

## EASTERN FOR WESTERNERS

(Review on Kallestrup, S. et al., 2022, *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge)

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## Східне для Західних

(Kallestrup, S. et al., 2022, *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge)

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Періодизація мистецтва як предмет дослідження – виклик для написання монографії про регіон Центральної та Східної Європи. Через щільне нашарування різних культурних контекстів і наявність досвіду, якого не мала Західна Європа (наприклад, існування радянського режиму), не дозволяє застосовувати до східноєвропейського регіону оптику традиційної історії мистецтв. До вирішення цієї проблеми допутилися й автори збірної монографії *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe*, де дослідники з Чехії, Румунії, Польщі та інших країн регіону аналізують періодизацію в історіографії мистецтва конкретних країн, яка проливає світло на «нелінійну» історію мистецтв, що поєднує в собі три головні дискурси – імперський, академічний та націоналістичний. Автори зосереджують свою увагу на таких проблемах, як візантійська спадщина, яка в історіографії 19 століття мала замінити для низки східноєвропейських країн італійський ренесанс, взаємодії великих західноєвропейських наративів з локальними східноєвропейськими, зміна погляду на періодизацію під впливом національних рухів та ін. Хоча статті присвячені різним проблемам та темам, їх об'єднує застосування постколоніальної теорії до періодизації і визнання центрально-/східноєвропейського регіону як «близького Іншого» по відношенню до західноєвропейського.

У цій статті я порівнюю ідеї, висвітлені в монографії, з іншими концепціями, що досліджують Східну Європу з боку постколоніальності. Зрештою, я приходжу до висновку, що всі вони, враховуючи розглянуту нами книгу, орієнтовані на розкриття питань, які цікавлять західних дослідників, а саме – чим є регіон Центральної та Східної Європи: колонізатором, колонією або об'єднує обидві ці риси. У той же час, спираючись на концепцію «горизонтальної історії» Піотровського, я стверджую, що для східноєвропейської аудиторії є актуальним не деконструкція наративів у межах сучасних центрально- та східноєвропейських держав, а навпаки – прослеження перетину різних культурних контекстів сусідніх країн поза межами національних наративів, оскільки східноєвропейські країни знають більше про мистецтво Заходу, ніж про мистецтво один одного.

**Ключові слова:** періодизація, історіографія мистецтва, Центральна та Східна Європа, нелінійна історія мистецтва, горизонтальна історія мистецтва

Anyone who has tried to deal with the problems of post-colonial theory and periodization of Central and Eastern Europe should have come across the ethnic complexity of this region and the need to take into account many nuances. The monograph of 2022 *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by researchers Shona Kallestrup, Magdalena Kunińska, Mihnea Alexandru Mihail, Anna Adashinskaya and Cosmin Minea, combined both of these aspects and tried to cover several cultural contexts at the same time.

The book is a monograph consisting of articles devoted to the review of periodization in local historiography and the compilation of specific narratives written by scholars from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Estonia, Romania, and Germany. In this way, the book conditionally provides an assessment from specialists, who are not only directly related to a particular research area, but also who work in this region.

The chronological framework of the study covers one century that lasted from 1850 to 1950. Such a choice may seem rather strange, but it is explained by the convenient consideration of several periods in art at once (romanticism, realism, avant-garde, socialist realism), which were accompanied by the collapse of empires and the creation of nation-states. In addition, the authors emphasize the importance of the issue of relationships between the three discourses - imperial, academic and the national-building ones.

Obviously, the work with periodization is a rather ambitious and responsible research goal, which can influence the course of subsequent research in this area. However, the authors turn to the analysis of historiography, thus reducing the burden of responsibility. In addition, the study of historiography is also a way to give voice to «marginalized» discourses. Although Piotr Piotrowski and his concept of «horizontal history» (Piotrowski 2009, p. 54) are not considered in theoretical perspective in the introduction of the book, his influence can be traced in the structure of the work and the conclusions that the authors draw. In particular, the monograph pays great attention to the foundation of Byzantine art, which is not a priority for Western periodization, but appears to be a local feature of the Eastern European region, which became important for the construction of national narratives in a number of states (Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia). However, comparisons with Western periodization are still present, such as: «if Gothic and Romanesque had become the architectural manifestations of Western European nations, then the roots of Bulgarian tradition should be sought in the pre-Ottoman past» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 89).

