

Interview questions

1. In your recent book *Race and the Yugoslav Region: Postsocialist, Post-Conflict, Postcolonial?* (Manchester University Press, 2018), you connect critical race scholarship, global historical sociologies of race in translation, and south-east European cultural critique to situate the territories and collective identities of former Yugoslavia within the politics of race. How do the intersections between the postcolonial – which is often connected to discussions of race – and the postsocialist – which is usually not – play out in this book?

Before I wrote the book, or rather started the process of reading and listening which led to me writing the book, there were two forms of postsocialist–postcolonial intersections I’d been most concerned with. One was the way that Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995), Maria Todorova (1997) and scholars whom they inspired to write about representations of the Balkans in the 1990s had adapted Edward Said’s mode of postcolonial critique into an analytical tool for understanding postsocialist cultural politics in south-east Europe, which had deeply informed my PhD research on popular music and national identity in Croatia, and the other was critiques of international intervention in postsocialist south-east Europe which perceived interventions and the foreign staff who embodied them as keeping the region in a neo-colonial position of dependence on the West and being predisposed to treat the region and its people in similarly neo-colonial ways – this was the main critical perspective I needed to bring to my postdoctoral research on foreign peacekeeping forces and their translators/interpreters in Bosnia-Herzegovina. I have to credit Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery’s call for ‘thinking between the posts’ (Chari and Verdery 2009) with starting to push me to reconsider what postsocialism and therefore postcoloniality stood for: if postsocialism shouldn’t be thought of

as the condition of countries which used to have state socialist systems but a global condition stemming from the collapse of state socialism in central and eastern Europe and the USSR, then postcoloniality too isn't just a condition of the countries which had overseas empires or were colonised by them but a condition that has implicated the whole of the globe. Had I been coming from different personal and academic starting points than being a white British woman who entered the academic community via a British 'area studies' department (the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at University College London), that might not have taken so long.

It's still very easy, on the other hand, for lenses that fuse the postsocialist and postcolonial to employ a postcoloniality without race – or at least it is if the owner of the lens is already able not to see race. Let's put that more strongly – if the owner of the lens has a position in the structures of global white supremacy and 'global white ignorance', as Charles Mills (1997) puts it, that means they've been socialised not to see racism in operation. Obviously those positions shift, and they're particularly ambiguous and contingent for people from central and eastern Europe, who as they travel often find themselves negotiating very different racial formations. The xeno-racism (to use Liz Fekete's term (Fekete 2009)) that has been levelled in the UK against Polish workers and anyone else whose accent makes them legible as 'eastern European', all the more so since the Brexit referendum, is a case in point. But the work of translating postcolonial thought into ways of understanding postsocialist cultural politics has largely been done by scholars who would identify themselves as white. That isn't to dismiss the marginalisation and belittling that scholars from south-east European backgrounds have faced and still do face in the Anglophone academy. But it does mean there has been a structural politics of knowledge which produces what I could call the (until recently) largely unexamined assumption that race is something that happens in the

postcolonial West and ethnicity is something that happens in the Balkans. I won't call it the largely unexamined assumption because the spaces where that examination was happening were pushed to the margins – it was being examined, in interventions like Anikó Imre's early essays on postcolonial whiteness (Imre 1999; Imre 2005), and in the thoughts of prospective scholars who might have internalised that their research questions or their embodied selves didn't have a home in the field of south-east European studies.

So even the postcolonial is not necessarily always, or even (until recently) often, connected to discussions of race. What I wanted to do when I began the work that led to *Race and the Yugoslav Region* was to make it impossible to conceptualise postcoloniality in south-east Europe *without* race. I needed to overcome the obstacles as much in my own residual worldview as in what we've constructed as 'the literature' that were suggesting the structures of racism which had emerged from European colonial violence weren't as relevant for south-east Europe because it hadn't had the same history of empire as Britain – indeed it had been subject to different forms of imperial rule for centuries. Being able to see race, racism and attachments to whiteness as a global phenomenon through Mills's work started to change that, as did understanding through the work of Ella Shohat, Robert Stam and Howard Winant and Michael Omi in particular (Winant 2001; Omi and Winant 2015) that it's possible to think of 'race in translation' (Stam and Shohat 2012), that is, the same formations of race don't exist everywhere, but the structures that give rise to them do.

