

Chapter 16

Connecting the ‘posts’ to confront racial capitalism’s coloniality: A Conversation

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Abstract

This chapter is a conversation on the coloniality of racial capitalism in contemporary post-socialist politics. Specifically, our dialogue examines the contradictions and challenges of the post-socialist position within transnational anti-racist solidarity in the face of emboldened structural and situational forms of violence that have come to dominate formerly socialist spaces. Moving through queer, trans and decolonial interventions in seeking to unsettle coloniality’s posts, in the first part we explore how the temporalities the ‘post’ prefix not only conceals the connections and continuities between colonial and cold war projects with contemporary racial capitalism but it also furthers a colorblind narrative of Europeanness that seeks to recruit the post-socialist subject in the ongoing racial, classed and gendered (geo) politics of EU borderization. In the second half, we discuss how these forms of post-socialist theorization have frequently contributed to the contradictions between the aspirational whiteness of the fascist movements in Romania, Croatia and Bulgaria on the one hand and the precarious position of post-socialist labor migrants in the EU. Finally, in the last section we reflect on the possibilities of transnational anti-fascist and anti-racist alignments that could confront racial capitalism’s coloniality.

Alyosxa:

A decade ago, I first suggested to differentiate between racism and what I call ‘migratism’ to analyse the complex nexus of racialization and migration in postcolonial Europe. Since then, I have published quite a bit on the topic and its challenges and controversies (e.g. Tudor 2017a/b, 2018a). My insistence that not all migration-based discrimination can be called racism but that whiteness – semi-peripheral East European whiteness for that matter – needs to be reflected upon critically, has been met with vehement critique. People often bemoan that I would take away ‘racism’ as a word to name the discrimination against East Europeans (who implicitly or explicitly are imagined as racially homogenous = white in these accounts). It is the affective anxiety that is bewildering to me – the idea that harm is done to white East Europeans when the discrimination against them/us is not called ‘racism’, the idea that it was Black feminism or Critical Whiteness Studies that had taken something away. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval Davis in an article published as early as 1983 claim: “The notion of ‘black women’ as delineating the boundaries of the alternative feminist movement to white feminism leaves non-British non-black women (like us – a Greek-Cypriot and an Israeli-Jew) unaccounted for politically” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, 63). These approaches alternate in their argumentation between calling for inclusion of white migratised women into the group of people

discriminated against by racism (Rzepnikowska 2019, 74; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, 63) and between claiming migration-based discrimination produces racialisation through de-whitening (Rzepnikowska 2019, 64). They want their exclusion from the nation state to be transformed into racism-experiencing inclusion in anti-racist scholarship. What is striking to me is that in these accounts that fight for the inclusion of – in my words – white migratised positions into racism definitions, the frustration and the feelings of being left out is not mainly directed against the dominant group but comes with envying the perceived recognition of Black and anti-racist interventions. In Alina Rzepnikowska's case it is "non-white ethnic minorities" who according to her get all the space in anti-racist scholarship and in Anthias/Yuval-Davis's case it is "black women" who get to be recognised as the "alternative feminist movement to white feminism". Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (2002, 225) even fear the "obliteration within European feminist race politics of the reality of racialized issues faced by women in Europe" when the discrimination against East European women is not named with the blanket term 'racism'. It is a language of loss (Before this new focus on racism that centres Black people and people of color, we were able to name the discrimination against white migrants) and of obliteration even (White migrants are being undone by Black people and people of color who define racism as 'white supremacy' and therefore as not directed against white migrants).

This brings me to reflections on the relation of postcolonialism and postsocialism as it is important to me to revisit the epistemologies of the 'posts-'. What is the work of the 'post-' in *postcolonialism* and *postsocialism*? The two certainly have in common the attempt to grasp the complexity of present geopolitics and reflect on the blurry spatial-temporality of histories, borders, boundaries and modes of becoming. Learning from critical (feminist) scholarship on the intersections of postcolonialism and postsocialism (see for example Cervinkova 2012; Chari und Verdery 2009; Koobak 2013; Suchland 2011; Tlostanova 2012), I want to ask how not to deplore the seemingly peripheral role of postsocialism compared to postcolonialism in gender and feminist studies based in the West (as this assumes the postcolonial cannot be postsocialist and as it replicates the laments towards postcolonial and Black feminism mentioned above) or avoid equating postsocialism with Eastern Europe (as state socialism is not an exclusively European phenomenon)? Moreover, I am concerned with the question in which ways postsocialist whiteness can be held accountable for its role in the modern white supremacist project?