The postcolonial approach requires not only attention to local (peripheral) art, but also the possibility of a different structure of artistic art, which is the main focus of the monograph. Here the authors refer to the category of «Other», formulated by Edward Said in his classic work «Orientalism» (Said 2007, p. 1-2).

The authors of the book adhere to the opinion that traditional art history cannot be applied to non-Western art, taking into account the region of Central and Eastern Europe. However, unlike African, Asian, or Native American cultures, the Eastern European region is «close Other» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022; p. 6), where the authors of the monograph again repeat Piotrowski (Piotrowski 2009, p. 52-53). The «close Other» simultaneously adapted to the great Western European narrative - not only in art, but also in politics — adopting the concepts of romanticism and nation-states, moving after that to modernism. At the same time, Eastern European historiographers could not attribute their culture to the dominant discourse, feeling the pressure of the Western European hegemony and the need to «protect» their discourse in a nationalist shell. Moreover, according to the authors' conclusions, this discourse was universally combined with external influences, the inclusion of territories in the composition of other states, the peculiarity of religious traditions (for example, the dominance of the Orthodox Church), competition with Western institutions, the appearance of Soviet power in the country, etc. Literally, the authors formulate it as: «The chapters in this book attempt to draw attention to how

this intermediate Other adapted, adopted, and created new frameworks for the periodization of art history» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 6).

Thus, the authors argue that Western (in particular, Austrian, French, and German) discourses constructed the dominant canon of European art, which begins with antiquity and gradually changes in style through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Modernity. Of course, the art historians of Central and Eastern Europe were also connected with the Western narrative, but in the Eastern European context it hybridized with local — including folklore — artistic traditions, «delayed» for a longer time than in the West, or was superimposed on the construction process of national states.

The first part, written by Matthew Rampley, examines the theoretical issues involved in the critique of linear time and periodization, where the theories of such authors as Pinder, Panofsky, Warburg and Moxie are cited as an example. From the point of view of the study of non-linear periodization, I especially appreciated the article «Beyond the Provincial: Entanglements of Regional Modernism in Interwar Central Europe» by Julia Secklehner, where the author applies the concept of «longue durée» to regional Czech modernism and the art of Salzburg, which turned out to be important in the discourse of nation-building and nationalism (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 39).

The second part of «We have always been Byzantines» is devoted to the priority of the Byzantine heritage, which played a role in the formation of the periodization of the 19th century. For example, the question of equating the Byzantine «renaissances» with the Italian one was revealed, which was the reason to include Bulgarian and Serbian art in the grand narrative: «To quote the Serbian art historian Sreten Petković (1930–2015), while medieval Serbian artists 'mastered all the secrets of painting', the West «could not achieve beauty in the expression of aesthetic ideals». Giotto had to wait for the sunset» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 215).

The third part, «Our art in textbooks», touches on the issue of the nationalist aspect in the construction of an artistic narrative in Poland, Estonia and Croatia in response to the Western-centric concepts of Karl Schnaase, Franz Kugler and Wilhelm Lübke. The dichotomy «center-periphery» is particularly detailed here, which at the same time explains the influence of German and Italian historiography and attempts to get rid of the dominance of European schools as much as possible by constructing a local narrative.

In the fourth part, «Tradition was invented by modernity» directs us to the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th century in Russian, Polish, Romanian and Czech contexts - from classicism, which was marked by Western influences and local canons, to romanticism with the opposite situation, namely changes in the creation of periodization as a means of constructing the past of the region, which existed in dialogue with Western canons, but local, national influences.

At last, the last fifth part, «Turning Points», contains two articles that explain the priority of specific historical moments in the construction of periodization - in this case, in Hungary (the Mongol invasion) and Romania (the establishment of a communist regime that replaced the dominance of socialist realism over Romanian modernism).

So, in the monograph, we have sections that are similar in theoretical approaches, but separated from each other by subject matter. This gives the structure of the book some chaos and forms the problem, which, in my opinion, is the main one for this work — uneven attention to different Eastern European contexts. Thus, several articles are devoted to Romania, when at the same time many countries are not included at all. For example, the Ukrainian context is not present in the book - only the territory of Ukraine and figures who worked in cities that are now part of Ukraine are mentioned several times. Moreover, they are not even mentioned in connection with the Ukrainian narrative: «When Joseph Hlávka (1831–1908), a successful architect-entrepreneur in Vienna and member of the Central Commission, was commissioned to design the residence of the Greek-Orthodox Metropolitan in Czernowitz (Chernivtsi), the capital of

the province of Bukovina, he made a study trip to seek inspiration in local artistic traditions» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 73); or «It is clear that, for Hlávka, Bukovina, then part of the Habsburg Empire, was not part of «the Balkans» but belonged to the «enlightened» West». (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 73).