One suggestion I make in the book is that perhaps postcoloniality has been quite easy to detach from race in south-east European studies because it has so often been filtered through Said, who didn't really contend with race either. Yet the politics and practices of representation that he critiques, and that scholars of south-east Europe have learned to critique

through adaptations of his ideas, are readily applicable to race as well *because those politics were already racialised* – this is how Gloria Wekker, whose book *White Innocence* came out just as I was starting to write up the work that became *Race and the Yugoslav Region*, is able to use Said's idea of the 'cultural archive' (Wekker 2016, 2) to expose the many traces of a racialised cultural imagination in a Netherlands where the public of the metropole weren't yet having everyday contact with a large population of people of colour (which seemed to be an immediate answer to the exceptionalist objection that eastern Europe didn't experience postcolonial mass migration and therefore didn't develop racism in a Western sense). Already as a PhD and postdoc, even though I wasn't yet equipped to trace global formations of race in south-east Europe in the ways that are much more possible in our field today, I could read Stuart Hall's essays on representation and cultural identity (Hall (ed.) 1997) and realise the parallels between his deconstruction of racist stereotypes in British media and the dynamics of representing the Balkans that I knew so well through this critical, postcolonial-inspired approach to SEE. What I was still missing was the framework for understanding Hall's examples such as the British media's hypersexualisation of the black athlete Linford Christie as part of the *same* structures that were also producing the othering of the Dinaric aspects of national cultural heritage in Croatia, or the moral panics about turbo-folk.

Fitting those together, where critical race studies and decolonial thought are necessary to provide that extra overarching layer (I feel like I ought to be saying 'superstructure' here, though I haven't done so before), allows us and really ought to force us to move from what I call a 'mode of analogy' in the book to a 'mode of connection'. I take the language of connection from Gurminder Bhambra's call for 'connected sociologies' and 'connected histories' (Bhambra 2014, 151) – that is, to articulate where topics and subjects 'we' might not have automatically tied into the global history of coloniality and racism have actually

been shaped by it. (Bhabra is the editor of the series that published *Race and the Yugoslav Region* – I proposed it to her because I’d already seen that in the run-up to the Brexit vote she was interested in thinking through things such as how the construction of eastern European national identities fitted into the dynamics of racism and xenophobia in the UK). I revisit topics I’ve worked on before – popular music; peacekeeping and peacebuilding; the historiography of ethnicity and nationalism – and outline the main formations of race that have been translated into identity-making in the region. In fact the book uses popular music to establish that racialised cultural imaginations *are* at work in south-east Europe – and that opens up space to examine race, racism and whiteness in spheres where they might have been easier to dismiss before.

2. As a specialist in post-Cold war history, international relations and cultural studies, you also draw on and expand on the work of intersectional feminist and queer of color scholars who have tirelessly worked to decenter Eurocentrism and whiteness. While transnational feminism is generally perceived as attempting to decenter Western epistemologies, it also needs to be interrogated for the assumed relationship between transnational feminist research and postcolonial feminisms, especially when considering how it has positioned the postsocialist feminist tradition. How would you situate your work in relation to transnational feminism?

The core of transnational feminism as an idea for me is something that exposes the asymmetries of the politics of knowledge, activism and organising. More than a way of thinking through feminist lenses about phenomena that need to be explained transnationally – though of course it entails that – it’s about the material and embodied labour of how we do

