

of the health-care system was generally seen in negative terms, while what was seen as good about the former system was the fact that it provided help equally for everyone. The social safety net no longer functions, and the poor now have nowhere to turn. The interview material revealed that society was perceived as riven by a deep schism between the highest class who have been able to gain the benefits of the introduction of a market economy, who by the same token can access private health services and leisure facilities, and on the other hand all the rest of the people who have to do their best to struggle through against the economic odds. The healthy body is perceived as a form of capital, a key resource of a potential employee in the labour market.

How young men and women who go into 'poor work' in state and former state enterprises experience the symbolic and material impoverishment of these changes is the subject of Charles Walker's contribution. It emphasises two dimensions of these experiences. First, it highlights the increasing difficulty for working-class young people to gain a sense of life narrative or social worth from the kind of industrial work that is available because of the deteriorating material returns, as well as the declining social status of this type of work. Second, the chapter points to the ways in which people experience these changes in terms of personal inadequacies or poor choices—developments which are more keenly felt by men rather than women given that employment is a more important source of social identity for men in Russia than it is for women. Walker reflects on the relevance of these findings for the fact that the problem of premature mortality in Russia affects men more than women. John Round also focuses on the social vulnerabilities of men in Russia, when he addresses the lack of social support available to middle-aged men. Many of his interviewees regard middle-aged men as an 'excluded class'. Many

interviewees emphasised the way economic pressures were affecting their mental health, and the fact that there was nowhere to turn to discuss these issues. The chapter links the creation of this new class of men to Russia's demographic crisis and the lack of state support and social policy aimed at protecting men that have become economically marginalised.

The volume represents a very welcome and overdue contribution to the study of the historically unique processes of class-making in Russia, which comes at a time of renewed recognition of class as a useful category of analysis. While there are similarities between what is happening in Russia and class processes in the West, including, as Lawler suggests, the normalisation of class difference and the devaluation of the dispossessed, it is possible that the particular paradoxes of capitalist class formation after communism will help propel change in unforeseen and novel ways.

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Timothy Havens, Anikó Imre and Katalin Lustyik (eds.): *Popular Television in Eastern Europe During and Since Socialism*

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Despite the growing amount of research exploring the domains of socialist and post-socialist popular culture, international scholarship in the fields of media and cultural studies is still displaying notable gaps in its reflection and understanding of Eastern Europe and the profound transformation of both its media landscapes and audience habits since 1989. This is arguably even more true for popular television, which, given the prevailing interest of scholars in the democratic roles and political control of

mass media after the transition, has been rather neglected in edited volumes and monographs published so far on the evolution of media systems in this part of Europe. Bringing together fourteen essays by altogether twenty scholars from Central and Eastern Europe and beyond, this book aims to tackle this 'double handicap' and contribute both to much-needed attempts to de-Westernise media studies and to advancing research on popular television production and reception in the context of globalisation and post-socialist cultural transformation.

The first of the book's three sections deals with popular television during socialist times. While the potential scope and depth of this topic goes well beyond the limits of the five chapters included in this section, they still provide a useful reminder. In order to fully comprehend the nature and peculiarities of the post-transition television cultures across the region, it is important to take into account the historical development of television in these countries during the communist and pre-transition period—especially since this can often reveal continuity with the socialist past. This is the argument advanced by Sabina Mihelj in her comparative study of television entertainment in socialist Eastern Europe, which convincingly demonstrates that, for many CEE countries, the change in television programming following the end of the communist regime was not as dramatic as conventionally portrayed, given the fact that their television landscapes were open to Western popular programmes already long before 1989. In a similar vein, Mihelj's analysis highlights the similarities, rather than differences, between social histories of television in the East and the West—for example, in relation to the use of television as a means of national integration by the state. This is a topic also explored in the chapter by Anikó Imre, illustrating with particular examples how historical drama series like the Polish *Janosik* or the

Hungarian *Tenkes*, which exploited folk mythologies and re-constructed real historical figures, were used as instruments to foster national identity and unity and to legitimise the communist regime. Reviewing the genesis of television in Romania from its onset to the post-transition era, Dana Mustata argues, much against the common stereotype reducing Romanian television to a mere propaganda tool for Ceaușescu's authoritarian regime, that in fact strict political control has only characterised a relatively short period of television history in Romania, while overall its evolution has structurally corresponded to its counterparts in Western Europe. Dorota Ostrowska in turn presents an in-depth case study of the Polish comedy series *Alternatywy 4*. Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of 'carnavalesque', she shows how the series managed to satirise both everyday life in socialist Poland in the 1980s and the state propaganda that permeated most television production during that time. The first section of the book concludes with a chapter by Katja Kochanowski, Sascha Trültzsch, and Reinhold Viehoff on political indoctrination in East German family series. They document the way popular television entertainment reflected and reproduced the GDR's official ideological line, dividing the world into 'friends' and 'enemies'. The former were represented by the Soviet Union and the other countries of the socialist bloc, the latter primarily by the United States and West Germany.