Similarly to my reflections on the 'post' in 'postcolonial Europe' (Tudor 2017a) and in line with Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora (2018), I suggest here that the prefix 'post-' provides odd, contradictory and productive spatial-temporal dimensions not only in relation to the term it is attached to (see Shohat's 1992 theoretisation of the 'post' in 'postcolonial'), but too in interrelation between different terms that are prefixed with the syllabus 'post' (see Appiah's 1991 question 'Is the Post- in Postmodernism the Post- in Postcolonial?' and various adaptations of the question). Based on the idea, that the prefix 'post' means continuities and ruptures in relation to the term it specifies, and not a

simple ‘after’ (Shohat 1992), but a non-linear, queer temporality, that cannot even be fully explained only in temporal dimensions, one could ask too, how the terms which are specified by the prefix ‘post’ interrelate and how they are put into context to each other through being prefixed in the same way. Is for example the *socialism* in postsocialism the *colonialism* in postcolonialism? Why is this equation problematic and what insights, challenges and potentials would a focus on the role of revolutionary socialism in decolonial struggles provide?

I consider myself an epistemologist. That’s why I see my work as about exploring the potentials of the ‘queer’ temporalities of the prefix ‘post’ and resisting attempts to erase contradictions. Indeed, I am rather interested in the (messy and contradictory) relatedness of the ‘posts’ than in their equation. One of the things that is important to me, especially in my role as a teacher and researcher in the field of migration and diaspora studies, is to identify Europe as postcolonial: as shaped through European colonialism (Bhabra 2009, Tudor 2017a). Therefore, my work privileges postcolonial understandings of racialization as central for critical analysis. Following Brah (1996) this also means understanding Europe as diasporic space – as the product of migrations and diasporas. A queer perspective in my work is more than a focus on sexuality, although it is not not-about-sexuality. For me analysing the ‘queer’ temporalities and trajectories (histories, wanderings, stayings and strayings, productive failures to belong to the nation state etc.) of queer and trans migrant presents and presences is a queer undertaking. Most notably scholars in the field of queer and trans of color critique use ‘queering’ as critical practice that is not only connected to non-heterosexuality (e.g. El-Tayeb 2011; Tinsley 2008). Building on their knowledge productions, I conceptualise ‘queering’ and ‘transing’ as critical moves with histories in different (but at times converging) political movements. While ‘transing’ can mean ‘going beyond a category’, ‘queering’ can mean disrupting normative orders. ‘Transing’ the nation and ‘transing gender’ (Tudor 2017b, 2019) could be thought as critical moves for a radical deconstruction of gendered and national belonging. Coming back to a point raised above, I find that speaking about postcolonialism and postsocialism in the same breath always carries the danger to equate either the ‘posts’ or the two terms that are prefixed in the same way. This makes me feel uneasy because certainly there must be ways to acknowledge that colonialism was and has always been bad, and socialism is at its core what? Good? In theory, a disruption of colonial/racial capitalism, in practice partly used as the driving force of Russian colonial modernity (Tlostanova 2012). Even in this formulation, both terms are not on the same level, as socialism seems to be used as colonising (as the case for Russia/the USSR) or as decolonial tool (e.g. the Black Panther Party in the US or African decolonial socialisms (see for example Césaire 2001 for a meta-reflection)).

In a turn towards resignification, Atanasoski and Vora (2018) suggest: “*Postsocialism marks a queer temporality, one that does not reproduce its social order even as its revolutionary antithesis.* Resisting the revolutionary teleology of what was before, postsocialism creates space to work through ongoing legacies of socialisms in the present.” Bogdan Popa (2019) speaks of “queer postsocialism”

as a way to disrupt straight linear time that understands socialism as heading towards revolution, but also as a queer temporality that does not cede socialism to the ash heap of history, defeated by Anglo-American liberal capitalism. In this vein, queering postsocialism is not just about queers in postsocialist countries or the diaspora. It is more a critical reflection on what socialism means when queered (and transed?). I think it is necessary to apply this insight to the scholarship that addresses the intersections of postsocialism and postcolonialism and with this put in plain sight the asymmetry of the terms. There is no such thing as queered and transed colonialism, of course. On the contrary postcolonial/decolonial intervention it is about decolonizing queer and trans and gender studies – making them accountable to critical analysis of racism and colonialism.

