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Reimagining Political Peripheries in Pišťanek's and Boldizar's Siberian Slovakia

Near the end of the Cold War era, the historian William Pietz found parallels between representations of the former colonial world and the socialist countries in Western discourse: “the function of Cold War language as substitute for the language of colonialism raises the question of the comparability and actual continuity of colonial and Cold War discursive structures.” Western scholars depicted the Communist system in opposition to democratic values, drawing on Orientalist tropes: “The basic argument is that ‘totalitarianism’ is nothing other than traditional Oriental despotism plus modern police technology” (Pietz 1988, 55-58). Pietz’s article received relatively little attention within the then-emerging field of postcolonial studies and it was not until almost a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union that David Chioni Moore’s article “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?” brought renewed attention to this comparison. Moore describes societies of the former “Second” (Communist) world as “extraordinarily postcolonial” and points out “how extraordinarily little attention is paid to this fact,” crediting this oversight to “the belief... that the First World largely caused the Third World’s ills, and an allied belief that the Second’s socialism was the best alternative” (Moore 2001, 114). He describes the desire in these countries for popular culture “as a

return to Westernness that once was theirs,” along with a rejection of “Easternness”, adding that “this headlong westward sprint... prevents most scholars of the post-Soviet sphere from contemplating ‘southern’ postcoloniality” (Moore 2001, 117-118). Another two decades later, after Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine prompted a wide-scale reassessment of Russian colonialism among Slavic studies scholars, Moore returned to the topic in a follow-up essay, in which he notes that the widespread adoption of the term “postcolonial” occurred “at the same time that the Eastern Bloc and then the Soviet Union fell apart, the Cold War ended, and the already precarious worldwide socialist project largely collapsed” (Moore 2024, 43). Nonetheless, “When post-Soviet topics make a rare appearance in postcolonial studies venues, the essays are written only by scholars native or connected to the post-Soviet region. The fleeting post-Soviet is thereby sequestered, and has not (yet) reshaped postcolonial assumptions” (Moore 2024, 52).

One of the earliest post-Soviet novels in Central Europe was Peter Pišťanek’s *Rivers of Babylon* (1991), which follows the rise of the hotel boilerman Ráčz to power and wealth through his use of brute force during the chaotic postsocialist transition. The title (in English in the original) is not only a Biblical reference but through its connection to the song of the same name, it also alludes to the spread of Western pop culture in the former Communist states, one of the most visible characteristics of this social transition. Peter Darovec has described Pišťanek’s work as “a revolutionary novel in its poetics, [which] even anticipates, to an almost visionary extent, the fundamental changes in Slovak society during the turbulent 1990s, which at the time the novel was written had not yet become apparent” (Darovec 2025, 91-92). Pišťanek followed it with two sequels, the latter of which, *Fredyho koniec* (1999, translated as *The End of Freddy*, 2008) features

an imaginary community of expatriate Slovaks in the oil-rich “Junjun” archipelago in the Arctic. According to Robert Pynsent, this third volume “concerns itself with Czech-Slovak relations, Slovak nationalism, but also Czech nationalism-cum-imperialism, and Czech arrogance toward the Slovaks, and towards the rest of Europe” (Pynsent 2000, 100).

The fictional relocation of Slovak identity to remote Siberia also appears in *The Ugly* (2016), the first novel by the Slovak-Canadian émigré writer Alexander Boldizar. Its protagonist is a member of the Slovak “Ugli” tribe that had settled in Siberia during the Russian Revolution, left behind by the Czechoslovak Legion that fought against the Red Army and eventually helped to found the First Republic. Among the reviews linked on Boldizar’s personal website is Poornima Apte’s from *Booklist*: “Boldizar’s debut successfully recognizes the chasm between youthful idealism and the reality it’s often mired in.”¹

As the Warwick Research Collective has noted, Pišťanek’s *Rivers of Babylon* “affords a critique of that instantaneity where the leaps and accelerations of capitalist ‘development’ leave large and unbridgeable gaps between the new business elites and the masses in the urban peripheries and rural hinterlands” (Warwick Research Collective 2015, 118). Boldizar’s *The Ugly* might similarly be described in the collective’s terms as a “novel of combined and uneven development,” and despite being written in English by an author in Canada, it reflects his background in the literary periphery of Europe through its parodic self-representation of imaginary Siberian Slovaks.

