

men. However, reacting to the initial positive opening of a discussion about Serbian responsibility for Srebrenica, circles influenced by the Serbian Radical Party quickly managed to poison the public sphere with a variety of communicative strategies that came down to denial. This is not a new issue, but few non-Serbian academics have followed the Serbian public discourse sufficiently closely to present the plentiful, well chosen examples Gordy has gathered.

Despite past horrors, Gordy comes to a positive conclusion: "Viewed historically, limited but meaningful action in the ten years following the departure of Milošević from power is a relatively large and rapid development" (169). "Guilt, Responsibility, and Denial" have a long way to go in Serbia, but the vast documentation of the war, as well as the work of cultural and civil organizations that have actively propagated the necessity of confronting the past offer a long-term perspective towards a positive outcome – so far as history has ever produced such a thing. To conclude, I would assess this book as a "must read" for analysts of Serbian politics and society and as a very useful case study for transitional justice scholars.

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Florentina C. ANDREESCU, *From Communism to Capitalism. Nation and State in Romanian Cultural Production*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. 190 pp., ISBN 978-1-137-27691-9, £ 66.00

The ambitious title of the book makes the reader expect a comprehensive volume on the entanglements of transition and cultural production in Romania. Instead the author focuses exclusively on one particular cultural realm, that of film. In this sense, the book's title raises expectations that are not

fulfilled in the little more than 160 pages that follow. Yet, even in a book dealing only with film as a social medium, Florentina Andreescu's task remains a challenging one: she is analysing the transition process through the lens of a film camera. In her introduction, she argues pointedly for a rehabilitation of the visual in the study of the social and political dynamics of change and asks the important question: Can the visual sphere be attributed a key role in the symbolic debates on the dynamics of change? In particular, she is concerned with the ways in which sociopolitical changes influenced filmic representations of the state, of the nation, of gender relations and of "the other".

Andreescu has a background in International Studies and Political Sciences, and it is through this angle – complemented by a psychoanalytical perspective – that she embarks on her analysis. Central for her is Michael J. Shapiro's model of a "cinematic nationhood", implying that film is constitutive for the self-image of the nation and the state, as well as a platform on which concepts of state and nation are continuously negotiated and reshaped (50). The seven chapters are a tour de force, outlining cinematic production in Romania throughout the last 40 years. They are structured according to the main topics the medium has dealt with: "the face of social authority"; the image of the worker as a hero; the image of the Romanian woman; and the image of the nation. Andreescu analyses these topics diachronically, differentiating between three temporal stages which she calls "communism", "transition", and "post-transition". The last phase is said to have begun in 2000 and is characterized by stable democratic conditions, a functional market economy, the establishment of neoliberal values and institutions, and Romania's entry into the EU (5). This somewhat positivist reading of the present situation

could well be questioned and problematized.

Andreescu names the "aesthetic turn" in political sciences as the main inspiration for her work, but it seems that in fact she is referring to the "visual turn" in social sciences. Her analytical approach remains a narrow one, reducing the aesthetic qualities of films to the idea that their creation is primarily politically motivated: she considers them simply as a "mirror" of politics and ideology. Moreover, she focuses exclusively on a semiotic reading of film (plots) as "texts", instead of analysing the visual, which lies at the very heart of film-making. Above all, two of the main elements that stand at the core of communist and post-communist filmic creation are conspicuously absent: (1) the audience – and this despite her arguing for film as an ideal medium for mirroring "mass beliefs" (though she does not specify which individuals or social groups such shared beliefs should be attributed to); and (2) the politics of film production and film industry. Seen in this light, the volume is little more than an innovative contribution to the field of Transition Studies. Focusing on film (plots) as ideologically infiltrated texts is a rather anachronistic perspective in a time when media theories, especially in the realm of visual studies, have significantly expanded to produce new and exciting approaches.

What is truly innovative in the book is the perspective: the psychoanalytical analysis of transition as seen through film. Here Andreescu argues that films are structured extensions of human fantasy, which she sees as charged with national myths and imaginaries. In this context, transition, which she understands as a social trauma, has a direct impact on the structuring of these imaginary worlds, including a potential blurring of the boundaries between the real and the symbolic (29).

