all) (Decolonise SOAS 2018). University librarians responded to the 'decolonisation' agenda as well, including at UCL, where SSEES's librarian Lesley Pitman jointly developed a model for auditing reading lists' relative balance of 'white, male and Eurocentric authors' and others (Schucan Bird and Pitman 2019: 1). These were the circumstances in which my initial commitment to encouraging fellow researchers of south-east Europe to address the global politics of race in their own work expanded into my writing *Race and the Yugoslav Region* in 2016–17.

3 The post-Yugoslav region and researching race

Between March 2015, when I took the opportunity of an invitation to give a Russian and Slavonic Studies seminar at Nottingham to suggest how critical race studies lenses might have deepened my previous projects on popular music and on peacekeeping, and March

2018, when *Race and the Yugoslav Region* appeared in a postcolonial studies series edited by Gurminder Bhambra, world events including the spread of the global refugee crisis into south-east Europe and the result of the Brexit referendum appeared to make the relationship between 'postsocialist' Europe and the global politics of race even more important to research, and thus to teach. The questions posed practically by Decolonise SOAS, combined with the ongoing critical reinvention of area studies through centres like SSEES (see Milutinović (Ed.) 2019), are important prompts. Yet the post-Yugoslav region (like the rest of central and south-east Europe) has differed from the regions SOAS researches, and most of the regions usually implied as subjects of study in references to 'globalising and diversifying' the curriculum (in the words of the Royal Historical Society's 2018 'Race, ethnicity and equality' report) beyond Britain and the West (RHS 2018: 23), for several reasons which complicate researching and teaching race.

Firstly, the post-Yugoslav region and its diasporas has until very recently been the subject of far less research on race in a global sense. The notes that became *Race and the Yugoslav Region* were initially an attempt to collate how race *could* be approached through existing research: where, for instance, were there studies of histories of the black diaspora and other migrants and travellers from outside Europe, to counteract the 'common sense' that apart from its Romani minorities the region had only ever been historically white? How could groups who did not fit into the prevailing schema of ethnic-majority national histories and equally autochthonous ethnic minorities be brought as close to the centre of study as those majority–minority relations are? How should one deal with tropes in cultural representations that one would readily call colonial if they appeared in western Europe, yet in south-east European studies tended to be bracketed away from consideration (see Imre 2014)? And what everyday encounters with racial difference had been produced through the solidarities Tito's Yugoslavia expressed with Non-Aligned allies in Africa? – probably the theme where research on race in and after Yugoslavia has most expanded in the last five years (e.g. Subotić and Vučetić 2019).

Secondly, studies of race, empire and postcoloniality in the North Atlantic and the former empires of western European countries – with which many researchers and students resisting structural whiteness in UK and Anglophone academia are involved – still rarely bring older and newer research on race in 'postsocialist' Europe into their dialogues. A recent *History Workshop Journal* roundtable on 'decolonizing history', for instance, quite typically brought together six UK-based historians of empire and decolonisation in South Asia, Southeast Asia, imperial Britain, the Caribbean, Africa and the USA in responding to the 2018 RHS report. This conversation made the essential point that 'rather than occurring through tokenism or the one-off "flipping" of reading lists and course themes, to decolonize history requires sustained, critical study of empire, power, and political contestation, alongside close reflection on constructed categories of social difference' (Behm et al. 2020: 2). Yet its call to 'bring a necessary global perspective to what too often tend to be framed as domestic debates on race, ethnicity, and gender' passed completely over central and south-east Europe as part of its globe, strikingly similar to the region's frequent invisibility in studies of how systems of racialisation classification vary around the world (e.g. Goldberg 2009; Stam and Shohat 2012).[2] And yet it has been more than a decade since Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery (2009) argued the effects of empire and decolonisation did not stop

[2] The closest it came was a passing reference to 'supranational partnerships like the Non-Aligned Movement' emerging through decolonisation processes (Behm et al. 2020: 9).

at those territories conventionally thought of as 'postcolonial', just as 'postsocialism' should denote the *global* consequences of state socialism collapsing in the USSR and eastern Europe, not just its repercussions in those countries themselves.

