

Postcoloniality without race?: racial exceptionalism and south-east European cultural studies¹

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Abstract

The black Dutch feminist Gloria Wekker, assembling past and present everyday expressions of racialized imagination which collectively undermine hegemonic beliefs that white Dutch society has no historic responsibility for racism, writes in her book *White Innocence* that ‘one can do postcolonial studies very well without ever critically addressing race’ (p. 175). Two and a half decades after the adaptation of postcolonial thought to explain aspects of cultural politics during the break-up of Yugoslavia created important tools for understanding the construction of national, regional and socio-economic identities around hierarchical notions of ‘Europe’ and ‘the Balkans’ in the Yugoslav region and beyond, Wekker’s observation is still largely true for south-east European studies, where no intervention establishing race and whiteness as categories of analysis has reframed the field like work by Maria Todorova on ‘balkanism’ or Milica Bakić-Hayden on ‘symbolic geographies’ and ‘nesting orientalism’ did in the early 1990s. Critical race theorists such as Charles Mills nevertheless argue that ‘race’ as a structure of thought and feeling that legitimised colonialism and slavery (and still informs structural white supremacy) involved precisely the kind of essentialised link between people and territory that south-east European cultural theory also critiques: the construction of spatialised hierarchies specifying which peoples and territories could have more or less access to civilisation and modernity. South-east European studies’ latent racial exceptionalism has some roots in the race-blind anti-colonial solidarities of state socialist internationalism (further intensified for Yugoslavia through the politics of Non-Alignment) but also, this paper suggests, in deeper associations between Europeanness, whiteness and modernity that remain part of the history of ‘Europe’ as an idea even if, by the end of the 20th century, they were silenced more often than voiced.

Keywords: Balkanism, Race, Yugoslavia, South-East Europe, Postsocialism, Identity

For almost as long as south-east Europe could be called “postsocialist,” south-east European cultural studies have been heavily informed by postcolonial thought. The interventions Milica Bakić-Hayden (1995) and Maria Todorova (1994; 2009) made by adapting Edward Said’s understanding of “Orientalism” (Said 1978) to south-east European cultural politics have enabled many scholars of literature, film and music to explain how “symbolic geographies” (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992) of “Europe” versus “the Balkans,” inside and outside the region, have informed the construction of national, regional, urban and political identities before and during postsocialism. Since then, studies of what Todorova (1994, 453) termed “balkanism” have made it axiomatic that collective identities in south-east Europe revolve around a set of binary, hierarchical oppositions which mirror the constructions through which, Said argued, western European imperialists constructed a “West” around their metropolises and an “Orient” around their “East.” They have made it far less axiomatic that these oppositions also exist within the global history and politics of “race.” The black feminist Gloria Wekker’s observation that “one can do postcolonial studies very well without ever critically addressing race” (2016, 175) could thus readily describe most adaptations of postcolonialism in south-east European studies. Articulating postcolonialism with race, conversely, overcomes the racial exceptionalism already identified by certain scholars (see Imre 2005) and writes south-east Europe into global histories of coloniality. In a political moment when myths of an all-white “Europe” defined against Islam give transnational white supremacist movements their identity narratives, it is even more important for studies of south-east Europe to articulate the complexities of “race” in the region.

Spatialized discourses of cultural identity in and projected on to south-east Europe do, in fact, mobilize tropes that echo discourses of “race” and whiteness elsewhere. While “Europe” and “the West” in balkanism stand for a space of civilization and modernity, the ‘Balkans’ connote primitivism and a backwardness supposedly inherited from Ottoman rule; “the city,” built and developed under 19th/early-20th-century nation-building projects with aspirations to match grand European capitals (see Behrends and Kohlrausch (eds) 2014), is imagined as a space of cosmopolitanism and progress, and the countryside (so often romanticized by nationalist projects) as the repository of ethnic and religious tradition. If “Europe” is the domain of reason, these constructions continue, “the Balkans” are the domain of passion, strong enough to overpower reason and bring on recurrent violence against historic ethnic Others. Time’s arrow, in these symbolic geographies, should typically be pointing the region towards “Europe,” where it can leave the Balkans behind. Postsocialist cultural production remediating or reclaiming the “Balkans” responded partly to late-20th-century Western tastes

for the exotic (Buchanan 1997; Iordanova 2001), which had themselves been formed around colonial gazes (see Hall 1997; Urry 2011); yet some cultural critics from the region suggested such productions also identified with and reclaimed the subordinate position south-east Europe had been forced into as an economic periphery of “Europe” itself (Kiossev 2002; Šentevska 2014).² Modernity and civilization are the thematic ingredients of balkanism; they are also, critical race theory tells us (see Mills 1997), the thematic ingredients of “race.”

Such identity discourses and their Saidian interpretations do not just help to understand cultural artefacts themselves, but also the broader politics of constructing ethnicized and socio-economically marked Self/Other identities in postsocialism. Scholars of popular and folk music, for instance, notice “Europe”/“Balkan” oppositions and use them to explain the region’s widespread symbolic value-judgements about cultural taste, which express a symbolic urban–rural divide by opposing “rock” (or “alternative” music) to “folk” (see Dragičević-Šešić 1994; Buchanan (ed.) 2007; Archer 2012). Ethnicized rejection of “the Balkans” made so-called “turbo-folk” music particularly contentious in post-Yugoslav Croatia, where its sound connotes both the Balkans and Serbdom (Gotthardi Pavlovsky 2014). The surge in orientalism-like discourses in late 1980s Slovenia and Croatia, expressing the case that Slovenes and Croats had more affinity for “Europe” than Serbs, South Slav Muslims or Albanians, was in fact what first led Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden to use Said to theorize the “orientalist rhetoric” of “symbolic geography in recent [Yugoslav] cultural politics” in 1992 (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 1).

Adapting Said has thus enabled scholars of south-east Europe to trace and connect the “nesting orientalisms” (Bakić-Hayden 1995) of ethnonationalism and the “urban–rural divide” of many social constructions of culture and class. Attention to Europe/Balkan constructions helped to explain why the 1990s Serbian opposition resented turbo-folk (Gordy 1999) or why some Sarajevo and Belgrade urbanists had called the Yugoslav wars a “revenge of the countryside” against cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic cities (Bougarel 1999); how cosmopolitan “anti-nationalist” subjectivities were produced through identification with the city and its space, against village primitivism (and against “newcomers” who had imported “Balkan” mentalities as internal economic migrants or wartime refugees) (Jansen 2005); and how a geopolitics of human rights and sexuality in the 2000s–10s made supporting Pride marches a symbol of liberalism against far-right and religious opposition (Mikuš 2011; Kahlina 2015). The Bulgarian historian Maria Todorova, meanwhile, turned Said’s “orientalism” into “balkanism” in order to explain how the West had constructed its own Europeanness by defining it against a Balkan Other (Todorova 2009, 3). Though Todorova disagreed with

Bakić-Hayden over whether balkanism was “a subspecies of orientalism” (Todorova 2009, 8), their combined influence (as we shall see) made postcoloniality more important in south-east European studies than studies of many other European areas – at a time where east European writers and feminists often argued their region was being made into an intellectual as well as economic periphery (Cerwonka 2008).