From a language point of view, reading this book is not exactly a delight. Awkward phrasing appears throughout the entire volume, and the lengthy introductory section on film theory, as well as the problematic part on film and nation, are difficult to access, providing vague, often simplified or even questionable definitions of key concepts for film analysis. "Socialist Realism" is a case in point. According to the author, the expression "is an aesthetic style attempting to mould the audience's minds as directed by the Communist Party" (3). Other passages offer unqualified value judgements. For example, when she refers to films produced during the era of communism, she states that these films "present simplistic stories with one-dimensional characters" (57), a judgement which surely fails to do justice to the multilayered and rich cinematographic output in communist Romania.

Although her sociopolitical macro-analysis of film production is schematic and often undifferentiated, her empirical analysis of particular selected films (especially those from the post-communist period) is captivating, problematizing, and good to read. Chapter 4, on the changing image of the Romanian worker as an ideological hero is a good example (81-105). Here Andreescu meticulously follows the transformation of a cinematographic topos from the positivist heroic worker image who lives through and for the state and its party to the suffering drudge exploited and humiliated by the new neo-liberal condition, the image promoted in films from the transitional period.

From a formal point of view, it should be mentioned that three chapters of the book have previously been published in journals. A very short index of only five pages is included in the volume, but not all films referred to in the text are listed there. The bibliography does not separate literature and film sources. A separate list

of all films mentioned would have helped reading. These aspects, among several others, show that an ambitious publication was unfortunately prepared with less care than was necessary. The result is a book which portrays transition in Romanian film as an analysis of film plots. It presents the Romanian case as a singular one, failing to see the undeniable connections to media policy in the USSR (shown, for example, in K. Roth-Ey's *Moscow Prime Time*) and to the Southeast European context.

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Uwe HINRICHS / Thede KAHL / Petra HIMSTEDT-VAID (eds.), *Handbuch Balkan. Studienausgabe*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2014 (Slavistische Studienbücher N.F., 24). VII + 844 pp., ISBN 978-3-447-06814-7, € 39.80

Quite unexpectedly, writing textbooks on the Balkans is in vogue again. Most of them are limited in scope to the end of communism and the subsequent period of political and economic transition – for example R. Bideleux and I. Jeffries, *The Balkans: a Post-Communist History*, or S. Ramet (ed.), *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*. But several textbooks published on Southeastern Europe and Yugoslavia take a broad thematic sweep or have encyclopaedic ambitions – for example, K. Clewing and O. J. Schmitt (eds.), *Geschichte Südosteuropas. Vom frühen Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, and H. Sundhaussen, *Jugoslawien und seine Nachfolgestaaten 1943–2011*. They all, however, face the same dilemma: unlike the classic diplomatic histories, like the one by Charles and Barbara Jelavich, a modern history textbook covers themes from linguistics to economics and more than a handful of nations, states and languages. Any such volume may end up

as a heterogeneous collection of articles instead of a comprehensive textbook, especially when written by a collective of authors. Yet, the scope of such a book is clearly beyond the capacities of a single author, with a few noteworthy exceptions. Who, for that matter, would dare to undertake a similar endeavour for Western Europe, including both Portugal and Iceland, covering architecture, popular culture and state building?

The present textbook, edited by the Slavists Hinrichs, Kahl and Himstedt-Vaid, excludes some (non-Slavic) countries, Greece and Romania, but includes Albania. Its focus is on post-1989 history. Most of the contributors and their themes are so well known that the book dispenses with an “About the Authors” section. The authors include Wolfgang Höpken on history and memory, Michael Schmidt-Neke on Albania, and Gabriella Schubert on gender issues. This heavyweight textbook of over 800 pages contains four sections: History; Europeanization (i.e. post-1989 history); Languages; and Culture. In terms of the quality of the individual chapters, the reader can be assured that each contribution is a condensed and highly competent analysis backed up by years of academic research, analytical observation, and local networking. Criticism by a reviewer would invariably end up as nitpicking over minor details, personal likings, or hobbyhorses.

Although the present textbook came out in August 2014 and takes into account events as recent as Croatia's EU accession, it may already be outdated in its political-strategic outlook. Typically, the second section, on post-1989 history and politics, is entitled “Europeanization”. It includes a separate chapter on every state in “the Balkans”, including Romania, but there is only a single chapter on Serbia and Montenegro together and none for Kosovo, Croatia or Slovenia. Extra chapters are