This observation should not become a means to derail redressing the injustices that white, Western academic structures have inflicted on knowledge from black, Asian and indigenous thinkers and the Global South. Rather, it is a call for the study of the post-Yugoslav region (and the rest of central and south-east Europe) to show as emphatically as possible that the area is already part of the global history and sociology of race, thus part of the global legacies of European colonialism and white Europeans' mass enslavement of Africans. So too is the marginalisation and othering to which the area has long been subjected, compelling Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) and Maria Todorova (1997) to foundationally translate Edward Said's postcolonial thought to explain constructions of 'Europe' and 'the Balkans', Marina Blagojević (2009) to theorise the region as a 'semiperiphery' of neoliberal Europe, and Marina Gržinić (2014) to make decolonial alliances with Latin American and African thinkers in critiquing the racism of European border regimes. Post-Yugoslavs' ambiguous and shifting experiences of how they and others racialise their identities, meanwhile, illuminate the contingency of whiteness itself (Drnovšek Zorko 2019). Distinctive theorisations of racism and postcoloniality are emerging grounded in the region's specific historical, geopolitical and socio-economic condition.

My own contribution to this turn, from outside south-east Europe, is an indirect consequence of the decolonising activism of students of colour at my former university, UCL: in the terms of the title of this chapter, the call was certainly one which came from 'inside the house', that 'house' being the institutionally white academy which campaigners were drawing on the thought of Lorde and others to transform. Yet when the colloquial image of the 'call […] coming from inside the house' is applied to racism (alluding to the horror-movie trope of the villain bombarding the protagonist with telephone calls to announce his presence in her home (Hall 2016)), it more commonly implies a menacing call, not a call of encouragement, from within the community where the speaker and audience belong: the medievalist Erik Wade (2019), for instance, argues '[t]he call is definitely coming from inside the house on this one' in critiquing many of his fellow white medievalists' reluctance to confront attachments to the racialised idea of 'Anglo-Saxon' heritage (see Rambaran-Olm 2018). Turning this other eye 'inside the house' requires contending with some much more troubling valences of race in post-post-racial times.

4 The stakes of researching race in post-post-racial times

One group of people who have had no qualms about thinking about race and whiteness in the context of south-east Europe and the Yugoslav region are white nationalists and identitarians, whose present ideology centres on an imagined threat to 'civilisations' of white European descent from Muslims who are poised to 'replace' them in the neighbourhoods of Western cities and ultimately impose Islamic law (Davey and Ebner 2019). Within this historical mythology, which the French writer Renaud Camus termed the 'Great Replacement', some sympathisers look to examples from the Yugoslav Wars, specifically the case of Kosovo Serbs and their 'replacement' by Albanians as evidence of what they warn will happen if Muslim immigration and terrorism goes unchecked (Tregoures 2019), and the notion of creating an ethno-religiously homogenous Bosnian Serb homeland through genocidal force that motivated Radovan Karadžić and his fellow leaders

of ‘Republika Srpska’ during the Bosnian conflict, which has been taken up in certain digital spaces as a model for what users radicalising each other into preparedness for violent action believe will be the duty of men of white European descent in order to make their cities, nations and continents safe again.

These discourses show remarkable continuities with the rhetoric of nationalist intellectuals and media before and during the Yugoslav wars, particularly their scripts for turning single interpersonal crimes into ‘evidence’ of eliminationist historical campaigns: the linguists Louisa Buckingham and Nusiebah Alali (2019: 4), for instance, draw on Florian Bieber’s study of Serb nationalist mythology to show how strategies of ‘eliminating the historical separation between past and present by contemporizing the past or historicizing the present’ (Bieber 2002: 97) also align interpretations of the past with ‘contemporary social and political narratives’ in today’s far-right extremism through ‘the notion of racial or cultural homogeneity (and superiority)’. They are more than parallels: for today’s far right, the Yugoslav wars and especially Serb nationalist targeting of Muslims are a living myth. The manifesto Anders Behring Breivik distributed before committing the Oslo and Utøya massacres in July 2011, which expressed and often pasted in writings by proponents of the ‘Eurabia’ conspiracy theory (Bangstad 2013: 373), contained several passages of admiration for Karadžić, for the Serb nationalist cause in Kosovo, and for the widespread Serb nationalist myth that Albanians and Bosniaks had been plotting to restore the domination of the Ottoman Turks. Its longer-term historical narrative about an Islamic threat to Europe drew most of its evidence from how ‘counter-jihadist’ bloggers had presented the Ottoman Empire’s treatment of Christians – thus drawing in the Balkan region in particular –and occasionally referred to expressions of that narrative by Serb artists and writers (including the late 19th-century painter Paja Jovanović and the propagandist Srđa Trifković).