Piro:

I think your point about postsocialist whiteness is an urgent one because when you say, "I am concerned with the question in which ways postsocialist whiteness can be held accountable for its role in the modern white supremacist project?" What you are calling into question is not just the colorblindness that often governs postsocialist studies but also the "political racelessness" to quote from Fatima El-Tayeb (2011), that dominates post-socialist politics today. This is a conversation that we have both engaged in for some time now. I remember a few years ago at the *Sexuality and Borders*ⁱ conference we discussed what Charles W. Mills (2007) work on the epistemology of ignorance and "white ignorance" reveals about postsocialist whiteness. I want to start with a small story from the student protests in Albania in 2019 that I think best illustrates how racism and anti-Blackness continue to be erased and silenced in political debates through deployments of amnesia and ambiguity on the one hand and ignorance and innocence on the other.

Halfway through a news coverage on the student protests in Albania in 2019, the camera zoomed in and focused on a sign that one of the students in the city of Elbasan carried that read "European prices, African Salaries, Arian Race, Taliban Standards, Miserable Albania." The news commentator read the sign that had become popular since the protests had started in 2018ⁱⁱ during a live report to suggest the strength and sentiment of rage and disappointment that the students were delivering home. In other words, how can an Arian race be given African salaries, Taliban standards and yet pay European prices while not being part of the European market? Or in short, why are Albanians being robbed of their 'Arian' race privilege? While the protests are far more complex and merit a more thorough analysis that I am committing to here, I draw on this slogan to illustrate some of the ways in which race functions as capital that the post-socialist subject can claim, trade and negotiate in the racial capitalist marketplace of the European Union. On the one hand, the sign illustrates the geopolitical imaginaries that govern racial capitalism's hierarchies and come to inform the post-socialist position in relation to them, while also exposing the racist premises of privileged relations promised by the politics of EU 'integration.'

In *Humanitarian Violence* (2013), Neda Atanasoski points out that in 1990s, “one crucial task of U.S. nationalist, liberal multiculturalism was to distinguish normative modes of inhabiting and representing diversity from aberrant ones, which could lead to ‘tribalism’ and separatism of the kind witnessed in the former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and Rwanda” (2013: 34). Atanasoski’s work that examines these dynamics in the 1990s is extremely important for the present political moment as it points out how Euro-American interventions in, and integration of, post-socialist spaces, came at a price of underplaying the rise of the incarceration of communities of color in the US and intensification of police violence on migrant communities in Europe and at its borders. Nowhere is this perhaps more obvious than in the first post-Cold War decades when while the EU and US were promoting racial capitalism as ‘Euro-Atlantic integration’ and ‘democratization,’ they were simultaneously busy building carceral regimes at home as the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2007) shows. The reason it is timely to return to this point is because it now brings up a new set of questions about what those post-Cold War politics of ‘Euro-American progress’ did to solidify far-right regimes across post-socialist spaces whose primary targets have been Roma people, refugees, trans and queer communities with Islamophobia underwriting all those projects of EUnification.

But I also worry that if we think of racism in Eastern Europe as a purely post-socialist phenomenon, we risk obscuring the durability of pre-socialist racial hierarchies in their continuation and collusion with socialism and post-socialist racial capitalism or to go back to Charles W. Mills (2015) again, a “global white ignorance.” Moreover, these temporal brakes of pre-socialist/socialist/post-socialist can sometimes construct a nostalgic colorblind and colonial-less image of socialist progress in between reactionary and racial times. Examining the deeper forms of whiteness in postsocialist spaces today can allow us to confront both the more protracted forms of racism in the region as well as their re-deployment in the post-socialist realignment with racial capitalism and coloniality. To do this, we have to always start from the position of racialized people across postsocialist spaces.