To illustrate postcoloniality’s place in south-east European studies, we might adapt the postcolonial feminists Anna Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling’s illustration of the politics of knowledge in their own discipline, International Relations (which primarily “knows” about south-east Europe through the prism of ethno-political conflict and international security³). Agathangelou and Ling (2004, 23) turn to the global historian Ann Laura Stoler, who has studied the intimate politics of Dutch and French colonial management in South-East Asia, for a metaphor viewing IR’s different intellectual traditions as unequally powerful members of a colonial household: a “similar politics of exclusion and violence,” they argue, structures IR. Within the “House of IR,” political realism takes the father’s role and classical liberalism becomes the mother; liberal feminism lives among the nurturing “good daughters,” Marxism, Gramscian critical theory and postmodernism “on the borders, upstairs” as “rebel sons,” while the “Native Other,” that is, “non-Western, nonwhite sources of knowledge, traditions, or worlds,” can be “smuggled in as ‘servants’ or ‘wards’ [...] but otherwise are not recognized as identities in their own right” (Agathangelou and Ling 2004, 23–32). “Peripheral and transitional economies” like postsocialism go unrecognised as distinctive, while postcolonial thought is kept “outside the house” (Agathangelou and Ling 2004, 32–3). Postcolonial thought in south-east European studies still might not occupy the master bedroom: but neither, thanks to “balkanism,” would it be outside the house (see Baker 2016). Postcoloniality has in other words been foundational to how south-east European studies has made sense of postsocialism as well as post-Ottoman cultural legacies – but has nearly always been a postcoloniality detached from global structures of coloniality and “race.”

Indeed, these structures’ invisibility in much south-east European studies has not gone unnoticed, and several scholars have already pointed to the exceptionalism that invisibility creates. Dušan Bjelić, for instance, directly disagrees with Maria Todorova’s interpretation of how the Balkans relate to postcoloniality and race in introducing an article on a topic that requires understanding a framework of global coloniality (Bulgarian Jews’ flight from Bulgaria during World War II, many of these refugees’ commitment to Zionism and their participation in the colonization of Palestine).⁴ Bjelić (2017, 122) disagrees with Todorova’s claim that the Balkans do not sit within “postcoloniality, the condition in areas of the world

that were colonies” (Todorova 2009, 195) and with her suggestion that Westerners found it easier to Other the Balkans because they could do so without being called racist:

Balkanism became, in time, a convenient substitute for the emotional discharge that orientalism provided, exempting the West from charges of racism, colonialism, eurocentrism, and Christian intolerance against Islam. After all, the Balkans are in Europe; they are white; they are predominantly Christian, and therefore the externalization of frustrations on them can circumvent the usual racial or religious bias allegations. (Todorova 2009, 188)

Bjelić suggests Maria Todorova’s argument exhibits the same “trend of foreclosing the colonial from European history” (2017, 220) that western Europeans show when bracketing off empire from mainstream national pasts (see Lentin 2008; Wekker 2016). And yet the Balkans and their ethnic-majority nations often appear in a much more ambiguous, contradictory relationship towards race: are the Balkans or their ethnic-majority nations white? Are they not white? When and where have they been racialized in what ways, i.e. what categories of “race” have been projected on to them? Is “whiteness” even relevant in writing about south-east Europe? Have the region’s present or past inhabitants ever identified themselves with “whiteness” as critical race theorists would understand it, and if not, is talking about “whiteness” in south-east Europe simply an inappropriate extrapolation of racial theories developed in western European and settler colonial societies that were directly implicated in the violence of empire? South-east European studies cannot explore these questions if its postcoloniality lacks race.

Bjelić’s critique of exceptionalism in south-east European studies joins other interventions like Miglena Todorova’s history of racial formations in 20th-century Bulgaria (Todorova 2006) and the work of the feminist media scholar Anikó Imre. Imre has long called for scholars to view “Eastern European cultures through a postcolonial grid” by working the region into global coloniality rather than simply applying postcolonial parallels to eastern Europe (Imre 1999, 405). The postsocialist attachments to whiteness that Imre perceives beneath Hungarian media’s endemic Romaphobia are mostly unaddressed in postsocialist cultural studies but illustrate a widespread east European exceptionalism around race, whiteness and coloniality. In 2005, Imre went further than almost any other scholar of south-east Europe and its environs at the time in naming public, and academic, racial exceptionalism:

[I]n East European languages, state politics, and in social scientific studies of Eastern Europe, the category of “race” has remained embedded within that of “ethnicity” [...] Race and racism continue to be considered concepts that belong exclusively to discourses of coloniality and imperialism, from which Eastern Europe, the deceased “second world,” continues to be excluded, and from which East European nationalisms are eager to exclude themselves. (Imre 2005, 83)

The fact that eastern European nations did not have overseas empires and their territories spent centuries under foreign imperial rule does not, for Imre, put them outside patterns of European national identifications with whiteness or outside the exceptionalism that disavows such identifications. Indeed, a similar detachment from the history of coloniality and imperialism can be found in Nordic nations that did not have their own empires as well as those that did, and fin-de-siècle textbooks, advertising and popular media reveal the racial imaginaries which taught ethnic Icelanders, Norwegians, Swedes and Danes that they were European, agents of modernity, and white (Loftsdóttir and Jensen (eds) 2012). This, in turn, mirrors racial exceptionalism in the Netherlands – a major colonial power – where most white people distance the Dutch nation from racism by contending that Dutch imperialists were more benign and that, before mass postcolonial migration, the Dutch did not know what “race” meant (Wekker 2016).

Wekker’s methodology for refuting exceptionalism – tracing how racialized imaginaries in historic education, art, public colonial exhibitions, magazines, and advertising (Wekker 2016: 93–8) are echoed by everyday racism in the present – could resonate particularly well with south-east European studies because Wekker too draws explicitly on Said.⁵ While Said traced his “cultural archive” primarily through literature, first in Orientalism then further in Culture and Imperialism (Said 1993, 51), Wekker treats written fiction as just one of its locations:

[T]he cultural archive is located in many things, in the way we think, do things, and look at the world, in what we find (sexually) attractive, in how our affective and rational economies are organized and intertwined. Most important, it is between our ears and in our hearts and souls. (Wekker 2016, 19)

This helps to make visible everyday permeations of “race” and coloniality even in places and times when direct interpersonal encounters with people categorized as foreign racial Others

were rare (what Sander Gilman (1982), researching 18th–19th-century Germany, termed studying “blackness without blacks”). Such close readings of everyday ephemera also sympathize with the project of cultural studies, especially Stuart Hall’s work on visual representations of difference, stereotyping and the “spectacle of the ‘Other’” (Hall 1997). For Hall, the hegemonic ideologies exposed by cultural studies methodologies were inextricably ideologies of race as well as class – and yet his references (characteristic of contemporaneous and present-day British commentary on race) to “racial and ethnic difference” (Hall 1997, 25, emphasis original), as if race and ethnicity could always just substitute for each other, are not enough alone to fully theorize “race” within south-east European (and wider postsocialist) cultural studies, where conflations of race and ethnicity have often prevented scholars seeing racism and racialization in eastern European nationalisms as more than another form of ethnicized xenophobia. South-east European theorists’ adaptation of Said in the early 1990s has illustrated constructions of ethnicity well, but has rarely stretched to incorporate global formations of “race,” a structure of feeling with its origins in Europeans’ rationalization of colonialism and enslavement. Whether the region can truly be described as postcolonial has nevertheless troubled south-east European studies since the beginning of the “balkanism” turn.