that work. In your recent article for *Feminist Review*, which I must tell you once again is one of the most transformational that I've read in years, you relay Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty's distinction between "'transnational' as a status quo, and 'transnational' with a radical, decolonising edge' (Tlostanova, Thapar-Björkert and Koobak 2019, 84). That is (now you and they have put it into words that way) the kind of transnational lens that I want to strive for, though I don't know if I always achieve it. So, on the one hand, it's an approach that I aspire to make my work converse with. The first time I thought about the range of topics that became *Race and the Yugoslav Region*, it was June 2013 when I'd just come from the *International Feminist Journal of Politics conference* at Sussex, surrounded by intersectional analyses that did not let their topics' connections to the historical legacies that have produced coloniality and anti-black racism go unspoken, to a workshop about gender and citizenship in south-east Europe that had been organised at Edinburgh by a research project on citizenship in the former Yugoslav successor states. The questions about historical formations of race in the region that I jotted down on the back of my programme as I listened to Julija Sardelić speak about Romani minorities and post-Yugoslav citizenship owed much to the environment of transnational feminism that I'd just been in: they'd become things it felt necessary to answer in a way they hadn't been before.

Because the way I came into south-east European studies was through this adapted postcolonialism (my PhD supervisor was Wendy Bracewell, who was one of the leaders of a large research project about east European travel writing on 'Europe' at the time (Bracewell and Drace-Francis (ed.) 2009), and interrogating ideas of 'eastern' and 'western' Europe was and is a major intellectual theme at SSEES), and also because the oversights in transnational feminism towards postsocialist feminism haven't affected me in the way they have you, I think I almost encountered postsocialist feminism as an expression of postcolonial feminism –

or rather it was a space which posed similar questions to my embodied self as a Western researcher studying the Balkans that postcolonial feminism would pose me as a white Western one. Again that's 'analogy' rather than 'connection', but noticing analogy is probably a first step *towards* recognising connection. So transnational feminism (or whatever we should call the space of critique and action where postcolonial feminism and postsocialist feminism operate) is also something that holds me accountable, or I aspire for it to be. It forces me to question why I'm the right person to do much of my research and, in particular, to have published a book which has the potential to become a go-to citation for discussing race and postcoloniality in south-east Europe. I'm conscious that I came late to this topic, compared to Imre, Miglena Todorova (2006) whose work on Bulgaria helped me clarify what was distinctive about formations of race in and after Yugoslavia, or someone like Konstantin Kilibarda (2010) who was explicitly writing about whiteness and Yugoslavia's relations with the Non-Aligned Movement in 2010. The map of theories and experiences that made me research and write the book in a particular way is probably what I add to it most originally – particularly the continuum I perceive between popular culture and politics, and the idea of individuals' identifications with collective identities that underpins a lot of how I see the world. I'm more able to say that having heard reactions to the book than I probably was when I was writing it.

But where a transnational feminist ethics also comes in is that it motivates me to pre-empt, and avoid becoming complicit in, the dynamics that could easily lead me as a white Western Anglophone woman working at a university in the Global West/North to become positioned as 'the' expert on race in the Yugoslav region. As you know better than I do because you've felt its effects, white Western feminists are socialised to have such a pedagogical, didactic and paternalistic attitude towards feminists from global peripheries that that structural background

is already there whenever I'm speaking and co-operating across difference. As part of negotiating those 'transversal politics' (I find Nira Yuval-Davis's way of formulating it a useful way of thinking about these kinds of dialogues (Yuval-Davis 1997, 125)), I need to be very conscious that language or behaviour which might not seem particularly marked to me could actually still be reproducing that. I'm not sure I always get it right. I'm already regretting titling a recent paper 'What female pop-folk celebrity in south-east Europe tells postsocialist feminist media studies about global formations of race' – who am I to 'tell' postsocialist feminist media studies anything? I also want to be meticulous in crediting the intellectual sources that my own work rests on – for instance the first two people I thank in the acknowledgements to *Race and the Yugoslav Region* are Flavia Dzodan and Zara Bain, whose writing respectively forced me to relate the familiar 'Europe' of south-east European cultural studies to the racist and fortified 'Europe' of critical race studies, and introduced me to Charles Mills whose writing on the *spatialness* of racialised hierarchies of civilisation and modernity was the hinge I needed to suggest how the way I was used to understanding constructions of 'Europe' and 'the Balkans' could combine with being explicit about the structures of global white supremacy. Without sharing digital spaces with them both in the early and mid 2010s, I almost certainly wouldn't have written the book.