I want to think through some of those more protracted forms of whiteness and racism in the postsocialist spaces through the work of Selma Selman because I think her confrontation of Roma racism in the Balkan region unsettles not just the politics of the far right but also the silence and compliance with racism in leftist movements. One of the best commentaries on this intersection of racial capitalism, class, gender and coloniality in postsocialism is her performance piece “Self-Portrait.”ⁱⁱⁱ In it, Selma, who is a Roma artist from Bosnia takes the electronic waste that people deposit in Roma neighbourhoods across the peripheries of postsocialist cities to demolish them into their city centres. In my conversations with Selma, she has described the process of the performance as wanting to spare no one from what the noise of capitalist violence sounds like, “you can’t deposit your waste in the periphery and return to the comfort of the centre making abstract noise about

‘rights,’ ...for instance, I chose to demolish a washing machine because I was trying to point out how the work of waste recycling that takes place in Roma neighbourhoods forces us to reckon with the racist, gendered and environmental violence that result from capitalism.”

Selman’s work is important because in confronting the post-socialist left and liberal peripheralization of questions of racism and refugees, it also exposes their comfortable collusion with EU and its captive and carceral border regimes in the region. Selma comes from Bihać, the site of refugees where the space once used for refugees from the Bosnian genocide now serve as EU sponsored camps for migrant detention. Connecting her own racialized reality in Bosnia to the refugees that are being pursued along the Balkan Route to prevent them from ‘entering’ Europe, in a virtual reality performance called “No Space,”^{iv} where she says that “There is no space here for you” she echoes the term that the Roma people encounter in the Balkans when looking for jobs or housing that is not disconnected from the same message being given to refugees when they are told that ‘there is no space for you here.’

I want to return to your question of “What is the work of the ‘post-’ in *post*colonialism and *postsocialism*?” because I think Selma’s work illustrates the kind of political projects and questions that emerge from connecting ‘posts’ to confront racial capitalism’s coloniality. This requires as you say, a “queer undertaking” which would mean not only thinking “against the dominant arrangement of time and history” as Elizabeth Freeman (2010, xi-xiv) puts it, but also taking apart the epistemology of the closet of racial capitalism’s coloniality. Clare Hemmings recent^v re-reading of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) aptly reminds us that the closet still retains its interpretative tensions to think through the current constellation of racial capitalism in as much as it “is the open secret through which difference and inequality are both obscured and played out in front of our eyes in plain sight.”

Alyosxa:

Yes, it is exactly those questions around identifying whiteness, nationalism and borders ‘hidden in plain sight’ in discourses on Eastern Europe or the diaspora that makes our work resonate with each other. As an East European diasporic queer/trans subject, I am very much aware of the fact that belonging to the nation, to ‘proper’ rather than peripheral Europeanness and to normative gender and sexuality is neither possible nor desirable. The melancholia of non-belonging is based on a loss that cannot be recovered – maybe it is the queer/trans migrant who knows that and who embraces rather than fights that melancholia?

Resonating with the example you mention in which student protestors pose the question “why are Albanians being robbed of their ‘Arian’ race privilege?”, in the diaspora these feelings of dispossession are reproduced in nationalist and racist ways. In a recent piece on anti-Polish discrimination in the UK, Rzepnikowska (2019, 73) mentions that her interviewees complain about “unfairness [...] about being victims of racism and xenophobia despite being white and European” as

seen in questions they pose in the interviews with her, like “[W]hy can’t [the British] focus more on blacks and Asians”? What really makes me uneasy here is that the academic scholarship that aims to point out anti-East-European discrimination in Western Europe and calls this ‘racism’, does not seem to have the tools to intervene or theorise the actual racism uttered by white migrants that follows the logics of claiming proper, white, racist Europeanness wanting to be a part of racist Europe as the ‘Euro-American progress’ story promises.

This normative understanding of belonging and progress very often comes as heterosexist and gender-normative nationalism (Tudor 2017b). For example, in 2013 the Romanian newspaper *Gandul* ran an ad campaign as response to growing anti-Romanian hostility in the UK that used slogans like “Half of our women look like Kate [Middleton]. The other half, like her sister”.^{vi} National white femininity as property of both Romanian men and the nation gets invoked by the use of the possessive pronoun in “our women”. Examples of this kind that try to ‘educate’ the West on the whiteness and Europeanness of Romanians are countless, both in academic and public media debates (see also Tudor 2017b for discussing a far-right example). In 2015, Channel 4 aired a documentary series that can be watched on youtube with the title “The Romanians are coming”^{vii} that follows Florin and others, recent migrants from Romania to the UK, on their journey. While the title of the series already plays with stereotypical phobia against Romanians invading the UK used widely in the run-up to the Brexit referendum, the comment section is bursting from contributions by outraged white Romanians that denounce Florin, the protagonist of the first episode as being Roma, not Romanian. “G[-] are migratory tribes from India, Romanians are an (sic) European Latin nation. There is a HUGE difference and every European citizen should know this.”^{viii} (for an analysis of this topos see also Oprea 2012).