How postcolonial should the Balkans be?

Revisiting the “balkanism” turn’s foundational contentions about how to apply Said to the Balkans in the early 1990s shows tensions about how “postcolonial” the Balkans are which arguably made it even harder to articulate how the region has related to “race.” In 1992–5, the Saidian method of tracing how certain societies and cultures were represented as “Eastern” or “Western,” and what ideological hierarchies were projected on to these representations, allowed Milica Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden to explain the “orientalist variations” on themes of the Balkans that Slovenian and Croatian political rhetoric had employed during the break-up of Yugoslavia, “claim[ing] a privileged ‘European’ status for some groups in the country while condemning others as ‘balkan’ or ‘byzantine,’ hence non-European and Other” (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 5). Bakić-Hayden then used the notion of “nesting” orientalisms (Bakić-Hayden 1995) to explain how Slovenes could cast Croatia as “Balkan” even as Croatian liberals and nationalists were insisting that Croatia’s Catholic and Habsburg past, with central European and Mediterranean cultural traditions, made Croatia so

fundamentally “European,” and so culturally different from “Balkan” Serbs, that Croatia should incontestably become independent from Yugoslavia.

Said’s “concept of ‘Orient’ as ‘other’” (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 917) still informs much south-east European cultural studies today, including studies exploring the material politics of postsocialism (see Volčič 2013) through the urban–rural divide. According to Bakić-Hayden, the “pervasive patterns of representation” Said had identified “that privilege a self-consciously ‘progressive,’ ‘modern’ and ‘rational’ Europe over the putatively ‘stagnant,’ ‘backward,’ ‘traditional’ and ‘mystical’ societies of the Orient” had outlasted colonialism itself to generate “a powerful set of categories with which to stigmatize societies that are not ‘western-style democracies’” and were perceived as lagging behind modernity (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 1–2). South-east Europe’s “nesting” orientalism thus belonged within “[t]he gradation of ‘Orient’” that had multiplied around orientalism’s “original dichotomy,” presumably Said’s Middle East (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 918). This hinted at, but did not expand upon, a more transregionally connected history where symbolic spatialized hierarchies of “Europe” versus “Balkan” might fit.

Yugoslavia’s collapse, and the essentialist terms in which many Western commentators explained the ensuing ethno-political conflict, also motivated Maria Todorova to begin critiquing representations of the Balkans (Todorova 1994). Todorova directed her longer historical view towards how western European writers and travellers had imagined their identities as European by contrasting them against what they perceived in and about the Balkans. Continuities between Western accounts of the 1990s Yugoslav wars and the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 suggested to Todorova that “the civilized world” (as the Carnegie Report into the Balkan Wars had termed the community of its authors and readers) had been constructing its identity against the same “frozen image of the Balkans” for a century or more (Todorova 1994, 456, 460). Todorova asked why, if racism had led to anti-racism and misogyny had given rise to feminism, Europe had not yet witnessed similar resistance to balkanism (Todorova 1994, 453) – suggesting the Balkans had been marginalized by a structural force as great as racism or patriarchy. She used Said’s interpretive tools to investigate these tropes. Yet Todorova differed from Bakić-Hayden in how she related the Balkans to Said’s colonial Orient: intentionally paraphrasing Bakić-Hayden, she contended that balkanism was not an “orientalist variation on a ‘Balkan’ theme,” rather, it had “evolved independently from ‘Orientalism’ and, in certain aspects, despite it or against it” (Todorova 1994, 454–5; see also Fleming 2000). Her distinction between Orientalism and balkanism included distinguishing how the West racialized the Balkans and the Orient respectively:

despite the presence of the theme of racial ambiguity, and despite the important internal hierarchies, in the final analysis the Balkans are still treated as positioned on this side of the fundamental opposition: white versus colored, Indo-European versus the rest [...] while orientalism is dealing with a difference between (imputed) [racial] types, balkanism treats the differences between one type. (Todorova 2009, 19)

The “foreclosure of the Balkans’ postcoloniality” that Bjelić (2017, 220; see also Bjelić, this issue) detects here rests, I suggest, especially in the text’s assumption that the Balkans are white. Foreclosed are the processes through which the Balkans came to be white, if white they became, which could be traced by examining the dynamics of “racialization” (see Murji and Solomos (eds) 2005) that have produced “race” and its categories, and the “translation” (Stam and Shohat 2012) of notions of race and whiteness around the world. Foreclosed, too, is how contingent – not predetermined – the Balkans’ racialization has been: often, they have been racialized as ambiguous or indeterminable, as only conditionally white, or as supposedly outside the global racial order altogether. And thirdly foreclosed is the position of racialized minorities (as well as the ethnic-majority nations who have been racialized as white) in the region’s demographic history, whether these are Roma who identify with and/or are ascribed ‘blackness’ or people of colour who have travelled through or settled in the region.⁶

We could ask instead “how the Balkans became white.” This would echo North American and Australasian migration and labour historians such as David Roediger (2005), who show how migrants from Europe’s various peripheries, including the Balkans, came to identify with, and be accepted into, whiteness: indeed, some anthropologists have already traced south-east European diasporas adjusting to new home countries’ racial politics, such as Bosnians in St Louis before and during the Ferguson protests of 2014 (Halilovich 2013, 228; Croegaert 2015). Yet Miglena Todorova (2006) qualifies Roediger by arguing that migrants from Bulgaria (and by extension, I suggest, other south-east European nations) did not only encounter “whiteness” after they had travelled; at the fin-de-siècle, south-east European intellectuals’ aspirations to modernity, couched in discourses of Europeanness, were already an identification with civilizational whiteness that members of ethnic majorities did not have to travel to “America” to learn.

When south-east European studies have engaged with the global politics of race, however, they have usually not used this mode of connection. The prevailing mode is instead a mode of

analogy, which Bakić-Hayden was already employing in her second balkanism article in 1995. This mode, quite common in theorizations of postcoloniality and postsocialism, starts to situate the region within global dynamics of race by drawing parallels a) between south-east Europe and the spaces where Europeans exerted colonial power overseas, and b) between the marginalization and stigmatization of people(s) from “the Balkans” and the racist oppression of people whose heritage linked them to those colonized spaces, especially anti-blackness against those of African descent. Such parallels depend on at least some comparison between Ottoman, Habsburg and Venetian imperial rule in south-east Europe (and Russian rule further north) and European coloniality in Africa, the Americas and Asia – the position Maria Todorova (1994, 453) herself briefly took when asking why balkanism was more acceptable than racism.