¹ Boldizar recently published his second novel, *The Man Who Saw Seconds*, a science fiction thriller.

Although Darovec refers to the first volume of *Rivers of Babylon* as a “revolutionary novel” that “graphically evokes a specific historical period,” he points out that paradoxically “it is not an explicitly political novel. In fact, it shows almost none of the revolutionary events that dramatically changed the state of the country in late 1989 and early 1990. [...] These socio-political processes lie outside the viewpoint of the characters surrounding Ráčz” (Darovec 2020). Robert Pynsent has described Pišťanek’s trilogy as a revival of the Slovak comic tradition: “His dominant mode is satire, and his devices belong to that mode, the grotesque, parody, the burlesque, and vulgar language [...] For Pišťanek, Thatcherism-Blairism, like Marxism-Leninism is moral weakness posing as strength, and he aims his hyperbolic satire more frequently at capitalism than socialism” (Pynsent 2000, 89-91).

According to Darovec, *The End of Freddy* received a mixed critical and popular reception due to Pišťanek’s decision to shift his primary focus from the Bratislava underworld to a broader satire of global capitalism: “Pišťanek’s extension of the novel’s space drives the characters to another continent, to another climate zone and actually even further [...] a significant part of the plot takes place in a fictional country, characterized as post-communist and post-Soviet, an archipelago somewhere in the far north” (Darovec 2020, 176). Pynsent views the third novel more positively as a “Czechoslovak” text reflecting the political relations between the two nations after their separation: “Pišťanek appears both to satirize [Slovak nationalist historians] who maintain that the Czechs treated Slovakia as their colony and to satirize the Czechs themselves for their supercilious approach to the Slovaks. . . The chief target of his hyperbolic satire on Czech politics is Masarykian messianism and, perhaps, most of all the version of this

messianism embodied in the politics of Václav Klaus” (Pynsent 2000, 104-05). The broad range of Pišťánek’s political satire can be seen in the fact that Pynsent sees allusions both to the founding father of the multinational Czechoslovak state (Masaryk), and to the Thatcherite prime minister (Klaus) who represented a cynical counterpart to the idealism of Václav Havel.

When the title character of *The End of Freddy*, the pornographic film producer Freddy Mešťánek visits Prague with his friend Urban, he feels “engulfed” by the Czech language:

“You prick,” he addressed Urban with his last bit of energy, “why do you speak Czech to them, when you’re a Slovak?”
“Because it’s a foreign language,” responded Urban. “In London I don’t try to communicate in Slovak, either. In Vienna I speak German. So why would I risk being misunderstood? I speak Czech, so I use it.”
Freddy looked at him with glassy eyes. [...] He didn’t like those bloody Czechs (Pišťánek 2008, 29).

Later in the novel, following a number of setbacks, including being abandoned by his wife, Freddy is contemplating suicide when he sees a political discussion on TV:

A Czech foreign affairs expert is explaining how it happened that a long time ago Slovaks settled Junja beyond the Arctic Circle. In the 19th century many Slovaks left to find work in America. A Junja Khan took advantage of this by chartering a ship in Hamburg onto which he lured Slovaks by charging only half price for a ticket to America. Once on the open sea, the ship turned out to be a slave trader taking them to Junja. [...] He sold them all to the Junjans and they used them for slave labor. [...] Junjans realized that if they gave Slovaks freedom, and let them do what their typical Slovak industriousness and inventiveness leads them to do, they would get more profit from them. [...] In the 1930s Russian communists got to Junja. They set up a puppet Soviet government that [...] founded reindeer, fishing,

and hunting cooperatives. Ethnic Junjans, who were lazy and thus understandably charmed by communist ideas, headed these cooperatives. After the fall of communism and the Soviet Union, the Russians left Junja. Since then, the two main ethnic groups have been at daggers drawn. There are many more Slovaks, who thus have an indisputable right to govern (Pišťanek 2008, 189).

Freddy decides to travel to Junja disguised as a journalist, but actually to join the Slovak guerilla fighters in the civil war. He is mistakenly reported as killed in the fighting and becomes a national hero, but he is in fact captured by the Junjans and held hostage as a Slovak spy. Taking on a new identity as the guerilla leader “Telgarth,” he actually does become a heroic figure.