And the third way that transnational feminism informs my ethical stance is that I'm continually questioning how I should be balancing the risks of doing scholarship about race and whiteness in my present place and times. On the one hand the structural privilege that I embody (including the perceived objectivity that whiteness gives me when I talk to colleagues about race, and that my lack of any family heritage from the region gives me in the West when I claim expertise about south-east Europe), and the secure position I currently have in the academy, means I ought to be able to absorb more of the consequences of doing this work

in public than scholars who aren't racialised as white and ethnically and linguistically positioned at what the colonality of knowledge (a term you rightly end on in your *Feminist Review* piece) has made the centre of global academic production. And/or scholars who are in more junior or precarious positions, as marginalised scholars are disproportionately more likely to be. If, fate forbid, I'm targeted for harassment more heavily than some upsetting near-misses I've had, I've got a reasonable expectation that management will believe my side of the story. On the other hand, I have to balance that with the realities of my own psychological and mental resilience as an individual, and I've been wrestling with this a lot at the moment as the context in which I'm personally working has shifted over the last few years.

3. What might postsocialist feminists learn from this book? And postcolonial feminists?

My first reaction is that it's hard for me to say – I'm not a postsocialist feminist or a postcolonial one, except in the sense that I'm operating in a world which has been shaped by postsocialism and postcoloniality and my scholarship is continually in dialogue with that of feminists who are responding from more intimately postsocialist and postcolonial positions. I *am* one of those agents of the Western mediation that you rightly say in *Feminist Review* that South-to-semi-periphery coalitions don't need, in fact that they ought to refuse – I can't disavow where that positions me, but I can make choices in what I write, who I cite and who I work with that do as little harm as possible and harness that positionality to have at least some transformative effect. What I think the book has done is given back-up to feminists and other critical scholars and activists working on and in postsocialist spaces who have already recognised how global formations of race have permeated into the semi-periphery – I can say that because from time to time on social media someone will tag me into a photo of a passage

from the book that expressed something they found particularly meaningful. The way the book builds its historical and conceptual framework is there to be built on and contested, and I'm sure that experts on particular aspects that I might just have covered in a couple of pages will expose limitations of it (I hope they will – I want to understand those better too). But I think it has established that part of the region's global historical context goes missing when we *don't* ask how the global politics of race have played out there. For postcolonial feminists, maybe it can contribute to demonstrating that 'postcolonial Europe' doesn't stop at the rim of the Atlantic and that there are past and present solidarities between south-east Europe and the Global South that shouldn't be forgotten just because postsocialist nationalisms wanted it to be – but I hope it would lead readers towards more of the postsocialist feminism I draw on if that side of it is new to them.

One thing I don't think I emphasised enough in the book is why it matters to be able to talk about race and racism, rather than just coloniality and Eurocentrism (even though present systems of race and racism exist because of coloniality). Here I'm thinking of an essay by Olivia Umurerwa Rutazibwa (2016: 192) that I hadn't read when I was writing the book – it's very tempting, she notes, for white scholars to strategically avoid 'race' in order to make their critiques of 'Eurocentrism' more palatable. But Eurocentrism exists in an academy and a world with histories which have already been structured around race. And without having to contend with the vectors of violence and oppression that 'race' makes visible, the 'postcolonial' as a way of thinking about postsocialist Europe becomes very easy to co-opt in ways that still entrench racist and xenophobic cisheteronormative patriarchy, in the particular ethnocentric form we're seeing in central and eastern Europe which is directed against historic national Others, new migrant minorities and the targets of anti-gender ideology – the argument that expecting central Europe to accept sexual and gender minorities or Muslim

refugees is a colonising act on the part of the West. As well as resisting the kind of far-right and white supremacist co-option of history, language and culture that colleagues in medieval studies, archaeology or classics are already contending with, we also have to insulate postsocialist adaptations of the postcolonial from being co-opted in the same sort of way.