This second article let Bakić-Hayden respond to Todorova and also to Larry Wolff (1994), whose Inventing Eastern Europe dealt more with Poland and Russia but similarly showed 18th-century western European travel writers constructing their Westernness and Europeanness against an imaginary semi-European “East.” Reiterating that balkanism “shares an underlying logic and rhetoric with orientalism,” Bakić-Hayden (1995, 920) argued (against Todorova) that “it would be difficult to understand it outside the overall orientalist context.” To support this, she observed that Wolff’s quoted descriptions closely resembled contemporaneous images of a submissive, conquerable India:

The resemblance of such places to familiar colonial sites did not escape the observant eye of western travelers bent on “objectivity” as an Enlightenment ideal of representation. Accordingly, in his travel account from [1772⁷] Joseph Marshall found the position of Russian peasants to be “near on the same rank as the blacks in our sugar colonies.” (Interesting here is not only the comparison itself but one that is lacking: Marshall selectively perceived only the cruelty of Russian despotic rule.) (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 921)

If the “lacking” comparison was between the cruelty of Russian imperial despotism and British colonial enslavement of Africans, this aside alludes to no less than critical race theory’s idea of “white ignorance” (Mills 2015) – the idea of whiteness as a structure of thought and feeling that impedes individuals perceiving or acknowledging the violence of the colonial systems from which they, their ancestors and their societies have benefited over time. Marshall lived within this structure; it would be much more contentious to say the peasants

he saw suffering their own oppressive, inherited form of forced labour and unfreedom also lived within it in 1772.⁸ Yet the descendants of that peasant class, by the 1990s or even under state socialism (see Law 2012), would give scholars ample reason to discern whiteness and racism among the ingredients of Russian national belonging (Zakharov 2015). The history of how members of ethnic majorities associated themselves with the affective structures of whiteness in the Habsburg lands, the Ottoman Empire or post-imperial south-east European nation-states is meanwhile still largely, though not wholly (see Todorova 2006), unexamined – yet, if whiteness as a subject position of identification with the supposed European civilizing mission can be said to have spread around the globe, why should eastern or south-east Europe be the only zone it overpassed? Before “balkanism” studies tackled this directly, they would at least establish through parallels between balkanism and racism that south-east Europe was part of a racialized world.

Balkan postcoloniality after Bakić-Hayden and Todorova: balkanism and racism in parallel?

The adaptations of postcolonial thoughts into postsocialist critique that followed Bakić-Hayden and Todorova have, despite Todorova’s own reservations about calling the Balkans postcolonial, fused as much as distinguished those authors’ contributions. The resurgence of “balkanist” premises in 1990s foreign journalism and fiction about south-east Europe, directly or indirectly remediating the Yugoslav wars, inspired literature and film scholars in particular to contend with past and present representations of “the Balkans.” Vesna Goldsworthy’s study of British literary inventions of the Balkans (some set in wholly imaginary nations and others which might as well have been), first published in 1998, described 19th- and 20th-century British writers as engaged in an extractive as well as discursive “imaginative colonialism,” whereby:

one of the world’s most powerful nations exploited the resources of the Balkans to supply its literary and entertainment industries [...] a cultural great power seizes and exploits the resources of an area, while imposing new frontiers on its mind-map and creating ideas which, reflected back, have the ability to reshape reality. (Goldsworthy 2013, 2)

Goldsworthy situated her present day as “an age so sensitive to discrimination of all kinds, a racism which is born not of colour but of nuance” – alluding to the so-called “cultural racism”

(Balibar and Wallerstein 1991, 26) of 1980s–90s Europe – in which she suggested the idea of “Europe” often served as a cypher “to express feelings which would otherwise be unacceptable, to offer racism a ‘politically correct’ form” (Goldsworthy 2013, xxv).

Goldsworthy (2013, xviii) rejects “the claim that the Balkans are not postcolonial,” but draws the same inference as Maria Todorova about balkanism being an acceptable form of racism, showing that complete consensus on the Balkans’ postcoloniality was not necessary to draw parallels between Balkanness and race.

By the mid-2000s, when Andrew Hammond (2007, 8) published his own study of British and American travel writing about the Balkans since 1850, “Todorova’s idea of western balkanism” could be described as “following Said’s orientalism” even though she had expressed important reservations about translating orientalism into the Balkans. Hammond, compared to Goldsworthy or Maria Todorova, used scholarship about race as well as postcoloniality more directly: via Robert Miles’s definition of racism, he argued that 19th-century balkanism represented “a kind of generic racism that claims to locate and define the supposedly mutual iniquities of those various ethnic groups inhabiting the Balkan peninsula” (Hammond 2007, 38) – a framework that English-speaking writers then revived after the collapse of Yugoslavia to explain postsocialist ethnopolitical conflict. Here, south-east European studies’ Saidian turn helped point to a connection between studying postsocialism and studying race – yet still described the racialization of the Balkans rather than racialization in the Balkans, with which the field should already have been dealing (Imre 2005).

Indeed, even Hammond’s engagement with race could have been extended beyond Miles’s parameters (Miles 1989). Miles has been criticized for too readily discarding “race” as a category (Brah 1994, 806–7) and for an over-emphasis on racist ideology that might preclude tracing structural racism in, e.g. ostensibly anti-discriminatory labour markets (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1993, 12).⁹ Hammond (2007, 38) himself acknowledged that Miles had been “[a]rguing against the more restricted” – but perhaps also more specific – usages of “race.” Under these sociological arguments, we might detect concern that the material legacies and histories of colonialism and enslavement behind “race” should not be forgotten in the course of deconstructing representations of belonging and otherness – reminding us that it will be important for more tightly “connected” (see Bhabra 2014) histories and sociologies of race in south-east Europe not to forget them either.

Studies of the discursive construction of “Europeanness”/“Balkanness” and collective identity in south-east Europe during the 2000s, meanwhile, also started reading balkanism as a parallel to racism. Both balkanism and racism, after all, demonstrably depended on

ascribing certain essentialized, undesirable characteristics to peoples that descent and custom linked to territories on the other side of some symbolic dividing line. Perhaps the most direct analogy between the stigmatization of the Balkans and anti-black racism came when Maple Razsa and Nicole Lindstrom (2004) titled their article on balkanism in postsocialist Croatian politics “Balkan is Beautiful.” The title alludes to the reclamatory slogan of Black Power and the cultural aesthetic it inspired among African-Americans (see Ongiri 2009, 94–5) and beyond, at a time when stereotypes and place-myths of the Balkans were also being reclaimed in postsocialist south-east Europe through what Alexander Kiossev (2002: 184–5) famously termed a new “Balkan popular (counter) culture” that “converts the stigma into a joyful consumption of pleasures forbidden by European norms and taste.”

Ethnomusicologists often interpreted such reclamations as a reaction from the periphery against the desire to become neoliberal European subjects that discourses of postsocialist transition and Europeanization had expected the region’s inhabitants to express (see Archer 2012) – and “Balkan”-sounding popular music did indeed elicit regular anxiety about the boundaries of national cultural identity in early 2000s Croatia (Baker 2008).