As in the previous volumes of the trilogy, Pišťanek overtly rejects high literary style, although as Rajendra Chitnis suggests, he “does not so much replicate as embellish the vernacular of the world he portrays [by using], for example, highly literary Slovak, urban and rural non-literary Slovak, the Americanized Slovak of a returning émigré, archaic Slovak and grammatically and idiomatically correct Czech not for verisimilitude, but to claim these different ‘languages’ as his own” (Chitnis 2005, 51). As the narrator himself explains in the text:

The Junjun Slovaks’ native language is Slovak, but an archaic nineteenth-century Slovak. The Slovak migrants used a language spoken in Slovakia when Slovaks were forced to settle the Junjan islands. Over the years, the Junjan Slovaks’ language has been enriched by so many Russian, Junjan, and Inkirunnuit expressions that my dear reader would find exact transcription of our characters’ dialogue hard to understand (Pišťanek 2008, 66).

When the novel was published in English translation by a small academic press in London, the editor's introductory notes informed the reader that while the original text switches between Czech and Slovak, "The translator and editor have decided to render the difference (the two languages differ little more than Edinburgh Scots from London English) not by writing different forms of English [...] but by printing what was originally written in Czech in the more imperial Garamond typeface." The additional background information provided (explicitly for a "British reader") also alludes to the Scottish context: "The novel is set in the mid-1990s, when Czechoslovakia has split into two states, and Slovakia seems an anything-goes playground for mafias and corrupt politicians, while the Czech state [is] now a Kingdom [...] The fictional Junjan Archipelago lies beyond the Arctic Circle of the Russian mainland and, in shape, seems very like the Shetland Islands, magnified by ten and rotated 90 degrees" (Pišťanek 2008, 5-6). At the end of the novel, Freddy leads the Junjun Slovaks to victory over their oppressors and after declaring himself Emperor Telgarth I, not only rejects the Czech kingdom's offer of unification, but leads the new Slovak Empire into the EU. After arranging for his parliament to elect Rácz as Prime Minister of the Slovak Empire, Telgarth not only expels all Czechs from the Slovak archipelago but in a final national revenge, blocks their application for EU membership.

Unlike Pišťanek's fiction, which received critical attention from leading Slovak scholars from its first appearance, Alexander Boldizar's first novel remains relatively unknown to both Canadian and Slovak readers, although the Slovak-American blogger Sarah Hinlicky Wilson has described it as "the best, most colorful, and most accurate depiction of what cultural confusion feels like that I have ever read" (Wilson 2018). In contrast to Pišťanek, however, who spent most of his life on Bratislava's outskirts near

the Austrian-Slovak border, Boldizar had an astonishing range of experiences that are partially reflected in his fiction. According to the author's Wikipedia page, mainly based on his website, Boldizar was born in Slovakia, escaped via Yugoslavia and Austria in 1979, and emigrated with his family to Canada. After his studies at Harvard Law School, he worked in such places as Japan, Indonesia, and the Canadian Arctic.

The prologue begins with a traditional boulder-throwing competition between Muzhduk, the son of the chieftain, and his opponent Hulagu, which Muzhduk wins: "Everyone cheered and came to congratulate Muzhduk for holding onto his title. He had gained another year to find and climb a mountain higher than the one climbed by his father or by any Slovak chief before him" (Boldizar 2016, 14). The village has one outsider, a Red Army paratrooper named Fred who has been held captive for years: "Fred knew more languages than the Uglis, who read every book they could steal, and he told Muzhduk wonderful stories about the world beyond Verkhoyansk: America, Africa, Europe, and other odd places" (Boldizar 2016, 17). Soon afterwards, a helicopter lands bringing a group of American anthropologists, whom Muzhduk immediately distrusts: "Fred the Political Officer had told him about the evil wizards of technology and the alienated factors of production and consumption, about the cities that scraped the clouds. And his father had met Americans in Afghanistan. He said they all sold shoulder-fired missiles" (Boldizar 2016, 19). One of the Americans informs Muzhduk (who speaks English) that Communism has fallen and that he has purchased their land from the Russian government: "You have a very rare breed of butterfly that lives only here. I want to set up a conservation area and fly in wealthy tourists" (Boldizar 2016, 20). To the horror of the anthropologists, Muzhduk informs them that the tribe eats the butterfly as a delicacy.