4. Does feminism need dialogues between the postcolonial and the postsocialist and why?

The short answer: of course it does, and I feel as if I've been part of more spaces than ever this year where they are happening. In the last few months since we exchanged the first round of questions and answers, I joined in a symposium on Race, Gender, Sexuality and Empire in Southeastern Europe organized by Christina Novakov-Ritchey, Sunnie Rucker-Chang, Ana Stojanović and Miglena Todorova at Toronto, Noa Ha and Fatima El-Tayeb's workshop on East European Cultures of Memory Between Postsocialism and Postcolonialism at TU Dresden, and a set of panels on postsocialism and racialized borders at the Amsterdam Centre for Globalisation Studies' conference (I should say that my presence at all but the Amsterdam conference was virtual – rattling off a fast-paced academic travel itinerary isn't a neutral act any more, or rather is much more marked as an act of acquiescence in the climate emergency than it used to be). Politically, in my home context, these have been several bruising months (the 2019 general election was four weeks ago) for democracy, workers' and migrants' rights, trans rights and quite possibly reproductive autonomy – one of Boris Johnson's advisers has just been praising Viktor Orbán's 'interesting early thinking on the limits of liberalism' and hoping for a 'special relationship' with Orbán's Hungary (Walker and Boffey 2020). So the radical connectivities that postsocialist feminists are forging with postcolonialism are happening at a time when our ability to openly name racism, misogyny and their intersection

in public is coming under increasingly sustained attack (the generations of socialist and postsocialist feminists who lived through the intensification of patriarchal nationalism in the early 1990s after the collapse of state socialism have already lived through such a revanchist reverse of their hopes for social transformation; in the West it is characterizing the late 2010s more than any other time in my memory). This context is on my mind much more than what I could have said about feminism needing dialogues between the postcolonial and the postsocialist in order to arrive at a holistic, globalized understanding of oppression. We need that, but we need that *for a purpose* – once we've understood through those dialogues that struggles we are impelled to see as disparate or even contradictory are actually resisting interconnected forces, what can we then practically do?

In a UK context which is where I feel most qualified to make suggestions about what feminism 'needs', for instance, those dialogues can show us how the postcolonial condition and the postsocialist condition are implicated in our current state of racial capitalism. By racial capitalism, I mean what Gargi Bhattacharyya (2018, x) describes as the racialized (and simultaneously gendered) processes that divide 'people [...] from each other in the name of economic survival or in the name of economic well-being' – these politics of entitlement and exclusion stratify the labour market, securitise borders and regulate everyday space. In London the racial logics of the global city, enforced through urban planning, housing policy, policing and migration control, are imposed on workers who have arrived via recent postcolonial and postsocialist migrations and the descendants of workers who came to the UK through postcolonial migrations one generation or longer ago (Danewid in press); those racial logics extend of course also to workers who can state their identity as 'white British' without qualification and are offered the nostalgic comfort of identifying with the 'white working class'. In smaller towns, the workers marginalized through these racial logics may be less

numerous or more recently arrived, but the logics themselves remain. Between 2004 and 2016, EU freedom of movement mobilities gave the citizens of some postsocialist countries more access to the UK labour market than the citizens of most countries Britain had colonized, albeit subjecting them to an ‘institutionalised xenophobia’ (Emejulu 2016) which cast them as responsible for conditions designed to immiserate precarious labour; after 2017–19, they faced negotiating the imprecise ‘settled status’ residency scheme or experiencing what the symbolic Windrush Generation (of black workers who arrived from the Caribbean after 1948) had faced when the ever-expanding UK border met irregularities in their paperwork. It takes a dialogue between postcolonial and postsocialist feminism to reveal the full processes at work here: how minorities have been pitted against each other; the stratifiability of whiteness which has enabled the stigmatization of ‘eastern European migrants’ (a process that predates the EU enlargements of 2004–13 and dates back to the Romaphobia hurled against Romani asylum seekers from central Europe and Romania in the late 1990s); the limited ‘ways out’ from discrimination that racial capitalism seems to offer those who can be racialized as white as long as they join in the exclusion of racial Others. Earlier I was tempted to call today’s postcolonial/postsocialist feminist dialogues ‘long overdue’, but of course they aren’t; as historians such as Chiara Bonfiglioli (2016) have shown, they were already unfolding during the Cold War, in settings where women’s activists from postcolonial and state socialist countries came together such as the UN Decade for Women. In the same way, let me not reduce postcolonial/postsocialist dialogues to the spaces of academic knowledge production where I happen to spend my working life: they are happening already whenever precarious workers from ‘postcolonial’ and ‘postsocialist’ spaces are organizing together.