Hoping the Croatian public would come to recognize the positive aspects of a “peripheral” or “border identity”, Razsa and Lindstrom (2004, 649–50) suggested that, with time, “just as many African Americans worked to turn racist representations on their head, Croatians might one day declare that ‘Balkan is beautiful.’” Their article reserved its direct connections with race/racism scholarship to a footnote, which quoted David Theo Goldberg on how race has had the potential to “be the site of a counterassault [...] for launching liberatory projects [...] and open[ing] up emancipatory spaces” (Goldberg 1993, 211 cited in Razsa and Lindstrom 2004, 650): these are words which “Goldberg writes of race, but which could be true of the Balkans” (Razsa and Lindstrom 2004, 650). In fact, Romani musicians’ cultural production and activism shows that there are liberatory projects around race in the Balkans – and what they are fighting to be liberated from are structures of racism that operate through the identifications with whiteness, and resultant investments in Romaphobia and other racisms, made by the same majority nations that construct “nesting orientalisms” (Bakić-Hayden 1995) that consign their ethnic Others to “the Balkans.” These are regionally specific inflections of ethnicity with race: but they exist within a global racial history of which the postsocialist and postcolonial period is just the latest stage.

Global postsocialism and global raciality

Opportunities to situate south-east Europe within a global history deeply shaped and scarred by European colonial exploitation and violence, thus to make explicit a postcoloniality with race, have magnified since Sharad Chari and Katherine Verdery (2009) called on scholars to view postsocialism and postcolonialism as global conditions, not as factors affecting different areas of the world. While south-east European studies was already able to acknowledge racialized oppression elsewhere in the world and explain it with reference to the history of western European colonialism, it traced that context into the Balkans much more rarely. Despite some notable exceptions (e.g. Boatcă 2006; Todorova 2006), most scholars in south-east European studies were still very unlikely by the late 2000s to set the region's symbolic spatialized hierarchies and overt racisms within a global structure of "race" (see Winant 2006; Mills 2015). Chari and Verdery's contribution, plus the global turn in race scholarship that shows how "race" has been translated through different social hierarchies in different societies to take differently localized forms (see Goldberg 2009; Stam and Shohat 2012), and critical race theory's problematization of "whiteness," however, all made it more possible to show that global formations of race do not just concern the societies around the Atlantic rim that studies of transnational raciality most commonly describe.

Chari and Verdery's intervention into postsocialist and postcolonial studies came at a moment when the growing literature on global raciality and "race in translation" itself generally passed over postsocialist Europe, leading Maxim Matusevich (2012, 328) to complain that even the interconnectivities powerfully revealed in the transnational approach of Paul Gilroy's The Black Atlantic were still "limited by the history and topography of Western imperialism," overlooking "another vector of postcolonial migrations" through which thousands of African students had lived temporarily (and some settled in) state socialist societies. Chari and Verdery wanted both their fields to move beyond a framework where "postcolonialism continues to be associated with the Third World and postsocialism with the second" (Chari and Verdery 2009, 18). If the consequences of the collapse of state socialism in 1989–91 reverberated far beyond eastern Europe and the USSR, they argued, European colonialism and its overthrow were equally not just a matter for colonizing and (de)colonized societies. Maria Todorova's objection that the Balkans had not been colonies, in other words, would not even need to be an obstacle to thinking through the effects of global coloniality in the region – and, accordingly, there need be no excuse for placing south-east Europe outside the history of the colonialisms and imperialisms that gave rise to "race."

Moreover, histories of individuals from the region which reveal entanglements with racialized projects of empire show that the region was not outside that history. Although

south-east Europe's national movements were themselves struggling for and consolidating independence at the height of European imperialism, and the Habsburg Empire (like Russia) exercised its imperial rule overland, south-east Europe(ans) were not wholly detached from European colonialism overseas. Indeed, even the Habsburg Empire had some maritime colonial ambitions, and sponsored expeditions to likely islands in the 1850s and 1890s (Sauer 2012, 14–16); individuals from Habsburg lands, including some South Slavs like the Croatian explorer Dragutin Lerman (a member of the Stanley expedition to the Congo in 1882 and Belgian colonial official for 12 years thereafter (Altić 2008)), acted as officials, cartographers and traders in established European empires. Even the late Ottoman Empire, often regarded as “non-European” in assessing whether the Balkans are postcolonial, has been argued to have taken up a “borrowed colonialism” from European powers, especially in its treatment of Maghrebi nomads (Deringil 2003, 312). Those south-east Europeans who emigrated to the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the 19th and early 20th centuries, meanwhile, can be seen as participants in the longer history of settler colonialism, even though they were relatively subordinate participants within settler colonial structures of capital and extraction, and even though (like other migrants from southern and eastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean) their access to whiteness was initially contentious, contingent and insecure (Roediger 2005; Todorova 2006).

Within Europe, meanwhile, the turn of the 19th/20th centuries was also the moment when a transnational European racialized imagination of civilization, modernity and whiteness was arguably most intensively formed through consumer culture and entertainment (see Wekker 2016). Peripatetic “human zoos” which invited European spectators to participate live in the colonial gaze by watching Africans and indigenous people exhibited as spectacles of savagery and primitivism travelled, Irina Novikova (2013) has found, as far as Moscow and Riga: they offer evidence that images of modernity in fin-de-siècle Russia were racialized so as to place Russian and Latvian spectators in the subject position of the European colonizer, constructing their modernity against black Africa's supposed savagery and exoticism, even though Russia was not a colonial power there. Similar exhibitions visited Vienna, Budapest and Prague in the 1890s (Scott 1997; Herza 2016), and postcards and magazines disseminated their aesthetics beyond their immediate visitors (see Deroo and Fournié 2011): a historical cultural studies could and should ask what racialized imaginaries accompanied the ideas of Austrian, German and French modernity to which south-east European nation-builders aspired. The work of explicitly incorporating south-east Europe into global racial formations,

therefore, should begin well before the racialized as well as ethnicized politics of postsocialism might have made them most visible.

The years surrounding the collapse of state socialism are, nevertheless, when it might be easiest to discern identifications with whiteness as well as modernity within liberal and nationalist aspirations to “return to Europe” after emerging from state socialism (and, except for the Yugoslav region, Soviet domination). Tomislav Longinović views the orientaling discourses that the Slovenian national movement projected on to Serbs, Serbia and the Balkans in the late 1980s explicitly as a “soft version of cultural racism,” which Western observers did not perceive as such because the “whiteness, technological superiority, and universalist humanism” that Slovene intellectuals ascribed themselves had also been “incorporated into the specter of Europe itself as the symbolic foundation of the West” (Longinović 2011, 90–1, 98). This begins to name whiteness as well as ethnicity as a factor of (post-)Yugoslav ethnopolitics, though still leaves open the question of how past or present Serbs have identified with whiteness as modernity. This and many other ambiguities in how south-east Europe and its people have been racialized, in fact, continue to complicate the question of how to integrate “race” into south-east European cultural studies, even though more conceptual tools and comparative examples exist now than in the 1990s. Such apparent confusion may well have influenced the field’s widespread exceptionalism towards race.