This dimension of contemporary white nationalist and identitarian thought has been underappreciated in south-east European studies, certainly by comparison with how the fields of classics and medieval studies have reacted to these movements’ fascination with imagined high points of white European civilisation such as Sparta, ancient Athens and the Crusades. Serb self-defence in Kosovo has been a material as well as discursive interest for these branches of the far right: a former member of the French branch of Génération Identitaire who intended to run in the 2012 French presidential elections founded an NGO called Solidarité Kosovo (Tregoures 2019), and one co-founder of Britain First (through a new group named Knights Templar International, seemingly after the imaginary international network of which Breivik had claimed membership) has used Serbia as a base for online video production and taken credit for sending bullet-proof vests to Serbs in northern Kosovo, as well as filming videos with anti-migrant border vigilantes in Bulgaria (Cosic, Marzouk and Angelovski 2018).

The place of south-east Europe in certain digitally mediated white nationalist and identitarian imaginations was illustrated horrifically in March 2019 when the perpetrator of the Christchurch shootings livestreamed himself singing a song in honour of Karadžić, recorded by a group of Serb soldiers during the Yugoslav wars, while driving to the first mosque where he planned to carry out his attack. This song, originally known as ‘Od Bihaća do Petrovca sela’ (‘From Bihać to Petrovac village’) or by the first line of its chorus ‘Karadžiću, vodi Srbe svoje’ (‘Karadžić, lead your Serbs’), was one of hundreds of new newly-composed folk songs written on the front line during the wars (a common musical practice on all sides of the conflict), and became an online meme after the recording appeared on YouTube and internet users started posting a still image from its grainy video on

imageboard forums: in Anglophone digital culture it became known by the title 'Serbia Strong' and the racist and Islamophobic slogan of 'remove kebab' (Procházka 2019).

The continuum of historic references that the Christchurch shooter inscribed on his weapon and equipment as heroic episodes in an imagined transhistorical struggle against Islam also drew in south-east Europe. They went well beyond the most familiar (such as 'Vienna 1683', a reference to the Siege of Vienna which had also inspired Breivik, or 'Miloš Obilić' and 'Stefan Lazar' from the 1389 Battle of Kosovo) into some that even many Balkan historians might have found obscure, such as the Montenegrin soldier Novak Vujošević, who killed 28 Turkish soldiers at the Battle of Fundina in 1876, placing all these references into one mythic continuum with references to contemporary far-right extremism such as the perpetrators of the 2017 Quebec City mosque shooting and several other attacks, the '14 words' slogan of US white nationalism, and a dedication 'For Rotherham' (the south Yorkshire town where a long-running case of organised sexual exploitation by a group of British Pakistani men targeting white girls has been instrumentalised and transnationalised by far-right video bloggers). This pattern of continuum construction is all too recognisable from the political anthropology of the Yugoslav wars and the 'decontextualizing' strategy with which Ratko Mladić began the attack on Srebrenica by promising 'revenge upon the Turks' (Halilovich 2019).