The second part of the volume deals primarily with the processes of commercialisation and globalisation and their impact on Eastern European television cultures. Shedding light on an under-studied genre, the first essay in this section by Katalin Lustyik examines the changes in children's television from mid-1980s until today, utilising empirical data on programming and audience ratings from Hungary. While the wider selection of programmes and the greater opportunities for younger

viewers to participate in shaping their television environment seem indisputable, Lustyik argues that the commercialised children's television of today contains its own ideological constraints and limitations in the approach to childhood, even if these are better concealed than were those of its socialist predecessor. The concept of media imperialism, which Lustyik's essay clearly relates to but does not openly mention, is explicitly addressed as the focal point of the chapter by Timothy Havens, Evelyn Bottando, and Matthew S. Thatcher. They analyse the impact of the European Commission's 'Television without Frontiers' Directive on programme imports in Hungary. According to the authors, the Directive—by imposing a limit of 50% on TV programmes of non-EU origin—has served its main purpose in the Hungarian context. However, the protection of EU programming has been achieved at the expense of programmes from CEE countries, which nearly vanished from Hungarian TV screens after 1989. Using critical discourse analysis, the essay by Adina Schneeweis explores the content as well as social and audience context of the popular Romanian TV show *Garanat 100%*, and specifically the way the show has framed issues of national identity and cultural orientation in times of profound changes in the country. The section concludes with a chapter on the changing practices in television programming in Poland since the introduction of the dual system of broadcasting in the 1990s. Here Sylwia Szostak demonstrates that despite the challenge from the commercial TV station Polsat, which filled its prime time with popular American series, the public-service television TVP managed to retain a significant audience share even with relatively conservative scheduling strategies and a reliance on domestic programmes.

The third part of the volume is composed of five case studies examining, from different theoretical and methodological standpoints, forms of representation of na-

tional identity through popular television series and reality shows. In the opening essay, Alice Bardan looks at the introduction of reality show formats into the Romanian television landscape, with a particular focus on *Big Brother*, which has rather surprisingly failed to attract audience attention in Romania, unlike in most other Eastern European countries. Challenging the received opinion that audiences prefer local versions of global formats, Bardan argues that the fiasco of *Big Brother Romania* can be interpreted as audiences' rejection of identification with the everyday symbols and practices of national representations conveyed by the show (in the sense of Michael Billig's banal nationalism). Inspired by the memory studies approach to issues of collective trauma and cultural nostalgia, Irena Carpentier Reifová, Kateřina Gillárová, and Radim Hladík analyse the re-construction of the Czech socialist past in the 'hybrid comedy/docudrama serial' *Vyprávěj (Tell)*, as well as the way this re-construction is reflected by the viewers, whose opinions and interpretations of the past are explored using the focus-group method. Coming to terms with the nation's communist past was also one of the important motives of *Szomszédok*, the Hungarian adaptation of the British soap opera *East-Enders*. However, as Ferenc Hammer documents, the main cultural-political 'mission' of the series was in fact promoting an idealized image of democracy, including the appraisal of electoral participation and other civic virtues of the new democratic order. The last two essays both deal with the representation of Roma on Eastern European television screens. Annabel Tremlett uses ethnographic interviews with child viewers of the Hungarian 'reality Roma' TV show *Gyözike* to illustrate the limitations of some mainstream academic or activist approaches to portraying Roma in the popular media. And Ksenija Vidmar-Horvath investigates the discourses of nationhood, ethnicity, and gender identity in

Slovenia through a case study of a scandal that erupted following the airing of an episode of the political TV show *Pyramid*.

Overall, these fourteen essays present an empirically rich and intellectually stimulating contribution to the studies of popular media in transition and post-transition countries. Apart from offering well-informed insights into the realities of Eastern European television landscapes and the habits of their audiences in the context of political and cultural transformation, one of the main assets of this volume undoubtedly lies in the various challenges it brings to the conventional, homogenising view of the development and current features of television cultures in Eastern Europe. Many chapters provide evidence that contradicts or at least complicates the often reductionist or simplified perception of particular historical circumstances and trends associated with this region and its media. These include the allegedly impervious 'Iron Curtain', which did not allow Western programmes to travel to the East (see Mihelj), the assumption that communist leaders had total control over the institution of television (see Mustata), the taken-for-granted preference of local audiences for 'their own' versions of reality TV shows over foreign ones (see Bardan), or the supposed comparative advantage of 'American' program-

ming strategies over the more traditional and domestic-oriented television schedules (see Szostak). In other words, the volume sketches a rather colourful and multi-dimensional picture of both socialist and post-socialist television environments, and also suggests these two may share more structural similarities than is commonly acknowledged.

Naturally, the vast geographical, thematic, and temporal scope of this volume does not quite allow for a systematic comparison of the facts and tendencies examined in each of the national case studies. The relative lack of comparative perspective—only the first two chapters have a pan-regional analytical scope—is the weak spot of the book, especially given the rather uneven representation of Eastern European countries. Seven out of twelve case studies deal with either Hungary or Romania. The editorial does not really substitute for this deficiency. Despite this, the volume must be welcomed and recommended as a valuable and inspiring inquiry into a still understudied territory, with the hope that it will pave the way for more comparative research and publication projects on these topics in the near future.

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