Ambiguities of racialization and exceptionalism in south-east Europe

The problem of where south-east Europe and its people fit into historic and contemporary global, or even European, racial politics is aptly posed by Vedrana Veličković, writing on postsocialism and postcoloniality after the EU’s eastward enlargements of 2004 and 2007. Veličković (2012, 170) suggested firstly that British xenophobia towards east European migrants post-enlargement (see Fox, Moroşanu and Szilassy 2012) showed “Etienne Balibar’s notion of ‘racism without race’ or cultural racism” in action, and secondly – then more unusually – followed Imre (2005) in extending this question towards racialization and whiteness in south-east Europe: “While eastern Europeans may be racialized when abroad as not-quite-white” – and as they were being racialized abroad as not-quite-white in distinct ways, as e.g. post-enlargement labour migrants or post-Yugoslav refugees – “how does eastern European whiteness operate at home?” (Veličković 2012, 171) She went on to suggest several indicative contradictions from the present and the state socialist past:

it would certainly be useful to examine, for example, Yugoslav popular culture, the racialization of Albanians in Yugoslavia, the perceptions towards African and Asian students who studied in Yugoslavia (or elsewhere in eastern Europe for that matter), as well as the worrying rise of racism and fascism in post-1989 eastern Europe. (Veličković 2012, 172)

Her article's closing vignette looking back to Yugoslavia's membership of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the publisher Biblioteka Nesvrstani Svet (Non-Aligned World Library), which had translated anti-colonial and postcolonial authors into Serbo-Croat, alluded to ideologies of anti-colonial solidarity and Third Worldism in socialist Yugoslavia which, by 2012, had been almost entirely submerged in south-east European studies beneath postsocialist topics such as ethnopolitical conflict, socio-economic inequality and uncertain democratization (Veličković 2012, 172).

Veličković was writing, however, at a moment where Chari and Verdery's bridge between postsocialism and postcoloniality plus Cold War history's "global" turn was inspiring fresh studies of state socialist internationalism towards the Global South.¹⁰ These both reveal racially charged intercultural encounters in the micropolitics of Yugoslav Non-Alignment (see Subotić and Vučetić, in press), and show that Soviet-bloc Communist parties also treated the Third World with a mixture of anti-colonial solidarity and paternalistic superiority from an implicit subject position of European modernity that constituted what critical race theory terms "whiteness." Such insights into how south-east European intellectuals and Communists negotiated, or more often dismissed, "race" help demonstrate that the forms of racial exceptionalism that have surrounded south-east European studies are not one but many, though all contain whiteness in the sense of not being forced to see "race" underneath: there are conservative and nationalist exceptionalisms, such as the Croatian historian Tomislav Jonjić's attempt to discredit Nevenko Bartulin's research into racial thought in interwar and WW2 Croatia (see Bartulin 2009; Jonjić 2012),¹¹ but there are also liberal and critical forms.

Dušan Bjelić (2009), for instance, has pointed out that while Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek as psychoanalytical theorists have both provided important critical tools for deconstructing exile (in Kristeva) and ideology (in Žižek), which sympathize with postcolonial readings of the Europe/Balkan relationship, they work against rather than with postcolonial critique when commenting on how mass immigration from the Global South has supposedly changed European cultural identity. While Kristeva in repositioning herself as a French scholar went through an "identification with the 'host'" including support for the

French headscarf ban, in what Bjelić reads as a “refusal to recognize [...] any aspect of immigrant identity formation that does not conform to the French symbolic system,” Žižek tacitly defended post-Yugoslav Slovenia’s “erasure” (Zorn 2009) of at least 18,000 residents from other Yugoslav republics from its citizenship rolls in the 1990s (Bjelić 2009, 499, 501, 514).¹² Žižek would argue increasingly against the supposed “hegemony” of “liberal multiculturalism” during the 2000s–10s, presenting this as a contrarian rather than still-hegemonic position (see Ahmed 2008), and his comments about refugees in 2015–16 bearing an “envy and resentful aggressiveness” that meant “they have to be educated (by others and by themselves) into their freedom” (Žižek 2016) would be described by Nicholas De Genova (in press, 9) as “adopting the condescending moralistic standpoint of European (white) supremacism.” Though Žižek had once popularized the postcolonially-inspired arguments of Bakić-Hayden, Maria Todorova and Goldsworthy in his “Spectre of Balkan” essay in 1999 (Žižek 1999),¹³ his engagement with postcolonialism did not extend to deconstructing the racialized Eurocentrism of coloniality’s presence in the present; rather, it demanded dignity for the Balkans (by rejecting their exclusion from “Europe”) while leaving intact the myths of a Muslim, Asiatic and Eastern threat to Europe that first informed the “European”/“Balkan” divide and which became both racialized and securitized after 9/11.

Besides these exceptionalisms, state socialist geopolitical ideology itself helped spread the idea that south-east Europe belonged outside the history of coloniality that had produced “race” and racism in western Europe, North America, or apartheid South Africa. The anti-colonialism of Tito’s overtures to liberation movements like Algeria’s and to the postcolonial states he sought as allies was deeply concerned with colonial oppression but not, Jeffrey Byrne (2015, 924) argues, with race itself. If what unified Non-Aligned states was birth through anti-colonial resistance, Titoism held that Yugoslavia’s allies need not fear any vestigial colonial intentions from this European power, for it had none of its own colonial history; at home, meanwhile, the myth of Yugoslav liberation from Habsburg and Ottoman imperial rule as a national liberation struggle combined with the myth of the Partisans’ own “people’s liberation struggle” against fascist occupation during World War II to subsume inter-ethnic territorial competition and violence beneath an official history of “brotherhood and unity.” Soviet-bloc states were not forging Non-Aligned alliances but, like the USSR, still cited their nations’ lack of a colonizing past and their own experiences under imperial rule as reasons why the Third World should trust Communist regimes more than the West. Yet this was often tempered, as Miglena Todorova (2006) shows for Bulgaria, with an assumption that it was natural for European state socialist countries through their assistance

and development programmes to bring modernity to the Third World – in this sense, state socialist geopolitics were still inflected by whiteness even though Communists demonstratively opposed “racism.” State socialist geopolitics produced their own Marxist, Cold-War-inflected racial exceptionalism as a result.

State socialist exceptionalism located racism as a constitutive aspect of capitalist exploitation in the USA and South Africa and an outgrowth of the imperial projects western European powers had launched in order to extract resources (including millions of enslaved human beings) from colonized territories and accumulate wealth. This Marxist reading of colonialism and racism had informed Soviet geopolitics ever since the USSR began exploiting it against the USA during the 1920s (Baldwin 2002), and underpinned post-1945 state socialist solidarities with the Third World – above all in Yugoslav participation in the NAM, where dependency theory and critiques of “neo-colonialism” (a term coined by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s president in 1957–66¹⁴) offered comprehensive explanations for the economic conditions of states and peoples that had achieved independence through the decolonization of European overseas empires and through the collapse of the old imperial order within central and eastern Europe (Young 2016, 51). “Race,” accordingly, was typically subsumed into the paradigms of ethnonational liberation struggle through which south-east European Communists understood the formation of their own nation-states.