5. How might such dialogues, and perhaps other dialogues that you find important, still be instrumental in looking for some shared agendas or coalitions to fight for a future?

To put it simply, can we still save or revamp feminism as a shared agenda or have differences between feminisms grown too enormous?

Are feminists even fighting for a future at the moment, or just fighting to hold on to what we fought for in the past? In the UK's current atmosphere, for instance, it feels ever more likely that the government will take the opportunity of Brexit to repeal equalities protections, which for all their limitations still created an important strategic lever for struggling against inequalities in representation and treatment in public institutions in particular (the booms in queer public history and heritage work this decade, and in more heritage sites being prepared to engage with the colonial legacies of their spaces and collections, would likely not have been so great without the public sector equality duty in the Equalities Act 2010, which required museums and other public institutions in the UK to anticipate the needs of groups the Act defined as protected minorities); the space that transphobic narratives about children supposedly being misled into believing they are trans have been given to become conservative *and* liberal media common sense has put us only one legislative step away from schools being forbidden to make children and teenagers aware of trans people, just as they were forbidden to promote homosexuality to young people between 1988 and 2000–3. Part of our immediate future is simply fighting for the recent past not to be erased. And yet I don't think differences between feminisms have 'grown' too enormous; rather, they were predestined to *be* enormous because of the way in which racial capitalism stratifies and divides lived communities, nations and the globe. It exists to preclude the perception of common interests and struggles across hegemonically constructed boundaries of difference, and to separate individuals into socially marked positions from which collective organization among and between them 'ought' to be

impossible. It exists to militate against the building of coalitions and encourage people to prefer protection for an entitled few to hope and transformation for the many, at the cost of confronting how they themselves have been implicated in these seductive systems of domination so far.

6. As Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora have argued, “there is still a crisis in both geopolitical and academic imaginaries of protest, particularly those influenced by Marxist critique, which calls for a dehomogenizing of the “socialism” in postsocialism and for a dialogue between the multiple inheritances of socialism in the present” (Atanasoski and Vora 2018, 143). In their understanding and we think you would agree, postsocialism is not a unified phenomenon or experience, and thus, they call for viewing postsocialism, like the related term postcolonialism, as an analytic rather than a fixed time period. How do you think “postsocialism” contributes to current geopolitical and academic imaginaries of protest?

Postsocialism as an analytic compels us to ask what happens after socio-economic systems and certainties collapse. What hopes did the old system offer which there are now no longer the conditions to fulfil; what hopes did the new system hold out and then dash? What ‘alternatives’ could be envisioned in the past which are harder to imagine, and might yet still be worth recovering, now? The sociologist Ana Dević (2016) writes of ‘what nationalism has buried’, by which she means the structural and socioeconomic explanations for public discontent and disempowerment during the late Yugoslav crisis that were silenced after the wars began by the rush to explain why ethnic violence had broken out instead – yet a new drive to understand the dislocations of a crumbling socio-economic system surged back up

after the global financial crisis of the late 2000s and that moment's own forms of protest. Yet what we have seen more and more since then is how readily the sentiments of losing the likelihood of a future one had felt 'entitled' to are convertible into a desire to secure one's metaphorical and literal home against Others who are supposedly responsible for threatening that entitlement – 'eastern Europeans' on the Lincolnshire job market; refugees on their way across the border where they will need housing; minorities outbreeding a majority population to the supposed point of 'replacement' (a theme both of the anti-Albanian, anti-Muslim rhetoric that Slobodan Milošević took up in during the late Yugoslav crisis, and of rhetoric on today's identitarian and white nationalist right – sections of which even look to the genocidal project of building an ethnically pure Bosnian Serb republic as an inspiration, while the patriarchal and Islamophobic right in central and eastern Europe gains strength from Western preoccupations with 'guarding the frontier' against Islam).