On the helicopter ride back to the village, Muzhduk informs the Americans about his tribe's history, which bears some similarity to Pišťanek's account of the Junjuns (although I have not seen any reference by Boldizar to his direct influence):

The Americans had read about the Czechoslovak Legion of 50,000 men who broke through Russian lines during World I and refused to turn back [...] Muzhduk explained that while most of the Legion had continued east, his great-grandfather Muzhduk the Ugli the First had stopped here [...] General Stefanik, the leader of the Czechoslovak Legion, insisted that the world was round, and that eventually they would come back to their beloved Tatra Mountains [...] Muzhduk's great-grandfather and six thousand men said no. The Verkhoyansk Mountains were similar enough to the Tatras, their feet were tired, they no longer remembered their wives. The six thousand stayed while the rest marched on. The Reds defeated the Whites, but many years passed before they turned to face their Slovak problem. [...] In the end, the Red Army finally solved its Slovak problem by printing maps that didn't show the valley. And so, everyone lived in peace (Boldizar 2016, 20-22).

At the village, one of the Americans, John, explains that he is the attorney for SiberTours, adding: "I graduated with a Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School, first in my class, and I'm a member of the New York Bar." He is surprised when Muzhduk's father explains that they do not have laws, since their culture is based on honor, including the boulder-throwing tradition: "Words are toys. You can't throw words." John objects: "Of course you can. That is exactly what law school teaches. How to throw words." He asks the leader of the Ugli tribe for a symbolic gift, a small piece of land "the size of a bearskin." Finding it an absurdly small request, the chieftain puts his signature to the agreement, but two weeks later John returns and informs him that his company is indeed the owner of the Ugli tribe's land: "I cut [the bearskin] into a fine thread. I took the thread and placed it in a big circle that surrounds the six villages. Now this area is all mine." Temporarily

defeated, Muzhuk's father sends him into the world: "Go to that place where John the Attorney learned to throw words. To fight Reds, we had to understand metal. To fight Americans, we need words. Pick up the word *Harvard* and learn it better than John and bring it back" (Boldizar 2016, 24-27).

The rest of the novel is split into parallel narratives, that of Muzhduk's study at Harvard Law School, which he reaches on foot via Alaska and Canada, and his later travels through Mali in search of Peggy Roundtree, a fellow law student who has gone to Africa to join the Tuareg rebellion. The Harvard storyline is narrated in the third person, while the African one is told in the first person. When Muzhduk eventually finds Peggy, she tells him of her admiration for the Tuaregs: "They are some of the greatest fighters in history. For a thousand years they fought off the Hausa farmers from the south and Arabic and French armies from the north. This is about the only place I can think of in recent history where the nomads beat the sedentarists." Muzhduk compares them to Attila the Hun, adding a bit of pseudo-etymology parodying the Slovak historical resentment toward Hungarians: "You know the Hungarian word for 'door' is ajto? In Slovak, ajto means 'even that.' When the Huns first arrived and raided Slovak villages, they stole everything, even the doors, because they'd never seen one before. The Slovaks were surprised and asked, 'even that?' And so 'even that' became the Hungarian word for door" (Boldizar 2016, 255-56). When he eventually reaches Timbuktu, the tourist office reminds him of Russian schools in Siberia: "Before flying into Niamey, I'd expected Africa to be free of all the bureaucracy that gripped America. I'd expected it to be more than Verkhoyansk. But Verkhoyansk Slovaks had never been defeated. They'd never been colonized, categorized, made dependent on foreign aid, and taught that bureaucracy was a sign of

civilization” (Boldizar 2016, 293). The novel finally returns to Verkhoyansk in the brief epilogue, when Muzhduk takes Peggy back to live with his tribe, and when they ask why he traveled both to Harvard and to Africa, he informs them: “Just as there are two parts to becoming chief, there are two sides to every word” (Boldizar 2016, 363-64).

While he does not engage with post-1989 Central European society as deeply as Pišťanek does, Boldizar’s hero Muzhduk the Ugli sees “Slovak” Siberia as a counterpart to his experiences at Harvard Law School and in Africa. Pišťanek’s and Boldizar’s works metaphorically portray the political and psychological traumas of the post-Communist era through the concepts of exile and tribalism, by repositioning the usually marginalized Slovak Republic as a center in relation to post-Soviet and postcolonial peripheries.