All these examples show that is important for scholarship, art and activism to connect, as you say, “the ‘posts’ to confront racial capitalism’s coloniality”. This is especially necessary in order to not fall into the trap of another progress narrative: The one that assumes anti-racism is situated in the West and Eastern Europe lagging behind once more, being ‘more racist’ than the West, needing to learn from Western critical race theory. Confronting the idea that a specific East European racism was imported into the UK by Polish migrants, Magdalena Nowicka (2018) calls the racism she encountered in the conversations with her white Polish interviewees “European racism”. This relates to El-Tayeb’s (2011: xiv) warning that “[a]ll parts of Europe are arguably invested in ‘whiteness’ as a norm against which ethnicization is read as a tool of differentiation between insiders and outsiders”. Therefore, as I want to stress, a transnational analysis of racism, nationalism and white supremacy is necessary to make sense of the multiple layers of power relations that are often played against each other. For example, in the *Black Lives Matter* statement that protestors read out in Bucharest on June 7th, 2020, they draw connections between police violence against people of color, anti-Roma violence and power relations like classism, misogyny, queer/transphobia and discrimination against sex workers and underline the need for a transnational frame.^{ix} Even though the initial moment of the

intervention was George Floyd's death and subsequent protests in the US and therefore had nothing to do with a communist past, the trolls on youtube accuse the protestors of 'communism', one of them going as far as suggesting they should die like Ceaucescu died (aka be shot by the Romanian military). While the postcolonial moment of the radically intersectional analysis the protestors offer is clear through both the anti-racism of the protest and the racist backlash in the comments, the postsocialist moment is more blurry: we have queer/trans-feminist anti-fascist anti-racist protestors and we have a Romanian social media public consisting mainly of fascists and racists accusing the protestors of communism. This is very much in line with UK far-right politician's Nigel Farage polemics that all migrants 'coming from these communist countries' are uncivilised: the idea that due to their communist past, Romanians have not learned how to be a proper member of society.^x As Cristian Cercel (2020) puts it, Romania is seen as having "[n]o politics, no society". Both rhetorics, the one of the Western anti-East-European far-right and the one of the Romanian far-right, are anti-communist but they ascribe communism to different actors. Western Europe sees all Romanians as tainted by communism; the European East sees itself as having put communism against the wall together with Ceaucescu. In this narrative, anti-racist, anti-fascist queer- and transfeminist activists get equated to the past, they have not moved on to the 'post' in postsocialism which in this grim understanding is the solidification of fascism/far-right regimes, as you point out. Of course, I am not following this use of the term. If we want to make 'postsocialist' work as an adjective that describes a current moment in states that were socialist during the Cold War, the postsocialist aspect of the example above both makes opposing white supremacy, nationalism and racism possible *as* post/socialist anti-racism, makes the postsocialist moment into a postcolonial one. In other words, opposing white supremacy, nationalism and racism does not work in the example as either anti-socialist or socialist.

Piro:

There are similar politics in Bulgaria and Macedonia too - but there, in a bizarre twist, the far-right folds together post-socialist liberalism with communism even though anti-communism has been a prominent feature of all post-socialist far right and liberal platforms. In Macedonia for instance the casual terminology for liberal civil society organizations is now *sorosoidi* deployed as attacks on George Soros and the Open Society Foundation, whereas in Bulgaria the term *liberasti* is meant to synchronize *liberal* with *pederasti*, the latter being term used across the Balkans to interchangeably mean both faggot and a turncoat. These terminologies are deployed not only by the far right but also by 'socialists' who frequently merge with nationalists on political questions regarding refugees and particularly racism against Roma communities.