Another insight that knowledge from the postsocialist and post-Yugoslav region might have been able to spread wider in better time, if Western academic and policy circles had treated it as able to explain more than the aftermath of the Yugoslav Wars in a narrowly bounded region they constructed as a 'post-conflict' space, is understanding that 'protest' is not just a thing of progress and the Left. The largest and most organized protests in post-Yugoslav Croatia have been from veterans of the 1991–5 war of independence protesting against government co-operation with the international criminal justice system, and demanding greater public recognition of their wartime sacrifice – symbolically in post-war Croatian public culture the (male) veteran is sacrosanct as the defender of the homeland, yet the demand for physical and mental health care in the former front-line regions (where successive governments have failed to improve the economy) far outstrips what the state has provided. Yet the most loudly articulated demand as if to solve these material circumstances is not to transform the socio-economic structures of post-Yugoslav Croatia but to stop investigating

war crimes allegations against Croats, tolerate slogans used by the fascist Ustaše state of 1941–5 in public, and ban the Serb minority from using Cyrillic script in Vukovar. In the decade just gone, the same networked practices that excited the Left when they saw them being turned against the financial establishment and authoritarian regimes have gone on to empower protest from the Right, perhaps even more successfully. What I've given here is probably quite an empiricist version of postsocialism as an analytic – 'what do conditions after the collapse of state socialism reveal about protest?' – which is still quite bound to a specific time and space; but then does postsocialist analysis and critique still have to have some grounding in societies where state socialism collapsed to be recognizably *postsocialist*? Where would a deterritorialised postsocialism end and begin?

7. What part might feminist agendas play in refuturing, in imagining new political imaginations?

You've asked me this just as I'm struggling with an exhausted *lack* of imagination on my own part, particularly regarding how we use or even exist in the public sphere. The position I'm personally speaking from when I say that is one of grappling with how defensive I've become against the online spaces that used to be where I was able to apply my interdisciplinary and transnational knowledge most: digital platforms always *were* spaces of contention and surveillance, but the spaces they used to contain for speaking and listening with intimacy and vulnerability (against the grain of the profit motives for which they were developed) are being edged out by an ever more continuous networked and automated assault. The creative impulses I used to have feel like they're answering outdated questions, and when it comes to the main form of marginality that's affected me (the subjectivity of having grown up queer and somewhat gender non-conforming in the particular place and time I did), I used to feel a

kind of fulfilment at harnessing embodied insights from my own queer experience into an analytical lens, but the more my queer experience is enmeshed with someone else's, the less I want to make it discoverable in a public arena (or at least the public arenas as they currently exist) for the sake of inscribing myself as a theorist. That weighs more on some of my popular culture work than on my work on race, postcoloniality and postsocialism (where elements of my professional and political life inform my perspective more directly than anything in my private domain – though I recognise the household is one of the spaces where the *most* everyday social reproduction of racialised categories of thought and feeling takes place).

The wider relevance of explaining this unnerving moment in my own 'feminist life' (Ahmed 2017) – since, as Sara Ahmed argues, the embodied consequences of our own experiences of doing feminist work are how we start to feel feminist theory – is, I suppose, that speaking about feminist agendas is inseparable from speaking about the conditions under which they are or can be produced: the platforms available to communicate them and put them in transversal dialogue with others; the political economy of how they can be invented, popularised, applied, contested and who is able to do so. The academic platforms where I've personally done much of my work towards a feminist agenda are even less fit for purpose as sites of refuturing than they used to be: they're largely structured not even to give us time to think about the future, even for those among 'us' who are allowed in. I *ought* to be offering some kind of answer about how the possibilities that stem from dialogues between postcolonial and postsocialist feminism will breathe life into the kind of feminist and material refuturing we urgently need, but I don't think a Western academic workplace overwhelmed by the audit culture of the neoliberal university is the place from where that answer is most likely to emerge.

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