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**Response to Charles Sabatos:
“Reimagining Political Peripheries in
Pišťanek’s and Boldizar’s Siberian Slovakia”**

In his paper, Charles Sabatos gave a highly interesting insight into two of the most important novels in the field of Slovakian literature of the last three decades: *The Rivers of Babylon* (1991) by Peter Pišťanek (1960-2015) and *The Ugly* (2016) by the Canadian-Slovakian author Alexander Boldizar (*1971). These novels deal directly or indirectly through literary satire with the question of the relationship between the small country of Slovakia and its larger, more powerful neighbours, with the question of the postcolonial relationship between East and West and the underlying stereotypes of dominant and subordinate perspectives and power structures.

In different ways, both novels address the complicated question of Slovakian self-positioning in the space of semi-peripheral and postcolonial dynamics. The *Rivers of Babylon* is set in the underworld of Bratislava at the time of the political change in 1989, a world of crooks, fences, prostitutes, informers and others who are out to make a quick buck in the period before and after the fall of communism. The characters all strive for a better life, each in their own way, which they realise through strategies of deception and destruction. The novel was very entertaining due to its playful mixture of different genres and was one of the most discussed novels in Slovak literature. However, the subsequent parts of *Rivers of Babylon*, the novels *Drevená dedina* (1994,

The Wooden Village) and *Fredyho koniec* (1999, *The End of Freddy*), did not achieve the same level of interest as the first part.

The absurd satire *The Ugly* tells the story of a Siberian tribe whose tribal homeland is stolen by an American lawyer who sends one of its members to Harvard Law School to defend his right to exist and his own habitat by appropriating the legal language. The novel was voted the best new release on *Goodreads* in September 2016 and named one of the best fiction books of 2016 by *Entropy Magazine*. A common underlying theme can be recognised in the works of both authors/novels:

On the one hand, Slovak society is struggling to reposition itself after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Slovakia attempting to redefine its role as part of Central Eastern Europe. In the field of tension of the long-standing asymmetrical relationship between centre and periphery, Slovakia appears as peripheral in two respects: on the one hand, as part of the East, which has been constructed as peripheral based on Western stereotyping; on the other hand, as one of the smallest countries within Central Eastern Europe, which occupies a marginal position in relation to its neighbours. The only way to break out of such stereotypical binary structures is ultimately through parody and satire – and this is the theme of both novels, one from the inside perspective of the author living in Slovakia, the other from the outside perspective of the author living in Canada. Slovakia and Slovakian literature share the fate of other so-called ‘small’ Eastern European countries and ‘smaller literatures’: they are not part of the central currents of international cultural and political attention and intellectual discourse.

And this brings us to one of the core themes contained as theoretical background in Charles Sabatos’s interpretation of the two novels: On the question of the extent to which postcolonial discourse can be thought together with post-Soviet discourse in analysing cultural, epistemological, political dependencies and

inequalities, or in other words, the extent to which the methods of postcolonial analysis can be adapted to the post-Soviet situation without running the risk of creating producing new imbalances and subalternities in the perception and self-perception of Eastern and Central Eastern Europe – for example by using the category of the post-Soviet, post-socialist to construct the East as the eternal ‘Other’, even 30 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. (With regard to the term ‘post-Soviet’ as an analytical category, there are two opposing arguments: first, the term is analytically legitimised precisely because of the collective transformation experience of the countries loosely grouped around it. Secondly, it can be argued that ‘post-Soviet’ no longer merely describes a historical period, but has also become an ideological point of comparison that reproduces the binary relationship between the capitalist West and the socialist-communist East in the tradition of the ‘Other’).

As Charles Sabatos shows in detail in his paper, what Peter Pišťanek’s and Alexander Boldizar’s novels have in common (despite all the differences in their narrative styles and despite the difference in themes, content-related and temporal framework of the novels) is that they radically break with the post-Soviet or post-socialist situation in the mode of transformation in which they seem to set the plot. At the same time - and this is what makes them so intellectually exciting – they satirically undermine the established categories and entrenched perspectives of the ‘late Soviet’, ‘post-Soviet’, ‘post-colonial’, ‘semi-peripheral’, ‘Western’, ‘Eastern’: In Pišťanek’s trilogy, the first part, *The Rivers of Babylon*, refers to Bratislava as a Central European metropolis in the intellectual ‘European periphery’, rich in linguistic diversity, social and cultural stratification and the pop music of the late 1980s in the former socialist world. However, the political transformation from late socialism to early capitalism barely touches this world, as it is not a struggle but a “grotesque fusion of the two antagonistic systems”, as the literary scholar Pokrivčáková (2002) puts it.