In 2017 for instance when I was doing research in Bulgaria on the racist protests on "Roma aggression" that accompanied the state organized destruction of Roma houses and communities across the country, I remember how the socialist opposition party was not so much questioning the far right

government for its rampant demolition of Roma neighborhoods as much as arguing that the government was not doing enough to ‘resolve the Roma aggression problem’ as it came to be known. Ivo Hristov, then an MP of Socialist Party (now MP with the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament) commented in a plenary session of the Bulgarian Parliament that, like the Albanians in Yugoslavia, Roma’s demographic growth and demand for rights were the “capsule detonator that are going to blow Bulgaria up”^{xii}. Meanwhile, 2017 being an election year, the head of the socialist party Korneliya Ninova had announced several times that Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May had been an inspiration for her political career. Despite this virtue signaling to the right, the socialist lost the 2017 elections and I remember the victory of Boyko Borisov and his coalition with the far right United Patriots – some of whom had direct ties to the vigilante groups that abused and pushed back migrants at the Bulgarian/EU-Turkish border, around Europe was framed as Bulgaria’s ‘pro-EU’ forces beating socialists. In many ways, this anchoring of post-socialist politics onto the EU have today refashioned far right and fascist groups like Boyko Borisov’s coalition government in Bulgaria into ‘centrist’ blocks.

I think here we need to turn to the EU and the role it has played in solidifying far right regimes across post-socialist spaces because Brexit, in all its racist revanchism, also served to redeem EU’s structural racism both at its borders and in its interior. Far from articulating a different approach to migration from Brexit, the EU used the Brexit moment to increase its spending towards a new carceral bordering conglomerate which went from €5.6 billion Euros for 2014-2020 to €21.3 billion for 2021-2027^{xiii} with a “new standing corps of 10,000 border guards – to be rolled out until 2027”^{xiii}. A great deal of these funds have also been allocated to the Greek and Libyan coast guards who are now routinely engaged in push-backs that result in unaccounted deaths of migrants at sea.^{xiv}

Unsurprisingly, when the EU parliament issued a statement in support of Black Lives Matter in June 2020^{xv}, many African migrants on social media asked if that included Black lives on the Mediterranean that the EU is actively involved in shooting, push-backs and covering up information on violence at its borders.

Much of the debate around Europhiles vs. Eurosceptics as Fatima El-Tayeb (2020) has recently pointed out, reproduces Europe’s internalist story, a colonial amnesia whereby the EU generates its supposed anti-racist stance by suggesting that is the Eurosceptics who are anti-migrant. In reality however the far-right has converged with the EU in the border security across the region where anti-refugee rhetoric and racism merge in keeping Europe’s ‘eastern gates’ safe. A July 2020 promotional electoral video for Croatia's ruling nationalist party HDZ, for instance, features the EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen alongside Ireland's former prime minister Leo Varadkar, ex-European Council president Donald Tusk, the German Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer and Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz all promoting HDZ to keep a “Safe Croatia.”^{xvi} The video is, among other things, a response to the critique that the ruling party has received for beating and pushing migrants back into Bosnia with shaved heads in the shape of a red cross. That the

EU also actively sought to cover up Croatia's violence towards migrants is illustrative of how entrenched these relations have become.^{xviii} HDZ's attempt in May 2020 to sponsor a commemorative mass for its Nazi-allied soldiers in Bosnia, for instance, all the while presiding over the Council of Europe, also shows how these racist and reactionary returns in the region are not in contrast but in collusion with the Europeanness and all that EU integration really stands for but also how Europe continues to cover up the coloniality of migration (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018) by projecting itself as a victim under attack by migrants from its southern and eastern borders. I want to quote Fatima El-Tayeb's recent work at length here because it illustrates this maneuvering brilliantly:

Absent from the concerted rewriting of European twentieth-century history after the end of the Cold War, which combined postfascist and postsocialist narratives into a Western capitalist success story, was a third factor in dire need of reassessment: Europe's colonial past. The refusal to engage with this past as internal to Europe's history also shaped the continent's vision of its future, manifest in a steadily growing postcolonial population that remains "un-European" and in futile attempts to once and for all define and fortify Europe's physical, political, and identitarian borders.... This malleability is particularly obvious in the perception of refugees and undocumented migrants, especially those classified as "economic migrants" (primarily North and West African Muslims and East European Roma) whose death by the thousands at Europe's southern (and increasingly eastern) border is willingly accepted." (2020, 76)