Also, the contexts of Belarus, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, most countries of the former Yugoslavia and Albania are not considered, only the contexts of Moldova and Latvia are indirectly outlined. Of course, it can be assumed that researchers could not cover all regions in a small monograph. In addition, the stated goal of the study makes us understand that it is aimed only at revealing some aspects of the study of Eastern European art: «Our aim, rather, is to signal the need to revisit and reassess some of the accepted notions of periodization in the region with the goal of understanding and, eventually, deterring the continued reification of national and authoritative conceptual models in present-day art-historical writing» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 10).

But in my opinion, the distribution of emphasis in the book - the division of discourse into academic, imperialist and national, as well as the focus on specific countries - is not accidental. I can conclude that the approaches used in this study are in line with the general trends in the «post-colonialism» of Eastern Europe in Western discourse.

As the authors of the monograph admit, the term «Central and Eastern Europe» is very vague: «In these localities, terms such as «Eastern», «South-Eastern», «Central», «East Central», «Balkan» or «Baltic» lose their strict geographical sense and acquire meanings weighted with the symbolic geopolitics of national identities, political or cultural borders and the historical past. This poses a methodological problem for the title of this volume» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 4). In the same way Jacob Mikanowski pointed out in his essay «Goodbye, Eastern Europe!», the term «Eastern Europe» is largely «not a place, but a way of thinking» (Mikanowski 2017). He even suggests that perhaps the space called «Eastern Europe» never existed, and this division is a consequence of the Cold War era.

What is common to the analysis of the region of Central and Eastern Europe in English-language literature is the «complexity» of the region, which was also noted in the introduction of the monograph we reviewed, and then revealed in more detail in the chapters, again concurring in views with Mikanowski, who noted: «Often, these differences corresponded to distinctions of class and profession, so that in Eastern Poland, Polish Catholic landowners ruled over Orthodox Ukrainian and Belarusian peasants who would visit Jewish and Yiddish-speaking villages to sell their produce and buy their wares» (Mikanowski 2017).

The authors of the book note that the «*histoire croisée*» approach is suitable for the study of the Eastern European context, which can maximally highlight the intersection of local folk culture, the heritage that was used for nation-building, with the influence of «great» narratives, modern ideologies and the culture of national minorities. By the way, the book pays little attention to the last aspect, focusing on the connections «Byzantium - Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania», «Italy – Croatia», «Estonia – Germany», etc. Even in the chapter written by Andrey Shabanov, the collection and exhibition of art in the Russian Empire, which is initially contrasted with the French Academy. Unlike Western schools, Russian art until the second half of the 19th century periodized works of art according to the era of the reign of a particular emperor, and only with the institutionalization of education was a national vision created.

Also, what unites this monograph with other approaches to the history of Central and Eastern Europe is a linguistic objection (or uncertainty) in terminology. «Not-quite-Other» (Kallestrup, S. et al. 2022, p. 6), «grey area» (Mikanowski, 2017), «non-aligned modernity» (Non-Aligned Modernity, 2016), «non-colonizer» (Ginelli 2017), «coloniality without colonies» (Warsza & Sowa 2022). Zoltan Ginneli (Ginelli 2017) argued that Eastern European countries can combine both the characteristics of those who were colonized and the colonizers, without touching on the problem of internal relations and conflicts between different ethnic groups. In particular, his vision of colonization

processes refers to two directions: the first is the intention of the Eastern Bloc to spread influence over countries of African content during post-war decolonization and exploit local national movements; the second is the fall of Eastern European countries themselves into dependence on Western capital and the introduction of neoliberal reforms.

At the same time, Romanian researcher Andrei Terian (Terian 2012) examines not only foreign relations, but also the situation within Eastern Europe and draws other conclusions. In his opinion, colonialism cannot be equated with any form of imperialism and/or dependence on states. Therefore, he considers it's incorrect to recognize the consequences of globalization on the part of Western capital as «colonialism» - as well as the dependence of Eastern European countries on the Soviet Union, which were part of the Warsaw Pact bloc, because neither Poland, nor Hungary or Czechoslovakia were part of the USSR and did not implement Russian as the official language. But Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova can be considered as former colonies, because they, on the contrary, were part of the borders of the USSR and were dependent on Moscow at the official level.