The access that far-right forums, blogs and videos provide to distorted narratives of Islamist extremism and Christian self-defence in south-east Europe creates a novel, and for many alarming, situation for educators who teach about the Yugoslav region at institutions outside it: we have resigned ourselves to few students knowing much about the 1990s wars at all unless they have some heritage from the region, yet today one source from which detailed 'knowledge' about the region (even about its wartime music videos) may enter the classroom could be the digital networks of the alt-right. Karadžić, Mladić and the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) are an established enough identification point in parts of this digital culture that a white man and amateur military re-enactor convicted of a fatal attack on a Pennsylvania State Police barracks in 2014 had posted photos to MySpace showing him in VRS uniform as part of a re-enactment group called Istočni Vuk ('Eastern Wolf') (Singleton and Morgan-Besecker 2014). This comes at a moment when international respect for survivors of the Bosnian genocide is low enough that Peter Handke could be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2019 despite his well-known sympathies with Karadžić and Slobodan Milošević, even – Adnan Delalić (2019) revealed during the outcry over Handke's prize – his participation in the wedding of Novislav Đajić, the accordionist pictured in the meme derived from the 'Od Bihaća do Petrovca sela' video.

Disciplines including classics, German studies and medieval studies have already been reckoning for some time with the knowledge that their fields fascinate white nationalist sympathisers and that a proportion of their colleagues are indifferent or even sympathise themselves. Classicists have reacted by compiling resources to help colleagues unpick the myth of ancient Greece and Rome as 'white' civilisations, teach about how ideas of whiteness were founded on imaginations of the classical past, and even counter white nationalist and identitarian appropriations of classical aesthetics, such as demonstrating that the iconic marble statues of the classical Mediterranean were originally brightly painted not plain white (Bond 2017). In German studies, the Diversity, Decolonization, and German Curriculum Collective (DDGC) formed in 2016 to advocate for the linked intellectual and material goals of 'more equitable and just curricula, pedagogical approaches, and working conditions' (Bryant et al. 2019: 2). Their concern with 'the ongoing, sometimes subtle, and

usually unquestioned collusion between (hard and soft) ethnonationalism in curricular design and the violence of white supremacy/racism in our societies' (Bryant et al. 2019: 2) mirrors calls in south-east European studies for critically questioning why ethnic majority nations are so often at the centre of our own teaching and research, and indeed connects directly with researching race in south-east Europe to the (large) extent that formations of race from the German-language cultural area were influential there. DDGC's open letter to the American Association of Teachers of German leadership in 2019 called for 'a future in which Scholars of Color (SoC), LGBT people, Jews, women, refugees, immigrants, non-native speakers, and low-income learners would count in German Studies, not as peripheral topics to be discussed and included, but as core makers of the consciousness' of the discipline (DDGC 2019).

Anti-racist organising in medieval studies has perhaps been the most intense and simultaneously faced the most backlash. Scholars struggling to break the much-mediated myth of medieval Europe as a wholly white space, confront the racist histories of their own discipline and many of its figures, and redress the field's structural and interpersonal exclusions of scholars of colour have engaged in a programme of activism and public scholarship that gathered further pace after Donald Trump's election in 2016 and the prominence of medieval symbols among marchers at Charlottesville in 2017. Their work has included founding the annual Race Before Race Symposium in recompense for major conferences appearing to shut out critical-race-based work and appearing indifferent to the safety concerns of scholars of colour (Katz Seal and Nolan Sidhu 2019: 273); compiling collaborative bibliographies of critical race scholarship (e.g. Hsy and Orlemanski 2017); making space for premodern critical race studies in special issues of journals (e.g. Kim 2019); and holding associations, publishers, authors and editors to account through social media and online journalism. The cost, especially for scholars of colour, has sometimes been reprisal harassment from inside and outside the profession (Kim 2018).

South-east European studies contains far fewer scholars of colour even than these fields, and many more who experience the intellectual and interpersonal marginalisation of south-east Europe(ans) in the Global North/West. It too witnesses contestations over how far its academic communities should take stands against racism. A few weeks after Charlottesville, for instance, the Association for Diversity in Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ADSEEES) and Q*ASEEES (Society for the Promotion of LGBTQ Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies) called on their parent association the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES) to endorse a draft statement urging scholars to 'consider how racism, antisemitism, and bigotry in general inform the subjects of our own research' (as well as to 'remind the world that these are not the only intellectual currents running through this region' – an equally important task); I was among the signatories of the open letter making this appeal. A shorter statement by ASEEES's Executive Committee, rejecting 'all forms of racism and intolerance, including white supremacy, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and homophobia' and linking to statements by ADSEEES/Q*ASEEES and other affiliates, appeared in the middle of September.

