

**Stony Brook University
The Graduate School**

Doctoral Defense Announcement

Abstract

Peripheral Visions: Regional Identity in the Literature and Cinema of East Central

Europe

By

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This dissertation examines the ways in which artists from East Central Europe simultaneously explore the peripheral European consciousness and challenge the dismissive discourse of Eurocentrism. I chose to interrogate that discourse from a unique regional perspective in order to open the discussion of the imaginary Europe to cultural influences that rose inside but apart from the tradition steeped in ancient Greece, Christianity, and the European colonization of the New World. In a sense, the very discourse of Eurocentrism contributes to the negative and exclusionary politics that it originally set out to criticize. In the hands on some post-colonial scholars, Eurocentrism functions as a way to congeal the dimensions of the “enemy” and crystallize the binary of the European colonizing center and the colonized margins. This clarifying conceptualizing strategy comes at a great price: Europe is reduced to a few politically and economically powerful nations. The intricacy of this continent’s multilingual, multid denominational, and multicultural identity is greatly limited. In this dissertation, by focusing on the European colonization of Europe (its own marginal territories), I signal the complex hierarchies that exist within the center of Eurocentrism, and reflect on the shifts in Europe’s awareness of its own identity. I read selected texts by Bruno Schulz, Eva Hoffman, Milan Kundera, and films by Agnieszka Holland, Jan Jakub Kolski and Krzysztof Kieslowski as artistic regimentation of European consciousness in the face of historical change. These artists have managed to reproduce the quandaries of the Third World as it exists within the First World.

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