Within the rich Saidian/Wekkerian “cultural archive” of state socialism that could reveal racialized imaginaries of space and modernity (see Todorova 2006), some examples from the Croatian Communist journal Naše teme will here suffice. In 1959, Naše teme published its first substantive article on Africa, titled “The struggle of the peoples of Africa against colonialism” (“Borba afričkih naroda protiv kolonijalizma”) (Peršen 1959): with Yugoslavia preparing to host the first NAM conference in 1961 and offering more African students scholarships to Yugoslav universities, this was a propitious moment to offer readers some basic background. Another article published in 1961 (when Tito had just visited West Africa, and with the NAM conference about to open in Belgrade) explained that just as “reactionaries” and “Nazi-fascists” had spread “racist theories about a superior European race of Aryans” which had led to “crimes of genocide in World War II,” “colonialists” had used scientific theories about “higher and lower races” as a strategy to divide and rule “the African peoples,” a comparison that fitted anti-racism into the Yugoslav Partisan myth itself (Barišić 1961, 1043). Naše teme quite regularly published articles on African revolutionary movements, African states’ postcolonial economics and questions of tradition and modernity in Africa’s cultural anthropology. Yet even these texts written from explicitly anti-colonial, anti-racist

and solidaristic positions employed strategies of address that, on a deeper level, positioned its intended reader not just in a clearly different zone of the world from “Africa,” but a zone where “Africa” was something unfamiliar for experts to study and explain.

Naše teme’s 1959 article, for instance, assumed a readership that still needed to be informed what apartheid was, which countries had been colonial rulers in Africa, and how recently the postcolonial states had become independent (including five pages of background on Algeria). Yugoslavia was positioned as an anti-colonial champion that “always stresses every people’s right to self-determination [...] and to determine the pathways of its own development,” and that “condemns every colonial [act of] oppression and exploitation of foreign peoples and territories” (Peršen 1959, 51). The beginning introduced Africa and its peoples as an issue that had been “attracting the attention of the world’s public more and more” since World War II and was “among today’s most important international questions:”

News and commentaries about events on the “Black Continent” [“Crnom kontinentu”] often receive very large amounts of space in the columns of the world’s press and occupy a notable amount of time in the daily programming of radio and television stations. (Peršen 1959, 13)

The addressee’s expected subject position was thus as a member of this world public and a consumer of world affairs, part of what Benedict Anderson (1983) would term the “imagined community” of news readers and viewers. A well-informed Yugoslav, this hinted, should aspire to understand Africa and to be part of this world public that debated Africa – the position of greater modernity from which “Yugoslavia points out that it is necessary to offer those countries economic aid, because they are less developed” (Peršen 1959, 51).

Naše teme’s two special issues on Africa, in 1961 and 1979, addressed an intellectual readership which had had access to increasing amounts of information about African political economy and anti-colonial thought from the African diaspora through journals like Naše teme and through translations of authors such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire: indeed, the friendship Césaire made with the Croatian and Yugoslav linguist Petar Guberina as students in 1930s Paris was a conduit for the Négritude movement to enter the Yugoslav intellectual sphere (see Cvjetičanin 1979; Kelley 1999; Humphrey 2014). And yet even the introduction to the 1979 issue, explaining how many other Yugoslav journals had published sections or issues on Africa just that year, contained vestiges of the idea that Africa was an unknown continent in need of discovery and revelation. If the 1961 issue had been:

the first more serious collection of texts about the “black” continent to have been published in our country [...] [then] [m]uch has changed since that modest, but also pioneering, publicistic¹⁵ undertaking of ours, when we were still “discovering” [kada smo još “otkrivali”] this continent unknown to us which was only just awakening from its colonial sleep. (Naše teme 1979, 513)

Here, again, is a hierarchy of temporality, where Africa is held back by “its colonial sleep” and Yugoslavia is in a position to reveal or discover it; here, simultaneously, is the colloquial inscription of the continent as “black.” Even though this text stands opposed to colonialism, and attributes Africa’s backwardness to colonial depredation not anything to do with African culture(s), its framing is still enmeshed in a colonial imagination that ordered the globe into continents that possessed modernity and continents to which modernity would have to be brought by others, and tied the supposedly most backward continent to the idea of “blackness.” The Yugoslav region, despite its history of rule by foreign empires and despite socialist Yugoslavia’s anti-colonial and anti-racist ideology, was not outside the coloniality of language and was not therefore wholly outside race.

Recent research on the racial politics of Yugoslavia’s global entanglements during the Cold War, indeed, confirms the suggestion Yugoslav Communists’ own symbolic geographies still preserved investments in whiteness as a conjunction of Europeanness and modernity. Jelena Subotić and Srđan Vučetić, for instance, argue that, on one hand, Tito and other leaders did not perceive race as a significant geopolitical or social category, but on the other “quite consciously retained [Yugoslavia’s] position as a European polity,” such that Tito could appear as the “travelling white European” who was not a colonizer; in semi-private, through diplomatic documents and travel writing, visiting Yugoslavs often expressed “a distinct superiority complex” towards people and regions racialized in colonial and neo-colonial global geographies as non-white (Subotić and Vučetić, in press, 8). Despite what were often Yugoslavia’s effective “performances” of solidarity, at a structural level Yugoslav leaders still “consistently failed to appreciate the racism of the international society [of states] and their own racialised privilege in it,” in the sense that by not needing to know they demonstrated that racism did not touch them (Subotić and Vučetić, in press, 1, 3). This exemplifies the stance Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2002, 42) terms “color blindness” and the epistemic privilege that Charles Mills terms “white ignorance” – indeed, it exemplifies Mills’s “global white ignorance” (Mills 2015, author’s emphasis), that is, the fact that

European colonialism globalized “race” so effectively that structures of white ignorance came to span the world (Subotić and Vučetić, in press, 1).

In using critical race theory, and especially Mills, to explain the racialized dynamics of Yugoslavia’s apparently race-blind Cold War diplomacy (see also Kilibarda 2010), Subotić and Vučetić join an emerging body of work on state socialist anti-colonialism, “race” and whiteness that achieves Chari and Verdery’s goal of treating (post)socialism and decolonization as interlinked not detached. The same move helps reconcile postsocialist adaptations of postcolonial thought to explain “European”/“Balkan” identity constructions with the challenge that Wekker (2016) and others have posed to postcolonial European studies, and that Imre (2014) explicitly addresses in calling for a “postcolonial media studies in postsocialist Europe:” how can south-east European cultural studies represent a postcoloniality with race, rather than continue reproducing the exceptionalism of a postcoloniality without it?

Conclusion

Approaches like Mills’s that emphasize the racialization of space as well as bodies may be particularly useful for understanding “race” in south-east European studies because they show racialization operating through spatialized hierarchies of modernity that south-east European cultural critique is already well practised in detecting, within and about its own region. Global formations of race, like balkanist representations, inhere through “an invented delusional world” of spaces and people, reducible to the stereotypes and tropes of “travelers’ tales, folk myth” and other artefacts of the Saidian cultural archive, “living in the white imagination and determinedly imposed on their alarmed real-life counterparts” just as south-east Europeans resist the worst of balkanism (Mills 1997, 18–19). They too are products of “an active spatial struggle [...] against the savage and barbaric” – indeed, the same struggle – to inscribe civilization, modernity and rationality exclusively on spaces and bloodlines constructed as “European” (Mills 1997, 43, emphasis original). The self-fashioning of “Europe” against “the Balkans” was intertwined with and inseparable from, not just parallel to, its self-fashioning as the domain of civilizational superiority and whiteness itself.