Returning to your point about what occludes and to an extent makes impermissible "a transnational analysis of racism, fascism and anti-communism/anti-socialism" as you put it. I think part of the problem is that we continue to think of colonialism in the third world, socialism in the second and racism in the first along those spatial and temporal coordinates of Cold War area studies. This broad categorization still dictates our analysis which is why for instance we still can't think of Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mozambique or South Yemen as post-socialist but only post-colonial. That countries of the global south rarely make it into post-socialist analysis is illustrative of the eurocentrism with which we continue to think about post-socialism but also because this convenient division exposes coloniality which Europe refuses to reckon with. Similarly, how can we address Chechnya, Dagestan or Kosovo today but as post-socialist or post-soviet or post-conflict but rarely post-colonial? In this sense, this is another reason why the former second world is nearly absent in critical race and decolonial scholarship as I have argued in examining the colonial entailments in post-socialist projects of 'Europeanization' (Rexhepi 2018a).

Madina Tlostanova's work for some time now has brought into question this absence by considering the ways in which being post-socialist and post-colonial are neither contradictory nor exceptional political positions but mutually constitutive ones in the larger context of coloniality/modernity. What the implementation of racial capitalism did across post-socialist spaces

since the 1990s, was to inscribe those racial hierarchies through in the context of labor exploitation and post-socialist capital accumulation through oligarch privatization of public wealth. In this sense, the post-socialist Chechen migrant in Moscow is the cheap post-colonial labor resource in much the same way that post-socialist and post-colonial migrants are exploited in the context of racial capitalism in Western Europe. Tlostanova's *A Janus Faced Empire: Notes on the Russian Empire in Modernity Written from the Border* (2003) is important because she points out how we still lack a political vocabulary and much less a political project to discuss these complex and sometimes contradictory processes of post-socialist coloniality and racial capitalism.

One way to think through a “transnational analysis of racism, fascism and anti-communism/anti-socialism” as you say, might also be to considering what socialism and postsocialism looks like if we placed the histories and lived experiences of colonized and racialized communities, queer and trans folks at the forefront of post-socialist analysis rather than the footnotes of larger (post) cold war colorblind and colonial-less politics. I am thinking here along Ann Stoler's work in general, and her *Imperial Durabilities in our Times* (2016) in particular, as a significant intervention that calls for attention to the afterlife of empires and their durabilities that hide in plain sight or ‘go by different names’. When Stoler argues that “the geopolitical and spatial distribution of inequalities cast across our world today are not simply mimetic versions of earlier imperial incarnations but refashioned and sometimes opaque and oblique reworkings of them,” (2016:5), she calls for a deeper excavation and exposure of the connectives and continuities between the past and present forms of geopolitical colonial and racial capitalist constellations of power.

So when I try to think how racial capitalism has reworked and refashioned post-socialist racial hierarchies, we come across the dilemma that we addressed earlier in this piece, on the one hand, we have the impoverished position of labour relations of the post-socialist migrants in the West, and on the other hand, a racial hierarchies of labour within socialist/post-socialist spaces. While I think they are equally important and inter-related questions, I want to focus on the reworked racial hierarchies in post-socialist spaces specifically and the kind of politics that they propel today. The solidification of far-right politics across the post-socialist spaces has politicized racist anxieties about refugees, impoverishment, security and demographics by projecting Roma and migrant communities as co-conspirators with ‘gender ideologies’ and queer and trans communities to conspire both against the racial purity of the nation and its reproduction. In the case of Bulgaria or Hungary for instance, as in the case of Romania that you raise above, the attack by the far right on racialized and impoverished communities has gone hand in hand with the attack on ‘gender ideologies.’ The merging of liberal and right wing with the EU bordering and securitization platforms in post-socialist spaces has managed to create serious divisions in forging intersectional and international solidarities (Rexhepi 2018b). This is not to say they don't exist. Some of the most crucial solidarity networks between refugees and people living along the Balkan refugee route today have been undertaken by queer and feminist communities such as the Anti-Racist network based out of Thessaloniki or the Transbalkan Solidarity

network that recently ran a 48-hour “return-the-bullets-back protest campaign directed at the European Union.”^{xviii}