The second and third parts of the trilogy, *Drevená dedina* (1994, *The Wooden Village*) and *Fredyho koniec* (1999, *The End of Freddy*), seem not only to parody debates about national identity or the cultural self-reflection of a small nation in a post-Soviet discourse by relocating an imaginary community of Slovaks far away into the (post-Soviet/post-communist) Arctic.

The novels also parody the nostalgic notion of a stable or homogenous culture and literature by shifting the focus from the unequal relationship between Czech and Slovak nationalism to the international level of global inequality in a turbo-capitalist world. As Peter Petro, the translator of the novels into English, pointed out in his analysis of the book, “it also throws light on the uncritical embrace of the Western pseudo-culture (represented by the porno industry), which found the post-communist countries that turned against all kinds of censorship an easy prey with willing collaborators” (2003).

Alexander Boldizar’s novel *The Ugly* (2016) (translated into Czech by Jota Press as *Ošklivec*), as Charles rightly argues, can be read as an indirect dialogue with or as a response to ‘The Rivers of Babylon’. For even though it was written in English by an author who does not live in Slovakia at all, but in Canada, and though it is set in the imaginary people of the Slovaks in Siberia, it also shows the ideological, cultural-capitalist extremes of postcolonial dynamics in relation to an East that is still exoticized. And it also shows that (national, cultural) self-assertion against the geopolitical power dominants of this world produces blossoms that are just as beautiful as they are ultimately hopeless. The novel reflects in a very humoristic way its author’s background in the literary periphery of Europe through its parodic self-representation of imagined Siberian Slovaks. It plays with both Western stereotypes about Eastern Europe and Slovak narratives of self-definition in the context of the political and psychological traumas of the post-communist era and also within globalised capitalism, by locating

the usually marginalised (albeit geographically Central European) Slovak Republic as a new (imagined) centre in relation to the post-Soviet and post-colonial peripheries.

Alexander Boldizar's novel *The Ugly* (2016), as Charles rightly argues, can be read as an indirect dialogue with or as a response to *The Rivers of Babylon's* double periphery. The novel was written in English by an author who does not live in Slovakia but in Canada. He also has set the plot of his novel in the imaginary people of the Slovaks in Siberia and he also shows with humor and parody the ideological, cultural-capitalist extremes of postcolonial dynamics in relation to an East that is still exoticized. And it also shows that (national, cultural) self-assertion against the geopolitical power dominants of this world produces blossoms that are just as beautiful as they are ultimately hopeless. The novel reflects in a very humoristic way the Slovak literature and culture in the literary periphery of Europe through its parodic self-representation of imagined Siberian Slovaks. It plays with both Western stereotypes about Eastern Europe and Slovak narratives of self-definition in the context of the political and psychological traumas of the post-communist era and also within globalised capitalism, by locating the usually marginalised (albeit geographically Central European) Slovak Republic as a new (imagined) centre in relation to the post-Soviet and post-colonial peripheries. I would like to raise two questions for discussion:

1. The first point refers to the asymmetries of simultaneity of postcolonial and post-Soviet discourses that both authors highlight in their novels by simply reversing the relations between centre and periphery and relocating the negotiations of Slovakian identity and community to the 'edge of the world', to former Soviet Siberia. Can we not also speak of a certain nostalgia here, in the sense that the imagination of a Slovak identity that has not (yet) been corrupted by the Western world has been deliberately relocated to the outermost periphery of the Western world in order to archive it? Could this be a persiflage of a nostalgic attitude towards the western and

global capitalistic world that, despite all the criticism inherent in the parodic approach of the novel, seeks to avoid liberation from the eternal reproduction of binary categorizations of East-West, post-Soviet/communist, colonial-anti-colonial?

2. What role does the topos of self-exoticization play in both novels in relation to the dynamics of popular culture, which is present both as a literary intertextual method and as an object of reflection? Both books play offensively and provocatively with a certain image of the East as the exotic Other. Is it possibly also about fulfilling expectations that are part of popular culture and the literary market defined as Western? Or could one instead speak of a re-appropriation of both Western and Eastern popular culture in literary discourse, with the aim of pursuing a very specific form of decolonization?

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