By recognizing and historicizing these linkages, therefore, south-east European studies can do more than illustrate the parallels between balkanism outside and inside the Balkans and the racism perceptible throughout past and present US, western European or South African social structures; and it can do much more than demurring that the Balkans were not

postcolonial because Ottoman imperial rule was not like British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, or Dutch. Embedding postcoloniality with race into south-east European studies requires integrating the history of imperialism and nationalism which produced balkanism, and the history of colonialism and enslavement which produced global raciality, into each other. This does not mean reframing the field's agenda away from problematics of "Europe" and "the Balkans," or the region's past and present peripheralization and marginalization within Europe; rather, it points towards how these dynamics have operated within, been influenced by, and revealed important ambiguities within formations of race around the globe.

Within these lenses, central and south-east Europe's complex entanglements with race during state socialism and its 19th- and early 20th-century exposure to European colonial imaginaries add historical context both to overt expressions of racism and anti-blackness within postsocialist nationalisms, – manifested most recently in "the former East European, Marxist and non-colonial states' refusal to accept EU refugee quotas for non-white Muslims" (Bjelić 2017, 23) – but also to the field's own, widespread and often latent, racial exceptionalism. A historically conscious lens suggests that postsocialist identifications with whiteness were more than just a short-term consequence of desires to identify with western Europe at a time when the idea of "European values" was being re-racialized amid increasing mass migration from the Global South and when European political institutions were being harnessed to the racialized border-security imagination of "Fortress Europe" (see Balibar and Wallenstein 1991; Lentin 2004; Fekete 2009). The region(s) had been embedded in transnational racial formations for much longer, indeed had been embedded in more of them than parts of Europe where political authority had changed hands less. A postcoloniality without race has roots in the race-blind anti-colonial solidarities of state socialism but also in the deeper associations between Europeanness, whiteness and modernity that remain part of the history of "Europe" as an idea even if, by the end of the 20th century, they were silenced much more often than voiced.

If after the collapse of state socialism the region's apparently most pressing matters (the collapse of state socialism, the ethnonationalist "retraditionalization" of public culture and, in the Yugoslav region, the effects of ethno-political conflict) could readily be explained with reference to ethnicity and socio-economic inequality without also seeming to need "race," this is demonstrably no longer true today. The "refugee crisis" in which the region's governments and civil society had to react to the transit of more than a million migrants and refugees from the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere in the Global South must also, De Genova (in press, 5, emphasis original) argues, "be understood to be a historical moment of

racial crisis,” since “[i]n the European context, the very figure of migration is always already racialized.” The prominently photographed presence, among the white nationalist demonstrators who terrorized Charlottesville in August 2017, of a medieval history student of Croat descent has meanwhile reinforced, to medievalists confronting pervasive myths of an all-white medieval Europe, how necessary it was for Medieval Studies to directly contend with the white supremacist appropriation of “Europe” and its medieval history as the imaginary fount of white cultural identity (Kim 2017). Scholars of south-east European languages, literatures and cultures are well accustomed to critical studies of the role of historical mythology in nationalist politics, not least the many narratives of national martial traditions as “bulwarks of Christendom” against the Ottoman threat: at a time when these very narratives and symbols are remediated by transnational white supremacist networks, it is ever more important to appreciate the Balkans’ complex place in the global politics of race and whiteness, and to theorize their geopolitical identity through a postcoloniality with race.

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9990 words

April 2018

¹ I am grateful to Dušan Bjelić for inviting me to contribute to this special issue, to Philip Wallmeier for the opportunity to develop an earlier version for the blog of the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin's Forum Transregionale Studien, and to Chiara Bonfiglioli for originally pointing out *Naše teme*'s coverage of Africa.

² While Irena Šentevska (2014, 430) describes this as a "subaltern" position, Maya Mišković (2006, 447) argues "subaltern" is not appropriate for the Balkans "[g]iven the absence of colonialism" on the Indian model. This tension in "Balkan" studies is discussed further below.

³ One landmark book in poststructural IR, by Lene Hansen, is in fact a discourse analysis of arguments for/against international intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which uses the work of Maria Todorova and Vesna Goldsworthy on European constructions of the Balkans to term anti-interventionist arguments about ancient ethnic hatreds "the Balkan discourse" (Hansen 2006, 105–6).

⁴ On connecting south-east European Jewish history, Israel/Palestine and coloniality, see also Li 2015.

⁵ Further demonstrated in Baker 2018.

⁶ On racialization of Roma in Yugoslavia, see Rucker-Chang, this issue.

⁷ Although the year is printed as "1722" (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 921), Wolff dates Marshall's book (Travels through Germany, Russia and Poland in the Years 1769 and 1770) to 1722 (Wolff 1994, 383).

⁸ While serfdom was inherited, it cannot compare exactly to chattel slavery, which subjected enslaved Africans and their descendants to extreme dehumanizing bodily violence and erasure of their collective cultural traditions.

⁹ See also Murji and Solomos 2005 on disputes between Miles and others on defining "racialization."

¹⁰ See, e.g. Quinn Slobodian and contributors on East Germany (Slobodian (ed.) 2015), or Maxim Matusevich (2012) on the USSR. These in turn rest on earlier studies of Africans (and racialization of Roma) in the USSR, and on contentions over "race" in US–Soviet rivalry.

¹¹ Jonjić lists numerous disagreements with Bartulin's reading of evidence, describes them as "fabrications" or "manipulations" (2012, 237), and rejects the notion racism could have had anything to do with Croatian nationalism. The politics of Croatian nationalist intellectuals distancing their tradition from Nazism/Fascism to reclaim the 1941–5 collaborationist Independent State of Croatia (NDH) for the history of Croatian sovereignty

informed this reaction. Bartulin (2014) argues conversely that race theory was prominent in Croatian nationalist ideology before the NDH.

¹² On the “erasure” and “race,” see Brown and Pistotnik, this issue.

¹³ Indeed, Žižek’s suggestion that “[b]ecause Balkan remains a part of Europe and is inhabited by white people, racist clichés that one wouldn’t dare use in reference to some African or Asian nation can be freely applied to Balkan [i.e. to the Balkans]” directly recalls Todorova’s description of balkanism as a prejudice that had slipped through late-20th-century political correctness, and his reference to representations from “the notorious Prisoner of Zenda” onwards echoes Goldsworthy’s Inventing Ruritania from 1998 (Žižek 1999; see Todorova 2009, Goldsworthy 2013).

¹⁴ On silenced patterns of racialization around blackness and whiteness in Ghana, see Pierre 2013.

¹⁵ “Publicistika” in Serbo-Croatian meant essay/book-length analytical writing, longer than news reporting.