After another year, ASEEES adopted a statement on diversity and inclusion (covering race and 12 other characteristics), and in 2019 it approved a code of conduct declaring harassment, intimidation, assault and shouting down speakers to be unacceptable in November 2019 (ASEEES 2019). The last ASEEES convention I attended was 2016, so these public-facing statements are the limit of my personal knowledge of the atmosphere there since; but the tensions of confronting racism and racial exceptionalism while critically

exploring how dynamics of race in the region may differ from Western theoretical models go beyond any one association, as does the importance of preparing members to discuss race and whiteness constructively across barriers of difference and proactively defending the academic freedom of scholars researching race who are increasingly liable to intimidation from the far right.[3]

These movements to challenge white supremacy and oppose structural racism have resonances and solidarities across academic fields. The myth of a wholly white medieval Europe, which premodern critical race studies have dedicated themselves to unmaking, is for instance the bedrock of claims throughout central and east European nationalisms that their national homelands were historically and culturally white and that therefore – as the myth is articulated now – they should not be forced to accept Muslim refugees: as wielded by the Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán and others employing his discourse, this not only attempts to exempt the region from postcolonial migration on the grounds that it was not responsible for European colonialism, but also casts the region's majoritarian nations as the victims of a new colonialism on the part of the EU (Kalmar 2018).

These different fields' conditions of labour and public scholarship are also connected in the same academy and public sphere. The same reflexes of defensiveness that interfere with critical, transversal conversations about race until white scholars become able to recognise and unlearn them. The websites, forums and video channels where scholars targeted by the far right will find networked harassment organised against them are the same, as are the forms of invasion into their offline lives they can expect, and the smear campaigns their workplaces will receive. The same university managers and leaders will need to understand (as many still do not) the overwhelming impact that today's modes of far-right harassment are calculated to have on their targets. This is nothing new for many colleagues working in the nations they research, who are already much more exposed to the online and offline consequences of critically studying national memory politics, sexuality or gender regimes, though the risks will influence new researchers' decisions about what topics they will study more than they did me, when my nationality and location still insulated me from the vast majority of harassment received by left-wing and feminist Croatian academics when I began my PhD.

This is nevertheless a moment in which more research is ongoing about the Yugoslav region's historic and contemporary place within global dynamics of race and racism than at any point since my career began, producing knowledge that can regenerate how educators teach about the region (e.g. Novakov-Ritchey 2019) and aiming to collaborate and communicate in ways that decentre Western academic conventions (e.g. Manolova, Kušić and Lottholz (Ed.) 2019). New theoretical contentions will doubtless emerge, particularly over how far theoretical concepts from the North Atlantic can be applied to the post-Yugoslav space or south-east Europe, just as studies of 'balkanism' in the 1990s and 2000s produced a debate over whether or not the Balkan phenomenon was Said's Orientalism itself. These are exchanges which white Anglophones and Global Northerners, scholars whose heritage connects them to majority nations in the region, and scholars who belong to racialised minorities may all find sensitive: it is how well we are each equipped to understand our own and others' politics of location that will determine how far we are able

[3] For its annual conference in 2020, the British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES) announced it had organised a special workshop on 'Race, Ethnicity and Equality in Slavonic and East European Studies', led by Prof Sarah Badcock of the University of Nottingham, to enable colleagues to share experiences of 'the drive to "decolonise the curriculum"' (Neumann 2020).

to make sense of the contradictory and discordant experiences through which, in our own subject positions, we have each encountered race and its valences after Yugoslavia. Though the circumstances in which I have done so are quite specific to 21st-century higher education in the United Kingdom, researching race for any and all of us is inseparable from the personal, professional and political contexts of our current 'post-post-racial' times.

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