A more negative vision is presented by Polish researcher Jan Sowa and curator Joanna Warsza in the essay for MoMA (Warsza & Sowa, 2022). From their position, the Eastern European states have a colonialist experience, which they try to hide behind the former colonial dependence. Despite the absence of Eastern Europe in Western discourse, the countries of this territory participated in colonial projects - for example, the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (present-day Latvia) established a colony on the island of Tobago in the seventeenth century - and continue to support neo-colonialism, such as Poland, whose state leadership implements an anti-emigrant policy.

According to Keti Chukhrov (Chukhrov, 2013), Western epistemology unfairly reduces Soviet aesthetics to totalitarianism, because it denies the progressive reforms of the USSR in the fields of science and industrialization and forces post-Soviet countries to deny their past — taking into account not only traumas, but also practices of emancipation and progress. As a result, this creates a new neo-colonial narrative that denigrates the experience of Eastern European countries.

What unites all the studies and concepts discussed above? Despite the presence of Eastern European researchers and curators as authors, they are united by their focus on the Western audience, which is trying to figure out what Central and Eastern Europe is — a colonizer, a colony or both of them, where, first of all, the role of nationalism and the Soviet experience in the region is of interest. In addition, while recognizing the ethnic complexity of the region, the authors mainly focus their articles on individual countries, rather than the specifics of the region as such.

While for the Eastern European audience it would be worth answering other questions. As Piotrowski noted, the peripheries look to the West, but know very little about each other: «Poles generally have almost no idea about the history of Romanian art — they ignore it out of a superiority complex on behalf of their own culture, which they prefer to compare directly to the West» (Piotrowski 2009, p. 57). Hence, for Eastern European researchers, it is not attempts to distinguish between contexts within the modern countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but, on the contrary, the disclosure of the intersection of different national projects in the region, the coexistence and conflicts of representatives of different religious confessions or ethnic groups, in order to give a more complete picture of the region, which is not limited to closed national narratives.

Therefore, the emphasis placed in the monograph under consideration should not be surprising. This work is another attempt to fit Central and Eastern Europe into postcolonial theory, as opposed to the decolonial option, which aims at the process of liberation from global marginalization within the modernist vision (Kumar 2017, p. 76-77). Namely, *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe* seeks to form epistemological principles that

should be taken into account by Western scientists when studying the culture of this region and respond to the requests of this audience.

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**Eastern for Westerners (Review on Kallestrup, S. et al., 2022, *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe*. London: Routledge)**

*Periodization of art as a subject of research is a challenge for writing a monograph on the region of Central and Eastern Europe. Due to the dense layering of different cultural contexts and the presence of experience that Western Europe did not have (for example, the existence of the Soviet regime), it does not allow applying the optics of traditional art history to the Eastern European region. The authors of the collective monograph *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe* joined in solving this problem, where researchers from the Czech Republic, Romania, Poland and other countries of the region analyze periodization in the art historiography of specific countries, which sheds light on the «non-linear» art history, which combines three main discourses – imperial, academic and nationalist. The authors focus their attention on such problems as the Byzantine heritage, which in the historiography of the 19th century was supposed to replace the Italian Renaissance for a number of Eastern European countries, the interaction of large Western European narratives with local Eastern European ones, a change in the view of periodization under the influence of national movements, etc. Although the articles are devoted to different problems and topics, they are united by the application of postcolonial theory to the periodization and recognition of the Central/Eastern European region as a «near Other» in relation to the Western European one.*

*In this article, I compare the ideas highlighted in the monograph with other concepts exploring Eastern Europe from a postcolonial perspective. In the end, I come to the conclusion that all of them, taking into account the book under review, are aimed at revealing questions that interest Western researchers, namely, what is the region of Central and Eastern Europe: a colonizer, a colony, or combining both of these features. At the same time, basing on Piotrowski's concept of «horizontal history», I argue that for the Eastern European audience, what is relevant is not the deconstruction of narratives within the boundaries of modern Central and Eastern European states, but on the contrary, tracing the intersection of different cultural contexts of neighboring countries outside the borders of national narratives, since Eastern European countries know more about the art of the West than about each other's art.*

**Keywords:** periodization, art historiography, Central and Eastern Europe, non-linear art history, horizontal art history.

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