One question that postsocialist scholars need to address is to what extent socialism was a decolonizing project not just in terms of self-determination but more broadly as a process of reparations and redistribution, not just ‘socialism’ as it was segmented into the ‘second world’ brackets but socialism more broadly as a decolonizing undertaking across the world. Here, we will find more complex histories that can widen solidarity beyond our post-socialist purgatorial position that like I’ve argued before in conversation with Marina Gržinić and Tjaša Kancler “the (post) socialist world still cannot resolve its (geo)political position of being in pact and proximity of Euro-American coloniality or its product and defying periphery.”^{xix}

Alyosxa:

We have discussed so many strands here, ever shifting conjunctures – cross-fadings, as I like to call them – of regimes and ideologies like colonialism, Eurocentrism, fascism, nationalism; of power relations like anti-Semitism, racism and anti-Romaism; and of their gendered and sexualized aspects. What you point out for Bulgaria and Macedonia, that “‘socialists’ [...] frequently merge with nationalists on political questions regarding refugees and particularly racism against Roma communities” is also true for Romania, and indeed it can be extended to the treatment of queer and trans people and feminist, gender, queer and trans theories. The recent ban of gender studies in Romania and the predecessor referendum in 2018 that attempted to change the constitution to make gay marriage constitutionally impossible, have both been driven by the conservatives and the far-right and backed by the socialists (Ciocian-Ardeleanu 2018, Erzianu 2020). Aptly the referendum – that failed due to low voter turnout – was called ‘Referendum for Romania’ and advertised with the Romanian national colors. Citing El-Tayeb, you pointed out that debates on Europhiles vs. Eurosceptics reproduce a colonial amnesia in which pro-European appears suddenly to be pro-immigrant and anti-racist. We both have come up with quite a few of these seemingly paradox examples in which the socialist left is backing traditionally far-right politics like anti-immigration and homophobia. This left-right convergence is a transnational phenomenon as shown for example in the US in January 2019, when a group of transphobic feminists held a panel against trans equality and rights under the title: “Concerns From the Left” at an event hosted by the conservative, right-wing Heritage Foundation which has a long history of opposing LGBTQ rights, feminism and immigration (see Tudor 2021). We could ask what makes left-wing politics left, if it is not the commitment to oppose hatred? Is it then only economic questions? Of course, these conjunctures do not come as a surprise as we know: socialists backing far-right queer and transphobic legislations and state racism, feminists joining right-wing anti-trans propaganda or gay people reproducing Islamophobic ideas of emancipation, migrants turning against other migrants as the ‘new’ unwelcome newcomers etc. You urge us to explore the ways in which “post-Cold War politics of ‘Euro-American progress’” have

produced “far-right regimes across post-socialist spaces whose primary targets have been Roma people, refugees, trans and queer communities” and at the same time, all our examples show that there is no easy ascription of any ideology as Western or Eastern, capitalist or socialist etc. There is no authenticity in either of the terms. What I always get back to then, is anti-fascism, anti-nationalism and anti-racism as terms of political alignment. As we both have shown, these terms only make sense in transnational analysis that opposes epistemological nationalism as we cannot make sense of racism, nationalism and fascism if we keep it in the realm of the uncontested national.

Piro:

I couldn't agree more, in as much as coloniality isn't just about regional repertoires of denial and ignorance over fascism but also how they are attached to larger transnational racist visions of a post-Cold war global color line. Where we locate ourselves in terms of “anti-fascism, anti-nationalism and anti-racism as terms of political alignment” as you say, becomes an important question about decolonial praxis and solidarity. If we locate racism, nationalism and fascism as the workings of coloniality/modernity, we are then called to examine the continuities of Eurocentric epistemologies and histories and their connectivities to racial capitalism not only as “the mere reconstruction of the past” as David Scott argues but also as “critical appraisal of the present itself” (2004: 41). In this sense, we can only confront postsocialist fascism by aligning ourselves with the “green, red and internationalist”^{xxx} movements for abolition of oppressive systems of racialized, gendered and classed relations of coloniality/modernity. Whatever our embodied or embedded position is in working to expose, fight, or abolish post-socialist or post-colonial fascism and however big or small our contributions, we should make sure that the fall of colonial statues across Europe and the United States today is just the beginning of a decolonial insurrection.

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